

Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews, and Theories of Power

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to understand Indigenous epistemologies of power from the standpoint of Indigenous participants who are originally from or currently living in the Sudbury and Manitoulin Island areas of Ontario, Canada. Indigenous research methods are privileged throughout, and key aspects of grounded theory are woven in to add support. Comparisons between the Indigenous epistemological concept of power and the Western theories of power of mainstream academia are made, as are relevant criticisms of Western epistemology.

Fifteen Indigenous participants were interviewed. The central category that arose from the data is, relationships. This central category ties the other main categories together which are: language, sacred sources of power, Indigenous women, abuse of power, and knowledge. The findings indicate that there are many forms and manifestations of power which are related to each other. The source of power is in the interrelatedness of everyone to everything else that is known and unknown. Humility, harmony and balanced relationships produce the healthiest and most magnificent manifestations of power.

The paper argues that understanding more about epistemologies of power will help illuminate a pathway by which Indigenous peoples and Canadians of settler ancestry can better understand one another, creating the shift in these relationships that is required in order to gather large-scale support for reconciliation and for ethical distribution of power resources in Canada.

Keywords:

Power, Indigenous epistemology, Indigenous methodologies, theories of power, Indigenous power, Indigenous philosophy, Indigenous relations.

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Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures.....	x
List of Appendices	xi
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Questions.....	2
1.2 Positionality	3
2 Literature Review.....	5
2.1 On Epistemology	5
2.2 Theories of Power.....	8
3 Methodology	32
3.1 Research Methods.....	33
3.2 Reflexivity and Relationality	37
3.3 Relationality.....	38
3.4 Community Partner.....	40
3.5 Grounded Theory	40
4 Findings.....	48
4.1 Sacred Power Sources.....	49
4.2 Abuse of Power.....	56
4.3 Indigenous Women	62
4.4 Language.....	73
4.5 Knowledge	82
4.6 Relationships and Community Power.....	101
5 Analysis.....	103

6 Conclusion	110
References.....	112
Curriculum Vitae	123

List of Tables

Table 1: List of key concepts separated from the data and presented in “power is” format. 104

List of Figures

Figure A: Decolonization Research Framework.....	36
Figure B: Representing and Visualizing the Data.....	47
Figure C: Binary Logic.....	79
Figure D: Nonbinary Logic.....	80
Figure E: Safe space for respectful convergence of truths.....	108

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Information and Consent Form	118
Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	120
Appendix C: List of Community Resources.....	121
Appendix D: List of Manitoulin Community Resources.....	122

1 Introduction

The topic of power is informed by vast literature that reaches back to the beginnings of Western philosophy. The conceptions that result are based on a Western worldview that does not incorporate cultural differences. Adding Indigenous epistemologies to the academic conversation about power can provide the insights needed to develop new strategies toward achieving a more equal distribution of power and encourage successful Indigenous-settler relations.

This study privileges the use of Indigenous research methods throughout. Key aspects of grounded theory are woven in to add support to the research framework. The purpose is to understand Indigenous epistemologies of power from Indigenous participants who are originally from, or currently living in, the Sudbury and Manitoulin Island areas of Northeastern Ontario, Canada.

This study is informed by the meaning of “power” as a phenomenon from the perspective of fifteen Indigenous participants. The data is first presented in a holistic style through story, then reduced to an epistemological statement about what the concept of power means to each of the fifteen Indigenous respondents. Comparisons between the Indigenous epistemological concept of power and the Western theories of power of mainstream academia are made, as are relevant criticisms of Western epistemology.

The value of the research is demonstrated by its applicability to the issue of problematic relations between Indigenous people and Canadians of settler ancestry. The journey toward reconciliation is obstructed by the complexity of the issues. Using philosophy and epistemology, this research aims to address the complexity and illuminate a pathway to reconciliation.

1.1 Research Questions

While designing the research question and sub-questions, I decided to stay away from asking the cause-and-effect questions, such as: “What are the causes of power?” Or “What are the effects of power?” However, those ideas will be addressed, and are probably impossible to eliminate, while discussing power. Fortunately, grounded theory allows for the examination of processes using a variety of “how” or “what” questions. I can therefore focus on: “What is power from an Indigenous epistemological view?”

Once the question is converted into ordinary language, all that I am really asking is: “what is power” or “what does this concept ‘power’ mean to you?” Sometimes participants can talk at length and provide a full interview of their response, contributing data without being asked any further questions. Sometimes participants are not quite sure what I mean. Therefore, I developed an interview guide (Appendix B) that asks for the answer to the main question, but also includes secondary questions that can prompt the participant to move their thinking into different areas and flesh out a more detailed response. The sub-questions, or prompts, include: (a) Who has power? (b) Do you have power? (c) Who doesn’t have power? (d) How do power dynamics affect or influence you? (e) How does power work in our society? (f) What makes a person powerful? Every participant was asked to answer the main question, but the sub-questions were asked only if the prompts were found useful during the interview.

Questions about epistemology and knowledge can be divided into four main, though overlapping, groups; concerning its nature, its types, what is known, and its origin (Proudfoot & Lacey, 2010, p. 118). The interview guide and the style of questioning that I used during the data collection phase successfully produced much Indigenous knowledge about the nature of power,

types of power, what is known by Indigenous people about power, and where that power comes from.

1.2 Positionality

Introducing oneself and the position from which one is speaking is an important pedagogical practice among many Indigenous groups (G. H. Smith & Smith, 2019, p. 22). This practice is becoming more common elsewhere in academia. As a researcher, it is recommended that I be conscious of, and disclose, values, biases, and experiences that I bring to this research study, so that readers can understand the context from which I come (Creswell, 2013 p. 216). As an Indigenous researcher, it is recommended that I remain mindful of where I speak from and how I am speaking, because deconstructing one's own positioning all the time is an important element of an Indigenous approach to research (G. H. Smith & Smith, 2019, p. 22).

I am Anishinaabe and a member of Dokis First Nation, although my ancestry is mixed. My father's side of the family trace their ancestry to Ireland. I was born in Kingston, Ontario, but our family relocated to British Columbia after the birth of my sister. I attended elementary school in Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, but later moved to Vancouver where I attended high school. For the last 17 years, I have been living in Sudbury Ontario. Over this time period, I have had opportunities to learn about the Anishinaabemowin language and about traditional teachings. I believe that I have accumulated important Indigenous knowledge, but I am a beginner on that journey. I am fortunate and grateful to live in an area that is so rich in cultural teachers.

I situate myself within the Indigenous academic community where I am a student working toward a contribution to Indigenous theory, Indigenous research, and Indigenous intellectual

self-determination. I believe that my interest in political philosophy and Indigenous theory can be harnessed to produce a better understanding of power dynamics in contemporary society.

I have applied my Indigenous and Western education to the study of an Indigenous epistemology of power with the intention of contributing to an Indigenous theoretical explanation of power. I have chosen to combine Indigenous research methods and Western grounded theory as a practice of theoretical and cross-cultural dialogue. This approach has been very useful in the way that Indigenous research methods have encouraged my building of long-term, respectful relationships with Indigenous community partners, and has led to the privileging of Indigenous voices and the generous sharing of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom within this work; while grounded theory has provided me with a particular analytic method that has helped me to make sense of what was shared and to present the work in ways that I feel encourages cross-cultural understanding.

Being of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry in my identity and my education, I am more comfortable working with a combination of Indigenous methods and Western methods, as I feel that this integration is a more authentic expression of who I am and how I think.

In this thesis, I use holistic Indigenous methods to present an overall picture, and to explain the concept of power from an Indigenous epistemological point of view. I then switch to Western methods and deconstruct the story, reducing it to its basic structure, so that I can present it thematically and in a manner that encourages dialogue across Indigenous and Western knowledge traditions. Presenting the research in this interrelated way allows for a conversation between what is currently known about power from a Western viewpoint and from an Indigenous viewpoint. My hope is that framing this work in these ways will help others to continue the conversation of our similarities and differences, as well as the many misunderstandings that

underlie the relationship between Indigenous people and people of settler ancestry, while illuminating a pathway to better relations. We must first identify where the misunderstandings lie before we can resolve them respectfully and achieve reconciliation.

Interrelatedness of concepts is an ubiquitous reality when investigating Indigenous epistemological worldviews, and although a thorough effort has been made to keep this paper succinct and well structured, it has not been possible to isolate one single Indigenous concept to individual sections or chapters. Several concepts, such as reflexivity, relationality, and respect are central to the methodology in chapter 3, but they appear again in the findings presented in chapter 4. Although this section describes the position from which I approach the research question, I would like the reader to know that I will be offering more information about my positionality later in the paper, especially as it pertains to the research framework and methodology.

2 Literature Review

2.1 On Epistemology

Stated simply, Canadians of settler ancestry see the world differently than Indigenous people do. Or stated the other way around, Indigenous people see the world differently than settler individuals do. In the words of Indigenous scholar Linda Smith (2000) “We have a different epistemological tradition that frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask, and the solutions we seek” (p. 230).

Epistemology is theory of how we come to know things. It is also called the theory of knowledge (Proudfoot & Lacey, 2010, p. 118). It is enquiry into the nature and grounds of knowledge (Proudfoot & Lacey, 2010, p. 118). Epistemological questions include: What is true and what is

false? (Vidal, 2012, p. 310). What are the sources of knowledge? What can one know? How does one know if something is true? (Chilisa, 2012, p. 21). If you ask these questions to a Western trained scientist, you would get answers that differ from those that you would receive from one of the Anishinaabe Elders who participated in this study. Even the social scientist would prefer to make a statement of truth based on facts that were proven scientifically, or at least she would support whatever statement she makes with the strongest factual evidence she has. Epistemologically speaking, the Western trained scientist's standard of proof is different than the Indigenous Elder's standard of proof. Indigenous Elders will tell you what they know from lived experience and from the knowledge passed to them by their Ancestors. Much of the knowledge that is carried forward is accepted as truth because it has always been known to be true. I argue in this paper that both truths are valid, as are the methodologies that are utilized to arrive at these truths.

It is my experience that Indigenous people talk about epistemology all the time. It is only that Indigenous people do not use the word "epistemology." Often, the word "worldview" is used instead, or the experience of navigating "two worlds" is referenced while discussing epistemological ideas. Every participant of this research commented on contrasting worldviews (for example, patriarchal system vs. matrilineal or matriarchal systems), and the word "worldview" was spoken fifteen times by the participants who were interviewed. Although there are philosophical concepts other than epistemology that make up a worldview, such as ontology (model of being), axiology (theory of values), and praxeology (theory of action) (Vidal, 2012, p. 309), for the purposes of this project, I have narrowed the focus to epistemology. I have asked the participants the epistemological question "what is power?" The epistemological question

invites the respondent to become aware of their worldview, and therefore the answer reflects not only aspects of their epistemology, but also aspects of their worldview.

When compared to the Western theories of power presented in the next section, the information that I received from the Indigenous participants shows a clear division between Indigenous thought and Western thought about the concept of power. This illuminates the many other misunderstandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that relate to the collision of worldviews. Of course, I am not the first to point out that epistemological differences prevent Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people from achieving a full and coherent understanding of one another. For example, one of the first Indigenous scholars, Vine Deloria, taught that if we are to distinguish a boundary between Indigenous and Western thought, then epistemology, or how we know things, is a good place to carve a difference (Waters, 2004a, p. xvii).

This project is an effort to continue talking about epistemological differences and the effects they have on our relationships. It is a contribution to the dialogue that must continue until there is enough understanding in every Canadian household to allow for reconciliation to manifest. This project is an effort to produce an Indigenous epistemological statement that answers the question: “what is power?” In my research on theories of power, I did not find a statement on power that matches the one produced by this research. Therefore, the epistemological statement about power produced by this research is an original contribution to the knowledge about power. The value of this data is demonstrated by its applicability to the issue of problematic relations between the Indigenous population and the settler population. The problem with the concept of reconciliation is that it seems so complex that no one can see a pathway to it. I am using epistemology to demonstrate a pathway to reconciliation.

2.2 Theories of Power

Power is an elusive concept; there are endless ways to think about it. During my research on what is known about power in Western academia, I encountered many similar statements. Peter Digeser observes that the debate over power ranges across political ideologies, methodologies, and disciplines (Digeser, 1992, p. 978). Robert A. Dahl remarked that the concept of power is as ancient and ubiquitous as any that social theory can boast (Dahl, 1957, p. 201). Indigenous scholar Taiaiake Alfred recognizes the existence of power in all the elements that make up the universe, and describes how Indigenous philosophies teach us to respect and accommodate that power in all its varied forms (Alfred, 2009, p. 68).

Power is also a broad concept. It is so broad that I have been discouraged from researching it, as it is difficult to draw the boundaries required for a concise thesis. My solution to this problem is to stay within the area of my original inspiration for this paper — the theories of power. While studying political philosophy during my undergraduate training, I became fascinated with theories of power. I was also intrigued by the reactions of others while learning about these theories. I witnessed other students discover that they are inclined to agree with some of the thinking out of which these theories were born. In contrast, I found that I did not discover any affinity for the stories of domination, control, and exploitation that I read in most theories. I am an Indigenous person and I gravitate toward more respectful and balanced models for relations between people. I know that violence and oppression are wrong, and I believe that this knowing is stored in my DNA. Experiences such as this inspire me to ask questions like, “why is it that my feelings about power are so different from the other students” and “why are we not learning about an Indigenous theory of power?”

The literature produced by the power debate is too voluminous to present in any comprehensive manner here, and therefore I have restricted this review to an overview of prominent theories of power. The selection is curated to demonstrate how the debate has evolved prior to colonization of the Americas, and after. An examination of power always brings to the surface many related concepts, which have their own clusters of sub-concepts, such as leadership, authority, agency, legitimacy, and sovereignty, to name only a few. It would take a lifetime to address every aspect of the phenomenon of power; therefore, concepts selected for deeper analysis are restricted to prominent themes that emerged from the data analysis.

In this section, I will present selected theories of power that I believe provide a well-rounded overview of the power debate. I start near the beginning of Western academia, in ancient Greece. I then move forward chronologically, theory by theory, noting key landmarks in what is known about power, focusing on Western epistemologies at the beginning of this section, and then shifting to Indigenous epistemology at the end.

Before the beginnings of Judeo-Christian and Muslim civilizations, and before most people understood that the earth revolves around the sun, Western philosophy was born in ancient Greece in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE. Socrates, Plato, and then Aristotle spent much time pondering the philosophical questions of life and society during this time period. The philosophical ideas of these three thinkers have remained influential over the centuries and provide the basis of many theories, including theories of power.

Socrates was born in 469 BCE, and much of what we know about him comes from the writings of his contemporaries, since he did not record his ideas. These contemporaries include Plato, who studied under Socrates, and Aristotle. Socrates was a critic of the democratic policies arising

in Athens, as he was concerned that common citizens lacked the knowledge required to make informed decisions about their best interests. He believed that ordinary citizens should refrain from voting or becoming involved in matters of the state and should instead provide goods and services. We know through Plato's writings that Socrates believed that those who hold the power in society should be virtuous and properly prepared through philosophic education (Brooks, 2006, p. 66).

Plato echoed Socrates' idea that people who exercise power should be endowed with expertise in political governance and philosophy (Brooks, 2006, p. 51). In the *Republic* at 426d, Plato argues that the right to hold power is not conferred by majority approval or by material wealth, but by expertise in statesmanship (Grube, 1992, p. 101). Socrates is the main character in the *Republic*, and through him, Plato defends justice and describes the perfect city, in which democracy is rejected in favour of rule by philosopher kings. Plato's preoccupation with idyllic life in the perfect city reveals his affection for idealism as a philosophical system that underpins his arguments.

Plato's student Aristotle departed from the idealist leanings of his predecessors and took a more practical approach to envisioning the best way for humans to live. Aristotle believed that knowledge is gained through experience, and he is therefore considered a realist and an empiricist (Tweedale, 1988, p. 501). Empiricism is an important aspect of the modern scientific method, which had its beginnings in this time period (Suter, 1939, p. 470). Theories of method became a subject for investigation in the moral and philosophical arguments of Socrates, and the famous Socratic method was first demonstrated in the Socratic dialogues of Plato (McKeon, 1947, p. 7). Building from the teachings of his predecessors and paying careful attention to how they established definitions and justified conclusions, Aristotle worked extensively on doctrines

and theories of method (McKeon, 1947, p. 6). This time period marks the origins of the Western epistemological idea that scientific thought must be systematic.

Now if we remember that for centuries, indeed until the consciousness of the scientific method fully dawned upon Europe with the advent of Galileo, the function of students was to mull over the Aristotelian writings (as, for centuries, the business of the scholars in China was to comment of the Confucian classics) we will not be surprised that Aristotle moulded the western mind. (Suter, 1939, p. 470)

Aristotle described and classified many phenomena, including power and politics. He was fascinated by biology and he worked tirelessly classifying biology the same way he classified the best way to order human society. Aristotle, however, engaged in more than just descriptive writing. In Book II of *Politics*, Aristotle critiques Plato's ideal state, thereby initiating the practice of scholarly debate – an academic tradition that continues in this research paper. In Book III of *Politics*, Aristotle records the various types of government that he has observed, including: monarchy, aristocracy, polity, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. Later in Book III, in a style similar to Socrates and Plato, Aristotle declares that those who are most virtuous have the strongest claim to all rule.

These three philosophers laid the foundation for what has become a longstanding debate about the phenomenon of power, and upon which a range of theories of power are built. Aristotle's typology of regimes was so successful that it ended up being used extensively until the time of Machiavelli, nearly 2000 years later (Clayton, 2004), and is still called upon to this day.

Machiavelli's *The Prince* is notorious for its cruelty and ruthlessness. In its pages, we find images of power as domination and control which is to be exercised over others, and society

constituted through the domination of the weak by the strong (Haugaard & Clegg, 2009, p. 2). Machiavelli's prince appears reasonable to the people, but he knows how to be evil and utilizes that knowledge strategically. For Machiavelli, power is a zero-sum game wherein a win for one player is always a loss for another player (Fraedrich, Ferrell, & Pride, 1989, p. 689). This is to say that one player cannot help another player attain power without suffering a loss, and therefore, one who desires power must achieve it through self-interest at a cost to others. In Chapter XVIII, Machiavelli uses the metaphor of Chiron the Centaur – half-beast and half-man – to explain how a prince must know how to use both natures wisely: “You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force; the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts, but because the first, in many cases is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second” (Machiavelli, 1997, p. 34). Machiavelli's influence has also been enormous, and many successive theories echo Machiavelli's thought, such as those by Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche (Honeycutt, 2018).

Another theory of power appears one hundred years later in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Hobbes contended that humans are by nature unruly, and therefore, discord exists among them. To seek shelter from this state, humans form governments, and do so willingly. This idea forms the basis of Hobbes's social contract theory, which he articulates in detail when he argues that citizens should come together and agree to sacrifice their power (over others) to a central authority in exchange for safety from each other in the state of nature. The Leviathan creature is the metaphor for the central authority that derives its power from the people and controls them. Since the people agree to the terms of the contract, the sovereign's power is derived from the consent of the people, and this concept of power marks the departure from divine right theory

wherein rulers derive their power directly from God(s). Hobbes further argues that the need for this coercive central power arises from the inability of men to rule themselves, and there is, therefore, no justification for resistance. “He that complaineth of injury from his sovereign, complaineth of that whereof he himself is author; and therefore ought not to accuse any man but himself” (Hobbes, 1997, p. 139).

Soon after Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, John Locke continues the debate in his *Two Treatises on Government*. For Hobbes, the sovereign’s right to absolute power beyond challenge is justified by the ability to keep order amongst men, saving them from their natural state of war, wherein they will eventually destroy one another. Locke is also interested in the natural state of man, however, he views men as more reasonable and peaceful than Hobbes’ portrayal.

In Chapter II of the *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke contends that:

To understand political power, right, and derive it from its original, we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature; without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man. A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another. (Mill, 1997, p. 218)

Locke believes that in the state of nature, man possesses basic human rights, and it is the function of government to protect these fundamental rights. For Locke, the people consent to be governed, but the people can also withdraw their consent, overthrow the ruling power, and set up a new government. Therefore, power is essential to the running of a peaceful commonwealth, however, this power over, or force power, must be vigorously checked and controlled (Moseley, 2005). This is Locke’s version of liberalism, wherein constitutionalism, limited government, and

the right to life, liberty, and property prevail (Locke, 1997, p. 242). Locke's liberal philosophy was immensely influential and was embodied in the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 (Dewey, 1963, p. 624).

Another influential thinker in the history of liberalism was John Stewart Mill, whose theory of power includes his famous harm principle. In *On Liberty*, he sets out to investigate the nature of power, and its legitimate use over society and over individual liberties. Mill argues that the government should not interfere with the freedom of individuals to live as they wish, and that compulsion or control should only be used when needed to protect others in society from harm. Therefore, according to Mill, "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others" (Mill, 1997, p. 936).

