

SEARCHING FOR A BETTER WAY: MY JOURNEY INTO “TWO-EYED SEEING” -
REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS FROM A SAULTEAUX
KNOWLEDGE HOLDER RELEVANT TO FUTURE
INDIGENOUS TEACHERS

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Abstract

This thesis is an account of my own journey into an Indigenous way of knowing, the teachings that stem from it and the potential path going forward. A decision-making process cemented in logic and reason, guided primarily by a Western way of knowing, marks the beginning of the journey. My journey into an Indigenous way of knowing is propelled by an inner urgency and a search for a deeper meaning to my existence. I engage in an extended conversation with a knowledge keeper of the Saulteaux traditional teachings of the Bear Clan and then reflect upon the meaning of these teachings. In doing so, the spiritual component of existence, which I have experienced through ceremony, is underlined as is its life-altering power to inform, alter and enhance my current way of knowing and being in this physical world.

As Métis peoples we have been naturally gifted with two different ways of knowing. In order to make informed decisions about how to lead our physical existence, we need to understand both ways of knowing: to be able to see with both eyes. Neither system is inherently right or wrong. Hence, the extent to which each way of knowing becomes part of an individual Métis epistemology is a personal choice.

Indigenous theory and Indigenous methodology are both used throughout the thesis. The concepts of Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012), narrative, storytelling, the conversational method as interview process, self-in-relation, self-referent and experiential learnings make meaning of the teachings and guide my reflections by providing the context for my insights. In the conclusion (chapter five), I write a letter to future Indigenous teachers, reflecting on the central role the spiritual component of existence can play in their journey as educators.

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I send my deepest thanks to my family and close friends, for your continual encouragement and support. I know I have missed a lot of family time; I apologize for this and extend my sincerest thanks for your understanding, encouragement and for the sacrifices and accommodations you have made.

Lastly, to my mother Bente and my teacher Mike (also to Elder Danny Musqua (Mushum) for sharing the teachings of the Bear Clan): for your endless patience, time, sacrifice and encouragement. For your wisdom, for the teachings and for letting me work through them and come to an understanding. For believing in me and for not letting me give up on myself; if it was not for your efforts I am sure I would not be here. It is hard to find the words to express how grateful I am for all that I asked of you and what you offered throughout this thesis process. Thank you for allowing me to find my way – Maarsii.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to mom Bente (White Eagle Woman) whose depth of knowledge I did not realize until I started this journey and was utterly humbled; to my mentor, teacher and friend Mike (Healing Bird) whose wisdom and humility embodies the teachings, and whose patience has surely been tested; to (Mushum) Elder (Dr.) Danny Musqua (Little Blackbird) for showing us “The Way”; and to my Bear Clan brother Corey (Spotted Eagle) whose physical journey was cut short.

I also dedicate this thesis to my family, for your sacrifice, encouragement, complete understanding and unwavering support – I have noticed, and I am grateful. I love you all, and I hope to be around a bit more now.

I also would like to dedicate this thesis to all Indigenous teacher educators and to their students. As well as to anyone who may find the teachings in this thesis of use on their own personal journeys - as the teachings are open to all.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to the students and teachers of the Saulteaux teachings of the Bear Clan: those passed, those still with us and those yet to come.

Prologue: Protocol of Introduction (Self-in-Relation)

As Kovach (2014) explains, “a protocol of introduction pays respect” (p. 103) because it acknowledges those who came before and their ideas - ancestors, all our relations, Elders, academics, that which may help guide your process of learning and discovery. A protocol of introduction, for many Indigenous peoples, is also a traditional cultural custom and practice for identifying our kinship group, the place we are connected to, and the Indigenous knowledge base which informs our collective and individual epistemology. Moreover, the protocol of introduction within research acknowledges those who have yet to come, as well as those who may find your research helpful. It allows the reader insight into another’s personal journey, where they came from and the direction they may be heading (Martin, 2003). This kind of protocol adds a human element to research. This is an element I am beginning to understand, and which is essential to Indigenous research conducted from an Indigenous perspective. Therefore, I believe it is important to begin this process with a brief prologue of introduction.

I am descended from Danish, English and Scottish grandfathers, and Norwegian and Plains Cree (kokum) grandmothers. For many reasons I self-identify as Métis. One of the main reasons that I identify as Métis is that I am indebted to the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) for allowing an opportunity for an ongoing immersion in Indigenous philosophy and for exploring my Métis heritage. This educational process has centered me on a path that I know to have meaning and which feels right. Had it not been for my initial cultural revitalization via SUNTEP, which is leading to a more complete understanding of Indigenous philosophy and the spiritual component of existence, grounded primarily in Métis,

Saulteaux and Cree traditions, I would not be here writing this today, nor would I be on the path that I am now.¹

However, I do acknowledge that even though I identify as Métis and am becoming more immersed within an Indigenous knowledge base, my non-Indigenous heritage has and will continue to be a part of my life. Simply because one identifies as an Indigenous person does not mean that they are obligated to denounce all other forms of knowledge or sever multiple and diverse community ties. The degree to which one recognizes, adopts and accepts Indigenous philosophy and all it encompasses is a personal choice, especially when we are referring to Indigenous spirituality and ceremony. I appreciate that this is a complex conversation that many people may struggle with as I have and acknowledge that in order to fully grasp its magnitude and meaning it needs to be further explored and explained. I will do this in chapter four and five as part of my learnings and further insights.

As well, I also recognize that as an Aboriginal person of Métis heritage, and a SUNTEP graduate, I am indebted for the education and opportunities that I have been afforded, the holistic knowledge I have gained and the all-inclusive path I am now following. My knowledge and education are not mine alone: to take away, do with what I please, to better my own situation. They are part of a collective responsibility; hence, the reason for this area of research and thesis question(s). These reasons, already mentioned plus those explained later, have greatly influenced the crux of this research and the questions posed in this thesis. All of which are based on the how I have come to make meaning of the teachings, and the knowledge gained on my journey.

¹ As I explain further in chapter two, there are kinship ties among various Indigenous nations (the Cree, Saulteaux and Métis included). I acknowledge this, and the similarities in philosophy, culture and language that can influence an individual epistemology. Thus, I appreciate that my learnings and insight previous to this thesis and going forward are to a certain extent fluid (in respect to the teachings from these three groups of Indigenous peoples) and they cannot be entirely separated or compartmentalized (Johnston, 1998; Lightning, 1992; MacKay, 2017).

As an aside and to clarify, I realize some people may find it odd that I am learning Saulteaux ceremonies stemming from a Saulteaux knowledge base, given that I am descended predominantly from Cree and Métis Indigenous peoples, and primarily it is these two groups of Indigenous peoples who occupied the area I grew up in. The specifics of how this came to be will be explained in detail in chapters one and three. Saulteaux are part of a larger group of Anishanabe² peoples. They have ties to the Cree, Ojibway and Métis but “maintain a distinct cultural identity of their own” (Knight, 2001, p. 30). There are Saulteaux peoples who traditionally and continue to occupy the area now known as Saskatchewan. A more in-depth historical account of the Saulteaux peoples is given in chapter three.

Just as I am descended from Danish, English and Scottish grandfathers, a Norwegian grandmother and was given the name of Jed Steven Huntley as acknowledgment of my European ancestry, I am also descended from an Indigenous kokum (grandmother) and was more recently given a Saulteaux spirit name to acknowledge my Indigenous ancestry and the spiritual component of knowledge, which is becoming more a part of all aspects of my life. The following story occurred in early summer of 2018, and it depicts the context and place of when and how that name was given to me.

It was a few minutes before seven o'clock in the morning. Noose (Michael Relland)³ and I pulled into the local fast food restaurant on the south side of Prince Albert. We grabbed four

² Variations in spelling regarding Indigenous languages needs to be noted. I have chosen to spell “Anishanabe” in this thesis, as it appears in Michael Relland’s thesis, out of acknowledgement and respect since he is my teacher and guide. I have also chosen to leave the spelling of “Anishinaabe” unaltered as spelt by Indigenous scholars Debassige (2013) and Corbiere (2019) when I am directly referencing their writing (footnote 3, chapter three and the reference list); to acknowledge slight spelling differences among like groups of Indigenous peoples as they pertain to place, region, and to the spelling variants that arise when an oral language and the teachings are put into written form.

³ Noose is a Saulteaux term of endearment and respect. It often refers to “a spiritual father or mentor. The noose is a teacher who acts as a counsel and guides individuals on their spiritual journey” (Relland, 1988, p. 34). I have used the spelling of the term, and the term itself as it appears in Michael’s thesis to acknowledge the commonalities and distinctions of language across regions (Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, n.d.). As well, the nuanced use of

coffees, chatted about the upcoming day, enjoyed the calmness of the morning and waited patiently for our other two relations to show (Noose also invited his adopted brother Curtis and his friend). They soon arrived, and we loaded all the gear into the other truck. We were headed to visit and sweat with Elder Danny Musqua (Mushum)⁴ and his family at his home on Keeseekoose First Nation. Elder Musqua is in his twilight years and I do not get down to visit him as much as I should or would like. I am a bit nervous but mostly quite excited, as I have not sweated with Mushum since 2008. The sun was shining. The sky was clear. The wind was calm, and the birds were making a harmonious presence – all the makings of a memorable day.

There was an easiness and familiarity about the drive down; this seemed to set the tone for the rest of the day. The conversation was natural and unforced. It flowed back and forth, front seat to back seat, side to side with such ease, almost as if we were long lost relations who had years to catch up on: even though my relationship with Curtis was introductory and I had never met his friend before. Sitting in the parking lot I remembered feeling restless and apprehensive and had suggested to Noose if we should take two vehicles. I thought the four of us might be a bit cramped in Curtis's truck with all the gear. But Noose insisted that we would be

the term “Noose” as it is operationalized to call to mind the reciprocal kinship relationships, responsibility to each other, and appropriate behaviours in the roles of father (as spiritual teacher) and son. Corbiere (2019) explains this kinship relationship using the Anishanabe Creation story and the celestial bodies, where “these planets and celestial bodies are often referred to as the first family.” And the father (as the sun) “shines indiscriminately on all of his children and all of creation. He gives warmth unconditionally and without favour. This is who Anishinaabe fathers were to emulate” (p. 259).

⁴ In reference to the Cree language classes I have taken and the Cree and Saulteaux fluent language speakers I have spoken with over the years, it does not seem that “Mushum” specifically references “grandfather” in either language. But there is an indication that it references “ancestors.” In this way it can be seen how the term came to apply to “grandfather”, since in a sweat lodge we give thanks and acknowledgement to “the grandfathers” and reference the rocks used in the sweat lodge as “grandfathers”; thus, this name might then be applied to all grandfathers, in both the physical and spiritual worlds. I have used the term Mushum when referencing Elder Musqua partly because of the common understanding of the term in referencing a person who is seen as a grandfather figure. As well as for the many reasons I have stated when referring to Michael as Noose. I am not a fluent Cree, Saulteaux or Métis language speaker and the focus of this thesis does not pertain to Indigenous languages. I do not intend any offence with the potential misuse or misinterpretation of the terms used.

fine, and as much as I wanted to question further, I felt it disrespectful to push the issue. He set aside my suggestions with such assurance, it is like he had an unmentioned reason or knew of something to come.

The drive down proved to be near as unforgettable as the visit and sweat itself. A few eagles, deer and other wildlife acknowledged us with their presence along the way and we pulled into Mushum's place in good time. We were welcomed with open arms by Mushum and family who could make it that day: several of his children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews had either made the trip for this occasion or booked off work. Before the building of the lodge began I made a point of spending what time I could with Mushum and of course asking a few questions. I noticed he was not surprised by my presence; and I am certain he knew I was coming even before I arrived. We were introduced to those we had not yet met, had a coffee and a quick snack and then went about erecting the sweat. There is a fair amount of work that must be done before you can have a sweat; it is all part of the experience and of the learning.

Once the sweat was built, Mushum insisted his doorman and adopted son Michael lead the sweat, and without noticeable hesitation he agreed. When Michael was set and ready to begin, one by one we entered the ceremonious sweat lodge. Unfortunately, Mushum has been troubled with mobility issues in the last few years and declined to go inside the lodge. He chose to stay in his wheelchair just outside the door; this way he could still hear the songs, the teachings and our prayers. At the end of each round we exited the sweat to grab some water, take a quick break and to check on Mushum. He was sitting there in his chair with a glowing smile, and with a look that embodied complete tranquility and pride: it was hard not to tear up. I could not help but appreciate that I was quickly becoming a part of grand narrative with great responsibility. These ceremonies and traditions, this way of knowing that we were doing our best

to carry on were a testament to Mushum's teachings. He had done his job. He successfully passed on what he knew to his children (adopted or otherwise), grandchildren, nieces and nephews. His obligation to keep, carry and pass on the teachings of Saulteaux philosophy was fulfilled. And I am sure that is what I could see on his face. Not so much that he was congratulating himself that he had fulfilled his obligation, but rather that many of his relations were coming together to learn and carry on the teachings which he had been taught. It was now up to us, while the teachings and ceremonies are in our care, to honour these ways and to not mess it up.

During my time at SUNTEP and while I have known Noose, I bore witness to many students, people coming to him for their spiritual name. They offer Noose tobacco, describe their request, and if he can help them he accepts and explains he will let them know when he has what they have asked for. He usually continues about his day and then goes and does whatever it is he does when a request of this nature is made. I asked him once how long it usually takes, and he simply replied that sometimes the name comes to him the next day, sometimes it takes a week, sometimes longer, but when it comes he knows. Once Noose has the name, he will get a hold of the person and then usually during a ceremony he gifts it to them. I have seen mixed reactions to this, but it is most often one of overwhelming joy, peace and acknowledgment. And this is a perfectly acceptable request to make of lodge holder and pipe carrier. If you feel you would like to know your name from the spirit realm, absolutely you can offer tobacco and make the request. Yet, I have never done this, and I do not know why. I have been Noose's doorman for close to five years, but it has not felt right, nor have I felt the need, to make this request. I always felt that it will happen when the time is right. I am not sure if this is something I did not want to rush, or

felt I was not ready, but regardless of the reason, I have not made the request for my spiritual name.

The second round of Noose's and Mushum's sweats is the family round. In this round each person has the option to share, to offer thanks, to pray for specific intentions, or to simply express what may have brought them to the sweat. I was seated just in front of the door, and when it came to my turn I started with my usual giving thanks and then asking for prayers. I asked for prayers for friends and family and asked for guidance for myself, to help clarify some personal events that I could not figure out, set-backs that were taking a toll on my overall well-being. I noticed a slight change in the weather but did not think anything of it. We continued clockwise around the circle until we were back to Noose, opposite the door. As soon as he started speaking I could sense a bit of excitement in his voice. He went on to explain that his Noosim (referencing myself) had been under his wing for several years now and that he noticed I had not requested my spirit name. While he always thought this a bit curious, he did not press the issue, as that is not the way. But he had noticed. Then today, he also noticed that when I began speaking the wind picked up. It started to blow quite hard, and the more I spoke the stronger and more continuous it became. Then, as soon as I was finished speaking and the next person started, the wind subsided. He said it was not a howling wind, but a strong wind that was noticeable and seemed to have purpose. I sat there spellbound and listened as Noose spoke with conviction: "Noosim, your spirit name is Wind Dancer." Instantly I felt a sense of calm and peace, an intent maybe, to let me know that even though times were tough, I was going in the right direction.

Upon completion of the sweat I went to chat with Mushum, radiating humble pride I am sure, and shared the name Noose had given me. Mushum congratulated, or welcomed me, with a

smile, a gentle handshake and a warm hug. I later asked Mushum how to say my name in Saulteaux, he replied: “Nōtināhsī-nīmit”, that means Wind Dancer: that is your name. And so it was. I am reminded of this often and I am content with the way it played out. But sometimes I still question why on that fateful day, did everything seem to align as the events did unfold. I am reminded of this again when Noose reiterates: “...you cannot force it. If it is going to happen, and it is supposed to happen, it will happen on its own schedule”⁵ (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

For the reasons mentioned, I understand that research, like life, must have purpose (M. Kovach, personal communication, October 2014; see also Chilisa, 2012; Hampton, 1995a; Smith, 2012). As well, reciprocity is a vital component to Indigenous philosophy; giving back to the people and community is one of the core Aboriginal values (Archibald, 2008). As a result, research should have relevance to both the person and community in order to have any validity and purpose (Kovach, 2009). Gone are the purposeless and anxious feelings that used to accompany every life choice I made. Feelings that would leave my every decision riddled with self-doubt. Acknowledging and embracing the transformation I went through in a sweat lodge ceremony led by a Saulteaux knowledge keeper is only part of the process of validity and reciprocity within the bigger picture. The importance of ceremony, and the transformative learning process of change, has been central to my own journey and it will be explained over the course of this thesis. This thesis is my story, my journey, for a significant part of this physical existence thus far.

⁵ The use of story is integral to this thesis and my personal journey. Story lends to meaning and relationality, and this relationship and use of story will be further explained in chapters one and three. Italics are used throughout this thesis (specifically in chapters two, three and five) to denote a story of a personal nature, which aid in both knowledge transition and meaning making. As well, italics of shorter length have also been used to denote words, points and sentences, which have significant meaning to this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PURPOSE OF THIS THESIS AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO (MY) SELF

Introduction: Outlining my Journey

This thesis is my story. My personal journey to date. It is a journey I have experienced and a story I need to tell. My hope in telling it is to highlight the value of ceremony in fostering transformative learning. Furthermore, I shall acknowledge the essential role the spiritual component of self has in guiding one's path to their true purpose in life. Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) emphasize that learning must have purpose, meaning and relevancy to yourself and to your community, and that "relevancy is integral to giving back" (Kovach, 2009, p. 149).

As a SUNTEP graduate⁶, I also acknowledge that the education provided to me has been instrumental in my transformative learning process. It provided me with the basis of Aboriginal⁷ and cultural knowledges that foster opportunities for life changing learning to occur. Exposure to Aboriginal cultural practises and ceremonies was not simply an academic process. Rather, it enhanced academic teachings by laying the foundation for the deeper meaning of Indigenous philosophy and the answers to life's path, which I was seeking. It was not until I was continually immersed in traditional ceremony that I started to gain an appreciation for, and understanding of, Indigenous spirituality, based on Métis, Cree and Saulteaux traditions.⁸ In particular, I began to

⁶ As Initially described in the prologue SUNTEP is a fully accredited four-year B.Ed. Indigenous teacher education program. SUNTEP is under the umbrella of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, which has agreements with the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan for programming and accreditation. Three SUNTEP programs are offered in Saskatchewan: Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert. As well there are various 'TEP programs across the country.

⁷ A legal term used by the federal government to refer to the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations peoples in Canada (Department of Justice Canada, 2020).

⁸ Métis, Cree and Saulteaux are three distinct Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Cree and Saulteaux are First Nations peoples, while the Métis are the Métis peoples. Their associations and relevance to this thesis is briefly explained in the prologue and it will be further explained later in this chapter and in chapter three. As well, similarities and distinctions of these Indigenous linguistic and cultural groups, as explained by MacKay (2017), will be explained in chapter two.

recognize the complexity, depth, and magnitude of Indigenous spirituality and how it is fundamental to and inseparable from North American Indigenous philosophy and worldviews (Battiste, 2013; Cajete, 2000b; Deloria, 2006; Ermine, 1995; Relland, 1998; McLeod, 1999-2000).

Of the many components of Indigenous philosophy, it is the spiritual essence or core, which has enhanced my knowledge and led me to a greater understanding of my life purpose, my path in this physical existence. Acknowledging the role that the spiritual component of self has in this physical existence has given meaning to my education and life, and it is fundamental in my search for self-identity and life's purpose. In this deeper search for meaning and purpose, and a more complete understanding of self, I have had to learn to look through two different eyes: Western and Indigenous. This concept, *Two-Eyed Seeing* has been crucial in my search for a deeper meaning and purpose in this physical existence (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012; Marshall, 2017). It is a central component to this thesis. Thus, it will be defined later in this chapter in the definition of concepts section. As well, a more in-depth account of how Two-Eyed Seeing specifically applies to my journey will be further explained in Chapter three and as part of the Wesakejack story (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Michael Relland, Métis and a Saulteaux knowledge keeper from Carrot River, Saskatchewan area, has been my mentor and guide for several years, aiding me along the journey of life. I shall refer to his Master's thesis (1998), *The Teachings of the Bear Clan: As told by Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua*, throughout, and in a conversation in chapter four, Michael will explain that the purpose of life is to learn (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2008). Each person is on his or her own personal journey in this physical existence, and even though each is a personal journey that we must face alone, the end result is the same –

“Anishanabe” or to become a better human being and to live a good life (M. Relland, personal communication, October 2014; see also Knight, 2001; Newhouse, 2004; Relland, 1998).

Michael also explains that our spirits have existed since the beginning of time, and the physical journey is only one of many our spirits will go on within the realm of the cosmos. We are here on an individual journey to try and understand our limitations, wants, needs, and desires of physical existence. As he explains in his thesis: “the life journey is an ongoing struggle to understand physical limitations and achieve balance and control over the physical” (Relland, 1998, p. 82). We should maintain balance and not allow the physical, including the mind, to have total control over self and spirit if we are to begin to understand the Great Mystery: namely, the mystery of self, our life’s purpose and our relationship to the cosmos. The concept of the *Great Mystery* is often found in many North American Indigenous teachings in reference to the spiritual realm and all of existence. It is an unseen creative life force, a consciousness, an energy that connects all beings. And it is a question of faith, not science, when we choose to believe that it exists. In this way faith is not to be interpreted as blindly and unquestionably following something which we will never understand, since as we gain insight into our personal journey and the spiritual component of existence, faith becomes a form of spiritual knowing. Our ultimate goal then, of our constant search is to understand the mystery of self and become closer to the Great Mystery (discussed later in this chapter as well as in chapter four) as part of the collective that comprises life as a whole (M. Relland, personal communication, October 2015; see also Knight, 2001).

This process of understanding, unraveling the mystery of self, while harmoniously developing an understanding of the complexities of the intricate workings of the universe and our place within them, is described as a concept of “coming to know” (Peat, 1994; see also Cajete,

2000b; Newhouse, 2004). On our spiritual path in this physical existence, coming to know is an educational journey. It is not a singular event, and the lifelong process involves developing a holistic understanding of our place and relationship with the cosmos and all beings on *Āhtasōhkanikamik*,⁹ without disrupting the natural order of existence (Cajete, 2000b; Ermine, 1995; Huntley, 1998). One of the ways to become closer to the Great Mystery is through observing and practising Indigenous ceremonies that strengthen our spiritual existence (Sinclair, 2003 as cited in Battiste, 2013). I realize that the explanation I have offered as to the purpose of self, our individual existence and the Great Mystery requires a more in-depth explanation than I have given here. It is central to this thesis and to my own personal journey. In chapters two, three and four, I explain these key concepts in depth in order to elaborate their overall significance.

Why the Need for Indigenous Spirituality, and Why Now?

What is it about Indigenous spirituality that after thirty years of existence in this physical world, when I seemed to be doing fine, that I embraced it? That I sought it out and almost immediately deemed it essential in my search for self-identity and life's true purpose? Before coming to this realization, my existence was restless and unsatisfying. While I experienced fleeting moments of satisfaction when taking a vacation, enjoying a new purchase, or spending time with friends and family, I was left wondering - is this all there is to life? I was not truly happy and content and was continuously searching for something more profound. It was as if deep down in my soul I was searching for something that I did not even know existed, nor even remotely thought possible. As Johnston (1976) puts it, “no man [*sic*] begins to be, until he has

⁹ A Saulteaux word for ‘Spirit Land’; which describes the concept of ‘Mother Earth,’ and all that is and what is provided for us, in the English translation (L. Cote, personal communication, January 16, 2021). Lynn Cote is a fluent Saulteaux language speaker from Cote First Nation, which borders Keeseekoose First Nation (the reserve Elder Danny Musqua is from – the relationship to Elder Danny Musqua will be explained later in the chapter).

seen his vision. Before this event, life is without purpose; life is shallow and empty; actions have no purpose, have no meaning” (as cited in Ermine, 1995, p. 109). This lack of meaning explained the constant burning sensation of discontent and my insatiable unrest that pushed me to continually change my occupation and location. Incessant, meaningless change constituted a futile attempt to comprehend my tumultuous life, in the hope of finding my own purpose and path in this physical existence called “life.”

Prior to my experience with Indigenous spirituality, I searched by the only means I knew how, and the way I had been living my life to date: to think things through logically, to allow my mind to rationalize and to validate every single life decision. I would weigh the positives and negatives of each possible decision and rationalize my choices based on the potential outcomes of each in regard to my current situation. Thinking through, maybe over-thinking is more accurate a description to the point of near confusion, was how I arrived at every decision. My heart and my spirit were continuously overruled by my mind. I had been told I analyze every detail in such a calculated manner, and my response was always: “well that’s my choice, it’s my life and I only get one chance at this; I’m in control and that is the way it should be.” When I read this now, I understand how foolish and arrogant this sounds and how misguided and limited I was. “In this world are very few things made from logic alone. It is illogical for a man [*sic*] to be too logical... Ruthless logic is a sign of a limited mind” (Courtenay, 1999, p. 272). What I understand by this quotation is that when we rely only on logic, we tend not to recognize the importance of emotions, feelings, or intuition (the spiritual component of existence). This was precisely the problem I was experiencing, since “ruthless logic” was limiting the scope of my mind. By contrast, I began to realize that intuition is especially important, because by paying

heed to it we begin to acknowledge the spiritual component of self and the role spiritual knowledge has in finding our true purpose and path in this physical existence.

The Research Questions I wish to look at in this Thesis

This thesis is about my personal journey and the transformative learning process that has ensued; and how I have come to make meaning of the teachings and experiential knowledge thus far – my self-in-relation (Graveline, 1998). In his research on Aboriginal literacy Anishanabe scholar Debassige (2013) terms this approach within Indigenous methodologies as a “self-referent approach” (p. 16). Although my journey started before birth, the bulk of my transformative learning coincided with post-secondary education, starting with my time at SUNTEP as an undergraduate student, both inside and outside the classroom when I was fully exposed to traditional Aboriginal knowledge.¹⁰ My personal philosophy to life, which I was using as a guide, was being questioned to the very core. The fundamental knowledge that I possessed, and thought was certain and absolute, and which I used to determine my purpose in life, was being challenged and put to the test. I could either embrace and explore it or denounce and forget it. And as much as I wanted to hold on to the security and familiarity of what I already knew and accepted as truth every fabric of my being urged me to explore new knowledge. I realized that if I wanted any hope of finding peace, meaning, and purpose I needed to change the course of my physical existence. This process, which required me to question my previous belief system, ways of being and the lens through which I viewed each situation, is what I understand by transformative learning.

¹⁰ Part of the mandate of SUNTEP is Aboriginal cultural programming. Via traditional and academic learning students are exposed to aspects of Aboriginal culture (history, worldview, elements of culture, to name a few). An account of a traditional cultural ceremony offered by SUNTEP at a cultural camp is given in chapter two, with a more detailed explanation of the purpose and make-up of culture camp in chapter four.

