

Demonstrating *Anishinaabe* Storywork Circle Pedagogy: Creating Conceptual Space for
Ecological Relational Knowledge in the Classroom

by

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Abstract

Aboriginal education reform policies, Truth and Reconciliation initiatives, and climate change indicators signal opportunity and an urgency for action to effect positive change through relationship with *Aki*¹. Aboriginal peoples' ancient and wholistic ways of knowing, being, doing, and feeling are touchstones to support timely transformative processes in education and Canadian society. Current educational initiatives emphasize learning Aboriginal content and the integration of historical perspectives and contemporary arts into the Ontario curricula. This case study of 17 participants in a grade 4/5 classroom explores a research journey in northeastern Ontario demonstrating how the oral tradition and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy create conceptual space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within the urban public school classroom. An *Anishinaabe* shared learning process devoid of power imbalance draws on the life experience of each student and educator in a culture and land-based approach. This study addresses the following research questions: What is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and what principles and concepts of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge are made visible in a public school classroom? How is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge socially enacted in the classroom? How does the teacher's perception of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge transform their pedagogy? A critical Indigenous² research theory and qualitative methodological approach bring forward a narrative inclusive of teacher and elementary student voices and participant researcher reflections and query.

¹ *Aki* is the *Anishinaabemowin* term for "Land". *Anishinaabemowin* refers to the Aboriginal languages of the Anishinaabek people, spoken by the Algonquin, Chippewa, Delaware, Mississauga, Odawa, and Ojibway and Pottawatomi people of the Great Lakes Region.

² The term Indigenous refers to the first peoples that occupied the continents of the world and is used in this research context to refer to all first peoples—unique in our own cultures—but common in our experiences of colonialism and our understanding of the world (Wilson, 2008, p. 15).

Anishinaabe cultural ecological relational knowledge refers to a specific area of Indigenous knowledge that suits the study's local context regarding *Anishinaabe* cultural origins, linguistic family, and community traditions. An animated learning process and experience incorporates life experience, relational collectivity, and inner knowing for *Anishinaabe* cultural ecological relational knowledge regarding the self in relationship with *Aki* and each other. The 'school yard as classroom' is utilized and this is especially supportive for First Nation students in transition to the city. Students' and educators' engagement in an inclusive community of respect and mutual understanding supports exploration of biophilia (the love of nature) and balanced relationships. The incorporation of *Anishinaabemowin* (Ojibway language) conveys worldview perspectives and exemplifies the Indigenous paradigm and ways of knowing. The *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle process builds identity and supportive relationships which are strongly associated with school success of particular relevance for Aboriginal student engagement in school. Classroom teacher praxis is stimulated in response to *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. A robust process for change emerges through an examination of ecological systems theory. The impacts of relationship-building, creation of a kind, respectful and inclusive classroom environment to interrupt systemic hegemony and racism are discussed.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Aboriginal education, *Anishinaabe* education, Indigenous philosophy, Indigenous ecology, *Anishinaabe* relational knowledge, *Anishinaabe* pedagogy, Indigenous research methodology, case study narrative, elementary classroom, storytelling, identity, community, story Circles, Aboriginal educational praxis

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my three sons, Douglas, Vincent, and Kirk, to my daughter, Stephanie, and to my grandchildren. It is my wish that our family and future generations will be inspired to learn and pass on the traditional *Anishinaabek* Teachings.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the Grandmothers who inspire me and fuel my passion to go forward in the face of adversity.

Chi-miigwech,

Msko-kii-kwe (Red Earth Woman), Mnjikaning Rama First Nation, Loon Clan.

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Sharla Peltier (*Msko-kii-kwe*)

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Introduction

A historic lack of respectful relationship has existed for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal consciousness is central to fierce cultural perseverance and resistance to Western-European societal forces of colonization and marginalization to enact social and educational transformation underway in Canadian society. Aboriginal people are diverse with each culture possessing its own language and system of beliefs and values based on experience and these are articulated in the philosophy of the oral tradition. A wave of resurgence for Aboriginal world views regarding ways of being and doing in the schools is countering some of the challenging factors affecting Aboriginal student achievement.

The focus of this case study is to demonstrate *Anishinaabewin*, an *Anishinaabe* way of coming to know (theory and praxis³) about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in an urban elementary public school classroom. In this research project, the creation of conceptual space for Aboriginal pedagogy and Indigenous knowledge is demonstrated in an urban public school setting through the social enactment of relationship in a culturally responsive educational paradigm within a grade 4/5 classroom. The classroom teacher and all students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) engage with Indigenous knowledge and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge⁴ in particular, through an Indigenous storywork Circle⁵ pedagogy. Learning about the inner process of balancing the heart, mind, intuition, and body through being in-the-moment and journeying to the inner space of reflection and self-knowing are fundamental to exuding positive perspectives outwards to relationships with others and for understanding of and

³ Praxis refers to the process of educator action and reflection (Haig-Brown and Archibald, 1996).

⁴ *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge refers to ways of knowing inter-relationships and inter-connections with Aki and each other according to Ojibway/Algonquin perspectives of this research project locale.

⁵ Circle, and other words that are typically not capitalized appear in this thesis with a capital to denote an Indigenous voice and Indigenous perspective in the research story.

appreciation for Indigenous perspectives regarding inter-relationships and inter-connections with *Aki* and each other.

A long, negative and hurtful relationship between Aboriginal⁶ people and schooling exists. Aboriginal leaders, parents, students and educators have lived experience with formal education institutions of marginalization and failure to provide an environment and educational philosophy that leads to Aboriginal student success (Battiste, 1998; Dion, 2009; Henderson, 2000). The residential school system is an artefact of racism and colonialism within the educational system and the privilege of Euro-Canadian knowledge and values (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, Cote-Meek, 2014). Aboriginal students, and all students in Canada have historically experienced the null curriculum - absent representation and honouring of Aboriginal material, Aboriginal stories, and Aboriginal teachers in the schools.

Educational reform is called for in Canada and a movement towards decolonization and social justice through critical awareness is underway. Recent education policies and curricula revisions point to transformative possibilities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015a, 2015b; United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2008). Aboriginal peoples have diverse historical, cultural, social, and economic circumstances. Educational reform cannot be achieved by a single sweeping policy in light of the Eurocentric environment and complex issues that need to be resolved regarding curricula development and implementation, teacher training and administrative practices (Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2010, p. 64). The residential school system legacy and historical social context means that all Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples are new to the learning process about history, culture,

⁶ The term Aboriginal is commonly used in Canada and is used in this research context to refer specifically to the Indigenous people in Canada (Helin, 2006). Aboriginal is the word used in Canada's Constitution and includes "Indians, Inuit and Métis".

languages and identity. Traditional culture encompasses Indigenous values, history and worldviews such as: involvement in traditional activities (a lived experience that determines how one sees the world); cultural identity (self concept that incorporates the culture); and traditional spirituality (knowledge and practice of spiritual ways and values that impacts both cultural practice and identity) (Zimmerman et. al, 1994, as cited in Longboat, 2012, p. 125).

Some Aboriginal people are committed to learning about and promoting the continuance of traditional beliefs and values while others no longer celebrate their cultural heritage.

Assimilation into the values and religions of dominant Western-European society is an issue (Ward & Bouvier, 2001, p. 8, 11). Evidence of this has come to my attention in my work with First Nation parents who share stories of their community-based schools that are devoid of Aboriginal cultural beliefs and values. In rural and urban schools in the school district where I am employed there have been reports from classroom teachers that Aboriginal parents have made a request to the school principal and classroom teacher that their child(ren) are not to engage in the making of dream-catchers, drumming or singing and they cite religious reasons. Indigenous scholars have examined their own bias and traced it to educators' influences on their personal assumptions that traditional customs and practices have no relevance in the world. Hill (1999) shared her transformative process of reconstituting a personal set of cultural assumptions for valuing cultural identity and Indigenous knowledge validation (p. 145). McCaskill, FitzMaurice, and Cidro (2011) surveyed a large urban Aboriginal population and reported that 2% of respondents indicated that they are not interested in participating in Aboriginal cultural and identity services in Aboriginal organizations (p. 306).

Indigenous Knowledge

Scholars from diverse academic and cultural perspectives have provided information about Indigenous knowledge as a process situated within a context of relationships. A few examples from the body of literature are presented here. *Anishinaabe* scholar Lana Ray (2012) illustrates that Indigenous Knowledges are not like Western-European knowledges. "Traditional knowledges are not held to the standards and constricted to the boundaries of Western knowledges" (p. 90). Indigenous knowledge is an animated process and experience. Battiste and Henderson (2000) contend that attempting to define Indigenous knowledge is inappropriate as Indigenous knowledge does not fit into the western conceptualization of culture and it is not a uniform concept but is a diverse knowledge that spreads throughout different peoples in a number of layers. It is interconnected within the people and their community and cannot be separated from the knowledge holder. The authors suggest that the process of understanding is more important than a definition of Indigenous knowledge. Mi'kmaq scholar and educator Battiste (2008) states that "No uniform or universal Indigenous perspective on Indigenous knowledge exists - many do" (p. 501). Cree philosopher Ermine (1995) discusses Indigenous knowledge as an interaction of life experience, relational collectivity, and inner knowing, for example, "[e]xperience is knowledge" (p. 104). This thesis explores and expands the understanding of applications within the context of a public elementary school.

Provincial policies and implementation strategies provide impetus for Aboriginal education in the public schools (*Ontario Ministry of Education First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Implementation Plan*, 2014a, *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, 2007) and ongoing monitoring (Realizing the Promise of Diversity, 2009; *A Solid Foundation - Second Progress Report on Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and*

Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2013). The First Nation Advisory Committee 2012-13 Annual Report (Rainbow District School Board, 2013) sheds light on the Aboriginal student population context of this case study school board. Across individual schools, the population varies from 1 to 30 percent and overall, 10 percent of the total student population are identified as First Nation, Métis and Inuit.

The integration of Indigenous knowledge into the mainstream curriculum is underway. School principals, and district administrators are mandated to provide a more culturally-responsive curriculum and pedagogy for Aboriginal students by addressing their distinct socio-cultural and epistemic values and beliefs. First Nations engage with provincial school boards through tuition agreements to provide education for First Nations students to attend public schools off-reserve. Many school boards have an established Aboriginal education advisory committee of community members, teachers, trustees, and family members of Aboriginal students to facilitate relationship building, information sharing, development of self-identification policies, and strategies to facilitate input from Aboriginal community members or to address specific concerns and perspectives⁷. Native Language programs and classes are optional for all students in many elementary and secondary schools and curricula revisions for social studies, history and geography in the elementary panel and for Native Studies, Canadian and World Studies in secondary schools are evident in Ontario. Except for one Native Studies text book⁸, text books inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives, histories and cultures are non-existent for all other subject areas.

⁷ The Rainbow District School Board's First Nation Advisory Committee (Sudbury, Ontario) has quarterly meetings (Rainbow District School Board, 2015).

⁸ Aboriginal Beliefs, Values, and Aspirations (2011), Grade 11 Native Studies course text.

Recent public school board monitoring and reporting on urban Aboriginal culturally responsive education projects is addressing the gaps in information about promising policies, practices and administrative and funding supports so that schools serving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners can support their fulfillment of educational aspirations (Anuik et al., 2010, p. 65). This research project is situated in an urban public school context and draws on the literature examining supportive factors and issues both internal to the school and external within the community (Dion, 2009; Dion, Johnston, & Rice, 2010; Haig-Brown, 2010; Johnston Research Inc., 2011; Kanu, 2011, 2002; Stairs, 1995; Sterzuk, 2008). Schools encounter challenges such as "...recognizing Aboriginal student populations, delivering programs when Aboriginal students are frequently dispersed across a range of schools, lacking the requisite knowledge for teaching Aboriginal subject material, and engaging families and communities who may be understandably resistant to formal educational systems" (Dion et al., 2010, p. v). In urban school settings, students may not be recognized as Aboriginal and if they are, they encounter expectations to lead the teacher and students in learning about cultural and historical perspectives (Dion et al., 2010, p. v). Some educators believe that professional development related to Aboriginal Education is only necessary if there is a significant percentage of Aboriginal students in the school and so teachers are being made aware that all students need to know about Aboriginal people, history and culture, Canada's colonial history, and about contemporary relationships (Dion et al., 2010, p. 49). Transformative strategic directions for decolonizing and indigenizing learning spaces and valuing the expertise that the Aboriginal community brings to the classroom by strengthening and sustaining community ties and partnerships are being brought to light. In a Toronto District School Board project, educators expressed that the source of significant professional learning for them was from "...direct and

ongoing contact with Aboriginal teachers, scholars, artists, and community members" (Dion et al., 2010, p. 36). Principals are actively engaging to understand concepts of decolonizing and indigenizing and transforming the school environment. A school environment that acknowledges Aboriginal people and includes staff with respectful attitudes and cultural understanding that is inclusive of Aboriginal experiences and perspectives is developing (Dion et al., 2010, p. 59).

Anishinaabe Ecological Relational Knowledge

The area of Aboriginal education that is being explored in this research context is *Anishinaabe* cultural ecological relational knowledge, a specific area of Indigenous knowledge that suits local needs, cultural origins, linguistic family, and community traditions. *Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge* is a descriptive term for ways of knowing inter-relationships and inter-connections with *Aki* and each other within the specific knowledge system context of localized content, meaning, and protocols. In this grade 4/5 case study within an urban public school in northeastern Ontario, an animated learning process and experience is enacted in the school that incorporates life experience, relational collectivity, and inner knowing for *Anishinaabe* cultural ecological relational knowledge regarding the self in relationship with *Aki* and each other.

This doctoral project promotes *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge to support the public institutional framework of school division and school board culturally responsive Aboriginal education initiatives. Although the presence of Aboriginal teachers and educational support staff and Aboriginal materials have increased of late in the schools, there is an un-tapped potential for local Aboriginal people knowledgeable in Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy to directly support the learning in the schools. Implementation of an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle

pedagogy promotes the role of Elder as teacher rather than Elder as a product-based demonstration such as drum-making, dreamcatcher-making, etc. This research project aligns with the provincial Aboriginal education strategy and demonstrates Aboriginal community resource person engagement not with the intention of training teachers to codify Indigenous knowledge for student-learning, but to enact Indigenous pedagogy and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the school through authentic curricular practice and genuine engagement of an *Anishinaabe* grandmother. What makes the approach authentic is the experiential aspect and natural role of the Grandmother within the pedagogical process in the classroom.

The relating of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge via an Indigenous pedagogical approach presents a new approach of a lived curricular practice for a culturally responsive education, learning and relationship-building for all. *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge encompasses Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing that correspond with local *Anishinaabe*⁹ culture and Aboriginal educational paradigms regarding: Indigenous science and environmental education (Aikenhead and Michell, 2011; Anderson, Clow, & Haworth-Brockman et al., 2013; Cajete, 1999a; Garrouette, 1999; Kapyrka and & Dockstator, 2012; Kulnieks, Young, & Longboat, 2013; Lewthwaite, McMillan, Renaud, Hainnu, & MacDonald et al., 2010; MacIvor, 1995;) and place-centered, land-based orientations (Alfred, 2014; Beckford and & Nahdee, 2011; Chambers, 2008; Friedel, 2011; Gardner & Peters, 2014; Simpson, 2014; Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013; Watt-Cloutier, 2000; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher Fox, & Coulthard, 2014).

⁹ *Anishinaabe* here refers to the term used by an Ojibway or Algonquin person to refer to him/herself. Elder and spiritual leader, Eddie Benton-Banai (1988) explains that the term refers to Original Man in the Creation Story.

This research project approaches learning and teaching from within a new paradigm other than the conventional assimilative models that have failed to support Indigenous student success. Longboat (2012) describes educational transformation as a "vigorous paradigm embracing change" (p. 73) and this research is complementary and illustrates learning and teaching about culture, language, traditions and identity. First Nations schools and cultural contexts are conducive to a "...culturally responsive education that is education inserted into living culture in all its aspects" (Longboat, 2012, p. 110). Creating space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within the mainstream, public school context aims to mitigate some of the challenging factors affecting Aboriginal student achievement such as bullying, racism, peer discrimination, and teacher discrimination while building self concept and identity, enjoyment of school, a love for *Aki*, and developing the whole child.

Research Approach

An Indigenous pedagogical process underlies Aboriginal education and relationship-building. The oral tradition story-telling process exemplifies ways of knowing and being that have a place in Aboriginal perspectives education. Indigenous scholar, Pitawanakwat (2013) describes the culturally and linguistically rooted understanding of story and the power of *Anishinaabemowin* to add specificity to the concept of "story" (*dibaajmowin* - a personal account, *aadsookaan* - a sacred story). He states that *Anishinaabe* values include a commitment to *debwewin* (truth) and stories exemplify integrity and honesty through the language. Story "may well be the most appropriate pedagogical tool and heuristic device for learning and teaching what it means to be Anishinaabe" (p. 372).

Anishinaabek stories are linked to *Anishinaabe* identities and worldviews and are fundamentally critical. Richotte (2013) explains that stories are functional tools critical to

Anishinaabe worldviews since "they not only provide an epistemological base for conceptualizing the world in which they exist, but also...invite critical reflection upon themselves and provide a strategy for behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. They also require activity on the part of ...[the listener]. *Anishnaabe* stories are meant to work, and they require work as well" (p. 381).

The theoretical framework for this qualitative research project encompasses *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. The research gives voice to children in the classroom and as a child-centred research approach, is based on acknowledgement that children are teachers and are worthy of study to bring forward their thinking in response to experiences and their agency for activating educational and social transformation. The thinking and feelings of 9-, 10-, and 11-year-old children in the classroom where learning about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within an Indigenous pedagogy are represented in student narratives, drawings, and written texts. Teacher conversations and interviews are utilized to examine the teacher's process of learning by doing and reflections on teaching and student learning.

As the researcher, I assume the role of participant-observer, close to the learning experience of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and the process of *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. As theory and practice become inseparable and the case study findings are presented, Aboriginal education praxis is informed.

As a storyteller in this case study research, I honour *gwekwaadiziwin* (the cultural practice of sharing a story based on the individual's life path and sensibility where direction to the listener is implicit and inevitably honoured through meaning-making). I echo the belief illustrated by Archibald (2008) that story sharing creates understanding about respectful

relationships between people, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals and toward cosmic order, the self and connections to our lives that are part of the ongoing process of the oral tradition. "Stories can be heard again and again and the meanings that the listener makes or doesn't make from them can happen at any time" (p. 24). This supports my faith in the process that participants in the Circles will have new understandings immediately and in future.

My intention for this research is to explain an Indigenous research paradigm and the relationships surrounding it. This research presents a unique opportunity to support respect and cultural awareness of the classroom teacher and students through the creation of conceptual space for Indigenous knowledge and incorporation of Aboriginal ways of knowing in an Indigenous pedagogy. Aboriginal worldviews founded in collectivity and interrelatedness contrast with the more empirical notions associated with Western traditions and influence accommodations for successful integration into curricula and pedagogical practices (Haig-Brown, 2008). *Anishinaabe* Grandmother Teaching stories and experiences outside of the classroom in the school yard stimulate reflection and engagement in an Indigenous approach to thinking, doing and relating processes of coming to know the Self and self-in-relation to *Aki* within the context of family, community and *Adinwehmaaganidook*¹⁰. This term is inclusive of *Negwadodem*, or the whole clan of family (blood) relatives and is conceptualized as kin-ship extending to community members, as well as to our ancestors. Teaching stories exemplify the oral tradition and what is referred to in this study as "Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge". The Teaching stories, grounded in an *Anishinaabe* ecological relational paradigm,

¹⁰ *Adinwehmaaganidook* is the *Anishinaabe* term for "all my relations". It was explained by Stan Peltier in March 2013 at the Anishinaabemowin Teg in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan as follows: 'Adinweh' (voice/language and philosophy inclusive; 'maa' (Aki realm); 'gani' (our physical relationship, animate); 'dook' (essence of our direction in existence, plural, many interconnected parts).

model ways of being and doing to honour the whole environment. At the core is the self-in-relation and balance here extends from the inside and outward to an individual's relations (family, clan, community), earth world, sky world, and universe (Dumont, 2006).

Story Circles are an important part of the storywork Circle pedagogy. Engagement of every student and their classroom teacher in the process is facilitated by acknowledging their contribution to the Circle. The researcher/*Anishinaabe* Grandmother facilitates participation by asking, "What did you notice about the Teaching story experience?" The teacher and students engage by listening, and sharing oral, textual, and symbolic representations of their thinking. Participation in the Indigenous storywork Circle process of knowledge creation provides opportunity for student self-awareness through reflection and enhances sense of community with peers.

My journal notes and observations of the school and classroom contexts, teacher conversations and interviews examine the teacher's process of learning by doing and his reflections on teaching and student learning. The classroom teacher observed the Indigenous pedagogy and student responses and gained understanding about how *Aki* informs pedagogy and praxis in the classroom, gaining understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal student ways. Regular, short conversations with the teacher about his observations regarding student socio-interactive processes in the classroom and new perceptions regarding *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge provide a way to honour the learning process.

Student participants from the grade 4/5 classroom are central to this child-centered research approach. Children are acknowledged as teachers within the *Anishinaabe* pedagogy and learning process. Students were invited to share their thoughts and feelings in response to

learning experiences in story Circles. Student narratives, drawings, and written texts form student qualitative data.

The Research Question

The broad research question to be explored in this ethnographic case study is: What is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and what principles and concepts of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge are made visible in a public school classroom? Specifically:

1. How is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge socially enacted in the classroom?

Ancillary questions include:

- a) How do students demonstrate *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge experience to participate in a Circle (Indigenous pedagogy)?
 - b) How do students show thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge (e.g. How do students incorporate *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge into their talk, drawing and writing)?
 - c) How are student perceptions of one another mediated by this displayed knowledge?
2. How does the teacher's perception of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge transform their pedagogy?

Ancillary questions include:

- a) What are teacher perceptions of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge?
- b) How are teacher perspectives of students stimulated by student displayed understanding?

Researcher Roles and Motivation

I am participant - researcher in my roles as the researcher and *Anishinaabe* grandmother sharing *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within a storywork Circle pedagogy. The research implementation is based on my professional and cultural expertise concerning relevant

content, learning styles, cognitive developmental stages of children, cultural knowledge, interpersonal skills founded on cultural communication styles, knowledge of the community customs and protocols, school curricula, and familiarity with *Anishinaabemowin*¹¹. My approach to the *Anishinaabemowin* language departs from standard linguistic approaches and focuses on the meaning of concepts from an *Anishinaabe* philosophical world view to bring these forward into the contemporary social context. I have been taught by the Elders that I entered this earthly walk with *Anishinaabemowin* within me and I have a natural affinity for the language and philosophy of the ancestors. I am an *Anishinaabemowin* learner. Although I am not a fluent speaker, I am supported by relationship with fluent Elders who are considered within the community to be "keepers of *Anishinaabemowin*".

The research design is based on my experience as an educator, my personal experience as an *Anishinaabe kwe*¹², and a review of the Aboriginal education, Indigenous studies philosophy, and social work literature. Life experience and relationship with community Elders have provided ongoing mentorship, guidance, and knowledge-transfer regarding Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, *Anishinaabe* legends and Teachings, and expression of concepts in *Anishinaabemowin*. The cultural values of knowing who I am and where I come from inform my current roles and responsibilities as an *Anishinaabe-kwe*. I am dedicated to honouring ancestral traditions and applying my gifts as a scholar and professional educator in contemporary society. My experience supports my roles as participant-observer and learner-teacher in this research project.

¹¹ *Anishinaabemowin* refers to the Aboriginal languages of the Anishinaabek people, spoken by the Algonquin, Chippewa, Delaware, Mississauga, Odawa, and Ojibway and Pottawatomi people of the Great Lakes Region.

¹² *Kwe* is the *Anishinaabe* term for "woman".

I assume a role as a teacher and helper to build relationships within education that support positive change. I find the following quotes to be especially inspirational for rising to the challenge. Indigenous scholar and researcher, Findlay (2000) asserts: "There is the further need, for those who have the most to say about what counts as culture, to *use* their knowledge and professional and institutional status to *help change* the dominant definition and understanding of Aboriginal knowledge" (p. x). My husband, shared a wise perspective with me. "My grandfather told me to get an education and come back and teach. He didn't mean for me to go get assimilated and just bring that back to the children" (Peltier, 2013 personal communication).

As I introduce myself within the context of this research project, connections to the research setting and issue are important. This research project has broad application in the school to all children and teachers, and my work is particularly relevant to the Aboriginal learner. Every year, families move from their First Nation community into the city and the number of *Anishinaabe* and Cree children in the schools is increasing. "Of the 637,660 First Nations people who reported being Registered Indians, nearly one-half (49.3%) lived on an Indian reserve or Indian settlement" (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 11). First Nations students attending school off-reserve in Canada is nearly 70% of the population (Longboat, 2012). Population statistics regarding this particular research project city indicate that the total population is 157,765 and 31,420 are below the age of 18 and there are 12,960 Aboriginal people living off-reserve and 3,545 are below the age of 18 years (Statistics Canada, 2011). Specific to this locale, Aboriginal people living off-reserve represent 8.2% of the total populace and 1.1% of the population is below the age of 18.

I have seen how Aboriginal children in the schools are naturally drawn to Aboriginal staff and their faces often light up when I visit their classroom with my Grandmother Teaching bundle. Children transitioning from their homeland to the city experience a disconnect from the extended family and cultural-social structure of First Nation life. My experience in the schools has shown that Aboriginal families typically move into a housing complex near the school and during the first year or two while in-transition, time spent out of doors, on *Aki* is almost nil. I empathize with these children and am motivated to facilitate the re-kindling of their love for and relationship with *Aki*. I value the opportunity to facilitate connection to Place and remembrance of their relationship to the Earth.

This research report represents my dissertation for an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Human Studies at Laurentian University. As I work from within an Indigenous research paradigm, I am cognizant that an essential perspective of Traditional Aboriginal culture is not appropriate since Traditions were functional in the past and are continually changing and moving through time in response to new contexts of ecological, political-economic and ideological impacts. The Traditions and stories of Elders continue to inform *Anishinaabe* identity and consciousness and continue as a discourse. As an *Anishinaabe-kwe*, what I bring forward is not neutral and my voice represents my experiences. The educational context for this research encompasses *all* students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in a grade four/five classroom and their non-Aboriginal teacher. This dissertation does not document the final accumulation of experience and knowledge but stands to support my path forward into the future. It represents a significant time in my life-long learning journey and is meant to be shared as an exploratory research project to inform Aboriginal education praxis.

Writing Style Features

Use of italics for researcher reflections. My reflections throughout the research process are presented in italicized passages. This is meant to honour the oral storytelling tradition and the sharing about what happened, how it happened, and new understandings gained.

Use of capitalization of Indigenous paradigm terms. Specific words that typically are not capitalized appear in this thesis with a capital. This form is purposeful to denote an Indigenous voice and Indigenous perspective in the research story. Terms such as Circle, Elder, Teachings are a few examples.

Text orientation. At times in this thesis, text will appear in an unconventional orientation to instigate the reader's sensitivity and awareness of alternative perspectives and realities. The vertical orientation of the text is meant to disrupt the reader's linear thinking as a means of re-orientation towards an Indigenous point of view. Re-orientation often requires a direct effort to participate in '360 degree seeing' (Dumont, 1976) and this text style is repeated throughout this dissertation.

Anishinaabemowin. In this thesis, Indigenous language (*Anishinaabemowin/Odawa dialect*) concepts and terms are italicized. The meaning of each term is explained within the specific context of use and footnotes are utilized to enhance the reader's comprehension. The use of *Anishinaabemowin* in this thesis departs from the Western tradition of linguistics. My application of terms and concepts as an Indigenous language-learner is presented to illustrate my perspective from within an Indigenous research paradigm. An *Anishinaabemowin* glossary is not found in this thesis since the meaning of key lexical items is dependent on the specific discourse context. Lengthy discussions with my *Anishinaabemowin* teacher, Stanley Peltier, led to our mutual understanding of the specific research contexts for the selection of related terminology.

The Powwow Metaphor

I have engaged as a traditional dancer at Powwows in the First Nation and urban Aboriginal community contexts since 1980 and this experience is similar on many levels to my engagement with this research project. My life as an *Anishinaabe-kwe* and my experience within a research process as an Indigenous scholar present a challenging duality of realities for me. It is my intention to illustrate and share thinking about this through metaphor. The Powwow metaphor serves thinking and then talking about one kind of reality (cultural world view) in terms of another (academic research process). Over the course of this dissertation, the Powwow metaphor will be re-visited to illustrate living in two worlds and to deepen the reader's appreciation that Indigenous world views and cultural traditions are lived.

The powwow - A community celebration of life. Each year, communities host Powwows and send out an open invitation for visitors and relatives from other communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to join in the celebration of life. Hosting a powwow is a big commitment and the preparation and execution of a powwow and dance can be compared to my engagement in this research project and the celebration of my learning and the positive outcomes of the study. My family has supported ceremony and Powwow in our territory for generations and I offer information from Powwow Teachings and experiences for the reader's appreciation and learning.

The metaphor of Powwow is presented here to shed light on my role as a participant in the Women's Traditional dance exhibition at a Powwow and to share connections about how I conceptualize my role from an Indigenous research paradigm.

Women's traditional dance exhibition. A special time happens at the Powwow when the women traditional dancers enter the dance circle and everyone who is not dancing rises in respect

of the women dancers who symbolically represent mothers and our relationship with our own mother. The traditional dancers maintain a state of remembrance for their mothers and the warriors in their heart as they dance in one place or move slowly with eyes focussed on *Aki*. The movement of the dance represents maintaining connection with *Shkagamik-kwe* in remembrance of the time when women stayed back with the children while the men left the village to harvest or protect their home. A traditional woman dancing in this way reflects the honouring of her role within the family, community, and nation. She is steadfast in honouring her responsibilities and envisions positive outcomes for the next seven generations. Engaging in the dance honours life and kin-ship with the other women dancers in particular.

This study addresses the following research questions: What is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and what principles and concepts of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge are made visible in a public school classroom? How is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge socially enacted in the classroom? How does the teacher's perception of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge transform their pedagogy?

This thesis presents information regarding the research context, literature, research methodology and findings and a discussion. Chapter One will address the historical and social context for this research: social responsibility and inclusivity; the multi-system educational context; justification for the research project; culture-based and place-based education, student identity; the oral tradition and learning; relevance to environmental education; and role of the researcher. Chapter Two will review the research literature to investigate an Indigenous paradigm that supports education, *Anishinaabe* Teachings through story, an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy; Aboriginal languages; educational praxis and critical Indigenous research methodologies. Chapter Three addresses the research methodology: Teaching stories;

teacher conversations and interviews; *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge; sharing Circles; reflective experiences in Place; and data analysis. Chapter Four presents the findings of the research: Sources of data and analysis; thematic analysis and coding; students' displayed thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in response to Teaching stories and reflective experiences in Place; storywork Circle pedagogy topics and making meaning; and classroom teacher data analysis. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the research findings and researcher reflections from multi-system education and societal contexts; dissemination of the data; limitations of the study; and implications for further research.

Chapter One: Historical and Social Context for this Research

The pre-planning stage of a Powwow can be compared to the research processes of surveying the project context and literature. The host community is comprised of a network of families and individuals with specific roles, responsibilities and gifts. Interpersonal communications and relationships support the community decision to host a Powwow celebration. Prior to announcing the intention to host, the status of community resources and supportive systems are reviewed. Resource gathering and mapping of details is an on-going process which aligns with planning for the future through gathering and harvesting activities.

Within my research paradigm I surveyed the literature and identified the work of writers and like-minded scholars and researchers. The extensive search proved fruitful as I synthesized the material to support the development of a research approach and methodology that would answer my research questions.

Dimension of Social Responsibility

The profile of Aboriginal peoples within popular culture in Canada has grown recently and education policies in Ontario support the inclusion of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives in the contexts of historical and contemporary societies in every classroom. This situation is long overdue and the null curriculum is finished. Indigenous scholars and researchers emerged from the unfolding story of Indigenous education in Canada.

This research project exemplifies a self-determining Aboriginal educational process and a local model for sharing responsibility and relationship in the public schools. The underlying impetus is attainment of an inclusive society and mutual benefits for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. The project of creating conceptual space in the schools for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is timely given that "[t]he global community is becoming

increasingly aware of the limitations of modernity and technological knowledge, [and] of the possibilities and potential of Indigenous knowledge..." (Battiste, 2010, p. 16). Indigenous scholars acknowledge the power of attitudes, beliefs and values within society to transform educational space and identify Indigenous thought and ways of being that are foundational for dialogic enquiry regarding contemporary issues and equity (Dion & Dion, 2004; Simpson, 2014; Battiste 2010).

This study provides opportunity to consider the students' social relationships and culture of the classroom nested in experiences and relationships of the school, home, friends and surrounding community. "Knowledge and learning are important components of a democratic society that affords everyone an opportunity and is situated from insight and understanding about issues such as poverty, equality, sovereignty, values, and race" (Begaye, 2008, p. 467). A multi-logical (inclusive) education system presents opportunities for social justice and equity for Aboriginal people "to expand and develop their identity within the framework of a Canadian society which offers them the rewards and responsibilities of participation, the benefits of involvement and the pride of belonging" (Turner, 2006, p. 128).

Context of Inclusivity

Relationship to *Aki* is important for everyone and experiential approaches outside in an urban school yard demonstrate the potentiality of such an approach to learning about self and relationship with *Aki* and each other. The storywork Circle pedagogy is inclusive of participants with diverse cultural and social identities, physical capability, and academic skill.

Multi-System Educational Context

Aboriginal education has a responsibility to uphold our worldview based on recognizing and affirming wholeness and to disseminate the benefits to all humanity.

(Ermine, 1995, p. 110)

This thesis is offered to expand our understanding of the complexity and ecological systems within the educational context that are susceptible to positive transformation.

Bronfenbrenner's (1989; 1995) ecological systems theory is applied to model the education research context to view complex multi-system levels and relational processes. Application of this theory follows the work of Johnston (2008) who demonstrated application of ecological systems theory to the analysis of educational context. The educational environment is comprised of four layers of systems which interact and can affect and be affected by the learner. The element of time comprises a fifth dimension within the model of complex multi-system levels and relational processes. The metaphor of *migizi* (Eagle) is introduced to initiate a process of appreciation for an Indigenous ecological worldview and sensibility. *Migizi* in flight provides a vantage point of seeing the big picture or "seeing with a bird's eye view" to examine the education systems.

This research is situated within an Aboriginal worldview or paradigm which involves consideration of the big picture or seeing all contextual interconnections. The whole is not considered to be the sum of its parts - the whole *is*. This view is described by Indigenous scholar Archibald (2008) in her re-telling of the legend "Coyote's Eyes" shared with her by Tafoya (p. 8). Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996) re-tell "Coyote's Eyes" to stimulate discussion of critical ethnographic research and to illustrate working across difference in education.

Dumont (1976) explains this perception as "a primal way of *seeing*" or "360° vision" that is different from a view of the world "in its tangible form and in a linear fashion... [Ojibwa] regard their own personal life and history as the mysterious complement of ordinary and non-ordinary reality... expressed as *simultaneous realities*" (p. 78).

Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing are complex and understanding the educational context for this research project involves seeing the breadth and depth of issues. I present "the eye of the eagle" analogy to focus on the underneath or ancestral underpinnings of the research context.

Macro System Context

The 'macro system' educational context can be explained with reference to the societal and cultural ideologies and the instructional and philosophical orientation of educational institutions and the Aboriginal community. The 'macro system' educational context is rooted in conflicting societal and cultural ideologies. The realities of the original peoples of Turtle Island¹³ within the context of foreign power, language, and thought have been invisible and certain truths in regards to historical accounts suppressed (Battiste, 1998; Dion, 2009, Simpson, 2014).

Indigenous knowledge systems were threatened and almost extinguished by the establishment of Reserves¹⁴ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the imposed *Indian Act* system of administration first enacted in 1876 with subsequent revisions. Connection to *Aki* and social and ceremonial traditions were severed as Aboriginal people were confined to specific

¹³ Turtle Island is a generally accepted *Anishinaabe* term for North America which is represented specifically within this locale through the *Anishinaabe* oral tradition re-creation story about how a new Earth was formed after the Great Flood (Benton-Banai, 1988)

¹⁴ Reserves are commonly referred to in contemporary times as "First Nations" in Canada and as "Reservations" in the United States (Helin, 2006, p. 18).

tracts of Land (Reserves) and traditional governance structures were negated. Simpson (2004) refers to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report and describes the policies of colonization and the detrimental impacts on Aboriginal peoples' languages, philosophies, and way of living in-relationship with *Aki*. "The state sponsorship of the cultural annihilation agenda outlined in subsequent Indian Acts spanning the late 1800s through the mid-1900s in Canada represented a systematic and conscious effort to destroy Indigenous Knowledge systems and assimilate 'Indians' into mainstream Canadian society" (Simpson, 2004, p. 377).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People 1996¹⁵ illustrates the negative impact of relocation on Aboriginal people. Cultural knowledge intimately connected with a physical homeland developed confidence through relationship with *Aki* that is "as close as your breath" (p. 468), linking a people with its past and its future. Identity was symbolized by places of significance, such as the gravesites of ancestors and locations for ceremonial activities, as well as geographical features such as mountains and lakes. These places [were] of cultural significance...relocation...[created] stress brought about by a major reduction in cultural inventory due to a...loss of behavioural patterns, economic practices, institutions, and symbols...The profound cultural loss triggered by relocation leads to stress and despair (p. 468).

Conquest and colonization has led to the mass subjugation of Aboriginal people in Canada through the force of cognitive imperialism (Smith, 1999; Colorado & Collins, 1987). Battiste (1998) applied the term "cognitive imperialism" to describe the process by which Western-European thought and language is constructed as superior and Indigenous knowledge and language as disposable.

¹⁵ RCAP Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 11.

Battiste (2010) expresses the urgent need for transformation in education to create respect for Aboriginal cultures and languages.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been relegated to systemic poverty. They are the most economically disadvantaged Canadians by all standard measures...reports...consistently attest to the dark side of life Aboriginal people have had to endure on reserves. Yet, most still prefer to live in their home lands, in a cultural and customary place, and continue to hold high hopes that education can help their children to close the gaps in Canadian demographics (p. 15).

Anishinaabe scholar, Turner (2006) criticizes the colonial intellectual Landscapes that have created and perpetuated a hostile world for Indigenous peoples. "...Most Canadians, including Aboriginal people, have a limited understanding of Aboriginal culture and history as a result of early French and British colonial policy that originated this 'burden of separation' in Canada...The tradition of federal responsibility for Indian¹⁶ matters inhibited the development of a proper relationship between the provinces and the Indian people as citizens" (p. 129).

Significant academic achievement and high school student success gaps between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students are well-documented (Longboat, 2012, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a) and perpetuated by institutional hegemony. Sterzuk (2008) is a non-Aboriginal scholar and researcher who is an ally¹⁷. She explains that a

¹⁶ The term "Indian" is used widely in the United States and the word is not in popular usage in Canada. In Canada "Indian" is used for a person defined in specific legislation (i.e. The Indian Act) as Indian (Helin, 2006, p. 18).

¹⁷ The term ally refers to a non-Aboriginal researcher devoted to the Treaty relationship who develops their bicultural abilities and honours cultural protocols, engaging in collaborative knowledge production striving to conduct respectful and useful research (Bishop, 1996; FitzMaurice, 2010; Haig-Brown, 2001).

significant part of the problem is that schools reflect the culture and beliefs of mainstream society and Aboriginal children are viewed with inequity.

History is being re-defined as Aboriginal people tell their stories. The role of critically aware educators, Aboriginal Elders, and knowledgeable Aboriginal community members to bring forward subjugated knowledge into the schools is being raised in education. Elder Reg Crowshoe (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015a) stated that, "Indigenous peoples' world views, oral history traditions, and practices have much to teach us about how to establish respectful relationships among peoples and with *Aki* and all living things (p. 17). Learning how to live together in a good way happens through sharing stories...reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the earth" (p. 18).

The injustice of Residential Schools. Reports from the Canadian government provide testimony that Indian Residential Schools (1879 - 1996) have been the primary intergenerational weapon to eradicate Indigenous knowledge as language, family and community connections were lost over six consecutive generations (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996¹⁸; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012, 2015a, 2015b). *Anishinaabe* scholar Simpson (2004) further laments the depth of harm. "The residential school system alone is responsible for the loss of Native languages in subsequent generations of Indigenous Peoples, in addition to raising an entire generation with limited access to the pedagogies of Indigenous Knowledge" (p. 377).

Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010) discuss the negative impacts of residential schools on Aboriginal people's oral tradition of re-telling stories connected to place and being-in-relation.

¹⁸ RCAP Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 10.

The connections between language, location and environment and the relationship that people have with each other is inextricably linked to how human relationships with place are understood and experienced. The residential school legacy has severed family and community relationships, almost eradicated Indigenous languages, and imposed foreign learning methodologies that silence spiritual understandings about sustainable relationships with the Earth and each other. ..The disconnectedness that the machinery of industrialization has created...continues to grow" (p. 21).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada led a holistic and comprehensive response to the abuse and negative effects for First Nations children that resulted from the Indian residential school legacy. The Commission was officially established on June 2, 2008, and was completed in June 2015. The final report (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015a) represents the findings from a nation-wide forum for survivors. *The Calls To Action* synopsis report presents the ninety-four recommendations for action towards reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015b). Aboriginal language recommendations can support educational transformation:

We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

- i. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them (p. 2).

The Educational reconciliation calls to action include (among a number of education recommendations):

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
 - iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
- iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect (p. 14).

This dissertation research study is timely in view of the national climate and it supports educational and Aboriginal language preservation initiatives towards reconciliation.

Canadian social and academic spheres have been positively impacted by the work of critical Indigenous scholars, educators and political leaders cognizant of the historical colonialist dialogue concerning Aboriginal education who have made a call for educational transformation. The recently established critical and Indigenous research methodologies and critical Indigenous philosophy theory within the academy (Battiste, 2008; Gehl, 2012; Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996; Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Kurtz, 2013; Turner, 2006) have been born from a thirty year process of de-colonization research by Indigenous scholars and allies (Battiste, 1998; Medicine, 2001; Pelletier & Poole, 1972; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

Examining this macro structure level deeply reveals that within the transformative process that is underway in education, not all Indigenous people are unified in their thinking. Indigenous people are awakening and Indigenous scholars are at varying degrees of self-awareness of their own decolonization process. During a visit with Elder Bell my goal of

entering the Academy with intention of gaining an academic voice and paving the way for future generations was discussed. The Elder shared his view that the collective force for creating Indigenous space is just beginning in that "there are Anishinaabe scholars who write about Indigenous knowledge and there are those who write about it and understand the medicine of it¹⁹". This speaks to the nature of Indigenous knowledge that not only involves the individual, but is enacted through and within the academic community.

Cree philosopher Ermine (1995) refers to "inward knowing" where visions and dreams are a creative process providing subjective and authentic insights to truth. The holistic epistemological system that includes culture and language supports a shared and collective representation of this knowledge. Application of this Indigenous knowledge system within the context of the academy illustrates that although the number of critically aware Indigenous scholars is growing, the impact on philosophy and educational theory is in its infancy since the Indigenous academic community is at the emergent stage of development. Conferences, research, Indigenous Studies and Education journals are emerging from the Indigenous community and are promoting engagement in the process of coming to consensus about the language and grammatology to establish and express an Indigenous knowledge epistemology within the context of academic institutions are timely so that new scholars (Indigenous and allies) have a clearer line of sight to recognize where support lies.

Without Indigenous languages in the institutions of learning, Indigenous scholars are further disconnected from unified thinking and culturally-based ways of being and doing. Socio-interactive patterns vary according to culture and learning environments that alignment with

¹⁹ Elder Leland Bell in a personal communication about the transformative process underway regarding Indigenous thought in the Academy (January 2015).

Indigenous ways of learning and being together are crucial for the success of Indigenous scholars within the academy. Linguistic anthropologist, Spielmann (1998) studied the “language-in-use” discourse patterns and features of *Anishinaabe* people to gain insight regarding how the people think and do things through talk. The author emphasized the role of Aboriginal language in accessing the knowledge and wisdom of the Elders, prevention of assimilation, and preservation of tradition-specific ways of relating to others. "The philosophy, world view, spirituality, and culture-specific ways of thinking and doing things of a people are built right into the very structure of their language" (p. 239).

Today, Aboriginal people are in the process of critical awakening and cultural resurgence. The profile of Aboriginal peoples within popular culture in Canada has improved and Aboriginal people are more present in mass media. In an interview, *Anishinaabe* (Onigaming First Nation) scholar and journalist, Kinew (2014) described the context where Aboriginal issues are discussed by Canadians today. "Research has shown that the majority of non-Native people get their information about the Indigenous community from the media...and what you've seen over the past decade...has been like a slow march into the collective consciousness".

Responses from global leadership (United Nations, 2008), national government (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012, 2015a, 2015b; Prime Minister Harper's Statement of Apology, 2008) and provincial educational policies (*Ontario Ministry of Education First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework*, 2007; *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, 2009) illustrate a climate of change as awareness of Western-European societal forces such as Western imperialism and patriarchy, Eurocentric, cultural hegemony, increases and decolonization processes advance in Canadian society and

schools. An Indigenous research framework is applicable to this case study research context which is situated within school Aboriginal education initiatives. At the macro-level, the Ontario Ministry of Education (*First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework*, 2007) and Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (*Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework*, 2011) policies indicate vision, policy statements, framework principles, implementation goals and strategies and implementation measures for increasing the knowledge and appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditions, cultures, and perspectives for all students. At the micro-level, school board data suggests that implementation is a complicated process and there is a dearth of research about initiatives demonstrating the effect of bringing *Anishinaabe* pedagogical approaches and new knowledge to students and teachers. The presence of an Indigenous context in the public schools and the situation of this case study within a northern urban public school setting informs understanding of the educational transformation underway regarding Aboriginal education and is also relevant to informing educational approaches in First Nation schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015a) *Final Report* documented the truths and impacts of the Residential School era in Canadian history. The report describes in detail "...the damaged relationships of violence, oppression, and exclusion" (p. 329) and calls for reconciliation where traditional beliefs and "...core values...create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth" (p. 329). The Commission reported that

Reconciliation calls for personal action. People need to get to know each other. They need to learn how to speak to, and about, each other respectfully...The way we educate our children and ourselves must change" (p. 364).

The global concern for the environment and increasing awareness of Aboriginal cultural values and respect for *Aki* command an authentic role for Aboriginal people and validation of Indigenous ecological perspectives in response to environmental issues. Ermine (1995) sees opportunity for Aboriginal ideology such as wholism and environmental ethics to make a difference. "Aboriginal education has a responsibility to uphold our worldview based on recognizing and affirming wholeness and to disseminate the benefits to all humanity" (p. 110).

Meso System Context

American Indians have struggled to adapt to an educational process that is not their own...a new Circle of education must begin...Indian people must open avenues of communication and establish a reflective dialogue toward evolving a contemporary theory for Indian education that originates from them and their collective experience.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 27)

The meso system can be described in terms of the relationship that the education system in Canada has with Indigenous knowledge and languages. Waves of movement towards the establishment of Aboriginal education within the public school and post secondary institutions are leading educators to connect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal paradigms within schooling.

The inclusion of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives in the contexts of historical and contemporary societies is now mandated across the curricula for all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). With regards to enhancing student success, identity-building, and family and community engagement, the *Policy Framework* sets out to:

- increase the capacity of the education system to respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students;
- provide quality programs, services, and resources to help create learning

opportunities for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students that support improved academic achievement and identity building;

- provide a curriculum that facilitates learning about contemporary and traditional First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives among all students, and that also contributes to the education of school board staff, teachers, and elected trustees (p. 7)
- integrate content that reflects First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives throughout the Ontario curriculum and related resources (p. 18)
- foster school-community projects with appropriate cultural components (p. 19)
- facilitate intercultural dialogue throughout school communities (p. 19).

The null curriculum. This research study contributes to increased awareness of Aboriginal consciousness and valuing of Indigenous philosophy and pedagogy in the educational system. Since Indigenous knowledge, languages, and ecological philosophical values have largely been historically absent from public education in Canada this research demonstrates a case study that is responsive to Aboriginal education movement. Battiste (2010) aptly highlights a change in the tide of Aboriginal education.

The recognition and intellectual activation of Indigenous knowledge today is an act of remediation, recognition of rights of Indigenous peoples, and a renaissance among Indigenous scholars, social activists, and allies [to] reveal the utility, wealth, and richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences to animate educational achievement. Aboriginal languages are the most significant factor in the restoration, regeneration, and survival of Indigenous knowledge (p. 17).

Provincial Policy. A view of the meso system or implementation level of provincial school-based policy shows that some school boards are creating space for Aboriginal students to

gather and engage in culturally relevant activities with community resource people and Aboriginal staff. The change in the schools is gradual and Aboriginal perspectives are complex. Because the education system's intent and focus is a scientific and linear perspective, this makes invisible a whole way of *seeing*. The social and economic context presents many challenges to schools struggling to create positive change toward an inclusive school culture with incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives curriculum and efforts proven by increased academic success. Battiste (2010) laments that in Canada,

Most schools...focus attention on fragmented cultural practices that make Aboriginal peoples visible only in their artistry, performance, and archival and museum work, and as such perpetuate notions of Indigenous peoples as historical and exotic, not contemporary and global with a knowledge system that has value for all (p. 16).

Practical implementation in the schools includes texts by Aboriginal authors, historians, and artists and curricular documents that encourage classroom discussion and exploration of historical and contemporary issues such as Treaties and Residential Schools. Aboriginal guest speakers and Elder visits support meaningful and authentic learning. Some evidence of meaningful collaboration with the Aboriginal community is evident (Haig-Brown Research & Consulting, 2010; Johnston Research Inc., 2011).

Narrative process within a classroom and school can stimulate educators to critically examine their own biases and to appreciate the potency of story for re-framing relationships within the context of an educational institution. Swanborn (2010) is a proponent of narrative inquiry in research as it offers new understandings for teachers and educational leaders that can add to the educational reform/transformation movement. The attitude of educators depends on

the consequences of their behaviour and teaching behaviour and cultural values will change as institutional expectations change (p. 82).

The persistence of the academic achievement gap has also been identified in Aboriginal student-specific achievement data related to implementation of the *Policy Framework*. Educational outcomes are a product of numerous effects at the micro and macro levels of analysis. Multilevel models are an appropriate response to this methodological issue by separating out the various levels of influence, for example, school and community factors as well as individual student effects. Evaluation of Aboriginal student success approaches related to implementation of the *Framework* in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a) is moving towards addressing this complexity with less reliance on quantitative data from provincial academic achievement tests (Johnston Research Inc., 2011). The process of educational transformation takes time and Aboriginal student success gap persists concomitant to mitigating factors of colonization, marginalization and poverty among Aboriginal peoples (Kanu, 2011; Moazammi, 2011).

Micro System Context

Ironically...in these contemporary times, the revitalization of Aboriginal cultural philosophy--its knowledge base and inherent skills--will depend once more on the practice of education. If Aboriginal people are to reclaim their traditional knowledge base and rebuild their communities and nations, then they must concern themselves once more with the practice of education both publicly within their communities and privately within their homes. Because education is an integral part of an overall process of socialization, much of what one learns in school will be transferred into the home and will affect a family's way of life and its belief system. The reverse is also true because whatever happens in the family and within the community affects the learner's perception of life and ultimately his/her performance in school.

(Hill, 1999, p. 9)

Indigenous (Lenape, Ontario) scholar and researcher, Dion (2013a, b) illustrates the transformation underway in the schools and shares teacher candidate training approaches to include cultural sensitivity and awareness towards cultural competency with respectful understanding of Aboriginal experiences, histories, languages and cultures. This area of research and implementation of Aboriginal content curricula is discussed in the micro system context as it sheds light on the people or teachers involved within the classrooms and provides an opportunity to examine the interpersonal relationships or lack thereof.

An examination of the micro system in schools shows that the Indigenous paradigm inclusive of *Anishinaabemowin* and *Anishinaabe* pedagogy within a shared learning process for students and teachers is timely in response to the tide of Aboriginal education. This dissertation research is situated on the ground level of the school. My research process embodies relationship-building and learning through *Anishinaabemowin* and Teaching stories that imbue concepts of Indigenous ecology for all. Each individual engages in making meaningful connections within a Circle learning process of knowledge generation and our understanding of student and teacher responses stimulates the process of educator action and reflection which is the source of transformation.

Non-Aboriginal literacy and language education scholar, Britsch (1994) describes research regarding the role of Indigenous community to language and culture revitalization in a Tachi Yokuts Tribe in California. In the preschool program, Elders "embodied the presence of the traditional culture in the school through the acting out of their roles as "knowers," and through the ways in which they...demonstrate life and language to the children" (p. 204).

[L]anguage is not something that can be *taught*: language is something that is "picked up" from the context of lived experience. Thus "knowing" a language means understanding it because one has understood the experience from which it came. When the home experience of the language is missing, people find it difficult to believe that the school can provide anything comparable - and, in fact, it cannot" (p. 203).

Aboriginal people in Canada cannot expect non-Aboriginal educators to teach culture and language. This enormous amount and challenge of work lies within the responsibility of knowledgeable Aboriginal community members in collaboration with the schools.

Dion (2013b) discusses the current situation where teachers struggle with their personal resistance to the transformational process and describes this as "the perfect stranger" phenomenon. She urges teachers to move forward beyond this form of racism.

Aspects of the 'microsystem' (teacher and student) response to infusion of Aboriginal perspectives through a curricula at a local school board are introduced in this dissertation research project. A look at the 'micro level' of classroom and school culture reflects the historical lack of relationship evidenced by social and political distance between Aboriginal peoples and educators. This phenomena of 'unconstructive silence' (Laprise, 2014) sheds light on the invisible barrier between educators and the Aboriginal students/community. Mi'kmaq education scholar and researcher, Battiste (2010) describes the negative impact of something that is subtly present. "In the educational environment... Aboriginal people's experiences are relayed in spoken and unspoken messages, complete with statistics telling them that it is not okay to be who they are" (p. 16).

The complexity of Aboriginal education in the mainstream and integration of Indigenous Knowledge in particular rests on ideological differences. "Indigenous paradigms of relationship

are less known to Western scholars than their own Western theories and ideologies" (Davis, 2010, p. 3) and as the institution of government-run education responds to social movements for educational transformation and calls for Aboriginal self-determination, educators are embedded in coercive conditions in the schools. It is only through partnerships and collaborative work that the mutual benefits of working together can be realized. Very different concepts of relationship within power configurations can be minimized as the vision for coming together around the specific agenda of a fair and inclusive education for all children in the schools forms the basis of respectful alliances. There is no room for the long legacy of colonization to rear its ugly head of paternalism and distrust. This research project is an effort to uncover and analyse the micro- and macro-dynamics of relationships in the school.

An additional fundamental problematic is that Indigenous world views cannot be directly translated into a dominant culture and language. Reinsborough and Barndt (2010) engaged in a popular education project in Latin America. The authors pinpoint "...a dominant cultural assumption that world views can be translated" (p. 169) as erroneous. They advocate for an exploration of practices and people that challenge conventional institutions to include more participatory means of knowledge production and voicing multiple languages in research. "[A] diversity of frameworks (ways of viewing the work) and cosmovisions (ways of viewing the world)" (p. 165) are required to reassess common practices in education research.

This research report responds to the need for an *Anishinaabe* framework and way of expressing educational processes in the dominant language that is at the core of the academic context. I emphasize key aspects of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing and represent the stories that have emerged from the research data with presentation of *Anishinaabemowin*. Communicating the research data and findings and sharing connections to the larger area of

Aboriginal education and related fields means traversing the invisible space that separates academia from an Indigenous paradigm. A direct translation to the academy is not possible in order to honour Anishinaabewin and I acknowledge Indigenous colleagues who work in solidarity and experience this challenge. This research report aims to poke holes in the perceived comfort zone of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to advance development of authentic inter-relationships and to support allies' work within Aboriginal education.