John Locke's theory was developed before the Industrial Revolution began in the late 1700s. By the time of Mill's theory, the capitalist English economy was the largest in the world. Enter the critics of liberalism and capitalism, most notably Karl Marx. Liberalism is based on the concept of individual rights that keep people safe from one another. However, for Marx, freedom is found in our communal relations with other people.

Marx believed that power flows from the control of the means of production. Marx argued that power in society is limited and can only be held by one person or group at a time. Marx explained that these "groups" are the working and ruling classes. Under capitalism, the ruling class hold all the power and use it to exploit the working class (Cook, 2011). Marx called for a communist revolution to overthrow the existing system of politics and economics and restore the power to the people. Marx and Friedrich Engels's "Manifesto of the Communist Party" ends

with this vociferation: “Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!” (Marx & Engels, 1997, p. 889). Marx’s theory of power was so influential that it inspired the communist regimes of the twentieth century, and indeed, shaped the philosophical thinking of successive scholars.

Norbert Elias spent much of his early career reading Marx, and his work is punctuated by remarks and criticisms about Marxism (Loyal, 2013, p. 582). Elias argued that Marx failed to isolate the phenomenon of power from its historical contexts, because this isolation is not possible. For Elias, history is important to the examination of power.

[Elias’] historical sociology posits a processual model of class which recognizes the importance of long-term structural changes and transformations in class structure. It is only in this context, across the sweep of centuries, that one can see that the sharp contrasts between the behaviour of different social groups steadily diminishing. Here, classes are made and remade in specific conjunctures of figural complexes where balances of power remain tensile and fluid. This perspective brings into view the permanent interdependence of rising and sinking movements, and processes of class integration and disintegration. (Loyal, 2013, p. 592)

For Elias, power is a game of interdependencies, and he uses this term “figuration” to refer to interdependency networks that develop slowly through changing social and political structures (Newton, 1999, p. 417). Elias argued for a relational theory of power wherein a power relation can only be said to exist if one party (or parties) do not have total control over another (Newton,

1999, p. 417). For Elias, the participants of the power game always have some degree of control over each other, and are, therefore, always to some extent, dependent on each other (Elias, 1970, p. 81).

Elias highlighted the functional interdependence between people, and for him, power is not something that is possessed by one person and not by another. Instead, power is a structural characteristic of a relationship – of all human relationships (Dunning & Hughes, 2013, p. 66). It is therefore difficult for one person or group of people to control outcomes, since their intentions and actions are always moderated by others upon whom they are dependent, and all outcomes, therefore, represent the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions (Newton, 1999, p. 417).

Michel Foucault began his career as a Marxist, having been influenced by his mentor Louis Althusser. However, he later avoided grounding his framework in Marxism, and instead, he developed a genealogical method of investigation wherein historical shifts in power matter – a method he referred to as an archeological method (Gutting, 2015, p. 375). Foucault is important to this study of power in two ways: first, for his theory of power, and second, for his method of investigation, which is similar to the method I am using here.

Foucault's thoughts on power also focus on power relations and relationships of power. Foucault insisted that power cannot exist on its own, in the absence of a relationship. The term "power" designates relationships between partners (Foucault, 1994b, p. 135). "Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" (Foucault, 1994b, p. 137). Further, power is not only rooted in government and in institutions, it exists wherever relationships exist, practically everywhere. Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social (Foucault,

1994b, p. 141). Therefore, whenever people interact, there are power relations present, whether we are aware of the power relations in our interactions or not.

We often perform our roles in society without scrutinizing them, and our relations with others seem successful so long as we obey traffic laws and wait our turn at the deli counter, and we do that without thinking about power relations. Though according to Foucault, to live in a society is to live in such a way that some can act on the actions of others (Foucault, 1994b, p. 140), and whenever we try to influence others, this is power. However, again we find that this influence has unexpected outcomes, because often our influence does not result in the outcome we originally desired. When we exert influence upon someone or some situation, we are setting off a chain of events over which we may or may not have much control. Others might add their influence to the mix, and the result might be very different than our intended outcome. Many times, our actions have effects that we will never know anything about. Foucault argues that these effects are generated by the interaction of power relations, and the mechanisms brought into play can be interpreted in terms of strategies complete with intentions of their own (Foucault, 1994b, p. 142).

Foucault's theory of power also indicates that power is inextricably linked to knowledge, and as Foucault proceeds through his historical analysis of power, he carefully considers the epistemological changes that occur in society over time. What counts as knowledge? In Foucault's *The Order of Things*, he uses the archeological method to trace the history of epistemology. The episteme of any given society in any given time period determines what will be discussed in academic discourse, and what will be considered true and false, or scientific and unscientific. Foucault refers to the fundamental assumptions or rules that frame what is and what is not discussed in any time period as an episteme. These assumptions undergo major shifts and

change over time – sometimes dramatically. These rules, or epistemes, are deeply ingrained in our thinking, and often we are unconscious of the fact that much of what we believe to be “truth” is governed by the rules of the episteme of our society.

Foucault’s theorizing was aimed at learning how power produces truth (Foucault, 1988, p. 111), and using the archeological method, he writes about the social history of the production of truth (Foucault, 1988, p. 112).

Philosophers or even, more generally, intellectuals justify and mark out their identity by trying to establish an almost uncrossable line between the domain of knowledge, seen as that of truth and freedom, and the domain of the exercise of power. What struck me, in observing the human sciences, was that the development of all these branches of knowledge can in no way be dissociated from the exercise of power. Of course, you will always find psychological or sociological theories that are independent of power. But, generally speaking, the fact that societies can become the object of scientific observation, that human behavior became, from a certain point on, a problem to be analyzed and resolved, all that is bound up, I believe, with mechanisms of power – which, at any given moment, indeed, analyzed that object (society, man, etc.) and presented it as a problem to be resolved. So the birth of the human sciences goes hand in hand with the installation of new mechanisms of power. (Foucault, 1988, p. 106)

For Foucault, knowledge and power are inseparable. He argues that it was shown previously by Nietzsche that behind all attainment of knowledge is a struggle for power (Foucault, 1994c, p. 32). He implores that the great myth of the West – that within knowledge and science lies pure truth, independent of power – must be dispelled (Foucault, 1994c).

In the 1960s, a movement toward the study of community power occurred, generating an interesting debate about power relationships. The idea that a small number of elites hold a disproportionate amount of power within society is known as elite theory. Robert A. Dahl set out to challenge this idea by undertaking a study of the community of New Haven, Connecticut, where he lived and worked at Yale University. In *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, Dahl focuses on decision making and the decision makers in New Haven to show that power is not always concentrated into a ruling elite, but is more widely dispersed among the actors of a society than previously thought.

Previously, in *Concept of Power*, Dahl makes his famous one-sentence declaration on the nature of power: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, p. 203). By this definition, we can see that A and B are actors in a relationship, and Dahl asks us to agree that power is a relation (Dahl, 1957, p. 203). However, he admits his statement would be more complete if he were to include references to the source of power, the means or instruments that actors use to exert power, the amount or extent of the power, and the range or the scope of the power, and he elaborates in the same article.

Dahl was a pluralist thinker, and his view of the function of power fits nicely into the diversity of interests found in modern democracies. Whereas the United States of America is a colonial state made up of settlers originally from other parts of the world, the American pluralistic model in the form of the separation of powers of the executive, legislative, and judiciary, as well as the basic separation of the church and the state, seem necessary to prevent abuses of power. However, Dahl is fully aware of the negative or undesired effects of pluralism on the functioning of democracy.

Social groups with greater ability or opportunity for self-organization tend to exert greater influence on public decision making than do groups with less ability or opportunity. Consequently, once a particular trajectory has been imposed on public decisions, the well-organized groups will be able to preserve it to the detriment of the less well-organized. (Fabbrini, 2003, p. 121)

Dahl draws our attention to the decision makers who have the influence to “get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” within the pluralist environment. Dahl insists that the study of power could not be undertaken without examining the decisions that are made in the community under study, paying close attention to who makes these decisions (Dahl, 1958, p. 466). By examining the decisions made in New Haven, Dahl concludes that power is widely dispersed and not concentrated in a minority elite. Dahl’s work set the stage for succeeding theories on community power.

Bachrach and Baratz criticize Dahl’s theory by presenting a second “face” of power that is overlooked by Dahl and other pluralists. According to Bachrach and Baratz, when we look at the first face of power, we see decision making on key issues identified as an important factor. However, the authors argue that we cannot overlook the second “restrictive” face of power, which is the power that is utilized to limit the scope of discussion while reinforcing a status quo through rituals and procedure (Bachrach, P. & Baratz, 1962, p. 949). This face of power restricts the ability of important and contentious issues to get onto the agenda for public discussion.

Can a sound concept of power be predicated on the same assumption that power is totally embodied and fully reflected in "concrete decisions" or in activity bearing directly upon their making? We think not. Of course power is exercised when A

participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences. (Bachrach, P. & Baratz, 1962, p. 948)

Simply put another way, “to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power” (Bachrach, P. & Baratz, 1962, p. 249).

In his book *Power: A Radical View*, Steven Lukes presents his three-dimensional view of power, adding a third face to the conversation. Lukes discusses the first dimension of power, direct power, as described earlier by Dahl, then he discusses the second dimension of political power as described by Bachrach & Baratz, and then he adds normative power, the third dimension. Normative power is a socializing power that is held by powerful entities such as people, groups, corporations, and the media to influence people to conform to behaviour norms and expectations. The skilled application of normative power can prevent real issues from arising, since the people willingly accept their role in the social order and are sometimes unaware of their interests.

A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? (Lukes, 1974, p. 23)

Lukes argues that any analysis of power must include a look at more than just the observable conflict, but it must also dig up whatever latent conflict exists if it is to understand who holds the real power in a society.

Peter Digeser enters the conversation at this point, declaring that yet another, fourth face of power, is shown to us by looking again at the ideas of Michel Foucault. Foucault suggests that the subjects (the As and the Bs) are themselves produced by power. Said another way, the influence of social power upon the subject “creates them” over time, and the subject is therefore a product of that process. In this way, we are vehicles of power, because power is conveyed through our practices and interactions, and power is put into operation when we participate in discourse and norms, and does not exist independently of those practices (Digeser, 1992, p. 982). This fourth face of power lies at the bottom of all our social practices, including politics, religion, health care, and education. Our lives are so saturated by this power that we cannot get away from it even if we wanted to. Digeser’s summary of the four faces of power shows us how the flow of the conversation shifts at the fourth face:

Under the first face of power the central question is, “Who, if anyone, is exercising power?” Under the second face, “What issues have been mobilized off the agenda and by whom?” Under the radical conception, “Whose objective interests are being harmed?” Under the fourth face of power the critical issue is, “What kind of subject is being produced?” (Digeser, 1992, p. 980)

This chapter has so far highlighted a snapshot of theories of power found in Western academia from around 400 BCE up to modern time. This is by no means a comprehensive list of all existing theories, but it does provide a general overview of the landscape that shapes the debate

about the phenomenon of power. Although I did not find an Indigenous theory of power, per se, I am able to discuss what many leading Indigenous scholars and allies have to say on the topic.

Indigenous scholarship associated with Western universities began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Robert Warrior, Vine Deloria's ground-breaking *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969), and subsequent books and essays from the early 1970s, established him as the leading contemporary American Indian intellectual figure (Warrior, 1995, p. xiv). Vine Deloria Jr. was a critic of Western science and religion, and consistently pointed out its impact on Western scholarship. He articulated the dualisms and dichotomies present in Western thought, as well as the cause-and-effect construction of it, and he contrasted those against Indigenous thinking and knowledge which "resides in the construction of meaning found in the process of living in the world" (Wildcat, 2005, p. 420). In a chapter called *Power and Place Equal Personality*, Deloria (2001), explains that "power" is the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe, and that "place" is the relationship of things to each other (p. 23). Deloria (2001) then forms the idea into an equation: Power and place produce personality, which simply means that the universe is alive" (p. 23). Deloria shows us that it is the same with Indigenous knowledges. Indigenous knowledges are to be treated as being alive:

Deloria treated American Indian knowledges as wisdom, as living entities. As a result he influenced two generations of Indigenous scholars who would not be trapped in the dominant Western dichotomy of either/or in any of its pernicious forms: primitive versus modern, spiritual versus physical, nature versus culture, and so on. He was an "Indigenist" before the term became popularly applied to Native-based thinking and actions. (Wildcat, 2005, p. 425)

Deloria was also the first to create a space within Western academia where we could look at power as it exists outside of the Western preoccupation with objectivity. “In Western thought scientific theories of reality, knowledge, and methods for knowing are logically consistent. The problem is that they constrain, even preclude, any discussion of our human experience and life as a part of processes involving power(s), which are irreducible to discrete objects or things” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 15).

It is at this point that we begin to see how the two viewpoints (Western and Indigenous) differ from one another. The theories of power of Western academia include the familiar notions of superiority, dominance, and control, while the Indigenous ideas are not as familiar. For this reason, Indigenous epistemologies of power may seem odd at first.

Critiques of the Western worldview have resulted in the common use of the term, Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is defined as an “imaginative and institutional context that informs contemporary scholarship, opinion and law” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 21). “As a theory, it postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans. It is built on a set of assumptions and beliefs that educated and usually unprejudiced Europeans and North Americans habitually accept as true, as supported by the facts, or as reality” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 21). Indigenous epistemologies present a challenge to the “truths” produced by Eurocentric logic, and Indigenous scholars present a challenge to the fundamental pillars of Eurocentrism: the obsession with objectivity and individualism.

James Henderson adds that Eurocentric thinkers do not understand the elegance of Indigenous thought and do not question the negative myths of colonial thought (Battiste, 2000, p. 252). These antiquated and erroneous myths keep Indigenous people trapped in a colonial context and discourse that alienates us from our power. Henderson articulates that Indigenous power

resources are found in the neglected life-worlds and consciousness of our Ancestors (Battiste, 2000, p. 252). “The Aboriginal quest for knowledge [is to] understand the nature and structure of a particular realm, on how realms interchange yet remain related, and on how language may create an elegant way of explaining an implicate order composed of complex systems of relationship and interdependence” (Battiste, 2000, p. 265). Henderson reminds us that the Elders are calling for us to return to Indigenous worldviews, languages, knowledge, and order, and he stresses that restoring Indigenous worldviews and languages is essential to realizing Indigenous solidarity and power (Battiste, 2000, p. 252).

Taiiaki Alfred also directs us to the long-silenced wisdom of traditionally rooted philosophical reflections when seeking our power. “The answers developed by our Ancestors hold power today as they did fifty generations ago. It will be necessary ... to adapt those traditional answers to the contemporary reality” (Alfred, 2009, p. 15). Alfred articulates that in Indigenous philosophies, power flows from respect for nature and the natural order (Alfred, 2009, p. 84). “To hold power, it is necessary to gain knowledge through life experience and directed learning from elders” (Alfred, 2009, p. 75). These philosophies are missing from the mainstream understanding of power, which results in the imbalances we see throughout contemporary society. Modern society does not give the proper reverence for the existence of power in all the elements that make up the universe. Indigenous philosophies teach us to respect and accommodate that power in all its varied forms (Alfred, 2009, p. 68).

In *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, Alfred discusses Indigenous power concepts that include an understanding of Indigenous justice. Alfred argues that Indigenous people are natural stewards of the land (Alfred, 2009, p. 86). This responsibility is related to the Indigenous concept of justice which is seen as a perpetual process of maintaining that crucial balance and demonstrating true

respect for the power and dignity of each part of the circle of interdependency (Alfred, 2009, p. 66). We, as Indigenous people, have the responsibility as stewards to look after this balance. “The goal of Indigenous justice is best characterized as the achievement of respectful coexistence – restoration of harmony to the network of relationships and renewed commitment to ensuring the integrity and physical, emotional, and spiritual health of all individuals and communities” (Alfred, 2009, p. 66).

Indigenous people have a talent for harnessing the balance we find in nature and applying it to human systems. According to Alfred, “we need to realize that ways of thinking that perpetuate European values can do nothing to ease the pain of colonization and return us to the harmony, balance and peaceful coexistence that were – and are – the ideals envisioned in all traditional Indigenous philosophies” (Alfred, 2009, p. 65). We need to refer to traditional forms to realize Indigenous power, which is not predicated on force.

As an alternative to state power, Indigenous tradition transforms our understanding of power’s meaning and use (Alfred, 2009, p. 73). We are required to look at power from a perspective that is new for some of us. There are many potential benefits to such a reorientation in our thinking, not only within Indigenous communities, but as the foundation for building a post-colonial relationship with the state (Alfred, 2009, p. 73).

From just these three examples of Indigenous scholarship, we can already see themes that emerge when discussing the concept of power from Indigenous worldviews. There is movement away from power as a coercive or oppressive force, and movement back toward an Indigenous understanding of power as balance within the interconnectedness of the infinite elements that make up the universe.

Kevin Fitzmaurice, an allied scholar, indicates that the difficulty in the relationship between Indigenous and settler populations is related to the force power that has come to dominate how both parties interact with each other (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 13). Fitzmaurice (2007) discusses the politics of difference and shows that the dominance of the force power of Western society in defining Others in racialized ways so as to assert superiority over them (p. 23) and the push-back from Indigenous peoples, saturates our relationship. These force power concepts are Western; they are legitimized by Western thought and language, and they are reinforced through Western education.

Fitzmaurice integrates Indigenous, Western, and Buddhist knowledge and practice to provide new insights into the politics of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, and the pursuit of peace (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 222). Fitzmaurice (2007) privileges Indigenous concepts of power and he advocates for “communal power,” which he defines as the power of all living things that arise from being in a collectivity with others (p. 17). In Western-based knowledge systems, concepts are often deconstructed into smaller parts and reconstructed in a way that represents their meaning. This is not always a sufficient method in Indigenous knowledge systems. According to Fitzmaurice (2007), communal power necessitates that we come to understand the world as a dynamic complexity of relationships and not as a collection of separate and knowable parts (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 229). What is required, then, is a conceptual movement away from force power toward a form of communal power, which is synonymous with peace and which emanates from being in a collectivity of living (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 75).

Fitzmaurice points to another Western power theorist, Hannah Arendt, who also conceptualized the power of the collective. In contrast to most of the theories of power that existed at the time, Arendt reminded us of the power of people when they come together to work toward a common

goal. For Arendt, power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 71). For an individual to be “in power” is to be “empowered” by a group of people (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 71), and Arendt shows us that we cannot neglect the power of the collective when we seek to understand power concepts.

Communal power, therefore, is about being in relation with all things, or simply “being” (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 122). Many Indigenous people believe that the interconnectedness of all things must be favoured over the Western notion of separateness of self and the use of coercive force power in perpetuating these concepts of difference. Fitzmaurice asks: “can people cooperate on common interests rather than compete around difference?” (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 25). I hope so. It is the reason why I undertake this research.

As an Indigenous researcher interested in Indigenous epistemologies of power, I believe the problem lies in the way these concepts are understood, and in the way that people think. I agree with Fitzmaurice and Alfred that a conceptual shift is required if we are to switch our desires for power from competition to cooperation. We must better understand our epistemological differences in order to better understand one another. Patricia Monture provides an example of how concepts are understood differently depending on epistemology, by describing a Haudenosaunee understanding of sovereignty.

...there is an assumption in Western thought that there is a single form and system of knowing and therefore sovereignty must have a single meaning, and that meaning is now enshrined in international standards. This is not what I understand Haudenosaunee people to be saying when we talk about sovereignty. It is the power to not only determine your being but also the power to be responsible to that identity.

In Indigenous epistemology, sovereignty means access to well-being for all our citizens. (Monture, 2006, p. 158)

This Indigenous epistemology of power supports the rising theme – Indigenous collective power. Again, we can see that power involves responsibility to the larger community.

There is room for more discussion around concepts of power. Using Indigenous research methods, my aim is to present a concept of power that is based on Indigenous epistemologies, or said another way, from an Indigenous standpoint. Afterward, I will use Western methods to reconstruct the Indigenous knowledge in a format that is more recognizable to Western academia. This approach is not new; Dennis Foley discusses how theories such as critical theory, feminist standpoint theory, and insider/outsider theory, inform emancipatory theories such as Indigenous standpoint theory.

To the Indigenous scholar critical theory, standpoint theory and insider/outsider theory are emancipatory and liberatory epistemologies in their deconstruction process. They are guided by a vision that there is more than just one worldview and interpretation. [...] They form the foundation of the reconstruction of Indigenous approaches to knowledge in a format and argument that the non-Indigenous scholar is familiar with. (Foley, 2003, p. 45)

“The emergence of an Indigenous standpoint in contemporary Indigenous scholarship is forging a new agenda that is necessary to change the existing power imbalance of contemporary literature theory, which re-enforces the dominance of western rhetoric” (Foley, 2003, p. 50). In this thesis, the dominance of western rhetoric around power is critiqued, and the critique is

intended to highlight the differences between Western and Indigenous epistemologies, emphasizing that these differences are also barriers that prevent reconciliation.