As a result, I consider the following research questions: *How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony? How can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education?*¹¹

A Conceptual Distinction: Aboriginal and Indigenous

Until this point it might seem that I am using the terms “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” interchangeably. However, they have slightly different meanings and there is an important distinction between them. Aboriginal, in a Canadian context, is a legal term and is used to define the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada. Under section 35.2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Aboriginal* includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples (Department of Justice Canada, 2020). By way of contrast, *Indigenous peoples* is an international term that is used, for example, by the United Nations to describe descendants of the original inhabitants of a particular region or area (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007). The concept of Indigenous includes the Aborigines of Australia, the Māori of New Zealand, the Sámi of northern Scandinavia and parts of Russia, many peoples in Africa, Asia and South America, as well as the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

The concept of Indigenous then, encompasses and includes Aboriginals, but the term Aboriginal, as defined in Canada, does not apply to all Indigenous peoples. In short, if you are a Canadian Aboriginal you are Indigenous, but being Indigenous does not imply that you are a Canadian Aboriginal. Canada’s definition of Aboriginal is context specific, much like Māori is specific to New Zealand; whereas, Indigenous is globally recognized. I shall use the concept *Aboriginal* when referring specifically to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada, and

¹¹ It is noted that the bulk of my learnings as they pertain to this thesis and these two research questions stem from the Saulteaux teachings of the Bear Clan as passed down from Elder (Dr.) Danny Musqua and conveyed through Michael Relland. This relationship between the three of us will be explained further, in chapter three and four.

unless indicated it will be in reference to the first two. When I use the concept *Indigenous*, I am referring to Indigenous peoples globally.

However, when writing about the methodology used in this thesis, I shall use the concept Indigenous. This is to distinguish Indigenous knowing and Indigenous methodology from dominant Western knowledge systems. While Indigenous knowledges grow out of the experience of particular tribal groups in relation to place and spiritual understanding, there are commonalities among them (Little Bear, 2000; McFadden, 1994). These include the importance of relationship with nature and community, the reflexivity of the researcher, their personal commitment to the research and their participants, and the inclusion of storytelling as a significant component of their work (Martin, 2003; see also Chilisa, 2012; McLeod, 1999-2000; Wilson, 2008). These attributes, in conjunction with an Indigenous knowledge system, set Indigenous methodologies apart from other qualitative methodologies that appear to resemble them. While phenomenology, participatory action research, narrative inquiry or autoethnography have been used by Indigenous researchers to good effect, they do not emphasize the importance of “self-in-relation” (Graveline as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 27) or Debassige’s (2013) “self-referent approach” arising from an Indigenous philosophy.

Methodology

Indigenous methodology stems directly from Indigenous knowing, as the knowledge informs the methods (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2017; see also Kovach, 2016). Indigenous methodologies give room for critical examination of the self in relation to one’s world. The critical self-reflective approach in this thesis is in line with Debassige’s “self-referent” approach and builds upon Graveline’s (2000) “self-in-relation” approach (as explained in the methodology chapter). The findings of this research emerge from a self (in this instance

myself) in relational conversation with an Saulteaux knowledge holder. As such, the methodology used in this thesis arrives at findings arising from one oral conversation and self-reflective understandings. Both the self-reflective examination and the oral storywork are founded on Indigenous knowledges. While this methodology involves story, this thesis is presented as written not oral.

Too often in the western world and in academia the veracity of the written word is given more weight and is considered to be legitimate and “truth”, than that of traditional oral knowledge, which is typically passed down through the generations via conversations and oral teachings (Huntley, 1998; Knight, 2001; Woodhouse, 2011). Therefore, in order to stay true to an Indigenous paradigm my interpretations and learnings as to my current understanding at this point in time were influenced and guided via an array of methods for receiving teachings. These methods are from both written and oral knowledge systems and include oral teachings from a Saulteaux knowledge holder (Michael Relland) and my reflections upon these teachings. The origins of the oral teachings which were conveyed to me through Michael Relland are thousands of years old (Relland, 1998). They have been passed from Elder Danny Musqua who learned from his grandfather, who in turn learned from his grandfather, and so on (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). The teachings of the Bear Clan conveyed formally to me through Michael Relland, as presented in this thesis, received ethical approval from the University of Saskatchewan. Extensive literature from Indigenous academics was used to supplement and corroborate traditional oral teachings in conjunction with the “self-referent” (Debassige, 2013) approach applied in the thesis.

With respect to written literature, I would like to highlight two documents that have been paramount in my work. Of note, although the Saulteaux knowledge system predates the written

word in what is now known as Turtle Island (North America), largely the vast majority of it has yet to be written (D. Musqua, personal communication, December 2018). With that being said, there are a few pieces of literature that have managed to clearly articulate fundamental components of a Saulteaux knowledge system in written form, while staying true to the sanctity of the oral teachings. *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Dr. Danny Musqua* by Dianne Knight and *The Teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Saulteaux elder Danny Musqua*, a thesis by Michael Relland, are two such pieces. Equivalently these two pieces of literature highlight and explain the North American Indigenous Bear Clan teachings of Saulteaux philosophy and worldview. In addition, and most importantly, both pieces of work have been researched and approved under the guidance of Elder (Dr.) Danny Musqua.

The two aforementioned documents were used to guide the opening, and then focusing questions I developed for the formal conversation (interview) that were discussed in chapter four (Spradley, 1972). As well, fundamental tenets of these two writings were also used as the conceptual framework to shape and structure my insights and learnings that occurred in chapter four and five. In order to stay true to the oral teachings and in an attempt to maintain their voice and distinctiveness, the conversation was recorded. Since there was one formal conversation, and it was feasible that not all my insights and reflections would come immediately after this conversation was complete, recording the conversation also helped to preserve the authenticity of the teachings when I needed to reference them for further clarification.

An Indigenous methodology stemming from the knowledges, for this thesis, is essential and this relationship cannot be mitigated. I realize that the basic explanation of the methods used in this thesis requires a much deeper look and explanation. In chapter three, I fully explain all

elements of the methods and ethical considerations that are used as well as how and why they are congruent with an Indigenous paradigm, which all originates with Indigenous ways of knowing.

Definition of Concepts

Spirituality and Religion

“Spirituality is the religion of the ‘Indians’.” I have heard this statement many times throughout my university life, as well as in discussion outside of the university. Is this true? Is spirituality the same as religion? If it is, then does it have a place in the education system? Can we ‘teach’ it; or should it be excluded from public education altogether – as in the case with teaching religion? Or, what if spirituality is not the same as religion, in what ways is it different? And what are the repercussions of trying to ban spiritual practises from the public education system? These are a few of the re-occurring questions I have had, and they have been brought to the forefront as a result of a personal experience I had several years ago, which requires a differentiation between spirituality and religion.

In 2004 I was visiting my former girlfriend at her parents’ place in Richmond, British Columbia. I was invited to accompany them to evening mass. I believe it was Christmas Eve, and was told by her father “when in Rome...”. I took the hint, as I was their guest, and went along. When it came time to go up and receive sacrament, the priest informed us that if we were not a member of the Catholic faith, we could not receive sacrament; although, the church did not have any objection to taking my money, “offerings” I believe he called them. We were to hold our hand over our heart, and he (the priest) would administer a “special blessing.” I politely stayed in the pew while my gracious hosts went and received sacrament. This suggested to me that organized religion is practised in ways quite different from the lived existence that defines Indigenous spirituality.

Indigenous Saulteaux spirituality embodies inclusion, acceptance and is a process that is innately lived (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2012). Michael Relland has come on several occasions to talk to the first-year university SUNTEP students that I was teaching; the topics he addressed have included religion and spirituality. I should mention Michael was raised, as he called it, “in a devout Catholic home” (personal communication, October 2014). He explained that, according to Indigenous Saulteaux philosophy, all human beings are spiritual beings in physical form. Our essence is not of physical beings, in fact we do not understand the physical form, which is why we are here. Our physical journey was mapped out long before we were born by our spiritual self. Our spiritual self is on this journey to better understand the Great Mystery: that which is our Creator and ourselves.

The Great Mystery, inseparable from the teachings of the Bear Clan, is both physical and spiritual, as well as masculine and feminine – it is all knowing and all being (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). Since we humans are spiritual beings, we do not understand what it means to be physical, or the wants, desires and limitations that accompany the physical form. That is why we are here, to learn – and as a result to better understand the Great Mystery. *Āhtasōhkanikamik* is our provider and teacher. During our journey, we are provided with all the teachings and tools necessary to re-connect with our spiritual self, in order to remember our journey and what we innately know. Trying to separate spirituality from Indigenous philosophy and everyday living would be like trying to separate your genetics from influencing your physical self. I will return to this important teaching below where I distinguish between God, Creator, and Great Mystery.

Another point Michael Relland touched on, which resonated profoundly, was that of inclusiveness. I will use the sweat lodge to illustrate this. Everybody is welcome in a sweat lodge; exclusions are not made because of religion, race or creed. The sweat lodge is a tool, and

its purpose is to re-connect with *Āhtasōhkanikamik* and your spiritual self. When you leave a sweat, you leave as a better person. If you are Catholic, you leave a better Catholic; if you are Muslim, you leave a better Muslim; and if you are an Indigenous person, you leave a better Indigenous person (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2012). Distinctions and or exclusions are not made.

Indigenous spirituality is not a religion and cannot be mistakenly regarded as such in society or the education system. If it is, it will foster knowledge that will be incomplete, unbalanced and partial (not whole). Indigenous spirituality needs to be accepted as a lived existence that is innately known and which directly influences and dictates daily life: its non-dogmatic emphasis is on self, the journey and the process of becoming a better human being (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). Holistic pedagogy must directly stem from holistic philosophy, and to separate the two is trying to separate yourself from *Āhtasōhkanikamik*. Additionally, spirituality is the core of Indigenous knowledge, epistemology, philosophy, worldview. You cannot understand North American Indigenous peoples or their philosophy, in its entirety, without understanding spirituality – spirituality needs to be discussed if you are seeking true insight (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2012; see also Ermine, 1995; Knight, 2001; Little Bear, 2000).

Great Mystery, Creator and God

God, Creator and Great Mystery. These three concepts are often used to refer to an all knowing, all powerful being, or universal entity. Yet there is a need to differentiate between them. This may be because we feel the need to understand that which cannot be fathomed in our physical existence. Yet again, we may also personify one of these concepts with human characteristics in order to make it more comprehensible, so we can then lay claim to it as a

universal, empirical truth (M. Relland, personal communication, November 2015). The following descriptions are how I have come to interpret and distinguish between the three concepts mentioned above: Great Mystery, Creator and God.

The concept of an established conservative Christian interpretation of the notion of God has strong Biblical connotations. God is referred to repeatedly in the Bible as “all knowing, the heavenly Father” and “His” way is the only way to get into Heaven. God is fundamental to Christian religion in all its denominations. He is presented as the all-knowing, man as the keeper of knowledge and redemption, and “He” is not a female. This implies that men and women must follow a male dominated path in this physical existence if they want eternal happiness in the afterlife (Heaven).

The concept of “Creator” is used in many modern Indigenous Creation stories, but still conjures up Biblical connotations. Although these images may not be as engrained as with the concept of the Christian God, I believe they are still present. I have asked both adult and elementary students repeatedly to describe what they visualize when they hear the term Creator, and the overwhelming majority articulate similar descriptors as those associated with the term God: a lone light skinned male, and all-knowing being, who was responsible for the Creation of Earth.

Of course, Indigenous Creation stories do differ in terms of the purpose of Creation, but the time frame is similar. For example, in Biblical Creation stories God created the earth in six days and on the seventh he rested. In many Indigenous Creation stories Creator created earth from a small piece of mud, in roughly the same time (King, 2003). While the order of Creation is similar (earth, plants, animals, humans), the purpose of Indigenous Creation is in stark contrast, for these stories show humans to be dependent upon the earth, plants and animals, not in

dominion over them. Despite these fundamental differences, the image of the Creator and a God force also have similarities.

The concept of The Great Mystery, however, is rather different. It does not rely on any church, or specify any one of the other religions, nor is it man-made. The Great Mystery, for many people is a foreign concept. Due to our cognitive limitations in understanding the unfathomable, we tend to personify spiritual deities in human forms, so they are more identifiable and relatable. While this personification may help put a face on the Creator it also limits their definition and serves as a gross oversimplification and misrepresentation. The Great Mystery, according to many Indigenous nations, is a consciousness, an energy, an intention that permeates and connects all things; but, it is also much more than this. In short, it is unfathomable, and its true nature and form is unknown or, in short, a Great Mystery.

The Great Mystery also simultaneously refers to the Mystery of the self and our relationship with the cosmos or universe (Relland, 1998; see also Knight, 2001). The Great Mystery can take us beyond the realm of the physical world. Here we find the possibility of gaining clarity and purpose by coming closer to an understanding of the “all-knowing, all being” that is the Great Mystery. While the Great Mystery is largely unknown, it can provide us with the deeply spiritual goal of our existence by connecting our individual existence with the wider universe. The Anishanabe peoples call it “Gitchi Manitou,” as do many other Algonquian language groups, and it is translated as ‘Great Spirit’ or ‘Great Mystery’ (M. Relland, personal communication, October 2014; see also Knight, 2001). The ambiguity and mystique of the Great Mystery is what is needed for my own personal journey conceived as an inward search to find my path in life. A journey that can connect me to the wider universe of being. Thus, it provides a cornerstone of this thesis.

Two-Eyed Seeing

The concept of Two-Eyed Seeing is a metaphor used to describe how to see the world through varying lenses, perspectives, worldviews – varying ways of knowing (Bartlett et al., 2012). The task is to know when to apply each respective way of knowing to best resolve the situation. However, *seeing with both eyes* also requires an in-depth understanding of all aspects of each associated way of knowing. Since, if we are cognizant of the potential impact and looking to benefit all peoples involved, a sufficient understanding of each representative group of people’s ways of knowing must be held.

Two-Eyed Seeing acknowledges the distinct nature of knowing of each group of people involved, as explained by Marshall (2017): “the advantage of Two-Eyed Seeing is that you are always fine tuning your mind into different places at once, you are always looking for another perspective and better way of doing things” (p. 2). The two eyes continually work together, to the betterment of all peoples involved and to future generations. Marshall (2017) also acknowledges that the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing is not contained to two eyes or two ways of knowing. It can extend to “Four-Eyed Seeing, Ten-Eyed Seeing or 3265-Eyed Seeing” (p. 2), or as many ways of knowing that are needed and involved to deal with the task at hand.

Although Two-Eyed Seeing is usually a collaborative process between various peoples with diverse ways of knowing that can extend to multiple ways of seeing, for the sake of this thesis, since it is a personal account of journey and meaning-making, I have chosen Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012). I use Two-Eyed Seeing as representative of my European and Indigenous ways of knowing that have been instrumental on my journey thus far (Bartlett et al., 2012). The task for me has been to see the world through an Indigenous and non-Indigenous lens. To not privilege one way of knowing over the other but to see and recognize the value and

merit in both, while being able to switch back and forth depending on the situation and context. In doing so, my aim is to best address the two main thesis questions and the four guiding questions from the formal conversation (interview), which are what my insights, learnings and reflections are based. A more in-depth explanation of Two-Eyed Seeing and how it specifically pertains to this research, thesis and my journey is given in chapter three (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Summary of Upcoming Chapters

Chapter 2:

In this chapter I give an account of a traditional spiritual Saulteaux ceremony at a sweat lodge, which reconnected me to my spiritual journey. The feeling of connection with nature and the universe that transformed my understanding is explored as an indication of the power of traditional ceremony and acknowledgment of the spiritual component of existence. The goal of the chapter is to provide a deeper understanding of how Indigenous ways of knowing as embodied in traditional cultural activities and ceremonies can foster greater spiritual awareness and understanding of Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012). The interpretations I give of my own growing awareness will enable me to contextualize the conversations with Michael Relland that will be explored in chapter four.

Chapter 3:

In this chapter I explain at greater length the distinctive features of Indigenous research methodology used throughout this thesis and particularly in chapter four: conversation, storytelling, narrative, relatedness to the land and community, and the kinds of knowledge to which this approach gives rise, particularly Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012) and spiritual knowledge arising from my own critical inner reflection in line with Debassige's (2013) self-referent approach. In doing so, I show how an Indigenous methodology stems from Indigenous

ways of knowing from which it cannot be separated. I also develop the guiding questions for the conversations with Michael in the following chapter. (See the Appendix of this thesis for ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board in the Humanities and Social Sciences).

Chapter 4:

In this chapter I engage in a series of free-flowing, organic and natural conversations with my mentor and teacher, Michael Relland, discussing and reflecting on the questions I pose. Since I used a conversational approach, which was not scripted, at times it did veer off and delve into other areas. However, rather than an impediment to quality research, these new directions provided further insight and much needed clarity about Indigenous knowledge, Two-Eyed Seeing, and the spiritual understanding arising from traditional ceremonies (Bartlett et al., 2012). This process of conversing about my questions was consistent with the goal of the thesis, which is to explain my own spiritual journey as it pertains to the understanding I have at this time. Furthermore, our conversations did include questions about how spiritual understanding should inform the development of self in Indigenous teacher education.

Chapter 5:

In this chapter I reflect on the conversations with Michael Relland in the form of a letter to students. In conjunction with the personal insights gained from previous chapters and insights from the literature, I interpret the meanings of Michael's teachings and their importance for my own learning. I make use of the accounts I have given of Indigenous ways of knowing, philosophy and research methodology, and Two-Eyed Seeing to sustain the new-found knowledge gained from the conversations (Bartlett et al., 2012). The goal throughout is to answer the key question at the core of the thesis: namely, how can traditional ceremony foster

the spiritual development of self? Moreover, I shall reflect on how the teachings and learnings embodied in our conversations could benefit the education of Indigenous peoples. I conclude with a letter to future Indigenous teachers as the bearers of the knowledge disseminated by SUNTEP as an invaluable Indigenous teacher education program.

CHAPTER TWO: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the philosophical background and context for my insights and reflections in chapter four, five and going forward. How I have come to make meaning of my story of spiritual remembering is rooted in North American Indigenous (Saulteaux) ceremony and in a review of the literature. Both types of knowing have been instrumental in my own individual epistemology; and they provide the philosophical context of the teachings discussed in chapter four, and the importance of the spiritual component to self and Indigenous teacher education programs – specifically SUNTEP. Moreover, a review of the literature, the experiential learning rooted in ceremony and the reflections on the formal conversation (interview) have been instrumental in making meaning of the two main questions at the heart of this thesis.

Spiritual Knowing: My Story of Spiritual Remembering

In the fall of 2012, I did not know what to do. I had been substitute-teaching for two years and did not want to continue for a third. At the same time, I could not take a full-time permanent teaching contract because I also was a proprietor of a seasonal business at a lake in Northern Saskatchewan. (I have yet to find a school division that would allow a teacher to leave the classroom at the beginning of May or commence teaching in October). I thought I would reward myself with an extended holiday once I finished up at the lake and the fall hunting season was over. I remember thinking at the time that I could haul logs in Alberta for a couple of months and make some quick cash. Then I would be set for the rest of the winter to travel and relax somewhere within the warm, blissful, sunny depths of South America.

With these ideas resonating in the back of my mind, I went to a sweat, hosted by Michael Relland during SUNTEP Prince Albert's fall culture camp, just north of Prince Albert near

Christopher Lake, Saskatchewan. My relationship with Michael Relland dates back many years. Through my mother, a long time SUNTEP Prince Albert faculty member, I had been introduced to Michael and was welcomed as a guest member of the SUNTEP Prince Albert community; since I was in the Prince Albert area for a few days he invited me to fall camp and to the sweat. Michael briefly explained the protocol associated with the sweat and that I should go in with a question, prayer or thought in mind. I had been in a few sweats before and always asked for blessings for family and friends who were going through some difficult times; this time I decided to focus on self and asked for guidance with the next stage in my life.

This sweat proved to be life changing. It was one of the defining moments of my life and has become an indelible memory in my life story. For reasons then that I could not explain, the experiences from this specific sweat provided the guidance I was seeking, at the exact time that it was needed. And as much as I want to describe it, I almost cannot. It is something that has to be experienced, to be lived in order to truly appreciate its magnitude and impact. Aboriginal philosophy is lived, is innate and is grounded in experience (Brant-Castellano, 2000; Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). Learning is experiencing and experiencing is learning. Had I never experienced the sweat I would not have learned about it, much less try to describe it. Balance, interdependence and interconnectedness are the basis of a lived reality (Cajete, 2000b; Huntley, 2001; Knight, 2001; Little Bear, 2000).

This is one of my first concrete memorable experiences of looking inward for answers rather than outward. Willie Ermine (1995) explains that people immersed in Aboriginal philosophy look “into” themselves and become re-acquainted with their spiritual realm for answers to the physical realm and one’s purpose on this earth. Bill Ermine, a cousin to Willie Ermine, and an Elder from Sturgeon Lake First Nation who shared his knowledge, with Michael

Relland, before he left the physical world, reiterates, that in order to find answers to the Great mystery, the mystery of self, and our purpose on this physical journey, we must look into ourself. The spiritual lies within the cosmos, the universe and all being, and within the spiritual lie the answers to our purpose and to the Great Mystery (M. Relland, personal communication, November 2015; see also Ermine, 1995; Knight, 2001). The knowledge I gained as to my purpose and the mystery of self, through the experience of the sweat remains vivid in my memory, so I will try to explain it.

I remember this being one of the hottest, most personal and inviting sweats I had been to. The people kept coming in until we were shoulder-to-shoulder and knee-to-knee; this left very little room to re-position if you cramped up, which is not uncommon in a sweat. The sweat Michael offers at fall camp is a 16-stick family prayer lodge, which involves four rounds of prayer and song, with a short break between each round. The pre-sweat banter was light and natural and the first three rounds of the sweat voiced familiarity, an easiness. The heat, songs and teachings seemed to gently rekindle fond memories of past sweats and perhaps forgotten teachings. Heading into the fourth round however, it seemed like the presence of the heat intensified. Michael continued to splash the glowing fire prepared rocks until they hissed, and the steam enveloped the participants in our temporary ceremonial shelter. Yet as hot and congested as it was, I sat tall and straight, my head tilted up and near the top of the canvas, welcoming the heat and its healing possibilities. My skin, I could feel was almost too hot to touch. The sweat was pouring down my face as if I had just come out of the water. I could hear people gasping as the last of water was splashed onto the rocks; the steam encompassed us and felt like it could burn if it chose to, much like the steam from a kettle. The air rushing into my lungs, through my mouth and nose was so amazingly hot I could feel my insides instantly

warming. Yet, unexplainably, despite the heat and minor discomfort I could sense from some of the other participants, I was completely at peace: my breathing even, calm, relaxed; my mind clear and open; my emotions uninhibited and my spiritual-self willing, accepting and searching. This was as close as I can ever remember being to the spiritual realm.

The door opened, which I did not notice for several seconds, and until the crisp September late afternoon air came rushing in and the steam billowed out into the cool evening air. If I was in a spiritual state, I returned to my physical presence. There were many sighs, some sobs, and a bit of uncomfortable yet relaxed laughter. I looked around and everybody was completely drenched. Some, heads down, looked on the verge of passing out; although, they did look at peace, healthier and calmer than before they came in. We passed the berries and water around and everybody shared as per tradition. The offerings of berries and water to spiritual beings above are symbolic gestures of giving thanks. During the sweat we are asking for guidance and a re-connection with *Āhtasōhkanikamik* (Saulteaux word describing all the earth provides for us) and our spiritual path, in turn we are offering our thanks (B. Huntley, personal communication, January 2016; M. Relland, personal communication, December 2015).

We sat for a bit: reflected, hydrated with water, ate and talked. Once outside I walked without hesitation or consciousness to the lake, followed only by a trail of steam that radiated off me, and sat submerged shoulder deep in the cool fall evening lake. I could feel the water gently lapping against my skin. I could feel the sand and pebbles ever so slightly embedding in my skin as I sat and sank into them. I could hear the loons singing to each other (or to us), the frogs and their amplified voices, and a sombre yet soothing howl of a wolf as it echoed crystal clear across the water. The stars were starting to become visible in the clear, crisp soon to be night. I was totally at peace; my mind was as free, clear and as welcoming as it had ever been. I was in tune

with nature and my surroundings to a point I cannot explain and to a point I have yet to experience again. And then, for whatever reason, the tears started coming. I cannot explain it and could not control or stop it; but they streamed effortlessly down my face, just as they do when I write this. With the tears a message resonated over and over again, one phrase, four words, simple yet profound: “You Are Not Done.”

Making Meaning of Spiritual Knowing

Even though I did not realize it at the time, this type of revealed knowledge (Brant-Castellano, 2000) is not unlike what Battiste (2013), Deloria (2006) and Ermine (1995) talk about when they describe looking “in” (the answer lies within you) for the answers rather than looking “out” (finding the answers outside of self). Innately one possesses answers, and a path becomes clear. It is only a matter of choosing to accept and follow it.

I was told the next day there was a faculty position opening soon within the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) Regina campus. I took this as the sign (*you are not done*) that I should apply and that I should not be headed for “quick cash” that would be selfishly squandered on a beach. Upon return to Prince Albert I applied immediately. Shortly thereafter I emailed the Dean of Education at the University of Regina, with whom I had established a very good relationship in undergraduate studies, and who had told me that when I was ready to pursue graduate studies to give him a call. He told me to fill out an application, which I did, and a short time later I was accepted into a Master of Education degree program in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Regina, commencing January 2013. Everything seemed to be falling into place.

The last piece of the puzzle to complete was getting hired for the faculty position at SUNTEP Regina. I was not too worried about this, which in hindsight was a major oversight

since this was the most crucial part of the process, considering it was hinted “off the record” that the job was “mine to lose.” The day of the interview came, and I felt great. I was ecstatic. I thought my future and the next few years of my life were set – dictated by a power beyond my consciousness. I had figured out my purpose and was following it: perfect, simple and easy. The interview went very well, and I left with the utmost confidence that in a couple of months I would soon be occupying the vacant SUNTEP Regina office. I even joked with the SUNTEP Regina administrative assistant who keeps SUNTEP Regina together. We have a mutual understanding: I tease and am then usually chased out of the office. The letter finally came in the mail and I confidently anticipated “congratulations...” as I opened it. Before I left Regina, I had already looked at housing and phoned a few friends to tell them I was moving back. I opened the letter: “We regret to inform you that you did not get the position.”

What? There had to be something wrong. I did not understand. It did not make sense. This was yet another roadblock, which I could not look past and which I did not comprehend. Among the questions I asked myself were the following: Why was I given a vision, in a sweat lodge ceremony, if it was not true? What was I supposed to be doing with my life? Why was I never satisfied or happy with my job, situation or material possessions? Why was I constantly searching for something else? Why was I not profoundly happy and content? What was my purpose on this earth? At every turn in the road, every major life decision, I had weighed the positives and negatives of possible outcomes, logically thought each decision through and made my decision based on rational thought alone. My mind constantly overruled intuition. Intuition I saw as impulsive and a sign of being uneducated. I equated it with those who did not have the capacity to formulate rational and logistic thought.

“Until you meet that inner need to find your purpose you will not be at peace” (Knight, 2001, p. 42). So, while this does explain my path of seemingly meaningless existence, it does not explain why, once I had my perceived vision: *you are not done*, the stars did not align. And why I was not able to pursue what I had seen and thought I had figured out? In my haste, and what I had yet to realize, is that there is an ethos to Indigenous knowledge that I did not yet comprehend: in this case it was patience. Many times, when a person is given a vision or is seeking clarity to the meanings of a teaching, the true intent of the message is not always immediately apparent (Fixico, 2003; Lane Jr. et al., 2012). There may be related aspects that you are consciously unaware of that need to be overcome or understood first. Simply because your will wants a definite direction with a definitive answer does not mean this will be. Things will unfold and reveal themselves in their own time, when you are ready, and - we must be patient (M. Relland, personal communication, October 2014).

However, my arrogance, anger and impatience overlooked this fact and was clouding my judgement. I was attempting to “think” the meaning of what my spirit showed me – to mentally interpret what I had intuitively felt. I had yet to realize or had forgotten that personal development and healing is a lifelong ongoing process: it is not an “event” (Relland, 1998). I also failed to acknowledge or remember that it may take time for the true meaning of the vision to be revealed. That the concept of coincidence, in Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy, does not exist; things, events do not happen out of sheer chance (Relland, 1998). Our life’s journey is meant to adhere to our innate pre-planned spiritual path. Our life purpose is related to meaning making and experiences we have been exposed to; it is through the meanings we have arrived at that filter our interpretations of the world and perception of reality. Traditional wisdom can

provide the philosophical structure through which to contextualize existence and life experiences in a manner that fosters purpose and connectedness to the physical and spiritual universe.