One of the challenges for classroom teachers is a lack of cultural knowledge and experience that is required to infuse Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum. Collaboration and authentic participation with Aboriginal Elders and knowledgeable community members is a beneficial and necessary step, however many teachers are unaware of networking options and in instances where teachers are engaging, their relationships are emergent.

Educators who find themselves in a role as ally to Indigenous people are in relationship across difference and in the public school system, the practice of integrating Aboriginal education is new. My opportune situation and role as an Indigenous educator within the context of the provincial Aboriginal education system is remarkable and I look to the possibility of alignment with teachers who voluntarily engage in giving up hierarchical positioning and advantage as allies. FitzMaurice (2010) describes his experience of being a white professor within an Indigenous post-secondary program and shares about how "...to be an ally is to align oneself and to work cooperatively and collaboratively with a group other than one's own" (p. 352). The scholar and ally illustrates how "[w]ithin a colonial, Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal context, alliances are ideally constructed as partnerships with an equal sharing of decision-making power and functioning within a consensus-based, Aboriginal cultural framework... [and]

full consideration of the intersecting manifestations of power, race, and colonization...[to become] an ally within a colonial context is therefore no easy task" (p. 353).

I have experienced the implementation of the 'Aboriginal Perspectives' framework in the schools within the jurisdiction of the school board where I have been employed for seven years. The local school board framework utilizes a read-aloud literacy approach with links to the revised Social Studies curriculum in the elementary classrooms. Teacher training and resources such as First Nation, Métis and Inuit-content books and media, classroom activities, and websites and videos for teacher learning about historical and social issues have been provided. Implementation in schools and in classrooms varies and this seems to be due to classroom teacher attitudes and personal perception of readiness. The lack of relationship with Aboriginal people perpetuates a comfort zone that denies them the benefits of learning in and through relationship to value Aboriginal peoples' contributions to Canada and honour our Treaty relationship. Personal acknowledgement that "we are all Treaty people" is a powerful first step towards building mutual respect and understanding and moving forward together to transform education and societal systems for equity and inclusiveness.

The educational system has powerful potential for generational change and this can be supported through authentic demonstrations of respect for the aspirations of local Indigenous communities, their knowledge, ways of coming to know, values, and beliefs and bearing on Indigenous cultures as thoughtful and purposeful. This case study presents an opportunity for the reader to see *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge enacted in a classroom through the storytelling oral tradition and pedagogy and to appreciate the transformative potential in the education system. When an *Anishinaabe* lens is enacted in the school community and urban community, conceptual space is created for Aboriginal student ways of knowing and being and

the development of relationships. Creating conceptual space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and pedagogy in the classroom provides stimulating approaches, engages innovation, and supports socially-responsive educational transformation. This case study demonstrates Indigenous pedagogy in a classroom and teacher and student participation creates new learning and relationships. This finding is illustrated in Chapter Four as the results are presented. A number of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge topics emerge in student narratives, drawings and writing. Student and teacher understanding and experiencing relationship with *Aki* and classroom community is demonstrated.

The review of Aboriginal education research in this chapter shows that much of the literature describes program resources and activities and community collaboration initiatives. Data from this research project specific to the impact of Aboriginal education programming within the social context of the classroom support implementation in the schools by illustrating student thinking in terms of inter-relationships and inter-connections with *Aki* and each other. The love of nature is demonstrated by the students in addition to kindness, respect and inclusivity toward *Aki* and each other. A discussion of the findings as these relate to educational transformation follow in Chapter 5.

The Context of What is 'Underneath'

The interrelationship of water, thought (wind), and breath personifies the elemental relationship emanating from "that place that the Indians talk about," that place of the Center where all things are created...this metaphor...illustrate	s the special quality and power that spirit has to orient us through the breath of its manifestations in language, song, prayer, and thought.
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(From Acoma Pueblo poet, Ortiz in Cajete, 1994, p. 43)

Further understanding is supported by looking underneath and so I introduce *Migizi's* gift. He flies so high above the earth and sky levels that transformation into Thunderbird happens. In this state, the bird's eye view becomes more than three dimensional, and seeing into the realm of the ancestors - those who have passed this way before is realized. This Indigenous paradigm metaphor describes the chronosystem in systems theory. This level encompasses the temporal aspect of change over time.

Being-in-relationship. Indigenous scholar and researcher, Blackstock (2003) reviews the Indigenous philosophical world view that has guided First Nations' values, beliefs and approaches to community and education.

Before the great pyramids of Egypt, the Parthenon in Greece, or the Great Wall in China, First Nations people lived in organized sustainable communities that celebrated strong cultures handed down by the voices of the Elders through the millennia. No society was ever without its challenges and each community maintained culturally based systems for supporting children and families...First Nations people believed that the totality of relationships between individual elements governed the well-being of the system more than the specific nature of individual elements, and that no one element existed in the absence of its relationship with another" (p. 333).

The author explains that children were viewed as part of an interdependent web and were full participants in society. Children's value for community sustainability meant that all community members had responsibility to nurture, guide, and teach them. The wholistic philosophy held value in maintaining balance of the spiritual, physical, emotional and cognitive aspects of the person and extension of this balance to the external systems of the environment. Through the process of oral history, the experience and observations from generation to generation reflected

knowledge of how to sustain the ever changing ecosystem. Adherence to specific indicators of ecological balance and a focus on sustaining balance in relationships are still reflected in today's traditions.

Contemporary Aboriginal philosophical beliefs and values are informed from the past through the oral tradition. Aboriginal systems of thought have been incorporated into our daily life as ways of our ancestors from times prior to contact, ingrained through stories, rituals, and humour and enacted in everyday experiences. Schooling consisted of lived experience within the relational social group and what was considered to be knowledge was what could be fully assimilated into daily experience.

Aboriginal culture has ancestral roots and is continually changing within the context of daily life and our environment. A well-known Alberta Cree Elder, Eddie Bellrose once told me, "Culture is a way to live *today*"²⁰. Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996) explore the state of culture and the impact of people, interactions, and researcher's re-presentations of Aboriginal culture. "Every living culture is in the process of transformation: the form of that transformation varies according to time, space, and the people involved with it... Cultures are also transformed in and by the representations created about them" (p. 274).

Reconstructing and revitalizing a cultural belief system reflects commonalities among diverse Aboriginal groups such as self-in-relation, interconnectedness, balance, immanence²¹, and learning through doing. There is a shared belief system among tribal groups (Little Bear

²⁰ Personal communication with Elder Eddie Bellrose at the offices of Four Skies Consulting, Edmonton, Alberta, 1980

²¹ Immanence is referred to as "a belief in, or knowledge of unseen powers or non-material energy...[t]hese mysterious powers are found in all Earth's creatures: rocks and crystals, birds and feathers, trees and wood, plants, animals, and humans and are visible especially in dreams, visions, and through ceremony" (Graveline, 1998, p. 52).

2000, Cajete, 1994). Tewa (Santa Clara Pueblo) scholar and educator, Cajete (1994) explains that Indigenous knowledge is diverse and Indian education can be discussed in terms of ...elemental understandings held in common by all. These strands allow development of a foundation for Indian education...contemporary philosophy ...generally...accepted by all tribes...shared metaphors and concepts that found unique expressions in different regions and tribes...were derived from a similar understanding and orientation to life (p. 42).

For example, Cajete describes the significance of breath as a representation of the spirit in all living things and the idea that language is an expression of the spirit with the power to move people and to express human thought and feeling. "It is also the breath, along with water and thought, that connects all living things in direct relationship" (p. 42). Humans are dependent on everything in creation and this deep sense of humility extends through the conceptualization of earth as our "Mother". Cajete (1994) expresses this sentiment with, "We are of this land and the land is us" (p. 91). "The perception of the Earth as having a living soul and that Indian people have responsibilities to the land and all living things that are similar to those they have to each other is foundational" (Cajete, 1994, p. 83).

Pitawanakwat (2013) illustrates a narrative expressed in 1996 by Elder and writer Lee Maracle. This echoes the relationship that an individual experiences with respect and humility within the Circle of life.

An elder once explained to me that the most essential aspect of being Anishinaabe is respect. He then related a familiar Anishinaabe creation story that explains how humans were the last beings to join Creation and thus are the weakest and most dependent upon other beings for our sustenance. Many other Indigenous peoples share this fundamental

value of respect for all other beings. This notion of respect is connected to humility and eternal gratitude for the gift of life each of us takes everyday - even when that gift comes at the cost of another's life, whether animal or plant, to sustain us. Seeing ourselves as part of a complex matrix of life is integral to Anishinaabe philosophy, and Anishinaabe stories will remain its original form of expression (p. 374).

*Akikendaasowin*²² is *Anishinaabemowin* and refers to a wholistic process of coming to know from Creation over the course of our life path. *Nibwakaawin*²³ is embodied in the understanding of and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are dependent on each other. Each person has special gifts and shares in the workings of everything and in relationship with each other. *Weh*²⁴ expresses connection to family, community, society, *Aki*, and the astral level. A framework for visualizing the interconnections can be represented in a spiral (White, 1996) or in concentric circles (Hodgson cited in Graveline, 1998, p. 58) that extend into the universe and constitute ecological consciousness of our kinship, identity and relations.

Archibald (1997) explains that the image of a circle represents a never-ending process. The never ending circle also forms concentric circles to show the synergistic influence and responsibility to the generations of Ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come. The animal/human kingdoms, the elements of Nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles...Maintaining mutual balance and harmony in all aspects of Creation is supported by ways of acquiring

²² Odawa Elder S. T. Peltier (personal communication May 2013)

²³ Odawa Elder S. T. Peltier ibid.

²⁴ Odawa Elder S. T. Peltier ibid.

knowledge and codes of behaviour through the oral tradition, of which storytelling is a key component (p. 14).

Hart (1995) illustrates a strong focus on people and entities coming together to help and support one another in their relationship within the community. He refers to Weaver (1997) who coined the term "communitism" to describe the "sense of community tied together by familial relations and the families' commitment to it" (Hart, 2007, p. 32). A means of self-expression within Indigenous society takes into consideration the needs of the community rather than an individual acting on self-interest.

Graveline (1998), an Indigenous social work scholar and researcher eloquently expresses that, "All of nature is in us, all of us is in nature...We are like one big family with "all our relations". Nothing we do, we do by ourselves; together we form a circle. That which the trees exhale, I inhale" (p. 56). Balance is maintained through a fundamental law of nature known as reciprocity where no more is taken than what will be returned. Cajete (1994) expressed that [s]eeking, making, sharing, and celebrating honours the perception of living in a sea of relationships with all living and non-living entities of Nature. Ecological relationship is exemplified in the taking of life to have life...Offering tobacco after taking the life of an animal...was a reflection of this understanding, this environmentally educated sense of being" (p. 89).

The world view that others are aspects of our self means acting in the best interest of others and the world in general to balance and harmonize relationships between self and other. Self-in-relation is a fundamental construct of Aboriginal identity, communal responsibility, and a strong sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of others (Graveline, 1998; Cajete, 1994).

Interconnectivity with our ancestors and those to come for the next seven generations epitomizes intergenerational responsibility (Absolon, 2011, p. 31).

'Youth For Lakes Walkers' *Anishinaabe* spokesperson, Brock Lewis (Bay Mills Reservation, Michigan) shared his experience of walking on *Aki* with film-maker Obomsawin (2014).

Walking is medicine. You get to feel the Land. That's how our ancestors are speaking through us - it's through the Land. I feel myself now very close to my ancestors...As we keep on walking through the Land our ancestors will rise through us and we will be together once again" (62:30 - 64:05).

Indigenous educational process.

Indigenous scholars recognize that Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing are sophisticated yet marginalized in Canadian society. Dine (Navajo) scholar Begaye (2008) states that the early colonists did not appreciate that Aboriginal people had a democratic society where strong spiritual, cultural, and social values were practiced and learned over the course of the lifespan. The potential of the cultural education system was excluded by the colonists and leaders today seek to control and change groups in an undemocratic fashion (p. 467).

Sto:lo (upper Fraser Valley in British Columbia) scholar and researcher, Archibald (1995, p. 289), dispels the myth that Western education is more advanced than Indigenous ways of knowing. The author illustrates the lifelong learning process and the depth and breadth of the educational experience. A wholistic approach to education reflected goals based on "...sharing, cooperation, and respect for the environment, oneself and others. The curriculum content included training in cultural, historical, environmental, and physical [body] knowledge. Community members and the environment became teaching

resources. Individual involvement in and responsibility for education created a lifelong learning process (Archibald, 1995, p. 292).

Archibald explains that the Indigenous educational process has evolved and changed over time and is relevant today. "The educational process was not static; it allowed for adaptation to environmental change and outside cultural influences" (p. 292).

This research project demonstrates the complexity in Indigenous philosophical ways of conceptualization. The case study explores the creativity and higher level thinking that an Indigenous pedagogy stimulates for students and classroom teacher.

The importance of community. The importance of community within the Aboriginal context and a democratic way of living by maintaining cooperation and harmony are fundamental ways of being. A broad view of the family encompasses relatives in extended families and clans. Cherokee author, Awaikta (1993) illustrates that unity in diversity is centered in the law of respect. A unified way of thinking with the mind/heart/soul - and head (as important only in combination with the other aspects of self) and a quietness within to maintain inner balance epitomizes respect and listening. The concept of non-interference maintains harmony within the family and community and the author described this as "giving people room to grow" (p. 289). Children are considered whole and complete and their life and learning is not controlled or manipulated by the adult. The context of harvesting and food preparation is used to illustrate that nature teaches democracy. An exploration of the historical roles of women, children, and men and the sharing of work and responsibilities meant that no particular job or person was more important than another.

Mi'kmaq educator and researcher, Baskin (2011) describes societal focus on the community. "[With] emphasis on the collective rather than the individual...[t]he well-being of the community takes precedence...Collectivism is central to Indigenous world views" (p. 120).

Begaye (2008) discusses the relevance of historical Indigenous education and social structures in today's educational institutions. Learning from the past as well as learning from the early Indigenous groups will produce better informed and multi-logical citizens. "Preparing communities to accept differing points of view would enhance the moral obligation of the dominant society to truly practice legitimacy democracy" (p. 469). This has the potential to transform educational and societal structures.

Justification for the Research Project

Cultural safety. Cultural safety and a culturally-responsive classroom are contemporary themes in Aboriginal Education. These concepts have only recently emerged and in my early work as a speech language pathologist providing services to Aboriginal people, I intuitively knew that the epistemology of special education approaches was inappropriate to the context of Aboriginal children and families and speech and language pathology clinical work was marginalizing Aboriginal children in the schools. Seeing through a lens that looks for, finds, and changes a deficit in an individual's communication (speech or language) meant enacting a foreign epistemology that did not align with *Anishinaabe* cultural values and world views. In conversations with my first clinical supervisor, I began the process of unlearning some of my specialized academic training. *During my four-year undergraduate training in speech language pathology at University of Alberta, I was prepared with an epistemology of looking for and finding deficits in the communication of clients and implementing interventions to teach new ways of pronunciation, expressing language (verbal and written), and involving educators and*

the family to support the change. During my first job as a clinician in Sudbury, my supervisor encouraged me to further develop "clinical expertise" and apply and interpret standard tests in the initial step of assessing the client. Guiding me to see the big picture, he advised, "If anyone is frustrated by the child's communication, then there is a problem". Most teachers of Aboriginal children in the schools were frustrated by the student's interpersonal and academic language difference which they perceived as a deficit. No wonder the speech and language caseload was filled with Aboriginal students.

This research project is a response to the needs of Aboriginal students for an educational experience that includes their stories and provides cultural safety²⁵ in the classroom. The creation of space in the school environment for the oral tradition and storyworks Circle pedagogy is timely for a re-centering of Indigenous thought and Indigenous knowledge processes to move forward in education" (Battiste, 1998; Haig-Brown, 2008). Such an educational experience can support an Indigenous philosophy about the important processes of life-long learning and achievement of emotional, mental, spiritual, and mental balance and value in community relationship (Styres et al., 2013; Baskin, 2011; Battiste, 2008). The Indigenous storytelling oral tradition transforms the school learning environment and stimulates educational praxis towards inclusion and appreciation of differing worldviews.

Simpson (2014) is an *Anishinaabe* scholar and researcher who advocates for *Anishinaabewin*²⁶ in education "...to re-establish the context for creating a society...of individuals that can think and live inside the multiplicity of our culture and our intelligence" (p. 13). This

²⁵ Cultural safety (Ball, 2008) is a concept that goes further than cultural sensitivity (being acceptable to difference) to analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and relationships with colonizers.

²⁶ This *Anishinaabemowin* term encompasses all that is meant by the term Nishnaabe intelligence (Simpson 2014, p. 8)

particular knowledge scheme is situated within a philosophy of learning "...both *from* the land and *with* the land...The Land, *Aki*, is both context and process" (Simpson, 2014, p. 7).

Culture-based and place-based education. It is apparent that Aboriginal values and customs have been honoured within the Aboriginal community for thousands of years and they are still valid in contemporary times. Culture and Indigenous knowledge are in a constant state of change. Nicol, Archibald, Kelleher, and Brown, 2006 (as cited in Longboat, 2012) describe culturally-based education as wholistic process for the learner.

According to Indigenous educator and scholar Cajete (1999b), Indigenous cultural perspectives regarding relationship to *Aki* is transformative for education and ecological interrelationship-building. "Honouring physical ecology and social ecology supports "compatible forms of social, economic, philosophical, and spiritual consciousness" (p. 202). The author explains that "bio phobia" has contributed to the dysfunction of modern relationships to the natural world. The concept of biophilia²⁷ is especially relevant today in light of our concern for the earth and sheds light on Indigenous historical traditions, environmental practices, sense of place and educational applications.

The basic framework for indigenous education is an intimate and complex set of inner and outer environmental relationships... Relationship to a place 'that Indian people talk about' forms the backdrop for the development of biophilia... a spiritual place, a place of being and understanding. This place is ever-evolving and transforming through the life and relationship of all its participants (page 193).

Cajete (1994) further emphasizes the importance of Place to learning. The author explains the need for educational re-vitalization for Indigenous people. "Homesickness after

²⁷ biophilia refers to the love for nature and non-human beings (Cajete, 1999b).

being separated from their home territory has taken a toll on Indian people as connection to their land is a symbol of connection to the spirit of life itself" (p. 190). The author explains that American Indians suffer from "ethnostress", a psychological response pattern stemming from a disruption of cultural life and belief systems that are cared about deeply, affecting one's self-image and understanding of one's place in the world. "Re-establishing the meaningful ties to the land that have been lost [by] re-vitalizing ancestral connections with Nature and its inherent meaning is an essential transformational process for Indian people" (p. 85).

Haig-Brown and Dannenmann (2002) discuss their research experience re-membering of the knowledge that is based in living on and with *Aki* and the importance of Place that sustains it. Within the *Anishinaabe* context, words such as "my", "our", "your", "his" or "hers" are not used in the way that the English language expresses possession and ownership, but rather as an expression of the very special relationship with our great Mother, the earth as teacher.

Scholars and researchers involved with educators and students are striving to change the societal relationships with movement towards educational transformation and social justice. Indigenous scholars, Styres et al. (2013) approach this work in urban settings utilizing a pedagogy of Land in teacher education. With a focus on the stories of Place, they draw attention to the layers of stories and relationships and

...imagine an X-ray allowing us to peer down through the layers of the earth to see the footprints of all those who preceded us on this land. Our footprints join those of the first Indigenous person who walked here and all those who followed. Our stories are layered on theirs just as the footprints are layered on one another. All our stories (p. 45).

This builds student appreciation of where they are and queries around "the ways urban landscapes are connected to and constructed over the traditional lands that the original people

have occupied since time immemorial and that they continue to occupy today" (p. 46). In the name of progress, archaeologists provide consultation as to whether or not a site is worth preserving and often in the absence of the Elders, historical and contemporary interconnected relationships between *Aki* and Aboriginal peoples are ignored (Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013, p. 49). Historic sites and place names signal stories arising from *Aki* and "remain inextricably intertwined in our lives in a complex web of colonial relationships" (p. 50). Such an approach in education can provide a segue to Treaty education and support respectful relationships in the schools.

Indigenous (Blood Tribe, Alberta) scholar Little Bear (2009) echoes the importance of place-based education and relationship with *Aki*. The power of remembrance as not only a cognitive process for Aboriginal people, but also a physical and emotional experience of learning. It is important that Aboriginal students have opportunity to know the history or narrative of a place, but also a physical and emotional experience are key to overcoming disassociation or distance from *Aki* that many urban people suffer.

[T]he objects embedded into these places be they stones, rivers, hills, or thunders have a language that can be understood by those connected to those places...[J]ust as a person would suffer from absences from friends, parents, and other relatives, Aboriginal people suffer when absent from the land. Place must be an integral part of any curriculum (p. 21).

Those who have been here before took up the challenge to create change and to mark a path for future generations to come. I respectfully address them and send out my voice with gratitude, "*Adinwehmaaganidook!*". Their shared stories are invisible tools that I pick up within

the context of Aboriginal scholarship and research alleviating my trepidation and supporting me to give back for those who come this way.

Learning about our relationship to *Aki* supports Aboriginal students' cultural identity and increases all students' awareness of and respect for Aboriginal people and perspectives and creates a practical educational springboard to numerous academic subject areas such as science (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Cajete, 1999a, MacIvor, 1995) and environmental education (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994, 1999b; Simpson, 2004; Toulouse, 2008). Students who have a physical experience learning on *Aki* develop embodied knowledge about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational understanding. Demonstrated values for environmental protection such as respect for plants, animals, water increase self-awareness and inner-knowing about being-in-relationship and re-connecting to *Aki*. Finding a special place to sit on *Aki* and be in-the-moment is a tangible experience more powerful than talking about the environment and Land stewardship within the confines of a classroom. Beeman and Blenkinsop (2008) describe this particular way of being as "attentive receptivity" and describe power for learning as "what self is changes...a state in which the borders of the self relax and become permeable with the more-than-human world" (p. 99).

The Indigenous ecology of wholistic and meaningful learning is valid in the classroom. Beckford and Nahdee (2011) illustrate educational approaches that link Aboriginal perspectives to environmental education.

Indigenous peoples' relationships to their Land represent models for human interaction with nature. Taught through education, these can help change the negative attitudes that hurt environmental quality. Indigenous ecological perspectives are relevant in mainstream education and can be incorporated into elementary classrooms" (p. 3).

In the educational environment...
Aboriginal people's experiences are relayed in spoken and unspoken messages, complete with statistics telling them that it is not okay to be who they are.

(Battiste, 2010, p. 16)

Equity and inclusiveness. *Anishinaabe* scholar, Turner (2006) explores the opportunity to create a sense of worldly worthiness for Aboriginal people by instilling feelings that their culture and history are worthwhile. This is possible through "a real sense of identity" and a "renewed historical understanding ...[of] great philosophical and practical significance as Canadians change their attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples" (p. 76). Just and effective policy changes can be initiated through the "principle of mutual respect...the quality of courtesy, consideration and esteem extended to people whose languages, cultures, and ways differ from our own but who are valued fellow members of the larger communities to which we all belong." (p. 77).

Hampton (1995), a Chickasaw scholar, illuminated new ways to understand Indian Education issues in Canada. In the wake of *The Red Paper - Indian Control of Indian Education*, Hampton identified that contemporary education is:

a political, social, and cultural institution that embodies and transmits the values, knowledge, and behaviors of white culture. The call for higher standards in education is

invariably a call for the standard of the whites. It is never a call for a more adequate presentation of the knowledge of devalued minorities, creative thinking about pressing social problems, higher standards of equity and respect, or recognition of institutional racism (p. 37).

Battiste participated in the wave of decolonization theory regarding Aboriginal education in Canada, co-leading the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada from 2007 to 2009. This work brought increased attention to the need for transformation and presented visions for a future where Indigenous people are treated with respect and fairness. Battiste (2010) describes her engagement in teacher education at the University of Saskatchewan:

...to normalize Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum so that both Indigenous and conventional perspectives and knowledges will be available – not just for Aboriginal peoples, who would be enriched by that effort, but for all peoples. Aboriginal knowledge serves to ground our interrelationships with each other... It is about balancing our brains and our selves and our societies in a world that could benefit greatly from the teachings of Elders, whose wealth of wisdom is abundant to those who listen and act. Finally, it is about every educator making a commitment to both unlearn and learn – to unlearn the racism and superiority so evident in our society and to learn new ways of knowing, valuing others, accepting diversity, and making equity and inclusion foundations for all learners (p. 18).

Anishinaabe scholar Cote-Meek (2014) researched racism, trauma and resistance in education at the post secondary level and makes reference to *Anishinaabe* educator Douglas who wrote in 1997 about the colonial mechanisms that control Aboriginal peoples and perpetuate an

education system devoid of Aboriginal history and culture. Colonial and imperial imposition maintains a societal education system and control over "what is taught, how it is taught, and who teaches in that space" (p. 89).

Pitawanakwat (2013) relates an assertion of Pelletier and Poole in 1973 that within the authoritarian mainstream education system in Canada "...schools stand in the way of life and learning" for Aboriginal people (p. 369). The authors anticipate a creation of space for Indigenous scholars in future as Indigenous self-determination is more fully realized in education. Pitawanakwat looks to the future where Aboriginal education "draws upon old knowledge processes and systems" (p. 368).

The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in education serves as a means of finding a way to live in peace together. Cherokee author, Awaitka (1993) expressed the value in learning about other people and their ways brings the realization of people working together and communicating in a peaceful way. "Often, we automatically assume adversarial positions when respectful thought would lead to cooperation" p. (237). In today's society of cultural diversity it is "imperative that we develop deeper ways of communicating with each other, of thinking and listening to each other, because our mind-sets and the language we use to express our thoughts are diverse also" (p. 237).

Aboriginal educators have always known that students are affected by the experience of the hidden curriculum at school. Aboriginal educator, Watt-Cloutier (2000) studied the negative impacts in northern Canada.

The hidden curriculum is learned in the playgrounds and in the hallways. It is learned from the way the teacher manages student behavior and from the way the desks are arranged. It is learned through the attitudes of parents and other community members

about the school and it is these very things, learned through the hidden curriculum, that are likely to influence a person's identity, sense of worth and view of the world (p. 18).

The author referred to the research by Four Worlds Development Project in 1984, stating that hidden curriculum factors have a direct connection with later or concurrent alcohol and drug abuse. It is a concern that children experience subtle racism without realizing how much they are learning.

Educational scholars Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) illustrate the means of creating a multilogical educational approach for diversity and justice in the schools through critical pedagogy and the valuing of Indigenous ways of knowing²⁸ and Indigenous ways of being²⁹.

The education system and Indigenous knowledge systems differ in the very way they define life...The Western scientific tradition categorizes the 'living' and 'nonliving' and implies a separation between human and environment espousing complete knowledge of nature and human domination. Indigenous peoples perceive all life on the planet as 'multidimensionality entwined' and the honouring of the sacred kinship between humans and other creations of nature is valued. Developing student knowledge of Indigenous perspectives presents provocation for a revolutionary effect of 'transformative science', an approach to knowledge production that synthesizes ways of knowing expressed by the metonymies of hand, brain, and heart" (p. 152).

A school learning environment that investigates Western science and Indigenous ways of knowing in a way that highlights their differences and complementarities can change ways of being-in-the-world that are supportive of multiple ways of seeing, justice, power, and

²⁸ Ways of knowing is referred to as 'epistemology' within a western-European research paradigm

²⁹ Ways of being is known as 'ontology' within an western-European research paradigm

community. The underpinnings of the education system in Canada necessitates the dichotomous framework.

It is not my intention to continue with the dialogic of a comparative dichotomy between Western colonial ways and Anishinaabe ecological knowledge, Anishinaabe ways of being, knowing, and doing. Today's context in education has evolved from a struggle with colonial intellectual imperialism towards an environment of equity and inclusiveness. Educational policy in Ontario addresses the need for diversity, equity, and inclusive education and is outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2009) Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. Other ways of being, knowing and doing include Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge and conceptual space can be created for Indigenous philosophy in the schools. Understanding and reflecting on our shared history is foundational for cultural resurgence and re-connecting with those who have been here before us on Aki and in the academy. Intellectual imperialism has reigned in the past and de-colonization, critical Indigenous research methodologies, critical Indigenous philosophy have a recognized place in the Academy. A context of possibility draws me in. The historical privileging of written texts and Western concepts of knowledge as a repertoire of the knower are opposed to Indigenous conceptualizations of embodied ways of knowing through a thinking, visioning, doing, and feeling life-long learning process. I move forward in a precarious way that both shelters "through degrees of separation and the use of power as a force of resistance" (Fitzmaurice 2010, p. 363) and serves to impart a greater good for respectful and balanced relationship with each other and Shkagamik-kwe.

“For Indigenous students, the sense of belonging at school is often the single most important indicator of educational success especially where generations before have been marginalized at school” (Longboat, 2012, p. 78). Significant and authentic knowledge expansion

of all students and educators about the rich cultures and perspectives of First Nation peoples and the *Anishinaabek* in particular can be realized through dedicated creation of space. "The importance and impact of culturally-competent teachers utilizing First Nations cultural knowledge in the school experience creates optimal learning environments so that students can maximize their learning potential and move successfully through a lifelong learning curve" (Longboat, 2012, p. 7).

This dissertation research immersed students and educators in culturally defined pedagogical contexts for sharing experiences and stories with an *Anishinaabe* educator to facilitate shared knowledge and understanding in support of the transformation that is underway in schools. The creation of a space of possibility for responding to the specific needs and interests of Aboriginal students and facilitating authentic, respectful, relevant, and equitable learning for all students in a grade 4/5 classroom is presented.

When students see that the school offers a culturally responsive environment that honors how they see the world, how they understand	knowledge, what they value in life, and how they make relationships within their particular cultural groups, there is a greater feeling among students that school is another home, a place of respect and comfort. Culturally responsive education has an impact on student achievement by creating an optimal learning environment.
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(Longboat, 2012, p. 88).

Student identity supports school success. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) report argues that the future of Aboriginal people within society depends on cultural identity formation. In this regard, cultural pedagogy and Indigenous philosophy provide crucial support for learning and engagement in the classroom. "Community is a sacred concept with high value in Aboriginal culture" (Graveline, 1998, 164). Borgenson (2001), describes how Aboriginal people transitioning to the city talk about "the importance of their Indianness", of

how it is lost in an urban setting when trying to become something they are not, the importance of being connected to the Land, their relatives and people, and always knowing the place they call "home" is where they will return (p. 167).

Developing a sense of identity and vision for balance in life comes from reflection about Indigenous stories and Teachings. Bopp, Brown, and Lane (1989) illustrate the process of personal growth that is an outcome of vision or an "ideal goal to look toward" and the ability to "face ourselves alone in silence, and to love ourselves...From this position of strength, no one can put us down, and no one can lead us to do or to be anything else but what we know we must do or be" (p. 56).

A large-scale study investigated the urban Aboriginal population in Toronto (McCaskill, FitzMaurice, & Cidro, 2011). The research report describes the complexity of cultural and identity factors. Aboriginal identity has to do with

"...how one self-identifies (e.g. sense of self, family background, personality, socialization experiences, etc.) as well as how members of the larger society perceive them (e.g. positive or negative stereotypes, media images, effects of residential schools and colonization, etc.)... An individual's identity...is formed and maintained as a social process of interaction with others. Identities are both individually unique and collectively shared. Further, individuals have multiple identities based on such factors as race, gender, age, social class, occupation, nationality, etc. and can change over time."(p. 384).

Identity is a resilience factor for Aboriginal youth. Ritchie, Wabano, Russell, Enosse, and Young (2014) state that developing resilience and a sense of identity is particularly important for Aboriginal youth. The research team led and evaluated the impact of an outdoor

adventure leadership experience on the resilience and wellbeing of First Nations adolescents from a First Nation community. Short term positive outcomes for resilience included aspects of "mental health, balance of emotion, and satisfaction with life" (Ritchie et al., p. 10).

This research case study elicits appreciation for integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum and the teaching stories and sharing Circles are socio-interactive processes that are reflective of some of the Aboriginal students' home culture. The socio-cognitive processes are aligned with Indigenous ways of thinking and doing and create opportunity for sharing of narratives that will lead to conversations and new/strengthened relationships. Peer to peer relationship and student-teacher understanding are enhanced. This is the essence of the project to demonstrate and support respect for diversity into the public school through the lens of Indigenous knowledge and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational understanding. The far-reaching outcome of education and societal transformation are considered in Chapter 5.

Values and behaviours that define a good way of life according to Indigenous traditions typify prosocial attitudes and resiliency. A team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-educational researchers (Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2001) interviewed fifth-eighth grade children in the rural Midwest of the United States identified that traditional culture positively affected their academic performance. Various levels of cultural education were provided in schools and enculturated students were described as knowing who they are and that "...they are on the right path, a sense of congruence with cultural heritage and teachings" (p. 15). Research findings echo what Aboriginal peoples have always known: "enculturation³⁰ is a resiliency factor in the development of their children" (p. 16).

³⁰ Enculturation is the process by which individuals learn about and identify with their ethnic minority culture

The power of story. Storying together creates relationship and a sense of community.

Educational researchers and scholars, Dyson and Genishi (1994) introduce their book about story pedagogy in the classroom to honour cultural diversity with this powerful espousal:

The storytelling self is a social self, who declares and shapes important relationships through the mediating power of words. Thus, in sharing stories, we have the potential for forging new relationship, including local, classroom 'cultures' in which individuals are interconnected and new 'we's' formed...individual lives are woven together through the stuff of stories (p. 5).

Non-Aboriginal educator and scholar, Gilbert (1994) discusses storytelling and social meaning. "Ways in which we might organize and transform a series of events into "a story" are dependent upon the cultural paradigms of possibility available to us; they are dependent upon the social understandings accessible at specific historical moments" (p. 130).

The power of the storytelling oral tradition pedagogy. The *Anishinaabe* oral tradition is a valuable educational literacy that deserves attention in the classroom and its power is readily perceived within the context of nature. Indigenous environmental studies scholars, Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010) acknowledge that *Aki* is a primary resource for understanding Indigenous knowledge and they promote the ideology of 'eco-hermeneutics' in education to move beyond the classroom to afford a deeper understanding and connection to place. The authors acknowledge that in school a focus on interactions between text and mind is an important part of the educational process and they suggest that moving beyond text by engaging students in a deeper understanding of connection to the places that they live brings power back to the oral tradition.

The orature of Indigenous knowledge, works on the ability of the teller to integrate and synthesize knowledge from an ecological and temporal location to engage a wide range of senses and with one's whole being (p. 18)...This process of being in communication amongst ourselves becomes more than just sharing information...[as we] move beyond ideologies of development that lead towards the destruction of the Earth [to] develop ways of thinking about how dependent we are on Earth and how to re-instil a fundamental understanding that our health is inextricably linked to the Land, air, water and diversity of the ecosystems within which we live (p. 20).

Collecting data in a textual form has become common-place and taken to be the primary way of representing knowledge in Western educational settings. Both oral stories and textual data are important forms in a holistic educational process' (p. 22). Kulneiks, Longboat, and Young (2013) are advancing integrated environmental education. They re-iterate the place for Indigenous environmental knowledge and the oral tradition. "Language about progress and advancement often neglects to acknowledge what is lost when written forms are prized over oral tradition and inter-generational knowledge: (p. 118).

Cherokee scholar and author, King (2003) illustrates how Aboriginal people value listening and story-telling and proposes that *we are all stories* and mutual understanding of the natural world and through a unification of mind with place, the listener to realizes the lesson. "We are surrounded by stories, and we can trace these stories back to other stories and from there back to the beginnings of language. For these are our stories, the cornerstones of our culture" (p. 95). He makes the powerful statement that "Insisting that something is true is not nearly as powerful as suggesting that something might be true" (p. 115). This presents the idea that Indigenous historical stories and legends are not meant to be proven or disproved. The concepts

and characters in the oral stories, stimulate imagination and presentation of metaphors and lead the listener to deep thinking. Oral stories are valuable literature in the classroom.

Oral tradition represents collective and individual truths of the people. This is explained by Ermine (1995).

Those people who seek knowledge on the physical plane objectively find answers through exploration of the inner space, solely on the corporeal level. Those who seek to understand the reality of existence in harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology. Aboriginal people have the responsibility and the birthright to take and develop an epistemology congruent with holism and the beneficial transformation of total human knowledge. The way to this affirmation is through our own Aboriginal sources (p. 103).

In this case study research, students experience Teaching stories within the context of an Indigenous paradigm or Indigenous Circle storywork pedagogy. Student response to the story is invited in a safe and welcoming environment that honours the individual process as well as the communal process of story.

Conflicting environmental philosophies. Aspects of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) environmental education strategy aligns with *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. New knowledge in the schools provides support for addressing contemporary global issues such as climate change, resource depletion, plummeting biodiversity, and environmental degradation. The vision for environmental education in Ontario is enunciated in the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) education document, *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*.

"Ontario's education system will prepare students with the knowledge, skills, perspectives, and practices they need to be environmentally responsible citizens" (p. 4).

Environmental education that has been developed in the European tradition and has at its core a fundamental world view perspective that man is dominant over nature (Baskin, 2011, p. 87; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 152; Simpson, 2014, p. 13) and the belief that nature is at the disposal of educators as an extension of the classroom. "Environmental education programs in general are taught from a Western perspective and typically do not engage with Indigenous knowledges" (Kapyrka & Dockstator, 2012, p. 98). *Aki* provides a physical context for exploration and scientific learning. In this study, the storytelling oral tradition incorporates Indigenous knowledge and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in particular through an Indigenous storywork Circle pedagogical framework. The philosophy that we are in relation to *Aki* and are dependent on nature is fundamental. Valuing interconnectivity and balance informs our role of responsibility to maintain balance and harmony with all things and each other.

The following is a quote from Elder George Courchene in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) report that illustrates the relationship of Aboriginal people and the natural environment. Fundamental beliefs about the nature of the universe and humans' place in the natural order and

symbols [trees, animals, rocks, sweetgrass] and enfolded in ceremony from birth to death... instilled confidence that safety and sustenance were attainable in life. Symbols and ceremonies combined to reinforce values - deeply held beliefs - and ethics - rules of behaviour. Together, values and ethics represent the common understandings that give meaning to individual existence and cohesion to communities. They are the substructure that supports civil behaviour and harmonious community life. (RCAP, p. 621)

[T]here is a natural law that cannot be altered by human action and to which human beings must adapt; the obligation to maintain harmonious relationships with the natural world and those to whom you are related; personal responsibility to adhere to strict behavioural codes; and an ethic of sharing, which involves returning gifts to human and other-than-human relations to sustain the balance of the natural order (RCAP, p. 624).

Indigenous scholars and activists (Simpson, 2004; Alfred, 2014) are confronting an environmental sciences approach to Indigenous Lands which is perceived to be aligned with corporate interests and resource extraction. Simpson describes how governments enable multinational corporations to remove Indigenous peoples from *Aki* and industrial deforestation in the boreal forest regions has resulted in the loss of food, medicine, and places to hunt, fish and gather and people have few reasons to go out on *Aki*. This means that children have lost opportunity to observe, experience and learn from the natural world. "The land is humiliated" (2004, p. 379). Alfred describes a "superfund" project that resulted from a successful cultural injury claim against two multinational industrial corporations for pollution to the environment and traditional Mohawk territory. The community is engaging the youth to regenerate cultural land-based practices and movement towards "economic self-sufficiency rooted in traditional practices" (p. 144).

Métis researcher Adese (2014) relates stories from Elder Ghostkeeper lamenting the detachment from *Aki* that he experienced when he transitioned to mechanized farming. The author describes what she considers to be the colonization's most destructive threat - a way of living that supports resource extraction economies that decimates animal populations, damages the ecosystem, and threatens the continuity of life itself. Ghostkeeper explained this to Adese as "the transition from living *with* the land, to living *off* the land" (p. 63).

Cultural, land-based learning opportunities support remembering ways to talk to *Aki* in Indigenous languages and stimulate respectful relationship and ways of being with *Aki*.

Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2013) are researching an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular approach to environmental education and Indigenous environmental knowledge. Developing environmental educational leadership and eco-literacy toward "[s]cience and technology, eco-justice pedagogy, experiential and outdoor education, food and stories, and Indigenous environmental knowledges are part of the spectrum of a whole systems framework" (p. 122).

The researchers posit that within the public systems of education, "nearby nature" can "inspire students to adopt an ethic of care and stewardship for their local environment" (p. 123).

Aboriginal women are considered the holders of cultural "water knowledge" and assume a primary role in the protection of water resources and women advise their political leaders on water management and security issues. Anderson, Clow and Haworth-Brockman (2013) interviewed Aboriginal women and presented women's special and distinct relationship to water, which is rooted in cultural beliefs, social practices and economic contexts. "[S]tories of many of the Grandmothers reflected a foundational understanding that water means life" (p. 13) and "water can heal" (p. 14).

Indigenous worldviews and Western worldviews stand in stark contrast to each other, especially in regard to perspectives regarding Shkagamik-kwe and her resources and although the relationship is often seen as antagonistic and seemingly irreconcilable, opportunities for learning and developing mutual understanding are evident. Kapyrka and Dockstator (2012) acknowledge that "[t]he current mainstream zeitgeist promotes a model for living that supports the priorities of a materialistic society in which capitalistic ideals seemingly justify unlimited resource extraction - and this type of lifestyle is alarmingly unsustainable" (p. 104). A "two-

“worlds” approach to environmental education that acknowledges the differences between the knowledge systems of both Indigenous and Western perspectives and upholds tenets of both methods of learning is described. Teachers animate a pedagogy of holism and engage mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically with topics and engage in critical thinking of the past and the historical influence of Indigenous-settler relations on educational practices. Storytelling as pedagogy and personal narratives and self-location of instructors and students are fundamental components of this new approach.

The learning context within this research study creates connection to the Place of the school yard and stimulates understanding of being-in-relation with *Aki*. Such a perspective is supportive of living with *Aki* and environmental protection is supported through enhanced biophilia.

Outdoor education and the school yard context. The school yard can be valued as a natural space within an urban setting that is readily accessible for students. "Although research has shown that environmental education has positive effects on children's environmental attitudes, recent research has also emphasized the importance of children simply spending more time outdoors" (Elliot, Eycke, Chan, & Muller, 2014, p. 3). The importance of natural spaces in education is not a new idea and the value of learning outside, outdoor play, and experiences on *Aki* is growing in education (Forest School Canada, 2014).

Nature-deficit disorder is a term coined by Louv (2008) to describe the “human costs of alienation from nature” (Louv, 2008, p. 36). The author describes a number of cultural factors that have led to this phenomena, notably the Western industrialized view that humans are separate and superior to nature. Today, children spend less time out-of-doors and the author links this to Western society's growing obsession with order and emphasis on indoor, structured

play and fear for safety outside. This concept sheds light on the importance of nature in our lives and leads to acknowledging the Aboriginal students who have transitioned from the First Nation community and land-based culture to the urban context.

Nature schools and nature kindergarten programs are emerging in British Columbia and Ontario. The model of forest schools in Scandinavian countries in the 1950's and adoption in the United Kingdom (including New Zealand) for the past several years provided the framework where children spend large amounts of outdoor time in natural settings. The development and piloting of Nature Kindergarten projects have expanded in North America at a rapid pace in response to bridging the gap between children and nature that has arisen from increasing urbanization and modernization (O'Brien, 2009). Students learn through play, exploration, and experience with natural systems and materials and Aboriginal resource people share stories and traditional knowledge regarding place (Hoyland, Elliot, Lockerbie, & VanStone, 2014).

More recently, the experiential outdoor learning programs such as Outward Bound have largely been replaced by educational adventure camps and intensive skill camps on *Aki*. Associated with adventure learning are the costs for specialized equipment (canoes, skis, snow shoes, camp outfitting), safety and skill training (first aid, swimming, canoeing certification) and travel. Youth leadership skill development is incorporated in secondary school student experiences.

Character education, citizenship and Indigenous perspectives. Character education is complemented by the *Anishinaabe* beliefs and values for a peaceful harmonious society exemplified in the storytelling oral tradition. Character education in public schools is meant to uphold ethical commitment to the cultural context of the public good and is "about a process of engagement in which communities come together to build consensus on the values they hold in

common" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, *Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12*, p. 7). In schools, the traditional practice of character education is supported by direct methods of teaching such as teacher modelling, rewards, highlighting virtuous heroes in literature and with focussed study on particular traits and repeated practice of desired behaviours. Ten foundational traits in Rainbow schools for ongoing character development include: honesty, respect, empathy, responsibility, integrity, courtesy, resilience, acceptance, courage and co-operation (Rainbow District School Board 2011, *Strategic Directions*).

Winton (2013), is a scholar who presents a thought-provoking rhetorical analysis of character education in southern Ontario and a critical policy research approach. The author asserts that character education supports capitalist values and work ethic and posits the educational institution as the moral authority. Winton believes that universal values silence dissenting voices and exclude different perspectives. Within the Aboriginal context, living the good life (*Mino-bimaadiziwin*) exemplifies a collectivist perspective where the choices that one makes are for the good of the people and support a healthy community. Stories facilitate the listener's inner journey toward understanding behaviours, outcomes, and morality.

The character education initiative is closely tied to citizenship education. Aboriginal people in Canada have a commonly-held political viewpoint that frames their identity outside of that of ethnic minorities or Canadian citizenship. Ghosh (2002), who wrote a book about multicultural education, succinctly explains this difference:

As the original people of this Land, Canada's Native people date back thousands of years. Some of them...can be traced back 9000 years...Canada's First Nations consist of over 550 Indian, Inuit, and Métis groups...The Natives lost control of their sociopolitical structures, as colonial strategies effectively eroded the majority of their

institutions...Aboriginal peoples of Canada do not want to be part of "ethnic Canada" because they are not immigrants; nor do they consider themselves to be visible minorities... To these groups, any association with ethnic or cultural minority status would mean giving up their claims and position on issues of sovereignty, Land and rights, as well as their treaty obligations... Another part of plural society, they assert that they are "citizens plus" and that their rights supersede all subsequent rights granted to other groups. Any real and long-term change will require education [policies and curricula] to be more reflective of and responsive to Aboriginal interests (Ghosh, 2002, p. 32).

Citizenship approaches that acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of Canada and highlight the Treaty relationship and First Nation governance structures dictated by the *Indian Act* are relevant for understanding power structures and Aboriginal peoples' concept of citizenship. Ward and Bouvier (2001) state the importance of understanding this perspective. "[M]ulticultural approaches to curriculum recognizes cultural differences but social justice is the lens of potentiality of societal cultures" (p. 7). Character education is framed within the perspective of being a 'good' citizen and this excludes Aboriginal peoples' experience and values such as the Seven Grandfathers.

Aboriginal cultural ways of being-in-relationship are epitomized by The Seven Grandfathers. *Anishinaabe* cultural values known as "The Seven Grandfather Teachings" are: Love; Respect; Bravery; Honesty; Truth; Humility; and Wisdom and have a place in the schools (Toulouse, 2008). According to Cree scholar Hart (2007), an individual's philosophy has to do with how one constructs meaning and how Indigenous individuals develop within the collective consciousness of the cultural community. He refers to the work of Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlap

(1992) that describes meaning constructs within Indigenous ways of knowing as "cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps" (p. 33).

This research project highlights cultural values within Indigenous pedagogy that is outside of a multicultural education framework. This is not to say that egoistic behaviour is condoned. The social and community context of the Circle is conducive to values education. The oral tradition exudes the Seven Grandfathers or core values of *Anishinaabe* society and these do align with focal education system character traits. This research project context is outside of the dialogue of citizenship and multicultural Canada in the sense that it is positioned within the social justice movement within an Indigenous paradigm. The direction of potentiality for this case study builds appreciation for the social and learning benefits from the creation of space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and storytelling for educational and societal transformation.

Student participation in the storytelling oral tradition is valued and respected and the cumulative experience of Circles in the classroom promotes positive social relationships and behaviours. In this research case study, Teaching stories incorporate The Seven Grandfathers and the Indigenous story Circle protocol is explained to the students and teacher (participants) to uphold respect through listening and accepting the story-teller's truth. Bravery for sharing and speaking honestly from the heart is encouraged. The Seven Grandfathers are not explicitly taught, rather the safe and inclusive context for storywork demonstrates positive attitudes, behaviours, and sense of community. The Teaching stories epitomize the oral tradition and bring cultural values into the awareness of the students through engagement in self-reflective and self-

critical processes. Among the *Anishinaabek*, the trickster is *Weynaboozhoo* "Nanabush"³¹, and this "hero" demonstrates the challenge of maintaining balance in one's attitudes and actions towards the Self and self-in-relation in stories and legends.

³¹ *Nanabush* legends are stories that have been re-told by *Anishinaabe* people for thousands of years that refer to the time of *Waynaboozhoo*, the spirit of *Anishinaabe* or "original man" (Benton-Banai, 1998, p. 31).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Indigenous peoples are taking the opportunity to "talk back" to the academic world.

...Native intellectuals go through a process in the academy of first proving they have been assimilated into the occupying power, second they experience disturbance where they remember who they actually are and remember the past, and third awaken the people and realign themselves with the people and produce a revolutionary and national literature.

(Smith, 1999, p. 70)

This study builds on research in the areas of Aboriginal education, Indigenous philosophy and social work. Aboriginal education refers to the process underway in the public schools to integrate cultural perspectives, histories and languages across the curricula. Indigenous philosophy is a term to describe Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being with particular reference to communicating Indigenous worldviews in the dominant language. An examination of the historical development of Aboriginal education in Canada is grounded in traditional cultural practices, beliefs and values. Indigenous languages, the oral tradition, conceptualizations of collectivity and communal life and inclusive relationality are relevant in contemporary education. Culture-based and place-based education, learning about ecology and being-in-relationship with *Aki* represent areas of indigenization of the curriculum. Equitable and inclusive approaches in the schools welcome Indigenous ways of being and doing towards social justice and educational transformation.

I will begin this chapter with a review of Indigenous research projects within the Academy and research methods and tools that support my research project utilizing a critical Indigenous research methodology. I will also discuss the oral tradition and Indigenous language and an Indigenous paradigm including Indigenous knowledge and Aboriginal pedagogy which utilizes Circle pedagogy. I will address the work that has been completed in Turtle Island in the

areas of culturally responsive education, bi-cultural education, along with suggestions for striving towards successful Aboriginal education and transformation.

The work of Indigenous scholars, researchers and allies is especially relevant to gain an understanding of Indigenous ecological relational knowledge and research approaches that honour Aboriginal pedagogy and are feasible within the context of mainstream education. The public school institutional context has limited capacity to incorporate certain aspects of Indigenous Knowledge (e.g. Traditional Medicine healing practices, navigational strategies for waterway travel utilizing the Sky World and spirit-guides). Much of the literature describes ground-breaking research projects within the Academy and provides guidance about Indigenous research methodology and protocols. The work of researchers who have previously investigated Aboriginal education and Indigenous philosophy and knowledge systems is reviewed with respect and an honouring of the authors' perspectives that contribute to the collective body of work. Wilson (2008) suggests that researchers "review in a style that is not critical, but builds upon the work of others...[and that] it can also form the context for relational accountability in working from an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 44). Rice (2005) presents an Aboriginal viewpoint regarding knowledge and comments on the increase in primary source material written by scholars.

Indigenous scholars and researchers engage in a two-fold process that is required for navigating from within an Indigenous research paradigm and as an outsider immersed in the Western system of the academy. This makes for a complicated process and presents challenges that are inherent when 'walking in two worlds'. Wilson (2008) describes this situation and justifies the writing style required in a literature review.

One of the great strengths that Indigenous scholars bring with them is the ability to see and work within both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews....Dominant system academics... are usually not bicultural. As part of their white privilege, there is no requirement for them to be able to see other ways of being and doing, or even to recognize that they exist. Often times then, ideas coming from a different worldview are outside of their entire mindset and way of thinking. The ability to bridge this gap becomes important in order to ease the tension that it creates... I will use a linear or tiered style of writing to meld the works of several Indigenous scholars as the topics of their writing overlap...(p. 44).

The epistemology of scholarly research requires enactment of deconstruction, to see compartmentalized knowledge and establish new knowledge in a specifically delineated place within the Academy. The complex process of writing from a place of Indigenous scholarship necessitates fluidity in focussed perceptions from within the *Anishinaabe* Circle and sense of Being to purposeful traversing of conceptual cultural boundaries to exude Western thinking and writing processes. I can relate to what Maori scholar Smith (1999) expresses about the post secondary experience where Indigenous scholars are becoming self-aware and are returning to work with and for Indigenous people to produce literature that is revolutionary.

Indigenous epistemology is best understood by examining Aboriginal views of knowledge and ways of knowing. Rice (2005) presents an Aboriginal viewpoint regarding knowledge and notes that there is increasingly more primary source material written by scholars on this topic.

The contributions of theories and concepts regarding *Anishinaabe* ecological relational understanding from the literature in the fields of Indigenous studies, cultural anthropology, and

social work are reviewed in this section of this thesis. In addition, the various Indigenous research methods and tools that will contribute to this interdisciplinary research case study within the context of an elementary public school classroom are outlined.

An Indigenous Paradigm in Education

Decolonization perspective. Consideration of the historical development of research theory reveals how decolonization theory and an Indigenous research paradigm have evolved. The historical Western tradition of science and the quest for universal laws and rules of nature in the pursuit of knowledge supported early positivists and post-positivists engaged in laboratory explorations that yielded valid and reliable data. Later research by anthropologists and sociologists provided qualitative data from real life experience and the realization that valid and reliable data collection and analysis was a challenge. An alternative view called critical theory arose from the idea that reality is not plastic with one fixed truth but is fluid (Baskin, 2011; Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996).

Wilson (2008) describes critical theory and the development of decolonizing theory.

Critical theorists contend that reality has been shaped into its present form by our cultural, gender, social and other values. The... investigator influences the subject and the inquiry through interaction with them...[and] helps to mould reality through their influence upon it...There are numerous perspectives to critical theory, including feminist, race and class theories. Promoting change to improve society is a key to the methodology followed, as well as to the axiology³² behind the research (p. 36).

³² Axiology is the research term for a ‘way of doing’ things from within a cultural perspective (Moreton-Robinson and Walter, 2009)

Decolonizing theory arose from critical theory within the transformation of Western tradition. Cree Saulteaux scholar Kovach (2010) explains the relationship of decolonizing theory and Indigenous theory in research.

Interrogating the power relationships found within the Indigenous-settler dynamic enables a form of praxis that seeks out Indigenous voice and representation with research that has historically marginalized and silenced Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999).

However, paradigmatically speaking, a decolonizing perspective and Indigenous epistemologies emerge from different paradigms (p. 42).

Anishinaabe social work scholar, Absolon (2011) illustrated the process of decolonization and education and returning to traditional values as a means of re-building our identity and strengthening family and community relationships. Each individual is situated within the centre of life and we seek harmony and balance as we relearn our history and traditions that underlie our meaning and direction.

Anishinaabe scholar and researcher, Pitawanakwat (2013) critically examines Native Studies within the institution that homogenizes aspects of "Indigenous" or "Native" studies and promotes stories as the center of scholarship to shift "the focus from the dichotomy between Indigenous and settler, or Native and newcomer. Colonization is not, never has been, nor ever will be, the defining experience of Anishinaabeg" (p. 367). Pitawanakwat re-tells some stories of respected storytellers such as Basil Johnston and Wilfred Pelletier and illustrates that "[T]he future of *Anishinaabe* education draws upon the old knowledge processes and systems that North American governments have worked to hard to suppress (p. 368). Pitawanakwat refers to Johnston's adage that "story may well be the most appropriate pedagogical tool and heuristic device for learning and teaching what it means to be Anishinaabe" (p. 372).

Aboriginal pedagogy and the *process* of learning are based on the experience of 'doing' and 'learning' rather than on the product or what one 'knows'. Coleman, Battiste, Henderson, Findlay and Findlay (2012) provide an explanation that the term "Indigenous knowledge" is better framed as the process of coming to understand. Scholarly work towards decolonizing the curriculum and advocacy for Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous languages in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia is presented. Coleman's transcript of Battiste explains that Indigenous knowledge comes from within a place and that place defines for a group what it is, how they relate to the world, and how they relate to each other. Our elders in all of our stories from ancient times offered teachings about how we are to live in this world to continue our survival and live out our purpose. Coleman's (2012) interview of Findlay adds to the discussion from Findlay's life experience in the north. Findlay states that knowledge is about a process of learning together and reflecting rather than a product or output and researchers tend to focus on things that are being looked for and valued.