The massive accumulation of academic production on the topic of power stretches across many social science disciplines, including political science, sociology, anthropology, political theory, organizational studies, and geography. Different perspectives within and transcending each of these, such as feminism, all make a contribution (Haugaard & Clegg, 2009, p. 5). Amy Allen takes the position that the fundamental lack of agreement on the definition of power is problematic (Allen, 2009, p. 293). “While many feminists have understood power in terms of domination, oppression, subordination – thus, they have implicitly defined power as the exercise of a certain form of power-over others – others have rejected this definition in favor of a notion of power as individual and/or collective empowerment or transformation – thus, they have implicitly (and occasionally explicitly) redefined power as power-to or power-with” (Allen, 2009, p. 294). Allen argues that power-over and power-to are well defined in the literature, but that a third dimension, power-with, has been overlooked. “Collective power can generate important conceptual normative and psychological resources for individual empowerment and resistance and, thus, is an important motor of social change” (Allen, 2009, p. 304).

Indigenous feminist Joyce Green contends that Indigenous feminism is a liberatory critical theoretical approach, that fits comfortably with feminist and post-colonial thought, as well as with critical race theory (Green, 2017, p. 17). Indigenous feminism analyzes the impositions of power from dominant societies, as well as from within Indigenous communities (Green, 2017, p. 16).

Several major intergenerational problems emerged from the legitimations of and the practice of colonialism and persistently afflict Indigenous peoples. These include violence against women and children; psychological trauma arising from explicit forms of oppression such as the residential school policy; impoverishment and isolation, the evils of racism and misogyny, which are intensified when directed at Indigenous women; and the destruction of national, cultural, family and community coherence that has produced much suffering for Indigenous peoples. (Green, 2017, p. 11)

It is argued by Indigenous feminists that colonization is a gendered process. Indigenous queer theory brings this analysis further, agreeing with Indigenous feminism and adding that colonization is also a heteropatriarchal process (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011, p. 212). Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill define heteropatriarchy as a social system in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 13). The power of the heteropatriarchy is the central analysis of Indigenous queer theory (Driskill et al., 2011, p. 212).

Having reviewed the interrelated and interconnected concepts of power across both Western and Indigenous scholarship, it has been my view that there is much more to be understood and appreciated about Indigenous theory of power. In chapter 4, I will be referencing many more Indigenous scholars and presenting more Indigenous contributions to the academic analysis of power, as it relates more specifically to what has been shared by Indigenous community members in this work.

3 Methodology

The theories of power that I have selected for presentation in this study show the general direction that the academic conversation about power is headed. I have shown that academic conversations about power reach all the way back to the beginnings of political thought. I paid special attention to the methodological underpinnings of these theories and I plotted a sketch of the development of Western methodological thought as it pertains to theories of power. I have also shown, however, that the philosophical assumptions that underlie the mainstream theories have not been fully expanded to include an understanding of power through an Indigenous epistemological lens. Western conceptions of power are, therefore, incomplete because they are based only in Western knowledge. These theories are based on the dominance of Western academic epistemologies and ignore Indigenous epistemologies. I believe that Indigenous epistemologies of power are valuable, relevant, and required for realizing a more accurate model of what power is. If we rely only upon Western epistemologies, then we can only know a fraction of what is to be known about power. If we can know more about the phenomenon of power, then perhaps we can begin to glean solutions to the power imbalances and the misapprehensions that stand between us and reconciliation.

My endeavour is to flip the conversation around, so to speak. It is to reframe the way that we “know” and speak about power. It is my attempt to articulate the reorientation in our thinking that is required in order to understand Indigenous epistemologies of power. In order to achieve this, I must resist getting trapped into the Western dichotomies that inevitably surface whenever we are using the English language and attempt to see power outside of the Western preoccupation with objectivity, individuality, and dominance. I believe that there is room in the academic dialogue to include another way of knowing what power is. I also believe that this

other way of knowing can help all of us to remember and understand how to manifest balance, harmony, and cooperation in our communities.

3.1 Research Methods

Indigenous communities are working toward increasing their participation and control of research that affects them. Indigenous academics are exploring ways to include traditional knowledge and community expertise in research design. As a student Indigenous researcher, I am excited to participate in the process of developing new approaches that allow for Indigenous epistemologies, or ways of knowing, to shine through academic discourse.

I used the information that I learned in the MIR program to design my Indigenous decolonization research framework. My research is about Indigenous epistemologies of power, wherein we inevitably discuss power dynamics and power imbalances, and that research is contained within a framework that addresses the very same structural inequalities. The framework itself is designed to challenge the dominant voices and the status quo (Baskin, 2005, p. 172). The challenge to mainstream science lies in the idea that there are other epistemological models, besides the Western model, that can shed new light on old problems and that are worth investigating. Mainstream academia is still rather uncomfortable with these ideas, and Indigenous research methodologies remain marginalized as a result. Part of my contribution, then, is adding my voice to those who advocate for Indigenous intellectual self-determination in research using Indigenous methodologies. According to Baskin, Indigenous research is not worth doing if it does not focus on the goals and processes of decolonization and self-determination (Baskin, 2005, p. 174).

It is not necessary, either, to discard Western research approaches. “Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 41).

As I have learned in this program, mainstream research methods and methodologies are not adequate tools for learning about Indigenous knowledges. Western approaches to research with Indigenous peoples use theoretical frameworks that lie outside of the lives of the people whose voices are being used as data (Baskin, 2005, p. 173). “Social sciences exploring human experience have adopted the scientific method as the hallmark of their credibility even though human behavior is subject to many variables that interrupt linear cause-effect sequences” (Castellano, 2004, p. 104). Scientific research is dominated by positivist thinking that assumes only observable phenomena matter (Castellano, 2004, p. 103). Western science is limited to what can be empirically observed, that is, it can only deal with what can we measure, quantify, and otherwise weigh in the balances (Mercier & Leonard, 2019, p. 5). This style of research does not reflect Indigenous ways of knowing whatsoever, and therefore, whenever Western science is considered the standard ontology and epistemology of science, Indigenous science is excluded.

Indigenous knowledge is scientific. If we think of science as a body of knowledge or a way of thinking; or if we think of it as a philosophy underpinned by such concepts as inductive and deductive reasoning; or if we think of it as a method that includes a hypothesis, an experiment, generation of data, and the production of theory; then Indigenous science is included (Mercier & Leonard, 2019, p. 4). Indigenous science makes an epistemological departure, however, since Indigenous science is also living and dynamic, and it is embedded in people and place (Mercier

& Leonard, 2019, p. 4). Western science requires that Indigenous science prove that it is alive and justify its interest in relationships between many phenomena at once as they interact in the real spaces of Indigenous origins. Since this knowledge cannot be measured by any Western standard or plotted out on the x and y axis, Indigenous science remains marginalized. Indigenous science is thousands of years older than Western science, and some scholars argue that Indigenous science is a more mature and embedded science than that which emerged from the Enlightenment (Mercier & Leonard, 2019, p. 8). This research is an effort to synthesize methods from both sciences.

It is incumbent upon Indigenous researchers to bridge worldviews and to explain the process throughout academic writing (Wilson, 2008, p. 132). Adding grounded theory is one way that I am bridging worldviews while undertaking this project. I used grounded theory as a guide while developing the research plan, and while analyzing the data. Utilizing a decolonization framework saturated with reflexivity to ensure I remain accountable to all of my relations during the research process, I applied Indigenous research methods in conversation with grounded theory to identify an Indigenous epistemological worldview of power.

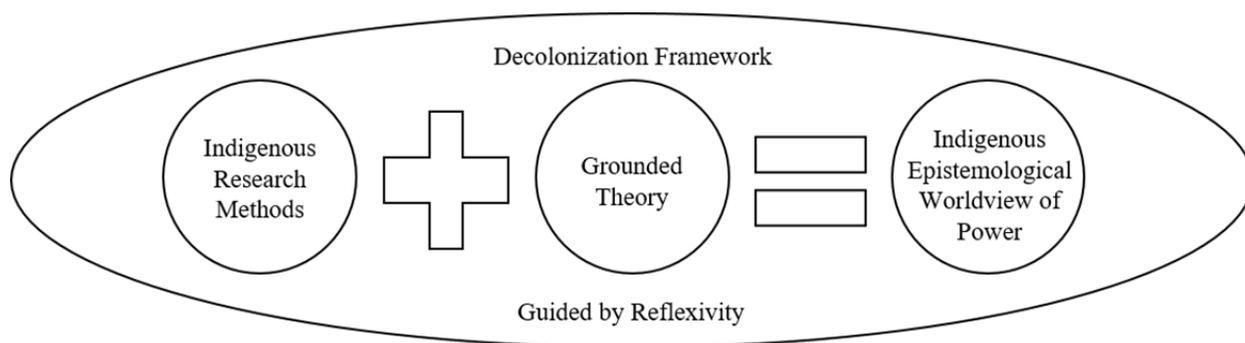


Figure A: Decolonization Research Framework.

It is important to pause here to emphasize that Indigenous research methods that are based on Indigenous science are fully adequate for researching Indigenous epistemologies of power, and Western methods are not necessary. I understand this better now that I have experience using Indigenous research methodologies in the field than I did when I designed the methodology for this project. The synthesis with grounded theory was born out of my original vision for the design of the project, which is a theoretical and cross-cultural dialogue made possible by utilizing both Indigenous research methods and grounded theory. Using Indigenous research methodologies allowed me to build the respectful relationships that are the foundation of this research, and they ensure that Indigenous knowledge remains privileged and prominent throughout.

This research is a collection of stories, and it is a story in and of itself. Indigenous research methods were used to design the project, collect the data, involve community in the analysis of the data, and to present it back to Indigenous people in a culturally relevant way. Reflexivity and relationality are key, and this research is a product of the many relationships that were developed and maintained using the teachings of Indigenous research methods.

The teachings of grounded theory helped me to communicate the research problem and the research purpose in a format that is well understood in Western academia. I also utilized grounded theory to reanalyze the data, the result of which is demonstrated in Table 1 on page 103. Indigenous methods are holistic, and from the perspective of what we know about Indigenous research methodologies, the result on page 103 is arguably over-processed. Grounded theory was necessary to help me to think about the data in a way that produced Table 1, but I

acknowledge that it is not necessary to determine an Indigenous epistemology of power. I am grateful to be a Master of Indigenous Relations student in a program that creates a safe space for Indigenous research methodologies and for hybrid methodologies.

3.2 Reflexivity and Relationality

As an Indigenous person, I can identify with the experience of “walking in two worlds” as it pertains to my life experiences and education. I am privileged to have the university education that I have, and I am honoured to have the Indigenous training that is accessible to me by way of my relationships with the teachings, the ceremonies, the Creator, and with other Indigenous people. The place where I fit into the two worlds is always shifting, as my interests change and the influences around me change. I must always practice awareness of this place where I fit as this research journey proceeds and I must declare my awareness of it to every audience – this is my reflexivity. Reflexivity in this context refers to the ongoing assessment of the influence of my background and ways of perceiving reality, experiences, ideological biases, and interest during the research (Chilisa, 2012, p. 168).

As the daughter of an Indigenous mother and a non-Indigenous father, as both insider and outsider within this research, I carry with me philosophical ideas, as well as experiences, within the colonial social and political framework that I was born into, and my interests are influenced by these elements. As an Indigenous person, I do not believe it is possible or appropriate to achieve subjectivity by separating myself from the Indigenous worldview through which I am viewing the phenomenon of power. As an Indigenous person, I am implicated in the research. By way of this research, I am advocating for making space for Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, and I am always looking for decolonization outcomes. I am an Indigenous researcher developing an Indigenous research methodology based on Indigenous epistemologies

and ontologies. My research is therefore firmly located in the decolonizing methodology and my reflexivity keeps me accountable to all of my relations during this process. I have been sure to communicate this to all participants, who were interested in knowing who I am, where I come from, why I am researching this project, and about what I stand gain from it. I have also been sure to explain reflexivity as a key component of my framework in every presentation of this research along the way.

3.3 Relationality

Whereas reflexivity weaves through the decolonizing research framework, relationality weaves through and supports the various Indigenous research methods used in this study. Utilizing reflexivity to remain accountable to all of my relations while conducting research is a movement toward the concept of relational knowledge, and a movement away from the Western idea that knowledge is an individual entity that can be gained and owned (Wilson, 2008, p. 60). Instead, relational knowledge focuses on how all things are related and therefore relevant (Wilson, 2008, p. 58), and relational knowledge is intended to be shared freely. Every page of this paper was generated from my relationships with others. I believe that I have an ethical responsibility to meet the community's conditions and honour the worldviews of the participants and my advisors.

Cora Weber-Pillwax recommends that the three R's – respect, reciprocity, and relationality – guide Indigenous research (Wilson, 2008, p. 58). Respectful research is about showing our honour by treating Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all origin with kindness and courtesy (Wilson, 2008, p. 58). When we carry ourselves in this good way, we develop trust with research participants and partners.

Simply because a researcher is Indigenous (or following an Indigenous framework) does not automatically translate into community trust. Trust needs to be earned internally. Trusting relationships are engendered in a variety of ways: following protocol, showing guardianship over sacred knowledges, standing by cultural validity of knowledge, and giving back. (Kovach, 2009, p. 147)

My research methodology requires that I maintain this respectful approach in every step of the process, from the development of my research plan, to the navigation of the data collection and data analysis processes, through to presenting the generated knowledge. According to Shawn Wilson:

I see Indigenous scholars putting into practice being accountable to our relations in four different ways. The first is through how we go about choosing the topics we will research. The second is in the methods that we use to “collect our data” or build our relationships. The third is the way in which we analyze what we are learning. Finally, we maintain relational accountability in the way in which we present the outcomes of the research. I see these four things in a circle in my mind, with each blending into and influencing the others. (Wilson, 2008, p. 107)

When undertaking research with Indigenous peoples, nothing is more important than making sure relationships of honesty and trust are established, that the researcher(s) intentions are made known and are transparent, and that participants have all the support and information that they need to understand the research and feel safe participating, all the way through.

3.4 Community Partner

My methodology requires that I build and maintain respectful research relationships. My research support structure began with my supervisor and committee, and it expanded early on to include an Indigenous community partner with whom I can develop a shared vision for the implementation of the research plan into the community. My first choice was Ogimaa Kwe Linda Debassige, Chief of M'Chigeeng First Nation. The first time I met Linda Debassige was in the summer of 2011 when I attended an event that she spoke at in Wikwemikong. I was impressed by her passion and enthusiasm for service to her community. In the winter of 2016, I attended the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation's Language Conference in Sudbury, Ontario, where I mentioned this project and my search for a community partner to Ogimaa Kwe Debassige. By this time, she was Chief of her community, and was therefore an Indigenous individual with insider knowledge about power dynamics who was able help me develop insights into Indigenous epistemologies of power. Soon after, I developed a research presentation into a video, and I sent that to her instead of writing an email. I received a reply from Linda accepting my invitation to join the project as community partner, and her partnership and friendship have been a blessing that I will not forget. Ogimaa Kwe Linda Debassige also represents the community as a full member of my thesis committee. With this research support structure in place, we began engaging with the participants.

3.5 Grounded Theory

During preliminary meetings with my community partner, discussion revolved around how and when to recruit participants. During the data collection phase, Indigenous research methods prevailed while reaching out to Indigenous community members. We recruited participants by visiting people in their homes, or at gatherings, or anywhere we happened to bump into them.

We are comfortable with this because we have had a lifetime of experience of visiting with Indigenous people this way.

At this point in my academic career, I am more comfortable when this research proceeds in a manner that is consistent with my cultural training as well as my academic training. Therefore, I am utilizing elements of grounded theory to balance my research methodology. As foregrounded previously, grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 83). The process under study here is power. I do not mean to say that I am developing a theory of power that is comparable to Foucault's voluminous contributions on this subject, or Dahl's intricate study of community power. Instead, the goal of this project is to generate Indigenous theoretical knowledge that will support the future development of an Indigenous theory of power that contends with the Western theories of power discussed in the previous chapter. Within the parameters of a master's thesis, I am applying Indigenous research methods and grounded theory, and I am analyzing Indigenous scholarship and the contributions of the Indigenous research participants to identify an Indigenous epistemological worldview of power.

Grounded theory was used to design the mechanics and movement of the research activities, and to focus the approach. We are looking for a theoretical explanation for a process, and in this case, that process is power. Our understanding of power is limited by the exclusion of Indigenous epistemological contributions. Indigenous epistemologies of the phenomenon of power can help us to better understand how to shift the balance of power to encourage reconciliation in Indigenous-settler relations. Written forms were developed to help collect the information

including an Interview Guide (Appendix B). Interview questions and sub-questions were designed into “how” and “what” questions that help us to understand a process.

In a grounded theory study, the participants need to provide permission to be studied, while the researcher should have established rapport with the participant so that they will disclose detailed perspectives about responding to an action or a process. (Creswell, 2013, p. 154)

A Letter of Information and Consent was developed to record informed consent (Appendix A). My community partner and I used Indigenous research methods to establish relationships with the participants, such as introducing ourselves (if necessary, since sometimes we already knew our participants as community members) and explaining our role and interest in the research project. We sought out interested participants by visiting with community members and explaining the project in everyday language. We provided details of the design, such as inclusion of participants into the data analysis and knowledge sharing aspects of the process. Tobacco was offered to all participants while making the request that they share their perspectives with me during the recorded interview.

The combination of Indigenous research methods and grounded theory enabled me to collect the detailed perspectives of our sample. Our sample included fifteen Indigenous adults over the age of 18 who have experience with the phenomenon of power (ten female participants and five male participants). All Indigenous participants of this project are either originally from the Sudbury and/or Manitoulin areas of Ontario, or they are originally from a different place and were living in the Sudbury and/or Manitoulin areas of Ontario at the time of data collection. Whereas the sample includes Indigenous people from other areas, the knowledge that resulted from the data collection will be referred to as “Indigenous” knowledge, rather than “Anishinaabe” knowledge.

Since everyone has experience with the phenomenon of power, any person who identified as Indigenous and who was over the age of 18 was eligible to be included in the study. We were, however, looking for a range of experiences with power. For example, every community member has experienced power as it relates to dynamics within the family, or the community. In this respect, everyone's perspective is relevant and important. Some people would be interesting to include because they have experience with the powers of the state, such as the legal system and the corrections system. Some people hold positions of power, such as teachers and academics, doctors and other healthcare professionals, politicians and Chiefs. We tried to include a range of experience with power while recruiting the sample, and I interviewed Elders (two male Elders and two female Elders), teachers, social workers, academics, youth, singers, dancers, artists, medicine people, and storytellers for this project. Decisions such as whom to recruit as participants, as well as selecting research sites where the interviews occurred, were reached by using a purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013, p. 155), wherein participants who can contribute to the development of an Indigenous theoretical view of power are purposefully sought out. Interviews were conducted during events and gatherings, and there were several one-on-one prearranged meetings as well. Snowball sampling was used occasionally during interviews that occurred at gatherings. For example, I recorded four interviews at the Wiikwemkoong Annual Cultural Festival in August 2017. I carried folding chairs with me and set them up in comfortable spots off to the sides of the powwow to interview three participants. I also interviewed another resident of Wiikwemkoong in her kitchen, not far from the powwow grounds. In September 2017, I interviewed three participants at the M'Chigeeng Annual Traditional Powwow in a similar manner. My community partner assisted with participant recruitment at both events. The audio recordings of those interviews include the heartbeat of the

powwow drum in the background. Some of these participants had recommended other people they knew who could contribute to the study, and they helped us introduce the idea to these potential participants as well. The snowball effect was easy to achieve in these settings, and a total of seven out of fifteen people were interviewed at these events using a combination of the two methods. The other interviews were prearranged with Indigenous people who were selected based on their experience with power, and sometimes other considerations. For example, Ogimaa Kwe Debassige and I had previously discussed which Elders I would recruit to answer the research question, and balance in the ratio of female Elders to male Elders is also desired.

The data was gathered using predominantly Indigenous research methods, as the intent was to collect Indigenous knowledge in story form. Storytelling is a common Indigenous research method, the origin of which reaches all the way back in time immemorial.

Storytelling is a valid form of Aboriginal knowledge as it includes responsibility on the part of the listener/researcher, incorporates both interpretation and analysis, has room for many explanations for the phenomena being researched, is a creative search for solutions, and is a political act of liberation and self-determination.

(Baskin, 2005, p. 180)

It is a method that I believe helps the participants feel their power in the process of providing data to the project. As mentioned, the interview questions were structured using grounded theory to induce responses that shed light on power as a process, however, these interview questions were used only if the participant found them useful. This is how grounded theory can be utilized to support the design whenever it is needed, while Indigenous research methods add relevance and balance to the research.