However, we are also afforded the will to choose. Following our spiritual journey is something we can choose to work towards or disregard, the choice is ours. It is only when anger subsided, and I became more in tune with my spirit, that I was able to more clearly appreciate and understand the meaning. Yes, the words, *you are not done*, turned out to be the same, but in my haste to think out what I had instinctively known, I misconstrued the meaning. In my zealousness, I again overthought and misinterpreted. I assumed the statement in my vision, *you are not done*, should be applied to the first educational opportunity that became consciously known – the faculty position at SUNTEP Regina. Thus, this is solely and blindly what I applied my vision, all my physical being and energy towards. Logically this made sense. In my anger and haste, after the rejection from SUNTEP Regina, I respectfully withdrew from the M.Ed. program at the University of Regina. The upcoming fall, 2013, I enrolled in a M.Ed. program in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan. It was only then that clarity of my vision began to ensue, and I began to consciously know and understand the true meaning and purpose behind the intent of the words, *you are not done*.

Previous to my journey and coming to a deeper understanding and appreciation of all that encompasses Indigenous ways of knowing, I logically thought through most major life decisions. Yet I was constantly restless, unsatisfied and second guessing myself. It was only when I started going to ceremonies and exposing myself to traditional wisdom that I began to realize that to allow the cognitive and rational to solely inform my every decision, may not be the only course of action I should consider. I was beginning to recognize that if I want happiness, peace, a sense of purpose and fulfillment, then I cannot think everything, while completely ignoring spiritual

knowledge. I need to acknowledge and accept that my pre-laid path and my purpose might be something I do not initially understand, but that their true meaning will reveal itself when I am ready. And then, as I reflect and think, it will make sense and provide further clarity with the next stage on my journey. Coinciding with this was the understanding that the innate journey is not a guarantee, but it is a choice and a possibility that I need to work towards.

The initial questioning of my existing belief system is the focus of the first stage of this thesis (chapters one and two), which also began my journey into North American Indigenous ways of knowing (mainly Cree, Metis and Saulteaux). This has enabled me to seek out other ways of knowing.¹² In the next section (chapter three) I formally introduce a Two-Eyed Seeing method and explain how it was used to expand and enhance my epistemology (Bartlett et al., 2012). In the last section (chapters four and five) I focus on Indigenous ways of knowing and as part of the teachings and my insights, I begin to view life's events through a North American Indigenous lens.

Indigenous Philosophy and Epistemology

In the Western context “epistemology means theory of knowledge, and theory is privileged within traditional Western paradigms” (H. Woodhouse, personal communication, April 30, 2017). Indigenous ways of knowing afford epistemology a more inclusive and robust meaning. From a North American Indigenous perspective, epistemology includes knowledge systems embedded in the social relations that produce knowledge, thereby providing it with a

¹² MacKay (2017) makes the following claim in her dissertation research when referring to Indigenous nations with a shared heritage, and kinship ties through culture, language, trade and land occupation: “I use Algonquian as an umbrella term to refer to the model of discourse that is the result of the dissertation research. I do so to acknowledge the three groups’ shared linguistic and cultural heritage and the contribution of the three groups to my understanding. Using Algonquian as a general term observes the fluid nature of identity without wrongly demarcating boundaries that distinguish the groups from each other” (p. 55-56; see also Johnston, 1998; Lightning, 1992).

deep contextual level of understanding (Deloria, 2006; see also Cajete, 1994; Huntley, 1998; Kovach, 2009; Woodhouse, 2011). Ways of knowing cannot be separated from the social and cosmological relations from which they emerge, since these relationships confer meaning on what is known (Fixico, 2003; Martin, 2003). The very concept of epistemology resembles what Graveline (2000) calls the “self-in-relation” (p. 361), whereby self and the cosmos are connected. By understanding that the self and its relation to the Great Mystery is the “foundation of all Aboriginal epistemology,” we can gain truth and insight into “our being in relation to the cosmos” (Ermine, 1995, pp. 104, 103).

Cajete (2000b), Fixico (2003) and Little Bear (2000) explain that an Indigenous philosophy involves trying to understand the relationships between all beings on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* and in the universe as a whole. As Knight (2001) puts it, “the natural system of the universe is not to be interfered with” (p. 39), because the relationships connecting all entities are purposeful and should be respected. The moment we begin to deny this, imbalance is created and “imbalance in nature is the beginning of our destruction” (p. 54). Knowledge in the context of North American Indigenous philosophy is about survival and understanding the relationships in nature and our place within the natural context (Cajete, 2000b; Huntley, 1998). We then know how to survive and co-exist on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* without causing undue harm. As her name suggests, *Āhtasōhkanikamik* (a Saulteaux term) is our mother, our teacher and our provider. This is an unarguable fact and literal truth. As Little Bear (2000) explains “Earth is our Mother (and this is not a metaphor: it is real)” (p. 78). Not only are we provided with what we currently need to survive, but *Āhtasōhkanikamik* also renews life, and continues creation for beings yet to come. As a result of our connection to her, earth as our mother is inseparable from North American Indigenous people’s way of being. And in living harmoniously with her, we can

become closer to understanding the Great Mystery: the mystery of self and our journey, path, and purpose in this physical existence (Relland, 1998).

In order to recognize our place in the totality of existence, we need to look inwards for answers (Ermine, 1995; Knight, 2001; McLeod, 1999-2000). This means that for our physical journey on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* to be successful we need to find our place without disrupting the balance and harmony of existence. This is reaffirmed by Huntley (2001), “there is a harmony or balance the world so desperately needs...” (p. 125). All beings are living; therefore, all beings have a spirit and are our equal. In fact, the two-legged creatures like us were the last to appear. So, it is we who have much to learn from the plants, animals and the supposedly inanimate objects like rocks (Suzuki & Knudtson, 2006). Indigenous peoples of North America have lived in accordance with the natural systems of the universe and tenets of Indigenous Saulteaux philosophy: tenets that require balance, harmony and acknowledgment of our place in nature, all of which enables us to find our path and purpose in this physical existence. Tenets stemming from a spiritual core are inseparable from North American Indigenous philosophy and our “way of life” (Deloria, 2006; see also Ermine, 1995; Knight, 2001; Little Bear, 2000).

We come from the Great Mystery and we return to the Great Mystery. Our physical journey on earth is essentially a journey home. Along the way, *Āhtasōhkanikamik* provides us with all the teachings and guidance we need to live by and complete this journey; as well, we are given all we need to rediscover our spiritual path on our physical journey and become closer to the Great Mystery and the mystery of self. Our personal journey and our place in all of existence is part of the Great Mystery, as we try to understand our place in relation to the universe (Relland, 1998; see also Ermine, 1995; Knight, 2001). This process of coming to know is what Elder Danny Musqua refers to as “The Way.” *The Way* [emphasis added] is about living in

accord with all of creation. It is also about self-remembering and about waking up our spirit in order to remember our path and purpose. We possessed this knowledge in the spiritual realm but have since forgotten it in this physical existence. The Great Mystery is both spiritual and physical. While we are spiritual beings in a physical existence, in essence we are incomplete, or somewhat one dimensional, that being spiritual knowledge. In order to become closer to and understand that which is our Creator, we need the physical knowledge of this existence to supplement our spiritual knowledge, when we return to the spiritual realm. That is why we are here. The purpose of *The Way* is to be the best human being you can be, and it involves many elements and an ethos, such as adhering to the concept of non-interference and respecting the right of others to exercise their own free will.

Experience is the basis of all our understanding. And the path to re-establishing our link with the Great Mystery is through ceremony and prayer, since they connect us through the heart and spirit. “In the life of the Indian there was only one inevitable duty – the duty of prayer, his [*sic*] daily recognition of the Unseen and Eternal” (Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa), as cited in Friesen, 1998, p. 21). The conscious mind does not know the path that has been mapped out for us. It is impossible for the mind to know our path, since it was mapped out long before our mind developed. The conscious mind has existed since birth or conception, but our spirits have existed since the beginning of time. The old ones say that in the moment of all creation the spirit of every human being who would eventually visit this physical world was mapped out (Relland, 1998; see also Knight, 2001). The physical journey we humans believe to be unique is only one of many journeys our spirits experience. The heart acts as a mediator between the mind and emotion and is the way to become aware of our spirit. Through prayer and ceremony, we can reconnect with our spiritual path in an attempt to remember the journey that has been mapped out

for us since the beginning of time (Relland, 1998). Since the physical world is beset with so many limitations, the rational mind over imposes its will in an attempt to rationalize every conscious decision; this over emphasis on the rational mind serves as an impediment to the development and reconnection to the spirit. Therefore, given the limitations of the physical journey and the conscious mind with which we try to control it, we may never reconnect with our spiritual path and find our purpose. This was indicative of myself and my situation in this physical existence, until I began to see with a different eye.

If we do not connect to the Great Mystery through both our heart and traditional ceremony, we may experience a sense of spiritual bankruptcy. This can take the form of a never-ending quest for wealth and material possessions, and a sense of disconnection and disassociation from self, community, and nature (Lane Jr. et al., 2012). This, I believe, is because the mind overrules the heart and spirit and if the spirit is suppressed, the rational mind then determines all our judgements and decision making (Knight, 2001). However, when this happens our mind is cut off from the spirit, which “typically functions as an anchor for moral judgment and conscience” (Relland, 1998, p. 84). As a result, all the inherent knowledge with which the spirit is imbued is inaccessible, and the mind then operates on a purely cognitive level rationalizing whatever choices we make. As mentioned, this disconnection between mind and spirit often leads to a total breakdown in the relationship between an individual, their community and nature (Huntley, 2001; Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). And this directly impacts the way we treat *Āhtasōhkanikamik*, ourselves and other beings.

The importance of ceremony cannot be minimized. Sinclair (2003) emphasizes that “the greatest mysteries lie within the self at the spiritual level and are accessed through ceremony” (as cited in Battiste, 2013, p. 76). As I have come to learn, our spirits have existed since the

beginning of time. In that moment of Creation, the path we follow and the life we live in this physical existence was mapped out by our spirit. Since we, as physical beings, have only existed since birth, we do not remember the knowledge derived from this innate path. Different ceremonies are used to re-connect us with our spiritual path, and during a ceremony we seek answers that our conscious mind does not recollect by reaching out for the powers of the universe that lie beyond our mere physical existence (Deloria, 2006; Ermine, 1995; McLeod, 1999-2000). The old ones say that within the spiritual realm lie the answers to the Great Mystery and all Creation, as well as answers of a seemingly smaller magnitude that include the purpose of this individual physical existence.

Epistemology and Ceremony

The complexity and purpose of ceremonies vary, and while they differ in their physical attributes, their overall intent is the same. Ceremonies serve as a tool through which individuals can access the knowledge of the spiritual realm by seeking truth, understanding and meaning that can be applied in their physical existence. Deloria (2006) explains that there are two ways in which to bridge the two worlds: either by offering tobacco, sweet grass, cedar or sage, *or* by singing songs and chants that have a spiritual origin. The burning of sweet grass, or smudging, for example, is an act of purification that rids the conscious mind of any negative thoughts or feelings. It is generally used at the start of any ceremony to initiate positive thoughts and dispel negativity, so we may go into a ceremony with a good mind and good intent. And while it is often used in more complex ceremonies, smudging can also be used daily on its own to open our spirit to the knowledge and guidance we are seeking.

As explained, North American Indigenous ceremony can have great benefits and practical effects aiding us on this physical journey. But it should not be seen as a cure to all the

shortcomings of the physical existence, nor as a “quick fix” to right the effects of the choices we make (similar to how modern medicine is used to cure many physical ailments). Unfortunately, however, it seems that Indigenous ceremony is often viewed in this light. As an example, I have borne witness to many people who wait until they are at the depths of despair before partaking in ceremony (a mistake I have made). They wait until they are so lost and broken, that they often appear to be asking for a fix or cure to all life’s problems. This is not what I understand to be the intent of Indigenous ceremony. Through a Western lens I do not see Indigenous ceremony as reactive and a “cure all.” It is meant to be preventative, so we do not get to the point of absolute despair or hopelessness. Through an Indigenous lens, ceremony is a tool which can be used to seek a spiritual knowing and a deeper sense of purpose and belonging; and if engaged in on a regular basis, hopefully we do not get to the state of nihilism. The following is one example of the intent of smudging on a regular basis and the benefits it can provide. This account ensued after a daily smudge and a moment of reflection.

When I smudge, as a means of engaging in ceremony, I am seeking a spiritual knowing. I smudge for clarity. I try to calm and relax myself so that I may be receptive to what it is I am asking for. At times I ask for guidance to life’s questions, and other times I smudge to refocus: to pause and take a breath. To allow myself a quick break from all the misgivings of this physical existence, and re-centre myself on what it is I am trying to learn at this time.

I smudge my heart: the emotional component of existence, to dispel ill feelings and induce positive ones. To help heal the pain and suffering that we may be feeling, to learn from it and accept it as part of our journey. I smudge my mind: the mental component of existence, so that I may use it in a good way and think positive thoughts, so that they will then become positive actions that will help or aid all people on their journey. I smudge my mind to clearly see

the answers to life's questions, so that my judgement is not clouded by ill feelings, especially in times of personal hardship, when it is easy to despair and harbour negativity. I smudge my body: the physical component of existence, to ward off any diseases or ailments that may be a cause of negative energy. So, my body is more likely to be strong, healthy and capable of doing the work needed to do. I do not smudge to undue the negative effects of all the physical toxins brought into our bodies, for this cannot be done. Smudging, or any Indigenous ceremony, is not a miracle cure that can fix all physical ailments. Rather, I see it as a way for us to be less susceptible to that which physically causes us harm. I smudge my spirit and my whole being: the spiritual component of existence to remember. To re-connect and acknowledge the help and guidance that may be needed to clarify events in this life journey that I do not understand; and recognize that this way of knowing lies beyond my physical consciousness. In seeking answers beyond my physical consciousness, I am opening myself up to another form of knowing and the spiritual component of existence.

I have come to understand that it is through spiritual ceremony that a connection between self and the Great Mystery can be established so as to guide and influence my daily life and enhance the knowledge I have as a human being. Traditional Indigenous knowledge is purposeful and directly influences and guides our way of living. Indigenous knowledge as embodied in spiritual ceremony is also rooted in the land from which we all draw breath and sustenance. By means of its emphasis on the relationality of all beings, Indigenous knowledge and ceremony can guide our lives and give them meaning (Cajete, 2000b; Deloria, 2006).

For much of my physical journey, I was accustomed to seeing the world through a singular Western lens. The process of this thesis is an attempt at understanding an Indigenous knowledge base, to be able to see the world through a North American Indigenous lens

(primarily rooted in Cree, Metis and Saulteaux ways of knowing). The focus of the next chapter is on methodology, where I elaborate on the significance of seeing the world through either lens, or both, depending on the context of what is needed. As mentioned, this perspective is referred to as *Two-Eyed Seeing* (Bartlett et al., 2012), and it can afford a person the luxury of switching back and forth between knowledge bases, provided the viewer has an adequate understanding of each knowledge system (Bartlett et., 2012; Ermine, 2007).

CHAPTER THREE: INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As a Métis person from central Saskatchewan who had somewhat of a cultural upbringing but is now delving deeper into Indigenous spirituality and ceremony from a Saulteaux perspective, I have had much to learn.¹³ Before the formal process of this thesis commenced, I approached Michael Relland, from the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan area. Michael is a Métis individual and the doorman to Elder Danny Musqua's lodge. He has learned from Danny as his adopted son and as a Saulteaux knowledge keeper. I offered Michael tobacco, asked for his guidance, and he accepted. Once offering Michael tobacco, I could then proceed with carrying out my research. This chapter explains how – the methods – that I have used to conduct my research.

The methods used in this research study will be in keeping with a North American Indigenous paradigm and will stem from a Saulteaux philosophical perspective. The research that guides this study is framed by traditional Saulteaux knowledge through experiential learning and ceremony as embedded in an Indigenous theoretical positioning. The methodology for this research, as described in this thesis, is complemented by literature from many Indigenous academics, from a variety of Indigenous groups (Archibald, 2008; Bartlett et al., 2012; Bishop, 1995; Ermine, 2007; Graveline, 1998; Huntley, 1998; Knight, 2001; Kovach, 2009; Racette, 1987; Relland, 1998, to name some).

The use of story is key in this research. It is my story in relationship to a Saulteaux knowledge holder and the stories he shared with me. The method for hearing story (i.e., data

¹³ As identified in the prologue of this thesis, Saulteaux peoples belong to the larger group of Anishanabe peoples, (I also acknowledge there are variations in the spelling of Anishanabe as Debassige (2013) and Corbiere (2019) make clear).

collection strategy), aligning with Indigenous Saulteaux oral dissemination of knowledge is a formal conversation method. This included one recorded formal conversation (interview) between Michael and me. The conversation method alongside a self-in-relation (Graveline, 2000) and “self-referent approach” (Debassige, 2013, p. 16) are the methods used in this thesis. In the instances with the Saulteaux knowledge holder (Michael Relland) responded to the four guided research questions of this thesis, this gave clarity to the two overarching questions at the heart of this thesis: *How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony? And, how can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education?*

Through identifying cathartic moments and through an analysis process akin to a thematic analytical method, I identified key teachings arising from conversation with Michael Relland. These teaching were interpreted through an inner self-reflective lens. The teachings that emerged stem from the recorded conversation with Michael Relland and are rooted in traditional Saulteaux knowledge. My default knowledge base is from a Eurocentric viewpoint. Thus, I have employed a Two-Eyed Seeing conceptual framework for considering two distinct knowledge systems, while looking for clarity in both (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Bartlett et al., 2012; Marshall, 2017). This thesis is “guided by two-eyed seeing” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 331) as a method of “weaving back and forth” (Marshall, 2017, p. 1) between the knowledge systems - in order to make meaning of the teachings. The Two-Eyed Seeing theoretical approach applies to my journey at this point in time, and the questions asked in this thesis, and the research design and the subsequent analysis (Bartlett et al., 2012).

To symbolize the Two-Eyed Seeing approach and provide a visual conceptual image for interpreting this research, I have utilized the infinity symbol found on the Métis flag. I use this

symbol as a metaphor to represent two separate and distinct knowledge bases (Indigenous and European) on either end. In the middle are the Métis, a blend of both groups of people and knowledge bases, who are able to switch back and forth depending on the given context (Bartlett et al., 2012). In the two sections later in this chapter titled, *Two-Eyed Seeing epistemological positioning and Conceptual framework for analysis*, I give a detailed explanation of the history of the Métis flag and symbol, the significance of the infinity symbol, and how it symbolically represents the Two-Eyed Seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2012). A visual of the infinity symbol is depicted below, to aid with this initial understanding.

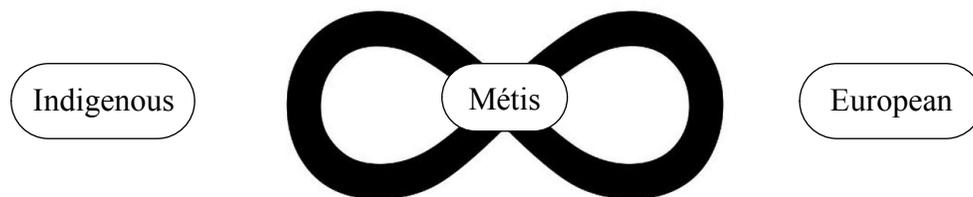


Figure 3.1 – Métis Infinity Symbol (Two-Eyed Seeing Approach)

(Figure from (Admin, n.d.); Text created using Microsoft Word)

Since traditional Saulteaux knowledge is the foundation of this research and thesis, the research methods (means of acquiring, gathering, sorting, interpreting and disseminating data) are carried out as fully as possible in accordance with an Indigenous paradigm. The methods which have been chosen for this research fit the parameters of an Indigenous methodology. The remainder of this chapter outlines the Indigenous methodology used in carrying out this research. Under the appropriate section headings, all methods of the research process will be further articulated.

Indigenous Research and Indigenous Methodologies

Indigenous methodologies begin with an Indigenous epistemological foundation. In this section and the next few I discuss this: the difference between Indigenous research and Indigenous methodologies; Indigenous knowledges as grounded in Saulteaux tradition; and the Two-Eyed Seeing approach which applies a Wesakejack / Trickster theorizing paradox, that I use in this research to reflect the Métis conceptual perspective that guides the interpretation of this research (Bartlett et al., 2012).

What constitutes Indigenous research? And what is distinctive about an Indigenous research methodology? Kovach (2016) differentiates between Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous research; the latter can include but does not always include the former. Indigenous research may include research utilizing non-Indigenous ways of knowing and methodologies embedded in western intellectual tradition, as well as Indigenous methodologies. However, Indigenous methodologies is a distinctive methodology with a distinctive epistemological foundation. Indigenous methodologies stem from Indigenous knowledge. It is Indigenous ways of knowing which informs Indigenous methodologies, unlike other approaches where the methodology can be informed from a different knowledge system (Kovach, 2016; Martin, 2003; Smith, 2012). Tribal cultural experience informs Indigenous methodology, which is relational, experiential, personal and holistic (M. Relland, personal communication, December 2016; Newhouse, 2004). In order for this thesis to be true to this distinctive approach, it must be based on Indigenous knowledge systems and utilize cultural ways of disseminating, interpreting and applying knowledge (Cajete, 1994; see also Caduto & Bruchac, 1989).

Indigenous Knowledges as grounded within Saulteaux tradition

As Kovach (2009) puts it, “the starting place for conceptualizing Indigenous research frameworks is the knowledges” (p. 54). Indigenous scholar, Manu Aluli Meyer (as cited in Kovach, 2009), states that epistemology is “every little thing” (p. 55). Indigenous knowledges encompass much more than the cognitive (what we see, think, believe and rationalize), by going beyond the realm of the physical to the metaphysical and reaching out to the spiritual and all the mysteries of the cosmos (Ermine, 1995). In addition to embodying ‘self-in-relation’ (Graveline, 1998), Indigenous knowing is specific to person and place. Chilisa (2012), Martin (2003), Relland (1998) and Wilson (2008) all reiterate that Indigenous knowing is relational, because it connects us to place and to the community of which we are a part. Each of us is on our own personal journey guided by our own individual spirit, and the learnings from a specific experience may be interpreted differently depending on the stage of one’s own individual journey (Relland, 1998; see also Chilisa, 2012).

Marlene Brant-Castellano (2000) explains that Indigenous knowing derives from multiple sources and she distinguishes between three types of Indigenous knowledge: traditional, empirical and revealed. Traditional knowledge has been handed down intact through the generations; it provides a history of a people that guides and influences their value system and beliefs. Empirical knowledge is gained through careful observation, which can be interpreted and applied to ensure success and survival. An immersed hunter, who is acutely aware of their surroundings and keenly in tune with all their senses while in the process of hunting, exhibits empirical knowledge. Revealed knowledge comes in the form of dreams, visions and quests. The knowledge revealed in such visions may provide clarity in one’s life path, or the path a people are to take during a particular troublesome time. All three kinds of knowledge may be necessary

for the spiritual understanding I am seeking on my journey, especially revealed knowledge, which can bring about spiritual understanding.

From an Indigenous perspective, this thesis is conceptually framed by a Saulteaux worldview. *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Dr. Danny Musqua*, written by Diane Knight, and *The Teachings of the Bear Clan: As told by Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua*, written by Michael Relland, are two pieces of written literature that are grounded within a Saulteaux knowledge base. The defining characteristics of an Indigenous knowledge base listed above are intertwined and inseparable from traditional Saulteaux knowing. Saulteaux knowledge is grounded in the spiritual component of existence and it stresses the importance of direct experience. The writings by Diane Knight and Michael Relland serve as the conceptual framing that has assisted in interpreting the findings and arriving at the themes presented in this literature. Alongside the Saulteaux teachings referenced in the above-mentioned literature, a Two-Eyed Seeing theoretical approach has been applied to allow for a Métis perspective to come through (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Two-Eyed Seeing Epistemological Positioning

Aikenhead and Michell (2011), Archibald (2008), McKeon (2012), Michie, Hogue and Rioux (2018) all put into words that looking through two different eyes is a metaphor for seeing the world from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. It involves not privileging one knowledge system over the other but seeing and acknowledging the value and merit in both, while being able to switch back and forth depending on the situation and context of what is needed to the benefit of all peoples (Marshall, 2017; see also Bartlett et al., 2012; Ermine, 2007; Newhouse, 2004). While many Indigenous nations may find similarities to this concept in their own respective ways of knowing – “Two-Eyed Seeing,” the English phrase describing a

traditional Indigenous Mi'kmaq perspective, was first publicly coined in 2004 by Indigenous Mi'kmaq elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012).

The phrase Two-Eyed Seeing describes one of the guiding principles of traditional Indigenous Mi'kmaq worldview (Bartlett et al., 2012), where there is acknowledgement and understanding of the benefit to seeing the world or a given situation from more than one perspective. Albert Marshall's (2017) description of Two-Eyed Seeing highlights the benefits of seeing with this approach:

Learn to see from your one eye with the best or the strengths in the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learn to see from your other eye with the best or the strengths in the mainstream (Western or Eurocentric) knowledges and ways of knowing ... but most importantly, learn to see with both these eyes together, for the benefit of all. (p. 1)

Seeing with this perspective then, giving equal weight to each respective worldview and accompanying knowledge system, honours each way of knowing and the holistic knowledge each lens represents: as opposed to simply making space for the non-dominant viewpoint, while viewed through a single dominant lens. Seeing with both eyes requires an in-depth understanding of each worldview, including all aspects of the knowledge system.

I find many similarities in this “seeing” approach, to a Métis perspective and how we see and interpret the world. We, Métis peoples, are a unique hybrid of European (primarily French, Scottish, English) and Indigenous (primarily Plains and Woodland Cree) peoples. We are a blend of both cultures, perspectives, worldviews and philosophies, with neither one worldview nor cultural heritage reigning supreme over the other: rather equal weight is, or should be, given to both. It then becomes an individual choice to what degree and the role each knowledge system

will have influencing each person's path, purpose and journey in this physical existence. With this comes the acknowledgment that neither knowledge system is superior nor inherently correct.

In reference to Chief Sitting Bull's words:

Take the best of the white man's road, pick it up and take it with you. That which is bad, leave it alone, cast it aside. Take the best of the Indian ways – always keep them. They have been proven for thousands of years. Do not let them die. (as cited in Friesen, 1998, p. 59)

One of the many aspects I have struggled with on my journey is identity. There is a stereotypical assumption by many, Métis included, that if you are Métis you are Christian and more specifically, you are of the Roman Catholic faith. Since I am not Roman Catholic and no longer a "practicing Christian" in that I do not regularly attend Church, believe in a singular perceived image of God, and question many aspects of Christianity, I have in the past felt like a fraud or interloper. I have questioned: how I can be Métis, if I am not rooted solely in Christian faith. Reading Michael Relland's thesis proved to be quite eye opening and freeing, in regard to the insecurities I held, since it became clear that he felt much the way I did. While Michael follows aspects of the Catholic faith, he still practices traditional Indigenous ceremonies. But he does not see this as interloping or fraudulent. He explains that Métis (from this perspective) are an equal blend of both cultures and knowledge bases, with our personal journey in this physical existence unique to each individual. And with each person possessing the capacity of free will, we are each afforded the right to choose what we follow (Relland, 1998).

As Métis peoples are a blend of both cultures, philosophies and worldviews, it is our duty, obligation and birthright to explore both knowledge systems - ceremonial practises and spirituality included (Relland, 1998). The degree to what extent and how much of each

knowledge system a Métis person chooses to incorporate into their own individual physical existence is a personal choice, with neither right nor wrong or better than the other. Choosing to adopt the teachings of the church or the teachings stemming from Indigenous spirituality is a personal choice. Following one over the other is not the defining criteria to identifying as Métis. I realize this topic may be contentious for many, Métis specifically, and that Métis identity involves both the personal and the political. This topic will be revisited in chapter five.