Critical Analysis and Resistance in Aboriginal Education

Non-Aboriginal scholars in relationship with the Aboriginal community have trail-blazed within the Aboriginal education field in support of critical analysis. Haig-Brown and Archibald (1996) discuss positive change in academic research through a process where collaborators recognize and develop understanding about their relationships and belonging to First Nations and non-native groups. The authors explain that "[t]ransformation refers to the outcome of praxis: As people act and reflect upon their worlds, those worlds are transformed" (p. 265). Haig-Brown (2001) explores theoretical approaches in her role as an ally in Aboriginal community field-work and examines the idea of the "Trojan horse" or what scholars bring back to the university from the Aboriginal community with unanticipated effects. Purposeful application of critical models

in an analysis of Aboriginal education in Canada exposes power relations and includes resistance, counter-hegemony and contradiction. The author expresses an epiphany that "these analytic tools...[are] a limited and limiting way to think about First Nations/Aboriginal education" (p. 28). She examines the analytical tool of resistance.

[It] is based in Western binaries which are culture specific and which reduce complexity in their constraining boundaries of either/or...and immediately assumes a hierarchy... (oppressor/ oppressed; mainstream/marginalized/ dominant/subordinate)...[making] far too simple the active and dynamic flow which makes up most people's lives...feeds the myth of Western domination as absolute...[and] can detract from the work that people want to do within their communities (p. 29).

Haig-Brown examines her process of putting aside "theoretical blinders" that an analysis based in conflict and binaries represents towards seeing the daily life experience of educators, parents and community members. Haig-Brown purposefully refuses an idyllic notion of wholism existing in cultures outside what is considered to be an accepted mainstream, making an effort to realize complexity based on *Aki* and the territories where she studies. Theorizing in acknowledgement of the power of *Aki* and the connections between *Aki* and people within the full range of life experience (that includes struggle) is a more relevant approach within the Aboriginal context.

Discussions concerning the place of Indigenous world view as central to Aboriginal studies as a necessary opposing force to Western paradigms. Brown and Gray (2010) cite Redfield's perspective that

World view is different from culture, ethos, mode of thought, and national character. It is the picture the members of a society have of the properties and characters upon their

stage of action..."worldview" refers to the way the world looks to that people looking out..."world view" attends especially to the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else. It is the properties of existence as distinguished from and relate to the self (p. 535).

Anthropologist Hallowell discussed the concept of "world view". Brown and Gray (2010) quote Hallowell stating that an objective approach to studying culture is not possible when "...categorical abstractions derived from Western thought" are projected upon other cultures (p. 537). Hallowell investigated the linguistic features of Ojibwe and illustrates that gender categories are absent and "animate" and "person" qualities are attributed to particular stones and Thunder for example. "The Ojibwa do not perceive stones, in general, as animate, any more than we do. The crucial test is experience" (p. 540). Animate and person qualities are evident in the grammar of an individual according to perception of relationship. Speaking to an animate object or using the kinship term "grandfather" for the sun are discussed as examples illustrating consideration of these as not "things" or actual "persons" but reflective of relational and animate qualities.

Critical Indigenous philosophy. Turner (2006) discusses the critical process within the contemporary academic context to engage Indigenous philosophy and the social sciences and humanities in dialogue to support a 'critical indigenous philosophy'. A *critical* Indigenous philosophy is meant to engage European philosophy while at the same time unpacking the meaning and praxis of colonialism in the history of ideas. In other words, a critical Indigenous philosophical community requires the voices of Indigenous philosophers *and* Indigenous intellectuals. The *Anishinaabe* scholar stresses the importance of explaining the Indigenous

worldview and Indigenous conceptions of reality by using an Indigenous language. This, he states is "doing" Indigenous philosophy.

Indigenous philosophy and language.

We need to experience the life force from which creativity flows, and our Aboriginal resources such as language and culture are our touchstones for achieving this. It is imperative that our children take up the cause of our languages and cultures because therein lies Aboriginal epistemology, which speaks of holism. With holism, an environmental ethic is possible.

(Cree Elder, Ermine 1995, p. 110)

There are many similarities and commonalities among Indigenous people's worldview and philosophy. Thought is expressed in language and the philosophy of the people is expressed in the Indigenous language of the group. Little Bear (2000) expresses that language structure and composition is designed to articulate Indigenous worldviews, values, conceptualizations and knowledge. Battiste and Henderson (2000), Coleman, Battiste, Henderson, Findlay, and Findlay (2012), Cajete (2000), and Little Bear (2000) illustrate that Indigenous philosophy can be categorized as process thinking and this is radically different from Western philosophy categorized as concept thinking. The verb-based Indigenous languages frame process thinking and consideration of life as active perceptions and actions of natural reality.

Abele, Dittburner, and Graham (2000) assert the importance of language to Indigenous philosophy.

[L]anguage and communication processes lie at the heart of transmitting cultural values and unique world views from one generation to the next...Aboriginal languages are seen as inseparable from issues of Aboriginal identity. As the bearers of thought processes, Aboriginal languages encode unique ways of interpreting the world (p. 26).

Much can be learned from Elders and Keepers of Indigenous language to develop an appreciation in Native Language classes in schools and the academy, and of the connection between world view perspectives (Aboriginal philosophies) and the words we speak. Linguistic scholar, Leavitt (1995) explored language and cultural content in Aboriginal education and illustrated ways of talking about the language and discourse in classrooms that align with cultural linguistic discourse and pedagogy. "Even where students work entirely in English, their personal relationships often retain features of the oral tradition, such as extensive, egalitarian peer integration and collaboration (p. 133). Leavitt describes the dominance of verbs in Aboriginal languages as consistent with "awareness of happening, eventuating, change, flow, interrelationship" (p. 133) and highlights this as "deeper differences in the nature of knowledge itself, in approaches to reasoning, and in the creation of new ideas" (p. 131). Leavitt states that "[w]ith few exceptions, the educational principles and practices of native cultures are not being applied in the classroom, even for native students" (p. 131) and the author makes a recommendation to base education in Indigenous culture, rather than simply including components of material culture such as artefacts, legends, or a static set of data about Aboriginal peoples as content in schools.

Little Bear (2009) aptly expresses the importance of Indigenous languages in education. Social healing and progress will occur only when Aboriginal people again think in sacred modes via their languages" (p. 22).

Henderson (Coleman et al., 2012) provides insight into how Indigenous languages work and are very different from English. The author laments that expert linguists do not say *why* we do certain things in different Indigenous languages and objects are not expressed by a noun or artificial name, but are defined by referents to motion and movement. "[I]t's a different structure

of knowing that's embedded in the language that's related to a deeper cosmology and knowledge system...the reference point is the earth and what lives in the earth lodge in all of our languages and how things are conducted (p. 151).

From the *Anishinaabe* creation story, it is understood that sound accompanied the creative energy of the universe. Rice (2005) explains that

everything that exists and is considered alive can be represented by primal sounds, the sound is more important than the name. These primal sounds exist in languages of the people and in the sounds emitted by the universe...Aboriginal languages are based on word meaning as well as word sounds which place one in relationship with the different aspects of creation (p. 20).

The primal sound of creation is symbolized in the sound of the drum and shaker. The drum is "described as having the same sound as the heart beat of the universe, representing the ever expanding spiral universe" (p. 19). The author discusses communication with nature. "Within many Aboriginal teachings other-than-human persons, such as plants and animals, can be spoken to by humans and understood when they speak to a human" (Rice, 2005, p. 21). Cajete (1994) shares the Tewa view of "language as a sacred expression of breath...and story roots a perspective that unfolds through the special use of language" (p. 32).

Battiste and Henderson (2000) describe the importance of Indigenous language for expressing understanding of creation and the world and illustrate this with the *Mi'kmaq* (allied people) language of the North Atlantic coast within the Algonquian Indigenous language group that "spans most of North America, from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains..forming the dominant Indigenous consciousness of the continent" (p. 75). The authors draw on conversations with physicist, Bohm and Blood philosopher, Little Bear to explain the "implicate order" and its

relations to Indigenous thought. The authors state the vitalizing context of the Mi'kmaq worldview expressed in the language and that it "has not developed a method to explain the forces or to change them, merely to contain them" (p. 79). The Algonquian perceptions of reality include understanding the invisible forces beneath the external forms of life, referred to as *manidoo*. "Most Indigenous peoples believe *something* gives rise to the living organism that contains it and survives this organism when it perishes" (p. 76). The Mi'kmaw language expresses a panorama of energy with verbs that frame the perception of "the great flux, eternal transformation, and interconnected space" (p. 76). The authors state that Mi'kmaq knowledge describes ever-changing insights about patterns or styles of the flux and does not describe or define reality. The phrase, "a never-ending source of wonder to the Indigenous mind" illustrates an active relationship devoid of the pursuit of total knowledge or understanding of all things. There is no singular definition of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge ways of thinking, doing, and Being.

The literature in the field of Aboriginal education, Indigenous philosophy, and social work presents information from a number of Indigenous cultural groups regarding ways of knowledge that are inextricably bound to thinking, doing, and being. Ways of being that are common across cultural groups are evident and described here. Anthropologist Hallowell (1967) described the "central value of Aboriginal Ojibwa culture...expressed by the term *pimadaziwin*, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of health, longevity, and well-being, not only for oneself but for one's family. The goal of living was a good life and the Good Life involved *pimadaziwin*" (p. 360). The world view of the people was the core of achieving the Good Life.

The interactive process of heart-knowledge and mind-knowledge is known in *Anishinaabemowin* as "weh"³³ and is the lens for seeing the interconnectedness of all things. *Anishinaabe* scholar Gehl (2012) explored the "circle of heart" knowledge and the "circle of mind" knowledge working together to come to understand "debwewin - a personal and wholistic truth that is rooted in one's heart" (p. 53). A non-human centric relational philosophy represents Indigenous epistemology (Deloria, 2004, Ermine, 1995). Little Bear (2000) and Cajete (1994) relate that thought is filled with a quality of spirit. Rice (2005) notes that the "actions/behaviours of individuals...maintain stability, harmony, and balance" (p. 73).

Battiste and Henderson (2000) explain that Mi'kmaq consciousness and order are expressed in the language and founded on the sacred view that the world is eternal and subject to endless renewal and realignments, or "the process which is meant to be" (p. 78). Forming consensual relationships or alliance with these forces informs stability in a transforming universe and is supported through the concept of "dignities" or proper conduct toward and relationship with nature and humans. Value in the beauty of quiet consciousness in the space between thoughts for contemplation of the implicate order, vast world, and inner space and "operating in the unknown, with humble respect for its vastness" epitomize a way of being with others and with the self" (p. 79).

The concept of knowledge is also described by Aboriginal people as a process of life-long learning. The Plains people (Bopp et al. 1989) examine the life journey of authentic human development and represent this by the sun's directional path around the earth from the east to the west. "[H]uman potential is infinite. Human developing never stops" (p. 38).

³³ Elder Stanley Peltier, Aboriginal Perspectives Teacher Training, Rainbow District School Board May 2012

Metis/Cree scholar Graveline (1998) describes the individual's responsibility for learning. "The individual was taught to be responsible for his or herself, but not in isolation from the community, or the natural world" (p. 59). The individual is responsible for "...seeking knowledge in experience and stories...[and] using our own bodies and senses to learn" (p. 60).

This dissertation research project is a response to Indigenous language loss and supports language revitalization, specifically *Anishinaabemowin*. Understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and philosophy is brought forward and the research methodology situated within an Indigenous paradigm facilitates communication of ideas and concepts in *Anishinaabemowin*. The research within a school demonstrated *Anishinaabemowin* as central in Teaching stories and research participants' responses and utilization of *Anishinaabemowin* within the text of this academic research report supports the important process of creating space within academia for Indigenous languages.

Cajete (1999b) describes the Indigenous learner's inner space process through which teaching and learning occur. Experiential learning by seeing and doing, storytelling learning by listening and imagining, learning through initiation of ceremony or ritual, learning through dreaming and imagery, mentorship or learning from an apprenticeship and artistic synthesis of creativity are described by the author (Cajete, 1999b, p. 55). Cajete (1994) illustrates a holistic learning process where the learner is immersed within the natural order. "[W]e learn through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds...Indigenous teaching emphasizes seeing things comprehensively - seeing things through and through" (p. 32).

Awaikta (1993) explores the synthesis of heart/mind/soul that honours "the sacred link between the material and the spiritual that makes of the two a seamless whole" (p. 230). Deep

thought arises from the maintenance of inner balance and this requires quietness within.

Awaikta uses the phrase "Be still and know" to describe the process of the inner space (p. 235).

Cree Elder, Ermine (1995) draws attention to the links between self-awareness within a broad view of community that includes "nature", and the meaning-making process from story. People engage in the exercise of inwardness or tapping into the creative force of the inner space to make the unknown - known. "This perception is a form of experiential insight" (p. 103). He describes "the mesmerizing effect of the total interaction in nature" and emphasizes how it is "only by understanding the physical world [that we can] understand the intricacies of the inner space" (107).

The Medicine Circle is a framework for examining and understanding Indigenous constructs such as the cosmic order and unity of all things (Dumont, 2006). Bopp et al. (1989) explored the teachings of the Medicine Circle, an ancient symbol of Native people in Turtle Island. The Medicine Circle is described as

"a symbolic tool that helps us to see that interconnectedness of our being with the rest of creation" (p. 41)...Just like a mirror can be used to see things not normally visible (e.g. behind us or around a corner), the medicine wheel can be used to help us see or understand things we can't quite see or understand because they are ideas and not physical objects" (p. 9).

Utilizing the Medicine Circle, relationships are expressed in sets of four (e.g. physical senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste; four dimensions of true learning - spiritual, emotional, physical, mental; life on *Shkagamik-kwe* (Mother Earth) - mineral, plant, animal, human; four cardinal directions - east, south, west, north).

The process of inner balance and relationships is further illustrated by Bopp et al. (1989).

Human beings must be active participants in the unfolding of their own potentialities" or gifts (p. 30)...Volition or will is a primary force in developing all of our human potentialities and all four dimensions of one's being are also foundational. The Medicine Wheel shows the universe reflected in our being - visualizing oneself in the center, connected equally to all points by the power of will towards idealism [which]...makes all great causes possible...a response of the heart...essentially an emotional attraction to what is good (p. 50).

Idealism and personal vision for our potential is understood from our Elders and the Teachings and trying to live like the people we admire. "Our vision of what we can become is like a strong magnet pulling us toward it" (p. 15).

Rice (2005) makes the connection of the Medicine Circle to Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Patterns of thought set out by a culture help define that culture. For many Aboriginal peoples, a circle represents the space in which we live...Circular patterns established by Aboriginal peoples help define us just as linear structures in western societies define those peoples (p. 4).

Lifelong learning involves developing self awareness and balance among the aspects of oneself - the mind, spirit, body, and feeling/heart. Graveline (1998) states that "...learning and teaching in the Traditional way embraces the mental, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of the individual, the family, the community, and Shkagamikwe as a whole" (p. 54).

Synthesis is a touchstone for Indigenous ways of thinking, being and doing and is described as a transferring process³⁴. Within our ever-changing context of life and contemporary environments, application of the Medicine Circle for our adaptation to virtually any context is possible. Awaitka (1993) described the process of "restoring harmony from the inside out, and of extending that concept from the individual to the community." The author explains the cultural wisdom of "...taking a principle from one sphere and applying it appropriately to another" (p. 283). Indigenous ways of knowing and application of the Medicine Wheel in education are useful tools in Aboriginal education.

Indigenous scholar and researcher, Wilson (2008) explores the Indigenous way of being-in-relationship and relational understanding of reality. Systems of knowledge in their context or in relationship (Indigenous epistemology) within an Indigenous paradigm is not only approached with intellect, but also with the senses and intuition. Relationships are "what surrounds us, and what forms us, our world, our cosmos and our reality. We could not *be* without *being in relationship* with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships" (p. 76).

Anishinaabe scholar and spiritualist Dumont (1976) expresses another way of seeing the world - through Ojibwa eyes that entails a vision before and also behind and an appreciation of the unseen or a fourth-dimension.

[A] three-hundred-and-sixty-degree vision... to perceive and understand the whole nature of an object or event - its physical reality as well as its soul...[A] comprehensive, total viewing of the world and is essential for a harmony and balance amongst all of

³⁴ Elder Leland Bell in a discussion about honouring Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy and maintaining the meaningful connections from *Anishinaabemowin* based on the oral tradition, storytelling, and Elder mentorship for scholars, Sudbury (December 2, 2015).

creation...a *primary* kind of vision and...a *primal* way of seeing...European man has come to think that he has 'progressed'...and developed a more advanced way of seeing and understanding the world...[t]he Indian has an older...comprehensive, double view of the world...and [today] we have lost sight of one whole dimension...by focussing so intently in a scientific and linear fashion, modern man has limited himself - to the extent of perhaps losing entirely a whole way of seeing" (p. 75).

Relationship to place.

The way things were done a long time ago was beneficial to people...Changes that have come with colonialism have affected the knowledge of the people. Knowledge that has been around for centuries has dissipated into thin air...The old ways are just about gone.

(Elder quote from Canadian Council on Learning's Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, Vizina, 2008, p. 26)

Cajete (1994) illustrates the Apache wisdom process as "a constant building upon earlier realities...The newest reality may seem different from earlier ones, but its essence and foundation remain tied to the earlier realities it encases" (p. 28). The perception of *Shkagamik-kwe* as having a living soul and that Indigenous people have responsibilities to *Aki* and all living things that are similar to the responsibilities they have to each other is foundational. Cajete describes 4-dimensional awareness (the seen and unseen) and states that learning how the realities interact is real understanding (p. 32). The author describes the learner's process of seeking understanding and balance and learning from *Aki*.

Elders refer to stories, language, ways, and the Land as gifts and life is in them for those who know how to ask and how to learn" (p. 39)...This way of thinking is based on the physical senses and developing the ability to hear, observe, perceive, and emotionally

feel the spirit moving in all its manifestation in the world around us...*Spirit is real.* It is physically expressed in everything that exists in the world (p. 48).

Stairs (1995) a cultural psychologist and teacher educator described the communicative practice of the north Baffin Island Inuit which engages the learner in reflective processing and knowing relationship to Place.

Native learners typically develop concepts and skills by repeating tasks in many different situations, such as hunting under varying conditions of weather and animal movement and with various types of equipment. They do not traditionally make explicit verbal formulations of basic ideas or rules for success, but rather recount what they have experienced and listen to stories which present concepts and principles implicitly.

Formulation of the big ideas is left to the minds of the individual participants or listeners according to their own experience levels and perspectives (p. 141).

Voice and song.

Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010) describe the learner's connection to Place and the development of human relationship with landscapes over periods of time by learning to look with understanding at what is before you. "[S]tories are situated within a particular place which is often connected to natural settings...[giving] emphasis on developing a relationship with place through oral tradition (p. 18). Dance, music, and language are practices that re-vitalize place.

Basso (1996) discusses how Indigenous knowledge of places and their cultural significance is crucial for obtaining wisdom enacted in the quick and clear recall of different places and identifying places in spoken discourse and in song (p. 134). Basso explains the interconnections of mind, and body and the power of one's voice to align with *Aki*. "When places are actively sensed, the physical Landscape becomes actively wedded to the Landscape of

the mind, to the roving imagination...Grounding ourselves, sending out a sound before approaching a special place on the Land" (p. 107) is practiced. The author uses the metaphor "drinking from places" to nourish the mind with wisdom.

Scholar and ally, Chambers (2008) researched and experienced place-based education within the community context of Kangiryuarmuit of the NWT and the Kainai (Blood) of southern Alberta. The author presented a description of a curriculum of place that includes story and song and emphasis on an education of attention. Knowledge and skills to be able to find one's way in the place where one lives endows an individual with identity. Chambers explains that a curriculum of place calls for an education of attention through direct and sensuous engagement with the world where each generation learns to notice the clues in a place, that are revealed to guide how to live here (p. 122). Stories and songs are "a poetics of remembrance, and those memories are located in places" and "[r]enewal ceremonies, the telling and retelling of creation stories, the singing and resinging of the songs, are all humans' part in the maintenance of creation" (p. 124).

Music as community. Aboriginal music and arts are being incorporated into the schools as arts to provide unique ways for students to understand the world. The study of arts brings deeper understanding and appreciation of other world views. Music education scholar, McIntyre (2012) investigated the issues surrounding infusion for students and discussed the close bond of Aboriginal music with society. The author describes important differences about the music context.

First Nations music usually has a purpose whereas Western music is often art for art's sake; First Nations music is an oral tradition and Western music is often written down; First Nations music is not as talent-focussed because the music is not a performance for

the audience, but is an experience dependent on spirituality meaning that an authentic experience is imperative if the music is to be fully appreciated (p. 26).

The author discusses implementation that is respectful and highlights that Aboriginal music creates intrinsic musical motivation. By pairing it with story and implementing it in relationship with a facilitator and mentor from the Aboriginal community, insight into the larger context of Indigenous culture in the world is enhanced.

The pedagogy in this research approach incorporates student voice through the sharing of stories and singing together in the Circle to create a community that emanates positive feelings. The use of voice to announce oneself to a special Place in the school yard demonstrates connection to *Aki* and initiates self reflection and getting to know oneself. The hand drum and song are instrumental to engagement of the students. Singing together builds a sense of community in the classroom and incorporates *Anishinaabemowin* into the pedagogy.

Indigenous Knowledge transfer.

Elders pass down Indigenous Knowledge through stories and the story-telling process provides opportunity for making-meaning and self-guided learning. Indigenous languages within the oral tradition are touchstones for cultural learning. Authors illustrate the relevancy of Elders and the oral tradition within the pedagogy of contemporary education. Graveline (1998) explains that knowledge-keepers have a responsibility to pass on knowledge orally and through demonstration. She states that, "[t]he persistence of stories and story telling suggests that it is central to an Aboriginal intellectual tradition and provides the core of an educational model" (p. 64). Vizina (2008) observed an Elder forum where they spoke of aware from an early age of their role to gain as much knowledge from the Elders as was possible. Reverence and commitment to this role meant one day being able to pass along the knowledge of history,

tradition, culture and language to the next generation. One Elder explained that traditional knowledge was passed down through the oral tradition and actual experience, hands on, and from the guidance of the Elder or someone who had skill in the particular area of work being done. "The way things were done a long time ago was beneficial to people...Changes that have come with colonialism have affected the knowledge of the people". (Elder quote from Canadian Council on Learning's Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, Vizina 2008, p. 26).

Within an Indigenous paradigm, there are many sources and domains of knowledge that have practical applications in every day life and include such areas as: historical knowledge, ecological harvesting, governance, and medicine. Mohawk scholar, Brant Castellano (2000), explained that Traditional Teachings include knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation. Empirical knowledge is acquired by careful observation by a number of individuals over long periods of time. Sacred knowledge is revealed through spirit dreams, visions and intuitions. Elders and individuals with developed expertise in specific knowledge systems are key to the transmission of knowledge. The pedagogy of learning within a cultural community is illustrated. "School education is...important to some extent, but of primary importance is the grounding in respectful behaviour towards oneself and one's culture (p. 22). Brant Castellano noted from her observations of Elders a pedagogical constant that "[t]he spaces of the 'unspoken' or 'unexplained' emerged as significant opportunities for self-guided learning...The Elders never interrupted other speakers with questions or comments. The Elders never asked another Elder for clarification of a comment (p. 22).

Cajete (1999b) utilizes a Tewah saying, "In sacred places we dwell." as a metaphoric illustration of the role of Elders in handing down inter-generational Indigenous knowledge.

The story of indigenous peoples is about the place of nature in the soul of each of us...In indigenous societies, elders are venerated, not simply because they are old, but because they are embodiments of an indigenous way of learning and understanding...reflected in the ways that they carry themselves, in the ways that they speak and in their ways of being who they are. Indigenous elders reflect an indigenous way of being biophilic [demonstrating love of nature]. (p. 194).

Anishinaabewin (Ways of knowing interconnections and interdependence). The centrality and applicability of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within the Indigenous pedagogical framework of the storytelling oral tradition is the guiding theoretical force in this thesis. In addition to the obvious channels of learning such as physically observing and engaging, the Indigenous ways of knowing our reality honours our inner being.

The oral tradition. Indigenous culture and learning are based on oral traditions and experience. The Indigenous language is a touchstone for pedagogy. "Indigenous peoples have their own philosophies, which they apply when articulating their understandings of the world. Indigenous philosophies are rooted in oral traditions, which generate explanations of the world expressed in indigenous normative languages" (Turner, 2012, p. 81). Respectful adherence to cultural protocols relates to the *Anishinaabe* understanding that our voice is powerful as it is the expression of our life force energy. Our words go around the world forever and so we choose our words carefully.

The process of the oral tradition within the context of Indigenous culture and enactment of orality consciousness in the schools is further explained by Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010). The orature of Indigenous knowledge, relies on the ability of the teller to integrate and synthesize knowledge from an ecological and temporal location of the natural world and through

a unification of mind with place, the listener realizes the lesson. "Stories are corporeal and neurological. Through engagement with human beings, they grow in both meaning and application" (p. 18). The authors acknowledge that in school, a focus on interactions between text and mind is an important part of the educational process. They suggest that moving beyond text by engaging students in a deeper understanding of connection to the places where they live brings power back to the oral tradition. The authors present the idea of a hermeneutic circle or 'reading event' within Indigenous traditions of close analysis and engagement with the oral tradition, where the storyteller and listener engage in a dialogic to personal interpretation. In contrast to dominant culture hermeneutics where insight into meaning requires textual convention, in oral cultures, "text is not necessary because the discovered truth may be a non-human truth that is pan-elemental" (p. 17). Focus on the "literary tradition as being part of oral tradition rather than oral tradition being part of literary tradition" is emphasized (p. 17).

Stories represent the truth of the people and Western scientific processes are different. Indigenous scholars, Hester and Cheney (2001) draw on experiences to explain Native Americans' idea of knowledge as a narrative of a life lived in the world. The individual stories are what is known. They may or may not provide a map of the world, but they do tell about the consequences of actions. "The Native tradition does not abstract truths out of the stories, the stories are often abstract enough in themselves without further removing them from reality." (p. 332). There is no need to engage in the European traditional process of where any "Truth" that one asserts, especially action guiding truths is contradicted by abstracting other "Truth" from other stories (p. 331).

Indigenous philosopher Deloria (2004) discusses the empirical knowledge systems of science and Indigenous peoples. Truth is a matter of ancient perception enacted through the

social relations of story and the oral tradition. Others are entitled to their truths and different perspectives have equal claims to truth. There is no competition to define truth that is situated in the boundaries of how people relate to each other, rather than being based on what they were taught to believe. "Tribal societies and Western thinking are different in approach to the world but equal in conclusions about the world" (p. 5).

In *Anishinaabemowin*, *gwekwaadiziwin*³⁵ refers to the cultural practice of sharing a story based on the individual's life path and sensibility. Direction to the listener is implicit and inevitably honoured through meaning-making. Stories and legends transmitted from generation to generation in Indigenous culture are connected to natural settings and stories are the life-blood of Indigenous oral culture. The storyteller speaks their truth, expressing their understanding of, or a reflection on, ancient knowledge truths and the listener engages in the meaning-making within the current, contemporary context.

Indigenous education scholar and researcher, Archibald (2008) explains the "mystery, magic, and truth/respect/trust relationship between the speaker/storyteller and listener/reader" of storywork (p. 20). Story sharing creates understanding about respectful relationships between people, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals and toward cosmic order, the self and connections to our lives that are part of the ongoing process of the oral tradition. The listener engages in making-meaning.

Another important principle of learning through storytelling is that since stories can be heard again and again, the meanings that one makes or doesn't make from them can happen at any time. One does not have to give a meaning right after hearing a story, as with the question-and-answer pedagogical approach. An important consideration is

³⁵ Elder S. T. Peltier (personal communication, June 2013)

hearing stories over time so that they become embedded in memory (p. 25)...Stories can be heard again and again and the meanings that the listener makes or doesn't make from them can happen at any time. One does not have to give a meaning right after hearing a story, as with the question-and-answer pedagogical approach. An important consideration is hearing stories over time so that they become embedded in memory (p. 24).

The importance of story to Indigenous people in Canada has been illustrated by the work of ethnographic anthropologists. Hallowell researched the Ojibwe in northern Manitoba in the 1930's. Brown and Gray (2010) present his writing about two types of traditional oral narratives. tabatcamoin - anecdotes or stories, referring to events in the lives of human beings (anicinabek). In content, narratives of this class range from everyday occurrences, through more exceptional experiences to those which verge on the legendary[;...myths (atisokanak) i.e., sacred stories, which are not only traditional and formalized; their narration is seasonally restricted and is somewhat ritualized. The significant thing about these stories is that the characters in them are regarded as living entities who have existed from time immemorial...the majority of characters in the myths behave like people, though many of their activities are depicted in a spatio-temporal framework of cosmic, rather than mundane, dimensions. There is a 'social interaction' among them and between them and anicinabek. (p. 542).

The researcher interpreted the Ojibwa concept of the "High God" as a very remote figure who does not appear in *atisokanak*.

In *Anishinaabemowin*, the implicit order of the universe is referred to as *manidoo ishpiming*³⁶. *Giizhigong*³⁷ is described as: the place where the source resides; the place where the light travels; and the place of creation where matter originated

Cree Elder, Ermine (1995) explains the role of the trickster in stories and legends that are passed down through the generations and stimulate higher-order thinking in the listener each time the story is heard.

The trickster-transformer continues to guide our experiences into the deep reaches of the psyche and the unfathomable mystery of being. The Old Ones knew of this character who directs us around the inner space and saw in him the potential for much deeper exploration into and knowledge from the very self... [guiding] young people into various realms of knowledge...[and] self-actualization. The fact that this trickster-transformer continues to intrigue us speaks of our unfinished exploration of the inner space (p. 105).

The pedagogy of story.

[S]tory may well be the most appropriate pedagogical tool and heuristic device for learning and teaching what it means to be Anishinaabe.

(From B. Johnston in Pitawanakwat, 2013, p. 372)

Stories teach us about ourselves and each other and are an important aspect of this research methodology. The power of story for learning and developing relationships is

³⁶ Anishinabe conceptual terms provided by Odawa Elder, S. T. Peltier. (Personal communication Winter 2013).

³⁷ Odawa Elder S. T. Peltier ibid.

illustrated in bodies of research within education, Aboriginal education, and Indigenous philosophy, among others. Indigenous scholar, Burkhart (2004) illustrates the learning and symbolic representation within the context of the story-telling process. Much of the communication concerning natural phenomena is highly contextualized in Native American culture, and information is conveyed, and symbolically coded based on experiential knowledge (for example, in art, legends, stories and ceremonies).

The pedagogy of story is illustrated by the work of a number of Indigenous scholars and researchers (Archibald 1995, 1997, 2008; Graveline 1996, 1998; Hart 1995, 2007; Lavallée 2009, Peltier, 2014). Graveline (1998) illustrates the importance of the listening process for Aboriginal people within a pedagogical framework and the oral tradition. The learner "listen[s] intently and respectfully to Elders and teachers in a non-demonstrative, introspective way, experiencing fully what they hear" (p. 64) to internalize the story.

Stories have always been accepted by Traditionalists as a way of teaching/learning from other's experience...A true story is one that is narrated by the person who had the life experience or who heard it from the person who did. Multiple experiences of the same story or experience are possible as each storyteller understands the truth from their own location and adds each new experience or story to their repertoire (p. 67).

Wilson (2008) explains the importance of the storyteller-listener relationship in the storytelling pedagogy.

The storyteller imparts their own life and experience into the telling and the listeners filter the story being told through their own experience and adapt it to make it relevant to their own life (p. 17)...When listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how

the story fits into the storyteller's life, it makes the absorption of the knowledge that much easier (p. 32).

In my community role as a grandmother, I have on occasion shared a personal experience story when approached by someone looking for an answer to a problem or when I felt that my truth presented in an honest and respectful way might provide guidance to a young person. I have also been honoured when a young woman has asked me to share a ceremony song and retell the story about its origin and appropriate contexts for singing it with a hand-drum or shaker. These responsibilities uphold the oral tradition and connect me to the place of my ancestors.

Cree educator and researcher Lanigan (1998) utilized Cree legends and story Circles as pedagogy and described the stimulation of creativity. "Stories incorporate several possible explanations for phenomena, allowing listeners to creatively expand their thinking processes so that each problem they encounter in life can be viewed from a variety of angles before a solution is reached" (Lanigan, 1998, p. 113).

Sharing Circles.

In Talking Circle...in "circle time"	We open our Hearts Speak what we know to be True Share what we Care deeply about As Honestly as we can...	as Respectfully as we are able. We are able to enter into another's experiences through their Words. A doorway to self- examination...	a social context for a "personal experience."
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(Graveline, 1998, p. 136-137)

Sharing Circles, story Circles, and talking Circles are described in the literature and have their origin in the process of Indigenous Knowledge transmission. Within the context of Teaching lodges and other community contexts, stories are shared in a group setting.

Hart (1995) refers to Charter (1994) and Katz and St. Denis (1991) who described the historical Cree teaching context. When teaching is done in a group, "people gather in a circle where the topic is symbolically placed at the centre of the circle and everyone has a chance to share their views about the topic" (p. 65). He explains that "since everyone is in a circle they will each have a different perspective of the topic or part of the picture. Everyone expresses their views so that a full picture of the topic is developed. Individual views are blended until consensus on the topic is reached" (p. 65).

Indigenous scholars and researchers have illustrated story Circles, sharing Circles, and Talking Circles as a methodological process that provides a rich data set. Archibald and Haig Brown (1996) provide an explanation of talking Circles where participants have an equal chance to speak and be heard about the topic brought to the circle. Lavallée (2009) is an Indigenous scholar who utilized qualitative Indigenous research methods such as sharing circles and reflection.

Stairs (1994) describes how Sharing Circles bring elders and educators together and make visible certain dimensions to which both insiders and outsiders in Aboriginal settings have historically been culturally blind. Reflection, story-telling and relationships can build worthwhile knowledge and experience. A cultural negotiation model of Indigenous education is essentially narrative as the story is told from daily micro-events in the classroom to overarching models of cultural context and meaning (Stairs, 1994, p. 169). Supportive relationships and respectful interactions are foundational to negotiating space and moving forward in the schools. Reflection and participation in sharing Circles may create insight for bridging to the classroom.

Aboriginal Elders and teachers play an important role in the education of children. The oral tradition is honoured in this research project and a knowledgeable *Anishinaabe* grandmother shares Teaching stories to facilitate listening, reflection, and understanding.

Educational Transformation

Critical pedagogy - The teacher as reflective learner. Education scholars and researchers, Jakubowski and Visano (2002) explore critical pedagogy and describe the unique context for research in the classroom where there is ontological priority to the "lived" experience in contexts created by students and teachers (p. 120). Open inquiry respects the diverse needs and backgrounds of students and supports an "authentic education" so that students and teachers recognize the existence of alternative worldviews. This includes "...understanding the construction of hegemony and, related to that, the silencing of certain voices" (p. 130). Society's dominant culture values of discipline, conformity and respect for authority are challenged by critically responsive pedagogical alternatives such as "the teacher as learner"(p. 131).

The collaborative inquiry professional learning approach (Ontario Ministry of Education (2014b) engages educators as researchers and shifts the role "...from lead knower to lead learner" (p. 5). Students are viewed as "the experts of their own experience" (p. 7) and teachers "integrate student experiences and knowledge within practice" (p. 5). Collaborative inquiry aligns with a culture of inquiry that "...begins with a curiosity or a specific issue about learning or learners" (p. 3.). Student thinking and creativity honoured within the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy stimulate further inquiry and interest and a classroom inquiry process can facilitate ongoing learning across many subject areas such as math, science, social studies, history, geography.

This case study is situated from within an Indigenous paradigm and utilizes an Indigenous pedagogy and is considered by the researcher as illustrating praxis toward critical pedagogy in education. Increasing knowledge and understanding about Indigenous philosophy and ways of being demonstrates respect for cultural complexity. Self-reflection and critique of teaching strategies and attitudes towards diversity and multi-logical perspectives is required for practical application in the classroom or "putting the knowledge to use".

Allies in Aboriginal education. The legitimacy of an indigenous paradigm in education and research has been raised and alliances and long-term relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have grown. Indigenous scholars such as Haig-Brown and Dannenmann (2002), Little Bear (2000), Deloria (2001), Brant Castellano (2000), have worked within the Western-European framework of the academy to build alliances and raise the legitimacy of an Indigenous paradigm.

This process is connected to the transformations occurring in elementary and secondary schools. Dion and Dion (2004) and Dion (2009) researched classroom contexts to reveal how identity relates to what an educator is "willing to know" with regards to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples' shared history in Canada. Teachers situate themselves on the inside of society and perceive Aboriginal peoples on the margins and do not readily cross the divide.

FitzMaurice (2010) is an Indigenous Studies scholar and ally who understands the time and energy required to "effectively move beyond stereotypical representations, learn about our colonial histories and current realities, and work through our negative tendencies towards white guilt and Aboriginal anger...This process of 'Indigenizing whiteness' [can create] meaningful alliances" (p. 364).

Community-based culturally responsive education.

Education is, at its essence, learning about life through participation and relationship in community, including not only people, but plants, animals, and the whole of nature.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 26)

Research has shown Indigenous students' academic performance is improved when school curricula promote the language and culture of the local community (Demmert, 2001). The Education, Jurisdiction and Governance Department of the Assembly of First Nations (Longboat, 2012) discussion paper states:

the past forty years have been witness to an evolutionary development in education called culturally responsive education that has now taken its place as a feature of major importance contributing to the academic success of Indigenous learners in the elementary and secondary levels of education in Canada (Longboat, 2012, p. 69).

Culturally-based education is described as a wholistic process for the learner that capitalizes on learner strengths and incorporates humour of the local culture. Approximately seventy percent of Indigenous students in Canada now attend school off reserve or away from their communities (p. 109). Community-based culturally responsive education happen not only in on-reserve schools but also in the urban and rural settings with Aboriginal community partnerships.

Student success in urban Aboriginal education.

It has become possible for Indian people to refuse to speak about ourselves in ways foreign to us, to explain ourselves in terms not appropriate to us, to judge ourselves by criteria we did not institute, or to accept that our traditional knowledge is not knowledge at all. We can hold firm our own indigenous ways of knowing and, in doing, protect and preserve those ways.

(Garrouette, 1999, p. 110)

Scholars in the field of education have contributed to understanding the context of Aboriginal peoples' experiences in *urban centres* and determined cultural aspects and strategies in education systems that support student success (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bouvier 2001; Longboat 2012; Beckford & Nahdee 2011; Toulouse 2008; Sterzuk 2008; Peltier 2010, 2011, 2014; Stairs 1995). Scholars and researchers in a local (North Bay, Ontario) urban center have recently provided a wealth of information regarding urban Aboriginal people's cultural and educational needs and perspectives (North Bay Indian Friendship Center, 2014). In Toronto, an extensive research project describes the urban Aboriginal people and community and illustrates their cultural and educational aspirations and life style (McCaskill, FitzMaurice, & Cidro, 2011).

Kanu (2002, 2011) engaged Aboriginal students of inner-city Winnipeg in conversations to identify the pedagogical and interaction patterns that have resulted in negative and positive learning experiences for these students as learners. Her research informs teachers in the development of effective teaching and classrooms that reduced the rupture between home culture and school.

Indigenous bi-cultural education.

Seeking the roots, their functions, and the relationships and connections between things forms the basis of Native scientific methodology... "the universe is alive." This world view is in stark contrast to a western scientific paradigm and methodology.

S. Lakota (Hunkpapa) philosopher Deloria Jr. (1986, p.6)

Finding and offering culturally relevant education programs for Aboriginal students is a growing concern. Contemporary education policy, curricula, and teachers are working toward inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives within the Western-based curricula. Bi-cultural education approaches had their origins in Aboriginal-community specific contexts such as First Nations schools and today are a response to culture-conflict educational situations experienced by Indigenous learners in mainstream and First Nations schools. Collaboration with the Aboriginal community is crucial for this process to be successful. Culturally responsive teaching such as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for students showed positive outcomes.

Effective bi-cultural educational procedures have been developed for mathematics (Graham, 1988; Howard & Perry, 2007), Native language (White, 1996) and science (Aikenhead & Michell 2011, Cajete 1999b, Deloria 2004, Lewthwaite et al. (2010)) in the schools. Cajete (1994, 1999a,) promotes an honouring of the foundations of Indigenous knowledge in education by reconciling Indigenous perspectives in sciences with a Western academic setting. The author has contributed to bi-cultural education programming based on an examination of the multiple levels of meaning that inform Indigenous astronomy, cosmology, psychology, agriculture. Cajete

(1999a) describes the process of bi-cultural science education where initially students learn basic science skills through the use of familiar things or events that tap into students' curiosity and later, a comparison of the way in which science as a thought process is exemplified in both their particular culture and that of the larger society.

Cherokee scholar, Garrouette (1999) advocates for a bi-cultural approach inclusive of cultural parity in the science classroom rather than having "traditional and scientific knowledge claims simply stand side by side" (p. 103). Culturally relevant educational programming to understand the different models of inquiry and to appreciate not only "what" the ancestors believed, but also to understand "how" they believed supports the integrity of Indigenous Knowledge and interferes with the "...ideological assumption that all thought systems, in all times and places, have been more or less close approximations to the single source of truth that the modern West has finally perfected: science" (p. 105).

Aikenhead and Michell (2011) represent a partnership of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal interests in building cultural bridges in a cross-cultural science curricula in rural and urban middle grade contexts. This approach supports scientific literacy for all students and helps Aboriginal students cross the cultural divide in knowing about nature that is encountered when Eurocentric school science meets traditional Indigenous Knowledge. Students make meaning by appropriating ideas from Aboriginal and Western sciences. Aboriginal students are lead by the teacher who identifies the cultural borders to be crossed, guides students back and forth, invites students to make sense out of cultural conflicts that might arise, and motivates students by drawing upon the impact Western science and technology have had on students' everyday lives. Such a teacher is called a "culture broker," a role described by First Nations educator Stairs (1995).

Cajete's (1999a) ethnoscience curriculum model incorporates an Indigenously derived structure called a "curriculum mandala". "Re-establishing the meaningful ties to the land that have been lost [through] re-vitalizing ancestral connections with Nature and its inherent meaning is an essential transformational process for Indian people" (p. 85). The author describes the curriculum as more than a bi-cultural approach since it presents "ethnosciences of American Indians...a valuable tool for understanding, the cultural influences in science. It provides a way for Indians and non-Indians to gain insights about themselves and cultural conditioning in the natural world" (p. 195). ...The Indigenous science curriculum follows the logic and integrative process that is inherent in the orienting of Indigenous learning (p. 198).

Honouring Aboriginal Pedagogy and Epistemology for Ethical Research

The guides and the hunters - what a contrast! If the guides could tell the hunters what being in that bush means to them - now, that would be worth something. To the guide that bush is home and he is kin to everything that lives there...But to the hunters it was getting away...and...so long as they went home with a trophy.

(Pelletier, 1973, p. 92)

Combining Indigenous principles and case study practice. Relational ideology and research process are important within an Indigenous paradigm. My process is like what Wilson (2008) describes. My life experience (upbringing, culture, Elders/mentors/teachers, profession) and personal characteristics come together to form an Indigenous research paradigm that is followed through at all stages of this research. This paradigm is defined by the beliefs that guide my actions as a researcher and include the way I view reality, how I think about or know this reality, my ethics and morals, and how I go about "coming to know" more. From the Indigenous paradigm, knowledge is seen as belonging not to the individual, but to the cosmos of which we

are part. The researcher is only the interpreter of this knowledge. Research is interconnected and relational with everything around, with an emphasis on reciprocity and respect. These aspects make Indigenous research emergent, unique, and context-specific. It presents a story for the reader to take what is good and useful for their own praxis.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers have brought honour to Indigenous knowledge systems in the academy and Cree scholar and researcher, Kovach (2009) describes the growing recognition among many Indigenous peoples that "for their cultural knowledge to thrive it must live in many sites, including Western education and research" (12). The author describes Indigenous research frameworks as conceptual tools to carry out research upholding cultural knowledges.

Indigenous research methodologies and approaches. A number of Indigenous scholars have demonstrated applications of qualitative research utilizing Indigenous methodologies. The scholarly work of Absolon (2011) has contributed to establishing the visibility and knowledge of Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge within and outside of the Academy and illustrates the transformative potential of an Indigenous paradigm as a viable key to Indigenize the education of Indigenous people and to Indigenize contemporary Western education. Absolon provides a rationale for avoiding comparisons to Western-European methods in order to honour working within an Indigenous paradigm. Absolon laments that "[c]olonization has attempted to make our realities invisible...[turning] us into the disappearing race and she illustrates her *Anishinaabe* research process that makes the invisible - visible and demonstrates that Indigenous knowledge is valid, real and concrete (p. 12)." The author states that this approach does not "make comparisons with eurowestern methods of searching. There is no need to. There are many pathways to knowledge" (p. 12).

Indigenous research framework development and implementation is evident in the urban Aboriginal community. The urban community-based Friendship Centers of Ontario have developed a research protocol that supports community Aboriginal people to generate and share knowledge where the process and outcomes are owned by the community, not by an individual or researcher. "[H]aving tea with an Elder is a valid way of seeking knowledge...offering tobacco is a valid way of ethically obtaining consent from participants...and [cultural] activities...are appropriate contexts for exploring research questions" (North Bay Indian Friendship Center, 2014, p. 30).

Indigenous scholar, O'Meara (1995) supports transformation through dialogue in the academy

When we talk about open dialogue between the Native and non-Native in an academic environment, different patterns of thinking must be respected. A new means of communication must happen in all aspects of native culture with the interchange of ideas. Moreover, this dialogue has to happen at all levels, in government and in places of learning. The dialogue must leave room for respecting differing ways of life" (p. 136).

Kovach (2010) explains that "Indigenous methodologies are a paradigmatic approach based upon an Indigenous philosophical positioning or epistemology" (p. 40). The researcher's appreciation of the experiential aspect of Indigenous approaches to learning and knowing and knowledge of Indigenous community protocols for how activities are carried out support this approach to the research. An Indigenous worldview has influenced the chosen methods, how data will be gathered, and data analysis and interpretation.

Protection from appropriation. A discussion about appropriation here relates to the problematic situation where non-Aboriginal people take away or engage in extraction from

Indigenous cultures and make them their own outside of the cultural context for personal benefit.

Within the Aboriginal community, there is a fear of being exploited that is deeply rooted in historical relations with Western researchers and academics not acknowledging Elder wisdom or misrepresenting the Teachings. There are various areas of exploitation such as medicine, *Aki* resources, arts, philosophy and pedagogy. Haig-Brown (2010) explains the process of cultural appropriation and promotes the establishment of an "appropriate cultural protocol in the use of Indigenous knowledges by non-Aboriginal people in educational contexts" (p. 925).

Battiste (2008) describes the "commoditization of knowledge [that] has been in practice for 500 years" and discusses the ethics of enabling "Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities to exercise control over information relating to their knowledge and heritage and to themselves" (p. 503). In 2010 Battiste explored appropriation in public education:

Scientists have just begun to recognize the potential of Indigenous knowledge, but there is still much work to be done. In order to protect it, we must consider the Eurocentric biases and cultural appropriations that are endangering Indigenous peoples' cultures and languages, for these cultures and languages are the source of Indigenous knowledge. In schools, we must engage in a critique of the curriculum and examine the connections between – and the framework of meanings behind – what is being taught, who is being excluded, and who is benefiting from public education... for all learners to learn it respectfully with Aboriginal people and without appropriating their new knowledge and experience for their own expedient ends (p. 17).

The approach in this research project honours the integrity of the oral tradition and Indigenous paradigm of knowing. The stories that have been passed down through the oral tradition for millennia are situated within an Indigenous cultural context and do take the listener

on an inward journey of self-reflection and wholistic knowing. The Teaching stories are not represented in detailed text as there is no need for this within an Indigenous paradigm and by eliminating lesson plans and scripted talk, the honouring of oral tradition relationship and context is exemplified. I feel that the oral transmission of knowledge is undermined in the Euro-Canadian educational context which emphasizes literacy consciousness and Aboriginal education is greatly dependent on written text. It is my intention to stimulate appreciation for Indigenous orality consciousness by enacting an Anishinaabe storywork Circle pedagogy in the classroom. This is my responsibility as an Anishinaabe-kwe and teacher and I do not mean to give it away to the institutions in the form of explicit texts and lesson plans devoid of a lived story process and so I choose to preserve it and enact it within the formal educational context for the benefit of the next seven generations. All students and educators can appreciate the oral tradition and the inward journey of reflection and making-meaning in schools when an Anishinaabe storywork Circle pedagogy is experienced.

Indigenous scholars and researchers have demonstrated approaches that protect cultural integrity and avoid appropriation. Indigenous scholar and researcher from the Sto:lo Nation in British Columbia, Archibald (2008) worked closely with Elders over the course of several years and facilitated respectful relationship between traditional storytellers and the schools.

Political advocacy work in Canada to interrupt appropriation within the context of education is highlighted by (Longboat, 2012). "The work in evaluation has been one of the prime areas where First Nations have laid claim to the intellectual property rights of Indigenous knowledge, cultural property rights, and have established ethical research standards involving reciprocity and responsibility (Longboat, 2012, p. 135).

The work of Indigenous scholars and allies lays a strong foundation for educational transformation with the welcoming of Indigenous ways of being and doing in the schools. An Indigenous research paradigm and application of Indigenous knowledge and *Anishinaabemowin* within an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy support authenticity in Aboriginal education through experiential learning and relationship with an *Anishinaabe* grandmother as teacher.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

When the Aboriginal community sends out word that they will host an upcoming Powwow celebration, a planning phase ensues, bringing people and resources together. No detail is overlooked to ensure smooth execution of the gathering and honouring invited visitors. The community Powwow is meticulously planned and all resources are utilized. This activity is like designing the research and implementing the methodological plan.

This chapter describes the theoretical framework for this qualitative research project which encompasses *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. The methodology is a case study that gives voice to children in the classroom and as a child-centred research approach, is based on an acknowledgement that children are teachers and are worthy of study to bring forward their thinking in response to experiences and their agency for activating educational and social transformation. This research is not being conducted within an Aboriginal community. Relationship and benefit to the community are touchstones for ethical research. The thinking and feelings of 9-, 10-, and 11-year-old children in the classroom where learning about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within an Indigenous pedagogy is represented in student narratives, drawings, and written texts. Teacher conversations and interviews are utilized to examine the teacher's process of learning by doing and reflections on teaching and student learning.

As the researcher, I assume the role of participant-observer, close to the learning experience of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and the process of *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. As theory and practice become inseparable and the case study findings are presented, Aboriginal education praxis is informed.

As a storyteller in this case study research, I honour *gwekwaadiziwin* (the cultural practice of sharing a story based on the individual's life path and sensibility where direction to the listener is implicit and inevitably honoured through meaning-making). I echo the belief illustrated by Archibald (2008) that story sharing creates understanding about respectful relationships between people, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals and toward cosmic order, the self and connections to our lives that are part of the ongoing process of the oral tradition. "Stories can be heard again and again and the meanings that the listener makes or doesn't make from them can happen at any time" (p. 24). This supports my faith in the process that participants in the Circles will have new understandings immediately and in future.

My intention for this research is to explain an Indigenous research paradigm and the relationships surrounding it. The power of an Indigenous research methodology does not require validation by a dominant Western-European tradition. Similarly, critiquing dominant research paradigms as a way to promote the need for an Indigenous paradigm erodes the underlying beliefs (respect, non-interference) upon which the paradigm is established. I have selected qualitative research methods established in the academy and applied them within this Indigenous research perspective.

My Research Design

Indigenous mythopoetic traditions such as the oral tradition (messages with words and those that include sound, dance, music, games, gestures, symbols, art, and dream that amplify thoughts, teachings, and emotions), drawings, the arts, and practical education are highly integrated expressions of thought, reflection, and participation (p. 132). "Art is an essential part of human learning and plays a pivotal role in the development of the inherent potentials of every person, regardless of social, cultural, or political status.

(Cajete, 1994, p. 163)

This research project approach is grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm and *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. The design is informed by Indigenous philosophy - assumptions and principles from Indigenous theory influenced the project design. The research design and methodological approach utilizes mixed methodologies that are complementary to an Indigenous paradigmatic approach. The focus of this case study is to demonstrate *Anishinaabewin*, an *Anishinaabe* way of coming to know (theory and praxis³⁸) about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within in an urban elementary public school classroom. This case study demonstrates the creation of space for Indigenous Circle storywork pedagogy and illustrates ways of knowing the interrelationships and interconnections with *Aki* and each other.

The paradigm for this research context includes theory and practice that is based on Indigenous knowledges with specific contextual knowledge from *Anishinaabe* culture and traditions in particular. This particular research is conducted by an *Anishinaabe* researcher who is a member of the local urban case study context. The Teaching stories and *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy are representative of the local Aboriginal cultural protocols and cultural content. The target group of research participants is not Aboriginal-specific (*Anishinaabek* and Dene students as well as non-Aboriginal students and the teacher) and the project context is situated within Aboriginal education. The research design and approaches taken during this research project are within an Indigenous research paradigm.

A qualitative approach incorporating the Western-based ethnographic method of a case study along with Indigenous methodologies such as Indigenous storywork Circle pedagogy

³⁸ Praxis is term that refers to the process of educator action and reflection (Haig-Brown & Archibald, 1996)

(Graveline, 1998) and conversational method (Haig-Brown, 2002) are utilized in order to explore the creation of space for *Anishinaabe* pedagogy and creation of ecological relational knowledge in an urban grade four/five classroom. The observance of peer-to-peer relationships and sense of classroom community over the course of the research is of interest and as well as representation of student and teacher voices to honour story within this process of Indigenous researching and knowing.

Qualitative researchers (Chase, 2005; Swanborn, 2010) and Indigenous researchers working within an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2009; Wilson 2008) informed some of the strategies that I applied to the case study research. Storytelling as methodology demonstrated in the literature has significantly impacted my approach to this dissertation project. Baskin's (2011) research approach utilizing storytelling which the author described as "a vibrant component of Indigenous research methodologies" (p. 228). Hampton (1995) promoted storytelling by research participants to ensure "a reflective discussion that enables all participants, including the researcher, to build knowledge together...the key to Indigenous research methodology - building knowledge collectively by focusing on the community in order to create richer understandings" (p. 13).

An Indigenous research paradigm is not narrowly confined to research by Aboriginal people, with Aboriginal people and for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people participated in this research case study which is framed within an Indigenous paradigm and enacted by an *Anishinaabe* researcher. The majority of the students in the case study are non-Aboriginal and a few *Anishinaabek* and one Dene student are included in this sample. My cultural acumen and membership as *Anishinaabe* suit an Indigenous research paradigm in the investigation. The research methodology is mixed with some Indigenous methodology

components (*Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy, teacher conversations) and non-Indigenous qualitative methods (case study framework and teacher interviews).

The work of Absolon (2011) contributes to understanding an Indigenous research process and context. Absolon explored an Indigenous research paradigm in-depth and demonstrated Indigenous methodologies and alignment with the worldviews and principles that they rest on. The author hyphenated the term "re-search" to mean "to look again" as this reflects an Indigenous process of knowledge seeking and production or searching and gathering (p. 21).

Paradigms are frameworks, perspectives or models from which we see, interpret and understand the world. A paradigm is influenced by culture, socialization and experiences. Our understandings about the nature of our existence and our reality and how we come to know about our existence and reality make up a paradigm. The morals and ethics that guide us are also a part of our paradigms (p. 53).

Since paradigm shifts occur particularly in social research, articulating an Indigenous paradigm sets the foundation for research work. My incorporation of *Anishinaabemowin* to convey worldview perspectives and research outcomes is meant to exemplify the Indigenous paradigm and ways of knowing. Not believing that we know everything means walking with humility and a relational and process-based ideology. Absolon looked to *Anishinaabemowin* to express our understanding of our existence and how we come to know about our reality and existence rather than academic terms such as ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. "Paradigms are the understandings that ground us in the world, and our knowing, being and doing are guided by these. There can be many paradigms, and paradigms can shift" (p. 53).