The data analysis stage involved a different mixture of Indigenous research methods and grounded theory. I began the process by spending many weeks with the data during the first half of 2018, when I was transcribing audio files, reading through the transcripts, and noting the themes I saw emerging. I spent many hours just thinking about the information. I created an environment that was comfortable and supportive of the relationship that I was building with the data. I included time for meditation and contemplation during this process. I was happy to be spending weekends on Manitoulin Island at the time. Sometimes I worked outside where I could have a fire, be with the animal life, and hear the waves of Lake Huron crashing onto the beach at Providence Bay. At my home in Sudbury, I grew semma (tobacco) from seed in my backyard garden that season. I looked after the semma every day with love and care, and I used that time to think about the research data. I provided many good thoughts and intentions for the plants while they were growing. The harvest is being used as offerings to show appreciation for the supportive efforts of others involved in this project.

To further ensure accountability to all of my relations at this stage, I sent the transcribed interviews to the respondents to provide them the opportunity to make changes or discuss any concerns they may have had regarding how their interview looked transcribed. I received concerns about how “choppy” their words looked when they were transcribed verbatim. I explained to the concerned participants that I had seen this before in my research work, and I hoped to lessen their worry by assuring them that all the interviews looked “choppy” this way on paper. This is because people do not speak a story in the same way as they would write a story. I explained to the participants that if I had asked them to write out their answers, they would naturally choose all the words that create legible sentences. However, while telling a story orally, a different arrangement of words is chosen since this sort of communication is less formal. I also

explained to these participants that they might notice differences in the appearance of quotes, because I had finessed some of the language only slightly, without changing the meaning of the quote. The intent of this has been to replicate the natural flow that is heard on the speech recording, by ensuring there are enough words to properly connect the ideas to one another in written format. Otherwise, I expect that many readers will struggle over the bumpy terrain of the “choppy” transcription. The concerns of the participants I spoke to about this were eased upon learning this information.

Using grounded theory methods, I organized the data into codes, concepts, and categories; then I developed the categories into an Indigenous theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of power. Using Creswell (2013) as my primary guide, I followed the steps of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (p. 86). I decided to code the data manually, because that method is the most intimate and helpful for developing a relationship with this information. The coding process indicated that the Indigenous epistemological understanding of power provided by the Indigenous participants would be made up of five themes that are related to each other. We have seen that the literature also produces relationships as a prominent theme within discussions about power. Following Creswell (Creswell, 2013, p. 86), I selected relationships as the single, central code to become the focus of the theory. In Figure B, the data is represented using a floral applique design similar to those that Indigenous women sometimes sew onto ribbon skirts. The five main categories of data that emerged from the interviews are presented as flower petals. These categories are connected by their relationships to one another at the centre and around the edges where the applique is stitched down to the skirt, represented by dotted lines. Figure B intends to show how I think about the intersectionality of the categories of data that emerged from the interviews. In the next section, I will describe how these categories are related to each

other and the larger central category that holds everything together. I will present data gifted to us by the participants, and I will reference the literature to show support for the logic.

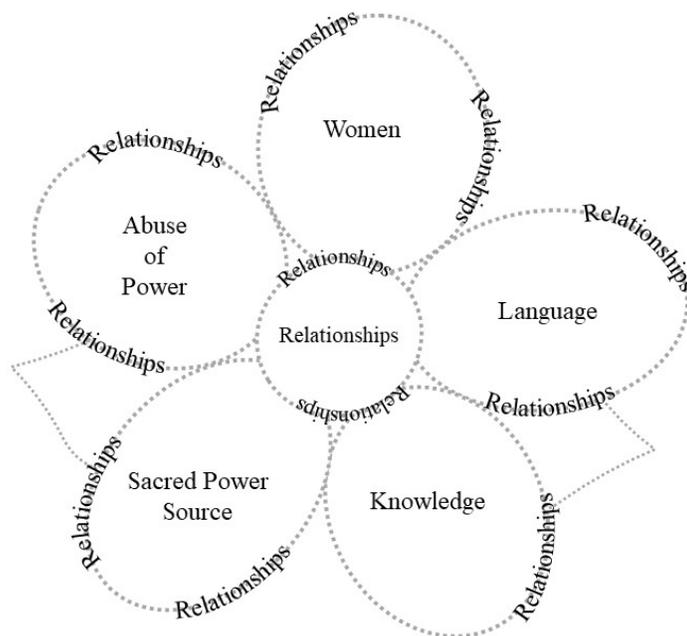


Figure B: Representing and Visualizing the Data.

After analyzing the data using these grounded theory methods, my community partner and I planned a knowledge sharing event that we named Eshkweziiwin Exhibit. All project participants received a personal email invitation to this event. Eshkweziiwin is an Anishinaabemowin word that was spoken by an Elder who was interviewed for this research. It means, “we have the power to do this.” The purpose of the event was to use Indigenous research methods to create relational knowledge by gathering together for the purpose of knowledge sharing. The event was open to the community, and posters were designed and distributed over social media, as well as around M’Chigeeng First Nation, where the event occurred in the fall of 2018.

The event was designed to allow for ceremony, a presentation of the data analysis, and discussion, as well as presentations by research participants. To properly honour and show gratitude to the community, we shared a feast before these presentations, and a giveaway occurred afterward. Ogimaa Kwe Debassige, four of the research participants, and I presented at the event. Six out of fifteen research participants were able to join us, and we had a small turnout of community members as well. The Eshkweziwin Exhibit was important for maintaining communication in the process of analyzing the data. The event was designed to show the participants and community the direction the research has been taking and the outcomes that might result from the analysis of the data. It was an opportunity for the participants to see themselves in the themes that were pulled from the data, and to add their voices to the relational knowledge that we have been creating together. The Eshkweziwin event also represents relationality and accountability in the way that we share what we are learning with each other. The experience further shaped the epistemological view of power that emerged from this research. After the Eshkweziwin event, I focused on the writing process. In the next section, I will discuss how the five thematic categories intersect at relationships – which arose from the data to become the central category in this Indigenous epistemological look at the phenomenon of power.

4 Findings

“We have to start writing our own stories and sharing them. We need to create opportunities to hear the voices and the stories of the people and validate that. We need to give the power back to the people.”

Lisa Osawamick (2017)

The stories that I collected over this research journey provide insight into the Indigenous experience with the phenomenon of power. Indigenous people collect stories as they move along their life journey of learning, sharing, and producing Indigenous knowledge. These stories are as meaningful to Indigenous people as the scientific products created by Western academia are to the Western world – they hold their own power. The quotation above also indicates that, through storytelling, Indigenous people gain power. Power as a phenomenon is so multidimensional that we can be creators of our own power at the same time as we are studying it and creating knowledge about it. Indigenous storytelling is a perfect sharing and learning method, and it is a powerful Indigenous research method. “Aboriginal peoples created, controlled, and changed their own worlds through the power of language, stories, and songs. Their words did not merely represent meaning, they possessed the power to change reality itself” (Borrows, 2007, p. 92).

In this section, I will present that data that I collected from Indigenous participants and situate the data in a context supported by previous studies about power and epistemology. The categories that emerged from the final stage of the data analysis of the stories presented in this section include sacred power sources, the abuse of power, Indigenous women, language, and knowledge, each of which are held together by the common prominent theme: relationships. All the subcategories from the first two stages of data analysis have been organized under these five categories.

4.1 Sacred Power Sources

“Everything in creation is there to work in conjunction with each other. We cannot live without what we might think is the most insignificant insect. It plays its part in the whole cycle of things. So it's a crime and it's a sin to not take their existence into consideration. I mean you ask for permission all the time from the rest of life. And you don't own it. And our philosophy is we all come from the spiritual realm. We come to that sacred fire that's the doorway from that other

spiritual side we go back to. The spirit of everything and everybody also comes from the same sacred source we do.”

Terry Debassige, Elder, 2017

The sacred power sources category holds within it many subcategories of data. Therefore, I have organized the subcategories into two groups to better present them. The first group includes the subcategories that are described by participants as having the power to give life, and to take life. These include the Creator or Great Spirit, the land, and the water. The second group includes subcategories that are described by participants as having healing power, such as the medicines, the ceremonies, and the songs.

Several participants in this project discussed their relationship to the land and to the Creator. These participants clearly indicated the power they believe resides with the land and with the Creator.

The more that I reclaim that very intimate relationship with the land, the more power I know I have.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

It's about other powers, the land itself having power. Because, (the Ancestors) were very dependent on the land that they were on, so some communities were very nomadic, so they would shift around depending on the land. Or going where the bison were or the buffalo. I think nature and land have power over people. Like water. Water itself is power. It's there to give us life, but it can also take it away.

Joey-Lynn Wabie, 2017

Our people have been here from, since time, you know? And we've been here a long time. What was asked of us when we came here for the first time was to take care of the earth, and that is what we have done. We try not to do things that disturb her or break her or anything like that. That's in our DNA, because that's the promise we made to the Creator.

Harvey Bell, 2017

It was clear during the data collection phase that these Indigenous people are deeply connected to Mother Earth and feel hurt over the lack of regard for her health. This lack of respect is a breach of the responsibility Indigenous people have to Creation.

Indigenous philosophies are premised on the belief that earth was created by a power external to human beings, who have a responsibility to act as stewards; since humans had no hand in making the earth, they have no right to “possess” it or dispose of it as they see fit — possession of land by humankind is unnatural and unjust. The stewardship principle, reflecting a spiritual connection with the land established by the Creator, gives human beings special responsibilities within the areas they occupy as Indigenous peoples, linking them in a “natural” way to their territories. (Alfred, 2009, p. 84)

The power of the Creator was included by most participants as relevant to the topic of discussion. Most participants used that term – Creator – though one participant also used the term Gchi-Manitou, and two other participants used the term Gzhe-Mnidoo. The latter two terms are widely understood to mean Great Spirit.

And you have what I call spiritual power. To me that's in the Anishinaabe world, when you go out and sit with the earth and you learn about the Creator's true power. The Creator has power. The Creator has the power to destroy the earth. When you look at it, the Creator gave us this earth to look after to take care of so it can replenish us.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

Gzhe-mnidoo is so powerful that when blowing breath, giving us breath, he had to use a miiggus shell and that's where our breath comes from. And, so he has the power to kill us, you know floods, fires, cleanse the Earth and so it's the eagle who watches every morning to see if the Anishinaabek are offering their tobacco, burning that tobacco and continuing that ceremony, being grateful every morning. And as long as we're doing that, we're going to be okay.

Clarice Pangowish, 2017

Reverence for the natural environment and the power of Creation is clearly important to the study of Indigenous epistemologies of power. This is the way that Indigenous people experience power that is coming from a sacred source. The power that Indigenous people draw from their relationship with all of creation is noted by most, if not all, Indigenous experts.

In *God is Red*, Vine Deloria critiqued academia and scientific authority, and created space for Indigenous scientific theories and epistemologies. He described how Indigenous people in tribal communities learned the proper relationship that they must have with other living things and how they acted harmoniously with other creatures (Deloria, 2003, p. 87). The world that Indigenous people experience is dominated by the presence of power, the manifestation of life energies, and the whole life-flow of a creation (Deloria, 2003, p. 87). Recognition that human beings hold an important place in such a creation is tempered by the thought that they are dependent on everything in creation for their existence (Deloria, 2003, p. 87). These are the ways that Indigenous people experience their lives. The epistemological position that Indigenous people take to find meaning is firmly grounded in the process of a living relationship with Creation.

The other sacred sources of power that emerged from the data have been organized into a group that I call “healthy or healing power.” These are the natural resources that Indigenous people have been using to heal themselves, keep themselves healthy, or maintain the delicate balance of healthy relationships between ourselves and the rest of Creation.

We know the power of medicines and we know what they can do when utilized for what they need to be utilized for, to be used in a good way. It's in our teachings, it's in our songs, it's in our prayers which come through our songs and our drums. It would be interesting to have this conversation with an Elder. When I am holding the semaa in my hand I'm asking my Ancestors to come and speak to me.

Kimberley Debassige, 2017

I present this quote because it speaks directly to the power of medicines. However, I think it is very inspiring to learn about how the other Anishinaabe people around me have incredible insight into this knowledge and can speak about it with such confidence. It gives me pride and comfort that this knowledge is being shared with those who are seeking it. In the following quotations, we learn about the power of singing, drumming, dancing, looking after the water, and using the medicines.

When I sing, it's very empowering because it makes my body feel free, it makes my mind feel free. It makes me feel like nothing could bother me. Absolutely nothing will bother me, during the time that I'm singing. And when you are sitting with your Mishomis (Grandfather drum) right there, that's another thing to just be able to be there with him and to sing with him. That's a very empowering situation any time that you do it.

Harvey Bell, 2017

Our medicine people were teaching about the medicines in this area and about the powers of those plants and the power of the roots and the power of those berries. And these are the Elders that are going to come and share their ideas of the medicine plants and also lifetime experiences about situations that made them survive and sustain themselves. So that's the power.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

We've come a long way in terms of maintaining or keeping our power. People have held on to the medicine teachings. People have held on to songs, even though they were being killed, even though they were being banned.

Kimberley Debassige, 2017

But then when we are protesting over environmental issues, this kind of thing affects everyone, not just the Indigenous people, but they are always blaming us for protesting and throwing our people in jail and mistreating them. I'm a traditional dancer, I'm a water walker, I'm a hand drummer, and using my sacred items, that really means something to me. I want to use them for that good way and it really bothers me that the world looks at us so negatively when we are only trying to help.

Rebecca Loucks, 2017

From an Indigenous epistemological viewpoint, spirituality and ceremony have a role in our lives, because Indigenous people practice healing powers, and communicate with the spiritual realm. “Within specific Indigenous cultures, traditional teachings, ceremonies, rituals, visions,

channeling, out-of-body experiences, touch, and food may be part of the journey to spiritual balance and well-being” (Baskin, 2016, p. 93).

Within Indigenous worldviews and spirituality, there is no separation between people and the land. Place, or the physical environment, shapes Indigenous people’s entire lives and everyone else’s lives too, even though Western culture people are largely removed and unaware of the connections between themselves and the physical environment in which they live. Place or physical environment directly influences cultures, education, relationships, food security, transportation, and spiritual beliefs. Around the globe there are sacred physical places that Indigenous Peoples fight to protect and where they conduct their ceremonies. The earth is often referred to as our Mother for She gives birth to us and provides all that we need. (Baskin, 2005, p. 174)

Indigenous advocates have been articulating this idea that our Mother Earth is alive, like us, and should therefore have the same rights.

That’s our belief. Everything has a spirit. Even the rocks and trees. They’re alive too.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

They are just discovering now that water is alive, that water is sacred. We’ve known that because it was a way of life. When you get up in the morning and you offer that tobacco. We’ve known that all along, and they call us uncivilized.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

“In the Anishinabek language, the land is animate and perceived as having rights and obligations in its relations with human kind” (Borrows, 2007, p. 146). Many Indigenous groups have well-developed notions about how to recognize the land as a citizen and seek to persuade other

Canadians to consider the adverse impact of their activities on the land itself, as an entity in its own right (Borrows, 2007, p. 146).

These concepts were passed down by Indigenous Ancestors and are being taught by the Elders. The knowledge finds its way into Indigenous scholarship where the rights of the land and the water are being discussed. The Ancestors and the Elders have an important role in this work. It is the Indigenous worldview that the Ancestors are to be cared for, provided for, and can be summoned to help us express our power through the work that we do.

We all went to church. I mean we pretty well had to. They really did control the social aspects of the reserve. But yet underground there was still this reverence for our ways. We gave offerings all the time, when nobody was around. We were always making food and putting out food, you know and to pray for whoever you were praying for. That was religiously done. You had to because the other spirits and your Ancestors sometimes have not completed their journey. So you have to give them sustenance.

Terry Debassige, Elder, 2017

Power is in my DNA. I've inherited this from past generations and our Ancestors and I think that our children depend on us to be able to share that with them as well as with the community.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

This lodge is one of the places that has empowered a lot of our own people. To create this place you can't use one person, it uses a whole bunch of people, but it also uses the Ancestors. When we build this place, before we even put holes in the ground, we prayed to the old people, we prayed to the spirits to come and help us that the day goes well. Each day that we work on it, that every day goes well. So many different hands touched the wood here, the screws, the drills the everything that we used. And that was a really powerful, powerful moment for each individual.

Harvey Bell, 2017

Because these concepts are relational in nature, the discussion about Ancestors and Elders pauses here and will resume in a later section. I will conclude this discussion with Alfred's call to Indigenous people to remember our responsibility to our Ancestors. I think this summarizes much of the knowledge presented so far:

It is incumbent on this generation of Native people to heal the colonial sickness through the re-creation of sound communities, individual empowerment, and the re-establishment of relationships based on traditional values. This is the burden placed on young shoulders by the elders and Ancestors who carried the torch through many years of darkness. It is not enough to survive and heal; there is also a responsibility to rebuild the foundations of nationhood by recovering a holistic traditional philosophy, reconnecting with our spirituality and culture, and infusing our politics and relationships with traditional values. (Alfred, 2009, p. 60)

4.2 Abuse of Power

“In order for settler colonialism to be strong, what Canada is founded on, Indigenous people have to be on the bottom.”

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

The participants of this project shared a large amount of data about the abuse of power and its negative forms and manifestations. The participants also connected the trauma they have suffered as a result of abuses of power to the colonial experience. The above quote uses a term that is the subject of current debate: settler colonialism. In Rowe and Tuck, settler colonialism is defined as:

The specific formation of colonialism in which people come to a land inhabited by (Indigenous) people and declare that land to be their new home. Settler colonialism is about the pursuit of land, not just labor or resources. Settler colonialism is a persistent societal structure, not just a historical event or origin story for a nation-state. Settler colonialism has meant genocide of Indigenous

peoples, the reconfiguring of Indigenous land into settler property. (Rowe & Tuck, 2017, p. 4)

Settler colonialism is about dispossessing Indigenous people of their land and destroying their ways of life.

Colonial processes, underpinned by an unfettered arrogance and self-asserted superiority, have shaped our shared, but different, experiences as Indigenous people. From our natural environment and relational structures that enabled collective well-being to our cultural knowledge systems to our languages and ceremonial practices, colonialism has sought to explicitly and implicitly disrupt and fragment our ways of being. (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019, p. 2)

Motivated by greed and administered with cruelty, the colonial project has dramatically changed the landscape of Indigenous territories. Several participants alluded to two kinds of power: a good form of power and a bad form of power. An Elder that I interviewed shared about how she sees two kinds of power, which are split up into the Anishinaabe concept of power (based on spirituality) and the Western concept (based on materialism).

Materialism versus spirituality. That's what it is. You don't have to have a big fancy house, a big fancy car, a big fancy swimming pool in the back of your house, you don't have to have those things today. That's a power symbol in the white man's world. That's their power symbol. We don't need those as Anishinaabe, as a spiritual person. If you can connect with the Thunder Beings when they come, that's power. That's spiritual power right there.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

In the Indigenous worldview, it is critical that we look after our relationships with all our relatives. Abusive power, such as that experienced throughout colonization, manifests dysfunction within relationships, which results in illness for people.

The priests knew we had the power to see ahead and they had to do something to take it away from us. They succeeded in taking it. And look at today you have lots of abnormal Anishinaabe.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

Indigenous people have been growing up feeling oppressed, abused, and traumatized. One project participant describes growing up within this traumatic colonial dysfunction:

There was a lot of infusion of European, cultural values and individuals, as well as the church, that had come in and imposing its culture and assimilation policies, as it was the government that led a lot of my mom and her siblings to slowly be disconnected from the culture. The abuses that went on in that community between community members, between settlers, between industry men that were engaging in the community was sometimes very ugly. Some of that abuse traversed within our own families and physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, incest, all those were extensions of those power control systems that these settlers were coming into these communities and wanting to stake their claim. Coming to find their riches, their wealth.

William Morin, 2017

Indigenous people have been feeling ignored and frustrated. I had the opportunity to interview participants who are water walkers and activists, as well as those who have held high-level Indigenous policy positions, and this frustration is made evident by their stories.

We're always working so hard to advance our people, for their own health and their wellbeing and we are constantly presented with so many barriers and challenges. Government, private industry, it is very frustrating to see that. We are still operating within this system and a process that was controlled by the colonizer.

Celeste Pedri Spade, 2017

We've been trying to tell the government about the concerns for the water and the environment and they call us radicals when we stand up for Mother Earth.

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

That power of voice and the power of those who can silence the voices of others was amazing and that power to determine who gets to speak and who doesn't - and it really upset me a lot to see our own people using that to silence their own people.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

Participants in this project described experiences of abuse, bullying, racism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and toxic power dynamics in Canadian politics, academia, the not-for-profit sector and the military. Indigenous people are occupying these colonial spaces and deconstructing colonial systems one small piece at a time; however, they are confronted by these expressions of colonial violence on a regular basis. The participants of this project navigate this stressful landscape and blaze a trail for those of us who are coming along behind them.

Colonial violence results in trauma to Indigenous people, and trauma is something that Indigenous people have been enduring for generations. Several participants shared traumatic experiences while explaining their view of power. Baskin prefers the term “collective trauma,” as it implies that all Indigenous peoples are burdened with the impacts of colonization; it includes a historical perspective and how this impacts the present, and it acknowledges that the racism faced by Indigenous peoples today continues to traumatize them (Baskin, 2016, p. 195).