Indigenous Theorizing and the Trickster Paradox and Seeing with Two Different Eyes

Story and narrative within an Indigenous paradigm are integral to Indigenous methodologies (Bishop, 1995; Kovach, 2009), this thesis and this research. Integrating and weaving my story within the theoretical framework and context of Indigenous ways of knowing has provided the needed background information that will privilege Indigenous knowing and lay the design for the structure of this chapter on methodology. As well as, it lays the foundation for how I make meaning of the research in chapters four and five.

Stories are limitless. And storywork and Indigenous theorizing are interconnected, so a bit about stories. Some say stories are as old as Creation itself. They tell histories. They explain; they travel; and they personally inform (King, 2003; see also McLeod 1999-2000). The intricacies and complexities of stories lend to their value, for contained within them is individual interpretation (B. Huntley, personal communication, June 2018; see also Archibald, 2008; Relland, 1998). Every person in this physical world is on their own separate journey and the stories can help and guide along the way. If we are all individually walking a separate path guided by the spiritual realm, then surely, we must all be looking for something slightly different at various stages of our respective journeys? This is what stories provide, and where lessons, value, worth and meaning are left to the listener to infer. I have included stories throughout this

thesis (indicated by italics). To provide the context for each chapter, and so the reader can interpret for themselves, to guide and aide them along their own journey in this physical world.

Most of the stories in this thesis are of a personal nature. But the story included in this chapter (two sections ahead) is a Wesakejack story. It seems fitting to include this specific story since it implies seeing with two different eyes, a perspective integral to this thesis and methodology. This Wesakejack story is from the Cree peoples of the northern plains and woodland areas of North America. In various Cree mythology there are many types of stories: some tell of Creation, some are personal, some tell of a history, some stories are considered sacred and are only to be told at specific times of the year, like Wesakejack stories (Archibald, 2008; Lanigan, 1998; McLeod, 1999-2000). Sacred stories were told by the designated storytellers of a group of people (S. Milne, personal communication, September 2018; see also Lanigan, 1998). The ones who, due to the gifts they possessed and the dedication and commitment they made to the stories, were entrusted to carry on the stories of that group of people, while staying true to their originality. Much like carrying on the teachings (ceremonial included) of an Indigenous way of knowing that are entrusted in your care (this teaching will be explained in detail in chapters four and five).

The metaphor for looking (seeing) through two eyes is a symbolic representation of how each eye could view the world - one from a Western lens with a Western knowledge base and one from an Indigenous lens with an Indigenous knowledge base (Marshall, 2017). Wesakejack in Cree mythology is a character who can transform itself into other creatures, and one who can commune with the animals and other beings (Lanigan, 1998; Pelletier & Fleury as cited in Préfontaine, 2015). Wesakejack is also a “trickster” character who plays tricks on all other life forms, itself included.

The trickster is many things, and each character is a trickster in its own right. The trickster is often a representation of human characteristics and qualities; it is also a mythological creature who talks to animals. It can be completely self-serving, yet at the same time can show how completely intertwined and interrelated all of humanity is with all beings on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* (Saulteaux word describing the concept of earth as our mother), through the display of un-paralleled compassion and wisdom (Archibald, 2008; McLeod, 1999-2000). Tomson Highway explains the trickster character is meant “to teach us about the nature and the meaning of existence on the planet earth” (as cited in Acoose, 1993, p. 37).

The animals and variations of human characters who play the Trickster are a representation of each one of us. Bente Huntley, my mother who has knowledge that I did not realize or appreciate until I started university, would tell me there is a Trickster in each one of us (personal communication, January 2014). In my naivety I took this literally and thought she meant it is a person who plays tricks on another for their own enjoyment. It was only within the past few years that I began to realize the trickster symbolizes much more than the simplistic notion I had given it. The curiosities, the wants, needs, desires within each of us are only a minute part of the concept of the trickster, how we humans come to perceive this physical world and our place within it. Contained within the many stories are the universal teachings and transcend meanings that are akin among many Indigenous nations, and where individual meaning making is left to the listener.

Theorizing Trickster: Explanation of Wesakejack / Trickster Character in Indigenous Stories

For the purpose of this thesis, I paraphrased and simplified the Wesakejack story mentioned above, to illustrate beliefs, theorizing, and assumptions that can be revealed by the trickster. Not to minimize the story’s importance to the various Indigenous nations who identify

with it and whose worldview it is inseparable from, but in an attempt to highlight the transferability and parallelism depicted within stories between the numerous nations across Turtle Island (what is now known as North America). From the Lakota, of what is now the north central United States of America (Goble, 1999), to the Rock Cree of north-western Manitoba (Brightman, 2007), and the Woodland Cree of the northern prairie provinces (S. Milne, personal communication, September 2018), to the Plains Cree of the southern prairies in Canada (Archibald, 2008) - all these diverse nations share similarities in stories that include a trickster character. While the story's nuances, regarding characters, place, dialogue and minor order of events may be slightly altered among the various groups, it is the layers of the stories, the big meanings, and the integrity of the story that stay intact. For it is within the intricacy of the stories' many layers that we see the similarities in the big meanings, which depict the parallelism and transferability of stories across nations.

The number of Indigenous nations who have told a version of this trickster story stresses their transferability and worldview spanning nations. As well, it accentuates the oneness of a story's fundamental tenets, the listener's *sui generis* interpretation of the teachings imbedded within the story, the diversity and far-reaching teachings that stories can have. With this I am also underlining the reality that land occupied by various Indigenous nations changed with time. Whether it was due to migration, battles, or trade, territories were fluid and dynamic and they did not follow the static and fixed borders we have today (King, 2012).

As a result, stories travelled freely with the people across the lands and across many nations. And in each telling of each story there are slight variations to the trivial details, as well as to the main trickster character. The Plains Cree often use coyote (Archibald, 2008), while the Lakota frequently use Iktomi, which means spider (Goble, 1999), the Métis use Chi-Jean (N.

Fleury, personal communication, September 2018) and the northern woodland Cree have repeated reference to Wesakejack (McLeod, 1999-2000). Within similar dialects among the Cree, Wesakejack has different spellings. With that being said, these minor nuances are as irrelevant in many ways as the spelling. The identification of the animal (as the trickster character) and the small details are changed to suit the demographic and geographical location of each Indigenous nation. The small details are inconsequential and do not change the big meanings or lessen the impact of the central teachings imbedded within the story. The lessons learned transcend Indigenous nations. They are the breadth of the story and it is here where-in-lie the teachings. I also note that there are different cultural protocols on how and when trickster stories are shared.

A quick point of clarification. Throughout the Trickster story following, I switched back and forth between male and female genders (Lane Jr. et al., 2012). This was done deliberately to show that even though, today, in most Indigenous Creation stories Wesakejack is referred to as “he”, hence male. But the trickster character itself is of spiritual origin with a fluid gender. It is not a physical being; thus, we do not know the character’s gender (Wilson, 1998). Yet repeatedly and almost unanimously the gender associated with this character is male. We also know that pre-contact many Indigenous nations on Turtle Island were matriarchal societies, where the male gender was not considered superior and dominant over other genders. Thus, we can accurately deduce that the constant referral to the default male character is a result of colonization, where patriarchy was prominent.

Wesakejack Story: Seeing through Two Different Eyes

A long time ago Wesakejack was walking through the woods feeling a little restless and looking for some excitement. He was walking by the lake when he came across chickadee. Wesakejack noticed that chickadee had pulled its eyes out of its head and tossed them high in the air. When chickadee called them back, they returned neatly to his eye sockets. Wesakejack was instantly fascinated with this trick; she had never seen this before and he knew that if he could get chickadee to teach him, then she could show off to all the other animals; they would think he was so smart and wise. So Wesakejack asked chickadee where she learned this trick and if he could teach him. Chickadee told Wesakejack that this was a very old and special trick and he only used it when he had very bad headaches that would not go away. Wesakejack asked chickadee to teach him, but chickadee said she could not, for he feared Wesakejack would not take it seriously and may abuse it. Wesakejack assured chickadee that she would not misuse this special trick and begged him to teach it to him. He told chickadee that he too gets very bad headaches, so bad that he has a hard time going about his day. Wesakejack continued to beg and plead until chickadee finally gave in and agreed to show this special trick to Wesakejack. But she sternly cautioned Wesakejack that he must only do this trick when he had extremely bad headaches, and that he could only do this trick four times. Wesakejack nonchalantly acknowledged the advice and thanked chickadee for helping him before continuing on her way.

Wesakejack was feeling very pleased with himself and could not wait to show someone his new trick. While walking along he thought he better practice a little bit before showing the other animals, surely chickadee must not have meant practicing when he warned him of only doing this trick four times? So Wesakejack complained of a headache, took his eyes out of his head and threw them into the air, then she called them back and they fell neatly into their

sockets. Feeling quite proud of herself she tried this trick a second time and again they returned to their sockets. Continuing along his way he tried his new trick a third time, this time while walking, and just like before his eyes returned to their sockets. Wesakejack was feeling increasingly pleased with himself, but he was getting a little impatient that he had not yet come across any animals to show his trick too, so he thought he had better try one more time, just to make sure he had it right. So, she did. Wesakejack complained of a headache, took his eyes out and threw them as high in the air as he could, and a short time later when he called them back, his eyes returned to their sockets. Now Wesakejack was quite confident that he could show this trick to anybody he came across. He walked with a little more zest, eager to run into someone - anyone.

Soon she came into a clearing and there were many animals milling about enjoying the day. Wesakejack summoned them all to come and see this new trick, a trick that only he knew. So, the animals gathered around, curious as to what Wesakejack was up to this time. When he had all their undivided attention Wesakejack took out his eyes and threw them with all his might high into the air, higher than any of his previous attempts. He waited patiently for a while before he called them back, but this time his eyes did not return to their sockets. Wesakejack frantically tried again to call his eyes back but they would not return. Feeling embarrassed and ashamed Wesakejack was left to wander away without any eyes, while all the animals laughed at his foolishness.

Wesakejack was having great difficulty finding his way through the forest, and she blamed chickadee for doing this to him. He kept bumping into trees, rocks, and branches that would poke his eye sockets and cause him pain. Feeling sorry for himself Wesakejack began to cry, and little mouse who happened to be nearby, heard him. Mouse asked what the matter was

and Wesakejack explained that chickadee had played a cruel trick on him and now he could not see because he did not have any eyes. Mouse took pity on poor Wesakejack and told him he could have one of his eyes because he had two and only needed one. Wesakejack thanked and accepted mouse's small eye and placed it in his eye socket. But mouse's eye was so small and let in only a little light, so little that poor Wesakejack could not see that far and still kept bumping into things. Again she started crying and this time bear came along and asked Wesakejack what was the matter. Wesakejack explained that chickadee had played a most cruel trick on him that left her without any eyes. She was blind until mouse gave him one of his eyes, but mouse's eye was very small and Wesakejack could still barely see. So, like mouse bear felt sorry for poor Wesakejack and offered to give Wesakejack one of his eyes, since he too had two eyes. Wesakejack eagerly accepted and placed one of bear's eyes in his other eye socket. But bear's eye was much bigger than Mouse's eye and this new eye from bear let in so much light that it nearly blinded Wesakejack. Consequently, Wesakejack was left to wander around with two mismatched eyes. Through his small eye he was left to see the world as mouse would see it, but it was hard as Wesakejack was not used to such a small eye, and through her big eye she was left to see the world as bear would see it. But this was hard as well, since Wesakejack was not used to such a large eye. So Wesakejack wandered through the forest, seeing the world through two different eyes.

I employed this distinct Wesakejack story because I see it as an Indigenous theory and metaphor between the two types of knowledge systems that exist in this thesis and research. The two worlds that I have been asked or chosen to walk, in terms of knowledge acquisition and for how I must continually switch back and forth between knowledge bases to try and make sense of

the literature and of the traditional teachings: much of which previous to this thesis has been foreign.

Research Methods

The methods used in this research study are in keeping with an Indigenous conceptual framing stemming from a Saulteaux philosophical tradition. In moving from a discussion of the epistemological foundations of the conceptual framing of this study, I now wish to move into the specifics of research methods beginning with the research question.

Research Question(s)

The intent of this research and thesis is to explain how I have come to make meaning of Indigenous knowledge at this point in my life, the role of Indigenous knowledge (including the spiritual component of self and ceremony) in fostering personal development; and the spiritual component of self and ceremony in informing an Indigenous teacher education program. The following questions have guided my study and my conversation with my research participant Michael Relland (who has wished to have his name stand):

- 1) What is the importance of Indigenous ceremony and how does it enable us to connect with our spiritual selves?
- 2) Based upon the Saulteaux perspective, what is your understanding of the Great Mystery, and how does it relate to the mystery of self and our spiritual journey?
- 3) How does the healing process initiated by Indigenous ceremony help us to find the purpose of our life and our path here on earth? Why is this important to our individual selves and to the larger community?
- 4) And how could an emphasis on spirituality inform Indigenous teacher education?

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Analysis

The Métis infinity symbol is a representation of two distinct, separate and equal nations, customs, cultures and worldviews coming together to form a separate distinct people: who are a blend of both parent nations and worldviews. As Métis peoples we have been gifted with two differing knowledge systems, and as long as we are familiar with each knowledge system, it is only natural that we utilize both. The lens through which we see and make use of each way of knowing, will depend on the situation and context, or challenge and task at hand.

The infinity symbol and the Métis flag were flown in what is now Canada, as early as 1816 (Racette, 1987). The Métis flag consists of a white infinity symbol centred squarely and superimposed onto either a blue or red background.

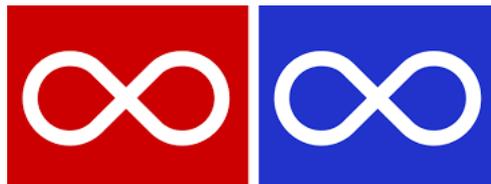


Figure 3.2 - Métis Flags

(Davidtfortin, 2014)

The blue background (flag) was associated with the Northwest Company and French “half-breeds.” At the same time the red background was allied with the Hudson Bay Company and Anglo-Métis “half-breeds” or “country-born” (Racette, 1987). While the colour of the flag indicated company affiliation, the common white infinity symbol was synonymous in its meanings: the coming together of two distinct and separate peoples and cultures (Indigenous and European) to form a distinctly unique people and culture – The Métis. The flag and infinity symbol are also a signification of the Métis as the creation of a new people forever, or to infinity, where we see the perseverance and practice of Métis ways of life and ways of knowing. Today

the Métis flag also serves as a sense of pride, a reminder, and is still a unifying symbol of Métis autonomy, in much the same way it did after the historic 1816 *Battle of Seven Oaks* (Racette, 1987) or *Victory at Frog Plain* as it is now known (L. Barkwell, personal communication, October 2018).

The notion of the Métis being a blend of both nations to form a separate and distinct people with a separate and distinct way of knowing is not new. Even though the Métis have been fighting for recognition since before Canada was a country, we have always known who we are. Nor is it unheard of for Indigenous peoples (writers, scholars, academics, researchers) to use the Métis flag and infinity symbol as a visual for their research framework. LaVallee (2014) is one such Métis scholar. In her doctoral dissertation she used the infinity symbol as a visual to represent the joining of qualitative research paradigms with Métis ways of knowing. In the middle a space was created that allowed her to make sense of her research as it pertained to “Métis people’s experiences and understanding of tuberculosis” (p. 11), while constantly negotiating the different ways of knowing.

My use of the infinity symbol as part of my research framework is both similar and different from LaVallee’s. I employed Indigenous research methodologies grounded in traditional Sauteaux Indigenous knowledge. The left side of the infinity symbol represents this way of knowing, while the right side of the infinity symbol represents my default Eurocentric way of knowing. In the middle is where I employed the Two-Eyed Seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2012). Where I am free to continually switch back and forth between these two ways of knowing (see figure 3), while keeping in mind that both ways of knowing have value and merit. The task is applying the needed knowledge from either system, or from a blend of both, for the

benefit of the research, community and all people involved (Ermine, 2007; Marshall, 2017; Newhouse, 2004).

This is not unlike being a Métis person with a blend of both knowledge bases. Where, since the fur trade (when many Métis acted as guides, interpreters and middlemen between the Europeans and First Nations) we have been asked to walk in both worlds, to negotiate contrasting ways of knowing and apply the needed knowledge given the context and situation. To try and make the best of the situation for all parties involved. Little Bear (2000) explains in detail that at the time of contact European and Indigenous ways of knowing could not have been farther apart. Given that most people, when presented with new information compare it to their initial understanding (in Canada the default is going to be primarily a Eurocentric understanding) effectively applying a Two-Eyed Seeing approach can prove quite difficult (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Parallel to the merging of the two groups of people, the Métis are also the blend of two knowledge systems, worldviews and lifestyles. We were and are a representative of the old world and the new world, while also acknowledging that what is old still has merit and what is new may not have all the answers. Similar to walking in the modern world and universities: trying to succeed and negotiate the Eurocentric avenues of academia, and at the same time making sure to remember our Indigenous ways that have brought us here and to understand they still have a lot of worth, value and embedded knowledge. Hence, why the extensive acquired literature in this research is supplemented with traditional experiential Indigenous knowledge and why it is conveyed in an Indigenous methodological manner.

In my analysis I used a Two-Eyed Seeing perspective with the assistance of the Métis infinity symbol to highlight the tensions associated with spiritual self-care in both personal and educational contexts. The task at hand then is to constantly negotiate the two ways of knowing to

find the best solution to the presented problem, given the context and situation, for the benefit of all peoples (Bartlett et al., 2012; Ermine, 2007). Not dissimilar and in-keeping with the above mentioned, I interpreted and grouped the recorded conversation and my self-reflection notes, keeping in mind the literature and my traditional teachings, to find the best explanations to the questions I have asked during this research process. To help not only myself, but also future Indigenous students who may choose to walk a similar path.

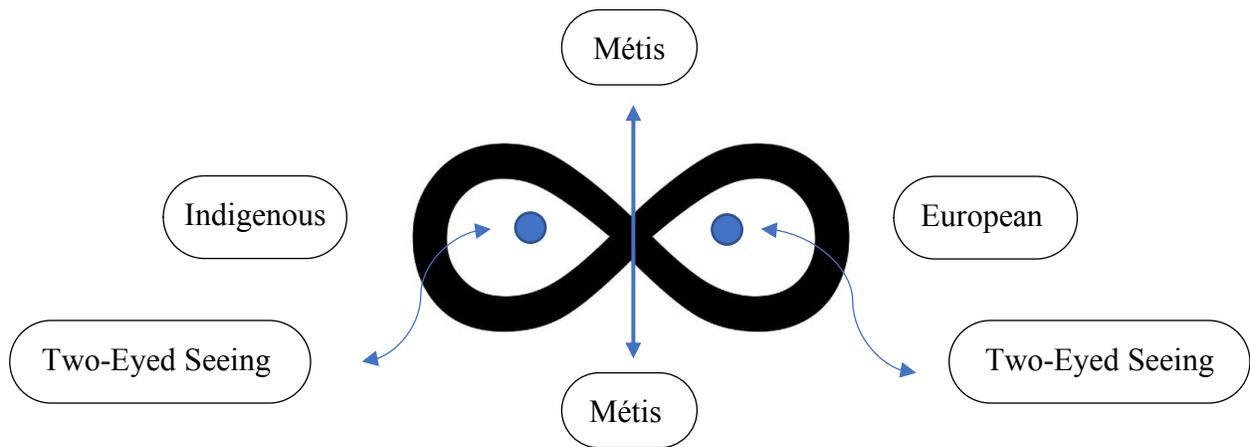


Figure 3.3 – Métis Infinity Symbol (Two-Eyed Seeing Approach)
(Figure from (Admin, n.d.); Text & ‘eyes’ created using Microsoft Word)

The depiction above (figure, text and inserted symbols) is my interpretation of the term *Two-Eyed Seeing* as it pertains to the analysis for this thesis (Bartlett et al., 2012). The left side of the infinity symbol represents Indigenous ways of knowing, while the right side represents European ways of knowing. Each respective way of knowing has a lens through which they see the world – this is represented by the blue circle or “eye,” of each nation. The middle is representative of Métis peoples. Where there is not only the joining of two distinct nations, but also the joining of two separate ways of knowing. Who, because of being a blend of both groups of people and knowledge bases, are afforded the natural opportunity to see the world from either perspective (Two-Eyed Seeing), or both, depending the need, given context and task at hand.

Self-in-Relation and “Self-Referent” Approach

As part of method, I have called upon a self-in-relation approach that began with a protocol of introduction (see Prologue in this thesis). I introduced myself to acknowledge the multifariousness of what a protocol of introduction represents, as previously stated, but also to familiarize the reader with myself (Martin, 2003). Previous to this thesis, I had a hard time talking about myself as I saw this as arrogant and egotistical. I have come to learn that recognizing self in relation to story when researching is essential: “we know what we know from where we stand” (Kovach, 2009, p. 7). This thesis is my personal account of journey, relationality and meaning making; thus, it makes sense to introduce myself at the outset, to situate and familiarize myself to the reader.

In my use of Graveline’s (2000) self-in-relation approach and Debassige’s “self-referent approach” (2013, p. 16), I became increasingly aware of needed distinctions. Debassige (2013) differentiates an Indigenous “self-referent approach” from Western autoethnographic study:

Although my work could be framed in the mainstream literature as an autoethnographic, personal narrative, or self-reflexive inquiry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), I have avoided these designations just as I have been inspired by some aspects of them [e.g., Cole & Knowles’ (2000) work on reflexive inquiry]. I remain steadfast in my primary re-search intention – to look again (Absolon, 2011). I feel this situates methodology in its appropriate place as a component of the Indigenous storywork process (Archibald, 2008), which involves narrating, expressing, “seeking, doing, learning, and living a spirit-centred way in Anishinaabe research (Debassige, 2010, p. 21).” (p. 17)

Since my story and journey into Indigenous knowledge and ceremony is a focal point in this research, my story then is inseparable from the research. It is intrinsically interwoven throughout

the research and thesis, and thus inseparable from myself and my understanding. By initially introducing myself, I am not placing myself first and most important, rather I am situating myself to place and explaining a context of the teachings available to me, and the learnings I have inferred. The reader then is able to relate the context to their own situation throughout the research, through a more complete and reflective understanding. They are afforded the choice as to their own level of involvement and profound understanding or meaning making.

With respect to Indigenous ways of knowing, I need to highlight and would be remiss if I did not mention that I do not think a person can accurately speak about what they have not experienced, since according to Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy, personal experience is the basis of each individual understanding (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). For this reason, my reflections in this chapter and in chapter five stem from the experiences and ceremonies I have been exposed to thus far on my journey. Specifically, these include a sweat lodge, fasting ceremonies, smudging, meditation and reflective introspection. I acknowledge there are many other ceremonies from many distinct Indigenous nations, which can alter and inform individual perception and understanding. But I cannot speak on those or extend my context of Indigenous ceremonies to encompass them, since I have not directly experienced them. With this in mind, the reflections going forward and insight I have gained over the course of this thesis are based on my personal insight as to how I have come to make meaning of Saulteaux Indigenous teachings of the Bear Clan passed down from Elder Danny Musqua¹⁴ as conveyed through Michael Relland (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998).

¹⁴ Danny Musqua is a Saulteaux Elder, Michael Relland's adopted father and teacher

Data Collection, Story, and Conversational Method

The process of narrative used in this thesis is not unlike what Archibald (2001) describes as “storywork,” which involves seeing stories as teachings on a journey and then reflecting as to their meaning and purpose by sharing what has been learned. As a research methodology, storywork includes “the engagement of the story, storyteller and listener [which] created a synergy for making meaning through the story” (p. 1). As a result, the interdependence of stories with the storyteller (whether participant or elder) and the listener (as researcher) is confirmed in a creative process through which the meaning of the stories emerges (Woodhouse, 2011).

Storywork and the use of narrative in this thesis, through an Indigenous research methodology, align with each other. My hope is that the sharing of my story alongside the meaning from my story, specifically the spiritual insight, will create a synergy that helps future students to acknowledge the role the spiritual component of self can play on their own journeys. Kovach (2009) states, “stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective” (p. 95). While my story is a process of coming to an understanding of the spiritual, the teachings do not belong to me. The teachings belong to a certain moment in time and a specific interpretation as to their meaning at that time.

An Indigenous research methodology is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and includes storytelling, narrative and conversation (Kovach, 2010). There are two types of story in my thesis: my personal story and my conversation with Michael Relland.¹⁵ I engaged in a natural and genuine conversation with Michael, my mentor and cultural advisor, about the importance of spirituality, ceremony, Indigenous knowledges and their role in determining one’s path and

¹⁵ My personal story also includes past experiences, reflections and insights on past stories from various Indigenous nations – mainly Cree, Métis, and Sauteaux.

purpose in life. This formal conversation was a single event, and it is embedded in a pre-existing relationship with Michael. For as long as I have known him, and since the process of writing this thesis has commenced, there have been informal conversations that have enriched my life journey thus far.

In order to conduct Indigenous methodologies that respect Indigenous knowledges, Kathy Absolon in an interview with Margaret Kovach (as cited in Kovach, 2009) explains that it does not involve interviews. Rather, an Indigenous research methodology involves discussions in which we engage in dialogue and we talk with each other. The term “interviews” conjures up many negative emotions and feelings (fear, apprehension, tension, disdain, mistrust), especially among Indigenous peoples. The theory and practice of interviewing invokes formality and adheres to the power dynamic of interviewer over interviewee (Thomas, 2005; see also Bishop, 1995). The rigidity and formality of the traditional interview process, where the interviewer asks a set of prearranged and dictated questions to which the interviewee answers, does not allow for the free flowing, mutually beneficial and participatory dialogue a conversation can bring. By way of contrast, Kovach (2009) asserts that:

Conversation as method is unlike standard structured or semi-structured interviews that place external parameters on the research participants’ narrative. An open-structured conversational method shows respect for the participant’s story and allows research participants greater control over what they wish to share with respect to the research question. (p. 124)

Conversation is a traditional Indigenous method of sharing ideas, knowledge, and experiences, where all parties have an equal say. The power dynamic is mitigated, and the richness and depth of sharing can be enhanced due to the fluidity of conversation. The entire process is based on

respect for the stories told to the researcher by the participant (Bishop, 1995; Thomas, 2005). Without respect for these stories, the research following Indigenous methodologies will be flawed. Moreover, this methodology mirrors the conversational method, which is one way Indigenous peoples use to transmit both our knowledge and value systems (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2010; Relland, 1998).

Kovach (2009) also explains that, “the oral rendition of personal narrative or formal teaching story is a portal for holistic epistemology” (p. 96). My thesis integrates a critical reflection upon my personal journey and the knowledge I have gained about my path and purpose in this physical existence as a result of being immersed in Indigenous ceremony and knowledges. As such, storytelling, arising from an Indigenous oral tradition, is an appropriate methodological tool.

The conversational method of relaying traditional Indigenous knowledge gives space for a personal narrative to come through (Bishop, 1995). A narrative describes a personal journey about what one has learned and how this may apply in the future by trying to connect the past (one’s pre-existing spiritual path) to the present (living a spiritual path in this physical existence). Furthermore, narrative allows for both research participants and readers to interpret its meaning for themselves (Bishop, 1995; St. Denis, 1992; Woodhouse, 2011). This thesis integrates a self-reflection on these and the many experiences of my life as related to this project.