Wilson (2008) explained that "reality is relationships or sets of relationships...[T]here is no one definite reality but rather different sets of relationships" (p. 73). This brings to mind the Indigenous perspective that forces in the universe are expansive and in a constant state of flux. Reinsborough and Barndt (2010) described the layers of reality as "cosmovision."

The "collectivist" aspect of knowledge within an Indigenous paradigm (Deloria 2001, p. 86) is examined within the research context of the grade five/six classroom. The process of reconciling different beliefs and points of view within the classroom community to develop the cumulative testimony of the group is observed and monitored. Indigenous worldview or philosophy is expressed as epistemology³⁹ or what Graveline (2000, p. 361) refers to as "self-in-relation". Relational ideology is at the centre of this research theory and practice. My visits to the class on five occasions, field notes and journal observations of the teacher's and students' stories, drawings, and writings, anecdotal notes made before, during and after outside activities and periodic teacher conversations yield hunches, insights, and wonderings from the reflexivity that arises from being-in-relation with research participants. Specifics of the research context follow in the 'Description of the Case Study Setting' section.

As the researcher, my role of participant observer in the elementary classroom provides a holistic perspective of the context through engagement in and observation of the setting to describe its social and behavioural processes and relationships of the students and classroom teacher. My location from within an Indigenous paradigm and engagement in a qualitative research approach means that I am not a neutral instrument of the research process. Kovach (2009) describes how subjectivity within this process implies a relational approach with

³⁹ Epistemology is defined as "knowledge nested within the social relations of knowledge production" (Kovach, 2010, p. 41).

reflexivity. "Reflexivity is the researcher's own self reflection in the meaning making process" (p. 32). I utilize a double-entry journal strategy (*italicized* text) to convey my interpretation and reflection on the research process throughout the data collection and discussion sections of this dissertation.

Situating myself in the research and declaring bias. The learning journey in this research process is expanding my perception of issues and solutions to problems in Aboriginal education. The words of Hampton (1995) speak to me and inform my process of situating myself in the research. He describes the continually changing context:

Indian education *sui generis...*[is] like currents in a river - some currents are stronger than others in a particular time or place...You can say that in writing about Indian education I am often so close that I can only see one side. Rarely am I able to step back and see one or two other sides but it takes many of us to see more than that. As in all conversations, it is the difference in our knowledge and language that makes a conversation difficult and worthwhile. This is common earth that we stand on that makes communication possible. Standing on the earth with the smell of spring in the air, may we accept each other's right to live, to define, to think, and to speak. (p. 42).

I assume a role that requires intellectual fortitude and scholarly writing skill development that is outlined by Turner (2006) in support of the development of a more robust community of critical Indigenous intellectuals.

The non-Aboriginal intellectual community does not recognize Indigenous philosophy as valuable sources of knowledge and our ways are typically of interest to anthropologists or historians to generate a discourse about Aboriginal peoples than in understanding the epistemological value of Indigenous ways of knowing (p. 90).

He asserts an important role for Indigenous scholars who are adept "word warriors", knowledgeable about non-Indigenous legal and political practices acquired from an education in the dominant culture's intellectual community (p. 95) to work with Elders and "indigenous philosophers" - indigenous intellectuals who possess the privileged forms of indigenous knowledge (p. 72).

Anishinaabe scholar, Absolon (2011) explains the challenge of being Indigenous within the Academy and describes a purpose which I relate to. "Most re-searchers referred to their search as a journey or learning path, but mainly a journey that was challenging at the personal, emotional, spiritual and mental levels of being. These journeys evidence tenacity and backbone within Indigenous researchers" (p. 95). Being able to negotiate two realities at once is a consciousness of mentally moving between the two worlds (Aboriginal worldview and a Eurowestern worldview) on a daily basis or Indigenous "bi-cultural understandings of two knowledge sets in two worldviews" (p. 160). The author describes this process as "having your feet in two canoes and somehow maintaining a balance" (p. 160). Doing Indigenous work within the academy means meeting the expectations of "naming and dealing with our dualities while affirming our bi-cultural orientations" (p. 160). "Within the academy, the role of Indigenous re-searchers is to transform systems of knowledge production, to be congruent with Indigenous world-views and to play a role in producing knowledge and information that is useful, beneficial and purposeful toward Indigenous emancipatory goals" (p. 106). This research utilizes an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants (classroom teacher and students) as a means of demonstrating how the oral tradition and Teaching stories stimulate thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. The researcher and all research participants embody cultural complexity with a unique breadth and

depth of beliefs, values, and experiences. This reality is more expansive than a notion of biculturalism and the Indigenous stories and pedagogy have relevance for all. How students and the classroom teacher's new knowledge is represented illustrates the relevancy and value of Indigenous pedagogy and relationship with the Aboriginal community in the schools.

I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of Indigenous researchers and scholars who have developed applications of an Indigenous research framework within the academy. Several researchers (Absolon, 2011; Archibald, 2008; Baskin, 2011; Gehl, 2012; Graveline, 1998; Kanu, 2011; and Wilson, 2008) have inspired me and the work of allies (Fitzmaurice 2010, Haig-Brown 2010, 2008, 2002, 2001, 1996) have helped me to understand my responsibility in the role of an Indigenous educational partner within mainstream institutions. My family is fundamental to actualizing self-in-relation, my impetus for gaining an education and engaging in research. I strive towards maintaining balance of my personal and family life and work and refer to what *Anishinaabe* educator, White (1996) has expressed about working with students in a way that brings honour to the relationship through what she calls "The seven gifts of the Seven Grandfathers" (p. 119).

Indigenous researcher and scholar, Graveline (1998) has explored the oral tradition extensively and states that "[k]nowledge base is expressed in traditional story form...[L]anguage loss equivocally means culture loss" (p. 67). Understanding about how world view perspectives are expressed within Indigenous language words and concepts informs my research process. I model *Anishinaabemowin* key concepts and terms frequently in Teaching stories with students to demonstrate *Anishinaabe* philosophy and build circle participants' comprehension and appreciation of *Anishinaabemowin*.

This dissertation is being written from my personal vantage point that is supported by twenty-nine years of experience in schools, Indigenous educational research expertise, and six years full-time employment in a local public school board. The context for the field research of this project is the district First Nation Métis and Inuit Program where my cultural affinity as an *Anishinaabe* woman and Grandmother provides depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding about reciprocity. Situating myself in this project facilitates research *by and with* Aboriginal peoples and an ethical research approach (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Within the school board, I have been involved in classrooms to support the Aboriginal Perspectives Framework - a collaboration with classroom teachers to demonstrate infusion of *Anishinaabe* oral traditions and culture with social studies and literacy. As an Oral Language and Learning, Teaching Cultural Specialist and Speech Language Pathologist, I have provided *Anishinaabe* cultural programming, curriculum development, teacher training and consultation, student evaluation and specialized programming in urban and rural schools bringing focus to the Aboriginal oral traditions and cultural pedagogies (e.g. talking/ listening Circle, local *Anishinaabe* Nanabush legends traditional hand drumming and singing, *Anishinaabemowin* and concepts of relationship/interconnectedness to the earth and each other). The work of reducing the mismatch between the language and culture of the school versus Aboriginal ways of knowing, Aboriginal ways of doing⁴⁰ and communicating, creates a welcoming environment where Aboriginal students are acknowledged and what they bring to the classroom is validated. A depth of movement from meaning to meaning-making, and ultimately to culture-making is called for counter the potential for a superficial process of introducing add-on "cultural

⁴⁰ Ways of doing is referred to as 'axiology' within a Western academic research paradigm

inclusion" (Stairs, 1994, p. 165). Understanding about Aboriginal pedagogy to increase appreciation for a reciprocal teaching/learning relationship that is long-term between the learner and teacher and the presence of equality within the context of the talking/listening Circle is enhanced through modelling and experience.

Although I was not raised by parents or grandparents well-versed in legends, they certainly shared the gift of story and told innumerable personal event narratives that enthralled me time and time again. I have carried on the story-telling tradition within my family by recounting events to serve as entertainment and guidance for my sons and grandchildren. During the time I lived on Manitoulin Island, I heard a number of *Waynaboozhoo* legends at gatherings and from teachers in the schools. I enjoy hearing Legends and have been working with a story stick to share *Anishinaabe* and Cree legends with children and adults for several years in schools and at community gatherings. These stories are re-counted only during the time of year when there is snow on the ground. This is explained by our Elders and expressed in the writing of Simpson (2011). The legend tends to stimulate visualizations of the interactions between animals and the more-than-human hero (*Waynabozhoo*, *Waysakeechak*) set within the natural landscape and wonder of the implicate order. Humorous situations cause laughter and smiles, and the listeners also demonstrate empathy towards the animals or *Anishinaabek* who experience hardship or injury. Often times, listeners will readily engage with puppets or iconic visuals that I provide and this stimulates them to take on a performance role including dialogue. Questions and wonderings are always stimulated when a legend is heard. Children frequently ask for the same legend to be told again and again.

The families and children that I worked with showed me ways of expanding my professional sphere of influence to take on a role within the *Anishinaabe* community as a helper

and facilitator of communication. I lived in *Wikwemikong* Unceded First Nation for fifteen years and worked almost exclusively with Aboriginal people within the context of education.

Honouring the child as a perfect and complete gift and responsibly receiving them into the family and community by nurturing their well-being and special gifts does not relate easily with the clinical speech language pathology way of being and doing. Over the course of years, my work experience and life path as a mother provided a rich learning environment for me. I gradually found a balance to use specific skills and strategies that support listening, talking, reading and writing and seeing and celebrating what a child brings to school in-relation to family and community. Ways of listening and observing are highly valued and seeing life's roles and interconnectivities with each other and the Creation are the basis of "culture - a way to live today"⁴¹.

I became aware that the speech and language pathology services were not meeting the needs and best interests of the Aboriginal community. I presented at the Ontario Speech and Language Association and Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists annual conferences and initiated a special interest group. After sharing stories about working in the Aboriginal community at forums with like-minded colleagues, the knowledge about systemic bias in service delivery grew and a professional body of knowledge emerged. I contributed by providing a description of features of First Nations English Dialect⁴², cultural-linguistic differences in language usage, and suggestions for culturally sensitive practices regarding *Anishinaabek* (Peltier, 2010, 2011). In addition I shared my work from analyzing *Anishinaabek* children's stories in view of what Elders consider to be a "good story",

⁴¹ Cree Elder Eddie Bellrose, Drift Pile First Nation, Alberta - personal communication winter 1981.

⁴² The term, First Nations English Dialect (FNED) in this context refers to a dialect variation of English, stemming from *Anishinaabemowin* (Peltier, 2010, 2011).

illustrating the importance of respecting cultural relevancy and reflecting values associated with the oral tradition (Peltier, 2014).

This brings me to my connection with Indigenous knowledge and the true-to-being way of walking as an *Anishinaabe-kwe*. In my cultural tradition, I introduce myself by re-membering my parents and relatives and acknowledging my homeland. My father, Irvin Douglas was raised with his uncle-as-brother by my grandmother, Emma Douglas. At a very young age, he served in the Canadian army as a member of the airborne militia in Italy. Severely wounded, he returned home to Rama First Nation and carried the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical trauma of War. During the sleepless wee hours of the morning he shared many stories of his life experience stories with me. It has always been amazing to my siblings and I that he lived well into his fifties. He was a community-elected Chief who carried the physical scars and pain from the battlefield and demonstrated passionate leadership for our community and advocacy for veterans.

My father was an avid fisherman and we lived in a small bay on Lake Couchiching in central Ontario. I spent days on the lake with him throughout my childhood, taking the role of keen observer and listener. We fished for keeps but at times a young fish took the bait and my dad spoke to the fish as he gently released it, saying "Go tell the others". I recall standing at the foot of the huge weeping willow tree on the lakeshore beside our home, looking up at one or two fish heads that were mounted on a board, with a small stick placed to open the jaws fully. I studied them closely, noticing how they faced the lake and over time they became bleached white and the sticks fell away. It seems I intuitively knew that it was not my place to ask but to "twice understand". Later in life, I came to know that these were not my father's trophies, but

epitomized his honouring and thanksgiving for the life that the Lake brought to our family and people.

Life experience has instilled in me the importance of connections with family, community and traditional territory so I visit my original home and First Nation regularly. I continue to deepen understanding and appreciation of my inner walk by spending time in solitude at camp with opportunity for reflection on my formal education and lived experience. I acknowledge and extend thanksgiving for the interconnectivities of *Aki* and Lake.

My mother, Peggy Monette was from the Algonquin community of Golden Lake. She did shift-work at a provincial institution for the mentally handicapped as a nurse's aid. I recall her waking my sister and I before the sun was up to braid our long hair so that it was neat for school. At times our furnace was out of fuel oil so we sat on kitchen chairs in front of the stove, feeling the warmth of the electric oven. We most often had fresh fish for dinner and my mother told me, "Never let on to your husband that you know how to clean fish." Her advice came in handy when I got married and prepared many fish dinners.

My grandmother cared for my two sisters, and my brother and me during the winter at her huge wooden two-storey house up the road. The root cellar under the floor in her kitchen was always full of garden vegetables. We were within the *Anishinaabe* circle of care of those in our community who trapped and made a living selling pelts. Frequent meals of beaver and muskrat nourished and maintained us. My grandmother and father spoke *Anishinaabemowin* to each other and did not pass on the language within our family. My understanding of this is that they believed a formal education in the English language presented opportunities for success in life.

My mother passed away when I was fourteen and I lived at home with my father until he passed when I was nineteen years old. With that, I set out to explore my identity and independence, travelling west to Edmonton where I worked for several years within the Cree community and also attended university. Pitawanakwat (2006) re-counted the "stages of life" Teaching. The life stages begin in the east and move across the Medicine Circle to the west signifying an individual's earthly walk or life path journey. The Seven Stages of Life are: The Good Life, The Fast Life, The Wandering Life, The Stages of Truth, Planning, and Doing, and the Elder Life. I apply this perspective to my life experience in what follows. During my time in Alberta, I was in my 'fast life' and I transitioned into the 'wandering life stage'. The McLean family of Sturgeon Lake became part of my family. I re-call with pictures in my mind and warm feelings in my heart, the supper of lynx-meat at their home one winter and the sunny fall day that my Cree mother, Eliza urged my sister Annette and I to "put on a shawl and dance outside". We danced to a Powwow song tape in celebration of the moose harvest and the life it brought to our family.

My cousin, Vern Douglas worked for the Edmonton Public Schools in the Sacred Circle, urban Aboriginal program. Together we made day trips to attend ceremony with learned Elders and keepers of the Cree language and tradition. This time signified my "truth" life stage. Abe Burnstick, Mel Paul, Eddie Bellerose, Michael Thrasher, Peter O'Chiese, Edmond Metatawabin, Eva Cardinal, and Eva Paskimin were some of my mentors who passionately demonstrated thankful acknowledgement for *Aki* and the goodness of relationship with other-than-human creation and each other. I reflect now on how beautiful the Cree ways are and appreciate the similarities with *Anishinaabek* life.

Over the course of my 'planning and doing' life stages and as I transition into the role of Grandmother, I have been married to an Odawa man from *Wikwemikong*, Stanley Peltier who is a Keeper-of-*Anishinaabemowin* and *Anishinaabe* ways. We have raised two sons together and I have extended love and guidance to his two children and seven grandchildren. My role within the Aboriginal community as a passionate advocate for maintaining *Anishinaabe* cultural traditions and revitalization of the language, has taken me on extensive travels to participate in cultural ceremonies, gatherings, and conferences in Canada and the United States. Elders and mentors have always been an important part of my life and I demonstrate reciprocity by mentoring young people to join the Circle. I have supported women to join the Powwow by sewing regalia and 'dancing them in'. *Anishinaabek* women have stood for me and, in turn, I have stood with young girls and women as they shared their stories of neglect, abuse and hardship. As I transition into a Grandmother role within my family and community, I share stories and talk about ways of knowing with children and those who value resurgence of the *Anishinaabek* and the cyclical interconnectivity of creation. I demonstrate celebrating creative expression as a traditional style Powwow dancer and hand drum singer.

I have a deep respect for my *Anishinaabe* ancestry and culture. I am personally aware of the sacred space that connects me with people and Places such as home and aspects of the natural environment on *Aki*. Engagement with ceremony, my attitude, and behaviour is a way of honouring that space. When I say, "I am the Earth", I acknowledge that what I do to the earth, I do to myself. This awareness developed from my life-long relationship with *Aki* and was solidified through the grounding experiences of the sweat lodge and fasting on *Aki*. My *Anishinaabe* teachers are my children, *Aki*, and community role models, *shkawbewisuk* (helpers), and Elders. Willie Trudeau and his wife, Marie Eshkibok guided me to learn sacred songs for

healing and re-connection with Self-in-relation. Willie accepted responsibility for teaching me how to prepare and he put me out on my fast as part of my rite of passage into parent-hood. In my Fasting lodge I re-connected to the natural world and engaged in introspection and reflection. Elder Trudeau visited me to support my understanding of the process and to interpret my dreams, and he brought me back from my Fasting lodge to family and community. I was acknowledged for honouring the ancestors and traditions at a feast and my Spirit Name was announced to all of the directions.

As an *Anishinaabe* person, I can purposely re-connect to *Shkagamik-kwe* (my Mother the earth) by conscious attention to Self-in-relation and observation of *Shkagamik-kwe* as teacher. I can demonstrate this to the *Anishinaabe* children as a means of providing them with a positive view of who they are and creating a connection to sense of Place. This is meant to support them on their life path journey of transitions and challenges. I envision this role as the responsibility of parent and grandparent. It is inappropriate to expect that the urban mainstream school experience and non-Aboriginal teachers can provide this. The collaborations with teachers and presentation of Aboriginal content curricula and training that I have been involved in for the past six years led me to see that teachers are learning the Aboriginal history and cultural perspectives along with the students as well as with Aboriginal people themselves. It is my personal hope that this research project will demonstrate the important role that the oral tradition and Teaching stories shared by Elders can fulfill in the classroom.

Non-essentialist perspective. The Indigenous Storywork pedagogy enacted in this case study requires a collaborative relationship between a teacher and knowledgeable Aboriginal community member. Aboriginal community resource people have a natural affinity to nurture Self-in-relation and learning from *Shkagamik-kwe*. My role is to work from within the

classroom context to facilitate conceptual space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational understanding specifically as *Anishinaabewin* is what I live and understand as an *Anishinaabe-kwe*. I believe that this space for knowledge creation is beneficial for *all* and will support and strengthen the development of community. I do not see the importance of this work within a self-serving realm where Indigenous people close ourselves within our Indigeneity, but I envision the potential benefits to all when we project ourselves in the broader world and educational system.

Role of the researcher. Adherence to an Indigenous research paradigm within the research methodology and storywork Circle pedagogy is noteworthy for discussion. My cultural identity and experience supported me to engage in various roles within the case study research project. As an observer of the case study context (school, classroom, students, classroom teacher, student - student interactions, student-student interactions) I took on the roles of note-taker while recording details about the specific context such as time, space, participants, and activities. Responses to my perceptions and observations of behaviour and insights regarding the personal behaviours of students and staff in the school were recorded as field notes in my notebook. A field journal was also kept with memories that were useful in the reconstruction of particular events that occurred in the writing of the field text and for planning next steps in the execution of the research project.

I was also a participant researcher within the Indigenous pedagogy of the Circle. The aspect of my role as Grandmother within the storywork Circle pedagogy are supported by Graveline (1988) in her discussion of ancestral responsibility to teach that is active for today's Elder's role in the oral tradition pedagogy in contemporary times (p. 64). As the students have experienced a visiting Elder in their school before, they perceived me to be an *Anishinaabe*

grandmother. *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge was shared in Teaching Stories and I facilitated the story Circles.

Teacher as model. In my role as researcher/grandmother, I reflected what Cajete (1999b) described as "an indigenous way of being biophilic." (p. 194). I carried myself and spoke in a manner that exuded my way of being who I am. I consciously connected myself to Place (*Aki*, students, Circle) through listening, observing, and being-in-the-moment. *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge that has been learned from *Aki*, The *Nibi* (Water) Song/Water, and Air relative to our particular place was shared. Respect with *Aki* that supports everything that we need for life: plants, animals, water, fire, air and we are in-relationship with all aspects of creation was demonstrated. The circle of life (natural law) was symbolically represented as an overlay of circles within circles where an imbalance in one circle impacts the wholeness of life.

I participated in the storywork Circle by sharing Teaching Stories and demonstrating ways of connecting to *Shkagamik-kwe* (Mother Earth) and Place on *Aki*. *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts, principles and values were demonstrated in the Teaching stories and opportunities were provided for participant exploration during quiet reflection time connecting with Place. In addition, I took on the roles of videographer and note-taker during the class visits, teacher interviews, and teacher conversations. Following the case study framework of Dyson and Genishi (2005), field notes consisted of researcher perceptions and observations of behaviours and contextual dynamics. Field notes were made to assist in the construction of this case as "...they help to give an audience of readers a mostly verbal description of the site – an ethnographic sense of being in the world we call our case" (p. 63). A field journal was kept with details about time, space, particulars of the connecting to Place individual activity, and

researcher memories to assist in reconstructing particular events during the data analysis phase. I planned next steps and recorded these in the field journal such as the decision after the first classroom session to provide a supply teacher so that the classroom teacher could participate.

Empowerment through positive thinking. Creating conceptual space for Indigenous story Circles and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is a challenging task. Momentum for establishing critical Indigenous research methodologies to explain historical, social, political, economic, spiritual, and cultural realities within academic research paradigms is growing, however a critical Indigenous research methodology embodied in this research project is meant to purposefully disrupt the status quo.

As I thought about the conflicting contexts of the linear paradigm within a mainstream classroom and the wholistic circular process within an Indigenous paradigm, my intuition brought me to realize a problem of putting a circle into a square. The classroom space was square and the school yard was square and I was working from within a circular space. Envisioning it this way meant that some people would be excluded and the circle of influence would be reduced. The following schematic (Figure 1) depicts how I initially envisioned the creation of space for Indigenous pedagogy and philosophy in the school:

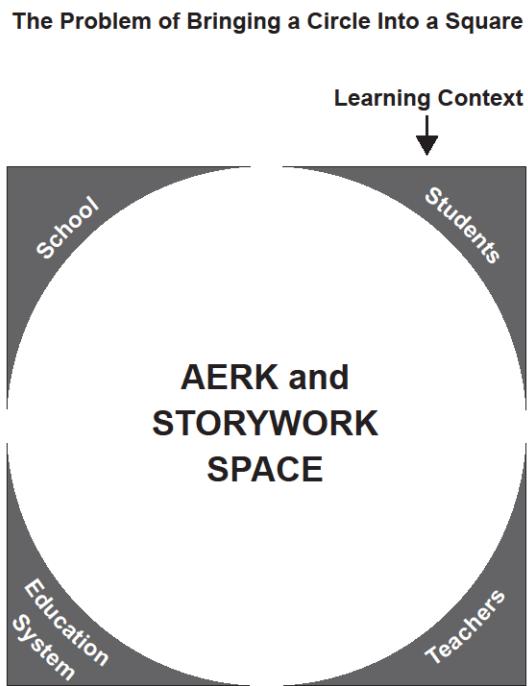


Figure 1. Conceptualizing the contextual problem

As I continued in the process of planning and preparing for the data-gathering phase of my research project, a change in my thinking occurred. I came to understand that putting a square into a circle creates opportunity and inclusion for all. Bringing *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and the storywork Circle pedagogy into the classroom is an inclusive context and has the potential for far-reaching positive impacts in education. The following schematic (Figure 2) illustrates how I re-envisioned creating a space of possibility in the classroom through this case study.

Resolving the Problem and Creating Space

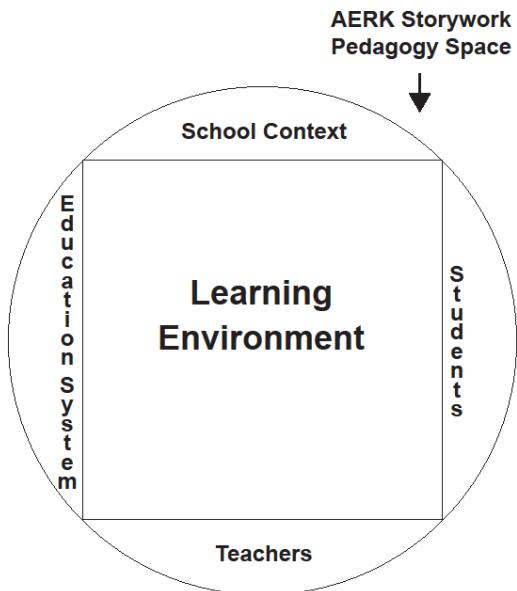


Figure 2. Perceiving inclusive possibility

Months before initiating the case study data collection, I planned to actualize the Circle by creating a physical space for the students and teacher to participate. A Medicine Circle resting on top of a circular cloth mat would centralize my Grandmother's Teaching Bundle. This space would also be embodied by us sitting around the periphery of the cloth mat with enough room for twenty people or so. I thought that students would enjoy sitting on the ground outside in the school yard or on the floor in the classroom. In a teaching/learning environment, references to concrete objects facilitates understanding of new or abstract concepts.

I shopped for the materials and as I sewed in my kitchen I thought about aspects of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge that are especially relevant to the time of year (June), location (in the urban school yard with mature trees surrounding our Place) and 9, 10 and

11-year-old children's interests and life experience. When the time came to visit the Grade four/five classroom, I was prepared and excited.

The Indigenous methodology work of scholars and researchers that I explored in the literature review was reflected upon and boosted my confidence in my approach as I prepared for this case study. I especially thought about Wilson's (2008) description of "research as ceremony", Gehl's (2012) Indigenous research process of coming to know through a heart-mind connection, and Absolon's (2011) understanding of methodologies guided by Indigenous ways of knowing our reality and *Anishinaabe* ways of coming to know. The words of Styres, Haig-Brown, and Blimkie (2013) "peering down through the layers of the earth and seeing the footprints of our ancestors" were with me and I reflected on Skype discussions I had with Dr. Haig-Brown in a recent reading course.

'Anishinaabe storywork Circle pedagogy' as Method

This case study invites one urban grade four/five classroom in north eastern Ontario to explore, witness and engage in an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy, making visible the student and teacher responses and new knowledge. Data was gathered over the course of five classroom visits. Each visit was one hour and visits occurred over a three-week period. The theoretical framework of story as pedagogy (Archibald, 2008) supports this research project which incorporates traditional patterns of teaching and learning in the storytelling oral tradition. *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is shared by the researcher through Teaching stories and activities based on Indigenous oral history and storytelling tradition (Britsch, 1994; Brown & Gray, 2010; Hart, 1995, 2007; Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999) inside the classroom and also outside in the school yard. The outdoor context for this research is the school yard.

There are no associated costs such as equipment or student clothing requirements. This is an outside learning opportunity that is readily accessible within an urban context.

Conceptual space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the classroom was made through introduction of the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle protocol and pedagogy in this research project. The term “storywork” is used here to refer to the pedagogical process utilized in the case study class visits. The oral tradition and Indigenous pedagogy are hallmark elements. The storywork Circle pedagogy had three components: The Teaching story portion lasted from 15 to 20 minutes; followed by the Teaching story where students engaged in self-reflection and connecting to Place for 10 minutes; and then an invitation and participation in the story Circle which lasted for 20 minutes.

In addition to listening and storytelling (language modalities), students were invited to engage in drawing and writing to express themselves. Experience has shown me that most students in grade four/five possess the oral language and writing/artistic skills that this research approach requires to represent their thinking and understanding of personal connections to new experiences. Cajete's (1999b) description of learning through "artistic synthesis of creativity" (p. 55) as well as the literature on multiple intelligences and learning styles (Gardner, 2011) informed my decision to provide opportunity for students to represent their thinking through a variety of modalities. Participants were invited to share their drawings, writings, and talk about their thinking and experience at the start of each story Circle with the prompt: “What did you notice about that Teaching story?”

The following procedure for creating a physical place for the students to experience *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy was followed for the class visits. First, I prepared the space by putting down the circular cloth with the Medicine Circle visual in the center along with

the candle/central fire. Then I invited the teacher and students to join me by forming a circle around the periphery of the circular cloth. A Teaching story was shared, a short period of outdoor learning followed, and everyone returned to the class for a story sharing Circle. A description of the protocol for the story Circle is provided in a later section of this thesis.

Through Teaching stories and activities, students were made aware of *Aki* and connections to *gaaniniigaaniijek* (our ancestors). Styres et al. (2013) placed emphasis on the layers of ancestral footprints in the earth and this was an inspirational perspective for experiencing ecological relational knowledge.

The Indigenous pedagogy of oral teaching and storywork Circle pedagogy supports a culturally responsive classroom. This approach supports what is described in the literature by Longboat (2012) as culturally responsive pedagogy as a wholistic process for the learner that supports 'heart and mind education'. Emphasis is on learning from peers without dominance of the teacher. Wholistic experiential learning engages students and teachers and participation in *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy enhances inner dialogue, listening, sharing and the process of knowledge creation. Students were seated in a circle with the classroom teacher and researcher, and the invitation to share reflections on experiences, stories, and Teachings were invited often throughout five classroom visit sessions. Representation of student learnings and thinking were shared in the Circle. Data samples gathered by the researcher included a song audio recording, stories, art/drawings, writing, photographs and audio and video files.

The opportunity to learn in the school yard facilitates student awareness of relationship to the *Aki*. Teaching stories and student activities out-of-doors in the school yard exemplify the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. Schools are encouraged to access this context in lieu of expensive field trips to natural areas on *Aki* that are a distance from the school. *Anishinaabe*

ecological relational knowledge principles concerning relationship with *Shkagamik-kwe* and *Aki* acknowledges respectful participation in the ecological system, however it does not directly relate to the corpus of work in environmental education developed in the European tradition. The intent is to make a contribution to our understanding of the *Anishinaabek* worldview and the role of interconnectivity as it relates to our relationship with each other and Mother Earth.

A Being-in-Place activity has the potential to support a personal state of "attentive receptivity" and wholistic coming to know that has been described by Beeman and Blenkinsop (2008). Battiste and Henderson's (2000) explanation that the beauty of quiet consciousness in the space between thoughts for contemplation epitomizes the humble way of being with others and with the self was inspirational to this aspect of the research method.

Time spent with *Aki* provides opportunity to: reflect on one's well-being; to create awareness of *weh* (the astral level supporting ecological consciousness of kinship, identity, and relations); and to honour *nibwakaawin* (understanding and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are dependent on each other). Participants were invited to connect themselves with voice and to visualize grounding themselves, and then occupy a sacred place outside in the school yard in a state of silence in the moment, and to observe with the senses. This provided an experiential component and participants then re-assembled for the story Circle where they were invited to relate a story about the experience and to share their drawing or writing with others.

The schematic below (Table 2) illustrates the elements of the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy that was utilized in my methodology. The classroom teacher and students experienced an Indigenous pedagogy that provided channels of learning through Teaching

stories, reflective experiences in Place, and story Circles. These are described in detail in the following section of this report.

Table A Components of the Anishinaabe storywork Circle pedagogy

1. Grandmother Teaching Story	<i>Anishinaabe</i> ecological relational concepts and principles were embedded in story.
2. Reflective Experience in Place - personal reflection about the Teaching Story	Explanation and demonstration. Re-connecting to <i>Shkagamik-kwe/Aki</i> - practice grounding the Self by quieting the body and mind, identifying and occupying a special Place in the school yard and observing from the inner space of attentive receptivity. Awareness of Self and interconnectivity with surroundings
3. Story Circle	Students shared in response to the question that was posed at the beginning of each story Circle, " <i>What did you think of that Story?</i> " Participants passed <i>Mishomis</i> /Grandfather rock from hand to hand and shared what they thought about the Teaching story experience. Students usually referred to their drawings and writing as they responded to the question:

1. Teaching Stories and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationship with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are part of... Who I am is where I'm from, and my relationships.

(Wilson, 2008, p. 80)

The *Anishinaabe* world view and philosophical concepts are related to the local natural environment of the Great Lakes region and woodland areas of Turtle Island. This research

project is within the context of northeastern Ontario, Sudbury and reflects the Odawa dialect of *Anishinaabemowin* (Manitoulin Island) and symbols and concepts from this locale.

The Medicine Circle represents the sacred centre of community to the Plains people and provides a model for describing various layers of an Indigenous paradigm. The self is situated at the centre and a person's spiritual (visioning, intuitive self), physical (sensing, doing, active self), emotional (affective, feeling self), and mental (thinking, reflective self) aspects are represented as quadrants. A person's self-awareness of these aspects and exploration through what is referred to as the "inner space", are the means of achieving balance. A person's life-path journey is one of continuous learning and development of the self and relationship to others and the world. Balance and harmony is maintained through respect and accountability to the world. Reciprocity (balance in giving and receiving) ensures stability.

From within an *Anishinaabe* ecological relational paradigm, ways of being and doing honour the whole environment. At the core of this work is the concept of self-in-relation and balance as it extends from the inside and outward to an individual's relations (family, clan, community), earth world, sky world, and universe. The Medicine Circle depicting the four colors and cardinal directions (yellow - east; red - south; black - west; white - north) was introduced to the story Circle. This provided a visual model to increase awareness of *Anishinaabe* concepts and relational philosophy. A large circular cloth mat with the Medicine Circle and an electronic candle representing a community fire formed the central area of the story Circle. The students and classroom teacher were invited to sit in a circle around the perimeter of the mat. The circle invited equity within the context of a Circle where there is no hierarchy and each individual contributes to the whole.

The Teaching story component of this storywork Circle pedagogy epitomizes the oral tradition and the listener's process of meaning-making. This is aptly described by Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010). "The orature of Indigenous knowledge, relies on the ability of the teller to integrate and synthesize knowledge from an ecological and temporal location of the natural world and through a unification of mind with place, the listener realizes the lesson" (p. 18). Hester and Cheney (2001) described how the stories are a narrative of life lived in the world depicting the consequences of actions.

I shared *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the Teaching stories that I have gained from reflection about my personal and professional life experiences and stories passed down to me from Elders and Keepers-of-*Anishinaabemowin*. The educational process of elder stories about experiences and observations of the natural environment as knowledge through stories from generation to generation is in-line with Begaye (2008). Wilson (2008) also supports my approach to Teaching stories and states, "The storyteller imparts their own life and experience into the telling and the listeners filter the story being told through their own experience and adapt it to make it relevant to their own life" (p. 17).

The concepts, principles and values that I shared in the Circles were explained in terms of an Indigenous paradigm encompassing the oral tradition and *Anishinaabemowin* world view. This approach is echoed in the literature by Turner (2012) who states, "Indigenous philosophies are rooted in oral traditions, which generate explanations of the world expressed in indigenous normative languages" (p. 81) and by Abele, Dittburner, and Graham (2000) who illustrate this with, "As the bearers of thought processes, Aboriginal languages encode unique ways of interpreting the world" (p. 26). I introduced and repeated several concepts and labels in *Anishinaabemowin* in-context a number of times in order to provide an explanation of

Indigenous world view with particular emphasis on conceptions of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

Teaching bundle and symbolism. I paid particular attention to aspects of Place/context during the Teaching stories to provide Circle participants with referents to facilitate comprehension of philosophical principles and concepts. This awareness has come from my life experiences in a traditional Teaching Lodge and ceremonies, my understanding of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge, and my experience as an educator of children. The literature review also exemplified the approach and content utilized. For example, I placed a candle in the centre on the cloth Medicine Circle to signify the concept of Self-as-centre. Hart (1995) provides a description that "a fire in the center of the circle helps individuals to symbolically come to their own sacred fire within themselves" (p. 70) and he mentioned that it symbolizes the fire circle of the group where everyone is equal and everyone has a voice. The fire as the heart of the Circle connects to all participants of all cultures (not just Aboriginal people).

My Grandmother's Teaching Bundle was utilized to introduce my relationship with the teaching tools that I carry and to model respectful relationships. The way that I interacted with some of the items also demonstrated the concept of animacy (*deweongan*/the hand drum and *Mishomis*/Grandfather Rock). The *Anishinaabe* grammatic of animacy is described by Brown and Gray (2010) according to the explanation by Hallowell that animacy is "reflective of a grammar of relationship". My shaker made from a deer antler and buffalo horn was used in my re-telling of part of the *Anishinaabe* creation story. The sound of the shaker illustrated what Rice (2005) made reference to as "sound accompanied the creative energy of the universe" emphasizing that "the sound of everything that exists in creation is more important than the name/label". The shaker and hand drum are my teaching tools to stimulate thinking about

foundational aspects of life such as vibrational energy and perception of a 4-dimensional reality (Dumont, 1976; Cajete, 1994).

Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge demonstrated in the Teaching stories in this research were relational to six directions, reflecting an Indigenous wholistic approach to learning. Hampton (1995) describes the sacred pipe circular movement which acknowledges the following in sequence: "above, then to the east, then to the south, then to the west, then to the north, and then to the earth" (p. 16). These six-directional patterns represent a complex set of meanings, feelings, relationships, and movements. "The six directions are a way of thinking about existing in the universe" (p. 16). The author applied the six directions as a way of thinking about Indian education as an organizing principle reflecting movement and historical development. Cajete's (1994) curriculum framework includes seven orientations: the center, east, west, south, north, below, and above. The author provides a detailed explanation of the rings of relationships that he describes as

the shared metaphor and meaning of sacred directions among Native American Tribal groups...directions represent not only geographical orientations, but consciousness as well. Sacred directions provide a way for individuals and groups to place themselves physically, psychologically, mythically, and spiritually...These symbols are essentially ecological in that they related to a people's perception of themselves in relationship to their environment. Each entity associated with each direction symbolizes a quality of thought and being...the combination of these qualities formed the foundation for wholeness and the dynamic process of natural reality (p. 198).

The individual presence contributes to a collective presence through interconnections and interdependence with all other things. Responsibility to learn and teach is enacted through

listening, observing from a place of receptivity and honour for those who teach, and doing by setting the knowledge in motion through our actions and behaviour. Wilson (2008) illustrates Self-in-relation and philosophy of identity that is foundational to situating this research within an *Anishinaabe* ecological relational paradigm.

The content of the Teaching story is Elder knowledge that has been passed down to future generations through the oral tradition and demonstrates our inter-connections with the sky, *Aki*, and our ancestry. The dialogue in this thesis expands my understanding that Indigenous knowledge comes from the earth and learning is about a holistic process for the learner in relationship with everything surrounding us. Human and other-than-human elements of the earth world, sky world, and universe are continuously in motion and *Aki* is first teacher. Group learning and reflection are hallmark features of Indigenous learning. We learn from *Aki*, Water, and Air relative to our particular place. *Aki* supports everything that we need for life: plants, animals, water, fire, air and we are in-relationship with all aspects of creation. The circle of life (natural law) is an overlay of circles within circles and so imbalance in one circle impacts the wholeness of life.

The metaphors: "What I do to the water, I do to myself" and "I am the earth" provide meaningful clarity to the principal of interconnectedness. A Teaching story about *Nibi* and singing of the Water Song (Day, nd) demonstrated embodiment of respect for water and life.

Anishinaabek have relationship with the celestial bodies of the sky world, the wind and air and rhythmical movements reflect cyclical patterns of time such as the sun travelling across the sky from east to west and the seasons. "Aboriginal peoples' understanding of the world is directly related to their understanding of the stars...One reason for following the stars, moon and sun is to be a participant in the circle of life, thereby helping to maintain the balance of life"

(Rice 2005, p. 40). The moon calendar of the *Anishinaabek* of Manitoulin Island indicates that the month that this case study is carried out is *Waabgonii-Giizis* or Blooming Moon. "The main point is that the calendar...[is] based on the cycles of nature, with the moon as the defining element, illustrating our connection with the sky world. In this way, the earth world reflects what is happening in the sky world" (Rice 2005, p. 40).

Within the context of the Teaching story of *Odewiminan* (Strawberries), students were invited to think about the local nature cycle and the human attribute or gift of unconditional love. Bopp et al. (1989) describes this as "a love that does not question others and does not know itself" (p. 42). The Teaching stories are described in a later section (See Chapter Four).

2. Reflective experiences in Place. Careful consideration of how I understand my being-in- relationship with *Aki* and reference to the literature by Indigenous scholars and elders on this topic informed my use of reflective experience in Place within the storywork Circle pedagogy. Time for students to engage deeply in an individual experience in their special Place was provided on two occasions (third and fourth Circles). This practice acknowledges sacred Place and is referred to in the storywork Circle pedagogy as "reflective experience in Place". These were brief, 10 to 15-minute opportunities to connect with *Aki* in the school yard and to increase self-awareness and reflection within the inner space. Students were shown how to breathe deeply with eyes closed to tune into the Self, to announce themselves to Place with voice, and to ground themselves with the energy of *Shkagamik-kwe*. Students shared about their experience establishing a connection to sacred Place through drawings and talk during the story Circle that followed the activity.

All of the students were receptive to the activities and readily removed their socks and shoes. Students thoughtfully selected their place, sat quietly on their own, closed their eyes, and

were receptive to being-in-the-moment. They had an opportunity to explore their perceptions through the senses as well as through intuition. The student drawings and writing from focused listening and observing time represent self-awareness, observations and feelings of connection and relaxation, and receptivity to wholistic perception that led to an incredible depth of knowledge and understanding. Students developed what Archibald (1995) described as an "incredible depth of knowledge and understanding" - a sense of "independence, observation, discovery, and respect for nature" that are viable education principles (p. 289).

Students were invited to occupy a special space in the school yard and to notice the clouds, wind and movement all around. Student story transcripts, drawings, and writing in response to their reflective experiences in Place are a representation of their personal truth and were honoured in the Circle by all participants. This is better understood by referring to Cajete's (1999b) notes the Apache saying, "In sacred places we dwell". In 1994 he explored the Indigenous process of coming to know in more detail and stated that it "supports self knowing and defining of spirit that is based in our senses and our emotions. "This way of thinking is based on the physical senses and developing the ability to hear, observe, perceive, and emotionally feel the spirit moving in all its manifestation in the world around us...*Spirit is real*. It is physically expressed in everything that exists in the world" (p. 48). This way of knowing is a significant process associated with *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

3. Story Circles. In this case study research, the students, researcher and classroom teacher participated in five story Circles. The Circles were recorded with a digital audio recorder or IPad with an external microphone and the participants were reminded that they could stop the recording for instances where they did not wish their words to be represented outside of the Circle. This is in keeping with the traditional protocol of Circles where some things are meant to

remain within the Circle. Students were invited to share a story demonstrating their meaning-making to the experience.

Students were invited to participate in the story Circle in a variety of ways: listening, telling a story that represents their connection to something in the teaching story, showing a sketch or writing or story that they have written. In the story Circle, participants were given the opportunity to refer to written drawings, stories, poetry, symbols that they produced on a clip board.

The work of educational scholars and teachers, Campbell and Hlusek (2009) provided suggestions for motivating students to write. "Oral language is the foundation of literacy development...[T]he social nature of writing requires that students learn to write inside a community" (Campbell & Hlusek, 2009, p. 1). Through their work with junior students for two months they "found that engaging in storytelling and talking about stories enlivened the process of writing for the group [described as including a number of] reluctant writers" (p. 2). They cited observation of Swartz (1999) that, sometimes "the best response to a story is another story". (p. 3).

Story Circle participants were seated on the floor or on the ground. When I introduced Grandfather Rock to the participants, I explained that the rock is the oldest part of *Shkagamik-kwe* and knows everything that was ever said or done here on *Aki*. I described my relationship with Grandfather Rock as a balanced, healthy one that is based on reciprocity - he helps me remember things and in return I bring him to visit with students and hear their stories. I treat him with kindness and care, just like I would treat my real grandfather. Grandfather Rock was referred to as *Mishomis* (Grandfather) and was central to our story Circle process to elicit respect and an orderly flow within the Circle. *Mishomis* represented for us a tangible reminder to listen

respectfully, remember, and share openly from the heart, in response to the students' sharings and personal life connections.

In a story Circle, stories shared are accepted as representing the storyteller's "truth".

Each participant is instructed to take what they can from each sharing and to leave the rest with the central fire. No one judges what is shared by another person in the Circle. This *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy provided a safe and respectful place in the classroom for listening, thinking, and reflecting on what is shared with the option of speaking when the stone made its way around the Circle to each participant. The process honoured coming to know in inner ways as well as through oral expression.

Circle protocol. The following Circle protocol was applied to story Circles. The protocol was explained by the researcher at the beginning of each story Circle to honour what is shared with respect. I asked the Circle participants, "What did you notice about the Teaching story?" to elicit their participation by telling a story, sharing their writing or drawing, and exercising the option of passing if they did not wish to speak. (See Appendix C Story Circle Script)

The students were instructed to listen respectfully without judging others, to remember what is shared, and to share openly from the heart. The person holding the stone is the speaker and will be invited if they wish to speak. When finished, he or she passes the stone to the person on the left. Thus the Circle flows in a clock-wise direction, following the route of the sun as perceived by *Anishinaabek* people, and extending from the heart on their left side. Story Circle participants have the option of passing the stone to the next person without sharing. Usually the stone is passed around the Circle twice to allow participants time to reflect and respond to what

others have shared. The passing of the stone to the next person signals that the person is finished their turn at sharing.

The Circle process of knowledge creation. The schematic below (Figure 3) below illustrates the clockwise movement of *Mishomis* within the story Circle. The Circle participant's cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles and knowledge from *gaaniniigaanijek* (the ancestors) is represented by the rainbow colours. The storytelling process within the Circle honours the individual and *debwewin* (personal and wholistic truth rooted in their heart). A sense of community is created as each person listens and/or shares (inclusiveness) and everyone is valued and seen as equally important (equity). The process is cumulative with each participants' story contributing to the complete story that is created through the Circle process and shared by all participants.

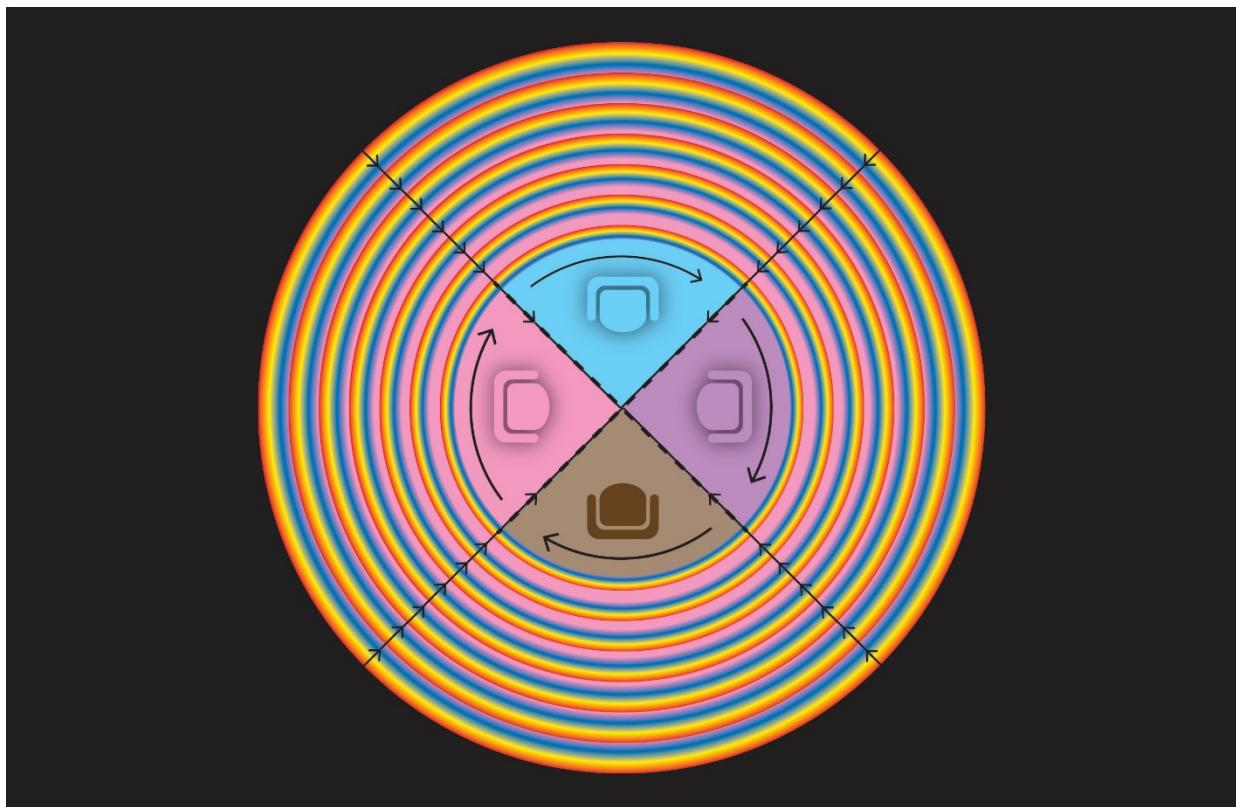


Figure 3. Story Circle participants 'make meaning'

Figure 4 represents the generative aspect where new knowledge is created within the story Circle experience. Each participant comes to share understanding with the other Circle participants and altogether, this process creates new knowledge. The new knowledge from the story Circles in this research project is referred to as *kinoomaadiziwin* and analysis of the story transcripts, drawings, and writing reveals aspects of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

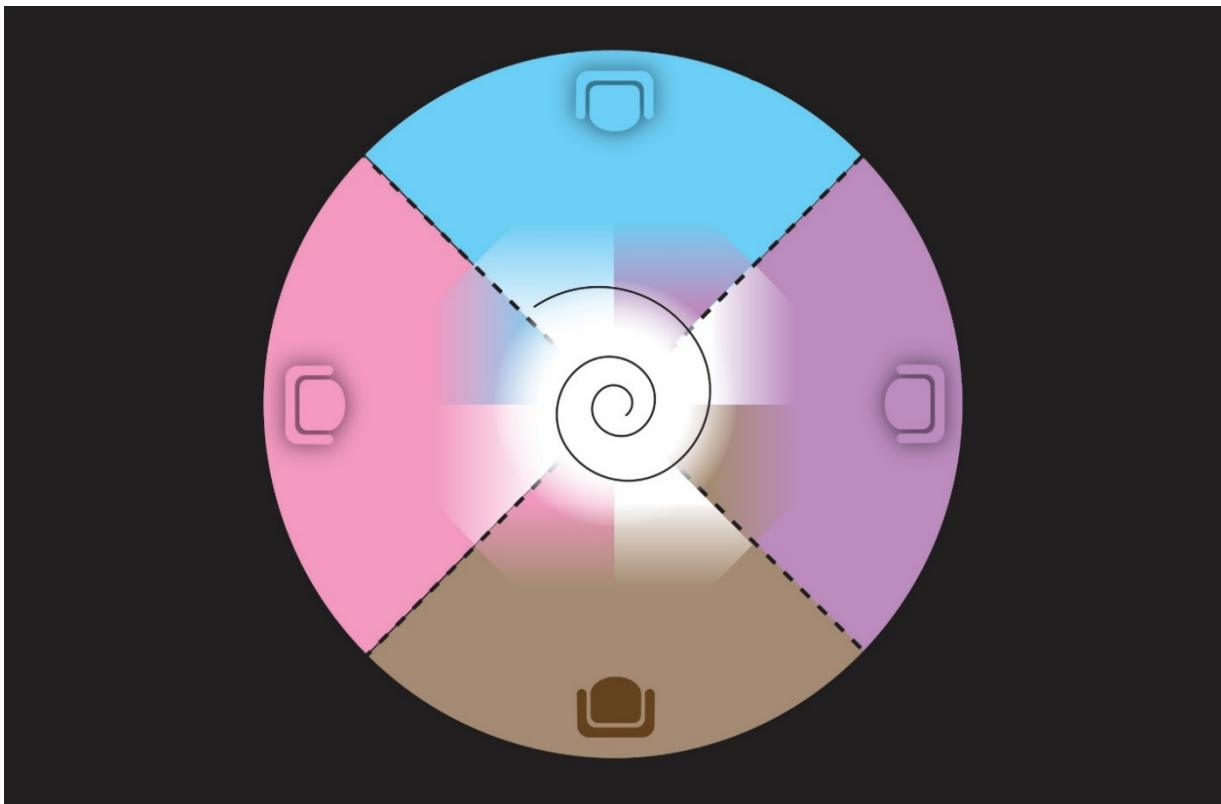


Figure 4. Generation of knowledge in the story Circle

The Indigenous storywork Circle process. The storywork Circle pedagogy (Figure 5 below) introduced *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the classroom utilizing a wholistic teaching/learning process. The Indigenous pedagogy is wholistic in that all aspects of the learner were engaged by: listening and thinking; intuitive reflecting and visioning; experiencing and doing (engaging in reflective experiences in Place, drawing, writing); and

relating and feeling (storying). An Indigenous cosmovision ideology is shown by the two colours forming the background of the schematic. Our way of knowing within an Indigenous knowledge paradigm and pedagogical process negotiates the physical world as well as the unseen.

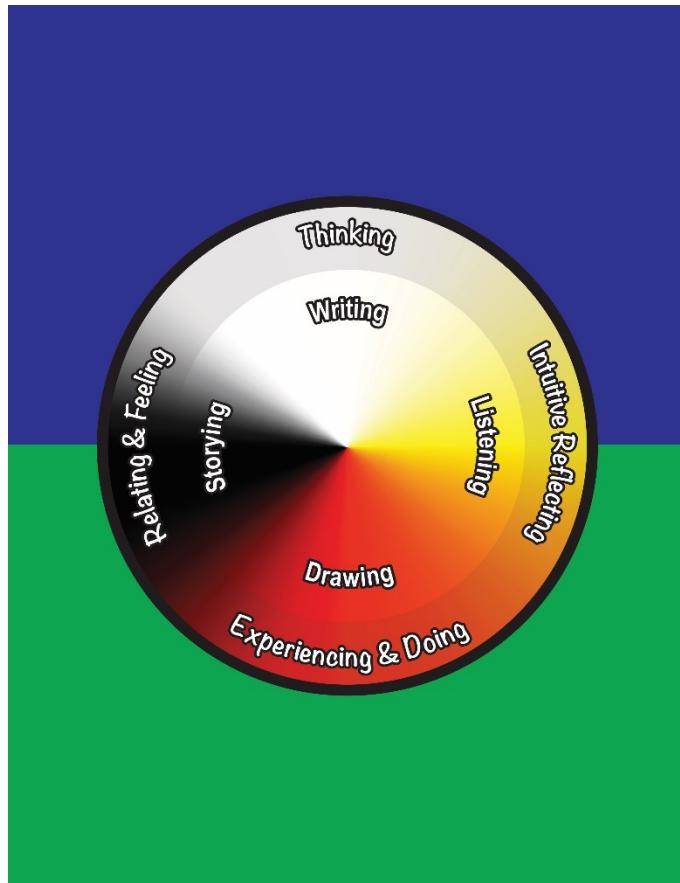


Figure 5. Wholistic Anishinaabe storywork Circle pedagogy

Data Gathering Methods

Teacher conversations. It is what teachers know, do, and care about that is most significant in this learning equation. Longboat (2012) describes the importance of teacher attitudes, behaviours and characteristics that are critical to student success.

When educators connect to the culture and community of their students, relationships form that enhance student performance (p. 70)... teachers who have a strong respect for Nation traditions and ceremonies and a desire to learn within the cultural protocols and boundaries will be seen as authentic by the students, not only caring but respectful and engaging. Students will work harder for such a teacher because of the relationship of mutual respect" (p. 96).

An Indigenous research methodology of "research as conversation" also known as "research as chat" described by Archibald (2008) is applied in this study. "Research as conversation is characterized as an open-ended interview with opportunity for both sides to engage in talk rather than only one party doing most of the talking. It occurs when the researcher is very familiar with the participant(s) and they interact on a frequent basis" (p. 47). My approach for focussing on the teacher's attitudes, questions, knowledge-acquisition, and relationship-building with the classroom teacher is based on Archibald's explanation of the elements and process. This approach was appropriate to my role as I became more familiar with the participants and interacted with them on a frequent basis over the course of the case study.