Cyndy Baskin spoke with many Elders and traditional teachers who consistently told her that, prior to contact, violence within families and communities was rare (Baskin, 2005, p. 216). The reasons given for this include the Indigenous value system that protects the balance and harmony among people, and the necessity of these good relations to the survival of the community (Baskin, 2016, p. 216). “Aside from practicalities, Indigenous worldviews as expressed through values and spiritual teachings also played a crucial role in ensuring that harm to others was minimal” (Baskin, 2016, p. 217). These values enabled networks of people to maintain healthy and positive relationships, but they are rejected by mainstream society, as they do not fit into the imposed colonial systems relied upon by Canada and other colonial states that continue to oppress and control Indigenous peoples to this day. Therefore, navigating the colonial trauma is our daily reality as Indigenous people. “All colonized people must find ways to survive the

experience, and not everyone is capable of active resistance” (Baskin, 2016, p. 97). “The challenge, and the hope, is for each person to recognize and counteract the effects of colonization in her own life, and thus develop the ability to live in a way that contests colonization” (Baskin, 2016, p. 97).

Expanding on the knowledge that power is a relational characteristic of human activity, wherever we find toxic power dynamics, we can expect to find toxic relationships. Unbalanced and unhealthy relationships lead to dysfunction in families, communities, and in all forms of organization. Several project participants described the challenges associated with lateral violence.

The fact is, lateral physical violence is a big issue in our communities.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

Lateral violence. Where does that come from? How can we work as a community? How can we work as people helping people? Human beings helping human beings and not have this lateral violence being part of it? Where is the power in that? Why is it okay for people to think and to treat people unfair and bring that violence into it?

Lisa Osawamick, 2017

I located a community resource created by the Native Women’s Association of Canada that defines lateral violence as a learned behaviour as a result of colonialism and patriarchal methods of governing and developing society (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2011). It is a cycle of abuse wherein oppressed people direct anger toward – or seek to oppress or control – other oppressed and controlled people, and its roots lie in factors such as: colonization, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2011).

Lateral violence is about the ongoing physical and emotional and psychological abuse that we commit against each other within our communities.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

Racial dynamics and racial hierarchies lead to interesting behaviours of acting out within Indigenous community sometimes — acting out against their own people in lateral violence, which is really super disappointing but understandable — but super disappointing because you know, we hold our own people back, we're the hardest on our own people sometimes.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

We see so many of our own people sabotaging our own people and not for a respect of our culture, but because it's opportunism. It's self-righteousness and it's just the wounds of those traumas that they carry and how those traumas force people to play these power games because it gives them something that has been taken from them – individual power.

William Morin, 2017

I began to see that everyone in our world, the more insecure they were, the more violent, the more aggressive, the more disrespectful or selfish they were. People that are wounded, people that are under power controlled systems and that's all they know, that's all they know how to communicate. It enabled me to be able to see people for who they were beyond those struggles that they had.

William Morin, 2017

Whereas Indigenous people continue to endure the ongoing traumas of colonization, the abuse of power is relevant to the Indigenous experience and worldview of power. However, when we dive into the ocean of knowledge that is Indigenous philosophy, we learn about another way to relate to one another.

There is a widespread cultural ideal among the original people of this land to achieve respectful coexistence as a tolerant and harmony-seeking first principle of government. Diametrically opposed to the possessive individualism that is central to the systems imposed on our communities, this single principle expresses the hope that tradition offers for a future beyond division and conflict. With this heritage why do we Indigenous people so often look away from our own wisdom and let other people answer the basic questions for us? (Alfred, 2009, p. 12)

It is time to look back at age-old Indigenous wisdom and apply it to our current challenges. It will require willingness on the part of government, industry, and Canadians in general, to try something different. Many Canadians do not understand the value of Indigenous epistemological worldviews and ways of knowing, and they are unaware that there are other ways of knowing besides the Western, or Eurocentric, worldview. More understanding between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians about the value of each other's epistemological worldviews can go a long way to co-creating strategies toward not only reconciliation, but toward restoring health and balance to human systems and populations globally.

4.3 Indigenous Women

The discussion about the abuse of power overlaps with the section about Indigenous women. This section is broken into two groups because the topic of Indigenous women arose from the data analysis in two ways: first, because Indigenous women suffer the most indignities and various forms of violence in our society, and second, because Indigenous women are regarded as holders of important powers by many within Indigenous societies. I will present data on oppression of Indigenous women first, as this concludes the discussion on abuses of power.

It's so dominant right now, the Western worldview, that when we talk about, or when we even just say the word power that's the first place people will go to, is the power that men have shown, the power that men have.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

We moved so that my father could find better employment, more steady employment, and more stable employment. That was the primary reason. One of the underlying reasons was that my father was wanting to remove my mother from her family, from her community, from her support system and network. It was an indirect way that he exhibited that form of power and control and was reflected in the culture that was going on. The governing systems, the legal systems, and so forth. That it was something that my mom just recognized as, "well that's just the way things are" and accepted it.

William Morin, 2017

There's a lot of white male aggression that you have to put up with when you speak your mind and, I think it's because you're a visible reminder of colonialism as a failed project.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

On several occasions, the United Nations Committee to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the Human Rights Committee (OHCHR) have recognized sex discrimination in the Canadian Indian Act as a root cause for violence (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018). One participant talked about how, at one time, an Indian under the act was defined as an Indian man over the age of 21.

Our power in the community was quite deliberately taken away by the Indian Act when they said chief and council could only be Indigenous, like the Indian at the time, Indian men over the age of 21. It was the same when you looked at the Indian Act that says an Indian was an Indian man or the wife of an Indian man or the child of an Indian man. So you can see how that patriarchy was brought over you know, by the colonizers.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

There were participants of this research who spoke about a power scale, or a power balance, on which they find themselves at the very bottom.

It would be interesting to look at the scale of power, and I think that Indigenous women are at the very bottom. Even though we actually have so much power, the power that we have is the least valued and respected within the society that we live in.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

You look at like the balance of power in society — is structured around race, it's structured around gender, so when you have both race and gender mingling, you have Indigenous women as the most vulnerable.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls crisis demonstrates that violence against Indigenous women is rampant and out of control. The research shows that Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Indigenous

women are 19 times more likely than Caucasian women to be murdered and missing (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017, p. 8). These numbers are horrifying, and our women are afraid.

I'm 32 and I have 3 kids and I'm afraid for my life, because of all the Aboriginal women gone missing. I'm afraid of my kids and their kids going missing, and going through more traumatic experiences than I went through, and they might not come back from it.

Rebecca Beaudry, 2017

The *National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Interim Report* also indicates that “simply being Indigenous and female is a risk” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017, p. 8).

Indigenous women are physically assaulted, sexually assaulted, or robbed almost three times as often as non-Indigenous women. Even when all other risk factors are taken into account, Indigenous women still experience more violent victimization. (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017, p. 8)

There are participants of this project who can recall a time when Indigenous women were held in the highest regard. It is the toxic effects of colonization, racism, and sexism that lead to the desecration of fundamental Indigenous knowledge – that women are sacred. When Canada asserted control over Indigenous lands and relocated Indigenous peoples to economically marginal reserves, it also disempowered Indigenous women who had held significant influence and powerful roles in many First Nations (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1).

Patriarchy was brought over by the colonizers — basically imported and imposed on our peoples and it took away the equality, it took away the power that Indigenous women had originally in matrilineal, matriarchal, matrilocal, where the land and all the produce

from the land belonged to the women, or even during the fur trade when Indigenous women had a vital, important production role.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

The link between the colonial goal of eliminating Indigenous peoples, and the fact that Indigenous women are targets for violence, does not go unnoticed by the project participants.

Because I believe very firmly that they (settlers) saw an empowered Indigenous woman who had the right to have say in her community, an Indigenous woman who had equality, and the whole notion of egalitarianism and equality was a threat to patriarchy.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

It's the women who have the power and the strength, it's the women who hold the families together, it's the women who are at the centre of the family, and it's the women who educate, teach the language and produce that next generation of human beings, of Indigenous people. If you're taking those women — taking away their power and their role in the family, then you're destroying the family, which we all know that was part of a very deliberate attempt to destroy the family in order to destroy Indigenous people — to eliminate the Indian problem by eliminating Indians.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

The very fact that we bring Indigenous lives into this world — it unsettles. We bring in more Indigenous bodies onto Indigenous lands, that are the most contested spaces in settler colonial states. I think that Indigenous women are often a cause a lot of anxiety around settler individuals. If you think about it, what makes people uneasy is, like the fact that we have all these rights and land claim processes going, that's always about acknowledging and respecting Indigenous claims to any territory, whether it be an intellectual territory or a physical territory. It's always going to take something away from them, and require them to give something up.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

Indigenous women suffer violence within our communities and in our homes at an alarming rate as well.

Many men have added to Native women's oppression by inflicting pain on their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters. Once we fully understand the idea of oppression, it doesn't take much further insight to see that men's inability to confront the real source of the disempowerment and weakness leads to compound oppression for women. This is a deep and universal problem that continues to

exist despite the positive economic and political developments that have taken place in Indigenous communities during the last two generations. (Alfred, 2009, p. 59)

The United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women, Dubravka Šimonović, visited Canada in 2018 and made several recommendations after her two-week visit, which address her concerns about: higher levels of intersectional discrimination and violence that Indigenous women face, human trafficking, sexual violence in schools and on campuses, the dire shortage of shelters for women and children escaping violence, lack of affordable housing, the persistent practice of removing children from Indigenous families, overrepresentation of Indigenous women in correctional populations, and the lack of adequate services, such as safety planning, counselling, children's programming, employment-seeking assistance, education, and health services, especially in rural and remote areas (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018).

It has been recognized by the Government that the basic inequities that exist between Indigenous peoples and the rest of Canada are a glaring reminder of the failure to overcome systemic racism, to heal the intergenerational trauma resulting from colonialism and of the inadequate provision of basic specialized services and programmes for each of the communities. Indigenous women from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities are overtly disadvantaged within their societies and in the larger national scheme. Indigenous women face marginalization, exclusion and poverty because of institutional, systemic, multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination that has not been addressed adequately by the State. (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018)

Communities suffer when Indigenous women are oppressed and devalued. Healthy Indigenous communities are built on the love and support of our mothers and grandmothers. The power that has been stripped from Indigenous women must be restored if Indigenous communities are to heal and flourish. These certainties are understood in our communities.

If settler colonialism relies on the subjugation and oppression of Indigenous women, then we know that successfully dismantling and battling against and ending the settler colonial project could be about raising up and privileging the power of Indigenous women.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

As the data shows, Indigenous people already know that empowering our women and restoring their ability to resume their important roles in Indigenous communities must be the cornerstone of successful reconciliation efforts.

Indigenous women are reclaiming their power, and they are applying and maintaining pressure on the Canadian government to address the issues of Indigenous women, a few examples of which include: discrimination in the Indian Act, the MMIWG crisis, abuses against Mother Earth, the water, and the environment, and Canada's human rights failure due to discrimination against Indigenous children and the impacts of the broken child welfare system. Progress is slow, and Indigenous leaders are to be commended for remaining engaged to do the difficult work required to restore balance to these relationships.

The families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are to be honoured and celebrated for their persistence over the decades to move this issue into the plain sight of all Canadians where it can no longer be ignored. Indigenous people have known for decades that Indigenous women have been, and are still being, stolen from their families and disproportionately subjected to all forms of abuse, exploitation, and violence. The families of the

missing and murdered have endured enormous losses, and their suffering was been worsened by the government's disregard for the lives and legacies of Indigenous women. The Canadian government's rejection of all calls for a national inquiry into the MMIWG crisis led to the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #41, "We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the cause of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Finally, in September 2016 the National Inquiry was launched.

Gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act has been remedied only recently. In August of 2019, the last provisions of Bill S-3: *An Act to Amend the Indian Act in Response to the Superior Court of Quebec Decision in Descheneaux c. Canada* were implemented. Finally, First Nations women and their descendants will be entitled to the same registration as First Nations men and their descendants, under the Act. This is 49 years since Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, who is a legend in Anishinaabe territory where I live, filed a dispute against the loss of her Indian status after marrying a non-Indigenous man in 1970. For five decades, Corbiere Lavell and other women like her have been bringing awareness to the issue through activism and challenging the discrimination in Canadian courts resulting in Bill C-31, *An Act to Amend the Indian Act*, 1985; Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*, 2011; and finally Bill S-3, *An Act to Amend the Indian Act in Response to the Superior Court of Quebec Decision in Descheneaux c. Canada*, 2017.

The daughter of Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Dawn Lavell-Harvard was interviewed for this research. Dawn spoke about how her mother's case was combined with Yvonne Bédard's case, and eventually the legal challenge went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Dawn

explained that at the time, these Indigenous women were not only opposed by the government, but also by Indigenous men. The National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations, opposed the challenge.

We would hold raffles and bake sales and stuff to raise money for my mum to go to Ottawa for her court case. At the time, the National Indian Brotherhood was fully funded by the government — they were brought in as interveners to speak against the women on this issue. The Chief in our community talked to my mum at the time and said, “You know you’re doing the right thing, and this has to be challenged because it’s not right, and it is clear discrimination. But you know, when we get out of Wiky, I can’t support you. I have to speak against you because I have to go along with the party line as part of the Brotherhood. But I wanted to tell you privately that you need to keep this challenge going and you need to keep fighting.” The collective opinion was that they had to fight against the women. There was a lot of propaganda and a lot of fear-mongering at the time — you know the government people telling the Chiefs that if you let these women do that they’re going to bring home their white husbands and the white husbands are going to take over your community.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

The legal challenge brought by Corbiere Lavell and Bédard was ultimately unsuccessful, but it demonstrates their resilience against blatant discrimination and their courage to stand up for the rights of thousands of Indigenous women, myself included. Corbiere Lavell and Bédard inspired other women, including Sandra Lovelace Nicholas and Stéphane Descheneaux, to continue legal challenges against the federal government, setting off the chain of events that led to the eventual elimination of the discrimination after nearly half a century. The length of time that it takes to get a National Inquiry into the MMIWG crises or redress 143 years of gender discrimination against Indigenous women demonstrates how slow the Canadian state is to redress its wrong doings.

This brings us to the second group of data that emerged on the topic of Indigenous women: the sacred power of women. Several project participants shared about women’s power, and about women’s teachings and women’s ceremonies. They shared their knowledge about the role of Indigenous women in their communities and how it fits in to a larger discussion about power.

As women, we are sacred and we have that power. Especially when we go have our moon time every month. From the teachings that I got when I was a young woman when I went through my berry fast, I learned that there's lots of sacredness around this time.

Lisa Osawamick, 2017

We have these teachings about being connected to life. We bring Indigenous bodies into this world.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

These Indigenous women have been gifted with teachings that guide them and help them to fulfil their roles in their communities. These teachings are a source of empowerment because they help Indigenous women access sacred power.

The important role of our Indigenous grandmothers was also affirmed by several participants during the data collection.

My grandmother was one of the strongest, most powerful women I knew.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

I think of my grandma, for sure when she was growing up. I think her power came from just surviving. It was all about survival.

Joey-Lynn Wabie, 2017

One male Elder recalls the healing power of the Grandmothers and the aunties and acknowledges their work in seeing over the wellness of the community when he was a boy:

They would sit around a copper pot of water praying, praying and singing the sacred songs, praying and praying and praying and praying. And one of them would take the water and drink it. And then that healing energy would go around the community to whoever needed it. That's that light you would see sometimes.

Terry Debassige, Elder, 2017

I asked a female Elder about who held the power in the community when she was a girl. The Elder explained that the Grandmothers had the most powerful influence:

The men, they listen to Grandma. Because the men depended on her to know their direction. And also the grandma was multi-gifted. She would be the one that led prayer

when the thunders came. She was the one that guided if somebody became sick, which medicines were right for that sick child. Or if there is an emergency it was the grandma that knew what to do on a moment's notice. And also she would be the one that planned — so that you don't burden a certain area where we're going to be going for that summer, we don't use all the trees or the medicines from that one island. We would go to another location. So she would know how to figure that out and say — we're not going there this year. We're going to go to this spot this year. So identifying what is the best for the general interest of everyone. Not only our family, but the land where we're going to go, the medicines we're going to pick. And also what's going to provide for us. The best interests for our families. The power of the grandmothers was there and we have to carry that on. We have to learn by what we've been taught by the grandmothers.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

Women were keepers of knowledge that the community needed for survival. Indigenous knowledge is further discussed in a subsequent section; however, we can see how the power of Indigenous women and the power of Indigenous knowledge intersects. Western society promotes goals and values that do nothing to meet Indigenous people's basic needs for health, safety, and security (Alfred, 2009, p. 118). "Most women recognize that their children's future depends on restoring balance and health in the community, and especially returning to respect for the special role and power of women" (Alfred, 2009, p. 118).

It is taught in Anishinaabe territory, and elsewhere, that women are carriers of the water. These teachings are shared by the water walkers of the water walk movement. Grandmother Josephine Mandamin walked more than 25,000 kilometres carrying the water message to the people before making her transition to the Spirit World in February of 2019, leaving a legacy of deep respect and care for the water. Anishinaabe women learn that we have the responsibility and the power to take care of the water and it is the women who pray over the water in ceremonies (Anderson, 2010, p. 26).

They're standing together for the waters, you know? It's impactful.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

That's our role to protect Mother Earth and protect the waters we have. And the more we do that the more we're going to be heard. And we see Josephine walking around with her pail of water, and all of us doing that together it's going to gain attention. And it's not just our people. There are others — we're doing this for the whole world to be able to save this.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

That is the way we were traditionally raised, to respect mother nature, respect for water, and that's the way we should be, living in peace and kindness and not having to argue about these issues. Without water, nothing on this planet exists, right from the plant life to insects to everything.

Rebecca Loucks, 2017

Water and women are powerful in Indigenous societies, and the relationship between the water and Indigenous women is a sacred one. One project participant explained aspects of the relationship between water and women by using meanings found in the Anishinaabemowin language:

Even something so simple as the word nibi, nibiish, n'biish. In that root word for those words is the "bi", "bi", meaning what water does, not what it is. And what water does is it's always flowing. It's always moving. "He's like the way water is." When you add that and you look at water being the signal that a child is born, the woman's water breaks and it flows that child's path like a river, weaves and winds it's own path, so does that child because that water that was in the mother then is flowing it's way, it's path. Not mine, not yours, that child's own path. So the word for baby is "binoojii". It begins with that "bi", with that flow because they now have their own life to lead and that life is in Ojibway bimaadiziwin. So all those words, that "bi", if we understand that analogy of all us drinking from that water and that connection to another word, is the word to drink in Ojibway is minikwe. Kwe is not woman as in Anishinaabe kwe. Kwe is an action. It's a verb. It's what women do. Just like what the river does. It flows. Women are like the earth in order for a tree to grow, it needs to be planted. A seed needs to be planted. For a child to be born, there needs to be a seed planted within a woman.

William Morin, 2017

In Anderson, we see that several Grandmothers began their interviews on the topic of water. Water is a conduit in the transition from the spirit realm to physical life on earth. Water is part of the transition between the spirit world and being born into the physical world (Anderson, 2010,

p. 7). We can see how the power of women and the power of water are connected in the knowledge shared by the project participants in this study as well.

4.4 Language

The previous knowledge shared about the Anishinaabemowin language begins to shed light on another category that emerged from the data during the investigation of Indigenous epistemologies of power: this is the power and importance of Indigenous languages. In the beginning of this research journey, I gathered some Anishinaabemowin words that have meanings relevant to the topic. In my notes I find gshki'weziwin which means ability, capability, and (in some cases) power. Mshkawziiwin means physical strength, but also ability to do things. Dibendizowin means “own oneself,” and has been used for self-government or self-determination. There are so many ways to talk about power, and to think about power, that it can be difficult to isolate the meaning we are seeking in words. As spoken by a participant:

It's not just about strength of one person over another or physical strength. It's also about the intangibles and the kind of power that we can pull into ourselves, even from our Ancestors when we speak to them, right, to help guide us. So that's what I think about when I first think about power.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

When I heard the word eshkweziwin during my interview with Grandmother Leona Nahwegahbow, I became very interested in the word, and I later asked her for more information about it. I also obtained her permission to use it for the title of the knowledge sharing event associated with this research, held in the fall of 2018. Leona explained that eshkweziwin means “we have the power to do this.” On the fourth page of the transcript, the Grandmother states “Eshkweziwin. I can do this. This is your power.” On the seventh page of the transcript, the Grandmother says the word again “eshkweziwin we have the power to do this”. Out of the approximately 40 different words spoken in Anishinaabemowin during the interviews, this word

is the closest fit to describe the Indigenous epistemologies of power that shine through this research: eshkweziwin, we have the power to do this. We have the power to restore ourselves to the health and to the wealth that we knew prior to contact. We have the power to do it using Indigenous epistemologies, and ways of knowing and doing. That is what I think about when I use the word eshkweziwin in this research.