Participants

I conducted one formal conversation (interview) that was recorded. It occurred at Michael Relland’s lodge approximately 30 minutes north of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Michael Relland, who is of Métis descent and is also a Saulteaux knowledge keeper who has learned under Elder Danny Musqua from Keeseekoose First Nation, has been my teacher, mentor

and guide for several years now. As previously mentioned, the interview was conducted in more of a relaxed conversation style as opposed to the rigidity of a formal interview process. While I expected the conversation to take approximately two hours, it did delve into areas that were rich in depth and meaning. Since I did not want to cut the conversation short, we continued until the conversation came to a natural end.

My inferences from the main teachings in Michael's thesis combined with our conversations from this research, and my post recorded conversation self-reflection notes have formed the foundation on which my reflections and insights are based. Several themes (or threads, teachings) arose from his thesis, the conversation and my self-reflection notes. All three methods of learnings have been themed into like groupings. These have formed the bulk of my formal reflective process that takes place in chapter four and five, where I reflect on the main teachings from Michael's thesis, our conversation, my self-reflection notes and how these pertain to my own personal journey at this point in time – my self-in-relation.

Recruitment of Participant(s)

While there are many Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers, there are also many Indigenous nations with differences in their teachings and protocol. To avoid the notion of pan-Indianism, I sought a knowledge keeper or Elder with the same knowledge base: teachings that stem from a Saulteaux philosophical basis. For this thesis, which integrates both a self-in-relation approach alongside a purposive conversation, I interviewed Saulteaux knowledge keeper Michael Relland. My strategy in inviting my participant (Michael Relland) was a purposive strategy. Michael has been a Gabriel Dumont employee for over thirty years.¹⁶ He has a vast and

¹⁶ As briefly mentioned, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) is a Saskatchewan Métis organization that aims to promote the renewal and development of Métis culture. There are several programs under the umbrella of GDI, SUNTEP included.

keen traditional understanding of Saulteaux knowledge and the purpose of ceremony. And it was through a sweat lodge ceremony he conducted that I was reconnected to the spiritual knowledge I previously suppressed, which to reiterate, formed the basis for this thesis.

Over the years, our friendship has grown and as I have become increasingly immersed in Indigenous forms of understanding our relationship has deepened, so that a natural mentor relationship has ensued strengthening our friendship. Michael (1998) wrote his thesis in the area of Indigenous philosophy on the teachings of the Bear Clan based on Saulteaux understandings. His own teacher, mentor and adopted father is Elder Danny Musqua. Elder Musqua is a highly regarded and respected Elder of the Saulteaux Nation, who received an honorary doctorate from the University of Saskatchewan in 1995 (Knight, 2001). Therefore, while I am crediting Michael with many of my insights and learnings, these teachings have undoubtedly been passed down from Elder Danny Musqua. Elder Musqua's teachings stem from his grandfather Healing Bear (Kageegaymuqua), who received his teachings from his grandfather Morning Light Hunter (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). For these reasons, conversing with Michael about the importance of Indigenous Saulteaux philosophy is consistent with the oral tradition of Indigenous peoples.

As per Indigenous protocol from a Saulteaux perspective, before this thesis commenced, I spoke to Michael about the intent of my research, what it would entail and what was required by him. I offered him tobacco and he accepted. As per Indigenous philosophy, he is bound to help me to the best of his ability. If he was not able to or did not agree to what I asked of him, then he would not have accepted the tobacco (D. Musqua, personal communication, June 2018; see also B. Huntley, personal communication, September 2006; M. Relland, personal communication, September 2016). As well, I am bound to do what I explained without deviating when I offered

Michael tobacco.¹⁷ The offering and accepting of tobacco among many Indigenous nations is a binding agreement between both parties that needs to be carried out in good faith. Once a person accepts the offered tobacco, the spirit realm and all of Creation have borne witness, thus it needs to be honoured (L. Bear & S. Bear, personal communication, May 2019).

Analytical Strategy Interpreting the Words

Conceptual theoretical framing, within the context of the Two-Eyed Seeing perspective, is the guide I used to make meaning of the teachings that originated from the formal oral conversation (interview) that occurred in the next chapter (Bartlett et al., 2012). Once I manually transcribed the formal conversation (interview), several reoccurring themes (teachings) became apparent. These ensuing teachings came about from repeated reading and listening of the transcribed interview. With the conversation transcribed I began manually highlighting all recurrent and emphasized points and sentences, as well as sentences and points that resonated. In a separate document I sorted all highlighted points and sentences into twenty, general but similar groupings. I re-read this list a few times and reflected on their individual meaning, in the context of the formal conversation (interview) questions and two main thesis questions. With this perspective in mind I focused the initial list to six, based on overlap and interrelatedness. From there I came up with an original title that I thought most accurately represented all points related to that theme (teaching). I then sought Michael's approval with the process, and his guidance and assistance with the final wording of the teachings (themes). We re-worded the teachings and placed them in order of appearance in the conversation and relevance to the research in this

¹⁷ Since I asked for Michael's guidance and permission to use Saulteaux ways of knowing as the philosophical framework for this research thesis, and since Michael is the teacher and I am the student, the final transcripts and dissemination of research findings must be approved by him before publication, even though he is not "officially" on my thesis committee.

thesis. Lastly, after further discussion with Michael and my supervisors, it was decided to include humility as a seventh teaching (theme). Even though the Indigenous Sauleaux teaching of humility was not explicitly stated in the formal conversation (interview), it was continually evident throughout the transcription, interpretation and dissemination of findings.

Michael Relland's thesis, *The Teachings of the Bear Clan: as told by Sauleaux Elder Danny Musqua* and Dianne Knight's project, *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Dr. Danny Musqua* and my self-reflection notes were used to support and substantiate the teachings (or thematic patterns) that emerged from the formal conversation (interview). The teachings in concert with a "self-referent" (Debassige, 2013, p. 16) and self-in-relation (Graveline, 2000) approach give rise to my findings. The discussion of the teachings (findings) begins in chapter four, where they are placed and reflected on in order of relevance and natural progression, to me and in respect to the research in this thesis. My reflections continue with further insights in chapter five, where, in the form of a letter to SUNTEP students I come to make meaning of the two main questions at the heart of this thesis: *How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony? And, how can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education?*

Ethical Considerations

As per Indigenous protocol, before this research commenced I offered Michael Relland tobacco, for the right to proceed and undertake this research while under his general guidance. I offered him tobacco again before the formal conversation (interview) began, since I made a specific and immediate request. As well, I have consulted with Michael's teacher and adopted father, Elder (Dr.) Danny Musqua, who has given his consent to the research being conducted.

I have completed both Graduate and Research Studies (GSR) 960 Introduction to Ethics and Integrity, and GSR 961 Ethics and Integrity in Human research, during term two of the 2013-2014 academic year. Both courses provide instruction on the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans on Research Ethics. As well, I have completed Educational Research Methods, Introductory ERES 800 and Indigenous Research Epistemology and Methods EFDT 810 as part of my course work. Furthermore, I have sought permission from the University of Saskatchewan Social Sciences Research Ethics Board for permission to conduct these conversations, which will also adhere to the guidelines set out in chapter nine of the TCPS2 (2018) for “research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada” (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 107).

Upon ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan (February 28, 2019) I contacted Michael, several weeks before the formal interview (conversation) was set to take place and met him at an amicable place so he could review the consent form. I explained the form and addressed any questions that he had. He was given all the time needed to review the consent form and come to a decision. Michael was informed of his right to withdraw when the consent form was presented to him. Consistent with the University of Saskatchewan ethical protocol, he was informed again of his right to withdraw before the formal conversation (interview) took place. He was also informed that his participation was voluntary and that he only had to answer the questions that he was comfortable with. He could withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Michael was also made aware that:

- If he wished to withdraw, all data collected pertaining to him would be destroyed. As well, everything we have talked about in confidence to that point would not be repeated by myself, nor would it be used in any part of the dissemination of the research findings.
- However, Michael was also made aware that his right to withdraw and to have his data destroyed would be waived once he signed off on the final *Transcript Release Form*. After this date, some form of research dissemination already occurred, and it would not be possible to withdraw the data.

After the interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, Michael was given the opportunity to review the transcript of his interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as he saw fit. I discussed again about using Michael's name, his need not to remain anonymous, and he chose to let his name stand. Before chapter four and five were submitted, Michael also had the opportunity to read and suggest any changes. I did adhere to these changes before submitting the final draft to my thesis committee and supervisors. Lastly, before publication, by the College of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Saskatchewan, Michael was given the opportunity to review the *Final Transcripts Release Form* and had the final approval on releasing the transcripts.

I have spoken extensively to Michael about the research that was conducted, and he gave his blessing. His participation was voluntary. As per the ethical protocol of the University of Saskatchewan, Michael was not considered a member of a vulnerable population. Deception was not used at any time during this research. If there were any unforeseeable risks at all, they were extremely minimal. After the formal conversation (interview) Michael and I engaged in a smudge, to induce positivity and ward off negativity, and I instructed him to call me if anything

was needed. I provided him with my phone number and initiated informal follow up conversations for several days after to see how he was doing.

Security and Storage

The data from the formal conversation (interview) was stored in my desk in my office, while the consent form was stored separately in my filing cabinet, also in my office. The desk, filing cabinet and office were all locked. All data were reviewed, interpreted and analyzed in my office with the door locked. The data were recorded on a password protected recording device. The only people who have access to the raw data are professor Howard Woodhouse, who is my supervisor, and myself. Long term storage of the data and consent forms, five years post publication, are with my research supervisor.

Reciprocity

In keeping with Indigenous (Saulteaux) philosophy and in respect to Indigenous knowledges, the giving of tobacco precedes any research or meaningful request. As I have outlined in previous sections this has already been done and explained. As has my intent that I carry out and conduct the research in a good way, which is acknowledged by the offering of tobacco. In addition, as per Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy, once you have progressed to certain stages in life and have come to a greater understanding of your purpose and path in this physical existence, your role changes slightly from a student to a teacher. It is then your job to pass along the knowledge you have gained to ensure the teachings are not lost. I am one of the students that Michael is passing his knowledge along to, as was done with Elder Musqua and himself.

The teachings stem from Elder Musqua, so it is imperative that he give his blessing, which he did, as has Michael Relland. In addition to this, I am an Indigenous person and a

graduate of an Indigenous teacher education program, and reciprocity has always been vital to Indigenous peoples: giving back to the people and community. The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) for myself was transformative, in my learning, teaching and in my life decisions and daily actions. Yearly, SUNTEP has a limited number of successful applicants. Once you are a SUNTEP student and a graduate of the program, your education is not yours alone to do with what you please, to simply better your own situation. We are responsible to the Métis (Aboriginal) community to try and better the lives of Aboriginal people as a collective, since not everyone was fortunate enough to have this opportunity. This research was undertaken with these thoughts in mind. The hope is that if future Indigenous education students choose to walk a similar path, hopefully this research, my account of journey and purpose will provide some clarity on their own respective journeys.

As a token of respect, appreciation and gratitude I will offer each member of my thesis committee, as well as Michael Relland, Bente Huntley and Danny Musqua a hand-made gift. While this was not implied or promised at the outset of this research, in keeping with Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy, gifts of a personal nature are bestowed upon those who have provided help and guidance and who have given freely and unconditionally of their time, when it was needed. In addition, a copy of the final thesis will be gifted to Elder Danny Musqua, Michael Relland, each of the three SUNTEP centres and the Gabriel Dumont Institute, my supervisors, members of my thesis committee, and the Department of Educational Foundations / College of Education / University of Saskatchewan for their help in this process that is an integral part of my journey.

CHAPTER FOUR: TEACHINGS AND INSIGHTS

Introduction: The Start

I have always found “getting started” to be the hardest part, of anything I do. Whether it is writing, working on a project, athletic competitions or even simply initiating a conversation. Getting started, beginning the process is what I have always found to be taxing. Once I have a start, a beginning, something to build off, I am fine. A connection develops and thoughts, ideas, words, begin to flow. My nerves settle a bit, calm ensues, the start gives way to the process, and I am off. This chapter is no exception, which is strange, since this is the chapter I have been looking forward to writing. While agonizing over the process of the previous three chapters and the unfamiliarity of the writing process, chapter four is where I was free to bring forth what I had learned. To discuss the components of Indigenous philosophy and ways of knowing that I deemed crucial on my journey and a necessity to bring to light; as well as how these teachings apply to Indigenous teacher education. This is where I thought my writing would be unrestricted and flow dreamlike onto paper. So why the struggle? What is my problem? Why has this chapter, where I am free to convey what is most important to myself and my personal journey, been such a struggle?

I believe one of the main reasons is the seemingly foreign nature of Indigenous knowing to my Eurocentric way of knowing. In an attempt to make meaning of the magnitude of Indigenous philosophy and all it encompasses, I am constantly referring to my first internalized way of knowing. While I have come to understand that we possess all the knowledge we need, primarily from Elders and knowledge keepers and from the teachings conveyed through the oral

conversation I outlined in the previous chapter,¹⁸ I have also come to learn that this knowing is within the spiritual realm and is accessed on a slightly different level with an altered way of knowing from what I revert to when I am searching for an understanding.

I liken it to the beginning stages of learning another language. Although I do not fluently speak another language, over the years I have acquired the basics of a few languages. During the process of learning a new word or phrase, I revert to English for a meaning, think of a response and a word in English and then translate that word or phrase to the language I am learning before verbalizing my response. I do not have sufficient comprehension of the language to be able to communicate effectively, without reverting to my default language. Nor do I know or have acquired all the inherent knowledge that comes with that language. And while I cannot say for certain if this process ever evolves, I understand that when you become fluent in another language, you do not continuously revert to your own language for meaning and understanding. You start to think in that new language. But this process takes time.

This is much like learning an Indigenous philosophy and all that it encompasses. In the many oral conversations with Michael, he likens learning Saulteaux philosophy to child development. He continues to explain that, regardless of age, when people come to the lodge to learn “they are newborn babes, they haven’t started to even crawl yet”¹⁹ (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). As you learn more, you begin to crawl, then you learn to walk and eventually you can run. I am not yet running. Maybe I am still crawling; most times I am not entirely certain. Even though I have been participating in ceremony and learning about a Saulteaux system of knowing for several years now, as occurrences happen, and events unfold, I

¹⁸ The way of knowing, for this instance, is in specific reference to myself.

¹⁹ In reference to the teachings of the Bear Clan and an understanding of the world, spirituality and personal development.

still revert to my default way of knowing when trying to make meaning. When I have gained some clarity and have come to an understanding within a Saulteaux epistemology, I struggle to articulate it in writing. Michael has reminded me on several occasions when I have struggled with various concepts, that meaning making is a process and it takes time.

It involves adhering to spirit and a remembering of spiritual knowledge, that which we have forgotten upon entering the physical world. First the knowledge is there (in our hearts and mind). We possess it, but it is like we do not know how to access it or how it pertains to our current situation. As we think about, reflect, question and discuss we start to understand how it relates, in our hearts and in our heads. Then, once we have sufficiently processed it, we remember it enough to make meaning of it and for it to make sense on paper. I think this is the stage I am at. Much of what I am learning makes sense in my head and through dialogue it becomes more concrete and less abstract. But I am still struggling at times to find the words to pull it all together. In my impatience, I often forget that knowing precedes articulation, and the timeframe between the two is not always consistent or consciously known. I believe the fact that I do not know the language in which the knowledge was created has also slowed my understanding and at times hindered the learning process: since, according to Elder Musqua, “knowledge is enshrined in your language” (as cited in Knight, 2001, p. 49). So, this has been my challenge; but I am still learning and hopefully crawling a little quicker as I begin to remember and unravel the mystery of self.

Privileging the Teachings

Just as I have struggled with the start of this chapter, I have also laboured over the appropriate way to sort, reference, and support the identified teachings (or themes) from the formal conversation with Michael Relland. At the outset it seemed logical to take co-existing

themes from Michael Relland's thesis, *The Teachings of the Bear Clan: as told by Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua* and Dianne Knight's project *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan as told by Dr. Danny Musqua*, that coincide with what I wish to talk about. And to then find quotes from the oral conversation to validate my findings and the pre-existing themes. But this method does not privilege the conversation, the oral word or the experiential learning that has guided me to this point. Therefore, in order to do the teachings justice, and in keeping with the oral tradition of Saulteaux philosophy, the following teachings (or themes) originate from the formal recorded oral conversation. Michael's thesis, Dianne Knight's project and my self-reflection notes were then used to corroborate the teachings discussed and points that emerged from the conversation, as described in the previous chapter.

With that being said, I want to clarify that while I have stated that I have analyzed the transcripts and placed them into groupings according to like patterns and similarities, these said groupings or themes are more oral teachings. Philosophical teachings that stem from a Saulteaux way of knowing are meant to help people find meaning in the nature of life and within the context of all existence. Rather than comparing and contrasting these teachings, my goal is to gain a more complete understanding of them. This process has compelled me to explore, discuss and seek guidance about the philosophical teachings at this stage of my journey in order to find a deeper meaning and purpose in the self-reflective journey of my physical existence. As a result, I primarily use teachings as the chosen reference.

I transcribed all the data manually, then engaged in a grouping process in order to structure the conversation and arrive at the teachings. (The details of this process are fully explained in chapter three under *analytical strategy interpreting the words*). Throughout this process, the interconnectedness of the conversation and of the common underlying teachings

which flowed uninterrupted became quite evident. This lends credence to the complexity and depth of knowledge contained within Saulteaux philosophy, and the ways in which knowledge is intertwined and inseparable from its teachings. Even though separate teachings and categories have been developed, there are many close relationships among them. This is similar to how the infinity symbol is a representation of the flow of knowledge for Métis peoples. Even though there is an intermixing or flowing back and forth of knowledge, an individual Métis person's understanding or epistemology will not be the same as the next. Meaning making is left to the individual person, much of which will be dependent on where that person is in their journey in this physical existence, what experiences they have been exposed to, and the lens they are using to see through.

Indigenous theory has framed and guided my self-reflective journey, particularly regarding the interview with Michael. With an emphasis on Two-Eyed Seeing I have referred to both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing at the intersection of Western and Indigenous thought (Bartlett et al., 2012). In order to find a deeper meaning in the dialogue and teachings which ensued from the interview, I have focused on the two main questions at the heart of this thesis: *How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony; and how can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education?* My hope in doing so is to find a sense of purpose, peace and connection in this physical existence.

The teachings mentioned in the following paragraph will be explored in each subsequent section in this chapter. An in-depth explanation of how I have come to make meaning of each teaching is strong evidence of the philosophical teachings flowing from Saulteaux knowledge systems. My explanations will be corroborated by Michael's words with quotes and narratives

from the interview. The traditional context of each teaching will be touched upon, as will the ways in which each teaching relates to my current situation and path as an Indigenous Métis person. In following the Two-Eyed Seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012) approach in my search for deeper meaning and truth, I hope the findings will be to the benefit of all peoples.

Recognizing the Teachings

When reading the transcripts of my recorded oral conversation with Michael, I was mindful of the two main questions at the heart of this thesis. With this in mind, seven main teachings emerged from the recorded conversation with Michael. In addition, there are a few interrelated points within each teaching, indicated by subheadings as needed. The seven main teachings are as follows:

1. Humility;
2. Misconceptions about Indigenous ways of knowing;
3. Spirituality as the cornerstone of Indigenous worldview;
4. The concept of the Great Mystery and the mystery of self;
5. The purpose of life as a learning and healing journey;
6. The importance of reciprocity in the teacher-student relationship ensuring carrying on the teachings; and
7. The role of Indigenous philosophy in an Indigenous teacher education program.

Although the value of humility was not explicitly discussed in the formal conversation, it emerged as a core Sauleaux Indigenous teaching, and this is where my analysis begins (M. Relland, personal communication, September 2016).

The Teachings

An important note, all references to Michael's words or teachings from this point forward for the remainder of the chapter are from the recorded formal oral conversation, which took place on December 1, 2019 at his lodge, unless otherwise indicated.

Teaching #1: Humility

“I know not very much, but I will tell you what I know.” This brief yet profound acknowledgement from many of the Elders I have sought guidance from has always bewildered me. I remember thinking that I wish I knew what they did, since I assumed that they possessed near infinite knowledge. In my ignorance, what I did not realize is that they may have been speaking from a spiritual reference to all knowledge of all beings. When explained within this context, with the depth and magnitude of what that knowledge can encompass, these Elders may be correct in acknowledging their own limitations of such knowledge. With this acknowledgement the Elders are modelling humility. Despite what a person knows, has come to understand, or has achieved, to remain humble is key to understanding our place in this universe and our role on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* (Saulteaux word for concept of the earth as our mother). As Michael metaphorically explains, “you might have more pieces to the puzzle than you had previously, but still we don't even have the edges completed yet” (personal communication, December 1, 2019). Thus, it does not matter what we think we know, there is still much left to learn.

For that reason, I have tried to remain humble throughout and to make sure the teaching of humility is evident in all aspects and stages of this thesis. Even though the teaching of humility was not directly identified, I have come to learn that humility is a core Indigenous teaching (B. Huntley, personal communication, September 2008; M. Relland, personal

communication, September 2016). And in keeping with the teachings, you should not have to announce that you are a humble person – it should be implicit, rather than explicit. Humility should be evident, practiced and modelled in everyday living and being.

With this in mind, and in my effort to ensure the teaching of humility is evident in my explanations, my perceived apologies are my attempt at staying humble. They should not be seen as an indication that the writing is weak, nor should they come across as me being unsure or hesitant. Rather, they are a recognition and acknowledgment of my own current limitations and potential growth, in my search for a greater understanding of self and all that comprises the Great Mystery and life as a whole. This is only the beginning of my learning. The teachings do not belong to me, and this is my interpretation at this point on my journey. I am merely one Indigenous student who is trying to learn as much as he can about a Saulteaux Indigenous knowledge base and how it can alter a person's path, journey and education so I can find peace and purpose in this physical world. In short, I am trying to stay humble.

I have come to learn that the depth and complexity of Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy is vast and layered; as a result, a sufficient understanding needed to do the teachings justice is far beyond my current comprehension. To use the metaphor, I am just starting to crawl. In-depth understanding of Saulteaux philosophy and the role the spiritual component of self has in your own personal journey takes a lifetime to make meaning of, and even then, I wonder how much we really come to know in the context of all existence. I have only allowed myself to be consciously open to a new way of knowing for less than a decade.

In keeping, I am asking for Michael and Danny's forgiveness and patience in the simplicity of what is written and beseech them for their continued mentorship and guidance as I work towards a more contextual and holistic understanding. I am humbly grateful for all the

teachings, patience, time and wisdom they have shown me thus far. I sincerely hope I have not misrepresented, simplified or made their teachings unrecognizable in any way, and if I have, I humbly apologize and will take immediate steps to make the needed adjustments.

As I unravel the mystery of self and work towards to a greater understanding of my innate path in this physical existence, I am coming to know the essential role ceremony can have in my life. In my desire for peace and contentment I have learned that I cannot be guided by intellect alone, that the spiritual knowledge I have suppressed for most of my life must ruminate in my current and future way of being, if I want to become the best Anishanabe I can be.

The remainder of this chapter consists of my interpretations and reflections pertaining to Saulteaux philosophy as they relate to the above teachings and main thesis questions. Hopefully clarity should ensue regarding some of the misunderstood and unknown underpinnings related to Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy that were previously mentioned.

Teaching #2: Misconceptions about Indigenous Ways of Knowing

This was at least the fifth or sixth time I had heard Michael Relland speak on the topic of Indigenous philosophy to a class that I was teaching. This was the segue into Indigenous ways of knowing and he was speaking to a group of first year education students. His “lecture” and I use this term lightly since Michael’s lecture is more of a conversation, on Indigenous philosophy and worldview stemming from a Saulteaux perspective, quite often varies in content and length, but the introduction is always the same. Each time Michael begins with the same Indigenous Creation story, how the physical world came to be. It has similar elements and events to the well-known Genesis Creation story. However, he stresses, although both Creation stories share similar elements, it is the difference in the interpretation of these elements and events that is of utmost importance and consequence. I had always wondered, why does Michael always start here?

Given all the intricacies and complexities to Indigenous ways of knowing, why begin with a Creation story so like that of the Genesis version that people may confuse the two or associate them as synonymous with one another?

Then I understood; in a moment of clarity it became clear. It is the basic yet often overlooked distinctions which are fundamental to an Indigenous knowledge system. It is essential for a person to understand these distinctions if they are to comprehend Indigenous ways of knowing, even if at an introductory level of understanding. An appreciation of the spiritual core through lived experience and acknowledgement of a life force greater than us as the root and foundation of Indigenous ways of knowing from a Saulteaux perspective is crucial, if a person wants to have any chance of understanding Indigenous knowledge in its complexity and entirety. And unfortunately, many times in our haste and eagerness to experience and learn about Indigenous culture, it is these fundamental principles that inform the culture, the methods and epistemology, which are often overlooked, misconstrued, or dismissed entirely. This is a key reason we need to look through both eyes when exploring Indigenous ways of knowing.

“Indigenous spirituality is all about freedom” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). It is about respect, connection, choice, free will, non-interference and equality. It is about letting others have the freedom to choose what their path is, just as you have this freedom. With this comes the acceptance that all our paths and prayers are equal; “we are equals” and “your prayers are as good as mine” or anybody else’s (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). If we respect the concepts of free will, non-interference, as well as the fact that we are all related and interconnected and that everything on *Āhtasōhkanikamik* is animate, then Indigenous ways of knowing become a philosophy of life. As Michael states: “It is not a religion; they call it ‘the way’, it is a philosophy of life” (personal

communication, December 1, 2019). Truth then is understood as much more subjective than the objective version we are taught in our colonized education system and in dominant society. Truth is a process of change and becoming, according to which, the greater one experiences the greater the likelihood of one attaining knowledge. Truth does not reveal itself at one moment in time, but over the length of our physical existence, provided we pay attention to the mysteries of existence.

“When you are at a place in your life when you are ready to learn something, you will learn it” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). You will also only fully comprehend certain lessons, teachings in their entirety, when you are personally ready, and the time is right. This is dependent on where you are at in your own personal journey and what you need to hear. I have been fortunate enough to hear elders and knowledge keepers tell the same story many times over, and each time I have taken away something slightly different - presumably because each time I hear the story I am at a different place. Since the story they tell, and the characters involved are the same, what is it then that has changed? Why should I not dismiss the story as repetitive and redundant, something that I already know? If it is the same old story, should I not already have taken all I can from it? What has changed in my process of self-discovery is myself and my present way of knowing, where I am in regard to my journey, and what I am ready to hear, or what I am seeking (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). I need to listen deeply and reflect and acknowledge that my past experiences will inform how I make meaning of a particular event, on my personal journey in this physical world. The knowledge and teachings have always been there, but it is who I am in the moment, informed by past experiences, which affects my level of meaning making.

The complexity and layered meaning of Indigenous knowledge continues to amaze me. Each time I think I have come to an understanding of a specific concept I am presented with more to reflect on and to learn. I need to start seeing Indigenous knowledge as a dynamic organic relational process continually informed by past experiences (M. Kovach, personal communication, December 3, 2020). This is an important part of the ongoing process of “higher learning,” and development of self, as I realize the more I have come to know, the more I have to learn: in addition to the amount of knowledge I will never understand. Learning about traditional Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy, whose concepts are quite different from Western knowledge systems propagated in education, has been enlightening yet humbling. While I do feel empowered by coming to understand Western knowledge through an Indigenous lens, this has been a most challenging part of my journey.

The old ones say that to begin to understand something, even at an introductory level, you should hear it at least four times. As a result, Indigenous ways of knowing can be misinterpreted, seen as simplistic and redundant, particularly when it is detached from the underlying spiritual core. The need to understand spirituality as the backbone to Indigenous knowledge will be further explained in the next section. And I shall examine the ways in which Indigenous spirituality and the spiritual plane lie outside the parameters of modern organized Western religion in chapter five.

Teaching #3: Spirituality as the Cornerstone of Indigenous Worldview

“All knowledge comes from the Creator and all knowledge is spiritual in nature” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). In this section I reflect on what this might mean.