I engaged in short conversations with the classroom teacher three times throughout the case study research. Guiding questions were posed to stimulate conversation and the discussions were audio/video recorded. Teacher reflections were elicited through the following questions: "What are you noticing about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge?", "What specific behaviours, actions and comments are you noticing about your students?"

Qualitative data from teacher conversations with the researcher include transcriptions of video and audio recordings representing researcher reflections. The classroom teacher was given opportunities to review and revise/edit his words and contributions prior to the report being

finalized. The creation of written and memory notes after discussions served to solidify head-and-heart connections, a reflective process and new understandings.

Teacher interviews. The researcher engaged the teacher in a preliminary interview to investigate his relationship with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum before the research project began. This approach is borrowed from Dion (2009) as it is important information to establish a sense of place that the teacher is coming from, to have an idea of what their history and cultural heritage is, and what cultural traditions they practice. Inviting the teacher to share experiences they have had with Aboriginal people, titles of books that they have read, courses they have taken, and subjects they have taught on the subject of Aboriginal people will provide information about their understanding and pedagogy (Dion, 2009, p. 180). This interview served as a baseline for investigating teacher attitudes and change over the course of the research project.

A post-research interview was completed to engage the teacher in a discussion about his experience and thinking about outcomes. Each interview was approximately twenty minutes in duration and was audio/video-taped and transcribed.

Ethical considerations. I strive to adhere to the ethical guidelines of providing the community with knowledge from the study that is purposeful and additive. Wilson (2008) discusses the ethics of Indigenous research.

The relationship building that this sharing and participating entailed is an important aspect of ethical Indigenous research...This research is emic. I am working within communities that I'm already a part of, rapport has already been built and trust established. Relational accountability requires me to form reciprocal respectful relationships within the communities where I am conducting research. The methodology

is in contrast with observational techniques that attempt to be unobtrusive and not influence the environment study." (p. 40)...It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects that I may be working with, but it is the relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge... You are answerable to all your relations when you are doing research (p. 56).

Sampling strategy and recruitment. During the selection of the classroom and participants, I was cognizant that my case be representative of a typical situation or "true to reality" for reader believability and generalization to praxis and I decided to keep a research diary to document my behaviour while conducting the case study and to create an archive for the sharing my reflections (Swanborn, 2010). I envisioned a research methodology that supports transformation of social science scholarship and allows for a clear articulation of the points of contact between my representation of the case study through narrative and the readers who need to hear them (Chase, 2005). My framework implementation illustrates the production of meaning regarding the research question as dependent on context, referring to field notes to present clear boundaries around the time, spaces, activities, and people of interest, and applying my own professional and personal knowledge and experiences to follow hunches and examine these in analytic work (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I used 'writing to think' and writing as 'a method of knowing' throughout data collection and data analysis which occur simultaneously (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005). The methodological approach taken in this research project has contributed to developing my sense of self. My voice in the process contributes to presenting this report as a research story.

This case study occurred between June 1 and June 30, 2015 within the context of a grade five urban school classroom. The school board research committee, and Laurentian University Research Ethics Board gave prior consent for this study to take place. The school principal and classroom teacher also agreed and parents and students gave consent to participate. (See letters of consent to participate in Appendix A). In the participant information letter, the teacher and student parent/guardians were informed that this research is part of the academic requirements for a PhD in Human Studies and that a written dissertation document would be submitted to Laurentian University. Although a protocol is already in place in the schools regarding disclosure of sexual abuse and the classroom teacher is present during all aspects of this case study data collection, the University Research Ethics Board ensured that parents were informed in the participant information letter that if a student discloses sexual abuse, the authorities would be notified. This explicit statement may have contributed to some parents not trusting the research process and they did not consent for their child to participate.

During the initial teacher interview, demographic information about the participants was collected by the interviewer. This information was noted on a Basic Data Sheet, but was not part of the research participant inclusion criteria. Research participant description includes: a) age, b) identity (student or teacher), c) gender. This information is additive and is presented in the discussion of results section of this thesis as a table and may provide useful information for subsequent studies of this nature.

The primary technique used to recruit participants was purposive sampling (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). The grade four/five target classroom and teacher were unfamiliar to the researcher, an employee within the public school board, in Sudbury (northeastern Ontario). The research was inclusive of the classroom teacher of the Grade five classroom and almost all

students in the classroom. Everyone was invited to participate in this study. Five classroom visits occurred at a time that was convenient to the classroom teacher and to the researcher and each visit did not exceed one hour in duration. Short (fifteen to twenty minute) teacher conversations occurred three times over the course of the data collection phase of this research project at a convenient time for the classroom teacher.

Field notes. Researcher field notes include observations of the teacher and students during the classroom visits and story Circle sharings. These notes were jotted down before, during and after each visit and I revisited them for various response themes during the analysis of the data.

Transcripts from interviews and conversation with the classroom teacher in addition to researcher diary and field journal entries contributed to understanding the backdrop to the storywork Circle and participant learning experiences. Macro and micro level system features that impacted the research outcomes are important considerations and are illustrated in double entry journal (*italicized*) text.

Voluntary Consent

One month prior to commencing the research, I visited the Grade four/five classroom to introduce myself to the students. I explained that sessions would be scheduled in the last three weeks of school for students to hear stories and learn about Aboriginal perspectives and that I wanted to give the students a chance to explain what they were thinking about this by telling a story, writing or drawing. It was explained that parents/guardians would give permission for participation in the project and each student could decide whether or not they would join in. Students would also decide if they were willing to give me their story, writing or drawing for the research. Information and consent packages were provided for each student to take home and

they were asked to bring the signed consent form back to their classroom teacher as soon as possible.

Parent consent. Parental/Guardian Informed Consent to Participate in Research forms were returned to the classroom teacher. Analysis of these forms shows that six parents did not consent for their child to participate and sixteen parents provided written consent for their child to participate. Analysis of the parental response shows that two of the students whose parents declined permission are First Nations students. This is not surprising to me as Aboriginal people are diverse – some are committed to learning about and promoting continuance of cultural beliefs and values and others are newly engaged in the process of learning their history and identity. There are families who do not celebrate their cultural heritage and many Aboriginal people do not trust the research process due to historical experiences of appropriation.

During the first class visit for data collection, two students whose parents had provided consent said that they did not want to participate and they indicated this on the Child Participant Consent Form. This resulted in fourteen students participating in the data collection class visits.

At the beginning of the second class visit for data collection, one of the students spoke to me and self identified as First Nations. She said that she really wanted to participate, however since her parents did not give consent, I explained that she would be excluded from the case study.

Student voluntary consent. The option for students to give the researcher consent to participate in the research was verbally explained to the students during the first classroom case study visit. Each time I visited the class, I provided a voluntary consent form for each student. All students were invited to provide a signed consent to participate each session (See Appendix A Part 3 Child Participant Consent Form). At the beginning of each (of 5) classroom visits, I

provided student participants with a consent form. These forms indicated if they consented to participate in the story Circle, if they were in agreement to be recorded, and whether or not their drawing and writing from the session could be gathered as part of the project. This student consent process initially consumed about 10 minutes of the session and gradually was more efficient as students became familiar with the procedure and filled out the form on their clipboard and handed it to the researcher.

The graph (Figure 6) represents student consent to participate in the case study research project.

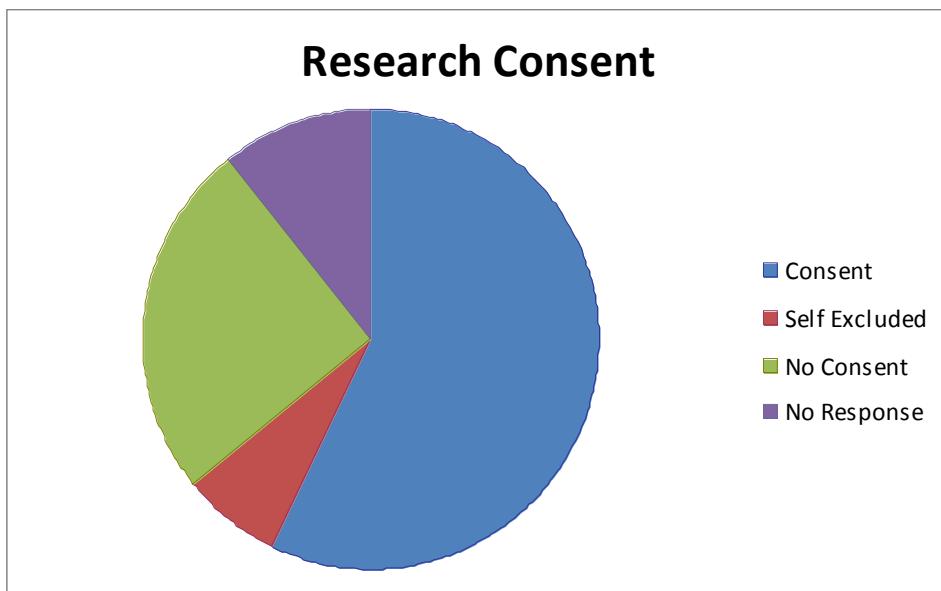


Figure 6. Research consent

Analysis of Child Participant Consent forms from each day of data collection in the classroom revealed the following:

- Ten of the 14 students always gave their consent for *all* aspects of participation in the study

- One student was absent on one occasion, consented to participate in the story Circle four times, and did not agree to have his drawing and writing or voice recorded from the story Circle each time
- One student was absent once, gave full consent twice, and on two occasions agreed to participate in the story Circle and to share her drawing and writing and did not consent to having her voice recorded
- One student was absent twice, and three times consented to participate in the story Circle, to share his drawing and writing, and did not consent to have his voice recorded
- One student consented to participate in the story Circle five times and on one occasion did not consent to have his voice recorded and on two occasions did not consent to share his drawing and writing.

Further analysis of the Child Participant Consent forms provides additional information about student participation. Six out of 14 students attended *all* (five) of the story Circles. Six students were absent for one story Circle and two students were absent for two Circles. Student absenteeism may be the result of a conflicting track and field trip (third story Circle) and the fact that the story Circles were held towards the end of the school year.

The gender and ages of the student participants is as follows: one, nine-year-old; nine, ten-year-olds; and four, eleven-year-olds. This is represented in the graph below (Figure 6).

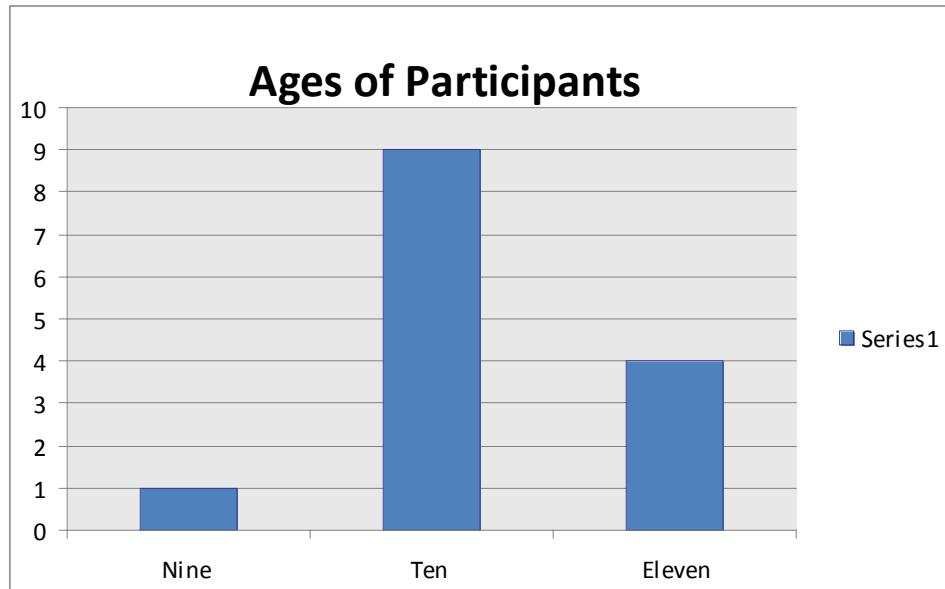


Figure 7. Ages of participants

There were ten girls and four boys in the case study. The graph (Figure 7) below represents this.

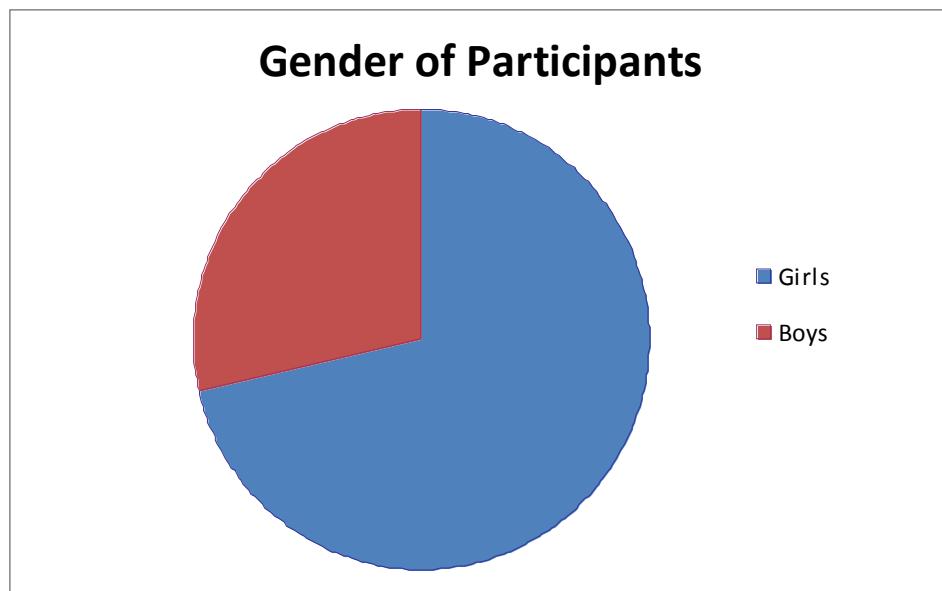


Figure 8. Gender of participants

Classroom teacher consent. The classroom teacher was given the opportunity to provide his voluntary consent. The option of withdrawing at any time without penalty and withdrawing his data without reprisal was explained at the time of consent. The classroom teacher was invited to change or delete any of his personal interview and conversation comments and written transcripts were provided (See Appendix A Part 2: Classroom Teacher Consent).

Respect for privacy and confidentiality was upheld though the storywork Circle pedagogy and protocol (e.g. audio recording is optional, what is shared is respected and valued). In addition, the teacher's and students' last names were not used in the story circles or during the teacher conversations to ensure anonymity of the data. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in the research report to ensure that their real names are not associated with the data. Participants have been assured that their real names are not used in any way. The name of the school is not revealed in the research report.

The ‘slipperiness’ of student consent. Since the student participants are nine-, ten-, and eleven-year-old children, the consent of their parent/guardian was obtained. At the time of the first classroom visit, several students' parents had not given consent for their children to participate in the research study. Two boys whose parents had consented for their participation indicated on their student consent form that they did not wish to participate. They came back in to the classroom, and were visibly unhappy and upset that their teacher had said that they should at least give it a try. With consideration of the ethics around voluntary participation, the researcher took them back out to join their teacher. I explained to the teacher that we couldn't decide for them to participate. My field note describes the teacher's reaction to the situation after the first session. *"He wishes all of the students could hear the Teaching Stories. He would prefer all of class members to be in the Circle".* (Field note June 10, 2015).

This case study illustrates how the social/political or macro structure of the school and community interplays with the micro structure at the ground/classroom level. Since the classroom teacher had just returned from a one week absence due to illness on the first scheduled classroom visit day, the researcher and teacher reviewed the parent consent forms received together at the beginning of the classroom visit. The teacher announced the student participants and let several interested students know that they would have to return the consent form in order to join in next time. One student expressed her disappointment to the researcher that her parents did not consent for her to participate, “I really want to”, she said. *I empathized with this student and thought about how this lack of parental consent excluded her from the group. I envisioned a fracture in the community and looked to a future scenario where Grandmother Teachings and storywork Circle pedagogy are established within the curriculum in schools.*

I monitored parent consents and student participant forms on each classroom visit day and followed up verbally with each student regarding their parent information and consent package. Three students indicated verbally that they had discussed the project with their parents who were in agreement. The school principal wanted to support the project by soliciting parental consent in a way that she thought was “more invitational” than the initial package from the researcher (Appendix A: Parent/Guardian Information Letter and Consent Form). Five packages were re-sent with a cover letter on school letterhead from the principal. The letter stated, *“Learning about Aboriginal people is part of the revised Social Studies curricula and we have an opportunity to have an Anishinaabe educator support this in the...classroom this month. All students will participate in the classroom activities as part of the curriculum but only students with signed consent will be part of the attached research work. Please read the attached information and indicate whether or not your child's drawings/writing and stories can*

be collected by Sharla Peltier as part of her visits to the classroom. Please return the final page of the package to the school with your child tomorrow." The parent consent forms were returned regarding the three students who had indicated their interest and said that their parents agreed. I reflected on the principal's action and perceived it as an illustration of power within the hierarchy of school, community, and families. The principal's attempt to intervene and solicit more parental consent was not effective as no additional students were given consent from their parents. It seems that the principal's position of authority in the school had no effect on the parents decision.

Description of the Case Study Setting

Description of the School. The school is close to the heart of the city and the school population includes twenty percent First Nations students and an Ojibwe Language Program is offered to Grades 1 through 8. The school website illustrates that character education is important. "[P]rograms to assist our students in becoming kind, respectful and responsible students and citizens" and "great learning goes hand in hand with honour, truth and integrity".

The culture of the case study school is inclusive of First Nations culture and Aboriginal education. Some indicators are the presence of *Anishinaabe* art and *Anishinaabemowin* signage and my observations that the school secretary interactions with First Nations students were observed to be respectful and caring. A relaxed and welcoming context was evident in the front office whenever the researcher entered.

These features of the school environment and culture are particularly relevant to creating a welcoming environment for Aboriginal children and their families. The school projects inclusion of First Nation culture to staff students and school visitors. This setting is also

conducive to teachers' and staff's attitudes of respectful inclusiveness and awareness of First Nation students and families in the school.

Description of the classroom. The research classroom was located on the second floor of the school on the eastern side. Since the research was carried out during the month of June, it was quite hot in the classroom and when the windows were opened up, things did not cool off.

I surveyed the classroom during recess time and made some observations and notes in my field journal. Most of the displays of student work and learning supports were teacher-made and the desks were set up in pairs, configured in rows. I concluded from these observations that the classroom teacher assumes responsibility for the environment, ensuring a structured setting with delineated areas for student work such as art and research projects. The teacher's desk was in the back corner of the room for observation of all of the students at any given time. The teacher's computer was in the front corner of the room at a tall glass desk and this area was sometimes used for small group work. Student computers were at a table along the side of the classroom. A large bookshelf was located behind the teacher's desk and this seems to indicate that students ask permission to access these particular resources. A bookshelf readily accessible to students was located in the back corner of the classroom. A tiered display shelf was located on the window sill with beautiful and interesting items for the students to explore (e.g. a shell, a clay sculpture). My interpretation of the classroom indicates that the space exudes the classroom teacher's valuing of aesthetics, arts, and order. Two pieces of students' written work were posted beside his desk. *I wondered if the classroom teacher selected these as exemplars of good writing and academic accomplishment or if they served to reinforce his value as an educator?*

My observations of the class during my visits were recorded in photos and field notes in my journal. The classroom teacher was observed to engage all of the students together from the

front of the class where the Smartboard and blackboard were located. He provided explicit, step-by-step instructions to the students regarding written seat-work and utilized a question-answer interaction style where students raised their hand in order to speak. Students were frequently called on to read-aloud. The classroom environment was quiet. Students formed small groups and enjoyed social time on the last day of school, playing board games on the floor and at the teacher's desk and computer stand. During transition time (recess, nutrition break, dismissal), students lined up to speak with him. Overall the classroom context was structured (physical environment and teacher's interactive style).

Perhaps focussing on the quality of thinking rather than the mechanics of writing and opportunity to share with peers what students have written about their thinking and learning is conducive to exploratory writing and new ideas (*Writing to Learn*, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012a). In addition to the physical space in the classroom, the social space for learning can optimize student engagement and creativity. A classroom learning environment that is functioning successfully as a "the third teacher" supports crucial communication and critical thinking skills (*The Third Teacher*, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012b).

I reflected on the relationship of this classroom context and teaching style to learning and framed it in this way: The students' thinking is shaped by the context of their learning. A structured, predictable setting with an authoritative teacher likely is not conducive to self-discovery and thinking-outside-the box. I thought that when students grow accustomed to being told exactly how to do something and a written response is expected, creativity and higher-level thinking are stymied.

Research context within the classroom space. At the time of the first classroom visit, the classroom teacher went out into the hallway with the 10 students who were not participating.

I asked the students to make room for a Circle and a number of students quickly pushed the desks and chairs back. I removed the cloth mat and Medicine Circle cloth from my Teaching Bundle and one of the girls quickly got a broom and swept up the floor. A few students volunteered and I guided them to set up the mat with the cloth Medicine Circle on top. This configuration clearly delineated the creation of space in the classroom for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. I felt welcomed and pleased at the way the boys and girls handled the items and created a Circle space with care and respect. *I thought about how the classroom teacher had been displaced from his classroom and I was concerned that this would contribute to alienation from the process rather than supporting the intended inclusion and participation of the teacher.*

Due to rainy weather, the initial and second classroom visits occurred in the Grade four/five classroom. Students assisted in pushing the desks and chairs to the periphery and the circular mat and Medicine Circle (that I had sewn) were placed on the floor. I sat on the floor around the edge of the mat with the group of 14 students. The classroom teacher responded to my invitation to join the Circle by placing his chair *behind* the first student in the Circle. *I wondered why the teacher chose this place? I reflected on past experience when I visited a classroom and the teacher did not join the Circle even when I verbally invited them to join me and the students. In such instances, I said that we would wait for everyone to come into the Circle. On a number of occasions, the teacher responded by sitting down in the Circle and sometimes they pulled up a chair outside the periphery. This behaviour is perplexing and seems to indicate reluctance on the teacher's part to abandon their role of representing an authority figure by joining in the Circle as an equal participant with their students. I also thought that*

perhaps the classroom teacher's lack of cultural or pedagogical acumen made him uncomfortable in this situation.

Research context in the school yard. Three of the classroom visits took place out in the school yard which was a large grassy field with mature trees around the fence and periphery. I always selected a shady spot away from the high traffic areas of the playground. A train track was close by to the east, on the other side of the street. Figure 9 shows the school yard.



Figure 9. The school yard

I arrived at the classroom, waited for the supply teacher to come in and get settled, and together with the students and teacher, we went outside and then back to the classroom. There were two stairs and four doors in the transition route and students readily volunteered to hold the door open and to carry the large blanket, Grandmother's Teaching Bundle, and basket of clip boards. The first time that the session was held outside, I was aware of the need to find a quiet place and had noted that the classroom teacher had a sore leg. I led the students to a spot at the

back of the school yard, a distance from the soccer game that was happening and in close proximity to a bench for the teacher to sit on. For the other sessions, students were invited to choose the spot and a boy complied to his teacher's request to bring him a plastic chair. Upon returning to the school, a student always volunteered to run around to the front of the school, gain access through the secure front entrance, come down a flight of stairs, and open the back door from inside the school. With the heat of the day considered, I noted that these students were especially kind to volunteer and they politely held open the doors for us.

My research design and use of qualitative research methods created space in the school for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and demonstrated *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. Appreciation of Indigenous orality consciousness has been supported through this approach and the research data and findings demonstrate how students and the classroom teacher engaged to make-meaning.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The Powwow grand entry. *It's Powwow time! At the time of the grand entry in a Powwow, the collective process of the host community has culminated in a representation of who they are - each person has contributed to welcoming the world to their territory/Aki. The community shares their best of all things with the people. The flags and Eagle Staffs of the people, warriors, and honoured leaders known as “the colour guard” lead all who have come to dance in the circle of the ceremony grounds. Everything, the colours dancing in the wind, the rhythmic sound of the men’s ankle bells and women’s metal jingles on their jingle dresses, and the beautiful array of Eagle and various bird feathers worn and carried, move to the beat of the big Mishomis drum. Everyone stands to honour the collective and the spectacle and power of life sends chills down their backs, grounding them to Shkagamik-kwe.*

In this chapter, I introduce the students with data obtained from the transcripts, drawings, and writings. The classroom teacher is introduced in the initial interview, and data from teacher conversations. The teacher post-research interview sheds light on his thinking and participation. In this chapter I explore the field data (transcripts, drawings, writings, my field notes, and my reflective journal) first in relation to the research questions and in additional data analysis, I utilize a double entry journal format to present my reflections and insights that emerged from the data analysis process (italicized text).

I also bring information from my field notes and my observations from my Field Journal forward and utilize these in interpreting the research data. My reflections are shared throughout the case study and research process. Examples of codes, categories and themes that emerged as I

engaged with the process of data analysis are presented and discussed relative to the research questions.

I began my research analysis process by making an archive of the field texts (surveying the data in its entirety) which included story Circle transcripts and drawings, text samples, teacher interview transcripts, teacher conversation field notes and transcripts, field notes and field journal entries). I engaged in a process of examining the data to answer the overarching research question: How is *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge socially enacted in the classroom? This part of the analysis process brought a story to light about how the concepts and principles were introduced by me as the Grandmother visiting the Grade four/five classroom and how the classroom teacher and students responded. It also brought to mind an exploration of the macro structure or school context and the micro structure or classroom context of the overall research story. Archiving the data means reviewing and appreciating each part of the whole and the Powwow analogy illustrates the complex, interaction with the movement and energy of the data.

Time for Intertribal Dancing

My process of looking for evidence within the artefacts reminded me of an intertribal dance at a Powwow. Everyone - Powwow dancers, drummers and singers, community members and visitors dance their personal style when called out for an intertribal dance in a clock-wise direction within the Circle. All age groups of all dance categories: women's traditional, jingle and fancy shawl; men's traditional, grass and fancy dancers show their moves. The traditional dancers move slowly and rhythmically while others zigzag at a frenzied pace, covering all areas of the ceremony grounds. An observer might also note one or two chicken dancers move forward and back as well as people of specific societies who dance in a counter-clockwise direction. The

crowd raises the dust but there is no chaos here, everyone dances their style in-sync with the drum. All are welcome here from the expert professional dancers to the first-timers, young and old.

Examining threads and connections. The data analysis and interpretation process meant that I initially saw the data and codes and then immersed myself with the data to compare coded items. And so, as I continued with my analysis of the data, I experienced the flow of information and energy from the children's drawings and the stories shared. This impacted how I decided to present the data and to discuss the field text.

I use the metaphor of a Powwow here as it epitomizes the movement and coming together of the thematic data analysis process within my Indigenous research paradigm. An intensive process of examining the data was carried out. I was able to physically move and follow the threads that pulled me here and there as they emerged. At times it was like a crazy, fast-paced dance as I responded to what the data was showing me. My shared context with the participants in the story Circles was particularly important as this provided a lens for me to identify themes and threads that aligned with the Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge that I actually introduced in the Teaching Stories. I referred to my research diary to recall my Teaching story process and key terms used, the English/Anishinaabemowin concepts presented, and details about the participants.

Here I thought about the extent of participation in the research. An invitation had been extended for all students, however ten did not participate. With regards to the 14 research participants, their Child Participant Consent Forms showed that they were on occasion reserved in gifting their stories, drawings and writing for the research. I felt that a sense of classroom as

community had been fractured through the signed consent form process which meant that some of the students were left out.

After reviewing the data in its entirety, I then looked specifically for evidence in the artefacts and story Circle transcripts that represented the Anishinabe ecological relational knowledge that was introduced in the Teaching Stories and experiences in Place. I assigned initial codes to the examples. At this time in the data analysis, I referred to my field notebook and journal to refresh my memory about the details of the session contents that I had written about in point form. I assigned codes written on coloured sticky notes on the field data that was displayed on my wall in a sequential fashion with artefacts paired with transcripts. Thus, a chaotic-looking process of meaning-making led me here and there, appreciating and noting the content that the data had to offer. *I envisioned myself involved in a dance with the drawings, writings, and stories. The data led and I followed.*

Sources of Data and Analysis Procedure

A number of researchers inspired my data collection and analysis framework which incorporates elements of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Chase 2005), writing about my data collection and data analysis experience (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2005), and clarity of perceptions and validity of my communication and assurance that my "...sense of the situation, observation, reporting, and reading stay within some limits of correspondent" (Stake, 2005). Dyson and Genishi (2005) describe this process as a "messy human experience" (p. 79). The researcher is "on the trail of thematic threads, meaningful events, and powerful factors that allow us entry into the multiple realities and dynamic processes that constitute the everyday drama...in educational settings...[and] insight...into the transformative possibilities of social spaces for teaching and learning" (p. 111).

I set aside quality time in a special location so that I could experience dedicated interaction with the children's stories and teacher's words in order to represent their voices in my research text. A variety of data analysis approaches are outlined by Clandinin and Connelly in their 2000 book about narrative inquiry. The paradigm of examining field texts in a three-dimensional inquiry space (spatial, personal-social, and temporal positioning) so that my memory accounts of events and re-telling process considered the story-teller's internal responses and context was helpful. Field notes were interwoven with journal reflections on how I was feeling about the experience and my inquiry process for constructing the field text. The audio and video recordings and field notes together were crucially important to constructing the data analysis. Teacher interviews and conversations were transcribed and considered in association with my field notes. The immediate purpose and focus shifted as the data interacted in a movement of expansion and contraction. Aspects of my shared experience with the students and teacher meant that boundaries were sometimes fluid.

I transcribed the audio recordings and video recordings gathered during storytelling Circles, teacher interviews and teacher conversations soon after they were obtained. The recordings were transcribed twice and careful attention was paid to ensure accurate representation of the student and classroom teacher's words. The transcripts were verified for accuracy by re-duplication of transcriptions with identification of sections with disagreement and re-transcription a third time for these sections.

I was inspired to honour the stories and let the children's voices talk to me and so I arranged to do the data analysis and interpretation and first draft of the research text at my camp. The peaceful solitude and beauty of this setting made this a wholistic experience for me and I kept true to my purpose without distraction.

I applied a thematic analysis and grounded theory approach by looking for patterns of thought and behaviour and engagement in the building of concepts and themes from the ground up. Data analysis initially involved archiving the field data and reviewing everything in its entirety for an overview of the content. I listened to the audio and video recordings and followed along by reading the transcripts to re-experience and recall the Circles, teacher conversations, and teacher interviews. I aligned each transcript with the drawing or written text and placed these in the order of each Circle, and lined them up on the walls of my cabin in a sequential fashion. This enabled me to see the drawings, writings, and transcripts clearly.

I saw the movement depicted in the children's drawings and appreciated the communicative power of each piece. *I wondered if I was imagining movement in the art and whether or not a casual observer would experience the same sensation? I decided to go visit my brother and explained what was happening to me when I looked at the drawings. He talked with me about how Elder Peter O'Chiese frequently started a Teaching with two parallel lines and how as he spoke, additional symbols were added and stories within stories emerged. It seemed that O'Chiese began with two basic lines every time, whether he spoke about such things as life responsibilities for a man or woman or the path of the Anishinaabeg and the path of the colonists, it always started the same and ended up as a complex maize of symbols and figures. My brother said that not everyone would be able to appreciate what I was seeing in the children's drawings. He stated that, "When people look at wood style art or recorded Medicine Circle Teachings, only about 30% of us can see and feel the motion that is represented.*

Medicine Circles sometimes include flags on the axis, depicting movement or spinning in a clock-wise fashion".⁴³ Figure 10 illustrates the Medicine Circle and movement.

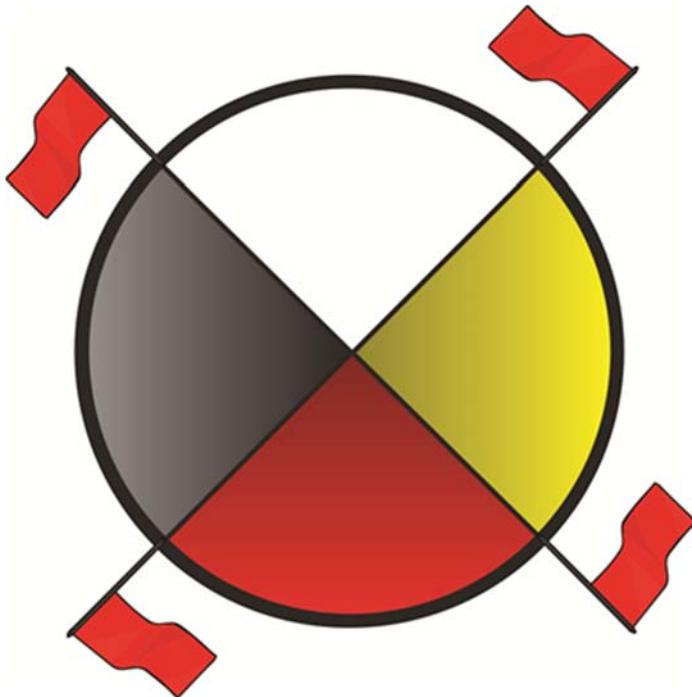


Figure 10. Medicine Circle with flags denoting movement

Students illustrated their thinking about the Teaching stories and referred to the drawing on their clip-board while re-telling the Story during story Circles. People's actions, events, and facial expressions depicting feelings were represented in the drawings and a number of the retells conveyed movement and action. Some students represented their understanding by re-storying within their personal and family context.

Story Circle data were transcribed verbatim from digital audio or video files of the five story Circles. The number of story Circle participants varied during each classroom visit from 10 to 13 and on occasion, a participant told more than one story in a Circle. Teacher interview

⁴³ Personal communication with Mark Douglas, at Rama First Nation August 28, 2015.

data (one initial interview and one post-research interview) was transcribed verbatim from digital audio or video files.

Table B represents the quantity of data from all sources during this case study research project. Teacher conversation data (three conversations occurred during after the second, third, and fourth story Circle) was transcribed verbatim from digital audio or video files.

In total, there were over 10,050 words transcribed and analyzed from these sources over a 6 month period. Research diary and field journal texts were reviewed many times over the course of analyzing and interpreting data to obtain relevant information regarding the context and researcher reflections and queries.

Table B Data collected, transcribed, analyzed from all sources in the research

Type of Source	Number of Sources	Description
Story transcripts	Story Circle #1 - 11 stories Story Circle #2 - 12 stories	Completed during 2 Circles inside the classroom on first and second visit
	Story Circle #3 - 18 Story Circle #4 - 18 Story Circle #5 - 9	Completed during 3 Circles outside in the school yard on third, fourth, and fifth visit
Student drawings	Story Circle #1 - 7 Story Circle #2 - 15 Story Circle #3 - 16 Story Circle #4 - 12 Story Circle #5 - 13	Completed during the Teaching Story, Reflective Experience in Place, Story Circle. These were shared during the story Circle component of the storywork Circle pedagogy.
Student text (writing)	Story Circle #1 - 1 Story Circle #2 - 1 Story Circle #3 - 3 Story Circle #4 - 2 Story Circle #5 - 1	Completed during the Teaching story, Reflective Experience in Place, story Circle. These were shared during the story Circle component of the storywork Circle pedagogy.
Teacher conversations	After the first story Circle After the second story Circle After the third story Circle	Obtained in the classroom while students worked or ate their lunch at their desk.

Teacher interviews	Initial teacher interview - 1	Obtained in a quiet, private room prior to the first visit on the first day
	Post-research interview - 1	Obtained in the classroom while the students worked at their desks after the fifth story Circle on the fifth day.
Photographs	Of the school context - 2	Obtained on the day of the preliminary classroom visit preceding the first classroom visit
	Of the classroom context - 10 Of the school yard context - 7	Obtained on the day of the last classroom visit
	Of reflective experience in Place - 7	Obtained outside in the school yard during the third visit

Thematic Analysis

I reviewed the literature on qualitative research with respect to grounded theory and thematic analysis (Charmaz, 2005; Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Howard & Perry, 2007). These researchers highlighted analytic guidelines in focussing data collection toward conceptual development and their approaches informed my process. I explored data analysis and interpretation techniques such as poetics of Place (Brady, 2005) and writing (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005) and critical Indigenous methodological considerations such as thematic analysis of stories grounded in relationships, and application of social justice sensibilities (Kovach, 2009).

Charmaz (2005) described how data collection and analysis are simultaneously occurring processes that provide "...an analytic interpretation of participants' worlds and of the processes constituting how these worlds are constructed" (p. 508). The researcher situates her approach within the movement away from positivist ideology towards a constructivist approach and advocates for "[r]e-grounding grounded theory in an epistemology that takes recent methodological developments into account" (p. 509). This places the emphasis on the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it and the researcher takes a reflective stance on

modes of knowing and representing studied life [so that]... our conceptual categories rise through our interpretation of data rather than emanating from them or from our methodological practises" (p. 509). "[G]rounded theory methods provide a way to proceed...[so that] the research problem and the researcher's unfolding interest shape the content of this activity, not the method" (p. 511).

Ritchie et al. (2014) researched *Anishinaabe* youth and their thematic analysis took into consideration the

interconnectivity between categories rather [representing]... a hierarchy of discrete and separate categories. This highlighted a unique Indigenous perspective to analysis that was also congruent with the Medicine Wheel framework. It was more important to view the interconnection between themes and sub-themes rather than through a linear (hierarchical) model that most mainstream researchers follow (p. 130).

This approach was especially suited my methodological framework and approach to data analysis within an Indigenous research paradigm.

The work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) informed my process of transitioning from field texts to this research text. I continually thought about the way the case study and narrative inquiry process illuminated the social and theoretical contexts in which the study is positioned. This I considered as "the so-what?" of this research.

Analysis Procedure for Storywork Circle Pedagogy

In this case study research, *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge was socially enacted through my implementation of a storywork Circle pedagogical context. The storywork Circle learning-teaching process occurred five times and included: epitomizing the oral tradition through Teaching Stories in my role as a visiting grandmother; introducing reflective experiences in Place that linked to the Teaching Stories; student experiences connecting to *Shkagamik-kwe*

and Aki to facilitate self-awareness and engagement in reflective processing; participant story Circles to respond verbally, through drawing, and writing.

My thematic analysis process. *A thematic analysis of the storywork data was completed by the researcher. As I engaged in this process I once again thought about how this is similar to the Powwow experience. What may appear to a casual Powwow visitor as chaos is really a synchronized flow of different meanings. The personal regalia with its life journey representations of beadwork symbols and face paint, the buckskin and accessories - a fan, eagle claw dance stick, are gifts from our brothers the animals and our dance style is purposeful to honour who we are, where we come from, and where we are going [Journal entry, Fourth classroom Visit].*

An overview across the Powwow sacred ceremony grounds brings focus on the young butterfly dancers twirling and displaying their fancy shawls and fast footwork. Meanwhile directly in front of the observer is a southern style traditional dancer with an upright posture who leans forward and fans Aki as if tracking an animal when the honour beats of the drum sound. Three grandmothers have aligned themselves on the outer periphery of the circle in the eastern portion, stepping sideways together with the energy of their jingle dresses sounding healing energy for everyone. Amidst this, young women with babes in arms quickly cut across the direction of the flow as they move to and from the central Arbor where their boyfriends, husbands, brothers, and uncles busy themselves at the drums when they are called on to send out a song for the people. The grass dancers sway like the wind with intentional footwork moving down the grass within the dance arena. Their colourful ribbons attract the observer's eye.

Coding. The data consisting of story transcripts, drawings with symbols and words/labels, and written text were reviewed. Evidence of Teaching story concepts was gleaned

as I examined the data while referring to Appendix B (*Anishinaabe Ecological Relational Teaching Story Concepts*). The following queries characterized my lens: *What content related to Grandmother's Teaching Bundle and Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge is represented in the data? What Teaching story concepts can I see?*

I also explored the coded data with attention to the ancillary research question: *How do students incorporate Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge into their talk, drawing, and writing?* This part of the analysis process involved an in-depth examination of the threads connecting the concepts and as they inter-twined across the student drawings, writing, and stories, meaningful themes emerged. As I moved with the threads, my thinking and intuitive processes became activated and new connections became evident.

Thirty-three codes were assigned to the transcripts, drawings, and written text. These codes identify *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts, principles and values that were made visible in the storywork Circle pedagogy. The following items were components of Grandmother's Teaching Bundle and were symbolized in student drawings (objects, details, actions, and printed words): Medicine Circle (concepts represented within the four quadrants - colours (yellow, red, black, white), cardinal directions (east, south, west, north), temporal concepts (sun rise, sun set), location of things and proximity to Place; *Mishomis* (Grandfather rock); *Odehwegan* (hand drum) and drum stick; *Nibi* (water) drinking water and copper water vessel; *Asemaa/tobacco*; candle (fire).

The Grandmother Teaching Bundle is represented in student drawings and/or labelling of items as well as in the student stories. This bundle is a culturally relevant teaching tool that I brought with me into the Circle. I used the Bundle in the Teaching Stories and made reference to the items to facilitate comprehension of abstract concepts. The circular mat and Medicine Circle

cloth are considered to be part of my Grandmother Teaching Bundle as these provided a visual representation of theoretical concepts regarding the Medicine Circle and Relational Wheel.

Knowledge about the Grandmother Teaching Bundle is represented with the use of names and labels for items familiar to the storywork Circle pedagogy. The data illustrates the use of symbols and words in English and/or *Anishinaabemowin*: *Nibi* (Water), *Odewehgan* (Drum), *Asemaa* (Tobacco tie). Abstract concepts were represented in student drawings by symbols. Some of these were a reflection of the Medicine Circle and Relational Wheel represented by the blanket, circular cloth and Medicine Circle cloth that were displayed as the Teaching Stories were shared. Other symbols were created by the student to support their re-tell of the Teaching Stories.

The students have seen how the items are functional within the storywork Circle pedagogy. They have advanced their cultural sensitivity with new understanding and increased awareness within the cultural context and *Anishinaabe* world view.

The data were reviewed with the broad research question in mind: *What is Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge and what relevant principles and concepts are made visible in a public school classroom?*

The following coded items were represented in student drawings, in writing (sentences and lists) and in student talk/stories: Self (at centre of Circle, cold wind, cold body temperature, warm sun, hot body temperature, water in the body); *Shkagamik-kwe* (Mother Earth), *Aki* (Land); Relational Wheel; conservation - ecological conservation and choice (hunting and taking only what is needed, harvesting only large fish); breath (sharing our breath with the trees - we exhale carbon dioxide and the trees breathe this in and exhale oxygen for us); air (clouds, clouds are our friends, clouds moving, bird in flight, leaves falling); wind (grass moving in wind, wind

pushing sideways, leaves moving in the wind); voice (laughing, whispering, baby crying, children's voices, children screaming and yelling, children's dialogue); song (singing; opera singing; *Nibi* (water) song in English and *Anishinaabemowin* languages); plant life (trees, tree, grass, flowers, leaves falling); food (strawberries are medicine for us); animal life (chipmunk, squirrel, robin, bird, insects, insect eating, wings flapping, crow, birds chirping, squirrel jumping off a tree, being bitten by a mosquito); family (parents, brothers and sisters, the Earth is Mother); ancestors/sensing the unseen (clouds communicating, Mother Earth communicating, tingling energy from Mother Earth, spirits, whispers); people (kicking sand, pulling grass, pencil scratching on paper, footsteps); belonging (feeling a part of something); Honesty (tell the truth, from the heart); Respect toward animals; Love; gratitude (to Mother Earth for life, appreciation for brothers and family); choice/volition; silence (hearing myself think); peace (peace and quiet).

The schematic below (Figure 11) illustrates the thirty four themes of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge that emerged from the data analysis. Indigenous knowledge and conceptualization of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in particular as a holistic process of embodied knowing from life experience, relational collectivity, and inner knowing. What is known is situated within understanding inter-relationships and inter-connections with *Aki* and each other within the specific knowledge system context of localized (*Anishinaabe*) content, meaning, and protocols. Indigenous people acknowledge that not everything is known and understood. This is represented in the schematic by situating *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge on a dark background.

The *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge themes represented in the student data are embodied knowledge. Colour groupings are associated in the schematic to represent

wholistic knowing: thinking (white); intuitive reflecting (yellow); experiencing and doing (red); and feeling and relating (black).

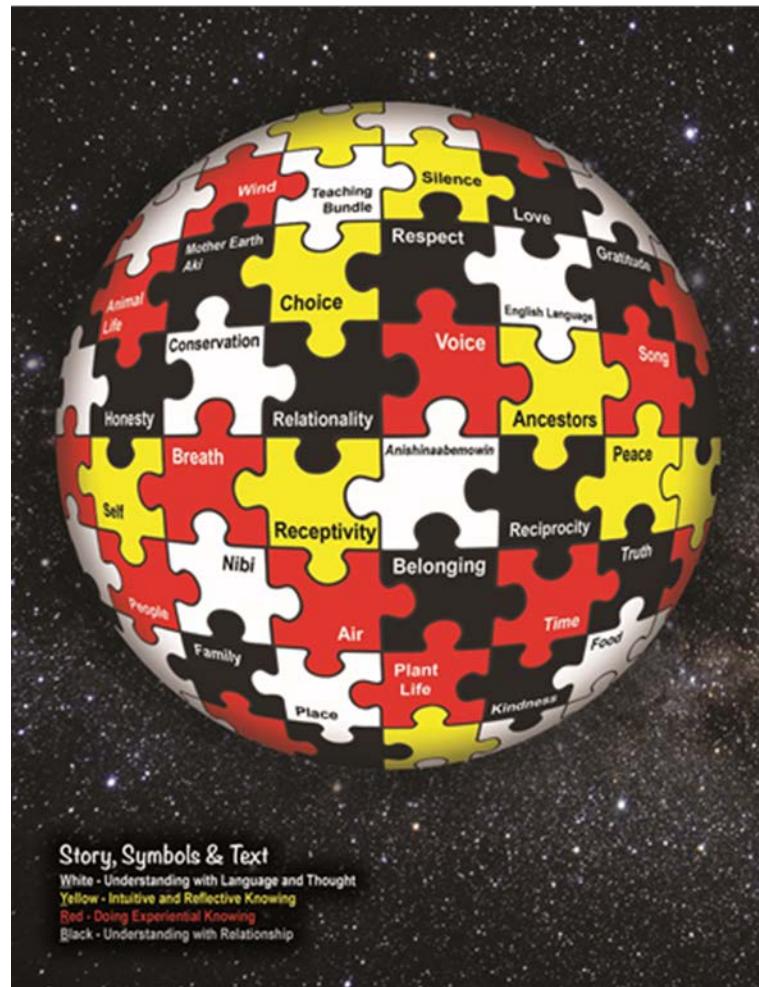


Figure 11. Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge themes

Students' displayed thinking. The second part of the overarching research question was considered in relation to the data examination process: *How do students show thinking about Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge?* The data analysis process revealed that student thinking was represented in their talk/storying, written text, and drawings as they participated in the Indigenous pedagogy in a collective process of 'coming to know'. The following topics are

grouped according to how student thinking was represented. These include codes and themes from the data analysis process.

Further student thinking is anticipated from within an Indigenous perspective. In future, participants may "twice understand" through engagement in further reflection on the learning experience and new personal connections and meaning-making.

Classroom Teacher

Initial interview procedure. An initial-research project interview was scheduled with the classroom teacher at his convenience. The process helped me to understand his cultural background, familiarity with Aboriginal peoples and culture and to explore his teaching strategies regarding Aboriginal content. The questions were provided to CT in advance (See Appendix D Part 1 Teacher Pre-Interview Questions). The option of meeting after school was given and he opted to meet with me during his double prep time in the morning at the school. We met in a private area in the school and the interview was video-recorded with my IPad. This interview lasted 20 minutes as I was cognizant of the teacher's limited time to speak with me. The interview was structured as I adhered to the direct and indirect questions that I provided to the classroom teacher ahead of time. The process helped me to understand his cultural background, familiarity with Aboriginal peoples and culture and to explore his teaching strategies regarding Aboriginal content.

Conversations with the classroom teacher. After each classroom visit, I engaged the classroom teacher in a short conversation. The teacher did not opt to respond to emails to schedule short conversations and preferred to discuss the story Circles briefly, face-to-face in the classroom at the end of each of my visits. *I wondered why he did not respond to my emails and inferred that he preferred communication in-person since he was just getting to know me. His*

decision to chat in the classroom rather than in private may have been influenced by a desire to participate in the research project while he was in the classroom rather than infringing on his preparation time or lunch break. One conversation was video-taped, one was audio recorded, and one was recorded with written notes in my field notebook.

Supply teacher. During our first conversation in the classroom after my first visit, I offered to arrange for a supply teacher for the subsequent sessions in order to facilitate the classroom teacher's participation. It was presented in a way to illustrate how his participation was valued and important to the study and the teacher agreed with the suggestion. I contacted two supply teachers who were established in the school board and made arrangements for them to come into the school for an hour and a half at the rate of fifty dollars. Both teachers were of First Nation background and spoke *Anishinaabemowin*. The Grade four/five classroom teacher was pleased that the rest of his class had an opportunity to interact with these supply teachers in particular. They led the class in unstructured activities such as drama, poetry-writing, and researching the topic of the Earth and the body in relation to water on the internet.

Teacher post-research interview. The post-research interview was structured as I adhered to the direct and indirect questions that I provided to the classroom teacher ahead of time. (Appendix D Part 2 Post-research Teacher Interview Questions). The interview also identified the classroom teacher's perception of the value of the experience for himself and his students.

The post-research interview was intended to explore the classroom teacher's perception of the impact and value of the experience for himself and his students. I suggested to the teacher that we meet after the research project for a post-research interview and I provided him with the interview questions ahead of time. The teacher said that he wanted to do the interview after my

final classroom visit. The post-research project interview was video-recorded in the classroom after my final classroom visit.

Dissemination of Data

Closure of the research process at the school was facilitated by a case study presentation held at the school in *Waabgonii Giizis* 2016 (one year post research in the classroom). A parent and student invitation-only presentation was held outside in the school yard to share the findings of this case study research. Eleven of the student participants, the classroom teacher, and the school principal attended as well as a grandmother of one of the student participants. Ice cream was shared together as I gave an oral synopsis of the research findings and outcomes. One of the boys (CD) expressed with emotion how grateful he was that his parents allowed him to participate in the group and he said, "I want to thank everyone for making this the best ever for me". One of the girls (WD) brought her father's hand-drum to the presentation and she drummed as everyone sang The *Nibi* (Water) song together. The school principal commented that this gathering was "beautiful" and "everyone was so appreciative".

The research study information and findings will be disseminated to the academic community and educators at conferences and through publication with the aim of sharing a case study about *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy and ecological relational knowledge in a public school grade 4/5 classroom.

Student participants, parents/guardians, the case study classroom teacher, school principal, and school board research committee were notified through a flyer from the school and food/refreshments were served at the gathering. A presentation using lay-person language that included samples of student drawings and story (that were not be attributed to any one student in

particular) and case study findings was made. The school (principal, classroom teacher) and school board research committee received a copy of the final research report in June 2016.

The Give-Away

At the conclusion of a Powwow, the host community gifts something tangible to every visitor in appreciation for their visit to the community and for the contributions they made to make the gathering pleasant and memorable. The host community is most gracious to visitors. The visitor feels that the host has already shared so much and when they accept yet another gift, it is a wonderful response of acknowledgement. Each visitor is invited to choose a gift and as everyone exchanges a hand-shake, a huge circle unfolds around the dance arena. Everyone files in to dance behind the flags and eagle staffs which are taken around the dance arena one more time. During the honour beats of the drum, everyone holds up the gift they received in respectful acknowledgement. The Powwow ends as the flags are retired and everyone breaks camp and heads home.

This section of the research text is meant to highlight the case study results which are gifted to the reader.

*Anishinaabe cultural linguistic discourse and pedagogy have been enacted within the language, communication, and learning processes in an urban grade four/five classroom in northeastern Ontario. In this case study, space has been created for Anishinaabe Grandmother Teachings that reflect the *Shkagamik-kwe* (Earth) Teaching Lodge. Nature (the school yard) provides a context for understanding Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge through a storywork Circle pedagogy. Student and teacher thinking and learning journeys are demonstrated in responses to Teaching Stories, reflective experiences in Place, story Circles, and *Anishinaabemowin* that exude Indigenous ways of knowing Indigenous reality and ways of*

coming to know. Participant stories, writings, drawings, and talk demonstrate learning journeys encompassing immediate re-vitalization of ancestral connections with Nature and its inherent meanings. Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data (interview, conversation, and narrative voice recordings, photographs and student written text and drawings) and application of thematic analysis illustrates perceptions of self-in-relation, values of community, and personal experiences of connection with the Earth for learning. Students and their classroom teacher who participated in this case study experienced opportunities to learn from each other and to appreciate diversity.

The participants shared their thoughts about the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the story Circles, demonstrating engagement in the Indigenous pedagogy. The story Circle participants became adept at saying their name and passing *Mishomis* if they did not want their story to be shared and this allowed the Circle to flow without disruption. On two occasions there was adequate time for *Mishomis* to travel around the Circle a second time, giving students an opportunity to expand on their thinking and reflections. Thus the students responded to the storywork Circle pedagogy and demonstrated the collective process of coming to know in a story Circle that generated new knowledge.

Teaching Stories

The *nibi* (water) teaching. The Teaching story about *Nibi* (Water) emphasized the fact that we *are* water (our bodies are composed of approximately 72% water). All life - plants and animals (our food and medicines) rely on water. The earth is composed of 72% water like us. The *Anishinaabemowin* term for *Nibi* refers to the concept that we embody water. We voice our appreciation for water and this acknowledgement supports balance so that the water is always healthy and flowing, giving us life. I mentioned the work of the Japanese scientist, Dr. Emoto (2005, 2006) who investigated the power of our words on water. Frozen water molecules from

water exposed to harsh words were examined under a special microscope and showed signs of structural damage. Those from water talked to in a positive loving way were whole, complete, and beautiful. I gifted two of Dr. Emoto's books illustrating the results of his experiments and theory to the classroom.

The first Teaching story about *Nibi* (Water) is an example of *tabasaamowin* (an orally transmitted historical story about people). The event happened at a time (50 years ago) when the reserve life was dictated by the Indian Act and law that imposed spiritual oppression on the *Anishinaabek* people. At that time it was illegal for my grandmother to honour the water in the spring with a tobacco offering. She honoured her responsibility as a woman for looking after the water and performed the ceremony in secret. The Story stirred a response from KR that reflected her feelings and personal values about freedom. "What I got outta the Teaching. It was pretty cool but then it was sad because it's a free country and everyone can do it [engage in ceremony] (KR1 transcript). The storywork Circle process introduced opportunity for students to explore the historical social-political context through the oral tradition and re-telling of this story.

The first Teaching story (*Nibi*) was re-told by MN with a personal experience connection and agreement with the value of personal liberty. "My name is M___ and what I found about the story. It was good that she did the ceremony and she wasn't even supposed to... when I went in the sweat lodge... and we did a water ceremony so I thought it was cool that she did it when she wasn't even supposed to. And she did it because she is from the heart (MN1 transcript).

Everyone joined in the singing of The *Nibi* (Water) Song (Water) Song at the beginning of each Circle during the research project. This provided what Chambers (2008) referred to as "an education of attention" that goes with a curriculum of place. The process supported the maintenance of creation through "a poetics of remembrance" linking stories and singing to the

memories in places (p. 124). Singing The *Nibi* (Water) Song (Water) Song together also facilitated the development of relationship with the forces that Battiste and Henderson (2000) described as a way "to be with the flux" by "creating harmony - an understanding of solidarity, love and caring" (p. 79). Over time, students sang without referring to the text and an audio recording represents their strong voices as they sang together.

AL responded to the *Nibi* Teaching story and *Nibi* Water song in the first story Circle by including some text in her drawing below (Figure 12). She represented the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concept of reciprocity by asking the water for healing ("please healing water") and thanking the water ("miigwech healing water"). AL's drawing seems to illustrate an understanding that water is animate. Perhaps her participation in the Teaching story and the experience of sharing water supported new knowledge. AL expressed personal gratitude for water and I hope that she will reflect on being-in-relationship with water for years to come. The storywork Circle pedagogy may impact future behaviour and choices about respecting and honouring water.