Several participants spoke Anishinaabemowin words while introducing themselves in the language. For some Indigenous people, using the language to introduce oneself is a powerful expression of who they are in relation to everything else. Two participants referred to it as their spirit name, two participants used the term Anishinaabe name, and one participant explained, “I introduced myself in my language.” The Anishinaabemowin word for name, n’dizhnikaaz, is usually used while introducing oneself in the language. Most of the participants who introduced themselves this way also thought it was important to name their community, or n’donjiba, and their clan, or n’dodem.

Explanations about the deeper meaning behind using the spirit name were also provided by participants:

I’m asking those Elders that I learn from to speak with me, because I think that’s important. These are not just my words that are coming out of my mouth, these are the words of thousands of people that have come before me, I’m only here because they were here. So I don’t just represent myself and that’s why I started it off by introducing myself in Anishinaabemowin because they’ll hear that — that’s their language. That’s our language. That’s what they spoke. And when I introduce myself like that then I know that I’m asking them to come in and be with me. So that’s why I introduced myself with my name. They walk with me, my Ancestors.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

Another participant shared some of what her Grandmother taught her about the spirit name:

My grandmother explains that it's important to have your spirit name because it's medicine. It actually is a medicine that helps you overcome any kind of ailments, whether they be physical ailments or mental, emotional, through your life.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

In the book *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition*, the topic of traditional names comes up repeatedly while discussing Indigenous languages. According to Seneca Elder Twylah Hurd Nitsch:

Language identifies the truth and growth of a person. Language is an expression of one's culture. Language tunes into the culture to describe situations. Language portrays the communication system of each culture. Language expressed names. Native children did not get assigned names until there was an appropriate time in their growth. A name was given by the Elders when the child expressed some particular characteristic that would earn a qualified name. Geographic locations earned their appropriate names. (Kulchyski, McCaskill, & Newhouse, 1999, p. 84)

The power of the spirit name is easy to find in the words of Saulteaux Elder Wilf Tootoosis:

Indian names are a very sacred, spiritual thing. They never talked about it. I didn't know my father's real name until about three years before he died. He told me his real name. It's confidential, and so were the old people years ago. Their real names weren't used, only in ceremonies. Each Elder had a nickname, that's what we go by today. The people are named after the nicknames because they didn't want to use the real name of the Elders at the time of treaty. Places around here also had Indian names, every place did. (Kulchyski et al., 1999, p. 351)

Grandmother Leona Nahwegahbow explained more about how the language is connected to the land, and how the language is connected to the teachings. Indigenous epistemologies are found in

Indigenous languages. The deeper Indigenous understanding or epistemology lives in the language, which is tied to the land, to the teachings and to our relations around us.

Our Mother Earth tells us where we are at with how we deal with our own lives and our own future generations. It's engrained in the land. We have that ability to pick up from our Ancestors, handing that to our young people. We have all the answers there. We don't need to have it all written. A priority for our people is to have their language and with that comes all the traditional practices and having good relationships.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

If you are speaking in Ojibway it goes right to the heart and it comes from your mind. This helps us to be able to do the right thing. And we are all empowered with that ability to know the right from the wrong.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

Indigenous worldviews are empirical relationships with local ecosystems, and Indigenous languages are an expression of these relationships (Henderson, 2000, p. 259). Indigenous languages express an awareness of a local ecology and are directed to understanding both external life forms and the invisible forces beneath them (Henderson, 2000, p. 262).

Traditional knowledge of the invisible forces all around us is found within Indigenous languages. Understandings such as these do not translate well into Western epistemology or language. Sometimes the problem of being misunderstood occurs when we speak our Indigenous languages. While discussing Indigenous languages, participants mentioned this problem of translation.

If it is written down (and translated) in the English language, it could be misinterpreted.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

We have to be very perfectly clear as to what we mean when we write the sentence because sometimes in the English language – it can be turned around to mean this or that.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

Indigenous epistemologies live in the context of the language and culture. Since Indigenous language and culture, and Western language and culture, are so different, ideas do not translate well back and forth between English and Indigenous languages. The meaning gets lost or distorted and misunderstandings occur.

So I guess if we're looking at power, the first thing that comes to mind is to look at what that word is and what it means. If we look at it in Anishinaabemowin, it could have different meanings to it. So when we state a word in Anishinaabemowin we're always looking at context and how it's used and who we're talking to. And I think that's really important when we look at that, because if we just take the English version of power and look at that word, you're going to have one specific definition and if I look at it with my Anishinaabe worldview, then it means something different.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

Therefore, to fully understand an Indigenous epistemology, one needs to understand an Indigenous language. The Elders and the language speakers do their best to convey the information, but key aspects of epistemological knowledge are difficult to transfer without use of Indigenous languages. I think, as students, we are limited in how much Indigenous epistemology we can understand for this reason. The Elders continue to stress the importance of language revitalization. “These languages provide direct and powerful ways of understanding Indigenous knowledge. They are the critical links between sacred knowledge and the skills required for survival” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 48). While talking about what is required to restore Anishinaabe people to good health, Grandmother Marie Eshkibok Trudeau emphasized, “you have to get that talk.” According to an Odawa Elder:

Native language is very important because our teachings are in the language. You miss out on the meaning when you talk about it in English. I have a hard time because I can't speak it but I can hear it, feel it and understand it, but for me to talk, I still have to work on that because I had blocked that and I had blocked it

when I was in residential school. That's one of the things that I've never dealt with. What I understand is when I hear the teachings in the Lodge, how beautiful and how sacred it is when it reaches people in the language. I can't even describe how it feels. But when you talk about it in English, its not the same, you don't have that feeling as you have in the language. We have to get back to our language, it's important. (Kulchyski et al., 1999, p. 160)

Several participants of this project expressed feelings of regret over the loss of the language in everyday Indigenous living.

A lot of the youth are saying that I wish I had my language. Like I said, eshkweziwin, we have the power to do this. Nodmodewin, we have the power to help each other. It's all within our control. And this is how we have been directed from our Ancestors. They saw the future where we will always have this environment around us that helped us and they still believe that the governments now need to understand that we have a connection to that land. That's where our language comes from. We are the only people that know that language. Nobody else around the world has that. We were directly empowered to have that language. And we cannot lose it. And this should be going on for many generations to have that language. But we have to start today.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

This Grandmother is a speaker of her Indigenous language, but most of the participants are not fluent speakers, because their Indigenous language was not spoken in the home.

My mom's generation very deliberately didn't speak the language in the home because they believed it would be a real disadvantage at school. Because my mom was the only child in her school who could speak both Ojibwe and English and she saw how hard it was and how harshly punished those kids were by the nuns because they wouldn't or couldn't speak English. I really regret that I never learned my language.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, 2017

It's a task for them to relearn the language because it wasn't spoken to them.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

The loss of language profoundly affected Indigenous peoples, because it disconnected them from their worldview. Indigenous people were given no choice other than to learn a European

language. Learning a different language is one thing, however, navigating the confusion that occurs while trying to understand the meaning of foreign concepts encoded into European languages through European epistemology is quite another, more difficult task. The same is true in reverse. Many Western stereotypes of Indigenous people are based on misunderstandings of our ways of knowing and doing.

Anne Waters contrasts the European binary system of thought to the non-discrete Indigenous worldview. Binary logic creates constructs that are sharply distinct from one another – for example, “good” and “evil.” In the English language, something may be good or evil, but not both at the same time and place, without diminishing the other (Waters, 2004b, p. 99). Waters demonstrates how the maintenance of these sharp, clear boundaries of the binary logic enables a hierarchical value judgement to take place, precisely because of the sharp bifurcation (Waters, 2004b, p. 98). Figure C shows how easy it is to separate words in the English language into their opposites and into the corresponding value judgement.

Good	Strong	Rich	Right	Above	Allow	Winner	Powerful
Bad	Weak	Poor	Wrong	Below	Forbid	Loser	Powerless

Figure C: Binary Logic.

A nonbinary (complementary) dualism would place constructs together in a way that one would remain itself, and still be part of the other. In this way, a hierarchical valuing of one being better, superior, or more valued than another cannot be – or rather, is excluded by – the nonbinary logic (Waters, 2004b, p. 99).



Figure D: Nonbinary Logic.

The Indigenous worldview is nonbinary and action based, meaning that Indigenous people are concerned with the products of their actions upon the web of relationships in which they live (Deloria, 2001, p. 23). Many Indigenous languages are verb-oriented:

Unlike most Europeans, (Algonquian peoples) do not have a noun-oriented language that create divisions or dualities. Their pursuit is to be with the flux, to experience its changing form, to develop a relationship with the forces, and thus to create harmony. Their language and thought are an attempt to learn from being part of the flux, to create a complementary and harmonious relation with nature, to experience the beauty of the moment, and to release such inspirations back to where they came from without fear or loss. Their language has not developed a method to explain the forces or change them, merely to contain them. This is the vital context of their worldview and life. Because of the awareness of flux and its forces, the Algonquian language is an active relationship between the elements of a particular environment. (Henderson, 2000, p. 262)

Western epistemologies of power focus on what is superior and what is inferior, whereas Indigenous epistemologies are not concerned with making judgements about the value of one over the other. Western European binary dualism is embedded in what came to be known as Western philosophy, at least as far back as Aristotle (Waters, 2004b, p. 105). As remarked by

Deloria, “very early, at least beginning with Greek speculation on the nature of the world, the Western peoples seemed to have accepted a strange binary system of reasoning in which things are compared primarily according to their size and shape. Out of this perspective came the natural sciences as we have them today” (Deloria, 2001, p. 24). Indigenous people were not burdened by the divisiveness of binary logic, and therefore Indigenous epistemologies of power differ from Western epistemologies of power.

Imposing a closed binary ontology on to Indigenous ideas obstructs communication/meaning systems, to such an extent that, for good reasons, Indigenous ideas and visions have largely remained closed to outsiders. The seemingly cognitive inability of some Euro-Americans to acknowledge a different ontological system, represented by Indigenous thought, continues to perplex and befuddle many American Indians. It has historically been in this context of blinded Euro-American vision that many American Indians have been denied the learning/use of Native languages; and in this way have sometimes been prevented from safeguarding ancient sacred knowledge. (Waters, 2001, p. 6)

I have learned that Indigenous people are concerned with performing their role within a network of relationships that extends out from experience on the ground in all directions into other realms. The Indigenous worldview is understood from within that network of relationships. Indigenous languages are what Indigenous people use to express these relationships, and therefore, the Indigenous worldview, and epistemology, is found in the language. There are Indigenous people working hard to save the languages. Indigenous languages contain Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous epistemologies, which cannot be lost.

Since languages house the lessons and knowledge that constitute the cognitive-spiritual powers of groups of people in specific places, Indigenous peoples view their languages as forms of spiritual identity. Indigenous languages are thus sacred to Indigenous peoples. They provide the deep cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Indigenous life. Through their shared language, Indigenous people create a shared belief in how the world works and what constitutes proper action. Sharing these common ideals creates the collective cognitive experience of Indigenous societies, which is understood as Indigenous knowledge. (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 49)

4.5 Knowledge

Finally, we arrive at the last category that arose from the data in this project: learning and knowledge. A definition of Indigenous knowledge is a good place to start.

Indigenous peoples regard all products of the human mind and heart as interrelated within Indigenous knowledge. They assert that all knowledge flows from the same source: the relationships between a global flux that needs to be renewed, the people's kinship with other living creatures that share the land, and the people's kinship with the spirit world. Since the ultimate source of knowledge is the changing ecosystem itself, the art and science of a specific people manifest these relationships and can be considered as manifestations of the people's knowledge as a whole. Perhaps the closest one can get to describing unity in Indigenous knowledge is that knowledge is the expression of the vibrant relationships between people, their ecosystems, and the other living beings and spirits that share the lands. The multilayered relationships are the basis for maintaining social, economic, and diplomatic relationships – through sharing – with other peoples. All

aspects of this knowledge are interrelated and cannot be separated from the traditional territories of the people concerned. Similarly, there is no need for separate reality into categories of living and nonliving, or of renewable and non-renewable. What tangibles and intangibles constitute the knowledge of a particular Indigenous people must be decided by the people themselves. (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 42)

Predictably at this point, we find that relationships are especially relevant to Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is specific to certain ecosystems and to the relationships that create those ecosystems. Therefore, Indigenous ways of knowing, or Indigenous epistemologies, have ethical and moral dimensions, and are tied to places, to ecologies, and to life systems (Baskin, 2016, p. 127).

For example, when a person enters into a relationship with particular knowledge, that person is not only honoured and changed by it, but must also take responsibility for it as well. A relational perspective teaches individuals to take social responsibility for living an ethical and moral life in the present, to honour the past through the spiritual care of those who have passed on, and to always keep the future in the next seven generations to come. (Baskin, 2016, p. 125)

Indigenous peoples possess their own locally specific systems with respect to the classification of different kinds of knowledge, proper procedures for acquiring and sharing knowledge, and the rights and responsibilities associated with possessing knowledge – all of which are embedded uniquely in each culture and its language (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 68). Several participants of this research spoke about their experience with learning Indigenous knowledge and the power they gain from it.

I have an Anishinaabe education and that includes a knowledge of the land, which is cultural, a knowledge of ceremony, a knowledge of people and families and kinship. Cultural education is understanding your own history of your relatives and specifically how they survived ongoing colonial violence within your own territory, how that impacts you today. I believe that's all a part of an Anishinaabe-based education.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

I find being home really empowering. I think I looked at things a little bit differently here. I was able to just be on the land. I would go for walks with my grandfather and he would tell me things in a different way than other people would off reserve. Whenever I came home here it just felt like it spoke to me and gave me back that power that has been gone or that had been taken.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

I gave myself the power to seek this knowledge, back in the day someone had more power over us and stopped us from learning our own ways. Everything was forbidden and we had to keep everything in secret. I took over and I said no this is enough. I'm going to take control again of my own life, of my own path, and if I want anything to change, I need to own what has already happened and who I am. In a sense I'm gaining knowledge to be able to help myself. I'm gaining tools and that gives me power to bring me into a good space. I didn't have any coping mechanisms, but part of learning who I am – I'm also learning all these different songs. I'm learning about medicines. So much to know and in a sense I do feel like I have a little bit more power and control over how I feel maybe in situations. Power over my own health and well-being. I think that, this is so cheesy but, knowledge is power.

Clarice Pangowish, 2017

The Indigenous participants explained that Indigenous knowledge brings them power. However, this power is not the kind that a person holds over other people; instead, it is described as a personal power, a self-power or a self-confidence. The power comes from the knowledge which came from learning what it takes to survive in the territories where their Ancestors have been living since time immemorial. This is described in the data I collected as “taking back power” that was lost during the colonization experience.

It is important for Indigenous people to hold up their Elders and to provide spaces for them to share and teach this knowledge through stories and ceremony; this is how Indigenous knowledge is shared and learned. The participants of this study indicated the importance of Indigenous

Ancestors and Elders who pass on the valuable knowledge to younger generations. They described how they access the power found within Indigenous knowledge through learning about the language, the medicines, and the ceremonies.

We care for people our people who have gone on in the Spirit World, always having that remembrance that we honour our Ancestors who have gone on because they have provided so much for us. And that we never forget them and we use a lot of our medicines that have been given to us as a reminder. Like the tobacco you gave me, this has been ongoing for many generations and we are the people that were gifted with these from the Creator, the Great Spirit has given us those medicines and we are obligated to continue with that practice into the seven generations ahead of us. And we're still using those medicines. And that's the power.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

If you didn't have it growing up, you can always search out those ways and find those ways and go to those old ones that have that knowledge. And I take it very seriously when they tell me what they want to tell me. They are telling me because I am the future of it. Someday, I'll probably be expected to carry on those traditions and pass on what I know to the best of my ability too. But even working with our Elders, they are always constantly working, striving to build community, to pass on those teachings. That's the most awesome power.

Rebecca Loucks, 2017

Another participant put appropriate emphasis on the power that lives in Indigenous knowledge:

What you were just told is something that is older than you are, that's been passed on for generations, and that's power in itself. For somebody to have held onto that that long, and share that power with you. Nowadays they call them teachings, but years ago, that was just life.

Harvey Bell, 2017

Since Indigenous knowledge bears heavy personal responsibilities, as well as the power to interfere with relationships between humans and non-humans, it ordinarily must be transmitted personally to an apprentice who has been spiritually prepared to accept those burdens and to bear the power with humility (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 67).

Another participant indicates that he applies Indigenous knowledge and teachings to his life to stay healthy:

It's so much easier. It's so much easier. Living that healthy road, that healthy lifestyle. Honesty and truth. Just being honest and truth, so much easier.

Gregory Odjig, 2017

The words of Elder Twylah Hyrd Nitsch shed light on how Indigenous education was delivered in Seneca communities:

Education has moved from the heart to the head. If it is heart connected, it must be truth connected and peace connected. That's where comfort comes in. If there is no comfort in education, then I think that there is something lacking in the education system. The Native education system of the past recognizes that there must be love, truth, and peace present, in all learning. People will recognize it as something that is wonderful for us to be involved in. Because everything we look at is teaching a lesson; a tree is teaching a lesson; grass is teaching a lesson, everything is teaching a lesson. We need to recognize that we are able to grasp that lesson if it is brought to us in an interesting way. When we can feel comfort we are part of its whole. (Kulchyski et al., 1999, p. 87)

This is the way Indigenous knowledge is understood; this is Indigenous epistemology. This Elder is describing how Indigenous people learn what they know; it happens through relationships with Mother Earth, with other creatures, and with the spirit realm(s). When love, truth, and peace are present, people will recognize it as something wonderful to be involved in, and the knowledge is shared, received, and trusted. It follows that when love, truth, or peace are not present, people may not recognize it as something wonderful to be involved in and may not accept the knowledge put forward under these circumstances. Through the Western epistemological lens, the methods described by this Seneca Elder do not produce any noteworthy knowledge. These ideas do not translate well into Western epistemology.

According to Leroy Little Bear, storytelling is a very important part of the Indigenous educational process. “It is through stories that customs and values are taught and shared” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81). One of the Anishinaabe Grandmothers interviewed for this project explained in amazing detail how storytelling fit into her education growing up:

I have learned by being out in the environment as being closely connected to the land. That's where our power came from. You were content, you depended on your environment. And also the traditional stories that came from those populations that were out there. And it wasn't just one family. There was a group of families that would be out there. Like a camping situation. Today a lot of people are travelling with their mobile homes, their tents, going to provincial parks. Well that was like me when it was June we would be out on the land, free and clear and at peace. And also learning from the Elders that were in those campgrounds, the legends.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

Learning experiences like this are echoed across all Indigenous nations. In the words of Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Ward:

There is Elders, they sit around maybe outside with the fire and the Elders and Elder women they sit around and tell stories. All kinds of different stories and they make children laugh and all kinds of different things like that. They go on for hours and hours just to learn their kids. (Kulchyski et al., 1999, p. 59)

Anishinaabe Grandmother Leona Nahwegahbow shared a story that she remembers from when she was still a child. She prefaced the story by explaining that many of the legends were of animals being our partners. “We communicated with the animals and stories were told about how animals were able to resolve their own matters,” she explained.

There was a story that I remember about the turtle being a very soft-bodied animal and he was by the lake and all the animals were poking fun at this turtle. But the turtle was always by the shore and he got to communicate with the fish who were coming to shore. And the fish would talk about where they migrated to and from and why they did this or that. And so the turtle was very familiar with their story. So when the families came down to the shore to look for food, the turtle was able to help them where to get the fish. And they would always have their tobacco, giving that to the turtle. And then we have this

Nanabush story where Nanabush comes to that location and he watches and he sees all the other animals poking fun at the turtle with his soft body and he was very open to giving information. The other animals were making fun of him, poking sticks at him and really making him scared and abused. So Nanabush comes out of the bush and says, I want you all to stop what you're doing. And they all ran out and went and hid wherever they were coming from. But the little turtle was there crying so Nanabush says, "You know something? I'm going to give you a gift." Those people ran away are going to come and we'll have a big community feast. So he called all the people that had caught the fish to come and provide the feast for them. And the turtle was there and those, people, all those animals were there and he says to the turtle, "When that day comes, it'll be a very special event for you." And that's the day he was given his hard shell to protect himself. So that's how we are. We are given gifts, but we have to understand where can we take that right path of life. If we do something wrong, we're on the left side of that eagle feather. If we're doing right we're on the right side of the feather and that's the wide part of the eagle feather. So that centre stem is our path of life and that's what was given to me to follow. And my spirit name comes with that, Clear Sky. You have to be clear as to where you're going in your life. And when you realize that you're able to walk that path of life and provide all the good directions for those that need it.