It has taken me quite a while to wrap my head around the concept of spirituality in terms of our existence and how it is intertwined and inseparable from self. From my experience, spirituality has always been associated with religious belief or faith and is separate from concrete ways of knowing. I have heard Michael mention in several conversations we have had that all knowledge is spiritual in nature and spiritual knowledge predates the physical world (personal communication, December 1, 2019). I have also heard many Indigenous academics, scholars and Elders echo these sentiments. During my time teaching an educational psychology class to a group of first year education students I have had the chance to further explore this topic, since the class is on the theory of human development. And as part of my syllabus, I acknowledge the important role Indigenous philosophy plays in human development and the benefits this worldview can have on children and all of humanity. This has allowed me to deeply engage with this topic, as I try to pass along these teachings and concepts to the students in the class, and to further understand them myself.

As mentioned above, the spiritual core of Indigenous knowledge, the root of the entire worldview is spirituality. Spirituality embodies and is present in all aspects of Sauteaux Indigenous philosophy, culture, ways of knowing and ways of being. Spirituality is embodied in an awareness of how we are connected and infinitely bound to all our relations. A shared spiritual bond as we journey, together but separately, as we try to come to a greater understanding of the Great Mystery. They call it “The Way” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). *The Way* [emphasis added] becomes a knowing, a spiritual knowing; a knowing guided by “the oldest and purest form of knowledge” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). As Michael has explained, and I have highlighted in this thesis, the spiritual world predates the physical world. And we are spiritual beings on a physical

journey: “our essence is spirit” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). The journey in this physical world is “one of many journeys our spirits will go on” within the realm of the cosmos and all of existence (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

We come here on a journey to understand the physical side of Creation, the wants, needs, suffering, hardships, desires – “all our frailties that are not known to the spirit” in the spiritual realm (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). We continue on our journey in order to come to a more complete understanding of all that is the Great Mystery (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). For as Michael puts it, “as spiritual beings they say that this journey that we are on today has been in the eye of the Creator since the beginning of time” (personal communication, December 1, 2019). And as we journey in this physical world, as we seek a greater understanding of all that is physical, on our way “we are given a bunch of tools to help us in that growth process” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). In order to wake up and remember the purpose of our journey, the ceremonies, the grandfathers as guides, the medicines are all made available to us. “So, the journey then is to wake up that spirit, to remember who you are,” as we learn how to contextualize our existence here on earth (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

Michael goes on to explain how the two worlds, the spiritual and the physical, are interconnected and accessible:

You know they say the two realms, the physical realm and the spiritual realm, are actually not entirely separate. Some Elders will describe it as there is a veil between the two realms, and as you develop your spirit you can actually look back into the spiritual realm where we come from and bring that knowledge... into the physical realm to make the physical realm a better place. (personal communication, December 1, 2019)

The untapped power and knowledge of the spirit can then be used to improve the physical realm and to help us remember who we are and why we came to the physical world, as we come to a greater understanding of the Great Mystery. Thus, spirituality is the foundation of Saulteaux Indigenous knowledge and is the cornerstone of Indigenous worldview, according to the teachings of the Bear Clan passed down from Elder Danny Musqua and conveyed through Michael Relland.

We need to remember and understand that “our true essence is spirit,” and our individual spirit was created in the moment of all creation (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). Also, the Creation of our spirits preceded this physical journey we are on that we call life. When our infinite spirits came to *Āhtasōhkanikamik* to learn about the physical through the process of childbirth (between conception and the third month of development), we forgot all the spiritual knowledge we once had on our predetermined journey. Our spirits are timeless and boundless, and coming into this physical world “is such a shock that the spirit actually goes to sleep, it forgets at that point what it was” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). This journey, then, is about waking of that spirit and remembering who we are. But “remembering is a process” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). Throughout this process we endeavour to use knowledge we once remembered in the spiritual realm to aid in our learning journey in this physical life.

Without this knowledge, we will still live this life, but the choices we make may not be guided by the spiritual knowledge we innately know or by our inner urgency. Adhering to spirit not only helps us on our personal journey, but it also gives us grander insight into the Great Mystery. Here we learn and remember the interconnectedness of all beings: how we are intrinsically tied to all of Creation, and how we should live in ways that cause as little harm as

possible to our fellow relations. A complete disregard for spiritual knowledge may stifle this understanding; or we may learn only a fraction of what is possible. As a result, our sense of fulfillment, destiny, peace, contentment and happiness may be an ongoing elusive quest.

Like many other people, I too have misconstrued the true essence of Indigenous spirituality by associating it with religion. And while I felt the two were not the same, I was never able to articulate why, either to others or to myself. As a result, I was constantly mulling over this concept and trying to understand it in fragments, usually out of context. It was not until I was at a significant crossroads in my life, was near desperation and had exhausted all scenarios and solutions to my current life's purpose, that I allowed myself to be open to a different way of knowing, and a different lens through which to see. It was only when I became immersed within Indigenous knowledge (primarily Saulteaux, Cree, Métis) and had a better understanding of it, that I was able to see how wrong my interpretation was. Now I understand spirituality to be a life force which binds all of Creation, one that has existed since time immemorial and an animate essence from which we are indivisible. As I journey and seek insight from the oldest and purest form of knowledge, I am beginning to see how North American Indigenous spirituality is intrinsically tied to all that is the Great Mystery. The importance of understanding the independence of spirituality from organized religion will be examined further in chapter five.

Since the spiritual world existed before the physical world, spiritual knowledge predates physical knowledge. Recognizing Indigenous spirituality is looking to the oldest form of knowledge to gain clarity on a profound level of how to live in this new world. This involves co-existing in both worlds, looking through two different eyes, and understanding our place and our role while acknowledging and accepting our own limitations. The process is similar to the way in which Indigenous (Métis) peoples are asked to navigate the world today, having a

comprehension of opposing knowledge systems while seeing the merit of each, according to their time and place. Through Indigenous ceremony I began to recognize and understand that the spiritual component of self is essential if we want to know our pre-destined path in this physical existence. That if we desire to quell our inner restlessness and seek ongoing peace, satisfaction, connectedness, fulfillment and purpose, then spiritual knowledge, or spirituality, must be part of our daily lives and our individual epistemology. Only then will we be able to acknowledge the presence of a life force greater than anything we can fathom, tying together all of Creation.

Teaching #4: The concept of the Great Mystery and the Mystery of Self

The Great Mystery and the mystery of self are one and the same: “The Great Mystery lies no farther than thyself” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). If it is that simple, why have I had such a hard time coming to grips with this truth? Why does this concept seem like such a mystery? Previously, and even now to some degree, I consider the Great Mystery and the mystery of self to be one and the same but also not the same, if that makes any sense. I see our smaller individual mystery of self to be conceived within the grander essence of the Great Mystery. Almost like a country within the world, a province within a country, a city within a province, an individual within a community. Or where you are on your own individual journey, contained within but still somewhat connected to the larger outlying community. Even though my rudimentary understanding seems close to all that is the Great Mystery and the mystery of self, I still mull over the depth of this concept when Michael mentions, “that is the Great Mystery” (personal communication, December 1, 2019). It seems that unravelling the mystery of self is in itself the Great Mystery; for as we come to a greater understanding of the mystery of self, we gain insight into the Great Mystery in the form of all dimensions of Creation and the intricate workings of the universe and our role within it.

As a spiritual being on a physical journey, we are incomplete, because we have forgotten spiritual knowledge (Relland, 1998). In order to come to a multi-faceted understanding of the Great Mystery, we need to have an understanding of all dimensions of it: “there are many parts to our Creator, one being physical” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). That is why we are here, to acquire knowledge of the physical. This is reiterated in his thesis and by the words of Elder Musqua:

My grandfather’s philosophy of life was simple. You come here on a journey. Your spirit, which was made in the instant that all creation was formed, came here to understand the physical universe, the physical nature of the Creation that is in all that we see around us. (as cited in Knight, 2001, p. 32)

Knowledge of the physical component of Creation is needed to aid in a greater understanding of the Great Mystery as the mystery of self when we return to the spiritual realm.

One of the central teachings of the Bear Clan tell us that The Great Mystery, all of Creation, is both spiritual and physical, and both masculine and feminine (Relland, 1998; see also Knight, 2001). It is all knowing and all being; it is complete for it is all of Creation. (As I was writing, visualizing and trying to comprehend this, my state of consciousness altered slightly from seeing the Great Mystery as a being tied to personhood to that of an entity which intimately exists and is all of creation). We are not complete, and an essential component on our journey is “learning the nature of the physical realm, trying to understand all things physical, overcoming the weaknesses and shortcomings we have as a human being in physical form” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

The teachings say that our spirit was created in the moment of all Creation and is timeless and boundless, since the limitations of space and time are foreign to our spiritual being. Our

spirit knows one desire and has one will, to complete this pre-destined journey, learn all it can about the physical world and return to where it originated - to all of Creation and the spiritual realm, or to the Great Mystery (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). Michael echoed the oral teachings when he mentioned why much of the time we seem to never truly be at peace or sure of our decisions:

At some point the spirit is there trying to guide you... if you want to know if a decision is good for you, make a decision. If it does not sit well, chances are you have made a bad decision. (personal communication, December 1, 2019)

Since our spirit subconsciously guides us on this set path, when we veer off it we begin to feel restless. There is an innate inner urgency, a need, to return to our set path and complete our journey before we return to the Great Mystery, with a greater understanding of all Creation. As reiterated by Elder Musqua in Knight (2001):

We come from the Creator and we go back to the Creator. That is why we are never at peace on this earth, given the inner urgency for something greater than ourselves. We need to have an understanding of something that is within us. We want to have a relationship with the Creator as that is where we came from. (pp. 32-33)

This, however, is a bit of a paradox, since at the same time our spiritual being is bestowed with spiritual knowledge and is on a journey to acquire knowledge of the physical world, it has forgotten all knowledge from the spiritual realm.

We need to remember that the spiritual realm and our spirits are infinite, timeless, boundless and have been around since the dawn of Creation. Coming into this physical world, from a woman's womb and then being contained and imprisoned in a physical body is such a shock to the spirit that it becomes dormant or goes to sleep. Part of the learning journey then is to

wake up the spirit, to remember the knowledge we had in the spiritual realm, to regain our pre-determined path, and to learn how to use that knowledge to unravel the mystery of self while on this physical journey. And that is why we learn and experience ceremonies, which are important ways to access spiritual knowledge.

Ceremonies are a tool given to us to use in this physical existence to help wake up the spirit, to discover who and what we are, and to remember the journey our spirit intended for us thousands of years ago:

That is why we sweat; that is why we fast; that is why we pray; that is why we have these lodges; that is why we have these songs. That is why we have the pipe and we have all these tools that were given to us, and they were given to us for that process of growth, discovery and learning. (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019)

Waking up the spirit is an integral part of the learning journey. For while we journey, we remember and come to a greater understanding as we come closer to unravelling the mystery of self and gain a greater comprehension of the Great Mystery. When we return to the spiritual realm and all of Creation, “at the point when we leave this physical body... we remember why we came to this world” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). We remember our journey and all the spiritual knowledge that we once had, as well as the acquired knowledge from the physical world, and we come to a more complete understanding of all that is the Great Mystery. The old ones say that this physical existence is only one of many journeys our spirits will experience within the realm of the cosmos and since the beginning of time. Our physical life and the knowledge we gain here becomes quite trivial when seen in the context of all existence and the many journeys on which our spirits travel. And it is only a part of the puzzle to understanding all that is the Great Mystery.

As we remember and open ourselves up to spiritual knowledge, we begin to close the gap between the mind and heart, between the intellect and spirit: “you build up that spirit, so that imbalance between the mind and the spirit kind of resolves itself” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). In this way we are achieving a more balanced way of knowing between the physical and spiritual worlds. As we unravel the mystery of self, we open ourselves up to spiritual knowledge and an additional way of knowing, much like seeing equally through both eyes and not allowing one to remain dominant over the other. This allows for a more profound coming to know of the ways in which we are connected to the life force and the intricate workings of the universe. It is in this way that I am beginning to understand how we are the Great Mystery because we are indefinitely interconnected with and inseparable from all of Creation.

An understanding of the spirit and recognition of spiritual knowledge can provide the philosophical context in which we can contextualize the complexity of the pre-determined set of relationships in the cosmos and among all beings here on *Āhtasōhkanikamik*. And by unravelling the mystery of self we come to understand our true essence, our journey, our purpose and our place within this interconnected web, that is all of Creation or the Great mystery. So, as far as my own learning journey goes, I do not think I yet intellectually see the Great Mystery and the mystery of self as being completely synonymous (and that may be part of the problem). Perhaps I need to open both eyes. But I do see how they are intricately bound to each other, how one affects the other and how listening to spirit will add clarity to this intimate relationship. This is a process that I am continually learning, experiencing and unravelling.

Nevertheless, it is through ceremony that I have come to a greater awareness of the spiritual component of self. Ceremonies have taken this abstract concept of spiritual knowledge

and made it tangible, purposeful and concrete. The sweat I went to with Michael in the fall of 2012, which I described in detail near the beginning of chapter two, is an example of spiritual knowledge that has altered my path and journey in this physical existence. Thus, I have learned the importance of paying heed to spiritual knowledge that may come in many forms: dreams, thoughts, feelings, visions, intuition and ceremonies. If we seek a deeper understanding of our purpose and path in this physical world called life, we must heed spiritual knowledge and the role ceremony can play in accessing it.

The concept of the Great Mystery and the mystery of self will be touched on throughout the rest of this chapter and in chapter five. I shall consider how the Two-Eyed Seeing approach is not necessarily limited to viewing the world through a Western or Indigenous lens but can extend to knowledge that is of both a spiritual and physical origin (Bartlett et al., 2012). The Great Mystery is inseparable from the other teachings and from my further insights and learnings. Direct references to the Great Mystery, how they have impacted my journey and coming to know, and how they pertain to the two overarching questions at the heart of this thesis, will be explained as they arise.

However, it is possible some readers may see these explanations as insufficient, leaving them with questions. My hope and the intent, is that this approach will allow the readers to make meaning of the questions for themselves. As explained earlier, we are all on our own personal journey in the process of unravelling the mystery of self. Your journey is as foreign to me as mine is to you, within the grand narrative of our unbeknownst personal journeys and not the personal context of this thesis. Further, I do not know the stage of the journey you are at, or what clarification or insight you may require. Thus, what you may infer or understand at this point in time may be quite different from myself, from others or even from your own self at a later time.

This is not wrong or flawed. It is part of the subjectivity of our individual epistemology and process of coming to know, as we unravel the mystery of self and gain a complete knowing of all that is the Great Mystery.

Teaching #5: The Purpose of Life as a Learning and Healing Journey

The Life Journey. “The purpose of life is to learn. And it is to learn about self. It is to learn about purpose. It is to learn about spirit, to learn about limitations of the physical” so that we can become “the best Anishanabe, human being you can become” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). At the outset, I thought this was an overwhelming and obscure philosophical statement, which could be interpreted and applied in many ways. I wondered what does it mean? What are we learning? And how is this statement, this teaching, related to healing and journey? Upon further exploration of Saulteaux philosophy and a few of its fundamental tenets, the relationship of these questions to my life’s journey has become clearer.

I have learned that once we reconnect with spirit and open ourselves up to spiritual knowledge, we begin to close the gap between the heart and the mind. To negotiate the “thousand miles between the heart and the head” is to become more whole and regain a semblance of our true essence and an understanding of a deeper truth (B. Ermine, as cited in M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). Listening to the heart in the form of intuition is the way to remember our path and purpose. The heart acts as a mediator between the mind and spirit. Unfortunately, our intuition and feelings are often overlooked and suppressed by logic and reason, as was the case with myself. While we do need to listen to our heart in order to remember our true path and purpose, this does not mean completely disregarding intellect. We were all given the ability to think and reason for a purpose and “development of the mind is

essential to understanding and acting in the physical world” (Musqua, as cited in Knight, 2001, p. 41).

Thinking may prevent us from impulsively and instinctively acting on every momentary feeling we experience. Automatically adhering to every impulse does not necessarily mean we are following a deeper truth, since spiritual knowing mediated through the heart is “greater than understanding feelings or emotions” (Musqua, as cited in Knight, 2001, p. 41). Since happenings and occurrences are not always immediately apparent on our life journey, it may take time for the true meaning of an event to become known. We need intellect to think, to reason and to contemplate, but not to the detriment of spiritual knowledge. There is wisdom in multiple ways of knowing and “it is about finding balance” among them (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). This is not unlike finding a balance between different knowledge systems and knowing when to use one or the other, or a combination of both, depending on the context, situation and challenge or task at hand. The lens through which we see invariably determines our understanding. This is why there is wisdom in seeing with both eyes.

It is important to recognize that we have all been colonized to a certain degree, and that Indigenous peoples have suffered from colonization in many ways. Among these was a new way of knowing, *scientific materialism*, which was forced upon Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and in many other parts of the world. Scientific materialism emerged from the work of mathematicians and physicists (known as 'natural philosophers') in 17th century Europe (Woodhouse, 2016). They thought of the universe as bits of inert matter governed by natural laws that determine their movement in ways that resemble a gigantic machine (H. Woodhouse, personal communication, November 28, 2020). This worldview has been remarkably efficient in terms of the natural laws of physics measuring the motion of bodies on earth and in the heavens.

And yet, as 20th century mathematical physicist and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead (1925/1953), argues, scientific materialism's conception of nature as "merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly ... is quite unbelievable" (p. 54). The reason Whitehead gives (according to Woodhouse) is the following:

Its abstract mathematical concepts are mistaken for our concrete experience of nature as an interrelated set of living entities in a constant process of organic growth and decay.

We can then fully appreciate the beauty of a prairie sunset, as the warm rays play upon our body and turn into dusk. (H. Woodhouse, personal communication, November 28, 2020; see also Woodhouse, 2016)

A quick juxtaposition of the principles of *scientific materialism* with those of *Saulteaux knowledge* reveal some fundamental differences. On one hand, "there is an acknowledgement of material existence only, a lack of meaning or purpose in connection with the universe, and nature is viewed as bits of disconnected inert matter" – scientific materialism (H. Woodhouse, personal communication, November 28, 2020). On the other, there is an acceptance of physical and spiritual existence; there is meaning and purpose to life's journey as part of the universe, and nature is seen as interrelated living creatures which we are interconnected with – Saulteaux knowledge (H. Woodhouse, personal communication, November 28, 2020). The structural differences of each respective worldview are reflective in the accompanying belief system. Although the two knowledge systems may be incompatible, they have informed different peoples' way of knowing and their way of being in this physical world.

The worldview of scientific materialism completely disregarded any notion of the spirit and of spiritual knowledge as a way of knowing (Regnier, 1995). As a result, hundreds of years of empirical, objective science as the only legitimate form of knowledge has left Indigenous

peoples without an anchor to the spiritual realm that informs their way of knowing and being in this physical world (Deloria, 1997; Little Bear, 2000). Too much adherence to intellect and the will of the mind has caused a disconnect from spirit, for it is as if we have closed one eye. Nevertheless, we are also in the process of decolonizing and finding a balance between the mind and spirit, which is part of the healing and learning process. In “resolving that conflict and finding balance” between heart and intellect, we are following a deeper form of knowing and gaining insight into our path and purpose (B. Ermine, as cited in M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). As a result, we are coming to a more inclusive understanding of the physical realm that is an intricate part of the Great Mystery and our learning journey. In other words, we are again beginning to see through both eyes.

The Learning Journey. Adhering to, respecting and understanding the connection and relationship between all entities as part of the Great Mystery while in this physical world is an essential part of our learning journey, since in doing so we can try to “contextualize our existence on this earth” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). Two of the fundamental tenets of Saulteaux philosophy derived from the intricate existence of the Great Mystery tell us that all beings are animate and interconnected. These central principles of the Great Mystery act as guides and are inherent in the philosophy of Saulteaux Indigenous peoples, according to the teachings of the Bear Clan (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). A few of the central teachings to Saulteaux philosophy that derive from these central principles, as conveyed through Michael Relland, include respect for all beings and the principles of free will and non-interference (Relland, 1998; see also Knight, 2001).

Learning to accept and understand these basic tenets, how they apply in this physical world and the limitations that come with them is essential to our learning and healing journey,

since “this physical universe is our teacher and it helps us to understand as spiritual beings, limitations, and... the physical side of our Creator” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). This important teaching is further explained by Elder Musqua: “the Creator put us on this earth to learn about physical limitations and laws, so that challenges of living in the physical universe, including the suffering and pain, are all part of learning” (as cited in Knight, 2001, p. 41).

Purpose of the Healing Journey. In the next few pages, I will explain further the connection between the intricacy of Great Mystery and tenets of Saulteaux philosophy such as free will and non-interference, and the ways in which they apply in this physical existence. Even when I do not directly quote Michael, the explanations will be based on my inference of his teachings, the bulk of which stem from our formal oral conversation (interview).

Healing as part of the Physical Journey. “They say our spirit goes on many journeys; this is one of many journeys” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). If before coming to this physical world, our spirits infinitely roamed the universe on multiple learning journeys, then each individual spirit is an autonomous being learning freely how it is intrinsically tied to the Great Mystery. When it comes on this physical journey, through the limitations and frailties of self or others, restrictions are often imposed on the spirit and the physical journey it had intended to complete. By accepting, and at times overcoming these limitations, while simultaneously respecting the autonomy of all other beings’ right to choose and follow their pre-purposed path, we recognize this as part of the learning and healing journey.

Healing as part of Learning. Michael’s statement that “the life journey is about healing, it is all about discovery” rings true; but, at this stage of my journey I am unable to fully grasp its meaning (personal communication, December 1, 2019). I do understand that life is a learning

journey; but, I still struggle to clearly make a connection to learning as healing. This may be because I still adhere to a Western concept of health as the absence of a physical or mental ailment and have yet to open both eyes in this respect. Nevertheless, I am beginning to understand that what is missing from this account is that health is not simply a matter of overcoming disease. From an Indigenous Sauteaux perspective “healing is not an event, it is a process,” a holistic process, which is an integral part of one’s lifelong journey of self-discovery (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

This interpretation of healing may serve a specific purpose for some people, but it does not embody the spiritual basis of a traditional Sauteaux perspective. Once one starts seeing healing as a spiritual process it becomes a coming to know, an understanding of the life journey and an acceptance of all it might entail, as we unravel the mystery of self. This is not to say that we should limit ourselves and “settle for less” in terms of which interests we choose to follow, or what we are trying to experience and accomplish in this physical existence. Rather, healing involves an acknowledgment and acceptance that pursuing what we innately desire is what will bring us the greatest sense of purpose, peace and fulfillment, because we are “potentially fulfilling our destiny” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

We need to also learn that part of the healing journey is being aware that we cannot force our will onto others, regardless of how correct we think we are. That another person’s path, regardless of their relationship to us, is known to them alone; and, if they are allowing themselves to be guided by their individual spirit, then they are on their own learning and healing journey. And no matter how much we think we know what is best for them or the choice they should make at a particular crossroads, innately we do not: “everybody has their own purpose, their own journey, and we cannot impose our will upon others” (M. Relland, personal

communication, December 1, 2019). Nevertheless, we can provide guidance, or advice, or shed some light on the possible choices they have, because we all need mentors, teachers and helpers on our own respective journeys. But ultimately, it must be up to each person to make their own choice. And we need to accept their decision even if we do not agree with it, since this journey is “all about freedom... it is all about equality” and free will is so sacred that “even the Creator will not impose its will upon us” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

Acceptance as part of Healing and Learning. Respect for the freedom of others serves several purposes. First, it affords the person the right to choose to follow their path and re-discover their journey. Second, it helps us to accept that which we cannot control. Even if acceptance is not easy, this is also part of *our* healing journey and something that we need to make meaning of. Third, it puts the onus and responsibility for the choices made and eventual outcomes onto that individual. Even if the person is unhappy with the way their decision turned out, they have to accept responsibility for the outcome. Regardless of the choices we make on our journey, we will inevitably come to another fork in the road and have another decision to make, since “one choice will always lead us closer to our purpose, the other may lead us away” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019).

It might be thought that this teaching implies that one should not care for others in their time of need. But this is a misunderstanding. Affording someone the right to make their own choices in life when presented with all the possible information at hand, while encouraging them to seek out other’s guidance if necessary so as to not make a hasty decision, shows a respect for the individual choice of an autonomous being as they express their own free will in an attempt to uncover the intricate workings of the universe. This is especially true if it enables a person to listen to their intuition, by observing ceremony and being guided by spirit, so that their choice

becomes an autonomous process of empowerment. This process involves recognizing that we are guided by a higher form of knowledge and are following a deeper truth, in which obstacles and hardships are all part of learning and healing. A more complete understanding of self means that we are able to accept and identify with all our experiences, both good and bad. What makes healing possible is how we make meaning of all such experiences; and, if we choose to learn from them, as we acknowledge the role they have in our personal development of self. I am coming to understand that this is the mystery of self and it includes a spiritual connection among all individuals, which together comprise the Great Mystery.

Understanding the elusive and often misunderstood Saulteaux teachings of free will and non-interference, according to the teachings of the Bear Clan conveyed through Michael Relland, have required deep reflection on my part. My difficulty has been in being able to put these teachings into words and actions. When we are at a crossroads, why should we seek the advice we need and contemplate the choices at hand, ultimately relying on spiritual knowledge to guide us, rather than the advice and experience of others? The answer seems to be that if we seek the greatest sense of fulfillment, peace and purpose, then the choice needs to be our own. I have also realized that this is not an easy concept to introduce into my life; but it is inseparable from the spiritual component of Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy and is key to unravelling the mystery of self.

Teaching #6: The Importance of Reciprocity in the Teacher-Student Relationship and in Carrying on the Teachings

“It is our job to make ourselves redundant” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). These words were in reference to the natural progression from crawling to running, which often happens when we engage in ceremony. Michael is speaking from a teacher

or mentor's perspective and in the following explanation I will stay within that same context. However, I am *not* implying that I am in any way a teacher of Saulteaux philosophy. But I have come to learn that trying to make ourselves redundant is a key component of reciprocity in the teacher-student relationship, since "it is a natural evolution," ensuring that the teachings are carried on (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). This does not mean that our teachers and mentors are not needed, nor that their advice should be dismissed, since Elders and knowledge keepers have traditionally always held a revered place within Indigenous communities. But teachers understand it is vital for those who are learning to crawl or walk that they be able to run on their own. As Michael clearly explains,

All these tools we have been given to build that relationship. At some point, as you develop, as you become hopefully wiser, hopefully more intuitive, hopefully more enlightened, you no longer require these tools anymore. You have built your relationship with your Creator.... At that point these things are really no longer that important to you – *to you* [emphasis added]. But they are important to those who come behind. (personal communication, December 1, 2019)

Carrying on the teachings and ceremonies as they have been passed down to us, helping people to learn and understand all they need to unravel the mystery of self, is how the traditional ways are carried on, and this is how our teachers give back.

To coincide with this, when a person is in the role of a teacher or mentor, I believe this means letting go of supposed control when in a perceived position of power. As Michael insists "this has nothing to do with power. If it does have something to do with power that is *Not* [emphasis added] a good thing" (personal communication, December 1, 2019). It follows that if the relationship is based on power and control then it is not about servitude. It is not about

equality between teacher and the learner's own personal development of self; and this is not in keeping with traditional Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy.

Michael has also mentioned that it is always a good idea to seek the help and advice of a knowledge keeper as successful navigation of this road requires guidance. At times this person is sought out and on occasion the opportunity presents itself, as was in the case with me. Before I started graduate studies and began teaching for SUNTEP (Prince Albert) I did not partake in ceremony on a regular basis nor did I have any in-depth knowledge of traditional Saulteaux philosophy. Through an evolving series of events Michael adopted me as his second son and doorman to his lodge. The idea for this thesis became apparent, and I began to seek his guidance as I delved deeper into traditional Saulteaux wisdom, in order to make meaning of recent life events and come to grips with the choices I had made.