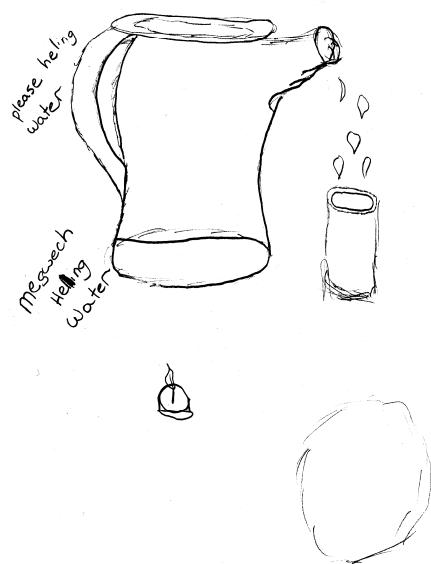


Figure 12. AL2 drawing Copper Water Vessel and *Nibi*

WD's response to the first Teachings Story (The *Nibi* (Water) Song) is shown below (Figure 13). WD shows her thinking about water in relation to the Sky World (clouds), lake and fish. She drew the interconnectivity of the ecological system in a drawing that has movement and flow to it. When I look at her drawing, I sense the circular nature of the movement of The *Nibi* (Water) Song.



Figure 13. WD1 drawing The Nibi (Water) Song

The *Odewiminan* (strawberries) teaching. The Teaching story "How *Odewiminan* (Strawberries) Came to the *Anishinaabek* People" was shared with the classroom teacher and students to demonstrate respect for plants and foods and to introduce the concept of personal gifts (unconditional love) and character attributes (honesty, kindness). This Teaching story recounts the experience of unconditional love and kindness within a family grieving the tragic loss of a son. The version of this story re-told by Pitawanakwat (2006) was used as a reference.

JP's illustration below (Figure 14) was shared during the second classroom visit in response to the Teaching Story of how *Odewiminan* (Strawberries) came to the *Anishinaabek* people. In the Odewiminan Teaching Story the boy violently pushes his twin brother down and the twin hits his head on a rock and dies. The boy tells his parents that his twin was lost in the river. Visiting his brother's grave in a state of guilt and remorse leads to the boy noticing a new plant and eventually eating the strawberry. With a change of heart, he tells his parents the truth and he comes to know their unconditional love for him.

JP's drawing (below) represents the context, events and feelings clearly to show her comprehension of the Teaching Story and concepts. Her illustration represents the violent act, grief, the twin's grave with the *odewiminan* plants and the rushing river.



Figure 14. JP2 drawing How Odewiminan Came to the People

In the story Circle she was the first in the Circle to share her understanding. She used re-storying within her personal context. JP spoke of the *Anishinaabek* ecological relational

knowledge values of Love and Honesty. “I didn’t like how he didn’t tell his parents of killing his own brother. It was really sad. But after he had a change of heart. He told his parents and if that was me killing my own bother I would cry [rubs her eye] because everyone should love their brother and love their people from their family. So they shouldn’t hurt them” (JP2 transcript).

WD talked about the experiences she had when she ate the complete berry during the *Odewiminan* Teaching Story and sharing of strawberries. “After I ate that strawberry it made me think of happy things in my life that happened.” (WD 2 transcript). She referred to the plant as “medicine” and seemed to experience the association with love that the strawberry brings. WD has First Nation background and seems to be sharing knowledge of her relationship with ancient wisdom that is passed down through the oral tradition.

The *Nibwakaawin* (relationality and interconnectivity)Teaching. I presented a Teaching about relationality and as I spoke I pointed out the cloth, mat, blanket, grass, and beyond to provide visual support for conceptualization. The individual was described as being central. I shared the idea that *Anishinaabek* value the child as the centre of the Universe and believe that the child chooses his/her parents. The four quadrant-coloured Medicine Circle cloth occupied the space in the centre of the story Circle and I delineated this to represent family. The cloth mat that the Medicine Circle cloth was situated on formed a circular border around the Medicine Circle and this was explained to represent relationship with the community. The area of the large rectangle blanket (where the story Circle participants sat during Circles outside in the school yard) was described as representing our relationship with the world, and the grass around the periphery delineated the Nation. Beyond that, it was explained signified our relationship with the universe. *Nibwakaawin* (understanding and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are dependent on each other) was illustrated. Since everything is in relationship,

a change in any one feature or layer of the relational wheel has far-reaching impacts on all aspects. This tied into the concept of volition or choice to act in a way that supports re-balancing and harmony.

The Medicine Circle and seven directions Teaching. Consideration of the seven directions (Hampton, 1995; Cajete, 1994) and the relational Wheel acknowledging ourselves at the centre (Bopp et al., 1986; Cajete, 1994; Absolon, 1993) and our relationship with all that is above, beneath and with us (Absolon, 2011, p. 58) such as ourselves, family, community, nation, world, and universe (Graveline ,1988) was explained. Teaching Stories about our interconnections with *Aki* and *gaaniniigaanijek* (our ancestors) were orally presented. I described the cloth Medicine Circle colours to the students in the Circle with a focus on directional and temporal concepts. The following illustrates the concepts: yellow indicates the Eastern Direction, morning, and the eastern people of *Shkagamik-kwe*; red represents the Southern Direction, the time of year for renewal and the southern people of the world; black represents the Western Direction and the place where our ancestors reside; and white indicates the Northern Direction and the northern people of the world. The Medicine Circle was included to represent the "cosmic order and unity of all things" (Dumont, 2006) and the interconnectedness of our being with the rest of creation and the power of volition or will (Bopp et al., 1989) to maintain balance.

The harvesting fish and *Waabgonii-giizis* (Blooming Moon) teaching. This Teaching story described the ancient aqua-culture system and practice of abstaining from fish harvesting during *Waabgonii-Giizis*/Blooming Moon or spawning season. The Teaching Story, "The Fish Fence at the Narrows" related how the "ecological relationship is exemplified in the taking of life to have life" and described maintaining balance through an "environmentally educated sense of

being" (Cajete, 1994, p. 89). The story illustrated what Cajete (1999b) described as biophilia (the love for nature and non-human beings). In this story, a historical sense of Place is emphasized. A way of being in balance with ecology (conservation) by understanding human interactions with *Aki* is the foundation for defining the fish harvesting aspect of *Anishinaabe* culture and the community/territory of *Mnjikaning*.

The Teaching Story about the Fish Fence also illustrated the special connection to Place where the fish gave food and a means of sustenance through trade with other tribes. This aspect of the oral tradition to connect us to Place is referred to by Kulneiks, Longboat, and Young (2010) in their description of a "commemoration of life that animals give to the people in a sacred way" (p. 18). The Story supported deep learning and thinking so that students look with new understanding at what is before them.

AL made a drawing about *The Fish Fence at the Narrows* (See Section 5. in this chapter - Thinking Deeply). She wrote the words to the *Nibi* Water Song in *Anishinaabemowin* (which she may have copied from the song that was provided on the back of her clip board). Her choice to include this may indicate her increased familiarity and confidence with *Anishinaabemowin*. This supports the idea that the story Circle context provides relevance for the language and opportunity for new language-learning that is inclusive of non-Aboriginal students.

JP's drawing (Figure 15) demonstrates her great story-telling ability from the fifth story Circle (Fish Fence at the Narrows). In her transcript she represented her understanding of the *Nibi* (Water) Song and concept of Water as animate. "The water kinda speaks to us too...with the waves" (JP5 transcript}. In her drawing, she re-told the story and represented herself standing at the fish fence. JP seems to have illustrated her thinking about the ecological system

and the circle of life in the symbolism of the big fish licking their lips as they follow the unhappy-looking little fish.

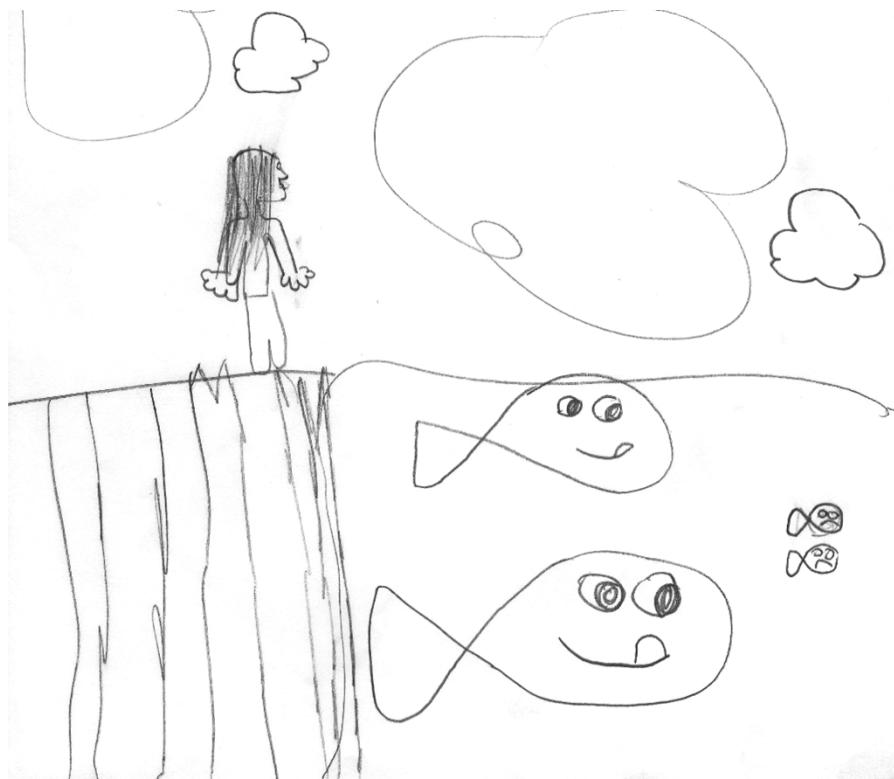


Figure 15. JP5 drawing *The Fish Fence Harvest*

Reflective Experiences in Place

The "reflective experience in Place" activities provided opportunity for students to have a wholistic experience which included listening, seeing, doing, thinking, and feeling. I shared the belief expressed by Rice (2005) who emphasized our relationship with the sky world (air, wind, movement of the moon and sun) as participants in the circle of life and our role to maintain the balance of life (p. 40). The concepts and symbols had an ecological focus as they related to the perception of Self-in-relation. Connection to Place and *Aki* creates relaxation and a sense of calm.

Deep breathing with eyes closed and visualizing were modelled while seated in the Circle. Rice (2005) described our relationship with "other-than-human persons, such as plants and animals...[that] can be spoken to by humans and understood when they speak to a human". Listening to *Aki* to understand more was demonstrated by focusing on the movement of the leaves of the trees and interpreting what this meant. I shared about how *Anishinaabek* consider voice to be a reflection of life and a representation of their individuality since no two voices are the same. In keeping with my cultural practice and the description from Basso (1996) about the power of one's voice to align with *Aki* I encouraged participants to use their voice to represent themselves with energy and intent when announcing themselves to Place. Everyone practiced using their voice to experience energetic participation and the power of voice.

The Teaching Stories are supported by student self-awareness and reflective practice activities in their special Place on *Aki* and the story Circles provide opportunity for knowledge creation. Students are sharing about going to the inner space and the self-awareness that they share as their truth (*debwewin* - a personal and wholistic truth rooted in one's heart). Gehl (2002) described this as the "circle of heart" knowledge and the "circle of mind" knowledge working together to understand *debwewin*.

The Teaching Story and practice of reflective experience in Place during my third classroom visit introduced the students to visualizing how we share our breath with the trees.

AL's artefact and transcript from the third session reflect her thinking about the Teaching Story and experience connecting to Place where we visualized our connection to *Aki* and sharing our breath with the trees. AL seems to have had a holistically powerful experience that day and she represents her thinking by writing within thinking bubbles in Figure 16. She shares her experience of hearing the clouds and interpreting Mother Earth as having a voice and conversing

with her. AL has new understanding of *Shkagamik-kwe* as animate and she has made thoughtful connections with the Air/Sky World. AL has the ability to connect with *Aki* and *Shkagamik-kwe* in a personal and holistic way.

In the drawing that contains text (below), AL talks about how she will apply this new knowledge to support her to do school work at home. She seems to have responded well to the storywork process, as evidenced by her thinking from reflective processing time with *Aki* where she had an opportunity to go inwards to know herself more intimately. The time spent outside apparently supported AL to see how her well-being is connected with *Shkagamik-kwe*.

As I analyzed the artefacts, I noticed that AL represented her thinking with text in four out of five drawings that she shared. She expresses herself well through writing.



Figure 16. AL3 drawing Reflective Experience in Place

In his response to the fourth Teaching Story about *Gaaniniigaanijek* (our ancestors) and the experience connecting to *Aki* and listening from the students' special Place, CD made a number of observations and wrote about them. During the story Circle, he shared what he heard and saw: "Just to name a few. There was rustling, yelling, drumming, creaking, wind, wind, wind, something falling, kids, bird noises, chipmunk noises, kicked sand, drumming, and scratching of the pencil on paper. Those are just to name a few and I never noticed any of those things before but this Teaching Ceremony helped me notice them" (CD4 transcript). CD seemed to gain self-awareness from situating himself in the centre of the Medicine Circle and thinking about the proximity and directionality of everything around him. His drawing of the Medicine Circle was indicative of his engagement in the process. CD may have been experiencing new learning and an appreciation for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. According to Hart's (1995) description of the story Circle process where "each person brings their own views and together a new understanding is developed by each person...Everyone has the chance to share and teach" p. (70). It seems that CD was participating as teacher and learner.

In response to the Teaching about the sky world and individual experience grounding herself to *Aki* and sharing breath with the trees, WD shared about her physical response. The transcript indicates that she visualized and connected with the sky world. "I liked the thing (practice). And it was really calming. I felt the energy through my body and it was kinda nice. Where I was sitting it was nice. And what I drew when I was there (referring to her clip board) - I drew the eagle in the wind up in the sky with a big tree" (WD3 transcript).

MF's writing that she shared during the third classroom visit, represents her experience is below (Figure 17). MN describes a physical and emotional response.

I felt the energy
rush through me. and the
grass was so soft. I
want to thank Mother
earth for this life.

Figure 17. MF3 writing Reflective Experience in Place

HB's sharing of her experience is similar to the personal awakening and receptivity to the voices of our ancestors speaking through *Aki* and through us that was explained by Lewis when he walked on *Aki* (Obamsawin, 2014). HB's sharing seems to illustrate "*Weh*" as her lens for seeing the interconnectedness of family and the astral level and ecological consciousness of kinship, identity, and relations. The process of learning together and reflecting (Coleman et al., 2012) is evident here as the Circle provided a context for everyone to understand and make connections for a continuing process of deeper understanding. HB's drawing below (Figure 18) represents her thinking about the experience she had when connecting to her special Place in the school yard.



Figure 18. HB3 drawing Connection to Aki/Shkagamik-kwe

The story Circle transcripts and drawing/writing were found to be rich with *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. I perceived the pedagogy as wholistic and noted how student talk, drawing, and writing were couched within the contexts of Teaching stories, reflective experiences in Place, and story Circles that involved the processing of information through visioning, feeling and thinking. Experiential learning for students was gained from reflective experiences in Place and processing information by ‘doing’.

The Story Circle Topics And Making Meaning

The participants in the storywork Circle pedagogy represented their thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in a number of ways. Analysis of student displayed thinking was organized by topics and examples from the data are provided to illustrate the students' representation of meaningful connections:

1. Re-storying. WD re-told a story in a way that made the story all about her. She lost a front tooth during the reflective experience in Place activity following the fourth Teaching story. In the transcript from the fourth story Circle, she shared her experience. It is possible that she will remember this situation for some time since it involves her personally. As WD spoke, she referred to the different quadrants of her Medicine Circle and what she observed in proximity to where she was sitting. “What I heard on the yellow I heard wind that was swirling by me or whatever. Then on the northern side I heard kids playing and yelling. But that’s pretty much all I heard because I kinda had a little incident [laughs]. My tooth fell out again [giggles]. During the second round of the story Circle, when *Mishomis* was passed around once more, WD talked about her sore mouth: “It kinda hurts to talk because my tooth still hurts...” (WD4b transcript).

OA re-told a story in a way that introduced me into the story. In OA’s drawing (below) is from the fifth classroom visit about *The Fish Fence at The Narrows* (Figure 19). She storied me into her re-tell of the Teaching Story and this represents her acknowledgement of our relationship. *This made me think about my experience that First Nation students readily acknowledge me in the schools and this happens too when I am travelling. Aboriginal people acknowledge each other and it is an instant, innate connection.* OA expressed her Aboriginal heritage to me, her teacher, and her peers and it is possible that her connection to me supported pride in her cultural roots.

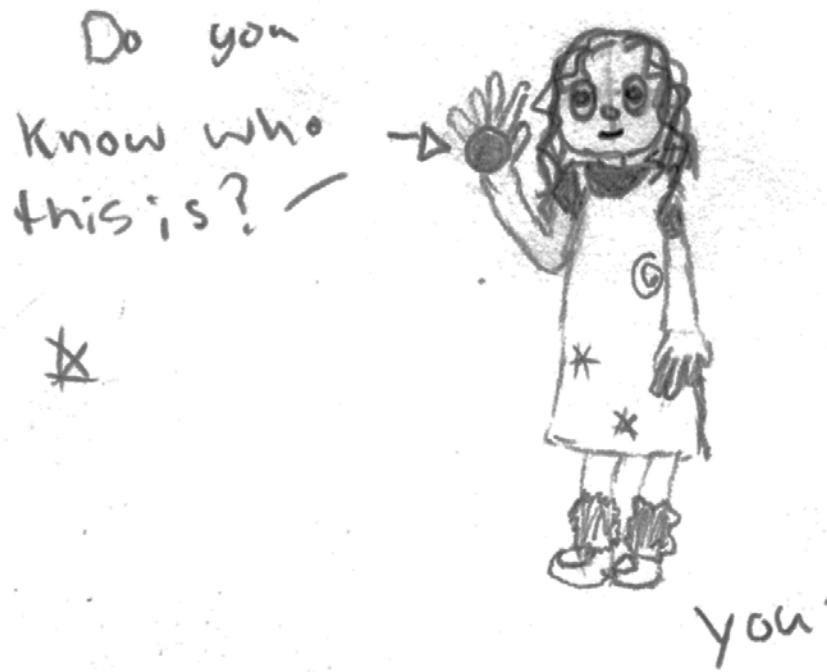


Figure 19. OA5 drawing Adding the Researcher to the Story

2. Visualizing while re-telling. In the story Circles students talked about using visualization as they listened to the Teaching Story. Student drawings and transcript data indicates use of visualization for comprehension of new concepts and terms from the Teaching Stories that are included in the re-telling of stories. This strategy supported their understanding and expression of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

KE is the youngest student in this case study (age nine years) and she used visualization and artistic abilities to represent her understanding of Place in relation to the Sky World and Universe. KE shared the drawing below (Figure 20) in response to the third classroom visit and reflective experience in Place. KE represents her position grounded with *Aki* and her acknowledgement of the huge Sky and stars in the Universe. *Mishomis* appears to be situated in a lodge on a bench.



Figure 20. KE1 drawing Representation of Earth, Sky, and Universe

KR talked about using visualization during the fifth story Circle. The transcript data includes the following: "When she was telling the story I kinda imagined it" (KR5 transcript).

In the drawing, DT seems to have used visualization (Figure 21). DT seems to have used visualization to represent the fourth Teaching Story about the Medicine Circle and directionality and the fifth Teaching Story about the Keepers of the Fish Fence and the harvesting at *Mnjikaning* over 5500 years ago. This drawing seems to illustrate DT's comprehension of the concept: "the narrows between two lakes". The specific location of the fish fence at the Narrows is indicated in the drawing by situating it between two lakes. The Medicine Circle symbol seems to represent thinking about directionality or proximity/location.

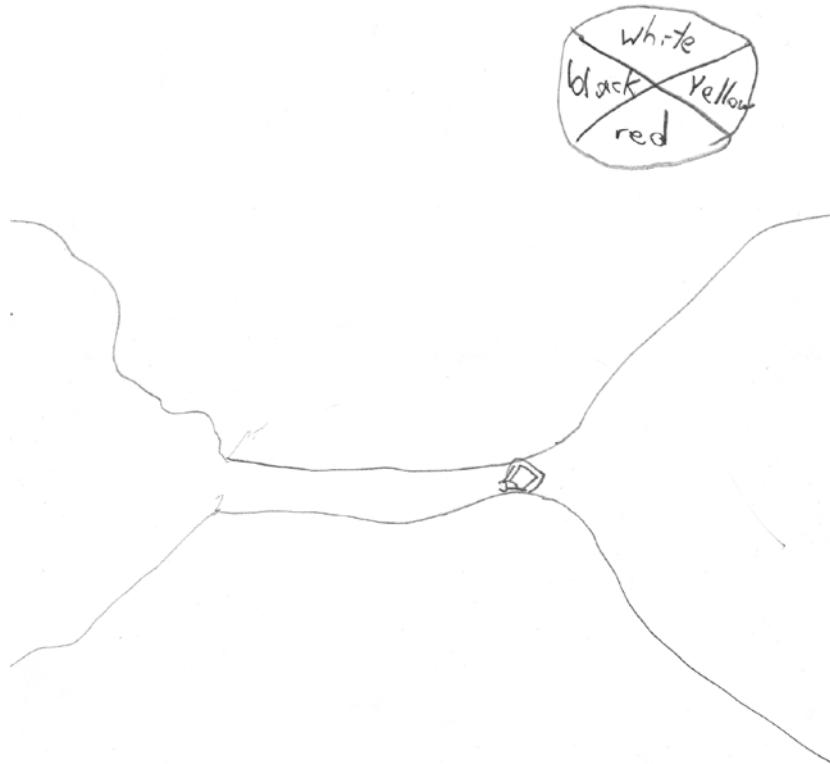


Figure 21. DT4 drawing Location of the Fish Fence Harvesting Place

3. Symbolizing relational thinking. Representing the Self in the center of the Medicine Circle or Relational Wheel indicates understanding that the student is in-relationship with all of the Creation. The student data illustrates this in the drawings and symbolism of the Medicine Circle and Relational Wheel where the student labels him/herself in the centre. This concept is also evident in the story Circle transcript as students described their reflective experiences in Place. Here they are positioned as central and what they saw, heard, and noticed all around them is drawn to indicate proximity.

Analysis of the artefacts shows that KG made seven drawings, one written text, and she shared a story twice during story Circles to express her thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. In the drawing below (Figure 22) KG represented her thoughts about the *Odewiminan* Teaching Story where a brother accidentally killed his twin. In the drawing KG

seems to symbolize negativity and bad feelings in her re-tell. She uses a dark symbol and a broken heart symbol at the bottom of her drawing. These may be associated with thinking about elements of the Story such as violence, death, and conflict.

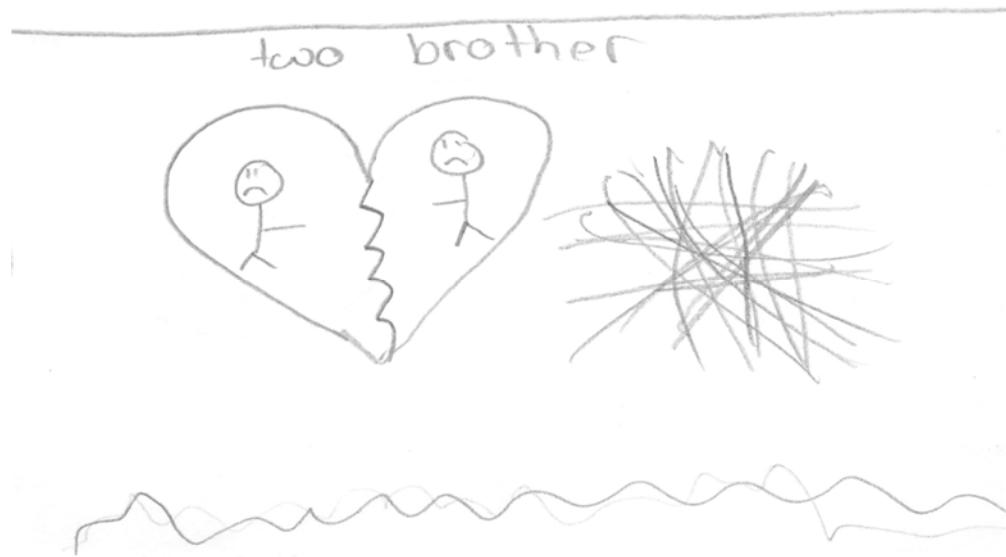


Figure 22. KG2 drawing Odewiminan Teaching Story Symbols

CD's drawing below (Figure 23) was shared in response to the fourth classroom visit and Medicine Circle Teaching. CD's symbol of a Medicine Circle shows the four sacred colours. This drawing seems to incorporate a representation of the Relational Wheel Teaching from the previous (third) visit as shown by the concentric circles. CD represents himself situated at the centre and he drew a bird, flowers and an insect in a layer that may represent the level of *Aki*. CD participated in the practice of being connected to *Aki* and this drawing may represent a growing appreciation and perception of life that he might have previously taken for granted. The square around the Wheel perhaps depicts the area of the large blanket that we sat on outside for the story Circles. CD's inclusion of this may represent his consideration of the outer level of the universe in relation to himself.

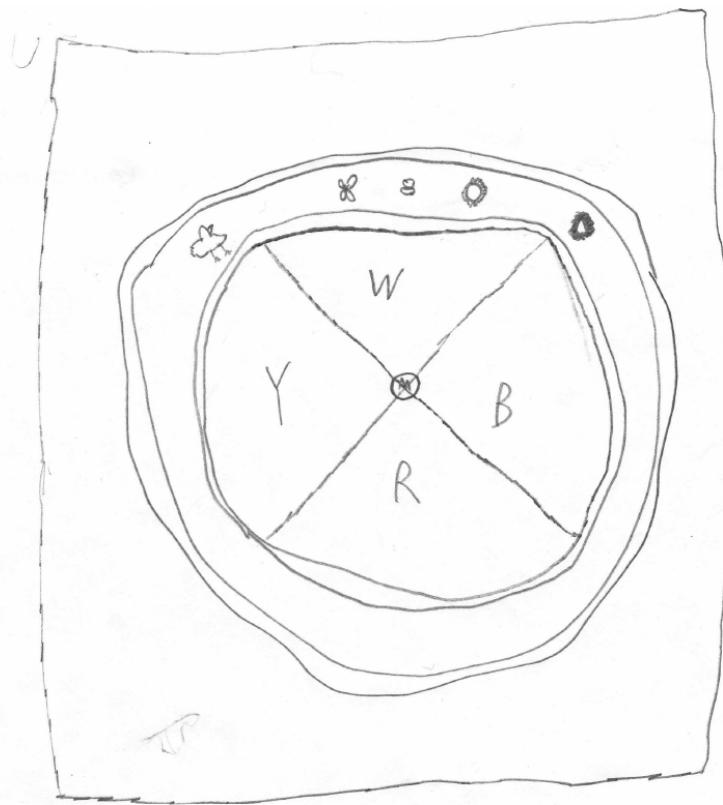


Figure 23. CD4 drawing Medicine Circle and Relational Wheel

JP's drawing below (Figure 24) represents the Medicine Circle. This was drawn during the third class visit when participants were given the instructions to place yourself at the centre of the Circle and show the location of items observed and perceived and their proximity to Self. The lines extending outward from the quadrants of the Medicine Circle suggest JP's thinking about the concept of interconnectivity with nation, world, and universe. Writing/text is used.

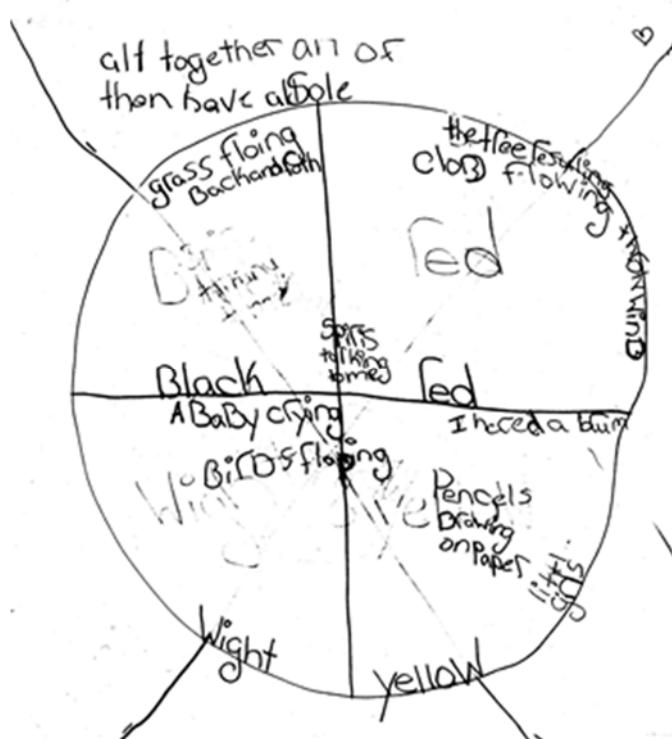


Figure 24. JP4 drawing Medicine Circle Representing Place

In the third story Circle after the Teaching Story about the Relational Wheel, MF shared her symbol that shows her position at the Center of the Wheel and the layers of relationship indicated with "family, community, nation, world". In the transcript of her story, MF seems to express her understanding of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. "I think today's Teaching Story was amazing. I drew a photo of the Medicine Wheel and it's just me, the family, the community, the nation and then the world and the universe" (MF3 transcript). Her drawing is shown below (Figure 25). The arrows on the relational Wheel seem to illustrate that community embraces MF and her family.

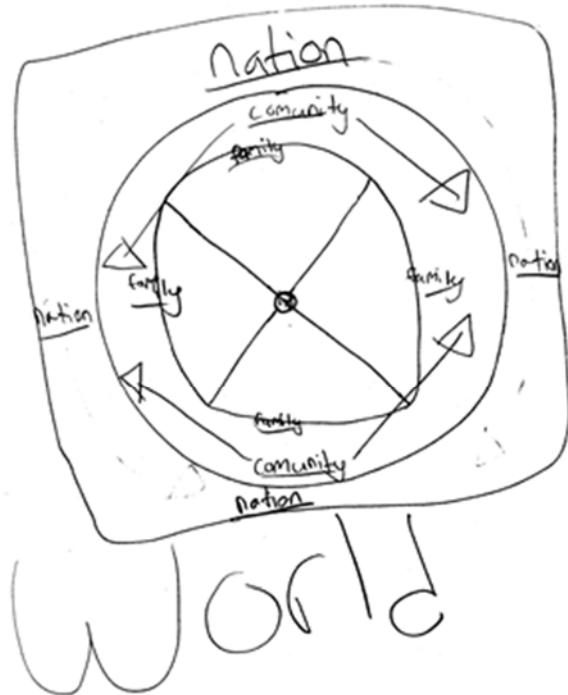


Figure 25. MF3 drawing Medicine Circle and Relational Wheel Symbol

AN's drawing below (Figure 26) includes text labels in response to the Water Teaching and first story Circle. AN seems to be thinking about the universe and relationship to Creator. This drawing might indicate acknowledgement of relationship with the sun and the universe as well as *Shkagamik-kwe*. AN includes *Mishomis* as part of *Shkagamik-kwe* and the drawing seems to reflect the ideas about water that were shared in the Teaching (e.g. 72% of our bodies are made up of water and 72% of the earth is covered in water). AN's text, "Creator watching over us humans", and the drawing of the figure at the top of the earth possibly represent his thinking about *Giizhigong* (the Place where 'the source' resides). AN's drawing includes text that illustrates his knowledge of *Anishinaabemowin*. He writes, "*Mishomis*", and his drawing shows Grandfather Rock being part of the earth. The drawing seems to illustrate relationality with the earth, sun, *Aki*, and Creator. AN may be expressing his understanding of the *Anishinaabe*

creation story as he draws a figure and writes “Creator[‘s] imagine[d] Land”. This artefact stimulated me to question and reflect. *Perhaps AN is thinking about a place of creation or imagination by the Creator in the context of his familiarity with the Anishinaabek Creation Story? It could be that the Nibi Teaching Story stirred AN’s First Nation cultural knowledge and perspectives?* This aspect of AN’s drawing may represent *Giizhigong* (the Place where the source resides). It is possible that the storywork experience provided an opportunity that AN never had before in school, to explore his understanding of the origin of *Anishinaabe* people and deep thinking about our relationship with *Aki* and Sky World.



Figure 26. AN1a drawing Relationship with the Universe and Unseen

Additional examples of symbolism are evident in student drawings. Numerals, arrows, and words were used to depict concepts of time. In MN's drawing in response to the fifth Teaching Story (Fish Fence at the Narrows) she represented her thinking using symbols. MN wrote the phrase “5,500 years old” and this seems to express *tabasaamowin* (a historical story) that the fish fence harvest occurred a long time ago. MN's drawing of the Fish Fence at the Narrows (Figure 48) is included later in this chapter in the Self (Identity) section.

AN chose not to share a story in the story Circles, however his drawings represent his thinking and responses. AN's drawing below (Figure 27) is from the last Circle and relates to *The Fish Fence at the Narrows* Teaching Story. He placed a Medicine Circle with labels for the four directions in the quadrants centrally in the drawing. This might connect to his thinking about the trading relationships that were honoured at the narrows as people from all directions visited the site. At the bottom he represents the concept that the community is ancient by drawing symbols including an arrow, multiplication sign and number (an arrow pointing to the right with “X 1000”). AN encased a drawing of a fish in a heart within a circle and perhaps this highlights the *Anishinaabe* Ecological Relational Knowledge understanding of respectful relationship and appreciation for the food that the fish provide. AN includes a large bird, possibly an eagle or a seagull that he associated with the setting that seems to represent the fish harvesting context at the narrows.

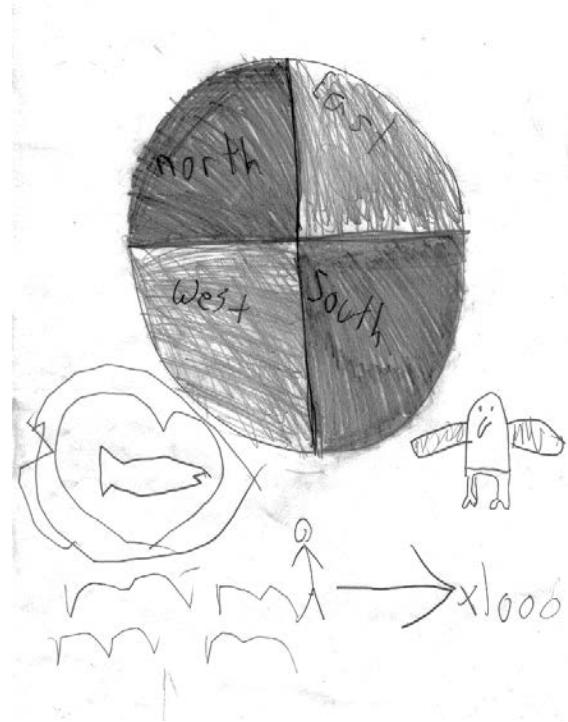


Figure 27. AN5a drawing *The Fish Fence At The Narrows*

AN made another drawing about the fifth Circle. His sketch of a fish with the text:

'MMMMM Fish!' seems to demonstrate writing himself into the story. Apparently, AN loves eating fish! Perhaps AN readily made a connection to the Teaching Story because fish is a main food source for many Aboriginal people in this geographic area.

The example below (Figure 28) is KG's response to the second class visit (*Odeweminan* Teaching Story). KG represents her thinking about the Teaching Story in a text with a drawing of a spiral below it. This sharing may represent her thinking during the reflective experience in Place practice or perhaps the spiral represents motion and knowledge generation that she may have perceived in the story Circle. KG is participating in the storywork Circle process and seems to be gaining new knowledge about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

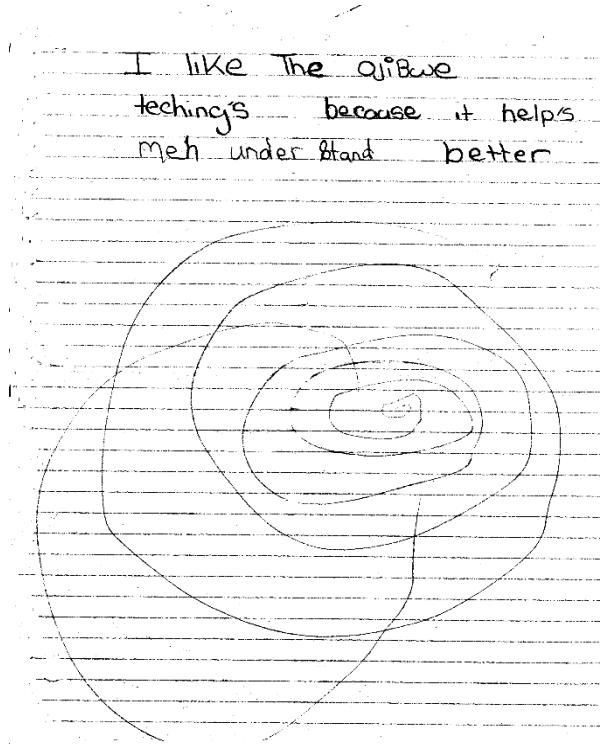


Figure 28. KG2 drawing and text Spiral Symbol

HB drew three pictures on her paper in response to the third classroom visit in response to the Teaching Story about relationship to *Aki* and practice connecting to your special Place in the school yard. This indicates that she was engaged in the process and her drawing below (Figure 29) symbolizes a positive relational attitude. HB drew hearts inside the clouds floating in the sky.

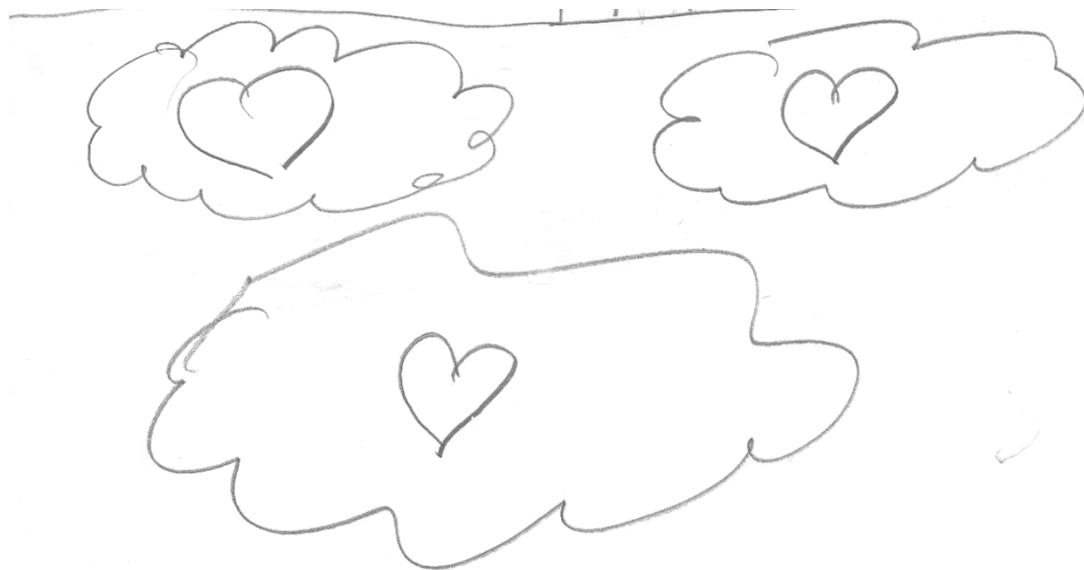


Figure 29. HB3 drawing Relationship with Sky World (Clouds)

4. Narrative discourse style. Students utilized different styles of text and narrative discourse to represent their thinking. This also informs our understanding of peer-to-peer relationships in the storywork Circle pedagogy. AL used thought bubbles to make her thinking explicit. (This drawing is included as Figure 16 in the Reflective Experiences in Place section earlier in this chapter.)

KG's drawings have a cartoon style and she incorporates humour about the Circle experience. KG wrote WD into her story by drawing a caricature-style depiction of her peer exclaiming that she lost a tooth. The drawing below (Figure 30) is humorous.

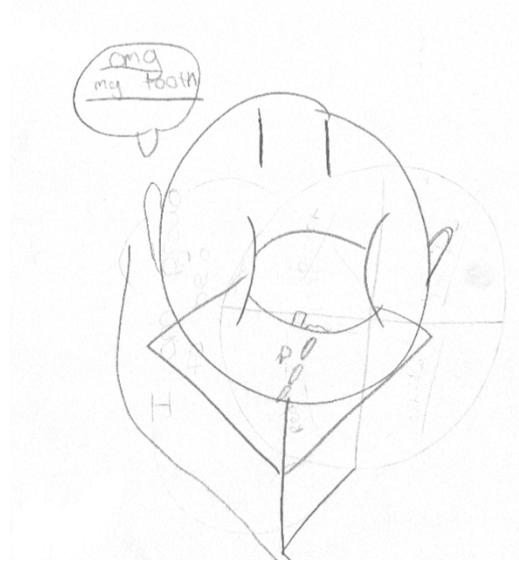


Figure 30. KG4a drawing Humour in Discourse Style

In DT's story shared in the third classroom visit, he talked about his experience listening and observing from his special Place in the school yard. "There was one other thing I noticed. It was in the exact center. It was some devilishly handsome boy writing down things that he heard. Oh wait. That was me [laughs] (DT4b transcript). Humour seems to illustrate DT's feelings of belonging in the Circle and his confidence in his contributions to the talk.

5. Re-telling with feelings and emotion. Emotions and feelings were conveyed in the Teaching Stories by voice, gesture, and spoken language. Empathetic listeners shared emotional responses with the storyteller.

AN's artefact below (Figure 31) from the third Teaching Story about *Odewiminan* is a re-tell of how the strawberries came to the people. AN includes a dark cloud above the family who is grieving the loss of their son. This may symbolize the violence and tragedy in the story. He portrays the sadness and grief in the faces of the people who are drawn sitting around the grave of the twin brother. The family home is drawn as a cabin to further represent the setting for this story. On the horizon is a sun and Medicine Circle with text representing the four colours in the

quadrants. The Medicine Circle symbols seem to reflect AN's thinking about the second classroom visit and the cloth Medicine Circle he observed in the centre of the story Circle.



Figure 31. AN3 drawing How Odewiminan (Strawberries) Came to the People

ALs illustration below (Figure 32) is in response to The *Odewiminan* (Strawberry) Story. She seems to represent the grief and loss experienced by the boy after accidentally killing his twin brother and the family mourning. The symbolism of the dark cloud may represent the mood of the story. AL's artefacts demonstrate her artistic abilities as her re-tells of the Teaching Stories include attention to details in the Teaching Story and she represents a number concepts and items from Grandmother's Teaching Bundle in her drawn artefact. AL's drawing reflects movement and a sequence of story events. The dark river may represent the emotional aspect of the story. The twin brothers have expressions on their faces that match their feelings when the

tragedy happened. Her depiction of the twin's grave illustrates the passage of time as strawberry flowers and mature berries are represented.



Figure 32. AL2 drawing The Odewiminan Teaching Story

WD shared about being calm and connected in her special Place during the third story Circle. Her drawing below (Figure 33) is reflective of her experience observing and listening and she illustrated an awareness of relationality about how the eagle relies on the air and movement of the wind for flight. In response to the sound of the drum that I used to call the students back for the story Circle, WD talked about how it made her think about her family. She lamented on how much she missed them. "I love how there's the drumming because it made me think of my family which I don't really see that often. Then I drew an eagle by a campfire kinda. It's not that good but at least I tried" (WD3b transcript).

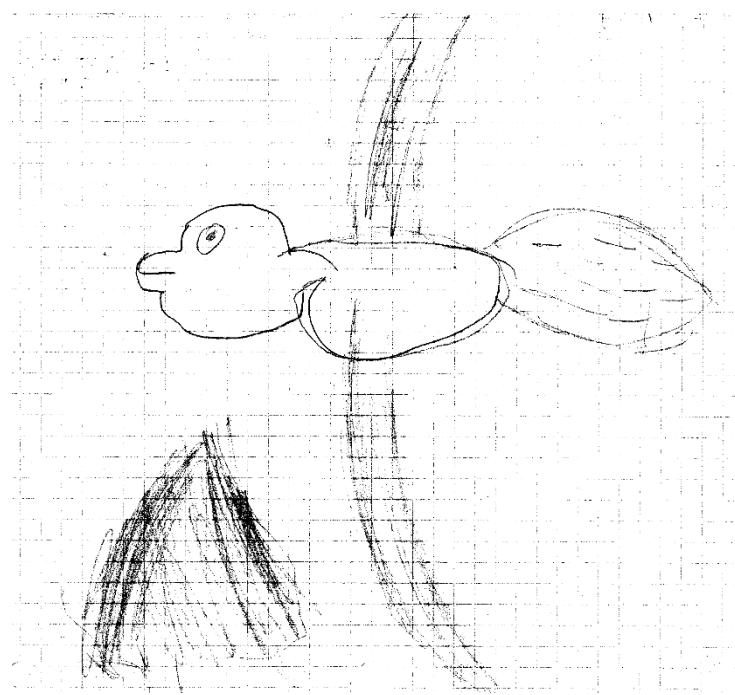


Figure 33. WD3 drawing Eagle in the Wind above Camp

KE is the youngest student participant (age 9 years). She shared her surprise and reaction to the new experience of the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts, values, and principles from the Teaching Stories. On two occasions she indicated a personal reaction. The written artefact from the third classroom visit Teaching Story about sharing our breath with the trees and the practice of finding and occupying a special Place in the school yard, included the following words in a word list: "crazy", "different". In KE's story during the fourth classroom visit in response to the Teaching Story about *Gaaniniigaanijek* and practice observing a special Place in the school yard, she expressed the following: "It was kinda weird how you 'posta listen to things. It's kinda different cause I never really did that before" (KE4 transcript). This seems to indicate that KG engaged and she might have gained an appreciation for a different way of viewing the world.

6. Thinking deeply. Creativity and deep thinking are evident in the student artefacts.

The making of connections between past experience and previous knowledge to new concepts of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge seemed to occur.

HB responded to the first Teaching Story with two drawings. Figure 34. (below) seems to illustrate a combining of concepts to represent a new idea. The *Nibi* (Water) Song was sung by everyone together in the Circle. The *Odewehgan* (drum) was present as a component of Grandmother's Teaching Bundle, however it was not sounded in the Teaching Story. It is interesting that HB included what seems to be the sounding of *Odewehgan*/the drum in her drawing. HB's drawing may represent her thinking about the words to the song, the water, and the *Odewehgan* together as an illustration of the synchronicity of giving thanks. The concept that water is life is shown in HB's text in this drawing below. This example provides what seems to be a representation of deep thinking, making associations, and new knowledge.



Figure 34. HB 1a drawing Drums (*Odeweganak*) and Water (*Nibi*)

The idea that *Mishomis* is ancient was expressed in HB's drawing below (Figure 35) about the first Teaching Story. She drew an image of a dinosaur which is associated with times long ago. This drawing seems to represent a thoughtful analogy. She placed the dinosaur beside Grandfather Rock.

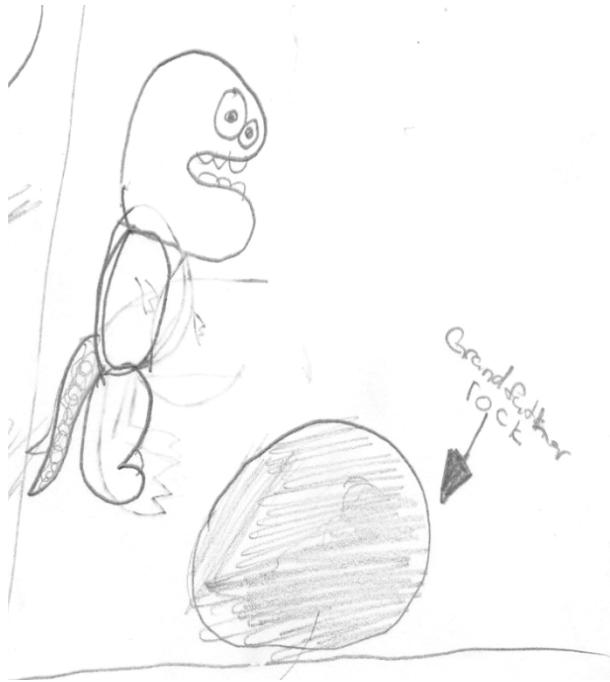


Figure 35. HB1a drawing Associating the Age of Mishomis with a Dinosaur

JP included a drawing of the moon in her re-telling about the *Nibi* (Water) Teaching. Perhaps she was thinking about the relationship of the moon and water and it's powerful creative force evident in the ocean's tides that was mentioned in the Teaching Story. The moon is shown in her drawing (Figure 36).



Figure 36. JP1 drawing Nibi (Water) Teaching Story

OA's drawing below (Figure 37) from the fourth classroom session seems to represent her thinking about directionality and proximity in response to the experience connecting to Place. OA uses text with symbols beside the list of things she noticed to represent her emotional reaction to being bitten on the leg by a mosquito and hearing a robin. She is processing information in a way that creates categories and this analytical thinking will support her recall of the experience in Place in future. The representation of *Shkagamik-kwe* as occupying a square space is a creative reflection of her thinking about the big picture. OA is contemplating our perception of reality! What an insightful experience. She places herself in the centre of the earth as if embodying the *Anishinaabe* belief that the child is the center of the universe.

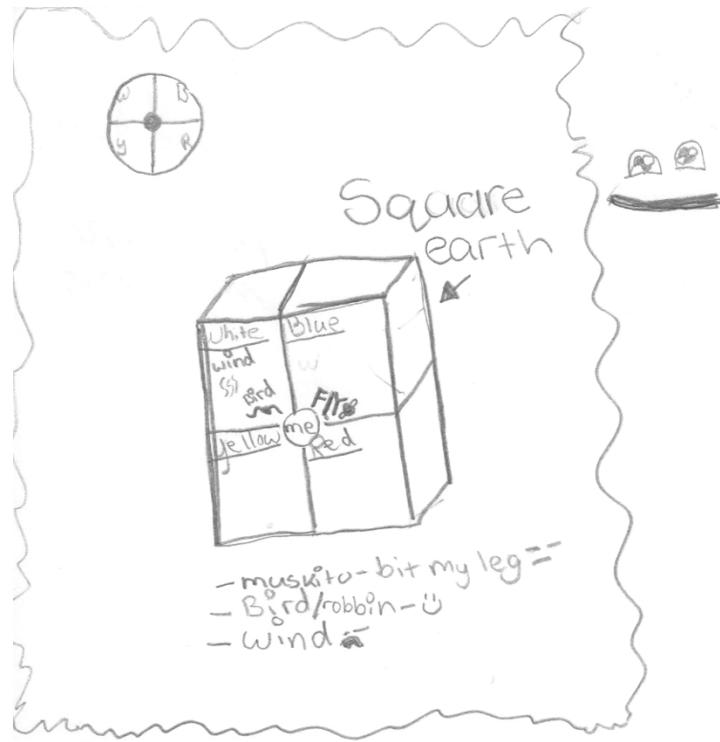


Figure 37. OA4 drawing Creativity and Alternate Conceptualization of Reality

AL's drawing below (Figure 38) is complex and new knowledge seems to be highlighted. She used the same text in two different story Circles for directionality. It is shown in this drawing where she re-tells details from the Teaching Story about the cardinal directions. For the Eastern Direction she writes, "That place where the sun comes"; for the Western Direction, she writes, "Sun goes down"; and for the Northern Direction, AL writes, "Northern people." The symbol of a Medicine Circle in the top left area could show her thinking about the cardinal Directions with a temporal sense and consideration of her identity and place in the world. She represents what appears to be ancestors in a beautiful image and a gateway. These aspects of AL's drawing suggest higher level thinking about the unseen and different realms of existence. This artefact may illustrate *gaaniniigaanijek* (AL's ancestors).

AL's transcript from her description of this drawing during the fifth story Circle illustrates self-awareness of new knowledge as she talks about remembering the Medicine Circle Teaching from the previous session. "And then I remembered from yesterday what the Medicine Circle means. I remembered" [she refers to and describes her drawing] (AL 5 Transcript). These examples show AL's ways of naming key themes of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and dimensions of her experience in the Circle.

AL's drawing below (Figure 38) also demonstrates the creativity and reflective processing that storywork invites. AL drew a picture to represent her thinking with words, symbols and a sketch in the bottom right corner. This complex artefact may represent a composite of her thinking about a number of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts. AL represented how she visualized the Teaching Story from the fifth Circle to retell with a focus on the historical place (*Fish Fence at the Narrows*). She included elements of the first Teaching Story about *Water* and may have drawn from her experience with the group singing the *Nibi* (Water) Song at the beginning of each Circle. AL also incorporates elements of the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts and principles from the third Teaching Story about the Medicine Circle regarding directionality, and relationality. She included the Medicine Circle with the four sacred colours and this may reflect an association with the concept of sustenance for all from Mother Earth when respect and balance is maintained in our relationship. The four colours possibly indicate the content of the story where the fish fence people traded and shared their harvest with travellers from afar. This drawing includes a symbol in the bottom right corner that seems to represent AL's thinking about relationality.



Figure 38. AL5 drawing Composite of Storywork Experience

MN's drawings of the Medicine Circle from the fifth session represents a somewhat sophisticated level of conceptualizing concepts. Her drawing seems to be a composite blending of different schemes as she included the four colours *and* the cardinal directions in the quadrants. MN appears to be cognizant of various concepts that can be illustrated on the Medicine Circle while a few of her peers' Medicine Circle symbols were less complex and included either the colours or the directions. MN's drawing (Figure 48) is located in the Identity (Self) section later in this chapter.

In response to the *Odweiminan* Teaching Story, KG's drawing (Figure 39) below seems to represent her thinking about life and death. Perhaps the tragic event in the Story where one brother was killed accidentally brought out this train of thought. KG writes, Why?" and seems to

illustrate a dichotomy of states of Being - one half of the drawing indicates living and the other side is not living. Below the horizontal line that seems to represent *Aki* dividing the two states, some lines are present and these perhaps indicate the layers of the earth and our ancestors' footprints underneath. This drawing also represents KG's thinking about the Sky World with the clouds and sun above *Aki*. KG seems to be engaged and wondering about the different layers and states of Being (cosmovision). The drawing as a whole might represent the Indigenous concept of *Adinwehmaaganidoonk* (All my relations). The storywork Circle pedagogy has given KD opportunity for wondering and reflection.

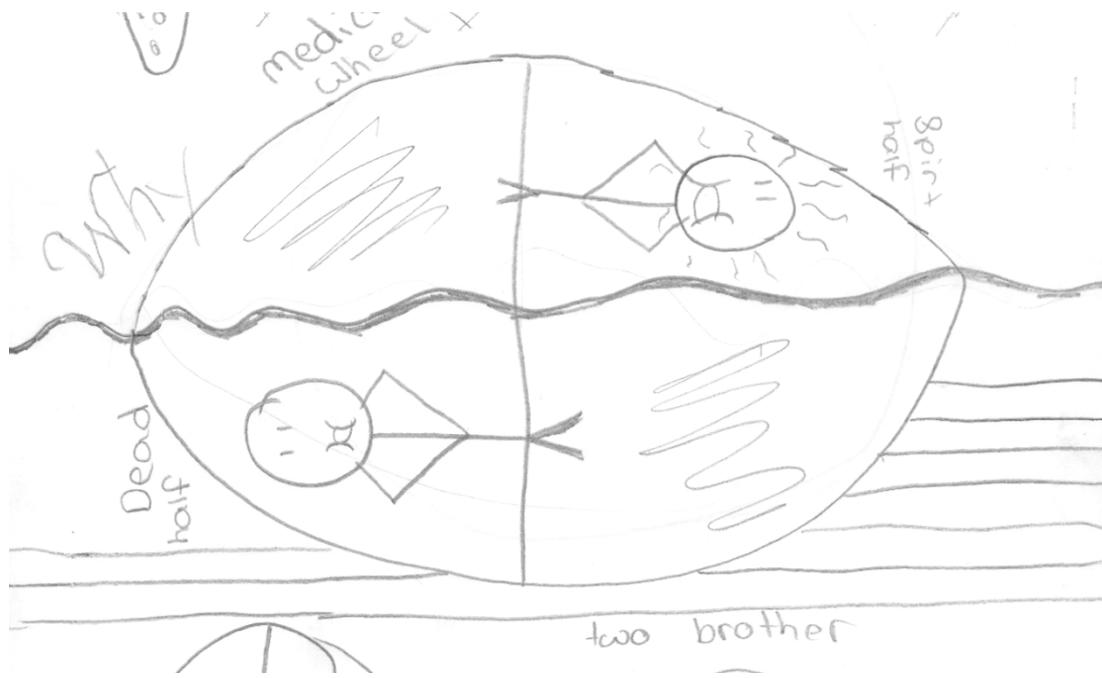


Figure 39. KG2b drawing Odewiminan Teaching Story - Tragic Loss of a Brother

7. Being-in-relationship with place. Being in Place means being in-tune with *Aki*, everything around (including the unseen), and with the Self. A wholistic receptivity is enhanced from an inward journey to deeply process what is seen, heard, and felt. Students drew, wrote, and shared stories of this experience. The written data illustrates a sense of peace and quiet.