Leona Nahwegahbow, Elder, 2017

Stories like this demonstrate how Anishinaabe people think in terms of relationships with everything else. Through stories like this one, Anishinaabe people learn what it means to be Anishinaabe and how to apply Anishinaabe values. Although Indigenous people can use the English (or French) language, understand Western epistemologies, and think using Western logic, our Elders are telling us that we must also make time to learn, practice, think, and create more knowledge based on Indigenous epistemologies. It is only that Elders do not use the word epistemology; instead, they talk about language revitalization and knowledge sharing using Indigenous methods. In the words of a Musqueam Elder:

As for us remaining Elders in Musqueam, we are trying to get the young people to go our way again. Education can make you think like a White man, we are trying to get our people to think our way. I believe that it is working. Even a lot of White people are starting to look to us now, they want to see the way we work things, they see it work a lot better than the government. Elders should make sure people

learn how to be Native, to think Native. We are starting to do that in school now, we are teaching the young people our languages. Pre-school, kindergarten, grade one, two, and three are being taught one-to-one in our language, for half an hour of school time. Other Native people are doing that too, to get our languages back.

(Kulchyski et al., 1999, p. 448)

Nearly every participant mentioned the Western education system during their interview. Many participants contrasted Indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge. There are mixed feelings about the Western education system; there is a lack of trust toward institutions of Western education and some participants feel pressured to conform to expected educational standards.

I don't feel that I have to be taught by these non-native people that they are saying you have to do this and you have to do that and this way. If it doesn't feel right to me – I have to be true to who I am. It's really important to be a role model and show that. I'm not trying to disrespect their ways, but it's just not a fit for the lifestyle that I want to lead.

Rebecca Loucks, 2017

For me [Indigenous knowledge] is paramount. I used to want to have that, "Oh I wish I went to University when I had the chance," that was one of my regrets, but my actual regret would be if I didn't learn who I was and what we do as Anishinabek, because I was totally lost before. I started learning about myself as a person. And I want to be able to share that kind of stuff with our people. Because I know a lot are still struggling. They are not powerless after all if they feel worthless or whatever. I want them to know that everything they need is right here on earth you don't need to follow a formal education to become worthy or have self-worth or have value to add to this world. So that's my goal is to learn as much as I can, and empower them.

Clarice Pangowish, 2017

*And a lot of our Anishinabek today they're caught up in that White man's power. *Zhoonyaa Mnidoo* (money spirit or money god). Money, status. "Oh I got my Bachelors, I'm better than you," that sort of thinking or thought. And I don't like that kind of power because it hurts. It hurts our people when someone thinks they're better than us just because they have their Bachelors, they have their Masters, they have their PhD, they have the White man's paper. But yet they don't even know how to survive on the land they don't know how to feed themselves.*

Marie Eshkibok Trudeau, Elder, 2017

I'm taking this economics course, they're giving us models and it just sickened me. It sickened me. It was obvious to me this is a greed-based system. How can any society live wholesomely with this kind of grounding? And yet it is revered and everybody chases it. It still rattles my very soul. This is so wrong. That education process — there's all these young minds, they're just soaking all this stuff they're being told, and I thought to myself, oh my God. And now all these young people are out there applying this to their reserves, you know? And I felt so heartbroken. It just made me extra mad. You know, when I wrote my final paper in law and economics, I refuted every damn thing they were saying. And I gave my reasonings. I passed.

Terry Debassige, Elder, 2017

There were project participants who described challenges or difficulties functioning in the Western education system as children:

The school was continually ignoring that there were areas of difficulty I was having in school. I was taking advanced math and such, but yet I was in basic remedial English classes. So what was the issue was not whether or not I was capable, but whether or not they wanted to spend the time with somebody who was not of their culture. And of all the teachers I had in elementary and high school, I only had one teacher – she was an Ojibway woman. It's knowing that one person, that one Indigenous person through my youth, enabled me to hold on. To stick it out. She enabled me to see that I can achieve. That I too can get through this. I too, can obtain some path through that system. I can overcome those control systems. That's when I started seeking "Who am I? What am I? Where am I?" And academically as well, I began to gain the confidence that, "Yeah, I can do that. Yes, I can read that. Yes, I have the ability. That word isn't too difficult to comprehend and grasp." And that slow building enabled me to see that I don't have a disability, I just learn differently than the way they were teaching me. So, I couldn't hold them to blame.

William Morin, 2017

Most of the participants in this research have experience in the Western post-secondary academic system, and five of them hold graduate degrees. Some participants reported finding power in what they learned about their own oppression in Indigenous Studies programs in Ontario.

For many Indigenous peoples, the only history we have known has been the story told from a white, Eurocentric perspective – one that depicts Indigenous peoples as primitive, less than human, unintelligent and a dying race. Coming to the fuller

understanding that these constructions are rooted in racism and that the resulting impact on one's self, family, community and other Indigenous people is related to ongoing colonial violence can also be a very validating experience. (Cote-Meek, 2014, p. 126)

As an Indigenous student, I experienced waves of feeling validated by the knowledge of the colonial history that I learned in Indigenous studies courses. These feelings were combined with waves of anger, triggered by trauma memory. I have heard several variations of this same story from Indigenous friends and colleagues, and this experience comes out of the data of this research project as well:

I decided to do my teaching degree and there's where I started questioning this idea and this concept of power because I was like, "Why are we learning about all different nations, but we are not learning about First Nation, Métis and Inuit children in this program?" I realized I was in the wrong program and so I switched to the Race, Ethnicity and Indigeneity program, and that set me on a whole other course. It was a starting point, an eye-opener for me to get this power back, because I felt powerless [in the previous program]. I felt like I couldn't do anything. I felt like I couldn't make an impact. I felt like I couldn't control my own education. I felt like I had to just do what I had to do within a program so that they can sign off on a degree at the end, and I wasn't okay with that. I ended up doing my degree in Native Studies. I wanted to bring that power back into my life because I felt like it wasn't there. And I felt that right through elementary school, high school, college, until university and this is where I really started to look into it [power].

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

That degree in native studies was my second degree. Within four weeks of classes, I had 25 years of questions answered. Many of those questions were, why I did the things that I did. How I worked through the things that I worked through. And those intuitive, innate blood-memory or just natural organic ways of understanding that — to treat people, to help people, to care for people, to be collective in our thinking, to be cooperative and sharing, all of those values, I came to see that these were Indigenous values. Indigenous values of survival and success and support and encouragement. That's when I started realizing that maybe this is the journey that I need to be on, is discovering more about that, because then all of those answers that I gained opened up so many more doors.

William Morin, 2017

One participant shared a story that ties many of these themes together: while having some difficulty with the structure of a university program, this participant describes how she found the answers she was looking for during ceremony.

So, we go into a fast and we start to get into the spiritual place where we are going to put it out there to Creator, to the universe, to our Ancestors, to our helpers that, "Okay. Now the real work begins. Help me clarify my roles and responsibilities." I put my tobacco down and asked for clarity. I go to sleep the second night of my fast. It was an old non-Indigenous professor that was in my dream. And, he says, "Here's the list of books you need to read and you need to study." And, he put out this paper and it fell to the ground with names and titles of books. I was just a little girl, about, you know, 8, 9 years old. I told the professor, I said, "Why do I need to read these?" "Because you do. This is what you need to read to be where you're going." And, I said, "But, I read these already." And, I said, "They didn't help me. They didn't help prepare me." They were all like, academic readings, you know, throughout my life that I've read through mainstream school. And then I started to stand up and say, "I'm not reading these anymore" and having that power back to say that, because for so long I have no power. My power is taken from me. And, so, in my dream, my vision, he says, "Well then what are you going to do about it?" And, then I said, "I know what I've got to do." And, just as I said that, that old Indigenous man started to transform into an Indigenous Elder. And, he started to have right, the wisdom. You know, you could see wisdom on him. You could see love. I said, "We need to start writing our own stories." And, then, as soon as I said that, "Fine, I'll write my own story." And it was like a big bright light, you know. And, I woke up because I was so thrilled. I was so excited. I was like, "Oh my God." It was amazing just to have that answered and that vision and that dream and to say, "Yeah, that's what you've got to do." And, have that power back into me — that life, that force, that being.

Lisa Osawamick, 2017

The story that this participant wrote became the work that earned her a master's degree. This is one important way that Western cultures and Indigenous cultures differ. The Western world is currently set up to separate religious activity and education. Education is secular. Therefore, if a student is having difficulty with a university program, they would not be advised to go out and fast on the land and pray, as that advice would not seem appropriate to the situation. However, in the Indigenous worldview, spiritual practice is not separate from other practices. The idea of separating spiritual knowledge from knowledge is not logical: politics and economics, as well as social and intellectual matters, are simultaneously spiritual (Deloria, 2003, p. 194). Under the

Western system, we have been taught to consider problems using logic and concepts that ignore spiritual facets of existence (Deloria, 2003, p. 289).

Indigenous worldviews incorporate ways of turning inward for the purpose of finding meanings through, for example, prayer, fasting, dream interpretation, ceremonies, and silence. Our Ancestors left us these methods through the generational teachings that are passed on by our Elders and through our blood memories. Within Indigenous epistemologies, there is an explicit acceptance that each individual has the inherent ability for introspection. Although there is great community guidance, this inward journey is conducted alone and it unique to each of us. It provides us with our purpose and, therefore, what we have to offer the whole of Creation. Knowledge, then, is based on experience. (Baskin, 2016, p. 90)

It is important to Indigenous students to locate ourselves in what we are learning. Many of us have questions about our experience and we are looking for answers in our education. Sometimes, our inability to locate ourselves in the work creates the desire to “Indigenize” it – not always to the pleasure of mainstream programs. There is a debate about what it means to “Indigenize” something, so I will clarify that I mean using an Indigenous worldview as a lens through which we process the information and create our academic productions. There will be differences in the productions depending on the epistemology used. Alfred’s writing inspires us not to compromise our commitment to maintaining the mentality of an Indigenous person. “This is what I see as the warrior ethic” (Alfred, 2009, p. 159). Resisting the urge to conform to Eurocentric thinking, and working Indigenous epistemologies into academic conversations, is difficult work fuelled by the warrior ethic.

One of the other participants was thinking about her own plans for graduate school while we were doing the interview. She remarked, “I’m trying to look and kind of decipher where my research will fit in. Do I have to follow those standards of that written thesis and/or the research itself, the format itself? It’s so dominant right now, the Western worldview.” Another participant has a goal of studying journalism:

I’ve taken a real serious look and I said “Hey, how can you help your people?” Journalism. I can write, I’ve got a good mind, I’ve got a good heart, my granny taught me to speak from my heart. That gave me my power to speak with my kindness and my good way. So as long as I keep using that power then I think I’ll make a difference in this world and that’s all that I really want to do is just to help anybody in that situation. Whether it’s Indigenous or not just to help them to reach out to go from where that darkness was, that dark place I got into when I was younger. To where I am now, wanting to give hope and reach back for somebody and help them forward. So that’s empowering in itself. It’s not going to be an easy journey, but it has to come from within and that will power from within is where that drive came from and I finally realized I’m beating this, I’m living in a good way. I’m living positive instead of negativity all the time. So if you can show that to the younger generation — I’m middle aged, I’m almost 49 years old, and I want to go back to university, so. So that’s empowering in itself. It’s scary, but I can do it, I’m looking forward to the challenge.

Rebecca Loucks, 2017

This participant understands that studying at a post-secondary level will come with an array of challenges. Deloria wrote that Indigenous students should expect these difficulties.

Indian students can expect to have a certain amount of difficulty in adjusting to the scientific way of doing things. They will most certainly miss the Indian concern with ethical questions and the sense of being personally involved in the functioning of the natural world. But they can overcome this feeling and bring to science a great variety of insights about the world derived from their own tribal backgrounds and traditions. They must always keep in mind that traditional knowledge of their people was derived from centuries, perhaps millennia, of experience. Thus, stories that seem incredible when compared with scientific

findings may indeed represent that unique event that occurs once a century and is not likely to be repeated. Western knowledge, on the other hand, is so well controlled by doctrine that it often denies experiences that could provide important data for consideration. (Deloria, 2001, p. 28)

I provide this quote because I want to briefly discuss the data collected on extraordinary or special abilities and powers, which a very small population of healers, medicine people, and other knowledge keepers have. For a time, I considered not presenting this information, because it might be considered too fantastic or too unscientific to support. However, when we are willing to set Western epistemologies aside long enough to view the data through an Indigenous epistemological lens, we see that the data is supported by the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples since long before Western science arrived on the continent.

I've seen some amazing things. One woman from Los Angeles wrote a letter a couple of years ago to our Rain Dance asking if we could pray for her. She was in an elevator accident, her disc had flipped and broken. Constant pain. No amount of painkillers would help. And she had other injuries. But she wanted help for that. The Rain Dance people, they did their ceremony projecting to her. And I was one of the grandfathers. That woman got a hold of us after. The pain went away, and her regular update the doctors are still trying to figure out how did it heal. It was slipped and broken, you know? Oh, and they repaired the valves in her heart too. A lot of people dismiss this.

Terry Debassige, Elder, 2017

Our people were given gifts and the Western society wouldn't understand those. So like a healer for example, has the power and only them not everybody has that gift, it was only given to them, to communicate with the spirits and the Ancestors and to understand them and the Ancestors will show them what a person needs for healing. So to me I think that's pretty darn powerful.

Clarice Pangowish, 2017

We used to have a close connection with the spirituality and Mother Earth and everything. Even after contact. Then it slowly diminished through where today most of us don't even know what spirituality is. We have an idea of what it is, but can you feel it? The only time you feel it is maybe when you lose a loved one. Or you see a little miracle

or something. But to feel that everyday twenty-four hours a day, twenty-four seven, no we don't have that. That's what they took from us. I heard a story one time about this man that and when they used to do ceremony like especially the Midewiwin, he's talking about how they used to measure power. They would shoot this miigis shell (cowry shell) into a tree using their mind. They would shoot that miigis shell and then they would use a stick to measure how far in it would go, like a bullet. He says "You try that today your shell probably won't even move." But back then that was the strength of the people.

Wilfred Trudeau, Elder, 2017

Speaking from my own Indigenous education, it is my understanding that Indigenous people had access to power that appears supernatural now, but was common to them before contact. When Indigenous epistemologies were still fully intact, Indigenous people were able to see without seeing, hear without hearing, and know what is known by communicating with Creation around us using senses other than the five that Western science explains. Stories of shape-shifting abilities and communication with other species are also common in Indigenous nations.

Very important in some of the tribal religions is the idea that humans can change into animals and birds and that other species can change into human beings. In this way species can communicate and learn from each other. Some of these tribal ideas have been classified as witchcraft by anthropologists, primarily because such phenomena occurring within the Western tradition would naturally be interpreted as evil and satanic. What Westerners miss is the rather logical implication of the unity of life. If all living things share a creator and a creation, is it not logical to suppose that all have the ability to relate to every part of the creation. (Deloria, 2003, p. 89)

The manifestation of power is simply not limited to mobile life forms. For some tribes, the idea extends to plants, rocks, and natural features that Westerners consider inanimate. (Deloria, 2003, p. 89)

In *Teachings from the Longhouse*, Chief Jacob Thomas describes the powerful relationships between Indigenous people and the rest of creation.

In former days, the animals knew the movements of the Native peoples, they knew what was in their minds. Even today, you cannot keep your thoughts from animals. Any animal can reveal to you the signs of future happenings. If you open yourself to them. This is also true of birds. Today we ignore this knowledge.

(Thomas & Boyle, 1994, p. 130)

There cannot be a discussion about Indigenous epistemologies of power without finding data on these extraordinary powers and abilities that manifest through sacred relationships. These sacred powers are relevant to the exploration of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous epistemologies of power. This sort of information is very well protected, however, due to its power and risk of misuse.

The residential school experience, and the traumas inflicted on Indigenous children and families, had resounding negative impacts on Indigenous communities for many generations. Indigenous people do not always see Western education as a safe or healthy pursuit. Education was both a target and tool of colonialism, destroying and diminishing the validity and legitimacy of Indigenous education, while simultaneously replacing and reshaping it with an “education” complicit with the colonial endeavour (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019, p. 1). Structural racism remains deeply embedded in institutions of higher learning (Cote-Meek, 2019, p. 13), and it is not unreasonable for Indigenous people to be apprehensive about Western education or around students, academics, and researchers.

[...] within universities, while significant levels of overt racism are, thankfully, no longer the norm, understanding of race generally and Indigeneity and Indigenous culture more specifically is predominantly understood through the lens of White middle class experience. It is from within these class and racially privileged positions that Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and presence are viewed. (Walter & Aitken, 2019, p. 4)

Despite the disadvantages, Indigenous students persist at navigating the post-secondary and academic landscape in increasing numbers (Mendelson, 2006, p. 24). Indigenous research is being published, Indigenous stories are being shared, and Indigenous scholars are making contributions to academic conversations. “As communities heal from the colonial interruption and experience a cultural renaissance, the desire for proficiency in mainstream domains (e.g., research and higher education) is a strategy to build capacity as a means to protect culture” (Kovach, 2009, p. 86). Clearly, Indigenous people and Indigenous epistemologies belong in universities.

If you're Anishinaabe you're going to exist in multiple places at multiple times and I think that's part of what has made us such a strong nation, is our ability to adapt and change. Not in a negative way, I'm not talking about assimilation. I'm talking about how we keep our values, our beliefs, and these core relationships relevant, active and important to us, no matter where we go and who we encounter. I think to love Anishinaabe values is to recognize how we've been successful within other systems. We have relationships with Lakota people. We have relationships with other nations. We have been shaped definitely by colonization but I feel that you can't separate the two because, like my mom would always say, that's actually part of who you are now, that history of colonization and fighting back against that colonization, and that is actually a strength for you to be comfortable with who you are no matter where you go. If you're really trying to work towards decolonization and ensuring the health and continuity and survival of your nation, you need to be everywhere and doing. And practicing who you are and your values, no matter where you are on this land and whether it be in the master's house or your own house.

Celeste Pedri-Spade, 2017

Most Indigenous people are not trying to exist completely outside of settler colonialism. As the quote above explains, Indigenous people do not wish to avoid the academy. Rather, the project of

decolonization would suggest a strategic engagement in which spaces, such as they exist within the academy, are appropriated to develop Indigenous studies that is located in diverse and multiple spaces inside and outside the university (A. Smith, 2014, p. 214).

From the Western worldview, Indigenous epistemologies appear to have less merit, scientifically speaking, when compared to mainstream academia. It has been difficult to convince academics that Indigenous knowledge is valid, and worthy of the academy's acceptance as such. Even as mainstream academics slowly accept the value of Indigenous epistemologies, it is still a giant leap to convincing them that application of Indigenous epistemologies should permeate all fields of study. As an Indigenous student, I am finding spaces to use Indigenous epistemologies under the safety of the "Indigenous studies" umbrella. The key to creating balanced relationships requires that Indigenous epistemologies be integrated through all academic disciplines.

The truth and reconciliation process requires us to re-examine and make a sincere effort to understand what truth is from both epistemological viewpoints. This is the only way we can create the understanding in the settler-to-Indigenous relationship that is needed for healing and reconciliation. This requires the settler population to first realize that their way of thinking is not the only way to think; and second to come to understand that their way of thinking is not necessarily better than Indigenous thought.

Eurocentric thinkers ... easily conclude that Aboriginal knowledge, consciousness, and language are irrelevant to contemporary Canadian thought. They see Aboriginal life as lifeworlds without systems (anarchy). Yet, when one aspires to decolonize Aboriginal people, these neglected lifeworlds contain the authority to heal Aboriginal identities and communities. Restoring Aboriginal

worldviews and languages is essential to realizing Aboriginal solidarity and power. (Henderson, 2000, p. 252)

Indigenous people are trapped in the Western context and are punished for thinking like Indigenous people, in the academy and elsewhere, where we encounter people who dismiss our epistemological point of view.

In Eurocentric education, it is important to learn and think and act within the colonizer's strategy of differences. The strategy of differences is about unpacking events so that the opposites will come out pretty much the same regardless of who is doing the unpacking. Examples of these opposites are the distinctions between savage and civilized, colonizer and colonized, and public and private. In Eurocentric thought, "objectivism" is the name given to this strategy of differences, and it is the dominant method in Eurocentric educational transmission. It is knowing through fragmentation and it is evident in the ways knowledge is broken down into grade levels and disciplines. It is a commitment to the idea that we cannot know anything truly and well unless we know it from such a distance that the "object" of knowledge remains uncontaminated by our own subjectivity or personal beliefs. (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 93)

The strategy of differences is inconsistent with Indigenous thought and interrelationships, and its dualisms have to yield more holistic thought if there is to be a relationship between Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 94).

4.6 Relationships and Community Power

Indigenous people rely on Indigenous knowledge to survive as Nations. Our skill at surviving in our territories is our expertise; it is our power. It requires that relationships be healthy and balanced. It is based on ancient and honoured teachings that carry with them the power of many millennia. While thinking about power, many of the participants of this research identified two closely related concepts: community power and survival. At this point, the discussion circles back to relationships, where we begin and end.

Tribal nations survived because they're powerful together.

Kimberely Debassige, 2017

My worldview tells me all the time that we need to stand together and be unified as a community, as women, as nations. That's where our strength will come from. That's survival.

Kimberley Debassige, 2017

I think about my grandma. I think her power came from surviving. Everyone would be surviving at that point right? So I think it's all about a collective sense of power and community.

Joey-Lynn Wabie, 2017

It's not just an Indigenous or an Anishinaabe value, that collective, it's a human value and we can't survive if we don't work together.

William Morin, 2017

Power is empowering the people around you. Not controlling them. You help them understand their capabilities, their knowledge, their wisdom, and that creates power. If you have five people with beautiful ideas and are willing to work toward those ideas, that's the ultimate power. That's how communities are built. That's how healthy tribes are built, when you can develop your people to have their own power themselves and to combine that power together with all your people, that's unstoppable. That's power beyond belief really. It's a beautiful thing. Say "I know that you are a great blacksmith. I know that you are a great arrow maker. I know that you are a great drum maker. I know that you are a great basket maker. Can you bring that to the rest of our community?" That way everybody knows their harmony for their own life. Power isn't about being over somebody, power is being with somebody to stand with them, to heal with them. Whatever may be going on in life. That's where power is created.

Harvey Bell, 2017

In Indigenous social systems, it is essential for communities to cultivate relationships with their neighbours that would allow for ongoing dialogue and dispute resolution (Alfred, 2009, p. 77). It is also essential that people come together and work cooperatively to ensure the survival of their family and community.

This emphasis on collective well-being is based on Indigenous values such as caring for all, sharing what one has, and interdependence. But it is also based on necessity and logic. Centuries ago, the original people of this land endured often harsh environmental conditions such as extreme cold and shortages of food. Families gathered to live together so they could support one another by working together for the betterment of all. They needed each other. (Baskin, 2016, p. 156)

Indigenous power is found in relationships, and relationships are important for the survival of communities.

The participants are also talking about empowerment. According to Alfred (2009), Indigenous empowerment involves achieving a relationship between peoples founded on the principles of autonomy and interdependence (p. 77). One way to empower is through Indigenous leadership styles. In an Indigenous context, leadership has nothing to do with tests of will or adversarial power games; rather, it involves sensing the common good and guiding people toward fulfilment of their needs within the parameters established by traditional cultural values (Alfred, 2009, p. 70). Alfred, and many others, have written that we must work persistently to re-establish these relationships. Alfred tells us it is a responsibility to our Ancestors that we do so.

It is incumbent on this generation of Native people to heal the colonial sickness through the re-creation of sound communities, individual empowerment, and the

re-establishment of relationships based on traditional values. This is the burden placed on young shoulders by the elders and Ancestors who carried the torch through many years of darkness. It is not enough to survive and heal; there is also a responsibility to rebuild the foundations of nationhood by recovering a holistic traditional philosophy, reconnecting our spirituality and culture, and infusing our politics and relationships with traditional values. (Alfred, 2009, p. 60)

I am interested in traditional Indigenous philosophy, because it provides a holistic framework for understanding healthy relationships, characterized by balanced power dynamics.

5 Analysis

I have been writing in a way that is intended to provide a pathway for the reader to make a conceptual movement from Western epistemologies to Indigenous epistemologies. I have presented the data in a holistic style via story and I have highlighted relevant criticisms of Western epistemologies. However, this project utilizes both worldviews to synthesize an Indigenous theoretical explanation of power. Western science has described natural systems in amazing detail and advances in technology have been astronomical. This research is an effort to privilege Indigenous epistemologies while resourcing both epistemologies in the same project.

Here, my writing switches in the direction of my Western training. A departure is made from the holistic storytelling format, so that I can deconstruct the data and represent it in a way that is more recognizable in Western academia. Table 1 shows key concepts from the data presented in a “power is” format.

Table 1: List of key concepts separated from the data and presented in “power is” format.

Table 1 <i>Findings in Table Form</i>
Power is the Creator/Creation Power is Spirit Power is the Elders and Knowledge Keepers Power is the healing that occurs in ceremony
Power is caring for the Ancestors Power is communicating with the Ancestors
Power is connection to Mother Earth Power is connection to life worlds
Power is water Power is Indigenous women as water carriers and life givers Power is the Grandmothers
Power is our voices, our stories, and our songs
Power is applying Indigenous knowledge for survival and continuity Power is depending on Mother Earth and the network of relationships for survival
Power is Indigenous languages and worldviews
Power is learning and sharing Indigenous knowledge
Power is relationships, kinship and community Power is respecting all the elements that make up the universe Power is respectful coexistence Power is helping others Power is traditional practices and good relationships
Power is holding on to the teachings and the ceremonies Power is the continued practice of ancient Indigenous methods Power is the Elders working to pass on Indigenous knowledge
Power is taking back control over my life Power is resisting colonialism and being true to who I am Power is ability to adapt and change, resilience
Power is being in the flux Power is being with the forces Power is harmony and balance

Next, I converted the data from the table into paragraph form:

Power is honouring all of Creation. Power is connectedness to Mother Earth and respect for her life systems. Power is caring for the Ancestors and using the knowledge and ceremonies they passed down. Power is Indigenous women who bring balance, carry the water, and give life. Power is our languages, our voices, our stories, and our songs. Power is the collective cognitive experience known as Indigenous knowledge, which is based on experience, language, and shared beliefs. Power is kinship, community, and good relationships. Power is remaining resilient, adapting to change, and ensuring that Indigenous knowledge survives the colonial assault.

Recollecting the purpose of this research project, which is to understand Indigenous epistemologies of power for the Indigenous participants, I can now answer my research question with the following statement: There are many forms and manifestations of power that are related to each other. The source of power is in the interrelatedness of everyone to everything else that is known and unknown. Humility, harmony, and balanced relationships produce the healthiest and most magnificent manifestations of power.

Now that we have an Indigenous epistemological statement about power, how does it fit into the larger conversation about power? The theories of power presented at the beginning of this thesis remind us about what is well known about Western theories of power. They teach us the theory behind force/coercive power, which remains the chosen weapon of normalized oppression to this day.

Power is the definitive hunger of colonization. The European will to dispossess harnessed power to achieve its ends whether it was the power that came out of the barrel of a gun or the apparent reason of law or the injunctions of a god. Colonization has always been a

culturally scripted power game and by its very nature it is a privileging of one form of political power over another. (Jackson, 2019, p. 5)

The gap in the literature arises at the intersection of epistemologies. What do oppressed people have to say about epistemologies of power? What is their experience with the phenomenon? What is their theory of power? I discovered that Indigenous people have much information to offer on this topic. Two key differences stand out between Western epistemologies and Indigenous epistemologies of power: the source of power, and our intentions for the use of power. What are the outcomes we wish to achieve by utilizing power? In Western epistemology, the source of power has mainly been by virtue, by right or by legitimacy. Western societies have allowed people to accumulate disproportionately high levels of power over others because it is considered either virtuous, righteous or legitimate.

In Indigenous societies, the source of power is the sacred network of interconnectedness of all elements of the universe, swirling around in a dance of perpetual change and transformation — or the flux. Indigenous people do not claim that any one person is more entitled to hold a disproportionately high amount of power over any other person or creature of earth, because the idea is absurd. The data shows us that unbalanced power relationships are antithetical to Indigenous epistemological views about being part of a healthy network.

The goal that Western societies seek to achieve with power is the production and maintenance of relatively orderly societies, based on individualism and competition, and wherein great discrepancies in wealth and power distribution are a normal feature of the capitalist model. Max Weber, a German philosopher, understands power as enforcing one's own will within a social relation, which can be achieved using violence if necessary (Göhler, 2009, p. 36). For Weber,

power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests (Göhler, 2009, p. 36). According to Göhler (2009), exerting an influence over others is a widespread understanding of power within the social sciences (p. 36).

The differences in the epistemologies are clear at this point, however, I have also located linkages between them, which signal common ground where the two cultures could meet to find a pathway forward. Especially relevant are the contributions of scholars – such as Foucault, Elias, and Arendt, to name a few – who describe the relational nature of power. For Hannah Arendt, power is a relation people produce by acting and communicating together; it is not primarily directed on others (Göhler, 2009, p. 36). The relation is power when it is public; when people are communicating with one another and acting “in concert.” Arendt contends that power is the opposite of violence (Göhler, 2009, p. 36). The commonality in this view of power to the Indigenous worldview is the inclination to experience power as something other than forceful or coercive.

As has been discussed, Indigenous people understand the force power that has disrupted the trajectory of Indigenous lives on this continent and around the world. However, the data of this research shows that Indigenous people continue to practice the rich theory and philosophy behind traditional ways of living and of being Indigenous, which has everything to do with power, and nothing to do with force. It is the reason that Indigenous people have survived the colonial experience up until now. Indigenous people understand that their power is in their community, and they work together toward community-oriented goals. Theory of power is not always about force – and this is the important point – because it is a point of entry to a new understanding of power.

Kevin Fitzmaurice demonstrated a space in which relations without force – or collective power – can live. Fitzmaurice (2007) uses Michael Thrasher’s medicine circles to represent how communal power is diminished by force power (p. 78), which has come to dominate the relationship between Indigenous people and mainstream society in a push-pull fashion (p. 22). Fitzmaurice (2007) explores how force/coercive power inhibits movement to balance and instead creates an insatiable craving for more force power and more alienation (p. 222). Therefore, we must consciously disengage with force power and allow space for both sets of epistemological “truths” to exist together without one dominating the other. For Fitzmaurice, this space is where we will find the possibility of relations without force – or communal power. I envision this a space for a respectful convergence of truths.

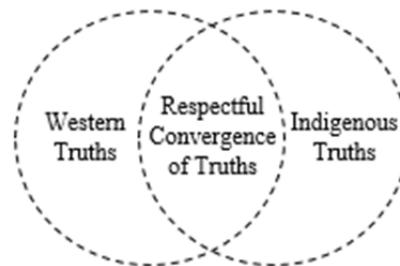


Figure E: Safe space for respectful convergence of truths.

This matter of truth is important to understanding epistemologies of power. Foucault explored the concept of truth at some length while theorizing about power. Reading Foucault was the first time I realized the extent to which concepts of power are entwined with concepts of truth. My understanding of different epistemological worldviews grew immensely once I understood that there are different “versions” of truth. Foucault tells us that truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements (Foucault, 1994a, p. 317).

Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1994a, p. 316)

Foucault’s writings demonstrate how the political, economic, and institutional regime of a society produces its truths (Foucault, 1994a, p. 317).

In the context of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada, we have two sets of truths to reconcile, as in Figure E. It is not properly understood by enough Canadians that these differences of epistemological worldview are what prevent us from understanding one another. I believe that all conflict, since the beginning of human relationships, results from misunderstandings. If both sides fully understood one another, the misunderstanding would be removed, and the conflict would no longer exist. Instead, both sides believe that their way of thinking is correct and that their actions are justified. They either cannot, or choose not to, understand the way of thinking on the other side of the conflict. To achieve truth and reconciliation, we must understand how power influences the production of truth. We must come to realize that our “version” of the truth is not the only version, since we have different epistemological understandings about the world. We must commit to creating the ethical and caring space within which we can disengage with force power, learn more about one another, and allow for the truths to converge in that safe space. “To decolonize is to recognize that colonization is a deceptive lie as much as a crushing oppression. However, in the end, decolonization simply means having faith that we can still be brave enough to change an imposed reality” (Jackson, 2019, p. 1).

6 Conclusion

The Indigenous theoretical explanation for the process of power presented in this thesis reflects Indigenous epistemologies found in Indigenous knowledges. For many Indigenous people, relationships based on peace, community, and cooperation are preferable to relations based on individualism and the illusion of separation that competitive societies create. From the Western epistemological worldview, it is difficult to imagine how to apply Indigenous theory to contemporary society.

The Indigenous epistemological statement produced by this research is an original contribution to the conversation about power. It has further value by the way it reveals the confusion that occurs when Western and Indigenous worldviews collide. Within the parameters of this thesis, the theoretical basis for an Indigenous theory of power has been established. I believe that the development of an Indigenous theory of power is worth more study, as is the applicability of philosophy and epistemology to reconciliation and healing.

I believe that most Canadians truly and sincerely desire reconciliation. A pathway to reconciliation appears when we understand that our conflicts are a result of our miscomprehensions about each other's perspectives and worldview. The research shows that Western epistemologies serve dominant non-Indigenous interests, while Indigenous epistemologies serve everyone's interests, including Mother Earth. As the severity of global and domestic crises increases, the average Canadian can see that a shift in perspective is required. Perhaps it is time for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to join forces and work together to come up with synthesized, hybrid solutions. If we can create awareness about the value of Indigenous approaches, and if we can combine that with the willingness to try something new

and/or different, we can open new doors, and generate new and innovative solutions to our common problems.

Canadians must work together toward truth and reconciliation. The goal is peaceful and ethical coexistence. However, this requires that ongoing colonial violence be addressed. It requires that we place the “truths” of Western epistemology on the same shelf as the “truths” of Indigenous epistemology and let them live together in respectful coexistence. Indigenous people are not asking for a dramatic switch from Western methods to Indigenous methods. Instead, we need willingness from the settler population to allow for Indigenous ways of knowing to share the same space as Western ways of knowing. This will only grow our collective pool of resources from which we can draw solutions to our challenges. It is the shift of power needed to propel us toward reconciliation.

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Appendix A: Letter of Information and Consent Form

Study Name: Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews, and Theories of Power

Researchers: Dana Hickey, dl_hickey@laurentian.ca

Introduction

Aanii/hello! My name is Dana Hickey and I am a student in the Master of Indigenous Relations program at Laurentian University. I am an Indigenous student and a member of Dokis First Nation in Ontario. In 2010, I finished a degree in Political Science also at Laurentian University. During that program, we learned about theories of power. These theories do not include enough Indigenous worldviews. Therefore, I am gathering Indigenous perspectives of the topic of power for this research project.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this project is to discuss the phenomenon of power and to identify and explore concepts of power from the perspectives of the Indigenous participants. The knowledge gained from this study will be added to the literature about Indigenous theories of power, and area of research that is currently lacking. A better understanding of Indigenous conceptions of power can benefit the effort toward reconciliation for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

What will happen during the study?

We are asking our participants to either participate in an interview or in a sharing circle. The estimated time commitment for one interview or sharing circle is 60-90 minutes. I would like to record the interview. If you agree, I will do this through written transcription or audio recording. We will use this information to better understand an Indigenous worldview of power.

Participation:

It is not likely that you will experience any harm or discomfort during the interviews/sharing circle, however, should you get upset while sharing your story, we can take a break or stop at any time. We will also be providing you with a list of community and other nearby support services if you would like to speak with someone further. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer. Our participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. You can decide to stop at any time. Even after agreeing to take part, or part-way through the study. If you decide to stop participating, there will be no consequence to you, and your data will be withdrawn from the study as well. Everything discussed in the interview is confidential.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

Unless you wish us to use your name, the information you provide us with is confidential. We will not reveal your name to anyone outside of the research team. We will summarize the information obtained from the sessions. We will use direct quotes but will not attribute them to you. The interview tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet (paper) and on a secured laptop (digital). The tapes will be transcribed and then destroyed once the research is over. Anonymized transcripts will be kept in the same locked cabinet and will be accessed by the researcher.

Who will know what I said or did in a sharing circle?

You have the right to have your personal information held confidential. However, in the case of participation in the sharing circle, we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality if other participants choose to speak outside the context of the research. If you decide to participate in a sharing circle, but you are concerned about confidentiality, we encourage you not to say anything that you would be uncomfortable with if it should be attributed to you by members of the community.

Information about the Study Results:

Findings will be communicated back to the community. Individual participants can request a copy of the findings directly from the investigators.

If you have questions or require more information about the study, please contact Dana Hickey at dl_hickey@laurentian.ca.

Alternatively, you may contact the research Supervisor Dr. Fitzmaurice either by telephone at (705) 673-5661, ext 408 or by e-mail kfitzmaurice@usudbury.ca.

This research has been reviewed and approved by Laurentian University Ethics Board, certificate number 6010973.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study was conducted, you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer,
Laurentian University Research Office
Telephone: (705) 675-1151 ext 3681 or 2436 or toll free at 1-800-461-4030
Email: ethics@laurentian.ca.

Consent

I have read the information presented in the Letter of Information about a study being conducted by Dana Hickey, of Laurentian University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw at any time before completion of the project. I have received a copy of the Information Form, and I agree to participate.

As the participant, I give permission for the researcher to use my name in the communication of this research: Yes: ____ No: ____

I wish to be identified as _____ (give preferred name or pseudonym).

Signature_____
Participant**Date**

Name of Participant (Printed)

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Study Name: Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews, and Theories of Power

Researchers: Dana Hickey, dl_hickey@laurentian.ca

Introduction:

Aanii/hello, my name is Dana Hickey, and I am a First Nations student working towards a graduate degree at Laurentian University called Master of Indigenous Relations. I started my post-secondary journey at Laurentian as a single mother of one daughter in 2005. In 2010, I graduated from the Political Science program also at LU (BA Honours). During that program, we learned about theories of power as written by some famous western philosophers. Those theories were lacking in Indigenous perspectives and I am aiming to strengthen and add to the current body of knowledge, so I decided to study Indigenous worldviews of power in this project. Gchi-miigwetch for your participation!

Questions:

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your life?
 - a. Prompt: Do you identify as an Indigenous person over the age of 18?
 - b. Prompt: Do you live on a First Nation or not?
 - c. Prompt: Did you grow up on a First Nation or not?

2. Can you tell me about your education?
 - a. Prompt: How far did you go in school?
 - b. Prompt: Do you feel that you have cultural or traditional education? Please tell me about that.

3. Are you currently employed? Can you tell me about your work experience so far?

4. Please share your ideas about what power is.
 - a. Prompt: Who has power?
 - b. Prompt: Do you have power?
 - c. Prompt: Who doesn't have power?
 - d. Prompt: How do power dynamics affect or influence you?
 - e. Prompt: How does power work in our society? Or in your community? Family? Workplace?
 - f. Prompt: What makes a person powerful?

5. Are you aware of any words in your traditional language that mean power?

Conclusions and Debriefing:

Gchi-miigwetch/thank you for sharing! Your contributions are appreciated. Do you have any questions for me? How are you feeling? [Listen] Would you like a copy of the resource list that was mentioned in the Letter of Information/Consent? If at any time in the coming few weeks you feel like you have something to add to your sharing or if you want to talk more, feel free to get in touch with me. [Provide LU business card].

Appendix C: List of Community Resources

This is a PDF. Can Grad Studies help me insert a PDF here?

Appendix D: List of Manitoulin Community Resources

M'Chigeeng Health Services

- Nursing Services
- Dietician
- Traditional Health & Community Wellness 705-377-5347
- Mental Health Program, M'Nendamowin Health Services
 - Clinic Manager Fred Migwans
 - Mental Health Worker Seapieces Marsland
 - Mental Health Worker Sabine Kristensen-Didur
 - Alternative Program Worker Mark Forsythe
 - Family Support Worker Leslie Corbiere
 - Community Support Worker Renee Corbiere
 - Child & Youth Worker Cherilyn Panamick
 - Program Support Worker Nancy Corbiere

Little Current

- Little Current Hospital and 24 Hour Emergency 705-368-2300
- Mental Health & Addiction Program 705-368-2182
- Noojmowin Teg Health Centre 705-368-2182
 - Psychologist Dr. Frank Kane ext. 215
 - Psychologist Brad Hempel ext. 203
 - Psychologist Albert Gouge 705-368-2182
 - Mental Health Intake Support Melanie Stephens ext. 222
 - Addiction Support Worker Kathy Martin
 - Addiction Support Worker Rob Wabegijig
 - Anishinaabe Traditional Manager Rosella Kinoshameg ext. 209
 - Cultural Support Provider Barb Recollet ext. 238

Mindemoya

- Mindemoya Hospital and 24 Hour Emergency 705-377-5311
- Manitoulin Family Resources 705-377-5160
- 24 Hour Crisis Line 1-800-465-6788

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Danielle Hickey

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Laurentian University
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada
2010 B.A.

Laurentian University
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada
2019 M.A. Candidate

Honours and Awards: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Bursary
National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation Bursary
Casino Rama, Award for Excellence
Laurentian University Aboriginal Postsecondary Education Award
Aaron Marsaw Award in Political Science

Related Work Experience

Research Assistant
University of Saskatchewan
2018-Present

Liaison Officer
CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health
2018

Research Coordinator
Health Sciences North Research Institute
2017-2018

Research Assistant
Health Sciences North Research Institute
2016-2017

Publications:

Hickey, D. (2017). Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews, and Theories of Power. In Sheppard, G., & Tremblay, L., (Eds). Diversity in Research - La diversité dans la recherche - Nooch Gegoo Ndagkendma-daa 2016 conference proceedings. Sudbury: Laurentian University.

Hickey, D. (2016). Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews, and Theories of Power. In Sheppard, G., & Tremblay, L., (Eds). Diversity in Research - La diversité dans la recherche - Nooch Gegoo Ndagkendma-daa 2015 conference proceedings. Sudbury: Laurentian University.