The relationship between the teacher and student is of importance since it is personal and can become quite intimate. Traditional wisdom, which is thousands of years old suggests that personal journeys and subjective meaning are generated by a natural setting that requires a great deal of mutual respect, trust and patience between the teacher and student. As a student and someone who is learning, humility, attentiveness and introspection are all required on my part in order to absorb knowledge and insight, and to ensure I model what is being shown to me. Replicating the teachings and ceremonies as closely as possible to the ways in which they were originally practised is paying homage to the accumulated generations of wisdom and knowledge that are imbedded in the process. It is about respecting this process and the ones who came before us, even if we do not yet fully comprehend why. Omitting or changing a part of the process or to ignore a teaching, due to lack of ability, simply reveals my arrogance and is in direct contrast to Saulteaux traditional ways of learning. We do make mistakes. We are after all

only human. But if our heart is in the right place, we should not have a problem humbly correcting these mistakes when they become known or asking for further guidance.

Ceremonies are a key component to Saulteaux philosophy. “They are tools that were given by the Creator to discover who we are” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). They are, as I have said, tools for us to use in our own personal development, so in a way they are not ours but are on loan to us. They need to be respected and kept as close to their original form as possible to ensure their authenticity and value to every person, and not only to the ones who perform the ceremonies. For those who need them, ceremonies can be used to connect with the spiritual realm as we unravel the mystery of self and come to a greater understanding in this physical existence. Ceremonies have been instrumental in my quest for meaning and purpose, although I have a long way to go. I have come to see that by honouring, respecting and practicing that which I have been taught and continuing to learn from Michael and other Indigenous knowledge keepers, as he did from Danny Musqua and others, I am part of something bigger than myself. If needed, if it is part of my path and journey, one day I may be asked to offer similar situations for those who seek out meaning and purpose on their own journeys in this physical existence.

Out of respect for our teachers “we try to do things as we were taught... you try to honour your teacher and do it the way they taught you” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). However, this does not mean there is one correct way to sweat, to smudge, to pray, or to set up a lodge. Michael has sweated with countless people in many different lodges. When he visits another lodge, he makes sure that he follows their teachings and their ways, and when they come to his lodge, he asks that they follow the ways he has been taught and what he is offering. There should not be a problem acknowledging or accepting this, since to claim

otherwise is to promote a black and white, right or wrong, one size fits all model of pan-Indianism, pan-spirituality and pan-ceremony. This is the antithesis to the diversity and nuances among Indigenous nations and to our own personal development. More often than not, the teachings and the tools used were suited to the area in which the people lived. As an example, Indigenous peoples on the west coast may not have a lot of access to sweetgrass, or Indigenous peoples in the desert (or on the prairies) may not have cedar, and Indigenous peoples in South America may have a completely different set of sacred medicines to gain access to the spiritual realm.

On a recent trip to southern Mexico, I took the opportunity to visit the Mayan ruin Ek' Balam. Part of the day involved learning a few words of Mayan, visiting with the Mayan people and learning some of their history, having a Mayan meal and participating in a Mayan ceremony. As part of their ceremony, we opened with what I know as a smudge. Our guide and interpreter said it was an offering of thanks and to gain access to the “afterlife” – he later explained that the afterlife was where we go when we leave this physical world. Out of respect for the Mayan people and their ways of knowing, I participated without comparing or questioning if their ways were “right” or “wrong”, or “better” or “worse” than what I was accustomed to. Instead of questioning I made connections and found many similarities to Indigenous philosophy and methods from the area in which I reside. For example, the acknowledgement of a spiritual component of existence and the partaking in ceremony in order to gain access. The sharing of stories and food, and the giving of thanks, indicating a reciprocal relationship and connection between teacher and student and the spiritual and physical worlds, are all indicators of similarities in Indigenous philosophy.

The minor nuances were dissimilar, but I found in the context of the big meanings, the parallels were remarkable. I find this telling and of importance since this group of Indigenous peoples are thousands of kilometres from the territory of the Saulteaux peoples. Until the last hundred years, physically traversing that great distance would have been a monumental feat. So, this is evidence that Indigenous nations did not merely copy one another, since otherwise the ceremonies would be near identical. What is significant are the similarities between the two philosophies in which a spiritual form of existence is fully acknowledged. The connection and recognition of a life force, which is beyond our physical comprehension that binds all of creation together is present in both Indigenous philosophies. The small differences are what makes each Indigenous nation unique and distinct. But it is the big teachings which connect us, namely the search for guidance from a power greater than we can fathom.

Shortly after I began participating in ceremonies on a regular basis, I often asked myself the following question: how close are the ceremonies today to their “original” form? And when I began helping Michael with the preparation for these ceremonies I was scared and intimidated, since I thought that if I made a mistake the authenticity of the whole ceremony would be in question and it would be my fault. I was preoccupied with order, procedure and right or wrong. I had placed the importance on the physical component of the ceremony, and not on its spiritual nature. Now, I am beginning to see Indigenous ways of knowing, spirituality and ceremony through an Indigenous lens. I am coming to a more in-depth understanding of the limitations of the physical world, the spiritual intent of ceremony and its importance to Saulteaux teachings and personal development. Through Two-Eyed Seeing I am less consumed with order, right or wrong, and more focused on purpose, intent and journey (Bartlett et al., 2012).

Teaching #7: The role of Indigenous Philosophy in an Indigenous Teacher Education Program.

An understanding of Indigenous knowledge and culture must begin with the philosophy or worldview: “Worldview, if you understand worldview, everything else makes sense” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). Within a Western understanding there can be significant differentiation between *worldview* and *philosophy*. However, within a Saulteaux way of knowing the two concepts are quite similar. In the previous reflections, on the teachings from Michael Relland stemming from the Bear Clan, I have used the terms sparingly and singularly since their infrequent use did not alter the clarity of my narrative. But in reflecting on this teaching and going forward I am less concerned with this, because the two concepts are so closely intertwined, and are used, at times, interchangeably in the conversation with Michael. In short, Indigenous worldview equates to Indigenous philosophy. By this I mean that Indigenous systems of knowing are inclusive of the spiritual plane, an understanding of the interrelatedness of nature, and of the value of all living beings, all of which influences how we perceive and understand reality and conduct ourselves.

An Indigenous worldview must lay the foundation and be the backbone of Indigenous teacher education programs, especially in reference to the big meanings. If we start with the philosophy or worldview, the underpinnings of the philosophical framework and its associated tenets will be seamlessly immersed throughout the program. The methods and pedagogy then will inherently derive from traditional Indigenous ways of knowing. The curriculum will follow; and the emphasis will move from process as opposed to product. Michael explains: “If you understand the worldview, if you understand it on a really deep level, the method comes out of that. If the method comes out of that then the curriculum has to be impacted by that also”

(personal communication, December 1, 2019). As a direct and natural result, the prominence of all aspects of culture will be integrated throughout the program, a culture which is rooted in the worldview and philosophical framework.

A pedagogical example of this process that I have been fortunate enough to experience has been at SUNTEP fall culture camps. At “camp” we (Elders, knowledge keepers, mentors, teachers, guests and students) are immersed for three days in a natural setting at a lake just north of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Here we commune together; we learn together; and, through a variety of ceremonies, activities and teachings we each work on our own personal development. We also directly learn about elements of culture previously not known or forgotten, but indirectly via the choices we make and our experiences, we are all working on understanding the mystery of self and the purpose of our own individual journeys. An absolutely fundamental part of camp are the Elders - the knowledge they have acquired and the teachings and wisdom that they leave with us. It is their knowledge, which guides and influences all aspects of camp. Our way of learning and coming to know is a direct result of the traditional knowledge they make available to us, which stems from their own respective nations’ philosophies and worldviews.

This pedagogical process *cannot* be reversed. If the methods of teaching are developed in isolation from the underlying philosophy, the learning that takes place will be inadequate because it is not based on traditional Indigenous knowledge. There is likely to be a mish mash of pedagogical frameworks, and the promotion of *surface culture* will be limited to its visual elements (dress, food and dance) that are often celebrated at mosaics or festivals (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Without the necessary grounding in the appropriate philosophical framework, the meaning and significance of the dress, food and dance are not understood or passed on. The result will be an incomplete and inadequate understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing.

In addition, one cannot over-emphasize the importance of spirituality to an Indigenous teacher education program (Hampton, 1995b). According to the teachings conveyed through Michael, “you can’t *Not* [emphasis added] address spirituality because that is the cornerstone on which everything hangs” (personal communication, December 1, 2019). Indigenous spirituality must inform all aspects of an Indigenous teacher education program, in order for the program to be authentically Indigenous. For this to be feasible in our modern world and education system, there must be a clear and separate differentiation of Indigenous spirituality and organized religion as many people believe them to be synonymous. I have already addressed this misunderstanding earlier in this thesis, and in chapter five I will underline the importance of spirituality as central to any Indigenous teacher education program. To refuse to acknowledge this is to undermine teacher education programs that are based on traditional Indigenous knowledge.

I will also explain in more detail why Métis Indigenous peoples should be afforded the choice of whether to include Indigenous spirituality and ceremony as part of their individual way of being, just as an individual Métis person should be free to follow the teachings of a Christian church. I will argue that the Two-Eyed Seeing perspective affords Indigenous Métis peoples with a greater understanding of each knowledge system (Bartlett et al., 2012). And the degree to which Indigenous spirituality or religion (or a combination of both) should be part of our own individual epistemologies and personal journeys in this physical world, is a personal choice. For some time I have been grappling with this question. It was not until I began to delve deeper and become more knowledgeable of all that encompasses the interconnected web of traditional Indigenous Saulteaux philosophy that I was able to see, even though dissimilar in many respects,

the teachings stemming from both ways of knowing have been fundamental in the construction of Indigenous Métis identity and Indigenous Métis worldview.

Throughout the final chapter I will emphasize the two main questions at the heart of this thesis:

1. How my path and life purpose has been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony; and
2. How traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature should inform Indigenous teacher education.

Both questions will be framed in terms of my own life journey and grounded in traditional Saulteaux Indigenous philosophy and worldview, as I have come to make meaning of the teachings of the Bear Clan passed down from Elder Danny Musqua and conveyed through Michael Relland. My insights and learnings are presented in the form of a letter to students.

CHAPTER FIVE: FURTHER INSIGHTS AND GOING FORWARD

A Letter to a SUNTEP Student

I hope this finds you well and at peace, at whatever stage you are at on your journey. I am on my way back from Michael's lodge. It is nearing dusk. The air is calm. Cloud cover blankets the stars. Winter looks like it will soon descend from the skies and envelop us for the season to come. It is late fall, a peaceful and serene evening following a memorable day. Michael and I built an eight stick sweatlodge, sweated two rounds, visited, enjoyed a delicious meal and chatted about my thesis – the teachings I have learned, what I am still struggling with or learning, and what is left to say to finish off this stage of my journey and this research thesis.

I am mindful of the teachings that I have come to know and the insight I have learned. But I am also left contemplating the depth and amount of what is left, which I want to convey while also being mindful of the structure of this last thesis chapter. I am often in wonder, as an Indigenous Métis person, as to how ignorant I was before my journey into an Indigenous way of knowing began? And what my thought process consisted of before exposure to, and acknowledgement of educational transformative life experiences? I am aware I allowed myself to be guided by logic and intellect alone and did not heed spiritual knowledge; but I cannot, with certainty, remember what this was like or to the degree that my thought process has changed and grown. I am reminded of a quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., “a mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions” (Goodreads, n.d.). I think this accurately depicts where I am at. Although I know my thought process has changed, I may never know to the full extent. Nor can I now fathom how spirituality could be absent from my current physical existence and decision-making process.

In the following explanation of this letter to you, I am going to further expand on two of the main teachings brought to light in chapter four: how Indigenous spirituality is inseparable from an Indigenous teacher education program, and how through ceremony, the spiritual component of self can alter our path and purpose in this physical existence, as we seek a greater sense of fulfillment and purpose. It is these two teachings that have been fundamental to my path and purpose on this physical journey, and they are a direct reflection of the two main overarching questions at the heart of this thesis: *How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony? And how can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education.* Both questions and the teachings discussed are key to Métis Indigenous peoples being able to see and walk in both worlds – Indigenous and European.

SUNTEP experiences have been instrumental at this stage of my journey: from culture camp, where the initial conscious catalyst for this thesis began, to the final stages of this thesis. My relationship with the SUNTEP community has brought me into contact with teachers, Elders and mentors needed to be able to make sense of a traditional Indigenous way of knowing, needed at this stage of my journey. I have come to learn that there is a process, history and reason events unfold as they do. While the process of my journey is in an ongoing state of self-discovery and remembering, the history of SUNTEP needs also to be remembered. Since as a SUNTEP student it is important for you to understand how it was made possible that you have the privilege of being here.

SUNTEP was born out of necessity and a recognized need to have Indigenous teachers in Saskatchewan's public-school system. Our Elders and old ones bore witness to how the current model of education was failing Indigenous students. As a result, they wrote letters, collected and

delivered petitions, held sit-ins at government offices and demanded that there be an education program designed to specifically address the needs of Indigenous (particularly Métis) students. This has developed into the realization that it is important to have Indigenous education taught from an Indigenous perspective, stemming from an Indigenous (in our case, Métis) knowledge base. As a result, the SUNTEP programs began in 1980 in Saskatoon and Regina, with a SUNTEP program beginning in Prince Albert the following year (Bird-Wilson, 2011).

SUNTEP emphasizes the need for Métis (Indigenous) knowledge, pedagogy and epistemology. We need to remember that Indigenous influences and knowledge are as crucial to Métis epistemology as European influences and knowledge. And if a teacher is expected to teach from a certain perspective, it stands to reason then that they need to be exposed to all components of this perspective as students in that respective program. This does include the methods, elements of culture and the importance of each; but it also needs to include the overarching philosophies and worldviews. Since the underlying foundational tenets of Indigenous (Métis) philosophy is what informs and needs to be present in all aspects of the methods and cultural teachings. And as already explained, spirituality, the spiritual component of existence, is an inseparable and integral component to Indigenous philosophy, worldview and way of knowing and must be included.

The events of SUNTEP are not as condensed as I have presented here. But I have included this condensed version to give you a brief history of SUNTEP and of the initial, and more-so ongoing need, for Indigenous ways of knowing, grounded within its philosophy and worldview, to be the foundation of an Indigenous teacher education program. If we as Indigenous (Métis) peoples are to have a complete understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and are expected “to teach from an Indian [*sic*] / Métis perspective at all levels of the

educational system and in both contemporary and traditional matters” (Bird-Wilson, 2011, p. 54), then we must be exposed to the root tenets of the program: the elements of the overarching philosophies and worldviews. So, we are then able to make a more informed choice as to how root tenets of each worldview, or a combination of both, may influence our individual journeys, and to best serve the students we teach. In short, we need to be afforded the opportunity to look through both eyes, so we can then see and teach from both perspectives.

My seemingly high expectations were questioned at times when I taught for SUNTEP Prince Albert. Regardless, I still think it is imperative to have high expectations in an Indigenous teacher education program. As I understand it, the program, the opportunities we have been given and the responsibility that comes with this, is representative of something which is bigger than our current individual selves. We should not take the sacrifices of our past and recent relations lightly, or the privileged spot we occupy as part of the SUNTEP community. There are responsibilities that come with our educational sponsorship. The onus bares on all of us to put forth our best and to shoulder the responsibility, and to safeguard, honour and carry forward our Indigenous (Métis) cultural inheritance. In this way we ensure what has been entrusted to us is as whole as possible and made available for future generations and peoples who may be in need (B. Huntley, personal communication, September 2006; M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019; see also Cajete, 2000a).

In the spirit of reciprocity this is another way in which we give back: to our ancestors, teachers, the community and to those not yet able to crawl. Similar to learning the teachings and ceremonies from an Indigenous way of knowing under the guidance or mentorship of an Indigenous knowledge keeper or Elder. Respecting and carrying forward the oral tradition of knowledge acquisition and dissemination, making available the foundational tenets of an

Indigenous philosophy is also how we ensure we each have the opportunity to see with both eyes.

We also need to remember that as a marginalized group of people, to be deemed equal as teachers and as an education program, we have always had to do better. A person of a minority group, as part of an affirmative action program, in the eyes of some people within dominant society is automatically deemed inferior (Boler, 2000; Fanon 1986; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). While this perception may not be fair, it is a symptom of the lasting effects of colonization and the assumed and adopted ideals of internalized superiority and inferiority, which are real and still prominent in education, in Canada, and in other parts of the world (Boyko, 2000; DiAngelo, 2018; Larocque, 1991; St. Denis, 2011).

To illustrate how powerful and pervasive dominant ideology can be, I will humbly share an example of my former way of thinking. I, as a guest member of the SUNTEP community used to question the quality of SUNTEP as an education program. My conditioned reservations were that Indigenous (Métis) peoples only went to an Indigenous teacher education program because they might not be able to succeed in a mainstream education program. Even though I would not openly admit, I always had a reason (excuse) why I did not want to enrol in the SUNTEP program. I, Jed huntley, the proud son of an extremely well respected and accomplished SUNTEP graduate, faculty member, program coordinator, and member of the provincial education community in its entirety, used to think that he possessed the critical thinking and awareness needed to question the integrity of SUNTEP (from an outside perspective), and by default all associated members of the SUNTEP community.

As I reflect, I now see that I questioned the very program which has been responsible for my academic opportunities and success. The program that has put me on a path I consider to be

more whole, purposeful and resonant with meaning. And a program which has heightened my way of knowing in this physical world. In short, a program responsible for my new way of thinking and being. I struggle to explain how difficult it has been to bring to light the above-mentioned reservations I held, or the massive shame that has come with it. As I see it now with both eyes, how could I have been so narrow minded, so arrogant and ignorant? My former way of knowing did not, even at the most rudimentary level, understand the need or purpose of SUNTEP. Or how the cultural component rooted in an Indigenous knowledge base is what makes the program unique and is largely attributed to student success. There is a continued need for the program to offer the opportunity to be able to see with both eyes.

But that is the power of colonization and dominant societal ideology when it is perpetuated, and uncritically implemented in education (Anyon, 1994; Boyko, 2000; McCearry, 2011). Through inaction, lack of education and awareness I (we) was allowed to assume and think that affirmative action programs were inferior. And that if a person is a part of an affirmative action program then by default, they must be inferior too; and that the sole reason they choose to attend an affirmative action program is because they could not succeed in a “regular or real” program.

Enrollment in SUNTEP Regina meant exposure to a new knowledge system, a critical lens in which to view and question my adopted and fettered *opinions*, and exposure to teachings I had previously willingly suppressed and ignored. Afforded the opportunity to see with both eyes, I have come to learn that my former way of thinking and seeing is shameful, embarrassing and could not be further from the truth. I have included this testimony not as a form of self-loathing, but as a reminder to myself of a powerful lesson I have learned: the value of seeing any situation with both eyes. I choose not to ignore my past oversights and way of thinking as a reminder to

myself, that although certain aspects of self and society may have changed, in many respects there is still a long way to go.

However, due to SUNTEP's continuous hard work in debunking these opinions over the last 40 years, these opinions may not be as prevalent or may have changed within the education circles in the cities where the program operates, and possibly even the province. Since once you are familiar, informed and more aware of a program or person, ignorant attitudes tend to mitigate one's views (Dei, 2005; Kumashiro, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). But when I attended SUNTEP at the University of Regina, many mainstream education students did not know about the program. Furthermore, some local Métis students coming out of high school have enrolled in education programs outside of Prince Albert because they had not heard of SUNTEP. This underlines that although well-known and respected in specific circles, the SUNTEP program may not be as well-known or respected as it deserves.

With this explanation my hope is that you see and understand why there is a necessity of high expectations in an Indigenous teacher education program (Hampton, 1995a). And this is why I push to uphold and attain these standards. We have the privilege of benefitting from what our ancestors, fought, bled and died for. If it was not for their sacrifice, we would not be here. Thus, all SUNTEP associated people are indebted to our relations who worked tirelessly, and continue to do so, for the betterment of all Indigenous (Métis) peoples. The reason for the stringent academic standards has been explained and should be obvious, but there is also a reason why culture stemming from Métis (Indigenous) worldview is just as integral to the make-up of the SUNTEP program.

On occasion I have heard a few long associated SUNTEP instructors and faculty mention that when SUNTEP first started most of the students had knowledge of their culture but that they

needed academic guidance. Now they say quite often it is the opposite, where many of the students have an academic footing, but they lack cultural knowledge and grounding. Arguably then, traditional Indigenous knowledge and its spiritual anchor, spirituality, is needed in Indigenous teacher education programs now more than ever (Cajete, 2000a). So that students may be afforded the opportunity to see through both pair of eyes.

As an example, since our origins, as an essential component to and product of the fur trade, Métis peoples have been asked to bridge two separate worlds: to be able to understand and negotiate both European and Indigenous worldviews, language and cultural practises. In order to act as guides, interpreters and middle-men [*sic*] between the Indigenous First Nations and European nations (R. Fayant, personal communication, October 2006). Since our inception then we have had a foot in both worlds. Our own unique and distinct culture as an Indigenous people developed as a result of having a foot in both worlds and being a blend of both groups of people. The ensuing developing culture is predicated on the knowledge base, philosophy and worldview of both nations. This adoption and integration of culture into our new and distinct ways of being cannot be limited to “surface culture” – elements of culture which are visible, easily identifiable and replicable (V. St. Denis, personal communication, September 21, 2013; see also James, 2005; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). It must also extend to “deep culture”: culture which is not visible but is known to members of that cultural group (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Shaules, 2007; St. Denis, 2011).

Deep culture encompasses the overarching philosophy and worldview of each nation. The philosophy and worldview inform the underlying tenets and subsequent culture of each group of people’s ways of being in this physical world. When it comes to Indigenous nations (the ones mentioned in this thesis), this must extend to the spiritual component of existence (Hampton,

1995b). Since if we listen to the teachings passed down from Elder Musqua and conveyed through Michael Relland, highlighted in chapter four and which cannot be repeated enough, “you can’t *NOT* [emphasis added] address spirituality because that is the cornerstone on which everything hangs” (personal communication, December 1, 2019). To further this point, Michael has mentioned in many of our informal conversations, as well as during ceremonies, that if a person wants to come to a deep and profound understanding of the teachings within Indigenous (Saulteaux) culture, then spirituality needs to be discussed.

As Métis Indigenous peoples “we should not be preoccupied as to the percentages of our Indian or European lineages; instead he stated that we should focus on recognizing and honouring both” (Relland, 1998, p. 77). With this statement Michael is referencing the words of Louis Riel while simultaneously explaining the reservations he had about exploring the Indigenous spiritual component of self as a Métis person. Michael acknowledges that he was raised predominantly Catholic, and questioned that if he could participate in traditional First Nations ceremonies, because he was Métis and not First Nations? And if Indigenous ceremony had a rightful place in an individual Métis Indigenous epistemology? Reading Michael’s thesis helped to ease some of the reservations I held in this respect. Since it gives me comfort to know that I am not the only person who has struggled with the notion of individual Métis epistemology and the inclusion of Indigenous ceremony and spirituality as part of their individual knowing and being in this physical world. That the degree to which Indigenous spirituality and ceremony and, or Western religion is incorporated into our daily lives, to give us meaning and to guide our decisions is a choice afforded to each individual. Indigenous spirituality and ceremony can be as much a part of Métis peoples’ epistemology as can religion and the church. Each can be used to see and explore the respective knowledge bases, which are foundational to Indigenous Métis

worldview, as we work on our own personal development and come to a greater understanding of self.

The effects of colonization and dynamics of oppression are complex, real, and intertwined within everyday aspects of Canadian society (Battiste, 2004; Boyko, 2000; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). I do not claim to be an expert or to be able to explain all facets of colonization and oppression. But in respect to the classes I have taken and taught in the fields of anti-racism, anti-oppression, decolonizing (Indigenous) education and Indigenous studies, I have come to acquire the makings of a critically informed knowledge base in which to view how systems of colonization and oppression are rooted in Canadian society and how they continue to oppress Indigenous peoples. Once I gained an introductory level of understanding, it was not difficult to see why Christianity and a religious belief system became the predominant, practised and promoted belief system with Métis Indigenous peoples, instead of Indigenous spirituality aided by ceremony.

The coming together of two separate nations, Europeans and Indigenous First Nations, also meant the coming together of two opposing and near incompatible belief systems (Little Bear, 2000; see also Cajete, 2000a; Ermine, 2007). European males and their accompanying beliefs of Christianity (including religion) and Western science (scientific materialism), encountered and clashed with Indigenous females and their accompanying beliefs of Indigenous spirituality (ceremony) and the spiritual component of existence. Under the aegis of oppression two dominant social groups (European males and a Western way of knowing), merged with two minoritized social groups (Indigenous females and an Indigenous way of knowing). The inevitable result was a new group of people, the Métis, with elements of both belief systems, but

also, with the prevailing belief system coming to the forefront and predominately being carried forward.

However, this does not mean that Indigenous spirituality and ceremony was void in the epistemology and worldview of all Métis Indigenous peoples. Nor does it mean that an individual Métis person is barred or should be hesitant to explore either. The words of Louis Riel acknowledging this, mentioned earlier, are echoed in the actions of other prominent and influential Métis leaders. The iconic Gabriel Dumont, as an example, was known to participate in Indigenous ceremonies (R. Fayant, personal communication, October 2019; see also Préfontaine, 2011). And although it cannot be said to what extent Métis people such as Dumont observed Indigenous ceremony or used spirituality to guide their lives, it can be assumed that if a person is going to heed any type of ceremony, then there must be some acknowledgment of that ceremony as significant to that person's life and the choices they make. Around the time of Dumont and Riel it does not seem there was a conscious need to remember to see with both eyes, since seeing with both eyes, incorporating elements of each respective worldview to best solve the problem or situation at hand, was an unconscious lived existence.

To coincide with this and according to Indigenous teachings I have come to learn through Michael Relland and other knowledge keepers and Elders: as a Métis person the role that Indigenous spirituality, ceremony included, can have in influencing our individual search for meaning and purpose in this physical existence “is something to take pride in and which I have the right and obligation to explore” (Relland, 1998, p. 77). Indigenous spirituality can be as much a part of the qualifying criteria to a Métis person's epistemology as can religious teachings of the church. Christianity and religion became the assumed dominant spiritual practice over

Indigenous spirituality and ceremony, not because it was “right” or chosen, rather in part because of the dynamics of oppression.

To further this insight, to deem all tools and ceremonies associated with Indigenous spirituality as solely a First Nations custom, is to then suppose that the church and accompanying religions are solely a European custom, and therefore should also not be associated with Métis epistemology. The very idea of barring Métis peoples from exploring teachings of the church or discouraging Métis people from engaging in Indigenous spirituality and ceremony, sounds almost beyond comprehension. As I explained in chapter three, the focus of the teachings you choose to follow should not be on the limitations of them in this physical existence, but rather on the spiritual intent of them and the role they can have in your own personal development of self. If we respect the foundational tenets of free will and non-interference, then an individual Métis Indigenous person is free to choose to be guided by Indigenous spirituality and ceremony or religion and the teachings of the church. To be guided by a combination of both, as some Métis already choose to do, is also an acceptable choice.

Spirituality is viewed as inseparable from an Indigenous way of knowing and it needs to be experienced if we want to begin to comprehend its depth, magnitude and interconnectedness. I will borrow Michael’s analogy of a strawberry (which he acknowledges he also borrowed) to explain. If asked what a strawberry taste like, what would your response be? You can try and describe the taste: the shape, the colour, the texture, the sweetness in as much detail as you like, but will this provide a complete answer and a necessary understanding of the question asked? Or is a description of what a strawberry taste like a near impossible task? The only true way a person will know how a strawberry taste is to taste it for themselves - to experience it. The same premise applies to Indigenous spirituality and ceremony.