Drawings illustrate awareness of the energy of the earth and air and sensing the unseen.

Text/student writing in prose illustrates the Being-in-Place process of reflection and "inner space" between the self and Indigenous ecological relational philosophy that supports the process of coming to know. This conceptualization is possible in any location and supports a person's perception of being grounded and belonging. This practice may provide a means of de-stressing and re-connecting when making transitions to a new school or home.

JP's drawing below (Figure 40) was shared in the third classroom visit. It represents her practice of Being-in-Place. Movement is suggested in the drawing and this seems to be associated with the wind. JP includes a path on the left side of this drawing and this indicates her journey to find and occupy her special Place on *Aki* in the school yard.



Figure 40. JP3 drawing Special Place in the School Yard

During the third classroom visit story Circle, AL spoke about her experience connecting with the wind to find her special place. "When I was walking I was actually letting the wind choose my path where I should sit" (AL3 transcript). This brings to light a possible future application of her new knowledge about connecting to Place. "I felt the energy going through my body. My body went from freezing cold to boiling hot...I felt like Mother Earth was telling me, "You have to start writing" and it helped me actually write a lot of things. And I was just thinking to myself when I get home I'm going to do my homework. I'm going to sit outside where the wind puts me. I'm gonna sit there and I'm going to do my work all relaxed and calm" (AL3b transcript).

In AL's sharing during the fourth story Circle about *Gaaniniigaaniijik* (ancestors) and the Relational Wheel, she expressed being in a state of receptivity. "What I thought of the Teaching story - it was really good. And here are just some of the things that I wrote down. So in the north direction I heard spirits and wind. In the east I heard running. Running and whispers. And the west I heard birds. I heard trees. And in the South I heard grass. And my favourite part of all is the middle because in the middle is me, and Mother Earth and I had a conversation today" (AL4 transcript).

8. *Nibwaakaawin.* *Nibwaakaawin* is a state of being rooted in the understanding of and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are inter-dependent. The data illustrates this theme in the *Nibi* song transcript. Together, Circle participants extended positive words and expressed feelings of love for the water, showing respect and relationship. This understanding is represented in the stories about hunting that illustrate kindness to the animals and in the drawings and stories about fishing that show harvesting only the large mature fish. The story transcripts that refer to being a part of the ecological system also represent the concept

of *Nibwaakaawin*. The relationship of air for flight and life and the visualization of sharing our breath with the trees are exemplars of this thinking.

In response to the first classroom visit and *Nibi* Teaching story, some student artefacts revealed thoughtful consideration of choice-making and consideration of relevant alternate outcomes. As thinking extends to make meaning and reflect on the Story, deep reflection is possible. JP re-told the *Nibi* Teaching story in a drawing and her words from the story Circle illustrates her thinking about behaviour, value-based choices. "What I thought about that Teaching story is it was kinda nice talking to the water and not polluting the water. Because if you pollute the water we won't have any clean water and you can't drink it. So that's what I thought about the Teaching story" (JP1 transcript).

The Teaching story about our relationship with the trees and plants and practice connecting to Place and observing how we share our breath with the trees were retold by students in drawings, writing, and talk in the story Circles. A high level of visualization and artistic skill was evident in the drawings.

HB's drawing below (Figure 41) is one of three from the third class visit. The Teaching story about sharing our breath with the trees and the practice of grounding oneself to *Aki* for reflection in a special Place were experienced by the student participants. HB's illustration seems to represent his thinking about the movement of the air as it is exchanged between the tree and the person. Details drawn on the tree characterize it as animate.



Figure 41. HB3b drawing Nibwaakaawin

During the story Circle after the third Teaching story about the Fish Fence at the Narrows, DT talked in a way that seems to represent his thinking about the ecological system and respectful harvesting. He recalled one of his personal experiences going fishing when he intended to keep the largest fish caught. "I quite liked the Teaching story because I could relate to it. Once me and my brother were fishing and we caught a fish. It was a medium sized fish and we let it go. But unfortunately we caught no other fish" (DT5 transcript).

9. Negwaadodem. This is an acknowledgement of 'all my relations'. This term is inclusive of *Negwaadodem*, or the whole clan of family (blood) relatives *and* feelings of connection (Weh) to community, society and all of creation. The data represents this conceptual understanding in drawings of what is below *Aki* (ancestors) and stories about family (mother, father, siblings, aunt, grandfather), home. The term *Weh* refers to our feelings of connection that

gradually develops from the process of heart-knowledge interacting with mind-knowledge so that a person feels connection with not only family and community but outward to society, *Aki*, and the universe. *Weh* is represented in the text and story data regarding appreciation for brothers and family.

WD spoke and drew in response to the Teaching story about The Fish Fence at the Narrows during the fifth class visit (Figure 42). She reflects on her family and relatives and represents her conceptualization of *Negwaadodem* in a beautiful drawing that exudes warm feelings and closeness. In her drawing below, WD uses the symbol of Turtle Island and the Medicine Circle with symbols for the four colours.



Figure 42. WD5 drawing *Negwaadodem*

10. Gwekwaadiziwin. This term refers to the concept of choice/volition and behaving in a manner that 'goes with the flow' of the universe. It means that a person possesses values and

morals and is seen to move in a straight way that does not interfere or harm the Creation. The data illustrates *Gwekwaadiziwin* in stories about telling the truth, acting from the heart, extending respect to animals, having gratitude towards Mother Earth for life, demonstrating love.

A review of the field notes with attention to the sequence of speakers in the second story Circle reveals that the *Odewiminan* Teaching story seemed to elicit feelings and connection to personal values. Students seemed to reflect upon and illustrate these in their talk and drawings through engagement in re-storying.

AL was the second to share in the story Circle after the *Odewiminan* Teaching story. Her story indicated feelings about being honest and telling the truth. “What I thought of the story was that it was really sad at how the brother died. But in the end I thought it was really good that he actually told the truth. And if that was me I woulda told the truth because I like telling the truth. I get scared if I don’t. So I thought that the story was quite good but it was kind of really sad” (AL2 transcript).

WD was third in the story Circle and put herself into the situation to explain her understanding. “I like how he actually told the truth after... That would be a scary thing if I actually killed my brother because if I killed my brother it would be so sad and I wouldn’t have nothing else to do” (WD2 transcript).

CR was fourth in the Circle and he re-iterated by re-telling with himself in the story. “The story was sad. If my brother got killed and I kept pushing him around it’d be really sad and if I actually killed him I’d miss him so much. And I’m glad he told the truth after because he had a change of heart” (CR2 transcript).

CD was sixth in this story Circle and he drew what looked like an unusual plant without leaves. He talked about not knowing what it is like to have a brother and not knowing if he

would tell the truth or not. "If I killed my brother because I was physically stronger and I kept pushing him around I probably would tell the truth. But I'm not sure. It'd probably be more nice to have a brother because it's company. So that's why I think that I would tell the truth. But if I was wrong about everything then I...if brothers were a nuisance I probably would not tell the truth about it" (CD2 transcript). CD's thinking out loud may provide a glimpse of the self-centered experience of being an only child. He might reflect on this story in future when he has matured and experienced more relationships to derive new meaning from this Teaching story. The pedagogy of storywork invites everyone to share openly from the heart without being judged or expected to respond in a certain way. It is a safe place for self-exploration.

KE was seventh to share a story in the Circle and it seems that she engaged in higher level thinking by making an inference: "Don't lie". When KE spoke in the story Circle, she responded in a way that indicates the story was complex. "I think about the story is that I don't know" (KE2 transcript). KE's drawing below (Figure 43) seems to refer to positive feelings such as "Love" and making a choice to be honest (different from the behaviour of the boys in the story).



Figure 43. KE2 drawing Odewiminan Teachings of Honesty and Love

KR was eleventh to share about her thinking in the Circle. She had an emotional response to the story and represented this in her talk. “I really liked the story but when the brother killed his brother it was really sad. And I didn’t really like that part. But I like the rest because he told the truth and he was confident and it was really nice that he told the truth” (KR2 transcript). This student seemed to infer the meaning of the story to relate to the Seven Grandfather Teaching of Honesty.

DT3 shared about the third classroom visit Teaching story and Reflective Experience in Place. His drawing below (Figure 44) seems to represent his thinking about what I said regarding sharing our breath with the trees. In the drawing below, DT drew a single leaf on a tree, breathing out oxygen. Perhaps he was engaged in deep thinking and considered the collective process of oxygen production by all plants and leaves. DT may be thinking about the power of collectivity.

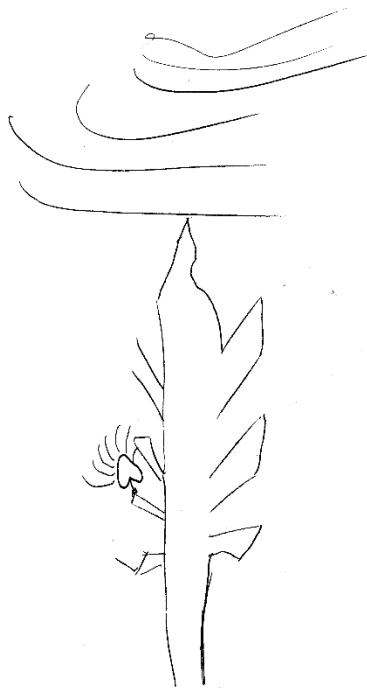


Figure 44. DT3 drawing Leaf Breathing Out Oxygen

MN's story about her experience re-connecting to *Aki* and observing and thinking about being in her special Place in the school yard shows that she was considering the role that people play in sustaining the ecological system. She queried, "But if they [hunters] don't really need food, 'Why are they hunting?'" (MN4b transcript). This questioning could lead to an exploration of values and important decisions regarding harvesting fish and wildlife.

MF shared a re-storying about the *Odewiminan* Teaching story by presenting an alternate, positive outcome to the story. Rather than dwelling on the tragic loss of the twin brother, she posits, "I thought that the son shoulda just listened to the parents before the twin died" (MF2 transcript). She seems to be thinking about what might have happened if the boys heeded their parents' advice to be kind to each other rather than wrestling and hurting one another. MF's thinking seems to illustrate the oral tradition process and storywork Circle pedagogy opportunity

for listener engagement in making meaning and application to personal behaviour and values.

The role of volition to balance the Self and relationships is described by Bopp et al. (1989) as "an emotional attraction to what is good" (p. 50).

11. Sense of belonging and community.

Creation of community in the classroom. Analysis of the field data indicated that over the course of the five story Circles in this case study, the participants were respectful, kind, and engaged in the process. Initially students were observed to encourage adherence to the way of being in the Circle by gently reminding a peer when he/she did not remember to hold *Mishomis*/Grandfather Rock close to their heart (in their left hand). By the fourth story Circle, without prompting, all participants spontaneously said their name to greet *Mishomis* and two students were observed to spontaneously contemplate their actions and switch hands with confidence. Students always handled *Mishomis* with gentle hands and respect.

At the beginning of each Teaching story, the group sang the *Nibi* song. A digital recording of the group singing in unison, boys together with girls represents group participation. During the third classroom visit, one student joined the Circle late and her peer voiced concern that she missed singing with them. She wanted everyone to sing the song again to include her. This event indicates that the group of students represent a community where everyone is acknowledged as belonging.

JP sat in the Circle to my left each time. When I first noticed this, I thought that she may have chosen this spot so that she could share first, however after more observation and reflection, it became apparent that she wanted to be able to help me with the recording process. JP always took the IPad around as the students passed *Mishomis* and the microphone around the Circle to share. Her thoughtfulness was noticed by all of her peers as she made a special effort so that

their artefacts would be recorded as described by them. It is possible that JP is perceived by her peers to be a person who initiates things and is considerate of others.

WD's transcripts and drawings include a limited amount of text. She explains her thinking and uses drawings that represent the interconnectivity of relationships. WD's thinking about her family comes through strongly and this presents opportunity for her peers and classroom teacher to understand how she is feeling and to know about her home situation. This strengthens her relationship and sense of belonging with classroom peers.

CD expressed humour in the fourth Circle. In the transcript of his story, he used a literary term, "the widow maker tree". CD said, "I believe that the clouds were telling me to brace myself for rain, and to watch out for falling branches because I was under a widow maker tree" (CD3 transcript). I had noted smiles from his peers in response to this statement in my field notes and this makes me think that perhaps CD is perceived by his peers as a light-hearted person. *Perhaps he is popular in the class?*

DT shared in a way that revealed his attitude in the third Circle to the Teaching story and reflective experience in Place. "Well, I found it quite fun. I liked the mood the drumming. It ain't rock-n-roll but beggars can't be choosers" (DT3 transcript). DT's demeanour is light and this brought balance to the more serious emotional and cognitive energy that was being expressed in the story Circle by his peers.

12. Receptivity. HB produced two drawings in response to the fourth Teaching story about *Gaaniniigaanijik* and the experience of grounding ourselves to Mother Earth and listening to *Aki* in Place. HB talked about an element of the story that represented peering down through the layers of the earth and seeing the footprints of our ancestors. She explained what she drew in her re-telling of the Story. "I drew layers of the earth underground. And then I wrote,

‘footsteps’” (HB4b transcript). Her drawing below (Figure 45) seems to reflect her acknowledgement of the ancestors and her connection to *Shkagamik-kwe*.



Figure 45. HB4b drawing Gaaniniigaaniijik

In MN’s transcript from the fourth class visit, she talked about her thinking after connecting with *Aki* and listening in her special Place. MN includes an awareness of her unseen ancestors talking to her. “...I heard my brothers talking to me. And they died so I heard them talking to me like it was a kinda like a whisper” (MN4b transcript). In her drawing and text (Figure 48) that represented her thinking in response to the fifth story Circle, she used a term that is often utilized within the *Anishinaabe* culture such as “all my relatives [relations]”. (Figure 48 is located in the next section of this chapter.)

13. Self (identity). Analysis of the artefacts from First Nations students in this case study shows that they shared about cultural knowledge and expressed familiarity with *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and *Anishinaabemowin*. MN self-identified as Aboriginal and her personal life experience with *Anishinaabe* ceremony was reflected by her

demonstration of connecting to Place in a holistic way. In her drawing from the first classroom visit in response to the *Nibi* (Water) Song Teaching story, she drew and labelled a tobacco tie (*asemaa*) and she was the only student who included this part of Grandmother's Teaching Bundle. She was familiar with cultural use of tobacco and her transcript about participating in the sweat lodge ceremony indicates her awareness of the unseen. "My auntie had to hold my hand because she didn't want the bad spirits to hurt me or anything" (MN1 transcript).

In MN's transcript from the fifth classroom visit where she re-tells the story of The Fish Fence at the Narrows, she mentions "They did ceremonies first before they ate..." (MN5 transcript). MN shares about her family cultural practices and shows her knowledge of the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concept of reciprocity in her re-tell of feasting the ancestors before eating the catch of fresh fish. MN's family experiences have been affirmed by the Teaching Stories and cultural practice opportunities for reflection in Place providing her with acknowledgement of her personal experiences and Indigenous world view philosophy. This supports her development of self identity and cultural pride.

During the fourth classroom visit, the presence of *Mishomis* in the Circle seemed to stimulate AL to think about her relatives and ancestry. AL shared a personal story that relates to her sense of identity, family connection and includes an intergenerational story about her father. "I wanted to share with you that I am actually going to bring in one of my traditions that I have in my family. My dad's dad, he passed away a long time ago and he gave my dad this rock that he got from the Atlantic ocean. And he was Native and my dad's a little bit Native. So just a while ago he sent it in the mail a couple days ago. So I might actually bring it in on Thursday which is tomorrow. I'm still debating as it's kinda special. But at the same time I know I can trust. This story actually helped me relate to my dad because my dad, he used to hunt when he

was a little boy. And he used to like scare all the animals away. He had a hard time [laughs]" (AL4b transcript).

AN is an *Anishinaabe* student and his drawings seem to reflect his cultural background world view. In his response to the first Teaching story about *Nibi*, AN made two drawings. His second drawing below (Figure 46) included a symbol of a turtle within a circle. This seems to represent North America which is a familiar concept referred to as "Turtle Island" for this First Nation student.

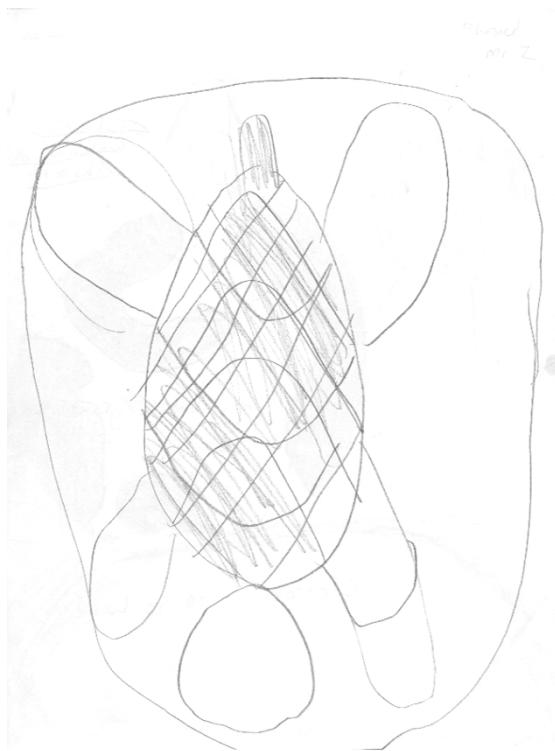


Figure 46. AN1b drawing Turtle Island

AL's drawing from the fifth story Circle is a composite representation of her thinking about *The Fish Fence at the Narrows* Teaching story and the listening and observing experience in Place as well as the relational Wheel. AL seems to be a deep thinker and she is open to sharing with her peers in Circle verbally and through writing and drawing. The storywork has

provided AL with opportunity to express her personal awareness of *gaaniniigaanijek* (the ancestors). She talks about this as she shares about connecting with Place and the listening experience. “In the north direction I heard spirits and wind” (AL4 transcript). She talks about her connection to *Mishomis* as she shares about the special rock that belonged to her grandfather which was recently sent to her by her father. AL shares about her identity as an Aboriginal person and recounts a story about her father going hunting. This is a significant outcome of the storywork Circle process and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. AL can personally and holistically relate to the pedagogy and it brings her awareness of identity to the forefront.

Perhaps this is the first time that AL has acknowledged her cultural heritage at school with her peers? Her classroom teacher indicated awareness of her cultural heritage when we conversed after this story Circle.

AN did not share stories or describe his drawings and writings in the story Circle. He listened respectfully and I can appreciate that he engaged in the process by the rich representations of his thinking about the Teaching Stories and experiences connecting to Place. He expressed abstract concepts and relationships through these artefacts demonstrating reflective processing. AN’s communication style seems to reflect shyness and his behaviour represents a gradual process of building of trust with a new person. He demonstrated excellent artistic and symbolic skills to retell stories, to represent relational concepts, and to share a little bit about who he is.

AN’s artefacts and communication style are similar to several of his peers who participated in the Circle with respect to spelling development (MN, JP4,5, MF, WD, KR, KE). The representation of thinking through drawing and writing rather than through talk was also evident in the field data for KE on two occasions, OA on two occasions, and KG on two

occasions. This case study illustrates diversity in student expression of thinking. Some are good spellers and all utilize text and drawings while a few are less verbal.

OA missed the second class visit. She did a drawing after the fourth and fifth Circles. She participated by providing artefacts and always passed when *Mishomis* came to her in the Circle. I asked the classroom teacher to take some pictures of the students during the experience of connecting to Place during the third session. The pictures showed her being-in-the-moment with her clipboard on her lap and she seemed to be enjoying her special Place. OA did not provide an artefact that day. *Maybe it was personal and she wanted to keep it private?*

OA's artefact from the fifth and final story Circle below (Figure 47) represents her artistic ability and what seems to be consideration about relationality with the universe. A query of what is beyond the stars demonstrates her deep thinking. Her writing style that includes dialogue with me is representative of our relationship. OA uses two drawings of fish with symbols to convey a complex concept. The large fish has a check mark and the small one has an 'X'. This readily portrays her idea of sustainability and harvesting from The Fish Fence at the Narrows Teaching story. This drawing may be a demonstration of thinking about ecological relational knowledge and *nibwaakaawin* (understanding of and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are dependent on each other). OA also includes a personal connection to the story and relates a personal event narrative using a drawn image of her swimming in a lake during the spring time with the shad flies hatch during that time. She labels this as a "June swimming connection" and this clearly indicates that she comprehended the Story and engaged in making meaning. She includes a sketch of *Mishomis* and writes a short apology for her spelling. It is interesting that OA is self-aware of her spelling errors. OA's spelling is similar to a number of her peers.



Figure 47. OA5 drawing Composite of Meaningful Connections

MN used text in *Anishinaabemowin* in her drawing from the fifth session in response to The Fish Fence at the Narrows Teaching story. She used "kii = land" and "giigonh/fish" which illustrates MN's knowledge of the Indigenous language and using it to express *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in her re-telling of the story. Her inclusion of *Anishinaabemowin* in written form adds to the presence and relevance of *Anishinaabemowin* in the schools. Analysis of MN's drawing of the fish fence below (Figure 48) shows that she comprehended the story and grasped numerous new concepts and terms. She made explicit notes on her drawing and this indicates that her level of engagement was high.

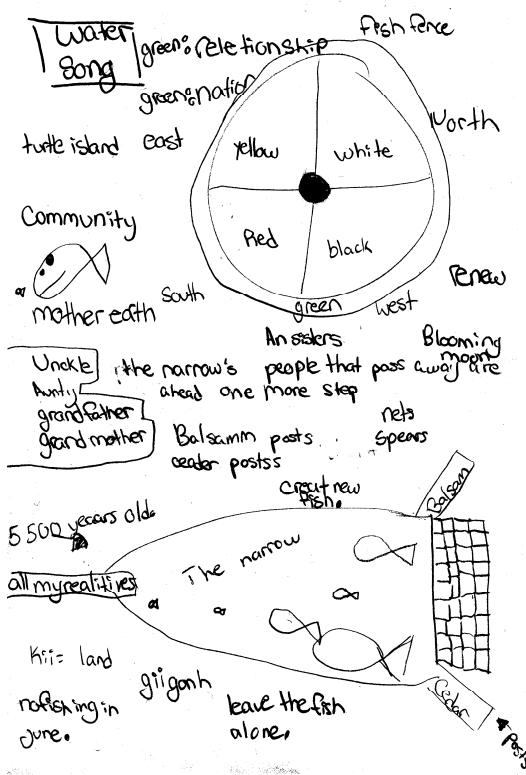


Figure 48. MN5 drawing Fish Fence Harvest

I had opportunity to get to know WD (a First Nation student) after completion of the classroom visits. When I participated in the school's Aboriginal culture day celebration, she came out of the school and we chatted. I made a note in my Field Journal that she seemed to be receptive to change in her home life. *Perhaps this is due to a past of numerous transitions?* I observed her taking a break from the group workshops and craft activities and she laid down in the centre of the school yard for a few minutes. I decided to give her space and eventually she approached me. She mentioned that she was getting ready to move to Manitoba. I asked her what she felt about it and she said that she was excited because she would be living on a farm that has horses. WD shared that her cultural heritage is *Anishinaabe* and Dene.

After the research project, when I attended the school Talent Show, WD took the stage to sing a pop song and while the song played, a peer did some dance/drama moves to emphasize

key messages. I could tell that WD had practiced a lot as the performance went off without a glitch. She was dressed in a really nice way that embraced the show-biz context with a fedora hat, skirt with leggings, and fashion boots. WD seemed confident in her performance. Her mother and a few family members were present and I observed that WD held a baby and played with her during the rest of the concert. I perceived her connection with the baby and how she enjoyed this time with the infant. After the Talent Show I told her that she did a really good performance and I asked if I could meet her family. WD introduced me to her mother, a young sibling (an infant) and her uncle who were in attendance. WD's mother said that she wanted her children to start learning about their cultural heritage. Her uncle said that he was a member of the Wolf Clan from a northern Ontario First Nation.

As I reflect on WD and our connection through this case study, I thought about how she represents our people in transition. Family issues mean that her mother is not her guardian right now. WD is confident and sociable and her enjoyment of small children will mean that she always has love in her life. She demonstrates the Aboriginal social practice of being responsible for those younger than oneself.

Classroom Teacher Data Analysis

As I analysed the teacher data, I was cognizant of the research question: *How does the teacher's perception of Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge transform their pedagogy? I also examined the data to respond to the following ancillary questions:*

- *How are teacher perspectives of students stimulated by student displayed understanding?*

This query examines what student responses (in their stories, writing, and drawing) the teacher is aware of that illustrate student understanding of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

- *What are teacher perceptions of Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge?* This research question frames the teacher's personal response to the Teaching Stories.
- *How does the teacher's perception of Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge transform their pedagogy?* This frames teacher consideration of the applications of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the classroom.

The transcript from the initial teacher interview sheds light on the teacher's background knowledge (Aboriginal pedagogy and Indigenous knowledge, languages, cultures, perspectives, and histories) and informs our understanding of his preconceived notions about teaching theory and methods and his attitude towards children. The post research interview is intended to illustrate teacher reflective process and reconstruction of beliefs about children and learning, shaped by his observations and experiences with the students over the course of the case study research.

Teacher conversations provide insight to teacher's reflection on the experience of the Indigenous pedagogical process of learning by doing and his perceptions of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. Teacher observations about the class dynamics such as peer to peer relationships and his thoughts and feelings about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and Indigenous pedagogy are invited.

Classroom teacher initial interview findings. The interview data sheds light on who CT is as a teacher in the classroom, with descriptions concerning his motives and attitudes about teaching Aboriginal content. Reflections and queries from my field journal are provided as a backdrop to my thinking about CT as I came to know him as a professional and began a relationship conducive to honest discussion about the project and student responses. Some of my perceptions are also shared here to connect the micro data of the classroom to the macrosystem

level of the school culture and the ecosystem level of the educational context. The socio-political environment that the classroom is nested within the school and surrounding community and larger societal system are worthy of note.

CT began our talk by showing me an article that was in the newspaper on the day of our initial interview. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report was newly released and the article re-iterated the finding that the Residential Schools in Canada are associated with genocide. CT spoke about his personal connection with the social and political context by saying that he wrote a paper that likened the residential schools to genocide twenty years ago when he was an education student. He explained that he can understand what happened to Aboriginal people in Canada, because of his people's experience in the Ukraine. "What had happened to the First Nations people and to my own people there are tremendous similarities. And the maintenance of a culture despite the attempts at the dismantling of those cultures is very similar."

The classroom teacher said that he has lived in the school community most of his life. The children see him in a suit during the day at school and in the neighbourhood wearing coveralls while working in his yard or out shopping. CT attended the school and was in the same classroom that he now teaches in. He is nearing retirement age.

CT described the school as being situated within a working class neighbourhood with the family dynamics that are "a reflection of our current times as far as one or two parents". He described different scenarios such as a single parent working and trying to get back into school to get a job while raising children, a single mother struggling without a job and having to feed two children, and a couple where both parents are working but the family is large with five kids. "I don't even know how they do it", he exclaimed. He is rooted in this Place, feels for the families in his neighbourhood and understands where the students are coming from.

Stories in the classroom. I asked him how story is a part of his classroom. He illustrated using “every opportunity to try to have stories alive in the classroom” such as recently inviting his students to write a story using any genre including a First Nations tale about a frog’s battle with a crow out in the school yard. I recalled reading one student’s written response in the classroom during my introductory visit to his class and took this opportunity for building relationship with CT by storying myself into the process. “Oh nice! And when I was in you shared one student’s writing which was like a book – a novel style”.

Student relationships. CT did not elaborate about his class’ peer-to-peer relationships when I asked, “What can you tell me about the students and how they get along like their peer group relationships and that kind of thing? What are they like socially?” He illustrated how polite and respectful they are in the school and towards guest teachers. When he was asked directly about conflict such as bullying, he said, “I think that bullying is something like a Hydra. If you cut off one head it somehow grows another one. The whole idea is to hope that the ones that grow back are smaller...But it’s very uncommon for me to hear about bullying.”

First Nation students in the classroom. When I asked CT about the students in his class, he revealed his value for the identity of his students. He said that at least eight of his students have either self-identified as First Nation, Métis or Inuit or he has come to know that they have Aboriginal cultural background. He said that a number of his students, First Nation and non-Aboriginal take *Anishinaabemowin* classes. CT spoke highly of the Native Language teacher who is *Anishinaabe* and stated that she “...brings such a wealth of wisdom based not only on her own belief structure but her travels. You know, quite a remarkable life experience”. *I thought about this and saw that CT has spent time talking with his Aboriginal colleague and he respects her. The Native Language curriculum incorporates cultural perspectives and*

Anishinaabemowin learning and I assumed that the students from CT's class who spend time with the Native Language teacher every day have gained experience with the language and knowledge about culture and world view.

Knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and community. CT was asked about his knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and community. He said that he has collected carvings and paintings by various Indigenous artists. Years ago when he was training to be a teacher, he mentioned doing a teaching placement at a First Nations school on Manitoulin Island and lived in the community with an Aboriginal family. He has been gifted with an Eagle Feather by the Aboriginal community. *I thought about how such an honour is bestowed upon an individual of fine character who demonstrates commitment to community.*

CT also mentioned being a brother to the Blood people in southern Alberta and living in Vancouver with the First Nations. “I just feel very blessed that I’ve had the opportunity to have the wisdom that has come from the various First Nations peoples that I have encountered...and the tremendous sharing of spirituality”. I responded by mentioning my experience with the Bloods while studying Plains Indian sign language as part of my undergraduate work. I travelled door-to-door with my video camera, meeting traditional Peigan, Sarcee and Blood people as well as Indian cowboys who shared about signals on horseback. CT blinked slowly, nodded, and commented, “Oh how neat”.

Teacher receptivity and attitude (valuing Aboriginal culture, perspectives, people). CT was asked to share how he feels about learning about Aboriginal culture, perspectives, and people through this research project. He responded by saying, “I think it is a tremendous opportunity for the students to have another wonderful chance to experience wisdom from involvement in the project.” When he was asked again about *his own* feelings, he replied, “I

think from myself, I believe that life is a learning process. And again, I'm blessed with the opportunity to again hear wisdom and to get a greater insight into a people that I believe have survived despite tumultuous times".

Oral history. When asked about how he feels about teaching Aboriginal content and knowledge he identified himself as a historian and shared his personal values regarding the First Nations oral tradition. "...[O]ral history has become a recognized form of history. It's important for the children to be able to recognize the importance of it" he said. Also important is for students to see "how this great country was shaped and how it is shaping for the future." He explained his feeling that "as children are going to be the leaders of this upcoming future they have to recognize what is equitable and where the truth is". He spoke of the value of finding the truth in the past and for the future. CT expressed that learning about the Indigenous people is critical to understanding an area "...any opportunity to learn about First Nations, the Indigenous peoples of Canada is a tremendous blessing". He shared his appreciation for living in Canada. *I could appreciate that our people share a painful historical relationship with oppression and near extinction. This lead me to consider CT as a potential ally and a professional who promotes equity.*

Aboriginal art. CT talked about sharing his Aboriginal art collection in the classroom. "I'd like for the students to experience these things hands-on and to be able to see them. Not just on a screen but to see the actual [art]. I commented on how it was nice that he shares his collection with his students. When asked what he has noticed about his students' ways of learning, his response was, "I think with all kids it's experiential...and they love to be able to learn and have fun – it's the key." *I responded to CT's teaching style in my Field Journal with the query, "Is hands-on exploration of artefacts from his personal Aboriginal art collection a*

way for him to use a multi-sensory strategy that he learned in teacher's college? Or is this strategy secondary to what he considers to be relevant content for teaching Aboriginal perspectives in his classroom? In retrospect, I believe it is the latter as I recall CT mentioning that he had won an Arts scholarship in high school and he has artistic skills and appreciation for aesthetics.

Family values - Respect for First Nation territory. I acknowledged his experience researching, searching developing teaching and including Aboriginal content. I asked CT to talk more about what he has done “to really get to know more about the content”. He said that the first Aboriginal content book he ever owned was called, “A Bow and Arrow” and he recalled playing as a child and not wanting to be a cowboy. From an early age he respected First Nations peoples and recognized the variances between different tribes. He shared a personal story about his father. “...my father was always very respectful towards the people that he knew. When we would go fishing on Birch Island he would always go and see the Chief and ensure that we weren’t causing any problem in spite of the fact that my father came from the Ukraine and was stumbling in English. He still was able to meet a tremendous variety of people including people that would give him the right to go fish.” I really liked hearing about his childhood link to the Aboriginal community and said, “That’s a nice story”.

Knowing our Treaty relationship. In response to my question about what other ways he teaches Aboriginal perspectives, CT expressed his interest and teaching his students about our treaty relationship. He said that they have been reading stories and have read a book about the treaties and how treaties work. “I think that it is important for them to recognize that a deal is a deal. And if you can’t respect and not only respect, but ensure that you make all the obligations fulfilled in the deal there’s something wrong...And I think that in deals of this tremendous scope

that First Nations made that there was huge trust on their side. And I think that has to be honoured.” CT said that he has shared about his past with his students that he would only go into business with people that he trusted to re-iterate the point about trust and relationships. *It seemed to me that CT's life experience and values may align with teaching about Aboriginal history and values.*

Student interest and engagement with Aboriginal education. I asked CT, “What do you think your students understand about Aboriginal culture, perspectives, and people?” He responded with, “I think they understand a lot more than the kids when I was in that classroom!” I responded by agreeing and I added that “Times are changing”. When asked about the level of interest for his students as a group he talked about the importance of the presentation to draw them in to it and to “recognize it for what the opportunities are”. *This response caused me to reflect on the trust that he was extending to me to teach his class. He did not know for sure but was putting faith in me to engage his students and maintain their interest and participation.*

Teacher conversations.

Personal connection to Stories and beliefs. Our second conversation took place at CT’s desk after my second class visit while the students were eating their lunch in the classroom. Notes in my field notebook illustrate CT’s response to the Teaching story of "How *Odewiminan* (Strawberries) Came to the *Anishinaabek* People". I posed the question, “What did you notice about today’s Circle?” CT said that it brought to mind the Kane and Abel Judeo-Christian story although the biblical tale was different in that it was a crime of passion. He noted that the Odewiminan Story “doesn’t tell us what happened to the twin after” and he queried, “Were there consequences?” CT responded to his own question by saying, “Well obviously he is living with it.” The classroom teacher mentioned that, “Somehow good came of evil” as if making a

comparison to the Biblical story that he is familiar with. *I reviewed my reflections from my field journal after this conversation. I appreciated how CT seemed to be comfortable with me to share about his personal connections to the Teaching story. He related his beliefs and values or religious morals to the Teaching story and this seemed to support the oral tradition process where a Teaching story engages the listener in meaning-making and there is no explicit outcome to the story. Since the listener's reflective processing is stirred, connections to their personal life experience are drawn. I wondered if CT would reflect more on what the students shared about their thinking in response to the Odewiminan Teaching story. Some shared about having a wholistic experience with the berries as medicine and made strong connections to Truth and Love.*

Student text-to-self personal connections. During this second conversation, I asked CT, "What did you notice about the students?" He noted that the students were "very engaged". Two students had applied a "text-to-self" connection during the story Circle and he commented that they "used a reading strategy that I spoke about just this morning" and his smile indicated to me that he was pleased this reading strategy was helping them also to comprehend an oral story. CT talked about MN's sharing about her tragic loss of a brother during the story Circle. He said, "They carry their own story. They share on many occasions and a discussion comes up". From this example, it seems that CT has a trusting relationship with his students and they feel safe to discuss personal issues with their teacher and their peers. The story Circle seems to offer a safe place and this is evidenced by MN's sharing about her family's tragic loss.

'Very powerful' student engagement in reflective experiences in Place. The third teacher conversation was video-recorded in the classroom after my third class visit where the Teaching story illustrated sharing our breath with the trees. Students experienced what can be

referred to as ‘sacred’ space by occupying a special place in the school yard and taking notice of the clouds, wind and movement all around. Deep breathing with eyes closed elicited a stance of self-awareness and wholistic perception (thinking, feeling, doing and visioning) while being receptive to Place and sharing their breath with the trees. Sacred space is enacted when the individual purposefully occupies a Place on *Aki* and focusses their complete being (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects) on interconnections there. Students talked about grounding themselves in their special Place and their practice of visualizing interconnectivity with *Aki*.

I asked the teacher, "What did you notice about the Teaching story today?" He responded with, "I noticed once again the students very engaged. I also noticed how students are reacting in so many different ways...It's tremendously positive and very powerful." *I wondered what he meant by “very engaged” and thought that he was referring to the group’s listening behaviours and involvement in the visualization activity where they sat with eyes closed and focussed on their shared breath with the trees.*

Teacher's new understanding about relationship with Mother Earth. I pursued information about his personal response and asked, "And for yourself? What did you notice about the Teaching story for you?" The teacher said, "I think as I had mentioned during the Circle I think it was a reminder of the tremendous importance we have in recognizing the relationship we have. I don't know if it's as custodians any more. Maybe there's custodians looking after us." *This signaled for me that the teacher was engaging in reflection and connections. These personal connections that he chose to share with me seemed to indicate a perception that is less-hierarchical than the view of man as dominion over nature towards*

consideration of the humble view of Anishinaabek as being dependent on the Earth and creation for existence.

I commented on how his point was interesting and asked, "Is there anything that you've noticed with the students since we've been doing this? Outside of when I am here? Is there anything that has come up that you've observed about them?" He talked about what he noticed, "A couple of students at the conclusion of the Teaching referred to Mother Earth and the relationship." I commented that, "It's percolating" and we will see whether it comes up any place else. *I wondered if he was cognizant of student behaviors (actions and words) that reflect a newly evolving sense of community. The classroom teacher's response to the sharing our breath with the trees Teaching story and story Circle about the students' experience in their sacred space reveals a shift in his thinking about our relationship with Aki.* In our first round of the story Circle he interpreted the meaning of the Teaching as "we are stewards to our brother plants and to the earth" (CT3 transcript). *It seems that although CT did not choose to talk when Mishomis came around the Circle the second time, he was impacted by the new knowledge that was created in the Circle. This seemed to signal a significant impact on CT's thinking and I wondered if he will reflect further and possibly connect this new knowledge to other areas of his being-in-relationship.* CT ended our conversation by saying "Just once again I feel very blessed to be a part of what's going on. Miigwech." This indicated that he appreciated listening to the Teaching stories and story Circles.

The fourth conversation was audio taped in the classroom while the students worked on math questions at their seats. The teacher and I spoke in very soft voices for privacy. I asked, "What are your thoughts about the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge or the Teaching Stories, that I'm sharing? What are some of the connections that you're making with that?" The

classroom teacher said, " I think that I had already mentioned the reminders of how important the relationship is between the ecological system and ourselves...perhaps not just as guardians of what we are inheriting but...perhaps there's other guardians that are there that are helping us." I interpret this as illustrating that CT made some personal connections to the *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge that was shared in the Teaching story and in response to the students' sharings. Perhaps it shows his engagement in deep thinking to understand the principle that we are not dominion over Mother Earth. I believe that considering the timeless interconnectivity of the ecological system with acknowledgement of more-than-human relationships leads us to humility and respect for the creation.

Awakening student sensitivity to Place. I once again was curious about his observations of the students and asked, "Are there any specific behaviours, actions, or comments from your students that you are noticing that seem to be related to the Teaching Stories and activities? The classroom teacher responded with, "Well I think through the different activities there's some very interesting revelations that are coming about from the students themselves about...what they're experiencing through the different Teachings. I know today there was a student who spoke about hearing whispers of her brothers who have passed and this was the first time this had happened for her. So there's a tremendous sensitivity that seems to be awakened or at least inspired by what has been going on." *I reflected on this and appreciated the teacher's response as an observer. The student seemed to feel comfortable in a trusting setting to share about her personal experience of sacred space and the inner journey to knowing. Although the teacher is not actively participating in the experience with Aki or sharing verbally in the story Circle, he seems to be developing new meanings through an Indigenous process of coming to know and the storywork Circle pedagogy.*

Teacher participation by *listening* to the Teaching Stories. Although the classroom teacher was not participating in the activities to occupy his special Place and connect with *Aki* and reflect, and he was not sharing in the story Circle (he spoke once when Mishomis came around to him in the story Circle), he was an important part of the process of creating new knowledge. His participation as a listener who engaged in reflective processing about the Teaching Stories and what is shared in the story Circle is a crucial component of the process of coming to know.

Mishomis was treated with respect and gentle hands, as he travelled around the Circle. Each student said their name and either talked about what they were thinking about in the Circle, or passed him along. The classroom teacher usually passed by handing *Mishomis* to the next student and although several opportunities to share were provided, he chose to speak on one occasion. *I thought about how the teacher acknowledged how Mishomis elicited participation in the Circle during one of our conversations, and wondered what interfered with his sharing? Perhaps he did not feel comfortable sharing personal thoughts and feelings with his students or with me?*

Teacher's response to the story Circles.

Worlds collide at the mesosystem level. I gave the students the opportunity to select our Place in the school yard for the last story Circle. Half way through the Circle, the Physical Education teacher approached and requested that we move so that his class could have a soccer game. The classroom teacher responded by telling him, “No, she is an invited guest to the school and you are not going to displace her. As you can see we are in the middle of things here and so you are going to have to do something else.” The students did not appear to be noticeably concerned with the disruption and we readily continued on with sharing in the Circle. The

Physical Education teacher was not deterred and he set up the pylons for the soccer game using the other half of the field. The soccer game was loud and distracting and students made sure to speak directly into the microphone of the IPad and to project their voice in order to be heard by others. This was not the first time that the school yard had been noisy and I appreciate that students are accustomed to transitions and interruptions on a regular basis.

As things unfolded, when the researcher was in the school a few days later, the Physical Education teacher approached to introduce himself. He mentioned that the Grade four/five classroom teacher had words with him after our encounter and he said that he wanted to offer me an apology. My field note states that the Phys Ed teacher apologized for coming into our space outside. He didn't mean to be rude - he always welcomes people who come into the school. He said, ``Sorry`` (Field Journal Note dated June 25th, 2015).

I perceived that the teacher was embarrassed and I was quite surprised by the apology. I readily shook his outstretched hand and responded. The Field Note indicates, "I explained that I wanted to take students outside but we can't always get to a natural green area so I wanted to show what happens in the school yard. This is all part of the story. We had a group of children playing nearby almost every time we were out there and many times a train went by. I expressed that I had no hard feelings and that I totally understood. The school yard is a busy place shared by everyone" (Field Journal Note June 25, 2015).

This scenario demonstrates that the space outside in the school yard is utilized and valued by many. In retrospect, I feel that my attention to the scheduling of story Circles outside in the school yard may have eliminated this conflict. This experience also illustrates the classroom teacher's passion for the learning opportunity, commitment to the process and respectful relationship with me. The Physical Education teacher may have gained new insight that other

students and teachers in the school value the school yard space just as much as he does and perhaps through a reflective process, humility counter-balanced his sense of entitlement. This represents how the creation of space for *Anishinaabek* ecological relational knowledge and Indigenous philosophy in the school had a circle of influence larger than the confines of the classroom. This teacher gained sensitivity and awareness of Indigenous pedagogy in the school.

Teacher Post-Research Interview. The students were seated and engaged in Math questions while the interview was conducted at the classroom teacher's desk. The post-interview was 19 minutes in duration. *Although we spoke with soft voices for privacy, I wondered if his responses to the interview questions would have changed much if the students had not been in the same room.*

Including Aboriginal content 'as best I can'. During the post-research interview, I began with an initial question about how comfortable CT is with the topic and how he feels about teaching *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge or what is called "Aboriginal content" in the schools. CT said, "I've always included as best I can any opportunities to introduce Aboriginal content and knowledge." *This response hinted to me that CT may have witnessed a new approach to teaching the content and indicates that his feelings about how he teaches remain the same. Perhaps CT is in the process of reflecting on the experience and it is possible that he will understand the Indigenous pedagogy in a way that supports him to utilize storywork Circle pedagogy in his approach.*

I also wondered what the story Circles and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge teaching stories provoked for his thinking about teaching. I felt that since he is nearing retirement, it is likely that he is reflecting on his career and asking the question, "What have I

taught my students?” I thought that perhaps the displayed thinking of his students during the story Circles is fuelling this process for him.

Aboriginal perspectives approach and historical content. During our post-interview, CT was asked to talk about if his experience in the project brought out a new way to teach Aboriginal perspectives. His response was, “I don’t know if I can say that there’s been a large increase in my knowledge base as I’ve listened to you.” When I probed by asking, “What about in the approach or methodology?” CT replied, “Yeah, these are things that I’ve done. These Circles. I’ve used the outside with students.” I pressed further to better understand whether or not he found value in the Indigenous pedagogy by asking, “So it’s supportive? It’s in-line?” and he said, “Yes, very much so.” I continued with this line of exploration and asked, “Was there anything that stood out as newly interesting to you?” CT replied with, “I think today’s lesson (our fifth Teaching story - The Fish Fence at the Narrows) about how closely tied historically that you are to the Land, and how that continuity is significant for the future of *Anishinaabek* people. It’s always as much looking forward as it is looking backward.” I felt that the experience was validated as it had spurred on his thinking and I responded with “Beautiful! *As I reflected on his comment, I appreciated that he acknowledged the time continuum and made the connection within the context of Anishinaabek ecological relational knowledge and the oral tradition. The oral tradition means that the ancient past is brought into the moment and the listener creates linkages to the future through reflective processing and personal applications in life.*

Facilitating writer's circles is a different pedagogy from story Circles. I was perplexed that CT said he utilizes the Indigenous pedagogy as I had noted that he had participated once in the story Circle. During the third story Circle, CT had shared his thoughts

about being "stewards to our brother plants and to the earth" (CT3 transcript) in response to the Teaching story and experience connecting to Place where we visualized our connection to *Aki* and sharing our breath with the trees. CT had been given five opportunities to share in the Circle and he passed each time except for once. *I wondered how he would facilitate a Circle with his students and not participate?*

I reflected on the classroom teacher's response about he has "used these Circles" and so I re-visited the data to see if it would speak to me about this. I reviewed MF's data from the first Sharing story (Figure 49). Her sharing resembled what seemed to be a formal written response representative of a literacy strategy that is well-used in the schools in the Language subject area. *I wondered if this is CT's pedagogical practice regarding Circles? I sensed that the cloth Medicine Circle and circular mat that I was considering as gifts for him might not be important in his classroom. For me, these items are an important part of my pedagogical approach.*

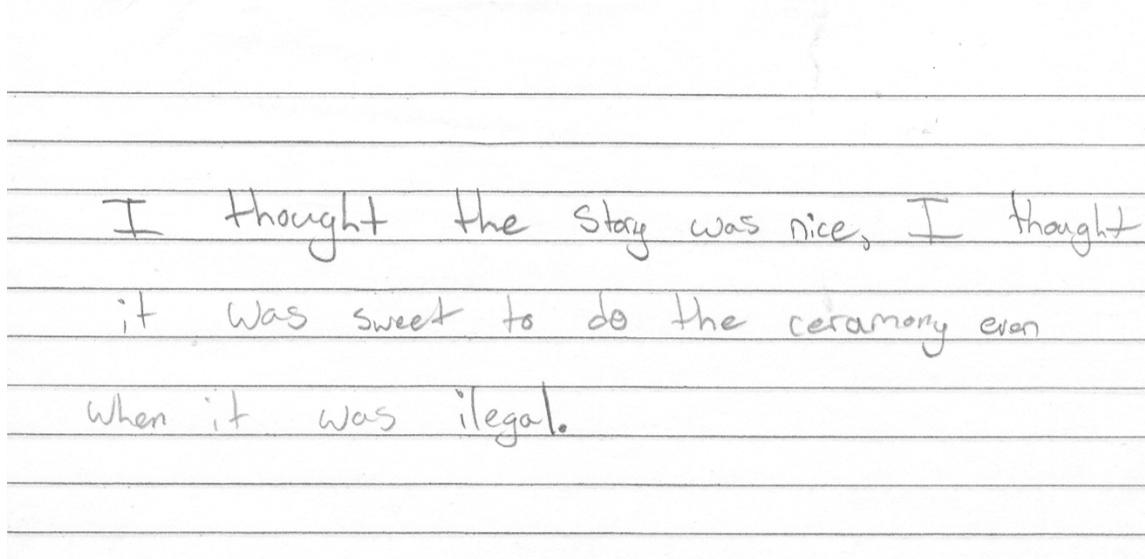


Figure 49. MF1 writing Response to Nibi Teaching Story

Teacher observations about students. I explained that this research experience gave me a chance to observe things that a teacher engaged in a lesson does not have the opportunity to see. I asked CT if he had any new perceptions about his students' peer-to-peer relationships such as the social dynamics of how they interact that might have arisen from his opportunity to participate within the Indigenous pedagogy with his students. He said that he didn't notice anything different and so I pressed on by asking him to tell me a couple of observations about how they are. CT responded by saying, "All eager to help...to participate in whatever the fashion is".

Valuing talk more than listening and non-verbal expression of thought. CT then talked about a First Nation student, OA and described her non-verbal behaviour as, "Very typical of her actions in the classroom not to participate. It's always a coup when she does say something." *This surprised me. He was taking exception to a student who did not speak in the story Circles and yet he demonstrated the same behaviour. In addition, OA is participating as a listener in the storywork Circle pedagogy and her drawings indicate that she engaged in higher level thinking and creating processing of information. CT's valuing of verbal participation and apparent de-valuing of listening illustrates Western perspectives regarding pedagogical approaches and discourse structures in the school.* I responded by drawing on my experience relevant to this situation from my work as a speech language pathologist and my understanding of First Nations children and communication style in the formal learning context. I explained my interpretation of OA's participation in the Circle. ["You know what I noticed about her? The first couple of times she was in the Circle she checked off: "Yes, I want to share stories. You can take pictures of me. You can take what I write and draw". And then so I got what she wrote in group, right? And then today she just indicated, "You can take what I write and draw." And so I

think maybe she had planned on being a part of that and then when the time came she didn't have her voice. And so I think today she realized that and so she just checked the one thing. But that's her comfort level, aye? Not very verbal. But what she drew today was so detailed and amazing" (Post-research Interview transcript June 18, 2015)]. CT acknowledged her gift of being "an accomplished artist" and he mentioned that she is receiving medical intervention to "help her find that voice that you talked about."

Mishomis is an instigator of respect in the story Circle. I wanted to understand what CT noticed about the students' learning during the research project and asked, "Is there anything that you want to comment on about how the students were learning in the project that you noticed? Is there anything that you noticed about how they learned in Circles that was different and noticeable?" CT responded, "Well I think that the use of *Mishomis* is an opportunity not only for tactile learners but also garners important aspects of politeness, kindness, and recognizing your place and your time and the opportunity in common and your role." *This indicated to me that the Circle process facilitated a respectful community for the students and provided a procedural order to the interactions. I acknowledged how the students treated Mishomis in a good way and thought that my modelling "gentle hands" and illustrating kindness was instrumental.*

The Circle is a safe place. I probed further and asked, "Are there some things that you learned about your students' cultural and experience background in the Circles that you didn't know before?" CT related the following: "When MN spoke to her deceased brothers I thought that was a very moving moment. That she had not only addressed the fact [of their tragic death] but also that she was able to communicate that." I responded by mentioning how that was a beautiful and healthy response that she shared and mentioned that another First Nation student

talked about her dad out east and her *Mishomis* rock that he sent her. CT indicated that he knew previously that she had First Nation heritage and I commented that it was good that she shared that connection from the Circle experience.

The school yard is *our* space. I brought up the topic of community in the classroom by mentioning the welcoming and respectful atmosphere in the classroom, especially when one student swept up the floor before we met together in the first Circle. CT said that, "[T]hey are comfortable in this environment [and] students...feel safe enough to express who they are. And they may not have the same opportunity in the playground, after school on their way home, [or] while they are at home. But for that short period of time that they're here...I want whole heartedly it to be a safe place for them to spend the day". I mentioned that it showed when we were outside on the huge playground with lots of room and were being displaced and he said, "No!" I said that he was thinking of the students. CT added, "My colleagues are sometimes very exuberant in their own needs. Sometimes there is a need for people to recognize that their priorities are not necessarily the priority of others. So I do have to apologize for my colleague. But...as you mentioned, no one was going to be displaced at that point."

Diversity of student gifts. I asked, "Do you have any comments on some of the other specific gifts of the students? Are there any really positive gifts that you've noticed students showed?" CT's response to this was, "Like the various hues of the rainbow I could tell the various talents that these students have. It's something that just continues to resonate, be it dancing, be it drama...All these things around nature to not only be a teacher and educator but also a better human." I commented on the boy who said he was at the center of the Medicine Circle and talked about himself as being a stunningly handsome guy and how this was a gift of

humour. CT and I shared a laugh. *In retrospect, I thought that CT enjoyed what the students shared and he appreciated their diverse gifts and needs.*

Students learned about relationality. My next question asked "What are some specific topics or concepts that you feel the students understand now about Aboriginal people and the community that they might not have known before the project?" CT referred today's session and identified: "Learning the idea about being in the centre of the Wheel and the different layers that come out from the middle. Although I think that they've come into contact with this idea [before], I think it's pronounced...very much so." *In my reflections on this increased awareness for the teacher and students, I wondered if students' sense of connectedness would support their idea of belonging in community as a support for them in future.*

Links to academic subject areas. I asked about academic integration of cultural concepts and learnings from the Teaching Stories to see if CT feels there could be a connection. CT said, "The various integrated areas being in science. The idea of them being a part of the universe, the respect for the ecological concerns of our current state with water, as reverently mentioned ...Mother Earth. The recognition of a society that has been here for a long time and tremendous need for fulfillment of its future." *To me, this seemed to indicate potential links to science, history, and social studies. I thought about how the classroom teacher could build on new student knowledge and create links by asking the students to recall aspects of Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge and discuss specific connections to academic subject matter.* For instance, *I could imagine CT beginning the next science class by saying, "This week we learned about nibi from a First Nations perspective and we have new ideas about the properties of water and how it is valued. Let's put all of this up on the board here (students brainstorm facts) and explore what else we can learn about water from our science text. Perhaps students*

could work in groups for a few classes to complete a Nibi project. I thought about the level of commitment that would be required on the teacher's part for this to happen and this reminded me of the books that I had gifted the teacher. Perhaps these resources would support additional academic applications as students themselves make new connections?

Teacher-student relationship. When I asked CT if there was anything else regarding student response to the research project that I didn't see. He talked about how there was eagerness and talk from them that "it wasn't something that was just going to end...that they would see you again so there was continuity there." I said that I would see some of them in future at the summer Math and Literacy Camp and the students were happy about that. *I was feeling a positive sense of accomplishment regarding the research project while at the same time disappointed that my time with the students and teacher was coming to an end. This made me aware of how research is about relationships and I appreciated the time we spent together and what we had learned.*

I showed CT several drawings and writing from the story Circles and he quickly glanced at them without making comments. *I was surprised because I thought he was interested in art. Maybe he was feeling pressured for time since the class was transitioning to nutrition break and he had things to do before his break? I thought that if he wanted to see more, he would initiate a future contact with me.*

Honouring the Indigenous Research Paradigm of Relationship and Continuity

Of special significance to an Indigenous research paradigm is researcher relationship to the people involved in the project. The researcher closely monitored consent for participation forms to ensure that only students from the Grade four/five classroom with signed parent consent and the students who indicated their willingness to participate in the classroom visit were

involved. This demonstrated ethical behaviour by the researcher in the school and classroom context. The classroom teacher perceived the researcher's character to be that of a professional person and educator.

The classroom teacher and researcher informed the student participants about the final classroom visit. One student, AL, acknowledged that it was the final story Circle in her talk on the last day. "Before I go, "Bye Mishomis" (AL5 transcript). KR's drawing during the final Circle included the word "GBye" and it was underlined several times for emphasis (KR5 transcript).

I was offered several hours of contract work supporting the Junior/Intermediate students in the Rainbow District Schools Summer Literacy Camp the following week (during the first week of summer vacation). I gladly accepted and felt that it would help me ease out of my research role in the classroom and school. As it turned out, a few of the students from the Grade four/five classroom attended the Literacy Camp and we were happy for the opportunity to spend some additional time together.

Although OA had not directly spoken to me over the course of the classroom visits, I was stoked into OA's drawing about the final story Circle. The picture resembled the researcher/grandmother with *Mishomis* held in the left hand (Figure 47). OA wrote some dialogue demonstrating their relationship. "Do you know who this is?" she asked. The reply, "You" was printed on the page.

The Indigenous research paradigm provided the context for creation of meaningful and respectful relationships between the research participants and researcher. This approach exemplified ethical and responsible behaviour in research.

The data from the transcripts, drawings, and writings of the students and teacher interview transcripts illustrate participation in an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy and thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in a grade four-five classroom. The double entry journal format presents my reflections and insights that emerged from the data analysis process and reference to my writing in my field notes and observations in my field journal. Examples of codes, categories and themes that emerged are discussed in relation to the overarching question about how *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is socially enacted in the classroom.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflections

Introduction

This research brings to light a story about how *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is introduced by me as the Grandmother visiting the Grade four/five classroom and how the classroom teacher and students respond. It also brings forward an exploration of the macro structure or school context and the micro structure or classroom context of the overall research story and illustrates transformation in the school space. Student and teacher narratives are presented to inform the reader about what happened and to understand the transformative power of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and storywork Circle pedagogy in social interactions and thought. This case study illuminates that new knowledge is created about Aboriginal world view perspectives among students and their classroom teacher when space is created for an *Anishinaabe* Grandmother to enact the oral tradition and storywork Circle pedagogy in the school. Student and teacher transcripts, drawings and writing demonstrate positive outcomes for participants including: appreciation for *Aki*; understanding of the interconnectivity with *Aki* and others; and increased awareness of self and knowing from introspection and reflective processing. The experience generates new knowledge about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and shows student and teacher thinking in a variety of ways with potential for application in academic subject areas. This research serves to illuminate possibilities for multi-logical and inclusive educational praxis.

An Indigenous research pedagogy applied within a critical Indigenous education theory re-balances the teacher-learner relationship and creates a community process of knowledge creation for transformation within the classroom, school and beyond to other educational and societal systems. A collective learning process within an Indigenous storywork Circle process

activates new understandings, higher level thinking and memory, and creativity. New knowledge supports respectful relationships and interferes with racism and Western-colonialist ideology.

My role as researcher within an Indigenous research paradigm is to provide introspective reflection and interpretation of the field data and findings. The following areas of insight that the research project generates are relevant to advancing the understanding of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy within a formal urban public school context. Consideration of the implications for transformation of Indigenous education in the field and for future research is given. My approach in this discussion supports the work of Johnson (2008) as ecological systems and complexity theories frame the constant evolution and development process of education to view this complex, dynamic system with multi-directional linkages and processes that interconnect the different layers within the system. The time dimension sheds light on the potential for small changes to influence ongoing and future outcomes.

Relevant to the field of Aboriginal Education, impacts from this case are evident at the chronosystem (time-based dimension), macrosystem level (school culture), exosystem (society), mesosystem level (bi-directional interactions and dynamics between aspects of the microsystem), and microsystem level (classroom environment including students, peers, teacher).

Sharing of my methodological and research processes and exploration of hunches through observations and reflections over the course of the research are bi-directional with systems of professional and personal collective knowledge and experience. The system is dynamic and nonlinear changes can be appreciated as we assume the lens of *migizii* and examine

the layers of the educational system. *Migizii* flies once again to provide a bird's eye view of findings, case study effects on educational and societal transformation and future implications.

As is illustrated by Dyson and Genishi (2005), this case study (the story Circle and *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy in a classroom) is not offered here for educators to replicate since every case and context is uniquely experienced by participants and uniquely bounded and theorized by researchers and learners. It is offered as an example that is responsive to diverse learners and to challenge and complicate contemporary ways of constructing children's learning and thinking inclusive of Indigenous perspectives. This case creates a circular, process-oriented and wholistic way of coming to know *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. A model for conceptualizing relational systems within the context of Aboriginal education and the ripple-effect of societal transformation is brought forward.

Microsystem Context

Qualitative data and interpretation of the findings represent impacts on the dynamics of the classroom micro system context - the classroom teacher, individual students, and group dynamics. The ecology of the classroom school community and school board constitute layers of an environment that interact in complex ways.

Participants in the Teaching stories and experiences connecting to Place (being-in-Place with *Shkagamik-kwe*) have responded to an invitation to re-connect to their Mother and to go inward to know themselves more intimately. Being-in-Place supports a personal state of "attentive receptivity" and wholistic coming to know that supports the work of Beeman and Blenkinsop (2008). Time spent with *Aki* provides students with the opportunity to: reflect on one's well-being; to create awareness of *weh* (interactive process of heart-knowledge and mind-knowledge as a lens for seeing the inter-connectedness of all things); and to honour

nibwaakaawin (understanding and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are dependent on each other). Analysis of student artefacts of thinking demonstrates support for what Bopp et al. (1988) describe as relationality concepts from the Medicine Circle. The being-in-Place student experiences are integral for coming to know.

The transformation of the classroom space in this case study has been elucidated with the analogy of putting a square peg (linear Western-based context of the classroom space) into a round hole (Circle pedagogy with interconnectivity and expansive relationships). The change is shaped by all students with diversity in learning styles and gifts experiencing and responding to *Anishinaabe* grandmother Teachings.

The classroom teacher's cordial invitation and interest in the Indigenous pedagogical process of the storywork Circle pedagogy (oral tradition enacted through grandmother Teachings and stories, being-in-Place experiences, and story Circle processing and generation of knowledge) are supportive factors to this case study research. The teacher's response shows a positive attitude that the Indigenous pedagogy is engaging and that the process supports student receptivity. His thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is evident in his observations that the students are "very engaged" and that the process is "tremendously positive and very powerful", and that "a tremendous sensitivity...seems to be awakened". The passing of *Mishomis* in the story Circle from student to student creates a procedural order and respectful community where personal family stories are communicated within a context of gentleness and kindness. The teacher is exposed to *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge principles that represent a different point of view regarding relationship to *Shkagamik-kwe*. The classroom teacher engages in an examination of his understanding of being in relationship to the earth as "custodian" and he accredits the experience to an idea that maybe he is being looked after. The

classroom teacher does not join in the story Circles (except for on one occasion) and this demonstrates that storywork Circle pedagogy is an opportunity structure for eventual transformation in his classroom and in teacher-learner relationships.

In our conversations and in the case study classroom teacher's sharing in one story Circle the valuing of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives was illustrated. The teacher also suggested possibilities for integration of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within academic subjects. The teacher's attitude and increased awareness of student appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being supports that rationale of bringing Elders and knowledgeable Aboriginal community members into the classroom.

The classroom teacher experiences an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy that demonstrates a culturally relevant and inclusive learning environment. His cultural understanding and system of belief regarding the perception of his relationship to *Aki* is stimulated. The classroom teacher has come to appreciate a different cultural perspective regarding the Earth as Mother which is in contrast to the Western notion that man is dominant over nature and the paternalistic attitude of being in a stewardship or paternal role with *Aki* (Baskin, 2011, p. 87; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 152; Simpson, 2014, p. 13). The teacher's experiences and thinking about Aboriginal education have the potential to influence other teachers' awareness and interest in collaborative relationships with knowledgeable Aboriginal community resource people. The role of teacher as model can positively influence transformation in Aboriginal education at the micro system level.

The students in this classroom case study engage in deep processing such as critical and abstract thinking and conceptual space is created for understanding *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge for themselves. Student symbolizing is evident in drawings and writing

and conceptual space is evident by visualizing. A circle occupies the physical classroom space and exudes a community environment of belonging and learner autonomy. Students' responses to the invitation in the story Circles to participate in the Teaching stories and reflective experiences in Place and their re-storying are rich with varied text and discourse styles (symbols, caricature). Students represent thinking about topics and concepts such as: Being in relationship with Place - biophilia (Love for nature) and receptivity to sense Place wholistically; *Nibwaakaawin* (acknowledging 'all my relations' inclusive of *Negwaadodem* or the whole clan of family/blood relatives and feelings of *Weh*/connection to community, society and all of creation); knowledge of Self, identity and engagement in peaceful contemplation and reflection; re-telling with emotion and feeling; re-connection and awareness of relationship to *Aki* and the sensibility of relationship with *Shkagamik-kwe*/Mother Earth that can be honoured in any context including an urban environment. An examination and interpretation of the data reveals *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge topics and provides evidence about how student thinking is made visible. The students engage in a collective knowledge creation process in the story Circle process. This generates new knowledge for students as represented by:

1. Acquisition of *Anishinaabemowin* (e.g. *Nibi* Water song, names of items from grandmother's Teaching Bundle and Teaching stories)
2. Engagement in higher-level creative thinking and reflective processing
3. A sense of *Gwekwaadiziwin* (making choices that 'go with the flow' of the universe representing values and morals/Truth, Respect, Love, and gratitude that move in a straight way, not interfering or harming the Creation);
4. *Nibwaakaawin* (a state of being rooted in the understanding of and respect for the interconnectedness of all life where all things are inter-dependent)

5. Plants as food to support wellness
6. Gratitude and reciprocity, and
7. New connections and cultural understandings (e.g. *Nibi* (water) is life).

It is of particular importance to note that student understanding about the significance and relationship with items in grandmother's Teaching Bundle shows cultural competency. The connection to cultural competence in this thesis supports the work of Gallavan (2011), who promotes the creation of opportunities for teachers and students to acquire cultural competence which "... entails the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and expressions (i.e., what we know, do, believe, and respect) about ourselves, others, and society demonstrated through our thoughts, words, actions, and interactions" (p. 10). Students are led to develop respectful relationships "...for future learning and a long life living in a world that does not yet exist" (p. 18).

Participation in this case study helps Aboriginal students, in particular, to realize *Asidwendaan* - their identity as *Anishinaabek*. I share in the beliefs of Bopp et al. (1989) that this practice supports personal growth and represents a "position of strength [where] no one can put us down, and no one can lead us to do or to be anything else but what we know we must do or be" (p. 56) and feel that the practice is beneficial for children to have a strong sense of identity and resistance to peer pressure.

A biophilic educational approach has been experienced by students learning through direct encounters with nature while learning in the natural setting outside in the school yard. Classroom experiences outside (on *Aki*) and *Anishinaabe* Teaching stories, and practicing reflective experiences in Place re-acquaints and re-connects all learners with *Aki*. Teaching stories illustrate *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge concepts and topics, and the reflective experiences in Place give students opportunities to understand "being of a place" and

using all of the senses for heightened perception. The naturalistic setting, storywork Circle pedagogy, and positive and enjoyable experience are conducive to every student's perception of him/herself in a positive, contributing relationship with others. The process is inclusive. All students who possess varied cultural backgrounds, gifts, and abilities have opportunities for reflection and sharing to help understand how they are shaped in interaction with and by others. The teacher, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students experience leaving the classroom to learn outside on *Aki* as a novel experience, and the context of nature and an Indigenous pedagogy is wholistically engaging. The *Anishinaabe* process of oral Teaching stories and storywork Circle pedagogy stimulates higher intellectual levels of synthesis for students and intrinsic motivation for learning as curiosity is aroused.

Group dynamics indicate demonstrated social cohesion as new knowledge regarding *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge is acquired and cultural competency skills are practiced within the Indigenous storywork Circle pedagogical process. The students gain a sense of belonging within the classroom community and the pedagogy supports attitudes of kindness, gentleness and respect for each other. Individual Aboriginal students experience seeing themselves in the curriculum as they engage with *Anishinaabe* Teaching stories and ways of being in relationship with *Aki*, the Self, and each other. The *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy means that students are shown and new skills are practiced, related to and felt, and stories and concepts are listened to, thought about, and understood. The Aboriginal students identity and cultural ways of being are valued and respected and the sense of belonging within the classroom community is reinforced. This creates a student response that interferes with bullying and focuses on belonging and respect.

The student influences and is influenced by the microsystem as evidenced by a bidirectional relationship within the microsystem. Patterns of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships that are experienced in this case study create conceptual space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and impact the physical environment through the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. Relationship between students and the student-teacher relationship involve kindness, respect, and autonomy rather than a hierarchical power structure.

Mesosystem Context

The case study research demonstrates significant impact for Aboriginal education at the microsystem and mesosystem levels of an urban public school. Teachers and staff outside of the case study classroom are affected by the case study experience. Apparent bystanders (other teachers, clerical staff and the school principal administrator) not only look on but are a part of the process underway as conceptual space is created and pedagogical approaches are utilized in the classroom environment for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge.

At the level of the school, regarding implementation of the *First Nation Métis and Inuit Policy Framework* in particular, this school has the potential to lead by expanding opportunities for students and teachers to acquire *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and increase Indigenous knowledge. The school community is rich with human resources such as Aboriginal artisans and Elders who are keepers of *Anishinaabemowin* within an oral tradition praxis. Elders and Aboriginal community resource people are becoming engaged in sharing Teaching stories, legends and pedagogical approaches that honour cultural traditions, beliefs, and values within the contemporary context of society. Elders are informed about the larger socio-political movement underway as Indigenous peoples are entering the collective consciousness of Canadians.

The school principal and teachers have the opportunity to invite Aboriginal people into the school and to engage with them in the process of creating relationships that are respectful and honour Indigenous ways of approaching Aboriginal education. Teachers and school principals have the potential to support the process of educational transformation as allies who support Indigenous knowledge systems in the school for all students. Through conversation and consultation, teachers and school principals have the potential to connect with the appropriate community resource person or Elder for the specific task or learning environment of the school. Aboriginal community resource people have specific knowledge and expertise such as counselling, artistic expression through the arts and dance, modeling *Anishinaabemowin* within an immersion context of doing something together, and providing Teachings and stories through the oral tradition in Circles. Not every resource person or Elder is a teacher and not every community member has experience with groups of students or working with teachers. There are Aboriginal community resource people who possess knowledge about the local history, First Nation community and family structures and there are many who are expert traditional harvesters and know about travelling on the local lakes, rivers, and *Aki*. Grandparents can bring wonderful wisdom to the classroom and school. Grandparents can provide students with ways of knowing family and community roles and responsibilities and practicing Respect, Kindness and Love. Transformation at the mesosystem context supports all students' learning and relationships. Aboriginal students in particular can benefit from increased self-confidence and pride in identity which support academic success, school attendance and engagement. Student responses to Aboriginal education opportunities have the potential to influence parental and family attitudes towards Aboriginal people and Aboriginal education in the schools. It has been my experience that the Native Language program in the schools can support cultural connections and

Anishinaabe world view philosophy for all students. On a few occasions in this case study school district, non-Aboriginal parents came in to meet the *Anishinaabemowin* teacher and thanked the teacher for their child's interest in Indigenous peoples. They said that they have learned from their child to appreciate another way of seeing the world.

The level of the school's administration commitment to Aboriginal education and participation of the students' urban Aboriginal community and First Nation can influence teaching staff, parents and family, and student attitudes and learning about Aboriginal education. The school community can continue to develop a respectful climate. Parental expectations about academic learning and success in school will shift to include the valuing of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy within the school. Tension and complacency towards Aboriginal education will be minimized. Such a change can minimize racism in student behaviour within the classrooms and the school context. Classroom teacher temperament and beliefs will hopefully shift to support praxis that includes *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and Indigenous story work Circle pedagogical approaches thus garnering support and involvement in collaborative and authentic relationships with Aboriginal community resource people and Elders.

Exosystem Level

The exosystem exerts a uni-directional influence on students and classroom teacher as it represents the larger social system of events, decisions, and policies. Federal and provincial mandates act on the mesosystem and microsystem. The displacement of Indigenous people in Canada and colonization processes and Treaties have separated First Nation peoples from Canadian society. Displacement of Indigenous people from *Aki* to First Nations has created the situation where Aboriginal people are dispossessed from the privately owned *Aki*. The reality of

the legacy of the residential schools means that Aboriginal students and their families are suffering from loss of Indigenous language, culture and traditions that support healthy and balanced relationships and they are dis-connected from community and relationship with traditional Elders.

This case study examines the impact on one classroom and the response of a small group of students and teachers. Thinking, feeling, and experiences have transformed the micro- and macrosystem levels. Immediate impacts on the exosystem are minimal as the power of federal and provincial entities and policies are oppressive. Change requires a series of events and decisions over a long period of time by an ever-increasing number of people to realize positive societal transformation.

Macrosystem Level

This is the broad social context and is also known as the culture of the school. Patterns of beliefs and values, lifestyles, opportunities, and customs are relevant for consideration. In this particular school where the case study research is conducted, French immersion programs are offered as well as Ojibway language classes open to all students. Aboriginal community artists (*Ontario Arts Council Artists in the Classroom* program) and Aboriginal dancers and singers (annual mini-powwow) have been engaged in the school for the past few years. This indicates a receptive and respectful atmosphere and climate for Aboriginal education to flourish.

The Canadian consciousness is raised regarding Aboriginal peoples and government policies and programs are developing to support improvements in the economic and social reality for Aboriginal people in Canada. The school community is representative of an urban, lower socioeconomic status context with twenty percent of the enrolled student population identifying as First Nation, Métis and/or Inuit. The economic culture of the school community and limited

provincial First Nation Métis and Inuit program funding means that the school yard is an important and relevant resource for learning about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. The 'school yard as classroom' supports biophilia without the associated costs of traveling to a natural green space. This construct represents *Aki* as "The Earth Teaching Lodge" which facilitated student experience of Indigenous ways of knowing our reality and *Anishinaabe* ways of coming to know in relationship with the locale. This context is readily accessible in most urban school settings.

The availability of community resource people and Elders who are knowledgeable about Indigenous ways of being and doing has the potential to meet the needs presented in the *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). There are opportunities for the school to collaborate with local agencies, institutions and programs that currently utilize community Elders. This would allow the expertise of Indigenous keepers of the language and traditional knowledge holders to expand their circles of influence beyond the specific settings of their employment and family-community roles. Classroom teachers who are not already in-relationship with local Elders will benefit from connecting with Elders employed and involved in the urban Aboriginal community as an initial starting point. Through the commitment to developing relationship with Elders and gained experiences as they engage in and support community activities with the Elders outside of the school community, teachers will come to see collaboration as beneficial. Teachers will feel more comfortable as they increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous ways of Being and doing Aboriginal education. This may further reinforce the benefits of seeking wisdom and advice from Indigenous knowledge keepers. This is a necessary process. Developing collaborative relationships with community

agencies, institutions, and programs to access Aboriginal community resource people and Elders can serve to advance teachers as allies.

Parental engagement is customary within this particular school culture and this is conducive to educational transformation. Aboriginal parents and community members have a long history of hurt and distrust regarding formal education. Aboriginal parents and community members have opportunity to participate in the school's annual mini powwow while the Ojibway Language program provides a segue for Aboriginal parental engagement. Invitation of Aboriginal community resource people and Elders can increase opportunity for Aboriginal education learning activities and increase the presence of Aboriginal peoples in the schools. This could have a bi-directional impact by increasing parents' interest to engage with their children at the school. As Aboriginal parents participate, their capacity to be acknowledged as knowledgeable and helpful resource people can be realized and celebrated.

The Chronosystem

Naturalizing IK [Indigenous Knowledge] can begin to neutralize racism, colonialism, and assumptions of the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples.

(Little Bear, 2009, p. 24)

The chronosystem is a time-based dimension that is worthy of consideration in the discussion of this case study and future implications. The case study and research project represent a short-term exploration of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy in one classroom. The chronosystem extends to a long-term time dimension for consideration of the student's lifespan.

The socio-historical time dimension in which the student is living is examined within the macro system, however, day-to-day and year-to-year development of Aboriginal education supports the transformation of education and Canadian society. As teachers in the case study school work with Elders and develop their role as allies, and as teacher training programs develop teacher candidates' knowledge of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and experience with *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy, new teachers will arrive at the school who are allies and are involved in the process with established relationships with Aboriginal community resource people and Elders. Curricular choices will be readily made that facilitate Aboriginal education for all students and integration within all subject areas. Since this case study school is one of the oldest schools in the district, it has a very well-established school community. This means that transition issues such as those experienced by a new school establishing connections with the community surrounding the school are not factors.

Consideration of the anticipated roles of the individual students who participated in this case study offers a positive visioning exercise consistent with an Indigenous ideology that what we do now impacts the next seven generations. The individual students' appreciation for other cultural worldviews has grown and the microsystem pattern of learning activities within an *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy, peer and teacher roles and interpersonal relationships in the classroom community is inclusive of relationship with Aboriginal people (visiting grandmother and Aboriginal classmates). The students are likely to resist bullying and racism towards Aboriginal people and may themselves develop as allies. This research has been influential towards transformation in expectations, opinions, and values. Students who experience Indigenous pedagogy and understand *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge are potential innovators in future through their roles and influence in societal systems. Their

future roles and influence within their families and communities has the potential to change federal and provincial mandates. Case study students' circles of influence in future employment and family-community relationships offers a sense of acknowledgment that this case study can have far-reaching positive impacts on educational transformation and societal change.

Educational transformation takes time. Closing of the academic achievement gap for Aboriginal students will continue to face mitigating factors of colonization, marginalization, and poverty among other exosystem factors. This being said, as Aboriginal education gains momentum, aspects of Indigenous knowledge such as *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and ways of learning including Indigenous storywork pedagogy will become part of the change process. Ecological systems theory shows a framework for the dynamic and non-linear processes of change at work. Johnson (2008) applied systems theory to examine educational teaching and learning and student outcomes in consideration of school characteristics and the ecological systems or environment surrounding the school (p. 5). This thesis supports consideration of systems theory in Aboriginal education contexts. As more families and school communities become engaged in the developmental process of Aboriginal teaching and learning, student outcomes and Aboriginal student achievement will increase in concert with the school environment and ecological systems within and surrounding the school.

Research to investigate Aboriginal education can take a field-theoretical approach to examine more fully the interaction of processes, people, and contexts. Over time the identification of aspects of Indigenous ways of knowing and Being that are conducive to a respectful and multi-logical school context will occur and effective program approaches will be created. Indigenous student academic achievement success will be more readily apparent

through quantitative evaluation of Aboriginal student academic success in future when Aboriginal education is implemented widely and consistently.

Trust. Sharing of my Grandmother Teaching Bundle demonstrated trust towards the students and storywork Circle context. Students benefited from the experience of being given opportunity to handle *Mishomis* as well as the beautiful Medicine Circle cloth and cloth mat that I had hand sewn with great care and consideration. Respect is learned by example.

When AL spoke about her decision to bring her special heirloom Rock from home to show her peers, it showed her awareness that the students had reciprocated trust in the Circle and this made her feel that she can trust them. Such a decision indicates a positive sense of classroom community that was evident in the storywork.

Relationship. During the first week of the research project, the role in the school as researcher was acknowledged and the relationship with the school was extended. The school principal invited me to facilitate six short workshops for classes and to participate in the mini-Powwow during the school Aboriginal Culture Day. This opportunity contributed to me (the researcher) being storied into the school context and contributed to a developing relationship. This demonstrated the “inclusive possibility” of bringing *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy into one classroom. This case study research created a wider impact extending from the micro-context outwards to the meso-system linkages between microsystems of the classroom, school, administration, and school community.

Listening. Indigenous pedagogy and philosophy in the school presents an enriched and engaging pedagogy. All of the case study students and the classroom teacher listened attentively, and contributed to the knowledge creation process in their own way.

The *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy was inclusive of a non-Aboriginal classroom teacher. Participants embody diverse learning styles, gifts, and abilities. This dissertation supports conversations among educational leaders and teachers to move from what we currently ‘know’ and ‘do’ within the institution of education towards engagement in discourse about ‘what is known in the research’ through examination of research case study and narrative. The case study does not demonstrate a linear model or cause-effect outcome of Indigenous pedagogy and philosophy in the school, but serves to stimulate praxis – the process of educator action and reflection which is the source of transformation. The classroom teacher’s responses to the Indigenous storywork Circle process contribute to valuing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing in school in support of educational transformation.

Students display their thinking about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in drawings, writing, and stories. They noticed the following elements:

1. Representations of Grandmother's Teaching Bundle symbolized in student drawings and *Anishinaabemowin* labels (objects, details, actions, and printed words)
2. Medicine Circle (concepts represented within the four quadrants - colours included yellow, red, black, white), cardinal directions (east, south, west, north), temporal concepts (sun rise, sun set), location of things and proximity to Place
3. *Mishomis* (Grandfather rock)
4. *Odehwegan* (hand drum) and drum stick
5. *Nibi* drinking water and copper water vessel
6. *Asemaa/tobacco*, and
7. Candle (fire).

Analysis of data from student representations in drawings, writing (sentences and lists) and student talk/stories show a rich embodiment of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge topics. Coding of topics and principles reveal the following:

1. Self (at centre of Circle, cold wind, cold body temperature, warm sun, hot body temperature, water in the body)
2. *Shkagamik-kwe* (Mother Earth)
3. *Aki*
4. Relationality - Relational Wheel
5. Conservation - ecological conservation and choice (hunting and taking only what is needed, harvesting only large fish)
6. Breath (sharing our breath with the trees - we exhale carbon dioxide and the trees breathe this in and exhale oxygen for us)
7. Air (clouds, clouds are our friends, clouds moving, bird in flight, leaves falling)
8. Wind (grass moving in wind, wind pushing sideways, leaves moving in the wind)
9. Voice (laughing, whispering, baby crying, children's voices, children screaming and yelling, children's dialogue)
10. Song (singing; opera singing; *Nibi* [water] song in English and *Anishinaabemowin* languages)
11. Plant life (trees, tree, grass, flowers, leaves falling)
12. Food (strawberries make us well)
13. Animal life (chipmunk, squirrel, robin, bird, insects, insect eating, wings flapping, crow, birds chirping, squirrel jumping off a tree, being bitten by a mosquito)
14. Family (parents, brothers and sisters, the Earth is Mother)

15. Ancestors/sensing the unseen (clouds communicating, Mother Earth communicating, tingling energy from Mother Earth, spirits, whispers)
16. People (kicking sand, pulling grass, pencil scratching on paper, footsteps)
17. Belonging (feeling a part of something)
18. Honesty (tell the truth, from the heart)
19. Respect (toward animals)
20. Love
21. Gratitude (to Mother Earth for life, appreciation for brothers and family)
22. Choice/volition and agency
23. Silence (hearing myself think)
24. Peace (peace and quiet)

Students acquired new understanding of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge through a pedagogy that led to an embodiment of knowledge by: thinking; intuitive reflecting; experiencing and doing; feeling and relating. A wholistic learning experience that was inclusive and respectful of all students was documented in this case study. The way that each student responded in the story Circles was witnessed by every participant because of the nature of the seating. The Circle accommodates seeing and hearing each other. Each person is an important part of the whole. The storywork Circle pedagogy was new for the students because they had been accustomed to sitting beside the same peer each day in the classroom. They were not used to seeing all of the other students because their desks were configured in rows in the classroom.

This case study research has challenged, extended, and refined current ideas, concepts, and practices in one classroom. A transformative pedagogy is anchored in the specifics of this particular single case and reveals the classroom teacher's attitudes and beliefs as well as the

students' assertions regarding *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. A student-centered perspective in the classroom has acknowledged student voice, feelings, and thoughts. The child as agent of influence in the transformation of the linear well-defined classroom space to an expansive process-oriented place is central.

Inclusion. Attention to educational systems theory in this case study emphasizes the challenges of implementing an Indigenous pedagogy. This is in contrast with current political-social practices of teaching Aboriginal perspectives in the public schools throughout the province through discrete, *content-focussed* initiatives (integration of materials that reflect First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives throughout the Ontario curriculum). This research has created interest within the school community and district to honour Indigenous pedagogy incorporating the oral tradition with a knowledgeable Aboriginal community member as a *process* for change. The presentation of an alternate and supportive means of implementation for the *First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* in elementary and secondary public schools can also inform the process in post secondary education. Institutions such as Colleges and Universities are working to implement the *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2011).

Change. The negative affects of institutional racism are counterproductive to Aboriginal education and impede movement toward a just and inclusive Canadian society. Today, formal education bodies today are mandated to ensure Aboriginal representation on Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities boards, councils, and advisory committees (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007b; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2011). Focussed support for teacher training and professional development is

underway with financial allocations and provincial initiatives (Ontario College of Teachers, faculties of education, school district professional learning initiatives). The education system based on Western-European epistemology and ontology supports the practice of hiring an Aboriginal person and formally naming them as 'Elder'. This is problematic since being Indigenous and acquiring a position in an educational institution does not guarantee an awareness/supporting of Indigenous Knowledge systems. Once an Aboriginal person is given the official label as 'Elder", the person is sometimes elevated with the status of being an expert in the system. Within the Aboriginal cultural context, individuals are mentored by a knowledgeable person who has expertise within a particular context for a number of years. The mentor ascertains when, if ever, the person has the right to teach others within the community role of Elder. The community roles, responsibilities and knowledge that an Elder assumes are conducive to specific areas of knowledge. Some Elders are keepers of *Anishinaabemowin* and some of these Elders are gifted with the ability to interpret dreams, identify a person's *Anishinaabe* name and/or personal colours. Some Elders are counsellors or traditional medicine practitioners. Other Elders may be skilled practitioners in harvesting and relationship with *Aki*, or great orators and historical story or legend-tellers. There are Elders who are expert at preserving and preparing foods, creating beautiful or functional carved items, dancing or drumming/singing, making regalia, drums, or hand-drums and drum-sticks. The specialization of skills for Elders is vast and varied.

When an institution officially recognizes a community member as an Elder and relies on them to know about and provide advice and leadership regarding all things *Anishinaabewin*, it is counter-productive and leads to de-contextualization of knowledge and gifts. Additionally, the

Elder is asked to work outside of protocol expertise for getting things done in a good way within the complicated and messy process of Aboriginal education.

The strategic directions of sustaining engagement with Aboriginal peoples and communities and building postsecondary systems' capacity can be supported by an approach similar to this case study model. The practice of authentic engagement of Aboriginal Elders and Keepers of the Language as teachers utilizing Indigenous pedagogy in the institution and the establishment and ongoing development of relationships, will demonstrate policy performance measures including receptivity to and respect for Aboriginal knowledge systems. The opportunity to transform spaces within postsecondary institutions through Indigenous pedagogy and Aboriginal Elders and Keepers of the Language *as teachers* is responsive policy implementation that meets the needs, identities and programming reflective of Aboriginal histories, identities, world views, values, and cultures.

Aboriginal student success. Significant impacts on the student learning journey were elicited by the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy through listening, writing, drawing, talking, stories, and shared experience. First Nation students in particular experienced a learning environment aligned with their personal experience and cultural background. Their sense of identity and pride was supported, and for some, self-identification within their peer-group was enhanced. These are supportive factors for school engagement and academic success of the Aboriginal student participants. Aboriginal students received respect from peers who appreciated the Indigenous storywork pedagogical experience and Circle process. The sense of the classroom as a respectful, kind and inclusive community supports the potential outcome of reducing bullying as Indigenous student ways of being are understood and valued.

Inclusivity, relationships, and responsibility to the environment. The description of this classroom case study relates to, and disrupts larger societal structures. All students were included in the Indigenous pedagogical process and learning about *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and students expressed their thinking in a variety of ways according to their interests and gifts. Demonstrations of respect for each other and nature/*Aki* and biophilia (the Love of nature), kindness towards each other and gentleness with *Mishomis*, the establishment of new relationships with Aboriginal people (Teacher with Aboriginal community member, students with each other through sharing feelings, stories, and thoughts) showed good relationships. The student's coming to know more about the Self and relationship with each other and *Aki* will carry forward and impact other societal systems including responsible ecological behaviour.

Connection to and respect for *Shkagamik-kwe* and *Aki* can be seen as an emancipatory vehicle for building relationships and inclusion of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in society. Teachers and students increased their understanding of *Anishinaabe* world view perspectives through the storywork Circle pedagogy and *Anishinaabemowin*. Appreciation for a different way of perceiving the world has been supported and this demonstrates a multi-logical school context that can be expanded to other classrooms and schools. Aboriginal artists, storytellers, movie-makers and Elders are entrusted by the community to pass on this knowledge and are responsive to invitations to create relationships in the schools. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report earlier this year, reconciliation is defined as "...an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (2015a, p. 164).

Implications for Additional Research

Additional case studies can illustrate relationships between Aboriginal community members, Elders and the school. Critical educational theory that is inclusive of Indigenous pedagogy and languages can only be demonstrated by an Indigenous teacher, Aboriginal community resource person, or Elder who is a fluent *Anishinaabemowin* speaker and carries and lives by traditional Teachings. The presence of such Aboriginal people within the schools is possible as teachers and administrators commit to a process of establishing relationship with the Aboriginal community and engagement in the process of coming to know Aboriginal ways of knowing in Aboriginal education. This might mean a shift in the teacher or administrator's philosophical thinking. This may also imply that a desire to control the process is shifted to a more collaborative inclusive model. Being an ally and believing in the transformative process from within an Indigenous paradigm is necessary to build long-term relationships and avoid appropriation of Indigenous ways and intellectual property rights. Consequently, cultural integrity will be safeguarded as Indigenous people model the oral tradition and relational, process-based ideology of Indigenous pedagogy and thought within the context of the educational institution. Authentic praxis will interrupt the tendency for institutions to limit the role of Elders to being one-time guest speakers or relegating Elders as the conveyors of greetings to open up a meeting. Hearing from an Elder is only a portion of the wholistic process of coming to know. Thinking, intuitive reflecting, experiencing and doing, relating and feeling support the learner to embody Indigenous knowledge and to gain deep understanding of Indigenous perspectives. Authentic praxis emerges where educators and Elders/knowledgeable Aboriginal teachers and community members put the knowledge to use.

Conclusions

This case study contributes to an understanding of transformative possibilities of social spaces for teaching and learning. The educational community was transformed in ways that support student and teacher learning and appreciation for Indigenous perspectives, values, views and practices. The case study illustrated the introduction of an inclusive pedagogy and reflected viable educational principles regarding all student participants. Positive elements of creating space for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the classroom that are particularly important for Aboriginal student success include engagement, awareness of self, and sense of Indigenous identity. The storywork Circle pedagogy within the social context of the classroom meant that students displayed knowledge and this mediated perceptions of one another. Relationships were explored and students saw peers and themselves in new light. Students applied the Teachings to their own lives and being-in-Place experiences developed self-awareness (responses to race, gender, humour, evaluation of artistic and writing skills through comparison, identification of peer helpers/leaders). A child-centred research process and student voice was honoured in this research process.

This case study carries "interpretive validity" in reasonable and trustworthy assertions about the local meanings and social dynamics. This means that the researcher's narrative representation of the case study is open to interpretation by the reader. An honouring of transparency regarding the researcher's bias, experiences, expertise and gifts and interpretation of the story as it unfolds includes an explanation of the students' and teacher's context (internal, external, temporal aspects). The researcher's narrative style of perceptions and reflections are shared in first person voice. This thesis offers a glimpse of factors that shape the creation of conceptual space in the classroom for Indigenous Knowledge and the story of this is "given

"away" here with the intention that the details are pivotal for readers to generalize to their world. It is my hope that this dissertation provides provocation of things to notice, reflect upon, and do. The researcher's sensibility in actions and beliefs from the wisdom of experience serves to inform the reader's praxis.

In our conversations and in the case study classroom teacher's sharing during one story Circle, the valuing of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives was illustrated. The teacher also suggested possibilities for integration of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge within academic subjects. The teacher's attitude and increased awareness of student appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being supports the rationale of bringing Elders and knowledgeable Aboriginal community members into the classroom.

This project demonstrates application of an Indigenous research paradigm and Indigenous methodologies as a model for future scholars in education. This approach may be adaptable to other academic fields of study.

Limitations of the Study

There is much to be learned by reflecting on the research process to better understand the present research context. This is a case study of one classroom within a well-defined temporal context and as such, the confidence in transferability of the findings is reduced. The interpretations of this exploratory research are my own and are presented here for the reader who is also interested in understanding how creating a space of possibility for *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and the oral tradition in the classroom is possible.

The challenges of consent to participate. Ethical practice was ensured by obtaining informed consent from the parents of the student participants and from the students themselves. The parent letter and consent form was lengthy and mention was made that if a student disclosed

abuse, it would be reported to the authorities as per school policy. Parent consent was not given for 10 students and 2 of the 10 students were from Indigenous family backgrounds.

Each student was given the opportunity to provide signed consent to participate in the story Circle activity, to have their voice recorded, and/or to have their drawing/writing gathered after each of the Grandmother classroom visits. Two students excluded themselves from all participation and one student consented to participate in the story Circle activity without consenting to have a voice recording or drawing/writing gathered for each classroom visit. A few students did not want to be recorded or to have their drawings/text collected at times over the course of the case study. For the most part, students gave full consent and this may indicate that they were comfortable with participating in the *Anishinaabe* storywork Circle pedagogy. Although the experience was novel, the majority of the students seemed to trust the process and they engaged in the pedagogy and expressed their thinking.

The classroom teacher seemed to be accustomed to directing the students in the classroom to participate and he did not respond favourably when each student was given the option of participating. When two students self-excluded, the teacher attempted to use his authority to change their decision. I asserted the students' autonomy and implemented my ethical responsibilities as the researcher, ensuring that parent consent, parent non-consent, student consent, and student non-consent to be honoured. I was diligent with attending to consent forms during each classroom visit and this may have caused the classroom teacher to feel undermined.

This prompts consideration of an alternate scenario where parental and student consent to participate is not an issue. If the context for the Grandmother visits to the classroom was not one of research, and the visits were invited by the classroom teacher and incorporated into the regular classroom curriculum, parental consent and student consent would not be necessary. This

alternate scenario is possible as school boards implement the *First Nation Métis and Inuit Policy Framework* in Ontario schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). The policy states that schools will strive to...employ instructional methods designed to enhance the learning of all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students... incorporate meaningful...cultural perspectives and activities when planning instruction... implement strategies for developing critical and creative thinking (p. 13)... implement best practices relating to First Nation, Métis and Inuit student success (p. 18)... foster school community projects with appropriate cultural components (p. 19). School boards will strive to: provide First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students with access to programs that focus on Aboriginal cultures and traditions and are delivered by Aboriginal staff (p. 16)... Develop and implement programs and services that are supportive and reflective of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures and languages... Facilitate intercultural dialogue throughout school communities (p. 19)...increase involvement of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents, Elders, and other community resources (p. 20).

All public schools in Ontario can invite Aboriginal community Elders and community resource people to classrooms and engage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and teachers in Indigenous pedagogy and cultural Teachings.

All individuals involved in the schools are required to submit a criminal reference check for safety reasons. This is not perceived to be a potential deterrent to an Aboriginal community member from engaging in the school where relationships are established and this requirement is explained as school policy for all visitors.

The teacher as learner. The classroom teacher in this case study seemed to be busy multi-tasking and had no time to do anything in depth. For example, our final interview was

completed in his classroom while the students did math seatwork, rather than during one of his double blocks of time for teacher preparation. It was late in the school year and he was busy with report cards and other responsibilities of teaching. I thought about the classroom teacher's absence of voice during the story Circles with the students and realized that his absence of voice is a squirmy place indeed. *I noted that his absence of voice in the Circle is an important statement of his engagement and modelling. I wondered if a classroom teacher occupies a place of power in the classroom with authority on knowledge and if this made it extremely difficult for him to participate as an equal within the Circle? Is it that the institution of the formal education system is not ready for Indigenous pedagogy which has no power hierarchy in the teacher-student relationship?"*

Family and community involvement. The case study methodology and research paradigm did not include a participatory role for the students' parents and the school community. This is a limitation. Exploration of student-parent/family reactions and dialogue could perhaps have served to inform key understandings of the impact of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and an Indigenous storywork pedagogy. Family stories and an exploration of relationship to *Aki* in the community and First Nation homeland would have broadened the data and provided information useful to educational praxis.

The classroom teacher and students could have been approached prior to commencement of the Grandmother classroom visits to understand student background knowledge, interests and to plan for the incorporation of community resource people and family members. This might have had the potential to create more momentum for ongoing Aboriginal education in this school.

Transfer of *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge to academic subjects was not demonstrated in this case study although the classroom teacher did perceive possibilities in science and environmental education. In order for this to occur, the classroom teacher would bring understanding and valuing of Indigenous philosophy into all subject areas, by demonstrating how Western, academic subject thought processes are exemplified in *Anishinaabe* culture as well as within the larger society. Inserting *Anishinaabe* perspectives into academic subject matter is not enough however. A teacher who facilitates as a cultural broker, moving students to explore the cultural borders and to move back and forth requires cultural acumen. It is possible that an Indigenous teacher may possess the knowledge and skill for cultural brokerage in the classroom, however most teachers (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) would benefit from engaging in relationship with knowledgeable Elders and Aboriginal community resource people and developing a role as an ally to the process of educational transformation.

A limitation of this study is that the community where the school is located was not directly involved. Because of strict guidelines with the research ethics mandate for privacy and anonymity of the case study participants and school, the connection to the community at large was stymied. Only the student participants and their family members, the case study classroom teacher, school principal, and school board research committee were given an opportunity to learn about outcomes of the case study in a presentation at the school.

Application of the oral tradition and *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge in the school is optional within the current provincial education policy and Aboriginal perspectives framework within this school board. Should Elder Teachings and Aboriginal community member involvement occur within the school context as education for all, privacy issues would not circumvent casting a wider school community and neighbourhood net.

Concluding Reflections

Understandings and reflections from Teaching stories, story Circles, and teacher discussions represented new knowledge acquisition and opportunity for personal meaning-making. Immediate new understandings have been stimulated and case study participants may come to understand in new ways as they reflect on their experience in the storywork Circle pedagogy. Cultural competency has been supported and this will suit participants to have ongoing and additional relationships with Indigenous people and First Nation students.

I have honoured the oral tradition and my responsibility as a teacher to perpetuate *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge. Additionally this work serves as a model in how to build bridges between Canadians and First Nations people by facilitating understanding and experience for young students in an urban public school. The students who journeyed with me on this case study are now, hopefully, better equipped with *Anishinaabe* ecological relational knowledge and a life-long process of learning. As I have been storied into the school and classroom contexts, I have influenced the attitudes and beliefs of educators, students, and their families. This research project has provided me with opportunity for self-reflection and action – putting the new understandings into my sacred bundle. I acknowledge and show gratitude to *Shkagamik-kwe* and *Aki* for our relationship and the nurturing they have provided in this learning journey. Miigwech.

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Appendix A Part 1 Parent/Guardian Information Letter and Consent Form



Date _____

Title of Project: *Demonstrating Anishinaabe Pedagogy to Invite Ecological Relational Knowledge in the Classroom*

Introduction:

Your child/ward is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sharla Peltier from the PhD Human Studies Program at Laurentian University. Sharla is also employed by the Rainbow District School Board in the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Program. The purpose of this research is to study the Teacher and student responses to lessons about Indigenous ecological relational knowledge in a sharing circle activity.

This letter and consent form, a copy of which will be left with you, is part of the process of informed consent. It explains what the research is about and what your child/ward's participation will involve. If you want to know more, please feel free to ask. It is important that you read this carefully or have me explain it to you so that you understand.

Voluntary and Confidential Participation:

Your child's participation in this study is strictly voluntary. He/she has the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may withdraw your consent for your child to participate at any time and he/she may stop participating without any penalty.

You can choose whether your child/ward is to be in this study or not. If your child/ward volunteers to be in this study, s/he may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions or add to discussions if he/she wishes and still remain in the study. S/he may decline from having transcripts of shared stories and art and written work included in the research report and still remain in the study.

Confidentiality of all research records will be strictly followed, and research participants will be issued pseudonyms to assure anonymity throughout this project.

Researcher's Role:

I will visit your child's classroom for one hour on five occasions over the course of a two-week period in June 2015. Classroom visits will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to the classroom Teacher. During the first class visit, I will introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visits. On each class visit day, your child will be given an opportunity to sign a consent form to voluntarily participate. Your child's classroom Teacher will arrange an alternate activity for your child if he/she does not consent to participate in my circle activity that day. I will be sharing a teaching story and conducting and facilitating sharing circles with the class inside the classroom and outside in the school yard.

Your Child's Role:

Participation in this study will involve a total of five hours of your child's time. If you consent for your child to be in this study, please complete this consent form (you will receive a copy of this form for your own records). If you agree, your child may be asked to participate in five, one-hour teaching story and sharing circle visits that will occur over a two-week period during the month of June 2015. Your child will:

- Listen to a teaching story about our connection and relationship with the Earth and each other
- Join storytelling circles with other students from your child's class. Your child will be asked to listen to the stories told by other children and to share their own stories about the teaching story. Your child's stories will be audio taped so that the researcher can later listen to the stories and write them down.
- At the storytelling circles, your child will be invited to take a turn by telling a story and will not be forced to participate or to tell a story of a prescribed length. They will not be subjected to any judgment from listeners regarding the value or acceptance of their story.
- Show their thinking about the lessons by creating a drawing, song, story, art, writing, or poetry that will be collected for analysis in the research project

Potential Risks and Benefits To Participants:

There are no known risks associated with your child's participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. I will make sure that your child is treated with respect for sharing his/her knowledge and I will open each story circle by reminding the students that the storytelling circle is intended as a safe environment where students may express their thoughts freely without criticism or judgement from others. Your child's participation in this study will help provide information to educators that will enhance the engagement of students in programming that includes Aboriginal-relevant storytelling activities that will support academic success. Your child will have fun and have a positive experience where his/her stories are listened to and acknowledged and he/she will enjoy listening to the stories from their peers. Your child will benefit from feeling that they belong in their classroom peer-group and that their thoughts are valued.

The Research Report:

As the researcher, I will provide a copy of the final written report to the Rainbow District School Board, Research Committee c/o Lesleigh Dye. In the Fall/Winter 2015 you and your child will be invited to a session at the school where I will present the results of the research project to the students and classroom Teacher involved in this study. In December, 2015, a copy of the research report will be provided to PhD Human Studies Program at Laurentian University.

Confidentiality Process:

Any information obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with your child/ward, will remain confidential. This is in exception to information that I am obligated to provide under the Child and Family Services Act regarding a child's disclosure of abuse, should this occur during this research project.

Your child's work and story may be reported in the research project and no information will accompany the material that can identify your child or others. Your child's privacy and information regarding his/her identity will be protected by the researcher. Your child's name, age, grade and contact information will be kept in a file with the signed consent form to participate in the research and the file will be locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office.

A research assistant will also listen to the audio recordings of your child's stories to help make accurate research records and the research assistant will not be told of the identity of your child. Your child's first name and age will be recorded on transcripts of his/her stories but only the researcher and research assistant will have access to this identifying information. The audio recordings of your child's stories will be will remain in my custody and will be kept in a secure location. All audio files will be kept for editing purposes in a secure computer. All audio recordings will be erased/destroyed at the end of this research study.

The written transcripts of stories with identifying information (your child's first name and age, date of story) will be kept in a secure file cabinet in my office for two years after the research project. At that time, the written records will be destroyed. This will allow time after this research project to create a publication for future use with teachers and scholars. No personal information regarding your child will be released to any party.

The publication will not include identifying information of your child or the name of the school.

Contact Information:

This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Rainbow District School Board Research Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Lesleigh Dye, Superintendent of Schools, Rainbow District School Board, telephone: 705-674-3171, Extension 7235, email: dyel@rainbowschools.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your child/ward's rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Officer, Laurentian University Research Office, telephone: 705-675-1151 ext 3213, 2436 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030 or email ethics@laurentian.ca

If you have additional questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may contact me at any time at: Speltier2@rainbowschools.ca

Please return these forms no later than June 1, 2015 in the enclosed envelope to your child's classroom Teacher, Attn: Sharla Peltier

Sincerely,

Sharla Peltier,
PhD Candidate, Laurentian University

Parental/Guardian Informed Consent to Participate in Research

As Parent/Legal Guardian of the Research Subject, I understand the information provided for the study "Demonstrating Anishinaabe Pedagogy to Invite Ecological Relational Knowledge in the Classroom" and described in the participant information letter. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Yes _____ No _____ I agree to have my child/ward _____
participate in this study. _____ (Child's name)

Yes _____ No _____ I agree to have my child/ward audio taped.

Yes _____ No _____ I agree that my child/ward's circle work can be collected by
the researcher

Yes _____ No _____ I have been given a copy of this form.

_____ (Parent/Guardian Name – Print)

_____ (Parent/Guardian Signature)

_____ (Date)

Thank you!/ Miigwech!

Appendix A Part 2: Classroom Teacher Consent

(Teacher Participant Name – Print)

(Signature)

(Date)

If you agree to participate, please provide the following information:

E-Mail Address _____ Phone Number(s) _____

Thank you!/ Miigwech!

Appendix A Part 3: Child Participant Consent Form



Laurentian University
Université Laurentienne

June 2015

Dear Student,

I am a student as well and am attending Laurentian University. I want to learn what children think about Anishinaabe stories and how they learn about their relationship to Mother Earth and each other.

I would like you and your classmates to listen to my story today and participate in a sharing circle together. You will be asked to listen and if you like, you can answer the question: "What did you notice about my story?". You can draw and write things down about the story too and share these if you wish.

You can decide if you want to participate today or not:

You don't have to participate, it is up to you. You can withdraw at any time. Your teacher and classmates will be with us at all times.

Confidentiality:

Your last name will not be used when I write down your story. Your last name will not be used on your drawings and writing that I collect for the research.

Thank you,

Sharla Peltier

If you want to participate today, please check off what you agree to do. Sign below and print today's date.

I agree to participate in the story circle activity

I agree that a voice recording of me talking can be made by the researcher

I agree that my drawing and writing from today can be collected by the researcher

Student Name

Date

Appendix B: *Anishinaabe* Ecological Relational Teaching Story Concepts

1. Medicine Wheel philosophy

- inner space reflection and volitional balance of spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects;
- four colours and cardinal directions (yellow-east; south-yellow; black-west; white-north)

2. Relationship and Interconnections of

- Self to Family, Community, Nation, and Universe
- Sky World - movement of sun, clouds, moon (*Waabgonii Giizis* - Blooming Moon/June)
- *Shkagamik-kwe (Aki)* - plants (*Odewiminan*), animals, *Nibi* (water), air, fire (Universal Water Song, Day, nd.)
- *Gaaniniigaanijek* (Ancestors)
- Harmony and reciprocity

3. Individual and Collective presence in the Circle

- learning/teaching
- listening
- respect

Appendix C Story Circle Protocol

In this research, a teaching story will be presented by the Aboriginal grandmother/researcher and students will be provided with a clip board and the option of drawing or writing to represent their reflections. The circle participants will be given the option of referring to their written work. The following Circle protocol will be applied to Story Circles.

In a Story Circle, stories shared are accepted as representing the storyteller's "truth" and each participant is instructed to take what they can from each sharing and to leave the rest. Participants will be seated on the floor or on the ground and a "talking stone" (a round, smooth rock) will be introduced with the question: "What did you notice about the Teaching Story?" The protocol will be explained at the beginning of the Story Circle. The participants will be instructed to listen respectfully without judging others, to remember what is shared, and to share openly from the heart. The person holding the stone is the speaker, and when finished, he or she hands the stone over to the person on the left. Thus the circle flows in a clock-wise direction, following the route of the sun as perceived by Anishinaabek people, and extending from the heart on their left side. Story Circle participants have the option of passing it over to the next person without sharing and usually the stone comes around the circle twice to allow participants to reflect and respond to what others have shared. The passing of the stone to the next person signals that the person is finished their turn at sharing.

In this case study research, the students, researcher and classroom teacher will participate in five Sharing Circles. The Circles will be recorded with a digital audio recorder and the participants will be reminded to ask that the recorder be turned off whenever they do not wish their words to be represented outside of the circle. This is in keeping with the traditional protocol of circles where some things are meant to remain within the circle.

This Aboriginal Story Circle methodology will provide a safe and respectful place in the classroom for listening, thinking, and reflecting on what is shared with the option of speaking when the stone makes its way around the circle to each participant. The process honours coming to know in inner ways as well as through oral expression.

Appendix D Part 1: Teacher Initial Interview Questions

Research Project Title: Demonstrating Anishinaabe Pedagogy to Invite Ecological Relational Knowledge in the Classroom

Broad Research Question: What is Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge and what principles and concepts of Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge are made visible in a public school classroom?

(Name), I would like to have an opportunity to speak with you about these questions. This information is to help me get to know you as a teacher and to understand a bit about your students and classroom. This information will be written in my dissertation in a way to provide context for the reader. I value your time and invite you to answer as much as you can when we meet for an “interview” and discussion.

Miigwech, Sharla

This section provides me with information about your background and teaching style.

Name: _____

Gender: Male

Education: Undergraduate Degree (University and time) _____

Division	Teachable
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Graduate Degree (University and time)

Other qualifications and memberships?

1. What are your main perceptions of children and youth?
2. What is your teaching philosophy?
3. How is story a part of your classroom?
4. How would you describe your cultural background?
5. Tell me a little about your home town?

This section explores your understanding of Aboriginal (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) content and learners. This is in no way meant to evaluate your expertise. I would like to know how comfortable/involved you are with the topic as we begin this project.

1. Can you tell me about your experience in First Nation communities or settings?
2. What is your understanding about Aboriginal community?
3. How do you feel about this opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture, perspectives and people?
4. How do you feel about this opportunity for your students??
5. How do you feel about teaching Aboriginal content and knowledge?

6. What are your concerns with how you teach about Aboriginal people?
7. What is your experience in researching, developing, teaching, and including Aboriginal content in your classroom?
8. Is there anything that you would like to share about your understanding of Aboriginal values, beliefs, and knowledge?
9. Please describe your knowledge of ways to teach Aboriginal perspectives to students .

Appendix D Part 2: Post Research Teacher Interview Questions

POST RESEARCH TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I would like to know how comfortable you are with the topic of "Aboriginal content" Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge as we finish this project.

1. How do you feel about this opportunity for you to learn about Aboriginal culture, perspectives, and people?
 1. How do you feel about this opportunity for your students to learn about Aboriginal culture, perspectives, and people?
 2. How do you feel about teaching Aboriginal content and knowledge?
 3. Do you see new ways to teach about Aboriginal people? Describe any new knowledge you have gained about ways of teaching Aboriginal perspectives to students.
 4. Is there anything that you would like to share about your new understandings of Aboriginal values, beliefs, and knowledge? What have you noted about Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge?
-

Regarding your classroom students....After having the opportunity to observe your students in the Teaching and Story Circle...you may have new perceptions about them.

1. Describe your students' peer relationships? What have you noticed over the course of this project...Dynamics of the social situation-what are their peer to peer relationships like?
2. Describe your students' ways of learning ...dynamics of the learning situation.
3. Describe your students' cultural and experiential background...things that you learned about them..specific behaviours, traits, personal attributes or gifts, specific actions, specific student stories, Social economic status.
4. What do you know about the Aboriginal students in your classroom that you might not have been aware of before?
5. What do you feel your students understand about Aboriginal culture, perspectives and people from participating in this project? ...topics, concepts.
6. Are you aware of any areas of integration to classroom? Did Anishinaabe ecological relational knowledge come up in conversations with peers? During class or a specific subject?
7. Are your students interested in learning about Aboriginal people? How do you know?
8. Comment on any additional impacts personally or for students from participating in this project.