At the beginning stages of my journey into learning all that was (is) Indigenous spirituality, at best I had a rudimentary understanding of it. I knew that religion and Indigenous spirituality were different, but I could neither articulate nor explain these differences. It was not until I began to immerse myself in the Indigenous Saulteaux teachings of the Bear Clan conveyed through Michael, that I began to gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual component of existence. Only then was I able to more concretely distinguish between the two. The opportunity to look through both eyes has enabled me to see the essence of Indigenous spirituality with a focus on self and personal development. It is as inseparable from an Indigenous way of knowing as all humans are a part of *Āhtasōhkanikamik* (Saulteaux word describing the earth as our mother) and this physical existence.

Indigenous spirituality focuses on personal development, on personal journey. It is about freedom and it is about choice. It is about free will and non-interference. It is about learning the limitations of the physical universe as we come closer to understanding all that is the Great Mystery. The teachings of the Bear Clan passed down from Elder Musqua do not exclude people of religious faith from exploring the spiritual component of existence and the mystery of self, nor does it exclude people who do not ascribe to a higher being. It is inclusive, and all peoples are welcome to explore the ceremonies passed down from Elder Musqua. Everyone is welcome in a sweat (Relland, 1998). Elder Musqua explains that if you are a Christian it will make you a better Christian; if you are Jewish it will make you a better Jewish person; if you are Muslim it will make you a better Muslim; and if you are Indigenous, it will make you a better Indigenous person (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). It is also explained that the ceremonies do not belong to us. They are on loan to us and have been given to use as tools in our individual personal development. As you commune with your God, your Creator, on your own

personal journey to unravelling the mystery self and coming to a more complete understanding of all that is the Great Mystery. Therefore, we can deduce that we do not have the right to exclude.

I will leave the last word in explaining this concept to Elder Musqua. He so eloquently explains that Indigenous spirituality, the process of becoming a better human being, transcends religious lines, as all are welcome regardless of faith. And that “*the way* [emphasis added] is not a religion but rather a way of understanding the spiritual world and developing a deeper relationship with the Creator” (as cited in Relland, 1998, p. 104).

With this explanation my hope is to provide clarity and peace of mind, so you my students, do not feel like you must choose between religious teachings and ceremonial teachings, between Indigenous spiritual exploration and identifying as Métis - you can choose to look through both eyes. The degree to which any individual Métis Indigenous person includes Indigenous spirituality into their daily life is a personal choice. It is inseparable from an Indigenous way of knowing and if an Indigenous teacher education program is going to claim any authority as stemming from Indigenous knowledge then spirituality needs to be a fundamental part of the program. Indigenous spirituality is not a religion, as the teachings highlight it is “*the Way*” [emphasis added], it is a philosophy of life. It is about personal development, building your relationship with the Great Mystery and coming to understand self. As Métis peoples it is about looking through both eyes, so we then are able to come to a more complete understanding of our own individual epistemologies, paths and journeys.

If we remove or omit spirituality from Indigenous teacher education programs on the premise that we are associating spirituality with religion, then we are removing one of the main pillars of Indigenous knowledge. The pedagogy, the culture, the methods, the curriculum (to use

a metaphor, the little teachings) will not holistically resonate as they will not be grounded in the big teachings. Any attempt in the removal or omission of spirituality from an Indigenous teacher education program is a disservice to Indigenous knowledge systems, Indigenous peoples overall and Indigenous education. In actuality you may be doing more of a disservice, as you will be actively working to keep in place the lasting and ongoing effects of colonization and non-Indigenous worldviews. Indigenous spirituality as a lived existence, as a dynamic animate experience, as a personal journey in our desire to unravel the mystery of self and come to understand the intricacies of the universe, must be accepted in its entirety if it is to be recognized as part of an Indigenous teacher education program rooted in Indigenous knowledge (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019; see also Bartlett et al., 2012).

In my search for meaning and purpose in this physical existence I like to think my personal development has come a long way. As an example, in high school I did not want to take Indigenous studies, to more recently where I now see Indigenous ways of knowing as essential to my current and future way of knowing and seeing. It was only when I enrolled in SUNTEP Regina as a student that began the process of my “critical awakening” (Henhawk, 2013, p. 512). This process accentuated with graduate studies, since prior to my experience of higher education and Indigenous cultural teachings, my way of knowing was primarily Eurocentric. I was a product of the colonial school system. And I find it a bit ironic that it took higher education and the very institutions which historically served to keep and maintain Eurocentric dominance of knowledge in place, are the very places that have given me a critical awakening and allowed me to see more clearly with both eyes (Henhawk, 2013; see also Battiste, 2013; Marshall, 2017).

Michael mentioned a sentiment in our conversation that I have heard before but is another example of a teaching that has resonated only recently. Due to the advent and ongoing effects of

colonization (largely because of the assimilative intent of residential schools and the demonization and partial erosion of Indigenous spirituality and ceremony) acknowledging the spiritual component of existence can be especially beneficial to Indigenous peoples: “It reminds them of who they are. It gives them a sense of identity. It gives them connection. It gives them place, a sense of belonging” (M. Relland, personal communication, December 1, 2019). All these tools of empowerment can prove instrumental in the decolonizing process (Henhawk, 2013). And decolonizing and two-eyed seeing need be a key part of any Indigenous teacher education program.

Although some may consider the process of awakening or remembering to be a decolonizing process, I also consider it to be part of my learning and healing journey. As my ability to see with both eyes has been heightened, I have come to a more in-depth understanding of self. It follows then, to see the world from both European and Indigenous perspectives, a person must have knowledge of both. With my previous way of knowing and singular lens in which I liked to view the world, I liked to state I was Métis. But other than possessing a Métis card or explaining that the Métis are in fact one of the three Aboriginal groups of people in Canada and that we were (are) the “forgotten people”, I held a surface level of understanding of nearly all things Indigenous; and not the deeper meaning needed to begin to articulate the worldviews / philosophy and individual way of knowing.

As I explained in chapter one, keeping your mind open to differing perspectives and not denouncing other ways of knowing or diverse community ties, enables us as Métis peoples to see both worlds in which we have been asked to navigate and live. Before the commencement of this thesis, I was and still am well versed with the Western gaze, it was seeing through an Indigenous lens in which I struggled. And although my understanding of either an Indigenous or European

way of knowing is not yet complete, possessing the ability to see the tests or opportunities on our life's path and having the fortitude to view and apply the needed way of knowing to come to the best decision at that given time, is what has brought me the greatest sense of purpose, peace and fulfilment on this physical journey. I am slowly, continually coming to a deeper understanding of what the Elders say when they explain that there is wisdom in seeing with both eyes (Bartlett et al., 20012; Ermine, 2007; Marshall, 2017).

I was out having coffee with a couple of people a while ago and one lady noticed my Métis ring. She asked why I needed to throw that in people's face all the time. I explained to her that is not my intention nor why I wear it. I do not wear a Métis sash pin on my jacket or wear a Métis ring for other people. I do it to serve as a reminder for myself. A reminder of how ignorant I was before learning how to see through both eyes, and to whom I am indebted, for setting me on this path I am on today. It would be extremely easy for me, and many other light skinned Indigenous people who have learned to navigate both worlds, to pass as non-Indigenous, to forget where we came from or who has helped us, and to reap the benefits of both worlds. So, for me, displaying identifiable aspects of Métis identity is a reminder: not to forget our traditional ways, our old ones, the culture and language rooted in Métis Indigenous ways of knowing that has brought us here. It is these ways that will keep us grounded and connected, moving forward in today's world as we try to navigate both worlds – the new world and new ways and the traditional world and our traditional ways.

As I have stated, the method of seeing with both eyes applies to European and Indigenous traditional ways of knowing in historical and contemporary context. As an extension, this applies to the academic worlds, where Indigenous knowledge has been historically excluded from academia. In an attempt to further Indigenous knowledge within academia, it is imperative that

Indigenous academics not forget our old ways and what has gotten us here. It is important that we not co-opt traditional Indigenous ways of knowing or pander to the university and academic standards of what is validated as knowledge. It is important that we provide the needed context, so that all people have the opportunity to realize that Indigenous ways of knowing are just as valid and legitimate as Western or Eurocentric ways of knowing and they need not conform to fit into a Western mindset.

I am gaining more and more clarity when Michael explains: you cannot force the river, it will flow on its own. If it is meant to be it will happen, and it will happen on its own time (personal communication, December 1, 2019). What is becoming clear is what could be termed as the misunderstood concept of “Indian time”. It was not until I was reading the recent comments my mother made on this last chapter that I was hit with a deeper understanding and profound awareness of this concept. She paraphrased an explanation she heard from Buffy Sainte-Marie, who used the analogy of child birth to explain that things will happen on their own schedule and you cannot force them. Traditionally you cannot force a baby to be born. It will be born when it is ready. Some are born earlier, and some are born later than the projected due date, but they are born when they are ready (personal communication, November 16, 2020). Events unfold as they are ready to happen, when they “are meant to be” or on “Indian time.” They happen at the moment in time when the journey was planned out in the spiritual realm. But time in the spiritual realm does not directly correspond to incremental time in this physical world, or more specifically in this modern Western world (Relland, 1998). I think that is where we get impatient and lack understanding: we forget to look through two eyes. We are so bound by incremental time that most often we cannot fathom how things could be explained or how we could function without these constraints.

Here-in-lies the misinterpretation of “Indian time,” which has contributed to the misuse of the phrase and incorrect application of this concept in parts of today’s physical world. “Indian Time” as it is referred to now is most often associated with being late, missing a set deadline, lagging, or not meeting another person’s schedule, expectations or obligations. It seems this is a complete ignorant interpretation and misuse of a phrase, which describes a concept that has significant meaning and applicability to Indigenous ways of knowing, and which can have great practical effects in this physical world. If we allow things to happen on their own schedule and try to not force a happening, we can then learn to accept what we cannot control and which we do not completely understand. We can begin to search for meaning and purpose to life’s happenings instead of solely focusing on emotions associated with the event and the immediate consequence.

Slow

As I near the end of this thesis and this stage of my journey, a moment of reflection is needed. It has been arduous at times, but also memorable and transformative. I am grateful for all that I have learned, and all the teachers, helpers, students and guides I have encountered along the way who have aided this process. You are an indelible part of my learning journey in this physical existence as I seek a more holistic understanding of all that is the Great Mystery. I acknowledge your contribution to my life, personal development and this research – I am humbled and thankful. As I look forward to the next stage of my journey and where it will take me, it seems only fitting that I leave you with a story. Take from it the meaning you seek; the meaning which lies with the listener.

Three-and-a half years, initially that is the time I gave myself to finish this thesis and my Master’s degree in Education. But it has taken me the maximum amount of time allowed, which

feels longer yet, almost like forever (if it is possible to know what forever feels like). Countless times throughout this thesis process I have questioned: is this worth it? Why am I doing this? Can I do this? Is anybody going to benefit? Does the potential professional gain outweigh the ongoing personal sacrifice and negative health benefits which have ensued? I remind myself often, usually when I am struggling, that if I had taken the M.Ed. course-based program I would have been finished within the three-and-a-half-year time frame I wanted. Now I am looking at near twice the length, and for what purpose? Not for a PhD. dissertation, which some people have completed in less time and will carry more weight and opportunity, but for a M.Ed. thesis that may very well sit on a shelf in the library or become archived online, unless it is sought out. From this respect, has this product, this piece of research made a difference, and if so to whom?

Now, when viewed through the other eye I have come to learn another perspective. One that acknowledges the process as opposed to only the product. It is not just the end result which matters; but the journey to get there is as important or many times more-so than the product, in terms of individual development, purpose and reciprocity. The acquired teachings, learnings and insight gained along the journey is as much a part of the process and end result, as is the finished product. From an educational transformative and personal development viewpoint this is what matters, is what is important and is what will guide me going forward.

Since this thesis process has started I have become increasingly fixated on the length of time it is taking. When in reality incremental time is a construct of our modern society, which is used to dictate and run our daily or even minute by minute lives. Yet in the spirit realm, and even pre-European contact in the Americas, there seemed to be less emphasis placed on incremental time (Knight, 2001; Relland, 1998). However, I realize in the society we live and operate in, and

within the academic walls, time does play a factor. It seems part of my learning journey is to remember when I must adhere to incremental time and when to let events unfold as they may.

Five years. If we consider our spirit has been around since the beginning of time, five years is the blink of an eye – if that. It is highly unlikely that incremental time was factored in when our spirit planned out our journey. Yes, I believe certain events along our path were planned and meant to teach us all about the physical universe and self, but I would be naive to think that the spirit planned such constraining specifics as: ‘higher education will take three-and-a-half to five years.’ The confines of incremental time are of the physical universe and more specifically of modern Western society. I told myself I wanted to be finished a M.Ed. in three to three-and-a-half years. It stands to reason then in order to meet this objective that the teachings, learnings and insight must happen within this time frame. But trying to rationalize three-and-a-half years when some of the teachings and learnings can take a lifetime is unrealistic, so why was I fixated on this set amount of time?

To me this is what I logically thought realistic when I planned out this degree. Before I even had a thesis topic, this made sense in my head. The university has a suggested framework and allocated timeframe for each degree. Due to my schedule and other commitments I put myself in the middle of the allocated time allowed, again this seemed logical. While I appreciate this, and now also appreciate how long Indigenous knowledge can take to learn and make meaning of, I still feel like this process has taken me longer than it should to arrive at the end result. And for whatever reason I get quite frustrated when what seems like almost everything in life takes me twice, three times as long as other people to complete. It seems this is with everything I do. Whether it is writing a paper or thesis, completing a project or home renovations, in near every avenue I engage it seems like a drawn-out extended process.

At some point during this research process I became familiar with the book 'A boy called Slow' by Joseph Bruchac (1994).²⁰ This book is based on a true account of events of a young Indigenous Lakota boy who, either had a similar problem, or displayed similar characteristics in all aspects of his life. Everything this boy did was thought to be slow, but it was also methodical and purposeful. Hence the name he was given as a child was "Slon-he," which translates to slow in Lakota (p. 5). This is not a very flattering name within the context of our modern understanding of the word. Slow was rarely in a hurry. But it was not because he was lazy or incapable, it was because he was careful, deliberate and methodical. He always put forth his best and he seemed to understand that sometimes doing a good job takes what seems like a lot of time (Bruchac, 1994). Slow seemed to understand from an early age that mastery of any kind has lifelong benefits, and many times if a person hopes to master a task it is a slow, painful and sometimes sacrificial process. Slow continued observing, learning and taking his time, and eventually he was given a new name. Due to his ability to communicate with the animals, the courage he displayed in battle, the wisdom he acquired through the patient and slow process of acquiring knowledge, the ability and the respect he gained from his people, the name he earned and that was given to him, was Tatan'ka Iyota'ke: Sitting Bull (Bruchac, 1994).

Now, I tell this story not to compare myself to one of the greatest Indigenous Lakota warriors and leaders of all time, for I am not that vain, arrogant or ignorant. Rather, I bring this insight to light to illustrate that if one of the greatest Lakota leaders of all took his time, saw the value in the process and did not give incremental time the reverence we do now; if Sitting Bull did not rush, then who am I to argue and to question how long some learnings take. And so, I

²⁰ I have only recently learned from Dr. Gail MacKay that, Bruchac is Abenaki and his story is Lakota. And Goble is non-Indigenous, although there is a story of his being adopted by an Indigenous family, albeit not an Indigenous band or tribe (personal communication, March 22, 2021).

accept this has been a slow process. My only hope is that the end result is worth it, that I did not disappoint; and, some people today or tomorrow may find value and meaning in the words, in the teachings and in the process.

Now I challenge you SUNTEP students, to rise above and become a change agent for your students. To learn to see through both eyes, so you can then provide this opportunity to your students - Mīkwēc, Maarsii, Hiy Hiy, All our relations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Invitation and Acknowledgment

To Michael Relland:

As you are aware I am in the process of completing my Master of Education degree through the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan. As a graduate of the SUNTEP Program, a Métis Indigenous person, and someone who has been profoundly affected since gravitating towards a traditional Indigenous knowledge system, from a Saulteaux philosophical basis, I wish to focus my thesis, research and learning on the role cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony can have in fostering transformative learning, in the personal development of self and how they can inform Indigenous teacher education.

As a focal point of this thesis, I would like your permission to discuss the teachings and learnings, stemming from the Saulteaux knowledge base, that have profoundly affected me. I am also asking permission to use your thesis to develop some questions that I hope to use in a conversation between you and I; as well I am asking for your permission to use your thesis as a framework that will guide my learnings and insights. I am requesting your permission again to audio tape a formal conversation (interview) where we will discuss fundamental tenets of the Saulteaux philosophy: more specifically traditional knowledge pertaining to the role of spiritual development, the role of ceremony in fostering the spiritual component of self, the tenets of free will and non-interference, and how this knowledge could inform an Indigenous teacher education program.

It is understood that you will receive copies of all the information gathered while conducting research for this thesis. It is also understood that I will securely store and retain copies of all written and recorded research information for a period of five years post publication; after this time all information will be destroyed unless otherwise indicated by yourself.

In your role of mentor, knowledge keeper and teacher, I humbly recognize that you will have final authority on any or all material that is included in the final draft of the research findings and thesis, and as such you will be able to determine how your knowledge is utilized. It is also understood, that once the thesis is published the content may be included in the research of others. However, it is also understood that you can withdraw your involvement and permission at any time, and that none of the knowledge that you have conveyed will be used without your full knowledge and written permission.

Thank you for considering this request

Humbly,

Jed Huntley

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study: Hello Michael Relland, I am humbly asking if you would consider participating in a research study for my thesis. The requirements and potential concerns are outlined below, and the title of the research study is: Searching for a Better Way: My Journey into “Two-Eyed Seeing” and reflections on spiritual teachings from an Indigenous knowledge holder and their relevance to future teachers.

Researcher(s): Jed Huntley, Master of Education student in the Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, 306 539-9325 (work), jsh789@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Howard Woodhouse, Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, 306 966-7522 (work), howardwoodhouse@usask.ca and committee member Dr. Margaret Kovach, Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, 306 966-7515, margaret.kovach@usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research: The objectives and purpose of this research and thesis is to try and explain how I have come to make meaning of Indigenous knowledge at this point in time; and the role Indigenous knowledge, the role of ceremony and the role the spiritual component of self can have in fostering personal development and how it could inform an Indigenous teacher education program. This thesis is NOT an attempt to convert people nor is it asserting that there is an Indigenous “recipe” that everyone must follow to attain happiness and optimum personal growth. Rather, it is an individual journey meant to highlight tenets of a specific Indigenous knowledge base that may have been otherwise unknown or misconstrued.

Since I work at an Indigenous Teacher Education Program and all our students are of Indigenous decent, the hope is that this thesis will bring to light components of Indigenous knowledge that students may not have been previously aware. The degree to which people (students) choose to incorporate elements of Indigenous knowledge into their own life journey is a personal choice; yet, this cannot be done if we are not conscious of components of an Indigenous knowledge system. The hope and intent is to bring fundamental tenets of a specific Indigenous knowledge system to the forefront, so students can make a more informed choice as to the role Indigenous knowledge will have in aiding them on their own life’s path, and in finding their purpose along this physical journey of life.

Procedures: The methods used in this research study will be in keeping with an Indigenous paradigm, and more specifically will stem from a Saulteaux philosophical basis. The first three chapters contain the bulk of the literature I have used in researching Indigenous knowledge, knowledge systems and how it pertains to my own personal development. In chapter three I will also develop the guiding questions that will be used in the following chapter. Chapter four will contain the formal conversation (interview) that will be recorded and will be guided by the questions stated in the previous chapter. I will use *The Seven Fires: Teachings of the Bear Clan*

as told by Dr. Danny Musqua, written by Diane Knight, and The Teachings of the Bear Clan: As told by Saulteaux Elder Danny Musqua, written by Michael Relland, as the framework to pick out themes that parallel not only the literature used, but more-so the questions asked in the recorded conversation (interview). In chapter five I will focus my post-conversation (interview) insights and learnings that I will reflect upon, how I have come to make meaning as to the overall questions in the thesis and to my purpose and path in this physical existence.

I would like to engage in one formal conversation (interview) that will be recorded. Since the bulk of my teachings have occurred at your lodge under your guidance, teaching and mentorship, it seems only fitting and natural that this is where the formal conversation should take place. With your permission I would like to record the formal conversation. Although this will technically be an interview, it will be conducted in more of a relaxed conversation style as opposed to the rigidity of a formal interview process. I expect the conversation to take approximately two hours, however, I am aware that the conversation may delve into areas that are rich in depth and meaning. If this is the case I will not cut the conversation short, rather I will let it come to a natural end.

Please feel free and do not hesitate to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Potential Risks: Since you are not a vulnerable person, I do not foresee any anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. In actuality, I will be learning under you. I appreciate and respect that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you only have to answer the questions that you are comfortable with.

After the formal conversation (interview), as per traditional Indigenous protocol we will smudge, to induce positivity and ward off negativity. If you need anything at all I ask that you call me (my phone number provided above); and I will follow up our interview for several days after with informal conversations, as a way of checking to see how you are doing.

Once the final draft of the research findings have been written you will have the opportunity to review them and sign the transcripts release form only if you deem the research to be accurate and acceptable to yourself and the larger Indigenous community to whom it pertains. As the teacher and knowledge keeper, I understand that you will be given final say if the research can be published.

Potential Benefits: As per Saulteaux philosophy, once you have progressed to certain stages in life and have come to a greater understanding of your purpose and path in this physical existence, your role changes slightly from a student to a teacher. It is then your job to pass along the knowledge you have gained, in a good way, to ensure the teachings are not lost. I am one of the students that Michael is passing his knowledge along to, as was the case when Michael learned under Elder Danny Musqua.

Compensation: There is not any monetary compensation that has or will take place. As per traditional Indigenous protocol from a Saulteaux perspective, before this research project commenced I offered Michael tobacco, as a token of respect, thanks and consent. Upon completion of this research and publication of the final thesis I will present Michael with a

finished copy. As well, out of respect, appreciation and gratitude I will present Michael with a gift; it may be a blanket, a hand-made drum, a bundle of traditional medicines or something similar. Again, this is out of respect, appreciation and gratitude for the significant amount of time and energy he has donated to this research project, and more importantly to my self-development, over the past years and the years to come.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you identify that you are not a vulnerable person. You are the only participant involved in this research and will be informed that you have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all data collected pertaining to you will be destroyed. As well, everything we have talked about in confidence to that point will not be repeated by myself, nor will it be used in any part of the research project. During the process of my self-in-relation and self-referent story and reflections, if it happens that I need to use another person's name, their identity will be changed to ensure anonymity. The identity of all other people's, other than myself, will be changed and protected in the dissemination of the research findings.

Upon completion of this research it is feasible that the data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences; however, if you so choose your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (your occupation, position, your relationship to Elder Danny Musqua) will be removed.

Storage of Data: Upon completion of the formal conversation (interview) I will drive immediately and straight from your lodge to my office in Prince Albert; the distance is about 30 kilometers. The data will be stored in my desk in my office, while the consent form will be stored in my filing cabinet. The desk, filing cabinet and office are locked and I am the only one with a key to the desk and filing cabinet. All data will be reviewed in my office with the door locked.

The data will be kept locked for a period of five years post publication. Once the thesis is complete and all data has been reviewed, all data will be transferred to my supervisor's office in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. The electronic data will be stored on his work computer that is password protected, in his locked office. The written notes and consent form will be stored in his locked filing cabinet, separately from each other. When it is time for the transfer to take place, all documents will be transported in a locked briefcase by myself. I will have made prior arrangements to ensure I can meet him promptly at the University, after I have left Prince Albert. After five years post publication, if you choose, the data and consent form will then be destroyed. The audio recording will be deleted beyond recovery; the notes and consent form will be burned. I will personally transcribe the recordings in my office with the door locked. As well, all data will be backed up on the University of Saskatchewan's secure cabinet site.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at

any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. As well, please know that during the conversation (interview), at any point you can choose to have the voice recorder turned off.

Should you wish to withdraw, all data collected pertaining to yourself will be destroyed. As well, everything we have talked about in confidence to that point will not be repeated by myself, nor will it be used in any part of the dissemination of the research findings.

However, please be aware that your right to withdraw and to have your data destroyed will be waived once you have signed off on the final Transcript Release Form. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred, and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

Follow up: A final copy of the research results will be delivered to you personally by myself. If this is not suitable or possible then you can email me at jsh789@usask.ca and I will email the completed research results to you. A copy of the completed research results will also be housed at each of the SUNTEP libraries (Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina).

Questions or Concerns: If you have any questions or concerns please contact me using the information at the top of page 1. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Research Ethics Office toll free at 1-888-966-2975 or ethics.office@usask.ca.

Consent:

SIGNED CONSENT: Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided: I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records. In addition, I grant permission for the following:

I grant permission to be audio taped:	Yes:	No:
I grant permission to have my organization's name used:	Yes:	No:
I wish to remain anonymous:	Yes:	No:
I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:	Yes:	No:
The Pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____		
You may quote me and use my name:	Yes:	No:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Formal Conversation (Interview) Questions

The title of the research project (thesis) is, *Searching for a Better Way: My Journey into “Two-Eyed Seeing” and Reflections on Spiritual Teachings from an Indigenous Knowledge Holder and their Relevance to future Indigenous Teachers*. The two over-arching questions fundamental to this thesis are: How has my path and life purpose been altered by cultural immersion and spiritual ceremony? And, how can traditional knowledge that is spiritual in nature inform Indigenous teacher education?

In order to help articulate and answer the two over-arching thesis questions, four guiding questions have been developed to help frame and focus the formal conversation (interview), they are:

- 1) What is the importance of Indigenous ceremony, and how does it enable us to connect with our spiritual selves?
- 2) Based upon the Saulteaux perspective, what is your understanding of the Great Mystery, and how does it relate to the mystery of self and our spiritual journey?
- 3) How does the healing process initiated by Indigenous ceremony help us to find the purpose of our life and our path here on earth? Why is this important to our individual selves and to the larger community?
- 4) And, how could an emphasis on spirituality inform Indigenous teacher education?

APPENDIX D
Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Jed Huntley. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Jed Huntley to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX E
Ethics Approval



Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 01-Feb-2021

Certificate of Re-Approval

Application ID: 690

Principal Investigator: Howard Woodhouse

Department: Department of Educational Foundations

Locations Where Research

Activities are Conducted: The data will be collected at Michael Rellands Lodge, which is located 30 minutes north of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The interpretation and analysis of the data will occur at my office in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan., Canada

Student(s): Jed Huntley

Funder(s):

Sponsor:

Title: Searching for a Better Way: My Journey into Cultural Immersion and Spiritual Ceremony and their Role within Indigenous Teacher Education

Approval Effective Date: 24-Jan-2021

Expiry Date: 24-Jan-2022

Acknowledgment Of: N/A

Review Type: Delegated Review

* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php>.

***Digitally Approved by Diane Martz
Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan***

APPENDIX F

Ethics Approval Amendment



Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 16-Mar-2021

Certificate of Approval Amendment

Application ID: 690

Principal Investigator: Howard Woodhouse

Department: Department of Educational Foundations

Locations Where Research
Activities are Conducted: Saskatchewan, Canada

Student(s): Jed Huntley

Funder(s):

Sponsor:

Title: Searching for a Better Way: My Journey into Two-Eyed Seeing and Reflections on
Spiritual Teachings from an Indigenous Knowledge Holder and their relevance to future
Indigenous Teachers

Approved On: 16-Mar-2021

Expiry Date: 24-Jan-2022

Approval Of: Behavioural Amendment Form: 25-February-2021

Title change

Acknowledgment Of:

Review Type: Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TPCS 2 2018). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php>.

***Digitally Approved by Stephanie Martin
Vice-Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan***