

WISDOM AS EXPERIENCE:
THE EMBODIMENT AND SPIRIT OF MÉTIS WISDOM

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ABSTRACT

The storied life experiences of three Métis Elders- Cort, Joseph, and Monica- are explored through this narrative inquiry and illuminate educative possibilities with respect to an integrated and lived notion of wisdom. Their diverse experiences reveal common threads with respect to identity, humility, perspective, and embodiment, which support understandings of how wisdom is relationally experienced and realized in a Métis cultural context. My research wonder primarily attended to the following questions: How is wisdom understood from the perspective of three Métis Elders and what practices or experiences support its embodiment and growth? What are the roles of aesthetic experience and community in supporting *Métis wisdom experiences*?

All narrative accounts were collected through individual semi-structured and conversational style interviews ranging in length from 60-120 minutes. Understandings of the participants' experiences were supported by a collaborative and relational inquiry process that ventured into the temporal, social, and place dimensions of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The stories of the participants fostered rich insights to how experiences might be integrated across time in order to facilitate a grounded and deeply connected self. The findings suggest that wisdom is an embodied experience shared with others, wherein relationship is deepened and the self is transcended.

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For my son, Kian Ara Sky. You are my most cherished gift and profound conduit of wisdom. You bring light to seeing, feeling, loving, and being. Thank you and I love you, my boy.

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INTRODUCTION

In the tradition of narrative inquiry, Chapter 1 puts forth a telling of and inquiry into two of my own storied experiences to both reveal and anchor the research wonder. What at first seemed like a forced exercise, a formality as part of the research protocol, later became so obviously connected to what arose within and from the research interviews and gained substantial revelatory significance. Chapter 2 explores the existing literature on wisdom and its development, and provides conceptual grounding, as well as calls forth imaginative potential and breadth. In Chapter 3, narrative inquiry as a research methodology is elaborated on, and its theoretical basis in a Deweyan notion of experience necessarily made clear. The storied experiences of the research participants are journeyed through in Chapters 4 and 5, unveiling key narrative threads and fostering insight and understanding of identity, perspective, and the educative potential of life experience across time. Chapter 6 summarizes the key discoveries, re-emphasizes the relational nature of the inquiry, and offers the space for all readers to see themselves in and learn from the stories of the participants.

There is the obvious temptation to observe the document sequentially as the chapter numbers suggest. However, it is encouraged that the subsequent chapters also be considered in their potential to reach back and enhance and broaden perspectives on the narrative beginnings, research literature, and, particularly, the research methodology itself. In this way, the personal, theoretical, and methodological contributions, as well as the transformative power of stories can also be clearly witnessed and felt.

CHAPTER ONE. NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

The telling of stories, to both others and ourselves, is simultaneously an act of both reflection and creation. Storytelling captures the continuous nature of experience in that it draws on the past, is told in the here and now, and offers the possibility for re-imagining who we are and who we might become. In narrative inquiry, it is the tradition for the inquirer to begin with the telling and inquiry into their own narratives of experience to orient them self to the study while unearthing the origins and nature of their research wonder. This autobiographical act is explicit in these narrative beginnings, yet also necessarily continues throughout the research process and encourages the ongoing commitment to think with stories (Morris, 2001). This chapter shares two of my own narratives of experience, inquirers into them, and details the emergence of the curiosities that inspire and guide this work.

Narrative #1 ~ Yoga

It was the first day of a 40-day yoga sadhana (spiritual quest) that I had chosen to partake in. I had been practicing yoga for less than a year and had dove in headfirst for the three months leading up to this sadhana. I had committed myself. So, here, I found myself in an old church filled with the smell of burning incense and sweet grass, kirtan music playing in the background, and an eager sense of anticipation for the practice to begin.

Just five minutes into the practice, sweat beaded off my forehead onto the mat below and both my arms and legs were in a state of shaking almost uncontrollably as I held the downward facing dog position for what felt like a very long time. My teacher (and former basketball coach) not only meticulously detailed the bodily engagements to

bring alignment and awareness to the posture, but also made suggestions of metaphorical connections between the quality of our actions and engagement with the larger context of life. He elicited sincerity of action in a way that, for me, called forth my best effort.

For two and a half hours amongst sixty other people, I directed my rigid body into various postures, regulated my breath consciously, steadily focused my eyes, and sweated...a lot. What occurred was a feeling similar to what an athlete feels when they are “in the zone.” I had an experience where intuition surpassed cognition, background seemed to merge with foreground, and I was fully absorbed in both the action and feeling of the moment. The challenging and long-held postures were no longer objects to be overcome, but relationships to look and feel into, to refine, and to accept. It was not a race, there was no one keeping score, and there was nowhere to go.

The class concluded with a seated meditation. In this very simple posture I felt peaceful, content, and connected to not only those people I had practiced with, but also to myself and a much broader context that is difficult to give words. I also drifted to moments where I cognitively reflected on the practice, and others where I experienced scattered and random thoughts of self-judgement and worry. Yet, when I returned to a gentle focus on my breath and body I returned, even if momentarily, to a sense of stillness and a quiet mind.

Inquiry

As I explored and sought to understand this experience with greater depth, I was naturally drawn backwards in time to the experiences that have influenced it. Dewey's (1938) concept of *continuity*, which suggests that every experience “takes up something”

from previous experiences and modifies the qualities of those that come after it (p. 35), is particularly relevant to my retelling of this story. The statement that “I had committed myself” not only spoke to the dedication I had made, but also represented an intentional resistance and response to narratives that I had encountered amongst friends and family that labeled me as both non-committal and indecisive. With the actions of taking up the practice of yoga wholeheartedly, and within the explicit commitment to the 40-day sadhana, I felt the opportunity to *embody* a way of being that ran counter to the limiting social narratives that no doubt impacted my identity. Further, my teacher’s identification of the connection between the quality of actions on the yoga mat with the broader context of life enhanced meaning and the possibility of a holistic transformation of sense of self through practice.

As a well-accomplished athlete, the physicality of the practice resonated with me in a way that was both familiar and new, given the social-cultural context in which I found myself. The application of my physical body was natural and confidence-filled given my athletic background. However, this environment was much different than that of the basketball court. What was encouraged in the teachings throughout the session was an enhanced attention to sensorial experience through breath and alignment, and a supportive camaraderie amongst the ‘community’ that was free of competition. The ‘stories I live by,’ recognized by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as our identity, which were rooted in social, cultural, and institutional narratives of individualism, competition, and success were surrendered, even if momentarily, to the moment. The experience provided insight to a different way of being, and through action and its imagined trajectory I felt myself to be in a process of *becoming* with yoga as an essential support

structure.

Throughout my early twenties I had been looking into a variety of eastern religions, seemingly in search of ‘something,’ and what drew me to yoga was the combination of the physical and spiritual/philosophical dimensions of practice. Prior socio-cultural narratives that I had been privy to, very much rested in Cartesian dualisms that separated mind and body, spirit and nature, and theory and practice. With the practice and study of yoga I seemed to have the opportunity to holistically understand the unity of these previously dichotomized dimensions. This was explicitly spoken to and reflected on in the previous narrative, wherein my teacher rendered the way in which we practice yoga postures as inseparable from and integrated with our way of being in the world. Similarly, another yoga teacher of mine also demonstrated a non-dualist approach in his statement that, “the practice for me is my philosophy” (L. Schultz, personal communication, July 2010). Much like Dewey (2009), who rejected dualisms of any kind, as they rendered man “impotent” (p. 241), the context of yoga, as I experienced it, eradicated boundaries and enhanced vitality and meaning through a focus on connection and continuity. A welcome relief from dominant socio-cultural narratives that seemed to reduce the possible scope of ways of being and knowing that might be held in an identity; a limitation I always found confining and frustrating.

What is interesting is that the spiritual/physical/emotional experience that I had through yoga practice was very similar to the experience of being “in the zone” as a basketball player—unbroken concentration, intuitive movement and decision making, and a felt merger with the total context of the situation. Yet, the understanding of these experiences, due to their temporal positioning and the corresponding interaction of

internal and environmental conditions, was markedly different. It is only looking back, that I consider both of these experiences as multi-dimensional (physical, spiritual, mental, emotional) and as sharing a distinctly similar quality. However, though I seemingly accessed “the zone” in basketball by chance, many hours of focused training likely helped make this possible. The same feeling in yoga seemed to be created through the application of the yogic system, as well as by the context in which I was a part. This inquiry begins to provoke several questions as to how experiences of these types, those which Dewey (1934) may have referred to as having a particular sense of immediacy and heightened unity (p. 37), could be facilitated or granted opportunity to emerge across time and context. How might cultivated ways of acting, feeling, perceiving, and being support the realization of this state? Is this type of experience or state a form of embodied wisdom?

Narrative #2 ~ Alongside My Grandpa

My grandpa’s acreage and sea buckthorn orchard are located three kilometers north of the Batoche¹ National Historic Site along the South Saskatchewan River. The twenty-five acres of river lot lies situated across from the Nesbitt Forest, just two kilometers from the St. Laurent ferry, and minutes from the Our Lady Lourdes shrine site. Though he had a mostly unspoken appreciation for the area which he had returned to since living as a child, his connection to it was perhaps most notable in family time spent on Sundays at the farm, his commitment to the church and shrine site, and the numerous construction projects he undertook in the immediate and surrounding communities of One Arrow First Nation, Muskoday First Nation, Rosthern, Bellevue, and Birch Hills.

¹ Site of the 19th Century Métis settlement along the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River and the final battlefield of the Northwest Resistance of 1885.

Always the entrepreneur, having owned businesses from airlines to radio stations and construction businesses, when pressed for what he “actually does,” he simply replies, “I produce.” In an attempt to understand what exactly motivated him for all those years, and into continuing work in his early eighties, again his answer is simple and direct: “satisfaction of accomplishment.” These and many other one-liners trickled in during the fall that we had decided to actually harvest the sea buckthorn- before then it had been left relatively untouched since it was planted some nine years prior, due to the overwhelmingly laborious and onerous nature of the work. Inspired after returning from India and Nepal, where sea buckthorn was being grown and harvested, I proposed that we finally give it a shot. Grumpy, the name which I called my grandpa in the later years of his life, unhesitatingly agreed. For me it was not only a good opportunity to make some money from the crop, but also to spend time with my grandpa and learn from him. For him, it was a good opportunity to do what he always did— “produce.”

The process of harvesting the sea buckthorn was one fraught with mistakes and a steep learning curve, a reality my grandfather seamlessly accepted, echoing a statement I had heard from him many times: “if you don’t do anything, you won’t make a mistake.” I consciously recognized, though not necessarily embodied at the time, his embrace of mistakes as integral to the process of carrying a project through to completion, and as an essential element at the root of his fearlessness. Though he very much stood at the periphery of the harvest, he interjected occasionally to help out and perhaps to motivate, never offering too much in the way of specific direction; thus, he allowed the space for me to figure it out. From proper cutting, freezing, thrashing and cleaning techniques, we made our way through a series of ‘adjustments’ that allowed for the completion of the

harvest and the production of over 8,000 pounds of sea buckthorn berries.

Amidst the challenges, and set almost as its backdrop, was a feeling of vitality and enthusiasm. The morning drives through the prairies and across Gabriel Dumont Bridge, past Batoche and my own river lot that I one day hoped to live on, started the days with a feeling of freshness and clarity. The many hours of hard work cutting branches and taking an uncountable number of thorns in the hands and arms were imbued with purpose, and an ever-deepening attention to the task being performed. There was also a feeling supported by the openness of the river valley, the vastness of the sky, and the many colours found in the neighbouring fields and forests; in the same way that a trek in the Anapurna range of Nepal created the sentiment that “the mountains make you quiet,” I found myself with a very similar feeling here in what I most commonly refer to simply as “Batoche.” What exactly that feeling should be called- contentment, presence, connection- I’m not exactly sure.

Inquiry

The inquiry into this narrative revealed a telling that is broader in its temporality as compared to the previous narrative (one night versus two months), yet the elements of this second narrative also demonstrated a connectedness that establishes this experience as *an experience* through the totality of its parts. Emphasis of the story finds varying expressions from the focus on my relationship with my grandfather, to Batoche and area as place felt and interacted with, and the process of harvesting the sea buckthorn as a central action of this entire experience. The way in which this experience was storied echoes Cajete’s (2001) perspective in that, “Telling the story of one’s journey is tracing one’s steps through people, events, and places that formed you” (as cited in Young et. al,

2015, p. 16). Upon deeper reflection, my retelling of this story revealed narratives that I had been living out as I engaged in this experience, those narratives that I attempted to counter through the action of this experience, and new possible narratives that I might reach towards as stories to live by.

The story articulated a desire to work alongside my grandfather, and certainly gives praise to his entrepreneurial accomplishments and the values of risk taking, productivity, and hard work that he embodied. Familial narratives that prioritize this type of tangible success have been ever-present since my childhood, and my grandfather, if not regarded explicitly as the poster boy for these values, would have had a profound influence in disseminating them to the rest of the family. Prior to engaging in the sea buckthorn project, I had been working as a yoga teacher and studio owner, which was generally met by family members with a lack of understanding and confusion, a concern about the monetary sustainability of it, and somewhat unspoken belief that it perhaps was not a ‘real’ job. These familial narratives, I believe, were also common social narratives that I encountered, and caused me to question my choices. Though I was committed to a ‘wisdom tradition,’ I was beginning to doubt the practicality of it, and the social, familial, and cultural narratives promoted a type of wisdom that was more in line with that demonstrated by my grandfather— a wisdom identified by action and results. So, at least in part, the choice to partake in the sea buckthorn project was motivated by the desire to create a counterstory², maybe not to totally replace, but to exist alongside my yogic narrative, in order to silence both external voices and internal critique.

² Lindemann Nelson (1995) describes a counterstory as “a story that contributes to the moral self-definition of its teller by undermining a dominant story, undoing it and retelling it in such a way as to invite new interpretations and conclusions” (p. 23).

Prior to this experience with my grandfather, I would have identified him as extremely intelligent, but am not certain that ‘wisdom’ would have been the word that I would have associated with him. However, through the experience and this continuing inquiry into it, I am made aware of his ability to take in and perceive the totality of a situation and to be immersed fully and unwaveringly in *process* until the consummation of the project. This quality of perception allowed the presence of meaning to be imbibed throughout each and every aspect of the situation, reflecting Polyani's (1962) belief that “when something is subsidiary to a whole, this implies that it participates in sustaining the whole, and we may now regard this function as its meaning, within the whole” (p. 58). In the same way that the parts were not separated from the whole, for Grumpy, theory was not separate from practice. The statement I heard him say several times—“Think long, think wrong”—is now understood much differently, in that I now view his thinking as embedded in and inseparable from action. Dewey (2009) stated that, “An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable experience” (p. 79). This sentiment echoes my grandfather’s non-dichotomous approach and helps me understand his fearlessness of making mistakes, as the experience of the ‘mistake’ is instrumental to the intelligent action to follow.

The narrative detailing of my grandpa’s commitment to the church highlights his faith as a central tenet of his life. Given this cultural narrative, I am made curious as to the implications and effect of his faith on his way of being; not just as a family and community member, but in the practical activities of his working life. How might one’s perspective of reality, so often rooted in cultural and social narratives, impact the ability

to see the totality of a situation and the connection of parts to the whole? How do these narratives impact what is regarded as wise and how one comes to embody these values?

The Narratives Considered Together

The two narratives, though seemingly different, share a vast number of similarities— some continuous with one another, while others appear unrelated. Amidst these narratives exist lived counterstories that seem to represent an attempt to create new stories to live by, and therefore a renewed sense of self. Embodiment as action emerges as a primary means by which these new stories, which reveal a focus on enhancing the perspective of a relational self, are brought into existence. Each narrative reveals a unique pedagogical style that facilitates and contextualizes the process of embodiment, the sense of meaning that exists within and is made through the situation, and a felt unity of experience that resonates as wisdom.

Counterstories

In both stories of experience there is a lived resistance to persisting social, cultural, and familial narratives. Similar to how Young et al. (2015) identified a life curriculum making “which becomes visible in the composition of counterstories” (p. 121), I was in the act of engaging in experiences that ran counter and sought to silence narratives that limited my identity. In the case of the yoga practice, I had committed myself to a discipline that undermined the competitive and individualistic narratives through focused engagement on the present and integration with community. My choice to harvest the sea buckthorn, though it was motivated in part to apply myself to a tangibly practical activity and entrepreneurial venture, was very much rooted in my desire to connect with my grandpa and the land and area of Batoche. Therefore, what is seen in the counterstories demonstrated in the narratives is both the impetus to and opportunity for an expansion of

identity towards one of enhanced relationality and connectivity.

The telling of these stories, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested, has provided the opportunity for retellings. Through this inquiry process I have begun to understand my stories to live by as “fluid, always shaped by the embodied, temporal notion of becoming, and linked to knowledge, context, and identity (Connelly & Clandinin as cited in Caine & Clandinin, 2013, p. 581). This provides the opportunity to enhance my understanding of identity as relational, and therefore recognize that the conceptualization, experience and development of wisdom might necessarily vary with context— place, time, and sociality.

Embodiment

The process of coming to know in each of the stories was explicitly with and through the body, as action was undertaken. Not only did the acts themselves represent the embodiment of values I sought to live out, they were constituted by the engagement of a lived body that acted on and was receptive to the environment. Sensitivity to the movements and feelings within the yoga postures, and the emotive effect of place and purposeful labour contributed to, if not constituted, the vitality of these experiences. Crites (1971) offered a way to conceptualize this profound feeling of ‘Self’ that narrative helps illustrate: “The self in its concreteness is indivisible, temporal, and whole, as it is revealed to be in the narrative quality of its experience. Neither disembodied minds nor mindless bodies can appear in stories. There the self is given whole, as an activity in time” (p. 309). In both activities, neither mind and body or practice and theory were viewed as separate or dichotomous but seen as one in action. It was in fact through activity, necessarily practical and embodied in both cases, that the deeper and expanded

feeling of self was cultivated and experienced.

Situation and Place

There are a few distinct silences in the narratives that have pertinence to the research wonder. The first is that though both stories mention experiences that create feelings of wisdom where the situation is seen in its totality and consummation, it is not addressed that wisdom did not seem to persist indefinitely. For example, “the zone” did not continue in all aspects of everyday life, I was not unwaveringly present and acting with concern for the collective either within or outside of the yoga practice space, and my grandpa certainly was not wise in everything he did. Therefore, wisdom may not be something that one simply attains, but something that must be experienced. It may be considered, again, that context is essential for the calling forth of wisdom and that the experience of it depends on a diversity of situational factors. Further, it may be interesting to understand the continuity of wisdom; meaning, if it is in fact experienced, how might it be taken forward to future situations?

Second, despite mentioning several details of the Batoche area including the historic site, familial connection to place, the Gabriel Dumont Bridge, and the St. Laurent ferry, the second narrative did not mention my Métis lineage. Perhaps it was left out because it is/was never an explicit part of my upbringing, and the traditions of the Métis people were never lived out by my immediate relatives or introduced to me. However, because of my kinship ties and connection to place, as asserted through the narrative, I am very interested in the untold stories that “Batoche” as place might hold for me. As Albert Camus stated, “Sense of place is not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do” (as cited in Basso, 1996, p. 109). Through my actions and “doing”

with the land during the sea buckthorn harvest, I see not only a reaching forward to new possible identities through place, but also a reaching back into how narratives of place may shape both sense of place and self. Further, given that I experienced what was the seeming rubbing up of socio-cultural narratives between the two stories, there was a felt tension due to the perception that the two contexts emphasized different types of wisdom. It has only been with substantial effort that I came to understand that the practical and transcendental perspectives of wisdom could be understood to be present, perhaps more and less explicitly pronounced, in both contexts. What emerges from this inquiry is a curiosity of Métis wisdom— how it is shaped and experienced, as well as how do cultural and social narratives effect Métis conceptualizations and educative practices of wisdom.

An experience in support of wisdom

The stories each reflect a reaching forward to new ways of being, and the effort to create new stories to live by. The recreation of the stories that we understand to constitute our self is no simple task. As Bruner (2004) stated, "...perhaps a metaphysical change is required to alter the narratives that we have settled upon as "being" our lives. The fish will, indeed, be the last discover water— unless he gets a metaphysical assist" (p. 709). Within the narratives provided there is a sense of seizure, a persistent meaning imbibed throughout the process, and a felt merger with the totality of context. Understood collectively, these elements provided the feeling of a metaphysical shift that Bruner suggested might be necessary for the creation of new self-narratives. Whether it was through the postural practice and meditation of yoga, the receptivity to the natural landscape of the river valley, or the participation in the work alongside my grandfather, these experiences granted insight to a new way of acting, feeling, perceiving, and

knowing that echoes Dewey's (1934) description of "having *an experience*" (p. 35). These types of situations, which are "realized in their continuity" and exemplify "growth toward consummatory, meaningful experience" are demonstrative of aesthetic experiences (Alexander, 1987, p. 62). I believe that these types of aesthetic experiences hold the potential for epistemological and ontological growth in support of wisdom.

Who are the Métis?

These narrative beginnings revealed a personal curiosity about my Métis ancestry and, as further invoked throughout this research process, what it means to *be* Métis. Because I am very much in the beginning stages of this journey, wherein I am negotiating how my familial past and connection to place inform my identity and way of being, it is with a strong degree of hesitancy that I even attempt to define what 'Métis' is; truthfully, I am still learning. However, for the reader who has little to no familiarity with the 'Métis,' I must attempt to share a contemporary, though not a unanimous, understanding of who the Métis are.

Simply put, Métis people are recognized as one of the three Aboriginal peoples in Canada and are of mixed European and Indigenous descent. However, what and who is considered to be "Métis," "métis," or mixed ancestry is a far more complicated and contentious argument that is beyond the scope of this paper. The capitalized version, Métis, most often refers to the distinct nation of mixed-descent people formed through ethnogenesis in the 18th and 19th centuries with a common culture, unique way of life, language, extensive kinship connections, and traditional territory. The sharing of this unique history and culture, and connections to distinctly Métis communities are understood to be integral in contemporary understandings of what it is to be Métis. The traditional Homeland of the Métis Nation is said to include what would become the three

prairie provinces, parts of Ontario, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, and the northern United States, with particular importance given to the familial, cultural, and political origins in the Red River settlement of Manitoba, and later in the Batoche settlement of Saskatchewan.

Research Wonder

The retelling of my stories has revealed not only my interest in the pursuit of wisdom, but also my understanding that it may be approached and experienced differently across time and context. There are both continuities and discontinuities with regard to wisdom conceptualization and growth from situation to situation, and it is interesting to inquire into the socio-cultural influences in this respect. The experience of Métis people, whose culture is rooted in both Indigenous and western knowledge systems, provides a valuable opportunity to illuminate practices in support of the growth of wisdom in a unique, and diversely influenced, cultural context.

My research wonder has emerged from my inquiry puzzle with one primary focus and two secondary wonders: How is wisdom conceptualized in a Métis context and what practices or experiences support its embodiment and growth?

- What is the role of aesthetic experience, socially, in nature, through ceremony, and within everyday activities, in the cultivation of embodied wisdom?
- How is community related to and supportive of Métis wisdom experience?

CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wisdom and Education

Wisdom is at the core of lifelong learning, and yet little discussion has been given to the types of experiences or ways of learning that lead to wisdom (International Journal of Lifelong Education, 2010; Yang, 2014). Given that rising IQ scores, improved access to information, and an overall growth in knowledge have done relatively little to mitigate global and interpersonal conflict and environmental degradation, Sternberg (2001) suggested that educators must help students develop in their ability to apply knowledge wisely. Though one may never achieve wisdom in any absolute sense, learners of all types may make “transformational progress towards becoming wiser” (Trowbridge, 2007, p. 160). It should be of paramount interest to advocates of lifelong learning to enhance understanding as to how growth in wisdom might be facilitated in a diversity of socio-cultural contexts. Societally, understanding the possibilities of educating for wisdom supports a population in the pursuit of and in need of wisdom (Clayton, 2015; Trowbridge, 2007; Trowbridge & Ferrari, 2011).

What is Wisdom?

There is disagreement among researchers as to how wisdom is conceptualized, and Grossman and Kung (2018) suggested that contemporary populations’ beliefs regarding wisdom must be explored and unpacked (p. 13). Several scholars, whose approach is deemed implicit-theoretical (Sternberg, 2001), have examined lay people’s beliefs regarding conceptions of wisdom in a few significant ways. In an attempt to identify facets of wisdom, some researchers have asked individuals to rate adjectives or statements potentially associated with wisdom (Bluck & Glück, 2005; Clayton & Birren,

1980; Glück & Bluck, 2011; Holliday & Chandler, 1986; Sternberg, 1985). Others have had participants nominate exemplars of wisdoms, from which the nominees' behaviours are examined (Bluck & Glück, 2004) or their shared characteristics identified (Orwoll & Perlmutter, 1990; Westrate, Ferrari, & Ardent, 2016). This research into lay people's beliefs about wisdom reflects individual, contextual, and cultural differences in how wisdom is defined and, resultantly, parameters of possibility of how it may be developed (Grossman, 2017; Sternberg, 1985). As will be noted later, it is important to recognize that these studies relied on observable characteristics and behaviours that most explicitly aligned with a practical dimension of wisdom, while providing little insight to the transcendental dimension or the ways in which these characteristics or actions came to be expressed. Further, the experiences that might lead to the particular perceptions of participants are unexplored in these studies.

Other researchers have taken an explicit-theoretical approach (Sternberg, 2001), such as Baltes and colleagues, and presented formal theories of wisdom that are suggested to account for and evaluate wisdom in research participants. These theorists utilized their models to score and assess response to situational factors. For example, Baltes and Staudinger (1993) and Smith and Baltes (1990) placed an emphasis on expert knowledge in their definition of wisdom, and gauged participant response with respect to fundamental and uncertain life matters. Despite the empirical utility this theoretical approach allows (Grossman, 2017), as it provides the opportunity to analyze the influence of contextual factors in how wisdom is understood, it fails to consider the internal factors of the individuals and how they interact with the environmental factors to create response. Because no attention is paid to the previous experiences of these participants,

there is little educative value or understanding of how they have come to particular decisions and actions. As was demonstrated in my narrative beginnings, past experiences were seen to bear relationship with those that came after it; thus, demonstrating a degree of *continuity* espoused by Dewey (1938). For example, my basketball experience of being in the zone, my intuitive and felt experience of the yoga practice, and my experience of absorption amidst the sea buckthorn harvest shared similar qualities, and the earlier experiences no doubt influenced the immediate and reflective aspects of the later ones. Therefore, in order to gain comprehensive understanding and educational insight, experiences of participants over time informed the present study and recognized that learning has been happening throughout a life.

These two approaches, implicit-theoretical and explicit-theoretical, are valuable in the sense that they reveal that conceptions and expressions of wisdom have contextual and cultural variability, but they do little to examine the myriad of factors that might influence wisdom conceptualization and potential development. Curnow (1999) suggested that the extent to which conceptions of wisdom are culturally specific or universal is yet unclear. Walsh (2011) and Levitt (1999) made important contributions in this regard, as their studies provided thorough analyses of how conceptions of wisdom grow out of and inform particular cultural contexts. Walsh (2011) explored varieties of wisdom and how their philosophical and religious underpinnings are culturally situated. Similarly, Levitt (1999) derived a comprehensive understanding of wisdom in a Buddhist context, from which a culturally specific model of wisdom emerged from the research. It was essential that my research allowed for exploration of cultural and contextual influence in this same way and contributed to the need for evidence from a wider range of

cultures “to further our understanding of the cultural difference in beliefs about the core components of wisdom” (Grossman & Kung, 2018, p. 18). Further, given that Walsh (2011) and Levitt (1999) revealed models of wisdom that go beyond observable characteristics and behaviour to also include internal transformations of sense of self and worldview, it was important that my research remained open to this as a potentially integral factor in the conceptualization and development of wisdom.

The Practical and Transcendent

Because my study was interested in the educative potential of wisdom, it was necessary that it explored not only manifestations of wisdom through embodied action, but also took into account and sought to understand internal transformations that are part of this process. The literature examined pointed to the necessity of exploring the relationship between practical wisdom (*phronesis*)– the observable wisdom of behaviour and ethics– and transcendental wisdom (*sophia*)– the inner wisdom of intuitive knowing and recognition of cosmic unity (Curnow, 2011; Swartz, 2011; Trowbridge, 2011). Trowbridge (2011) emphasized the importance of *sophia* by claiming that *phronesis* cannot exist without *sophia*, and that “any definition of wisdom would need to include reference to *sophia* in order to be complete” (p. 151). Therefore, a study interested in a comprehensive understanding of wisdom that incorporates both transcendent and practical wisdom must simultaneously explore the transconceptual and self-transcendent knowledge of *sophia* and the contextualized embodiment of *phronesis*. These findings in the literature relate to my narrative beginnings in the sense that the experiences I addressed contained aesthetic qualities that resemble transcendent wisdom amidst embodied practices and actions. This fact fuels the research wonder, as it begs the question as to how the practical and transcendental might support one another, not only

within a specific situation, but also from situation to situation over time.

Empirical research, as noted in the implicit and explicit-theoretical approaches highlighted above, as well as in the studies of Chen et al. (2014) and Yang (2014), has heavily favoured the practical dimension of wisdom. This approach enabled the researchers to make conclusions about the perceptions of what constitutes wise behaviour within the contexts under study, while providing no insight to the processes of learning that supported those behaviours. In response to the shortcomings of both a narrow conceptualization and limited developmental insight, several authors emphasized the need to consider the transcendental dimension as essential to understanding wisdom in its totality (Ashcroft, 2015; Curnow, 2011; Trowbridge, 2011; Trowbridge & Ferrari, 2011). It was integral that my proposed study considered the nature of the relationship between *sophia* and *phronesis* so that educative processes aimed at cultivating wisdom can optimize holistic wisdom development. Though “ultimately phronesis and sophia may be one thing” (Trowbridge, 2011, p. 151), an enhanced understanding of the dynamic between these two dimensions of wisdoms facilitated educative value and insight from my research.

Walsh (2011) and Levitt (1999), in their exploration of wisdom in non-Western contexts, gave recognition to the transcendent-practical connection. Walsh (2011), who presented ‘stages’ of wisdom, indicated that transpersonal stages, which are equivalent to transcendent wisdom, are closely linked to practical wisdom as both cause and effect (p. 114). Thus, he stated that intuitive insights and understandings of interconnectedness are said to foster wise behaviours, which in turn foster further development. Similarly, Levitt (1999) posited a reciprocity in the process of wisdom development in a Buddhist context,

wherein a realization of self-transcendence and universal connection is linked to understanding the value of compassionate and altruistic behaviour (p. 93). Therefore, what at first seems to be the goal of wisdom (self-transcendence) gradually emerges within the process of seeking it, where it is both inspired by and inspires values and behaviours (practical wisdom) through embodiment. From an educational standpoint, this is suggestive that practices and processes that invoke and connect these two dimensions of wisdom be considered within the particular context under study.

A Working Construct

I recognize that varying cultural contexts and worldviews impact different understandings as to how wisdom is defined, approached, and experienced (Yang, 2011), and that my study must necessarily attend to these differences. However, I believe there is value in establishing a broad, initial construct of wisdom that honours diverse cultural perspectives and includes ethereal and embodied relational aspects of wisdom (Yang, 2011, p. 48). Aldwin (2009) effectively addressed this required breadth, and allowed for the inclusion of both the social and the personal, the practical and the transcendental in his definition:

[W]isdom is a practice that reflects the developmental process by which individuals increase in self-knowledge, self-integration, non-attachment, self-transcendence, and compassion, as well as a deeper understanding of life. This practice involves better self-regulation and ethical choices, resulting in greater good for oneself and others. (p. 3)

The emphasis placed on practice suggests the opportunity for wisdom as an act of learning, and as “a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Yang, 2014, p. 131). In addition to lending itself well to considering and

exploring wisdom's educative potential, it approaches wisdom not as a fixed quality (Blatner, 2005), but rather as one that emerges and grows through the experiences of practice, process, and reflection. This had important implications for my study as it shifted the understanding of wisdom beyond a quality to be possessed, to an enhanced experience of sense of self and connection to others that is realized and embodied in the present moment. Furthermore, the consideration of wisdom as practice provides openness and sensitivity to the cross-cultural variability in how wisdom is conceptualized and embodied, and, therefore, the opportunity to draw upon culturally situated perspectives on educating for wisdom.

Impact of Cultural Context

The process by which wisdom is conceived of and experienced varies in different cultural contexts (Yang 2011, p. 48), and studies regarding wisdom must attend to how cultural paradigms shape conceptions of wisdom and influence wisdom's development (Walsh, 2011). Because wisdom develops in sociocultural environments, the effect of worldview and valued ways of being on how wisdom is conceived of and learned must be considered. For example, Levitt's (1999) study illustrated how the Tibetan Buddhist perspective of reality, which holds the 'true self' as distinct from the individual, worldly self, is naturally aligned with the component of transcendent wisdom understood as interconnectedness (p. 93). Aspirants in this context, therefore, grow in transcendent wisdom both through existing beliefs and through the selfless actions (practical wisdom) that align with and affirm these beliefs. A cultural context that holds a more individualistic perspective of reality may likely demonstrate a different way in which self-transcendence and practical actions are experienced and related. Grossman (2017) emphasized the importance of context in the promotion of lived wisdom, as he claimed

that contexts which support “an ego-decentering mindset can be effective for enhancing wisdom in daily life” (p. 247). An understanding of how a specific cultural context promotes this type of “ego-decentering” and relates it to embodiment holds great potential. Varying perceptions of self and reality influence approaches to conceptions of wisdom and to educating for it (Triandis as cited in Yang, 2011, p. 48), and the complexity of the contexts that influence those perceptions must be explored.

The need for the examination of diverse socio-cultural perspectives regarding wisdom conceptualization and development was made abundantly clear by the literature reviewed. Yang (2011) demonstrated how cultural differences affect perceptions and pursuit of wisdom and proposed that the incorporation of varying approaches to wisdom will help gain a more complete understanding of wisdom. Curnow (2011), Trowbridge (2011), and Trowbridge and Ferrari (2011) addressed the need for the enhanced incorporation of transcendent wisdom in contemporary studies, and that this requires a shift from studies focused on Eurocentric contexts to explore a diversity of cultural contexts and traditions. Similarly, Grossman and Kung (2018) called for a “culturally grounded understanding of wisdom related phenomena” (p. 34) and suggested that it is important to explore what people in different cultures believe they can do to grow in wisdom (p. 18). The Métis context in which my research was situated responds effectively to the call for diverse cultural perspectives regarding wisdom and its development and, by way of the research methodology that focuses on participant experience, will provided a thorough understanding of the dynamic between internal factors of the individual and the socio-cultural and environmental contexts.

The Métis Context

“Cultural memory is the mother of wisdom” (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 123) and inquiring into the educative process of wisdom must consider how what is viewed as the optimal conduct of life is culturally situated and influenced (Grossman, 2017). Little research has been done to reveal traditional and culturally embedded Métis learning practices, despite their inherent value and potential benefit to both Indigenous groups and other cultures (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Rice & Steckley, 1997). Because it is a commonly held belief that experiences throughout a lifetime contribute to growth in wisdom, it seems reasonable to assert that the practice of wisdom be included in that broad field of lifelong learning. Since Indigenous cultures have historically had well-established systems of lifelong learning that did not dichotomize the vocational and the cultural, they may offer potentially interesting and well-integrated models of wisdom and its development (Rice & Steckley, 1997). “Through an exploration of Métis possibilities that are grounded in Métis experiences and relationships within and between communities” (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012, p. 8), opportunity exists to explore how cultural identity and the lifelong learning of wisdom are connected in a Métis context. This research has, therefore, not only contributed to the call for enhanced cultural perspectives in the field of wisdom research, but also responded to the demand for high quality Métis educational resources (Dorion & Prefontaine, 2001) rooted in experience. In seeking to understand wisdom experience in the lives of the three Métis participants, particular attention must be given to ways of being through land, community, and storytelling.

Since it is difficult to develop a universal understanding of Métis experience, Macdougall (2010) suggested that it is a Métis way of life known as ‘wahkootowin’ that

is more definitive. Macdougall described wahkootowin as based on a “broadly conceived sense of interrelatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual” (as cited in Adese, 2014, p. 53). This ontological perspective and way of being closely resembles a comprehensive understanding of transcendent wisdom and ego-decentering and provided an interesting avenue to explore within the research. Looking at participant experience allowed the exploration of the complex of factors that encourage the development of this worldview and how it relates to the practical wisdom of everyday life.

Leclair (2003) asserted that, in a Métis context, “knowledge is created through a continuous process of mutual exchange between all beings” (p. 62). This knowledge creation process affirms values of interconnectedness and a relational perspective of reality. It was of interest to explore how these values of mutuality and interconnectedness (Fitznor, 2006) are educated for, impact worldview, influence behaviour, and relate to conceptions of and growth in wisdom.

Land

Métis relationship with the land must necessarily be considered as a vital factor in how wisdom is understood in this cultural context— not only as a source of sustenance in a practical sense, but also as a source of spiritual and cultural connectivity (Kunnie & Goduka, 2006, p. xi) in a potentially transcendental sense. Much like other Indigenous peoples around the world, land exists as the core of culture, ritual, and tradition (Kunnie & Goduka, 2006, p. xi). Therefore, in consideration of cultural context and its impact on wisdom conceptualization and development, it was pertinent that experiences and practices related to land be thoroughly explored. As Laroque (2010) suggested, it is “not

just about living off the land; it is about a whole way of perceiving, practicing, and connecting language, land, knowledge, skill, and spirituality, and human-nature relationships from our land-based cosmologies” (p. 137). It can be seen in this broad understanding of connection to and through land that it is essential to Métis worldview and considerations of wisdom. Because experiential, land-based knowledge is foundational to being Métis, there is potentially great educational benefit by learning from Métis who grew up on the land (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012, p. 20). Therefore, the study sought to understand these Métis land-based connections in order to enhance the educational value and insight into how wisdom is shaped with and through the land.

Community

In seeking to understand the lived experiences of participants, unearthing the role of the community’s formal and informal rituals and practices, including the role of elders, was of great importance. “Following Dewey, the study of experience is the study of life, for example the study of epiphanies, rituals, routines, metaphors, and everyday actions” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415). The community to which one belongs is highly influential of all these aspects. Polyani (1962) asserted that what we believe is very much conditioned by one’s native community (p. 322) and that participation in ritual is an integral way in which members of a group “affirm the community of their existence” (p. 211). In an Indigenous context, ceremony is an instrumental pedagogical tool to teach lessons about family, community, and life, and storytelling and ceremony are utilized by elders to achieve transformative effects and encourage balance (Iseke, 2013).

Elders give voice to the Métis experience (Dorion & Prefontaine, 2001, p. 21) and, by way of storytelling and other methods, facilitate learning about life (Iseke, 2013).

These Métis elders act as wisdom and knowledge keepers and are leaders in sustaining culture and pedagogy within their communities (Ermine, 1995). Through *story*, they express the interrelationships that are foundational to wahkootowin, and educate children, youth and adults on ways of being (Iskee, 2013, p. 561). Their way of instruction reflects a comprehensive understanding of wisdom, as they relate the material and the personal in their lives to the spiritual (Rice & Steckley, 1997). Because of their central role in facilitating learning within their communities, as well as the way in which a deeply ingrained interconnectedness is facilitated as a way of being, Elders are invaluable in not only exploring concepts of wisdom, but also how it is learned and embodied.

Embodiment and Experience

Embodiment

Dewey's (1938) theory of experience provided an ideal means by which to explore the educative possibilities of wisdom through and as experienced in a Métis context. It is particularly relevant given his non-dualistic philosophy (Le Grange, 2004) and relational view of reality that may well align with the Métis way of life known as wahkootowin. A Deweyan perspective embraces a view of an embodied individual who is always embedded in and dynamically involved with a world of sociocultural and physical objects (Skorburg, 2013; Overton, 2008) and is not apart or aloof from its environment. For Dewey, embodiment is biological, social, and emotional and the body is regarded not simply as a physical thing, but rather as a lived body that is intertwined with its environment, is intentional, and is material (Müller & Newman, 2008). This ontological stance posits a relational self (Garrison, 1997), wherein experience is viewed as intrinsically context bound (Müller & Newman, 2008) and sees the organism and environment as fundamentally connected (Alexander as cited in Skorburg, 2013, p.69).

This perspective of embodiment allowed for the most comprehensive understanding of the contextual whole and the impact of its realization on wisdom experience.

Aesthetic Experience

Dewey's (1934; 1958) recognition of implicit self-world integration, which he claimed is most profoundly felt in aesthetic experience, holds the possibility of a self-transcendent quality in and through experience. Within aesthetic experience, Dewey (1934) stated, "We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves" (p. 195). Dewey (1934) asserted that the enhanced vitality of this type of experience "signifies active and alert commerce with the world" and "at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events" (p. 19). This is demonstrative of a felt transcendence of an isolated self, made possible through the embodied actions and feelings that allow for the felt "continuity of the organism and the environment" (Alexander, 1987, p. 196). Through my research, it was of interest to explore the possibility of how ways of being in Métis culture affect ways of perceiving; and, further, how a particular way of perceiving/seeing facilitates felt unity and relates to ethical behaviours and actions.

Aesthetic experience holds promising relevance to a Métis context given both the opportunity for these types of experiences through relationships and activities with and on the land, as well as through engagement with a wide range of artistic, cultural, and communal activities (Barkwell, Dorion, & Prefontaine, 2001; Harrison, 1985). How might heightened and consummatory experiences within these relationships and activities both support and be supported by the worldview of interconnectedness at the heart of

wahkootowin? How do these aesthetic experiences relate to practical wisdom? My interest in the potential role of aesthetic experience in practice is undoubtedly influenced by the experiences laid forth in my narrative beginnings. Both the embodied, felt practice of yoga and the physical engagement with the land during the sea buckthorn harvest facilitated experiences of absorption and connectivity amidst practical actions. This prompted curiosities as to if there may be educational experiences in a Métis context that might have a similar intent and effect.

Final Thoughts on the Literature

The literature reviewed reveals both the limited way in which wisdom has been conceptualized, as well as how its developmental and educative possibilities have been insufficiently explored. Because conceptualizations of wisdom have focused on layperson perspectives in Eurocentric contexts, emphasis has been placed on practical facets of wisdom while failing to explore a transcendental dimension that may well be intertwined. Enhanced multi-cultural perspectives of wisdom and its development are suggested by the literature. Studies such as Levitt (1999) and Walsh (2011) demonstrated how studies focused on experience in non-Eurocentric contexts allowed for a deepened and diversified understanding of worldview and the complex interaction of the practical and transcendental in educational practice.

A Métis context holds promising lifelong learning lessons in relation to wisdom. Because a Métis way of life is centred on a concept of interrelatedness that does not dichotomize the material and the spiritual, it provided an ideal context to explore how wisdom is understood, and how transcendental and practical components might interplay through experience. Dewey's ideas around aesthetic, consummatory experience provided exploratory possibilities of how the practical and transcendental dimensions unite through

and as experience and supports this inquiry. hooks (2010) said that “knowledge rooted in experience shapes what we value and as a consequence how we know what we know as well as how we use what we know” (p. 185). In seeking to understand Métis participant experience, I not only explored how wisdom grows through experience, but perhaps more importantly, inquired into the dynamic interplay of culturally situated ways of knowing and being *in* experience and its relationship to wisdom.

CHAPTER THREE.
NARRATIVE INQUIRY:
METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING LIVED EXPERIENCE

Introduction

At the heart of narrative inquiry is the goal of understanding people's experiences; it is the study of lives lived and in the process of living, begins with individual experience, and recognizes the embodiment of the person in a world with which they interact (Clandinin, 2006). Though there is certainly emphasis placed on individual stories lived and told, it is the collaborative exploration of "social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46) that deepens understanding and enhances meaning making. Insight into the interactions of an individual within a diversity of contexts over time (Bresler, 2006) helps reveal the ways in which participants create knowledge as relational beings. Therefore, narrative inquiry is particularly well suited to understanding educational experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and is equally valuable across formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings.

As will be demonstrated, the epistemological and ontological foundations of narrative inquiry support my research wonder and allowed for depth of exploration into the personal and contextual factors that affect wisdom conceptualization and development in a Métis context. Further, the experiential and relational nature of the methodology aligns with a Métis way of life known as *wahkootowin*, both theoretically and practically, and lent itself well to understanding how interrelatedness is facilitated, practiced, and felt. Educational implications are relevant to not only Métis people, but also cross-culturally, as this culturally situated perspective of wisdom contributes to wisdom and experiential learning theory and practice.

What is Narrative Inquiry?

Narrative inquiry is both a way of looking at experience and a research methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The fact that narrative inquiry is explicitly “both a view of the phenomena of people’s experiences and a methodology for narratively inquiring into experience” (Clandinin & Connelly as cited in Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 166) distinguishes it from other narrative practices and research approaches. The view of the phenomena of experience is one in which people, individually and socially, lead storied lives, and that it is through story that people interpret and make meaning of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477; Clandinin, 2013). As a methodology, narrative inquiry names the relational and narrative patterns of inquiry that are used to study storied lives. Therefore, narrative inquiry researchers maintain a view of experience that humans lead storied lives (Clandinin, 2006), and employ a methodology that “allows for the intimate and in-depth study of individuals’ experiences over time and in context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 166).

Theoretical Foundations

John Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience provides the philosophical foundations of narrative inquiry (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013), and it remains the “conceptual, imaginative backdrop” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.2) to the methodology. Dewey (1938) provided the criteria with which the educative quality of an experience can be understood in its ability to facilitate *growth*; these criteria also offer a foundational basis for his theory of experience. The first principle– *continuity*– asserts that every experience modifies the person who enacted and underwent that experience (Dewey, 1938). Therefore, something is ‘taken up’ from a particular experience by the individual that impacts the quality and nature of future experiences. The second criterion of experience

put forth by Dewey (1938) is that which identifies the transaction between the individual and their environment— *interaction*. The interplay, or *interaction*, between the objective conditions of the environment and the internal conditions of the individual represents the co-constituted nature of the experience. This view, which is essential to his relational ontology, allows “for the study of experience that acknowledge[s] the embodiment of the person in the world” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). And lastly, *situation* is simply specified by the two criteria of *continuity* and *interaction*; that is, by temporal positioning and internal and existential conditions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Educators, therefore, seek to facilitate situations in which interactions along the experiential continuum contribute to growth both in particular directions and in general.

The impact of Dewey’s principles of interaction and continuity on narrative inquiry cannot be minimized. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) stated: “A narrative ontology implies that experiences are continuously interactive, resulting in changes to both people and the contexts in which they interact” (p. 576). The narrative inquiry process happens within this “stream of experience,” as part of experience, and in turn generates new relations as the inquiry events unfold (Clandinin, 2013). Because a Deweyan ontology is transactional and temporal, there is always a necessary and implicit return to experience; narrative inquiry embodies this principle, as both researchers and participants probe into stories and their impact on who they are and who they are becoming. Therefore, we see that to deeply engage with experience is both an ontological and relational commitment; a relational living alongside, where researchers and participants explore how they are “living in the midst of [their] stories” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576).

Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space through which to attend to the complexity of experiences lived and told. The three commonplaces— temporality, sociality, and place— draw upon Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and help to conceptualize and guide the dynamic nature of the inquiry process. In working with these commonplaces, the narrative inquirer is able to study and represent “the complexity of the relational composition of people’s lived experiences both inside and outside of an inquiry and, as well, to imagine the future possibilities of these lives” (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 3). Therefore, a narrative inquirer not only uses the three-dimensional space to attend to the living and telling of stories of experience, but also to give recognition to the opportunities for retelling and reliving (Caine et al., 2013).

Temporality

Dewey’s concept of *continuity*, the idea that every experience is influenced by those that come before it and will have an influence on those that will come to follow it (Dewey, 1938), is the basis for the temporal dimension of the inquiry space. Throughout the composition of field and research texts, the temporal period to which the narratives of past experience allude, the times at which participants are observed in the act of ‘living’ narratives, and the varying times at which researchers and participants meet and collaborate must all be attended to. This temporal dimension, as applied to the study, broadens the inquiry; there is a continual moving backward and moving forward in time as participants and researchers reflect on and make meaning of past experiences (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Considerations of sociality and place must necessarily include this temporal dimension.

Sociality

This dimension corresponds with Dewey's concept of *interaction* (Clandinin, 2006), which posits that every experience involves an interplay between objective and internal conditions (Dewey, 1938)– that is to say, between an individual and their social environment. If we are to achieve a rich understanding of participant experience, we must recognize that experience does not go on exclusively in an individual's body and mind (Dewey, 1935, p. 42); people must be seen and understood both as individuals and as always in relationship (Clandinin, 2006, p. 46). There is, therefore, a necessary moving inward to the internal processes of the individual and a moving outward to the external conditions with which they interact (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); each factor must be given equal consideration when attending to the educational quality of particular situations. Further, researchers must inquire into the internal and social conditions of their own storied past, as well as attend to the relationship between researcher and participant throughout the inquiry.

Place

The place dimension is related to Dewey's concept of *situation*, which he conveyed as the interaction of the factors of experience- objective and internal conditions (Dewey, 1938, p. 32). Now, of course physical place is captured in this understanding, as it is an objective, external condition. However, understanding of place captured in Dewey's (1938) 'situation' goes beyond the physical landscape that people live upon, as Silko (1997) identified, to one in which we understand place as something that people "live within" (as cited in Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 47). In this way, place can be understood to be the landscapes where stories take place, where inquiry events occur, and

as a constituting force that shapes and constrains the stories that are told (Bruner, 2004; Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Therefore, in the narrative inquiry process it is pertinent to recognize that narratives and participants are embedded in place, that the researcher too comes to live within that landscape, and that the landscape changes in accord with the temporal and social dimensions.

Attending to experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is a messy process, as there is a continual movement inward, outward, backward, and forward, and temporality, sociality and place are considered simultaneously. Rich understandings unfold and possibilities are created as we attend to emotions, aesthetic reactions, and moral responses, as well as to events, people, and places (Clandinin, 2013). The unveiling of cultural, social, institutional, and familial narratives throughout the process makes evident the situated nature of experience in context, time, and place and gives insight into the complex dynamic of the interaction of the factors of experience.

In the Midst

Dewey's (1938) notion of continuity, which serves as the basis for the temporality commonplace of the inquiry space, suggests that the narrative inquirer commits to understanding lives in motion. Narrative inquirers recognize that they enter into the research relationship in the midst of both their own and other's lives (Clandinin & Caine, 2013)– relational lives that continue to be lived and undergo change throughout the research process and beyond. This fact has important implications for entry into the research field, and to the living out of epistemological and ontological commitments throughout the research relationship.

Autobiographical Inquiry

When entering into a narrative inquiry, the researcher draws upon their own experiences in order to orient themselves to the study (Caine et al., 2013). These “narrative beginnings” (Caine, 2010) are a part of an ongoing, intensive autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2013); a practice that is carried on throughout the duration of the study alongside participants. The necessity of this continual practice of orientation and reorientation emerges from a relational, and, therefore, fluid sense of identity, and supports the narrative inquirers ontological commitments as they continue to live in the midst of their own and the participants evolving stories.

Stories to Live By

Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) referred to identity, or who we are, as “our stories to live by” (p. 584), and for both researchers and participants, stories to live by are “always shaped by the embodied, temporal notion of becoming, and link knowledge, context, and identity” (Connelly & Clandinin as cited in Caine et al., 2013, p. 581). This has important implications for the narrative inquirer in that their objective is not to say that participants are a certain way, but rather that they have a narrative (experiential) history and are moving forward to the future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized that this presents a challenge in that people, places, and things must be presented as becoming rather than being. It is by thinking and expressing narratively, through the imagined three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, that the temptation of a fixed and singular story is overcome (Clandinin, 2013). Thus, an attitude of openness must permeate the inquiry process, and the researcher recognize that all stories are partial, and that there are no final tellings and no final stories (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, 2013).

Knowledge for Living

The epistemological commitment of narrative inquiry echoes that of Dewey (1938) and posits that “experience is knowledge for living” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576). Through engagement with participants, both researchers and participants tell, inquire, and retell stories, creating new stories to live by and new ways of being. It is through this process that narrative inquiry embodies experience and supports the growth and transformation of those involved. Downey and Clandinin stated that “inquiring narratively with others opens up the possibility for growth, by which we mean coming to tell and live what at least seem, in the moment, to be better stories” (as cited in Clandinin, 2013, p. 203). This depth and intimacy of engagement, and the resultant possibility of change, enhances the relational commitment and the ethical responsibilities of the researcher throughout the inquiry process.

Relational Commitment

Narrative inquiry methodology embodies a relational being and knowing in the way that researchers and participants live out research puzzles alongside one another. As Clandinin (2013) stated: “Narrative inquiry is people in relation studying people in relation” (p. 23). The depth and emphasis on relational engagement in narrative inquiry is demonstrated by the fact that the research process itself is one of interactive experience over time, and honours the ontological foundations of the research methodology. It is not only inquiry into lives lived, but also the space and attention given to the “unfolding of lives in relation” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 580) that enhances the understanding and social significance of experience. By intentionally putting our lives alongside an other’s life, we attend relationally to our own life and other’s lives across time and places (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 23-24).

Ethics

Due to the highly relational nature of narrative inquiry, ethical concerns are prevalent throughout the duration of the inquiry- from the autobiographical outset all the way to the presentation of the final research text (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The relational ethics require special consideration, as researcher and participants engage in long, intimate relationships that require trust and the creation of shared narratives. The significance of the impact of this level of engagement and potential effect on both participants' and researchers' stories moving forward calls for a heightened and ongoing consideration of ethics throughout the inquiry process.

Clandinin and Caine (2013) pointed out that the most significant commitments of the narrative inquirer are methodological and relational. As discussed, the epistemological and ontological commitments are lived out through a relational engagement with participants over time, wherein a thinking with stories facilitates an understanding of the complexity of experience and approaches lives as always in the making. Because of the degree of relational engagement and the fact that narrative inquirers can shift the experiences of those with whom they engage (Clandinin, 2006), there are significant relational responsibilities that the researcher must uphold. This ethical responsibility spans both the short and long term and is largely guided by relational ethics and an ethics of everyday life (Charon & Montello, 2002). Spaces that are created for the telling of and listening to stories are spaces of belonging, and are “marked by attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 200). Narrative inquirers stay mindful of shifting ethical matters throughout the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and principles of collaboration and negotiation permeate the inquiry and help sustain both methodological and relational responsibilities.

Empathetic listening and a continued openness to researcher and participants' process of becoming helps resist the lure of a single story and allows being-in-relation to guide the inquiry (Caine et al., 2013, p. 583).

Ethics of Research with Indigenous Peoples

Research with Indigenous people carries with it heightened ethical concerns and responsibilities, many of which are explicitly attended to in narrative inquiry research. The creation of ongoing and intimate relationships with participants in support of understanding and embracing Indigenous ways of knowing is supported by a collaborative and reciprocal approach to the ongoing research. Adhering to cultural standards and maintaining an attitude of openness also contribute to the degree of respect that is necessitated by the research relationship (Carjuzaa & Fenimore, 2010). The researcher must remain committed to the ethical use of knowledge that has been shared, and necessarily avoid generalizations by attending to the personal and cultural landscapes of the participants (Carjuzaa & Fenimore, 2010); landscapes that exist in the ongoing streams of experience of the participants. The narrative inquiry methods outlined allow for the fulfillment of these ethical responsibilities through the relational inquiry process that seeks to understand participant experience and develop continuing relationships.

A Eurocentric research paradigm being utilized for research with Indigenous peoples raises concerns as to the compatibility with the Indigenous paradigms of the participants. However, Wilson (2008), who identifies these concerns, also suggests that research methods can be rooted in other paradigms so long as they fit the ontological, epistemological, and axiological elements of an Indigenous paradigm. Hart (2010) identifies prevalent aspects of an Indigenous ontology being a relational worldview,

reciprocity, and the interconnectedness of a spiritual realm with the physical realm. The ontological roots of narrative inquiry hold a relational view of reality and allows for the storied experiences of participants to voice understandings of their own experiences, including that of integrated spiritual-physical experience and diversity of relationships. Epistemologically, an Indigenous research paradigm includes a subjective process of knowledge creation, a reliance on Elders and the importance of storytelling, and an inward exploration that is accompanied by practical application that affirms the spiritual (Hart, 2008, p. 8). Similarly, narrative inquiry postulates a coming to know with and through story, the movement of narratives into and out of the inner worlds of participants that deepens understanding and reveals connections, and the ongoing possibility of living out new stories as stories are told, listened to, reflected upon, and continue to be lived. The axiology of an Indigenous paradigm, as previously discussed as related to research ethical concerns, holds values of participant control over the research, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, collaboration, and openness (Hart, 2008). Narrative Inquiry axiology holds these same principles as central to the researchers ontological and ethical commitments.

Narrative inquiry, despite not being grounded in an Indigenous paradigm, does offer a high degree of compatibility. Relationality, as central to perceptions of reality, is held by both paradigms, and the importance of storytelling as a tool for learning from life experiences contributes an honoring of Indigenous epistemology. This is further fulfilled as participant voices, through storied experiences and collaboration throughout the research process, allow for the centering and exploration of the individuals' ontologies and epistemologies. Therefore, the research has the potential of contributing enhanced

understandings of Indigenous paradigms as participants express their own ways of knowing and being.

Justifications for the Research

This study is justifiable in personal, practical, and social/theoretical ways, and holds great potential in contributing to the overall educational landscape. Clandinin and Caine (2013) insisted that these justifications— personal, practical, and social/theoretical— be revisited continuously throughout the negotiation and co-collaboration with participants in the research study. It is important that the relationship between the researcher’s interests and the social significance that becomes evident from the lives of those under study be clearly communicated and articulated (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001, p. 122), and that the “so what?” and “who cares?” (Clandinin & Caine, 2013) of the research be kept conscious.

Personal justification

The narrative beginnings offered at the outset, positioned me with respect to the research puzzle and the literature. My experiences rooted in the postural practice of yoga and the farming of sea buckthorn revealed a curiosity about the nature of wisdom, and how it is conceived of and experienced in different contexts. Though the yoga experience seemed to be anchored in an intentionally spiritual context as compared to the practical and overtly tangible context of the sea buckthorn harvest, the peak experiences had in each context revealed a similar quality of felt connectedness and integration with the environment. Both experiences involved an intentional engagement with the physical body through action, from which emerged meaning and profound aesthetic experience that resonated as wisdom. However, because the experience of wisdom did not persist indefinitely, it aroused further curiosity as to its contextual and relational nature. The

socio-cultural contexts, though apparently different from one another, provided an interaction in which the aforementioned feeling of unity was had.

Now, given my Métis background, I became interested in how wisdom might be conceived of and the types of experiences that are promoted in support of its development in a Métis context. The role of identity in wisdom came to be of particular personal interest, as my own detachment from my Métis roots raised curiosities about self-knowledge, self-understanding, and the diversity of ways of being I might possibly hold. The mutual influence of European and Indigenous ancestry offered unique possibilities for exploration in this regard, and the land-based and artistic practices provide exciting avenues through which aesthetic, consummatory experience may be had. For me, the study allowed further inquiry into tensions that exist between how wisdom is understood and is educated for in different contexts, how this is connected to worldview, and how an enhanced understanding in this regard might support my own journey to grow in and experience wisdom.

Practical justification

The study offers great potential in its ability to shift and affect educational practice. As mentioned, little attention is given to educative practices that contribute to growth in wisdom; rather, the focus is typically placed on the accumulation of knowledge, without a supporting education into how that knowledge might be used wisely. This research study offers rich possibilities in answering this deficiency and enhances the availability of diverse cultural perspectives with regard to wisdom and its development. The findings may not only provide improved learning opportunities for Métis students, but learners of all types in formal, informal and non-formal educational

environments. Further, with an emphasis on experience, research findings may support the enhancement of experiential education practices, as well as provide insight into how socially and culturally situated life experiences impact worldview, aesthetic experience, and growth in wisdom.

Social/theoretical justification

From a social standpoint, the research will contribute to the conversation surrounding Indigenous education in Canada, and potentially illuminate culturally situated experiential learning opportunities for Métis students while also countering historically rooted and ongoing racist perceptions of Métis people as intellectually inferior. The enhancement of the understanding of Métis ways of knowing and being through experience can aid educators of all kinds in their ability to consider the social and cultural impacts on student needs. The findings may not only prove valuable and applicable in formal education contexts, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in informal settings where wisdom is sought to be developed in alignment with a Métis worldview. Further, and more generally, for a society in need of more wise people, the research adds to the literature surrounding the diverse cultural perspectives on wisdom and its development and broadens the opportunity for growth in wisdom as a lifelong pursuit through and as experience.

The study has the opportunity to contribute not only to disciplinary knowledge in the field of education, but also to the methodological knowledge of narrative inquiry. Because narrative inquiry is a relatively new methodology, Caine and Clandinin (2013) asserted that it is important that researchers consider the methodological contributions they make with their research. Within the field of education, the discipline in which

narrative inquiry has primarily been utilized, narrative inquiry projects have overwhelmingly been based in formal educational contexts. This study applies the methodology to informal and non-formal learning environments, and therefore contributes to enhancing the scope of studies for which narrative inquiry has been employed. In addition, because narrative inquiry is primarily concerned with understanding experience, this study potentially offers a unique type of experience to be understood— aesthetic experience. Given the ceremonial and nature-based activities of some Métis, these realms offer likely connections to aesthetic experiences, and narrative inquiry is well disposed to understanding them with depth and co-collaboratively drawing out their significance with relation to wisdom. Therefore, exploration into aesthetic experience through narrative inquiry is a potentially significant methodological contribution.

Methods

Beginning the research

As detailed above, narrative inquiry ethical responsibilities are pivotal throughout the duration of the study, starting with the negotiation of where and how the research process is to begin. This negotiation of entry into the field is pertinent from both an ethical and practical standpoint, as it clearly establishes the responsibilities of both researchers and participants with respect to the highly relational work that is to unfold (Clandinin & Huber, 1990). Because the approach to narrative inquiry is intended to be open, emergent, and negotiated, the research methodology allows for flexibility and responsiveness in meeting the needs of the specific individuals and communities within the study, including their land-based and cultural protocols. Due to the nature of the topic, sacred practices and places will come up as possible activities and spaces for both

interaction and observation; the protocols surrounding each of these were observed with respect, and properly negotiated with the participants and community leaders both at the outset and throughout the course of the study. Therefore, the particulars of the study were negotiated and attended to the specific locations of the study, the duration, the activities involved, and the time requirements for the participants (Wang & Gaele, 2015).

Research design

The research study focused on the narratives of three Métis participants in order to understand their experiences of wisdom, its conceptualization, and its development. These participants were identified and approached primarily through both academic and social networks, and conversations regarding the research project helped elicit recommendations for participants. Because the educative practices in support of wisdom likely occur primarily in informal and/or non-formal learning contexts, there was not an easily identifiable location where the research activities should be carried out; thus, the importance of negotiating with participants as to where the inquiry events occurred. Three scheduled interviews with each participant occurred over the course of a few months and assumed a largely conversational style as I engaged and spent time with the participants (Clandinin, 2012). These meetings occurred in diverse locations and for varying durations of time, allowing participants the ability to utilize place and social context to express their narratives of experience. Given Métis connections to land, artistic and cultural activities, and community, it was interesting to see how the relational living alongside unfolded throughout the inquiry. Though the primary nature of the study is a “telling inquiry” by way of conversations and interviews, it was supplemented by elements of a “living inquiry” as “we often go wherever participants take us” (Clandinin

& Caine, 2013, p. 171). Remaining open in this way supported my ontological commitment and gave the opportunity for authenticity of participants' voice in expressing storied experience through the lens of their own worldview.

The process of the inquiry

The process of the inquiry unfolded as I engaged with participants in the field through both telling and living, creating field notes and field texts from those experiences, and writing interim and final research texts in collaboration with participants that deepened the inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). It was important that I kept in mind that I not only focused on the particular experience under study, but also on myself as a researcher experiencing that experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 161).

Field notes and field texts

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated: “the narrative inquirer writes field notes about life in its broadest sense on the landscape” (p. 79). Field notes, which capture the details of the life in the narrative inquiry field, record the actions, doings, happenings and feelings, support stories of experience shared in the tellings, and are narrative expressions in their own right (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104). As my inquiry embraced aspects of a living inquiry, these field notes had enhanced importance and provided the opportunity for deeper reflection on both the research field and my experience as part of it. The field notes contributed to the field texts, which would commonly be referred to as the research data. The field texts were both composed and co-composed with participants and came from conversations, interviews, observations, and artifacts (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Huber, 1990). My study focused on conversations and observations in the field as the primary source of the ever-evolving stories of experience and field texts.

The participants did reference artifacts that supported their stories of experience, and these were included as part of the field texts. Field texts, whether composed or co-composed, were negotiated with research participants.

Interim and final research texts

In regard to field texts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warned that we can fall in love with them, and they reminded us that “our inquiry task is to discover and construct meaning in those texts” (p. 130). Therefore, field texts must be reconstructed as research texts, and in common terms may be considered to constitute the data analysis of the study. The relational research relationship deepens as interim research texts are co-composed and negotiated with participants and the response community that has become a part of the research journey. Clandinin and Caine (2013) identified that interim texts “call forth further experiences to be told or lived” (p. 172)– actions which contribute to fulfilling the epistemological commitment of the methodology. Throughout the inquiry I was engaged in the continual process of writing interim research texts in close proximity to the creation of field texts and recognized that there was an ongoing and necessary return to experience. In moving towards final research texts, there was experimentation with narrative form and a reaching toward a sense of an aesthetic whole (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 167) as the participants and I best tried to represent not only past participant experience, but also the experience of researcher and participant through the inquiry relationship. These narrative expressions simultaneously considered voice, audience, and academic/institutional requirements. Final research texts resisted conclusive tellings, and instead focused on enhancing insight and understanding into the participants’ experiences while remaining open to the further transformation of

experience beyond the research study.

Transitioning to Chapter Four

Through experiences of the wisdom tradition of yoga and of the harvest of sea buckthorn alongside my grandfather, who I recognize as wise, I became curious of how wisdom is culturally situated and what experiences might support its development. My Métis lineage and affinity and connection to the land in the Batoche area further honed this curiosity to inquire into the educative practices that contribute to the growth of wisdom for Métis people. The literature reviewed affirmed the need for this inquiry, as my research addressed a broadly conceived notion of wisdom that includes the practical and transcendent, contributed a diverse cultural perspective to the field of wisdom research, and provided valuable educational resources rooted in Métis ways of knowing and being. Embodiment and lived experience occupied central themes throughout the inquiry, and aesthetic experience from a Deweyan perspective offered imaginative possibilities with regards to wisdom *as* experience. Narrative inquiry, a highly relational research methodology, was utilized as the ideal means to understand participant experience and reveal the complexity of culturally situated ways of knowing and being in relation to wisdom conceptualization and realization.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE WISDOM OF A STORY

Introduction

The relational narrative inquiry process with Cort, Joseph, and Monica revealed the necessity of having a foundational identity rooted in familial and cultural narratives both told and lived. These narratives provided the participants a source of connection and affirmation, a sense of understanding, a moral compass, and the opportunity to open up and share of themselves; furthermore, it is important to note that these stories were formed in the midst of and supportive in overcoming major life challenges at young ages. These stories to live by have been, as will be seen, instrumental in the participants' desire and ability to help and relate to others, and (and as will be seen in Chapter 5) to engage openly in experiences so as to gain and transform perspective, and to live in truth and connection to spirit.

Just as experience is of a continuous nature in a Deweyan framework (Dewey, 1938), so too is wisdom in the experiences of these Metis individuals; it is revealed to be developmental, processional, and relational. For this reason, wisdom in the context of this study is perhaps best understood not as a developmental achievement, but rather as a developmental practice as Aldwin (2009) suggested. Therefore, in this inquiry I have sought to understand the continuous nature of participants' experiences and the ways in which wisdom is nested in and fostered by interactions in different times and places. The narrative inquiry process provided the ability for participants to share their insights of how having an identity through foundational stories to live by, formed in the midst of challenges and in relationship, both constituted and fostered their ability to share and connect with others. They demonstrate that the wisdom of knowing and sharing who you

are is part of the healing journey- it provides the basis by which to offer oneself to others through a process that is mutually affirming.

Cort

The moment I met Cort, I felt him to be confident and certain of who he was, and I sought to gain insight as to how that was related to his understanding of himself as a Métis man and of identity, more generally. This curiosity was in part rooted in the silences identified in my narrative beginnings around my being Métis, but also in the way that his evident knowing of self, allowed for the felt knowing of him. He connected with people. Though the questions around identity seemed tangential at first, the stories which evolved from them, particularly those involving his relationship with his grandmother and other experiences that further affirmed his identity, were inextricably linked to and foundational of Cort's conceptualization and embodiment of wisdom.

Standing on Stories

In our dialogical explorations of Cort's Métis identity, the paramount importance of his grandmother not only in his understanding of his cultural identity, but also in terms of his self-knowledge more generally, became obvious. Because Cort's mother was institutionalized, having grown up in orphanages, she experienced the brainwashing of the institutional narratives similar to those cultivated in residential schools. Cort recounts the general dysfunction of the home environment he grew up in as a result, and the persistent denial by his mother of her Métis origin. Therefore, when Cort experienced racism at school, being called a wagon burner or a half breed, and questioned his mother, "what are we?" (Cort, November 18, 2018), she would simply tell him that 'I'm dark.' She provided no source of understanding for who he was or what he was experiencing.

However, because Cort spent a lot of time with his grandmother he knew she was a Cree speaker, and he also experienced kinship relationships with his aunties and uncles alongside his grandmother; he had access to familial and cultural narratives- “So, I got those stories. So, I KNEW...I knew I was a half-breed. I was ok with that. I just needed to know what that was in terms of my culture” (Cort, November 22, 2018). Cort explained the significance of the stories shared with him by his Kookum:

I think in my case, it was about me knowing our history. So my grandma would tell me stories about her growing up. Tell me about what happened to Métis people, the struggles, so that I understood that. Where we came from. So, WHO we are. So I think that was a big part of why she was telling me those stories, so that I would know them, and internalize them. And that’s exactly what happened. I heard them over and over and over again, and they just became a part of me. (Cort, November 18, 2018)

Cort illustrates how shared family stories from his grandmother about “how they lived” (Cort, November 22, 2018) and the traditional Weysakaychak stories that illustrated “those moral things, about how you practice” (Cort, November 18, 2018) connected with and supported Cort’s understanding of who we are as Métis people, culturally and historically. Collectively, these stories educated on values and ways of being, including humility, generosity, respect, and community. Cort revealed, therefore, that his source of identity goes beyond immediate experiences to include familial and cultural narratives imbued with meaning and values.

Knowing your lineage and family origins is particularly salient in the Métis culture “because of our dark times, because of the racism...when people were

disconnected, and even changed their name” (Cort, November 22, 2018). When Métis people meet, we all want to know the family name and where they’re from “because it connects us, it reminds us of the community we belong to and our similar struggles, our similar experiences” (Cort, November 22, 2018). His reflections on his experiences at ITEP³ and at *Back to Batoche*⁴, emphasized the sense of belonging and affirmation that results from the sharing of stories and sharing in experiences that makes us feel comfortable in our own skin. The importance of shared stories to live by supports the notion of identity as relational and intertwined with the communities that affirm us. It is both an act and feeling of connection that affirms sense of self.

These ways of knowing and being, learned through stories told, aligned with, and were supported by, the living alongside his grandmother; here, the feeling of connection was further enhanced. Cort noted that he went with his Kookum everywhere and had the opportunity to sit and listen to the old people conversing and “kind of absorbed all that” (Cort, November 22, 2018). He was very much accepted as a fixture of his Kookum’s visits, while at the same time he made the tea, got the cookies, and only participated in the conversation if he was invited to. Values of humility and generosity were learned through living, as were the many lessons received by observing and listening. In addition to the cultural connections through experiences with people, his Kookum engaged Cort in experiences of place, where directly felt relationships with land contributed to the foundation of self. For example, the experiences of being out picking berries and then making lagren with his Kookum inspired a respect and appreciation “every time I go on the land” (Cort, November 22, 2018). Through this experiential learning with his

³ ITEP refers to the Indian Teacher Education program at the University of Saskatchewan.

⁴ Annual Métis cultural festival held near the Batoche National Historic Site in Saskatchewan.

Kookum as a basis, Cort noted that in future experiences on the land “you’ve got this whole worldview where it’s connecting...it resonates through your being and you feel that resonance. It’s that affirmation” (Cort, November 22, 2018). He spoke of that connection as part of his spirit and part of his being. Thus, his experience of land is part of the diverse way in which Cort experiences himself as a Métis man.

Through both the stories told by his grandmother and those lived alongside her, Cort said:

I know who I am. I know who I am because I’m grounded by my grandmother. I have those teachings and those experiences...I use my grandma’s stories as a foundation. Like I know she was wise, and I guess that’s wisdom. For me they’re my foundation. They’re what I stand on. So that I can speak. (January 10, 2019)

These experiences, which would become Cort’s stories to live by, helped offer him a way of knowing, being, and doing. A story from which to embody himself in the world. In consideration of the continuum of experience, the process of coming to know himself through the sharing of stories told and lived with his grandma exemplifies that quality one might deem wisdom. In this context, because self-knowledge is relationally situated, so too must wisdom be understood in this way. How Cort goes on to embody who he is and live out his values through his role as an educator, further asserts that wisdom must be shared for it to be wisdom at all.

Stories to Calm their Spirit

The way in which Cort came to know himself as a child and young man, amidst challenges that sought to disconnect him, by connecting to the stories and experiences with his grandmother, is lived out in his way of doing and being as an adult. As a lifetime

educator (and learner), Cort exhibits values learned living alongside his grandmother in a way that helps calm the students' spirits; he illustrates his belief that, "For it to be wisdom, "you have to share it" (Cort, January, 10, 2019). In conversation surrounding the role of life experience in wisdom, Cort discussed the difference between someone who is merely old and an Elder:

An Elder has life experiences but learns from them. They learn from them and they can share them with you, and they can empathize and relate with you...sometimes you gotta walk that path in order to be able to help someone else who is walking that path. And to me that's wisdom. You LEARN and your healing journey is something that you can share. (Cort, November 22, 2018)

Through the narratives Cort shared in our interactions, he illustrated how he utilizes his own stories, both told and lived, to support his students. The telling of his personal stories, because of his ability to relate to the challenging experiences of the Indigenous children, serves as a basis for connection and hope. For students that are coming to him with problems, Cort understands, through his own storied experience, the importance of providing the feeling of a safe space that emphasizes listening and the freedom to decompress. "The Indigenous students understand the role of an Elder or a knowledge keeper. And so, when they come to me...you can let your guard down and chances are you don't have to explain. You don't have to explain. And that's all the difference" (Cort, December 13, 2018). Cort illustrated the value in his ability to relate to challenging experiences when he discussed how a young girl who came to him upset, and Cort was able to say, "I get it. I know where you're coming from" (Cort, January 10, 2019). After he shared his own experience and received confirmation that it sounded

familiar, he told her, “Ok. I’m here. I’m here” (Cort, January 10, 2019). He recognized that though he can’t make her hurt or her suffering better for her, he can show her that there is hope because “I’m here” (Cort, January 10, 2019). It is through the sharing of those painful experiences with someone else that Cort is able to recognize those times in his life as “part of God’s plan, his purpose” (Cort, January 10, 2019). It is both the acceptance of and transformation of a story to the benefit of others; an act of mutual affirmation and the embodiment of closely held values like generosity and humility.

Teaching in a Métis designated school with a large Indigenous population, Cort recognizes that many of those students do not know who they are; what is to be Métis or what it is to be Cree. One of Cort’s Elders, Glenda, says that “You are who you are born into” (Cort, December 13), and when you do not know what that is, you are detached or disconnected. Cort sees it as his role as an educator and Elder to “attach them and ground them” (Cort, December 13, 2018), because “that’s when things open up to you” (Cort, December 13, 2018). This is very much what his Kookum did with him- connected him to the stories and experiences that grounded him in his understanding of being Métis.

One way Cort seeks to make this connection, to help them with that sense of “pride and understanding, and give them perspective (Cort, December 18, 2018), is through the use of place. Cort has designed and decorated his classroom in a way, that he says, “channel[s] my grandmother” (Cort, November 22, 2018). The room is filled with his Kookum’s things, including her chair, doylies, dishcloths, photographs of the family, and even a KFC chicken bucket. He recollected that when his grandmother wanted to give him a treat or had the uncles and aunts over, she bought chicken; the bucket is intended to remind people that this is a special time because “that’s when people come

over” (Cort, November 22, 2018). There is a kettle ready for people to come in and sit down and have tea, just like Cort used to witness of his grandmother and her friends-remnants of the ways in which he came to know himself through the social experiences lived alongside her. Pictures of his aunts and uncles, grandmother, mother, sister, and niece, along with articles of Métis clothing and Métis sashes also decorate the room. They serve as indicators of the importance of family and culture, and how those narratives help inform and are foundational to who we are.

Cort described that he wanted to “honour other ways of knowing, being, and doing,” so when “you crossed that threshold that you walked in here and had that experience [of another way of knowing, being, and doing]” (Cort, November 22, 2018). The physical layout of the room and the way of interacting in that space, Cort hoped would facilitate the experience of another way of knowing, being, and doing similar to that which he had with his Kookum. In his attempt to channel his grandmother, Cort hoped that “everybody else will feel it” (Cort, November 22, 2018); that grounded, direct connection to another way. Whether the person who enters the room is Indigenous or not, Cort creates that opportunity for connection through feeling; a feeling that fosters enhanced understanding and perspective, but also invites inquiry and the telling of more stories. Through his use of space in this way, he again shares of his own story and fosters not only the hearing of, but the experiencing of another narrative. What Cort asks is that when people come into the room that they say to themselves, “I need to open my heart and my mind to that, and be respectful” (Cort, November 22, 2018). Both through Cort’s lived way of being and the story told through physical space, teachings of humility, generosity, respect, and community are shared in a unique and experiential way.

In reflections on why he continues to teach when he could have long been retired, Cort said, “I’m here because I’m part of a whole and I need to affirm that. And as I affirm that, I get affirmed” (Cort, December 13, 2018). Thus, the sharing of his stories, both vocally and through the creation of opportunities for lived experience and interaction, provided a source of connection and affirmation for the students; but also, these acts embodied the teachings of his grandmother and honoured the stories he lives by. “Wisdom to me is the learning from your life experiences and putting them into practical application” (November 22, 2018). The practical application is indeed relational. The sharing of his story helps others with their own challenges and supports new perspectives; it also strengthens himself.

Monica

The first time I met with Monica she was very much in the midst of her battle with kidney disease; she was receiving dialysis multiple times a week and awaiting a kidney transplant with as much patience as possible. Despite the physical challenges and, as I would find out later, challenges on multiple levels of her being, she still had a sparkle in her eye. Her degree of resilience was obvious in her optimism, enthusiasm, and laughter, and in conversation regarding her Métis identity, the origins of this and other notable characteristics of Monica were given greater understanding. The familial and cultural narratives she detailed illuminated the source of many of the stories she lives by and the gifts she shares; infused in those experiences is a relationally situated wisdom.

Small Town Girl from Cumberland House

In reflecting on her identity in our dialogues, Monica saw the origins of her Métis identity as largely rooted in relationships to place. She stated, “I think my earliest understanding of my identity as a Métis person is rooted in my experience as a child

living in the oldest Métis settlement in Western Canada, which is Cumberland House” (Monica, Jan 29, 2019). Though it was a community where “we never really talked about identities” (Monica, March 6, 2019), Monica shared experiences that expressed her connection to what she understood Métis people to be historically and to her family. She enthusiastically spoke of the “collective energy of young people having the freedom to explore their environment” (Monica, January 29, 2019) through stories of swimming at Big Rock, being chased by boys who threw snakes at them, and travelling downstream by canoe to pick berries with her mother and aunties. A sense of adventure, experimentation, and connection with the northern woods filled these stories. These experiences, along with her understanding of her father as a gifted hunter, trapper, fisherman, and her parents being skilled entrepreneurs exemplified a narrative coherence with how she described her ancestors.

We come from voyageurs. We come from people that would open up trails. People that were hardy. People that were resilient...They were the interpreters. The original interpreters. They were the ones that helped to build relationships...I think to me when I think about historically who the Métis people were, that's the epitome. People who were interested in learning other things...So I think there's a whole history there of who our people were. It's like they were a blend of the European and Indigenous. (Monica, March 6, 2019)

Monica, in alignment with the narrative she told of her ancestors, gave further insight into her understanding of herself through her immediate family experiences at a young age. She described the innovative, risk taking, and entrepreneurial nature of her parents, as they opened and ran the only cafeteria in town. The embodied values of her

parents, and her felt connection to them and her ancestors, as demonstrated in these reflections informs Monica's perception of self and way of being. Further, she notes that "the thing that I valued most from childhood was our home was like the hub [of the community]" (Monica, March 6, 2019). Throughout our conversations, Monica spoke to her *gift* of communication; a gift from childhood that was nurtured within the context of their home as the social centre of the community, as well as living amongst her twelve siblings. The importance of communication, connection, and sharing, values which were demonstrated in these early narratives, became central to Monica's interaction with and contribution to the world.

The major challenges Monica experienced and how they were met through the response of her family, catalysed perspective, values and ways of being. When Monica was five years old, her mother, who "was the rock of our home" (Monica, January 29, 2019), passed away. At that time, her father succumbed to a broken heart and "just fell apart" (January 29, 2019), moved to B.C. and the kids were left in the care of older siblings. At that time, her second oldest sister Jenny, vowed to keep the family together, and kept that promise. Monica highlighted the teachings derived from that experience including, "the importance of having family, the importance of having support, and the importance of honouring what it is you say you are going to do" (January 29, 2019). She recalled that she experienced her "fair share of childhood trauma" (Monica, January 29, 2019), and a familial and cultural concept that was reinforced by her sister was that of resilience- to "never give up" (February 26, 2019); a teaching that helped support her during those challenges and which she embodies to this day.

Monica recognized Jenny as her biggest teacher and spoke to the lessons that seem to be at the heart of her moral compass; these moral underpinnings are demonstrated to be lived out in her later narratives of experience. One of the teachings Jenny used to say to Monica was ‘e-kanawêhtamâsawîn,’ which:

...is Cree for 'don't think you're better than anybody else.' And she used to say that a lot. So, the teaching was, some people get very full of themselves and their ego gets in the way of their growth. So you have to maintain humility. And if you don't maintain humility, you're basically gonna get taught humility. You're gonna get kicked on your ass (laughs). (Monica, January 29, 2019)

Monica elaborated how Jenny was aware that her sibling was the youngest female in this big family, and was getting a lot of attention for that as well as for possessing some gifts. She stated, “Your ego can get in the way, so you have to be cautious of that...and so sometimes they will try to remind you of your path and your journey, so you don’t fall prey to that” (Monica, February 26, 2019). She connected this to another childhood teaching that both requires and supports the quality of humility: “you don’t just think about yourself. You think about other people. If you’re gonna do something, it’s not just for your own benefit. You have to think about lifting other people up with you” (Monica, January 29, 2019). This was a familial teaching maintained by Jenny, which had its origins in the behaviour of her mother who had a “tremendous capacity to love” and exhibited that in the “community by sharing” (Monica, February 26, 2019). In her reflections on humility and generosity as fundamental elements of her childhood teachings, and with wisdom as the imaginative backdrop of our dialogue, Monica stated, “I don’t think you can have wisdom without humility” (Monica, February 26, 2019).

Monica believes that “you take the root of your teachings from childhood” (Monica, January 29, 2019). To understand the teachings that Monica received in childhood is fundamental to exploring her way of being in the world throughout her life. Resilience, humility, generosity, communication, and risk taking, as values rooted in familial and cultural narratives, provide the basis of Monica’s stories to live by and pathway to healing on her human journey. As will be seen, these storied values become most fully embodied when they’re shared, and the relational and healing nature of wisdom becomes clearer in Monica’s experiences throughout her life.

The Gifts of Teachings

Monica emphasized the importance of the gifts that we have been given and figuring out channels to offer them. Her perspectives on the particular strengths that we have is imbued with a humility that determines it imperative that they are offered to others: “You have to recognize that you don’t have those gifts just by yourself. They were given to you. When something’s given to you, you have a responsibility to share it freely” (Monica, March 6, 2019). Monica’s foundational stories to live by, those that emphasize humility and generosity, support this perspective; the result is the sharing of personal strengths found in those stories. Additional stories told by and lived alongside Monica throughout the research process gave further insight into how the awareness of her gifts is affirmed and embodied through relational experiences.

Monica addressed the significance of receiving her spirit name, ‘Woman of the Rock,’ as it has helped her significantly as a guide for her own growth. She recollected her and her husband having a laugh when she first received her name, as her husband said, “...it just makes sense...everywhere you go, you’re collecting rocks” (Monica,

January 29, 2019). Monica would then make an analogy, as someone who enjoys travelling and developing relationships with a diversity of people, stating “I guess they’re teachings I’m collecting, right?” (Monica, January 29, 2019). Implicit in her recognition of a ‘teaching’ is that it is something that you receive, but that you also share on your journey. Monica recognizes that a rock is animate and has spirit, and along with all of nature, gives of itself; the sharing of her own gifts reflects this same generosity and is part of “honouring my spirit” (Monica, January 29, 2019).

When Monica was acting as the Aboriginal Relations Consultant for the City of Saskatoon Police Service, she was approached by an Elder who asked her what her spirit name was and if she knew what it means and what her purpose was. Up to that point she had never been told, and the Elder said, “It means that you’re an interpreter...your job is to help people understand each other” (Monica, January 29, 2019). Upon finding out that her role was to facilitate understanding between the Métis, First Nations, and the police and to help build that relationship, the Elder confirmed that she was doing what she was meant to do and exactly where she was supposed to be. In consideration of Monica’s self-understanding, as related to her ancestors being interpreters and the value she places on effective communications with others, this role exemplified a channel for sharing the stories she lived by. She expressed gratitude for this experience of both self-affirmation and affirmation from the Elder, “To know that I am in my journey” (Monica, January 29, 2019).

Monica has also embodied this role as an interpreter by helping Indigenous students find their identity as a schoolteacher, as an Indian-Métis Educational Consultant, working at the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and connecting Elders with the

community. As exemplified by her own journey with kidney disease, she said, “If you have a challenge in your life and you’re able to successfully go through that challenge, you now have the ability to share that experience...essentially, you’re an interpreter [of that experience]” (Monica, March 6, 2019). The familial and cultural narratives of resilience from her childhood, as well as her own lived challenges such as the murder of her brother, teenage pregnancy, and nearly being murdered in B.C., have supported the development of a strength to share her stories to “help other people maybe understand something about themselves” (Monica, March 6, 2019) and discover their own resilience.

As we conducted our last interview at the Community Renal Health Centre, Monica illustrated her ability to give perspective to her own challenging experiences and invoke a vantage point of gratitude because of what she will be able to offer others as a result. This practice was also demonstrated by the life affirming values that emerged from her childhood narratives, both joy-filled and challenging; she told the narrative in such a way that encouraged the connection to and support of others. Amidst the other patients receiving haemodialysis, with whom she had cultivated friendships and a feeling of community, she expressed the opportunity to see the connection between teachings and gifts:

And I really thought a lot about this whole journey of kidney disease. And what it's taught me. And I realize that I was selected by Creator. Because of the gifts that I have to be able to articulate, to be able to be self-aware, to be able to be an advocate. That's part of my role...I consider it to be my sacred responsibility, that's why I had this experience. (Monica, March 6, 2019)

Monica's embodiment of the stories she lives by *is* the honouring of her gifts. She utilizes her experiences *as* teachings, and ultimately integrates them by sharing them through the expression of her gifts. It is in this way that life experiences, particularly those that are challenging, can be seen as gifts themselves and embraced with gratitude—they are opportunities to BE yourself. Monica stated that the wisest people that she knows are not necessarily academically trained people, but rather have a great ability “to convey wisdom from their lived experiences” (Monica, February 26, 2019). She demonstrates this ability to not only share that which she learns from experience but exemplifies the perspective that it is in these moments of sharing that wisdom truly exists.

Joseph

It was a decade or so ago that I first had the pleasure of being in Joseph's presence. He was offering a pipe ceremony at a yoga event I was attending, and it just so happens that I had the opportunity of being the fire keeper for the ceremony. I struggled with keeping the fire lit (!), yet I clearly felt his unwavering patience, kindness, and openness to connection with me and the group. The research experience of this narrative inquiry enhanced my understanding of the authenticity by which he offered that ceremony. Throughout this inquiry, Joseph illustrated the major challenges to his identity, as well as the process by which he was to restore this connection to the world through the Cree teachings and way of the Elders and the affirmation of his Métis lineage on his mother's side. In the stories Joseph shared, he depicted how a foundational sense of self, re-established through the Cree culture and a diversity of relationships that supported that journey, was necessary to his survival following residential school; further, the way in which he came to know himself informed the medium and breadth of which he would

express himself in service of others and heal himself. This journey further illustrates the processional nature of wisdom.

A Shower of Songs

Unlike Cort and Monica who had familial and cultural narratives solidified in the early years of their lives throughout youth and young adulthood, Joseph had his foundational narratives uprooted and delegitimized through his thirteen-year experience of residential school. Therefore, his coming to know his core stories to live by began in his early 20's as an act of survival and a process of story making. This process was both impacted by distant childhood narratives “of a living culture that was life sustaining” that Joseph “had put in [his] pocket for while” (Joseph, November 15, 2018), but also by those institutional narratives experienced through residential school.

When he was taken to residential school, Joseph was not only cut off from cultural practices, but completely dissociated from his family, and the familial narratives that he had lived alongside for these first five years of his life. “The foundation of the Cree family system is relationships you have with everyone in the family. That’s the foundation” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). The eradication of those relationships with his parents and aunts and uncles, meant the subversion of the family system and *wahkotowin* (kinship). Coming out of the residential school he was relating to and connecting to nobody; wanting “to feel it [*wahkotowin*], but you can’t, because [the] *wahkotowin* is messed up” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). In the absence of stories rooted in family and culture, the institutional narratives offered at the residential school established a connection with the Eurocentric, mainstream culture instead of with his own. The life sustaining stories from childhood were silenced and supplanted with a

discontinuous, colonial narrative; thus, creating narrative tension, disorientation, and confusion.

Joseph explained that because his “trust relationship with humanity was broken,” he had to “rebuild and reconnect” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). He explained that two things began to happen at the time: he was following “the way of the drum and the way of the Elders’ teachings” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). When he suddenly discovered that he had this Cree culture in his early 20’s, “it was like I fell to the middle of the earth and I had to climb to the top...I was empty” (Joseph, November 15, 2018); yet the discovery that he had a culture and an identity gave him “this little light” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). Joseph began to fill this hole with cultural narratives by listening to the stories of the old people and going to cultural events to experience the lived story of the Cree culture. “So, my story had to be filled with the stories and the songs and the ceremonies, and all the things that are part of nehiyawiwini...I was just trying to make my story full” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). The Elders’ stories, told and lived, and all the cultural information was gradually becoming a significant part of Joseph’s own story.

Simultaneously, Joseph intuitively understood that he needed both the Cree and mainstream culture to “be functioning in my own heart and my own mind” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). The institutional narratives lingered, and the Cree cultural narratives were being re-formed; Joseph recognized that the two worlds had to be lived in tandem at this time. His living amongst the mainstream culture, namely with those people with identifiable cultures, began through his engagement with the artists and musicians. Because of the trauma and his broken trust of the world, it was “excruciatingly painful” (Joseph, November 15, 2018) to go beyond relating to a small circle of people in your

family. So, Joseph “translated [his] relationship with the world through music...songs about love and unity and feeling good. We are all one people” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). Through musicians, artists, and multicultural people he began to “regain the trust through these beautiful people” (Joseph, November 15, 2018) and his “wahkotowin sort of expanded” (Joseph, January 8, 2019).

In further reflections on how he came to know and understand himself, Joseph spoke to the power of the feeling of embodied, lived experiences. He recognized that his story began amidst that living culture with his grandparents, where he experienced sun dance, picking berries, and the old way of surviving. Joseph described “the little medicine bag they left me” from those experiences, and though silent for a long time, that story was awakened when he would be exposed to Cree cultural practices on the land. He illustrated the power of song and ceremony in healing from what he thought was the loss of identity, and the renewal of that connection and relationship as he depicted a sun dance experience from his 20’s:

...I left when I was six years old, and here I am in my twenties and I’m hearing these songs and they’re doing something inside of me. I’m hearing them just overpowering, overpower me. Internalize the sounds and the images, the feeling. It was incredible. It’s like I needed all that shower of traditional songs, traditional things that were happening... And I needed that to heal. (Joseph, November 15, 2018)

Similarly, Joseph shared a story of going to his mother’s house as an adult to show her that he had learned to jig, in the hopes that she would jig with him. It was an attempt to connect with his mother, and also to feed and affirm the curiosity of his Métis

ancestry- a cultural narrative which had been silenced in the household by the dominant narratives of his father. Despite having a sprained ankle, she put on the Red River Jig and she danced “because it was in her to do it” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). Following the dance, his mother went into the back room and came back with a blue sash and handed it to Joseph. The only words that were exchanged were, “Here son. Here, my boy” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). As Joseph explained, “She just awakened a part of me that I hadn’t really understood or felt. Yet it was there. She had affirmed the Métis part of our family...so I had something to be connected to through my mother” (Joseph, November 15, 2018). The story suggests the authenticity of self-expression that comes through the body, the opportunity for connection through movement and music, and the stories of affirmation that it lives and opens up for telling. The dance not only connected Joseph to his mother, but his mother to her own foundational story and desire to share it with her son through the dance and the offering of the sash.

To be without identity is to be without relationship. In Joseph’s narratives following residential school we see the gradual expansion of his relationships: with the Cree culture, with non-Indigenous friends, artists, and musicians, and with the Métis culture. A common thread amongst these narratives of connection is the poignancy of immediate, sensorial experience through activities of song, dance, storytelling, and ceremony. Ways of coming to know and ways of relating through embodiment and feeling. These mediums of expression are modes of communication, of ways of telling and hearing stories. Further narratives illustrate the alignment of his identity as an artist and a knowledge keeper, and how their interaction is an authentic and healing expression

of his stories to live by when shared with others. They reveal the wisdom of how a story is shared.

Don't Think Too Much

Joseph's stories of the process of coming to know himself through song, pow wow, storytelling, and dance illustrates the embodied nature of those experiences. These practices resonated with him not only for the purpose of their enjoyment, but for their ability to facilitate the sense of deep connection: "There's something internally that connects with something beyond yourself" (Joseph, November 15, 2018). As Joseph followed the way of the Elders, he "didn't realize at some point that all this search and all this knowledge that I was acquiring would become part of my work...as a cultural knowledge-keeper or a ceremonial person" (Joseph, January 8, 2019). However, "the multidisciplinary way of expressing as ceremonial people" (Joseph, November 15, 2018) offered Joseph, the artist, the comfort to share his story through the mediums that were touching his own heart and mind.

As Joseph was in the process of coming to know his story, the institutional narratives were slowly fading, and the other way- the Cree culture- was coming into view. As he re-connected with the Cree cultural narrative and was acquiring some knowledge and history about who he was, he wanted to share what he was learning because he "felt so alive. I felt so alive once I knew that I had something to share with the world" (Joseph, January 8, 2019). This act of sharing was a further act of connection and affirmation. Joseph expressed through story and song that what he thought he had lost was "very good for my mind, body, and spirit" (Joseph, January 8, 2019). The practical mode of expression, the 'doing' aspect of the teaching was enjoyed by the audience, and

it told him that “there is something to our culture” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). It showed him that nehiyawiwon not only had value for his own sake, but also provided for a feeling and experience that can touch others within and beyond that culture.

With the old people as the source of “guidance, direction, and inspiration” (Joseph, November 15, 2018), Joseph would become *oskâpêwis* (a helper in ceremony), and in tandem with his own broad quest for spiritual knowledge, would develop and share the skills to assist people struggling in their own journey, as he had. “And I don’t think it’s relegated to just Indigenous people. It’s anybody, right? Could be anybody” (Joseph, January 8, 2018). Joseph stressed that his sharing of these ‘medicine’ teachings had to be done through story and song because of his deficit resulting from how he was taught, having been moved from grade to grade without developing his mind. Therefore, Joseph struggled to vocalize what he learned in an academic way, so he had to “do things with people” (Joseph, January 8, 2019) to most effectively express his “own feelings and thoughts about life” (Joseph, December 5, 2018).

This type of embodied learning aligned with the Cree way in which “you DO things, and by DOING you learn, and you know” (Joseph, January 8, 2019), as well as with a teaching that comes from the sweat lodge, “*ekay osam mistahi mâmitonêyhta-don’ think too much*” (Joseph, December 5, 2018). Joseph explained:

What I mean about thinking too much is that you don’t actually do anything, cause you’re thinking about it. You’re thinking too much about it rather than using the body to move... You have a body, you have emotions, but if you think too much, you become that. Someone who thinks and talks too much rather than someone who feels. (Joseph, December 5, 2018)

Joseph, as an artist, allows himself to teach from that perspective, where he plays the flute, sings pow wow songs, and tells stories of the Cree culture. Rather than being told, the audiences are shown and experience “what to do, how to live, how to BE!” (Joseph, November 18, 2018). The movement, undertaken by both Joseph and his audience, allows for both parties to be embodied and experience connection and feeling to each other; the teachings are shared through living.

For Joseph, embodiment was critical in both the coming to know himself and the expression and sharing of himself. Because of the trauma he experienced in residential schools and the lingering institutional narratives that affected his mind, learning was most successfully done with and through the body. To move, to sing, to hear, and to be in nature awakened a dormant part of his being that needed to heal and be connected to others- both through nehiyawiwon and through music. Joseph carries out his work as a knowledge-keeper in modes of expression that are most true to him as an artist and human being; therefore, by teaching and relating through embodied interactions, he invites authentic relationship in support of feeling connectivity. This depth of connection is an experience of wisdom.

Chapter Summary

The narratives of Cort, Monica, and Joseph illustrated the process of coming to know their own stories to live by through familial and cultural narratives, both told and lived alongside. In the case of Cort and Monica, foundational stories to live by were rooted in stories told that emphasized values such as humility, respect, and generosity. Further, stories lived alongside family members facilitated connections with place and nature, as well as emphasized community. Joseph’s process was primarily rooted in embodied experiences offered through Cree cultural practices facilitating feeling, as well

as social experiences with fellow artists and musicians that broadened his ability to trust and relate. All three participants experienced a coming to know with and through relationships to others, enhancing self-knowledge and opening up the possibility to share of their own challenging stories for the benefit of others. This beginning of self-knowledge, from a perspective of continuous experience, can be seen as the emergence of a relationally based living of wisdom.

The expression of self, for all participants, aligned with their process of coming to know, and was practical in its ability to support others and strengthen their own sense of self. For Cort and Monica, their way of being was rooted in core values of generosity and community, and their ability to relate allowed the sharing of their own stories, both told and embodied, that fostered connection and affirmation. Joseph's creative expression, in alignment with the Cree way of 'doing' to know, allowed for the sharing of personal and cultural narratives with diverse people in support of feeling belongingness. In all these narratives, much in the same way that the wisdom of knowing oneself emerged relationally, wisdom was imbedded in the act of sharing itself- as teachings and gifts.

CHAPTER FIVE. THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM

Introduction

The participants' narratives around foundational identities illuminated the relational origins of self-knowledge, and the significant impact that those stories to live by had on the engagement in a process of wisdom. The embodiment of this 'self' was exemplified by a 'doing' in the world that honoured these stories by remaining in alignment with their way of coming to know and with the teachings and values cultivated through those experiences. Wisdom was revealed to be inseparable from the experience of sharing and the feeling of connection in 'being.' Though the participants all exhibited a 'knowing who they are,' their narratives also expressed an openness to experience with the possibility of shifting perspectives; both of themselves and the world. What is exemplified in these narratives is how help from others and interaction with diverse experience broadens ways of knowing, doing, and being and how connection is experienced. The scope of connection experienced by the participants is revealed to be expansive, and relational identities through felt, embodied practices illuminate the practicality of spiritual awareness. Spiritual wisdom is shown to be lived and shared, supportive of self-integration and non-attachment, and conducive to compassion for others.

Cort

Stubbornness of Mind

Throughout our conversation, Cort often expressed with great conviction, "I know who I am" (Cort, November 22, 2018). Yet rather than being confined by this self-knowing, it is precisely due to the confidence and security that arises from this feeling of affirmation that "I can open my mind to other ways of seeing things and be ok with that"

(Cort, January 10, 2019). He expressed, with respect to his go to person when it comes to wisdom, Brenda⁵, that “she’s comfortable in her own skin and that takes a lot of self-knowledge, confidence...but that’s part of wisdom” (Cort, November 22, 2018). Cort testified to her being a lifelong learner and having the confidence and vulnerability to question what she knows; a further reminder from the Elders “about our humility...we’re all on a learning journey” (Cort, January 10, 2019). Cort honours this teaching by engaging in experiences in ways that open himself to the perspectives of others and to the transformational expansion of perspective that ceremony can reveal; both facilitate insight and broadened connections.

In the same way that Cort’s foundational stories to live by were established in relationship, he illustrates that the ways he has grown in self-knowledge as an adult have come from listening to the perspectives of others. Cort spoke to the importance of having “somebody who can help you know what you don’t know” (Cort, December 13, 2018). In order to be receptive, however, “you have to be conscious of that need that we can’t just be satisfied with who we are. You’ve gotta be able to move forward. But you need people who will challenge you” (Cort, December 13, 2018). Cort detailed a time in his life where he was needing to find balance and was exhibiting dysfunction (unbeknownst to him at the time) in his relationship with his mother, who was an alcoholic. Urged by the social worker, Cort decided to attend Al-Anon. Particularly through the brutal honesty of his sponsor, Cort realized that “it challenged me that I had to listen to other people, and I had to find them” (Cort, December 13, 2018). It clarified in him that we need to seek out people we trust to tell us what we don’t know and see about out ourselves, and “do

⁵ All individuals referenced by the participants are represented by pseudonyms throughout the text.

something about it” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The process stabilized him, focussed him, and allowed him to work on his relationship with his mother in a healthy way. “So, if you want wisdom,” Cort said half-jokingly, “12 step program” (Cort, December 13, 2018).

Cort’s cultivation of self-awareness has allowed for the recognition that he has a deficit due to the absence of a father growing up, and the lack of his mother’s parenting skills due to her institutional upbringing; he lacked healthy parental models. Therefore, with respect to the raising of his own children, he spoke to the necessity of relying “on other people for that perspective and trusting them because I don’t have that” (Cort, December 13, 2018). In addition to overcompensating by ensuring he gives his children a hug and kiss before they leave the house (they’re 27), he has relied on his wife to be his “rudder” (Cort, December 13, 2018) and gauge for normalcy. An act of vulnerability, honesty, and commitment to perspective.

In addition to the openness to his perspective being changed by others, Cort’s narratives illuminated an openness to experience, specifically, ceremonial experiences, which also results in transformation. Rooted in the humility teaching from his grandmother, “Don’t judge people, don’t think you’re better,” Cort goes into other situations “a little more open-minded, a little more accepting” (Cort, November 22, 2018). “Maybe that’s part of wisdom, is learning that life experience that you have to sometimes leave your stuff at the door and be able to walk and be open-minded and receptive. So that you’ll experience things. I know that’s what ceremony is about” (Cort, November 22, 2018). The statement echoes the same type of invitation of clear receptivity that he offers people who come into his classroom so that they might

experience a different way of knowing, being, and doing. It is the openness to experience that facilitates the realization of what you didn't know you didn't know and provides an opportunity for growth.

Cort shared the story of a sweat lodge experience with his late Elder, Edward, and how this embodied practice instantly expanded his perspective. Edward told Cort, “In terms of culture and understanding and building relationship between you and me, we can only get to a certain point...it takes ceremony to get through that wall” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The wall he referred to as *stubbornness of mind*. Cort recognized that he had some book knowledge, some life experience to a certain point as related to First Nations, but through the sweat lodge experience realized that he had no understanding of the depth of relationality central to a First Nations' perspective- “No idea” (Cort, December 13, 2018). And, as soon as he had the ceremonial experience, he understood what the Elder was saying:

It was transformative in the sense that I suddenly became very much aware of the elements...of the power of prayer. I thought I knew prayer. Now all of a sudden, I've got a different perspective that I didn't have before...And suddenly I get it. I get it. I get my relationship with that rock. I get my relationship to this lodge and what it symbolizes. All of that. (Cort, December 13, 2018)

The transformation of Cort's perspective, both due to his open-hearted approach to the experience and the nature of the ceremony itself, created enhanced understanding and depth of relationship not only with Edward and the Cree culture, but also with others who engage in ceremony as a form of practice, like his friend and Lakota teacher, Dan. “Cause suddenly I know...I know stuff I didn't know before, and that's what he'd been

talking about all along. Just got to know him in a deeper, more meaningful way” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The growth in perspective through impactful experience such as ceremony, expands our network and depth of connection with people, and in some instances, with nature. It demonstrates that humility presents the opportunity to be receptive

The experiences of gaining perspective from others and through transformative, ceremonial practice demonstrates that humility creates the opportunity for the growth that accompanies receptivity. Cort warned that “pride oftentimes stops us from responding to other people’s ways of knowing, being and doing because we think we’re right” (Cort, January 10, 2019). Humility lowers these barriers so that the “doors are open and you become responsive” (Cort, January 10, 2019). It is through this process of reception and response that we grow in perspective, relationship, and connection.

Kahkiyo ni wakomaganak (All My Relations)

The conversations with Cort were focussed on the understanding of a relational identity rooted in familial and cultural narratives, and the embodiment of values through their practical application in service of others. This way of knowing and doing demonstrated a fostering of *spirit* as experienced in relationship to others- both communally and personally. The sweat lodge story exemplifies how Cort’s relational scope and depth was enhanced through embodied ways of knowing. He not only experienced deepened understanding of personal relationships held, but also discovered newly felt connections- his relationship with the rocks, that they had a *spirit*, and that he “can listen to the stories of the rocks” (Cort, December 13, 2018). This ability to engage in broadened forms of relationship and spiritual connection was also exemplified in

Cort's feeling affirmed and of "a pouring into my spirit" (Cort, November 22, 2018) when he goes out on the land. Cort provided further stories in which embodied practices are undertaken in support of a state of being that rests in directly felt relationships to all things. These experiences hold the potential for the recognition that you are part of a whole, and that the honouring of spirit holds practical wisdom.

As part of a 'Life Experience' program Cort was leading with Indigenous students, many of whom were disconnected from who they are, he was encouraged by the Elders to smudge the kids every day. "When you smudge these kids not only do you create this connection with the Creator, but you calm their spirit... They've had so many challenges coming at them that you need to calm their spirit" (Cort, December 13, 2018). So Cort carried out the smudging practice with kids, and it also became a daily part of his life for a period of time and a part of his "spiritual walk" (Cort, December 13, 2018). For him, as well as the students, the smudge grounded, focussed, and connected him. Cort spoke to the embodied, sensorial nature of the practice as being impactful- the visual of the lighting of the bunch, the sight of the smoke rising, the physical act of drawing the smoke in, the smell, and the community aspect, all contribute to the power of the experience. It is an act of prayer that honours the gifts from the Creator, "seen and unseen. Known and unknown," (Cort, December 13, 2018). The practice is an act of intentionally connecting to those physical elements and, through feeling, embodying the idea that all things carry a spirit and are connected to the Creator. The ceremony contributes to a lived perspective known as *kahkiyo ni wakomaganak*- all my relations. "We're talking about my relations in terms of my family, my blood and then not my blood. But also, the animals, the plants, the earth, the spirituality- that focus that

everything has a spirit and also with the wind, the rock, the water, the fire” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The smudge is facilitative of the felt realization that all of these relationships are part of who you are. Therefore, within and through that broad expanse of relationships is our *being* affirmed, and spirit experienced and honoured.

A story that Cort has received and has resonated with him, which he both practices himself and shares, was received from one of his Elders, Glenda. The advice she gave is that if you are troubled, or have worries or powerful emotions, there are two things you can do. The first, is “Go out and stand under a tree, and put your hand on that tree. And feel the strength of that tree” (Cort, December 13, 2018). Though the tree is strong, it bends, and in the fall, it sheds its leaves and lets go of its burdens. In the spring, “it re-invents itself. It brings new life” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The embodied act of letting go, as supported by the felt relationship to the tree, allows for a transformation of being through experience. The second activity is to “stand in the wind and let the might of the wind blow over you. And ask for a little bit of its strength. Take a little bit of its strength. But the wind will blow over you and if you are willing it will take your anger. It will take your sadness” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The act is both symbolic and felt, imagined and lived. Both acts exemplify a reconnection to self through *kahkiyo ni wakomaganak*- “the connection to the land, to the wind...all of that is a part of my spirit” (Cort, December 13, 2018). The practice, Cort said, “is both powerful and practical...it engages more than just your mind, it’s about all aspect of your being” (Cort, December 13, 2018). It offers embodiment as a way of knowing, doing, and being, and the possibility to touch and be touched in ways that resonate *as* spirit.

Cort's understanding of spirit is rooted in the idea, and experience, that we're related and connected to all people, the earth, and all living things; everything has a spirit and we are moving within a fluid web of connection and we should "know that connection" (Cort, January, 10, 2019). The knowing of that connection is through the experience of spirit, which is an awareness and feeling that emerges when we are touched by things (as exemplified by the smudge ceremony and the tree and wind practices). "And the more I know who I am, the more I'm aware of my spirit...And I know those things that feed it" (Cort, December 13, 2018). Therefore, self-knowledge anchored in an understanding of an ever-expanding web of relationship allows for the engagement in experiences that support that transcendence of a separate self. Whether they are interactions with other people or with the land and natural environment, embodied experiences, simultaneously active and receptive, resonate *with* and *as* spirit. The practicality of this realization cannot be understated. The more we feel the inseparability of ourselves from the world, the greater the impetus and obligation to care for the land, the waters, the trees, or the people- kahkiyo ni wakomaganak. Wisdom, as a broadened sense of connection that supports good living, is seen as a product of the awareness of spirit and the cultivation of that experience through embodiment. This type of wisdom aligns with and is perhaps mutually supportive of the wisdom of knowing oneself, the wisdom of sharing oneself with others, and the wisdom that accompanies the expansion of perspective. All serve a sense of connection and, as demonstrated by the children's ability to experience deep connection through embodied practices, spirit is likely less of a developmental achievement than it is a realization in support of being. The embodied,

experiential realization of interconnectedness supports the honouring of relationship by way of how one lives.

Joseph

The Voice of the Ancestors

Joseph's narratives from his 20's and early 30's emphasized a focus on filling himself with Cree cultural teachings and the stories of the Elders in order to establish a knowledge foundation from which to interact with the world. However, at some point the thinking mind (*mâmitonêyhta*) kicked in and Joseph realized that "I'm too much what I've believed to be the source of my whole existence" (Joseph, January 8, 2019). Instead of using *mâmitonêyhta* to create his own experiences, his *iyinisiwin* (knowledge based on experience) was only based on the experiences of those beautiful Elders and not his own. Although this served a purpose for a time, as Joseph was becoming a knowledge keeper and sought-after storyteller, "they weren't necessarily my own story, my own developed intelligence and wisdom based on insights...I was becoming too much the voice of the Elders" (Joseph, December 5, 2018). It was then that Joseph would need to distance himself for a time from "that which had actually saved my life" (Joseph, January 8, 2019) and pursue other forms of spiritual practice and other ways of knowing. He demonstrated non-attachment and facilitated opportunities to grow in perspective.

The process of stepping away from the Cree culture came at a time when Joseph was heading in the direction of becoming a ceremonialist, and something inside intuitively told him "that's a little too fast. I need to slow down" (Joseph, January 8, 2019). Having been in what he called a state of catharsis, where the physical intelligence was speaking loudly and telling him *pimpahta* (run) and *mêtawê* (play), this next phase of the journey came to be marked by developments in stillness, listening, and growth of trust

in himself. The practices he came to engage in to support this, which were not totally disparate from nehiyawiwinn, were introduced by people he met: “It’s like they passed that on to me and actually created who I am. Through how they were...I was ready to learn that and then it just came” (Joseph, January 8, 2018). Once again, the relational basis of knowing was reinforced, and the necessity of humility and self-awareness to open to what you do not yet know.

Buddhism, which was introduced by his friend Jon and practiced by Joseph for 15 or 16 years, became a source of insight and brought a lot of new information about “the human state and all the different areas like physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional” (Joseph, December 5, 2018). Because of similarities with the Cree culture, like the basis being in embodied practice, and the relatability of spiritual deities to that of the ‘ancestors’, he felt safe in the Buddhist practice. Joseph described a feeling of “becoming more whole” not simply due to the nature of the practice, but because he was able to relate the Buddhist practice (what he was doing/who he was being now) to what he’d experienced earlier. Therefore, it not only affirmed nehiyawiwinn, but also affirmed his connectedness to, and inclusion in, the larger human race *as* nehiyaw. The practices, which were subtly physical, necessitating awareness and consciousness, facilitated Joseph’s learning to be calm, quiet, and still; ways of being developed through embodied ways of knowing, such as mantra, meditation, and aligned posture; not dissimilar from nehiyawiwinn. This narrative congruence confirmed Joseph’s ability to *be* in relationship to both people and practices outside of the Cree culture, thus, expanding the scope of his connection and identity.

Joseph also met and created relationships with people who were exploring and working with other sources of guidance; people that were rooted more in the spiritual and the intuitive and were “somehow connected to their overself” (Joseph, December 5, 2018). He explained that in his early 20’s, when he was struggling with belonging and acceptance, having just gone through the residential school, he really felt like he did not belong in this world. “I felt like I was always in the other world and I wanted to live there” (Joseph, December 5, 2018). Later, as he began to work with transmediums, psychics, and other people from the more ethereal world, he started to tune into that other source of guidance- the spiritual force. Once again, he made the connection to his own prior experience, in that he communicated in this way with his mother as dream partners (pawâmiwin). nehiyawiwîn, being a spirit-based culture, supports this form of “intuitive connection to another world,” but through what they call “ancestors” (Joseph, December 5, 2021). This other world and this other way of knowing through intuition and listening, was again, like Buddhist practice, far from exclusive. Joseph, as he stated, went from being a listener of the Elders, to a listener of some other form of communication and spiritual guidance. By way of learning from these people who could “make sense of the world not just from the physical but also from beyond, the spiritual” (Joseph, January 8, 2019), insights would begin to reveal themselves; such as his gifts as a hands on healer and his potential to be informed by spirit to assist people on their own journey. Therefore, eventually the value of the spiritual realm, not as a means of escape from the world, was recognized; it was a source of guidance and broadened connection in support of ways of doing as an embodied human being.

Joseph's stepping away from the Cree culture was an act of letting go, self-trust, and a quest to grow in both *mâmitonêyhta* and *iyinisiwin*. It opened up a process whereby Joseph became "re-creational" (Joseph, December 5, 2018) in order to make sense of where he had come from. He discovered the interwoven nature of the stories he had been living by with those that he intuitively was engaged in living. Therefore, his ability to relate as *nehiyaw* with his new experiences expanded his scope of relationship in a way that was inclusive of his Cree origins and further affirmed his broader human identity. Joseph's statement, "Wisdom comes from knowing your own story, and knowing who you are" (Joseph, December 5, 2018) is salient in the consideration of the above narratives. The making of the Cree stories he received 'his own' came by way of their emergence and integration in his own acts of living; embodied intelligence based on his own experience. "I can use those words now that the old people said, but they're all based on my own personal journey" (Joseph, December 5, 2018). Wisdom can, therefore, both be seen in the broadening of perspective through openness to experience and guidance from others, and in the awareness of how your story can always be enhanced by further growth in experiential intelligence (*being*).

Your Daily Walk

Joseph's stories illustrate an ongoing process of healing and self-discovery following residential school. He stated that this journey of "always trying to figure things out" is difficult to always be in and "you wonder when it's going to be over. When is life going to begin?" (Joseph, December 5, 2018). However, rather than this process come to some type of resolution, developed self-awareness and mindfulness are put into practice

as a means to fully embody oneself in the world while still working on one's dysfunctions.

But that is the LIFE! First you got the bullshit (laughs). And then you can live, or at least understand who you are as a physical, as a cellular being, as a spiritual being, as an emotional being. All these things, and you kind of reach that point, you reach that place of awareness, and that becomes the work, I guess, onward. Recognize that this is who I am, and this is what needs to be done. And you DO it, whatever needs to be done. (Joseph, December 5, 2018)

True to his Cree way of 'doing' to learn, Joseph emphasized the simplicity, not to be confused with 'ease', of responding to one's deficiencies through a lived practice of self-integration. This practice of living by "the mind, the heart, and the body" (Joseph, December 5, 2018) is the essence of self-realization, according to Joseph, and when embodied, the experience of a true state of being is felt and known. It is from this place that self-trust is cultivated and the opportunity for deep connection with others, who are also embodied in truth, is made possible.

Joseph stated that it is not easy to be a wise person, for one who functions with a degree of attention is awake to both their strengths and their dysfunction. However, by remaining interested in the alignment of mind, heart, and body, mistakes and errors in judgement can be recognized as opportunities for self-adjustment without disintegration. You are reminded through "your daily walk" (Joseph, December 5, 2018), by your actions, of what your demons are and perhaps why you do the things that you do. There's a source to the dysfunctions, and "you can work on those because they are coming from a deeper place within your body" (Joseph, December 5, 2018). He recognized the source of

information that emerges from the body through living, and the value in attending to those manifestations through the observational quality of *mâmitonêyhta*. “You weren’t given the mind for the sake of thinking. You were given the mind for the sake of watching where you go, watching what you say, and watching what you think.” (Joseph, December 5, 2018). This broadens the notion of *mâmitonêyhta* from simply thinking before you act, or discernment, to an awareness that permeates and is observant of actions. The quality of mind is one of clarity that allows for the witnessing of how one is being. It is from this place one can embody a truer and more aligned way of living.

Joseph’s stories revealed several acts of embodiment that were fundamental to his growth in self-knowing, as well as to his growth in independence and integration of diverse perspectives. From these experiences, he recognized the necessity of *feeling* in order to be embodied: “if you can’t feel the energy around you, there’s a problem with that...If you can’t feel it, to me that’s not being embodied. Then you’re not living with the truth” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). Physical practices like yoga, Buddhism, and Cree cultural ceremonies facilitate embodiment, said Joseph, as the sensorial nature of the practice immediately calls out to the feeling aspect of our awareness. Within these practices is the opportunity to attune to sensitivity, witness being, and engage in conscious action; they are *embodied practices* that demand conscious attention. Joseph said that when that level of heightened conscious awareness is present in everything that you do, you can reach the point of self-actualization or awakening. “In Cree, *nehiyawewin*, it’s *pimâtisiwin*. This is the life force. It’s all encompassing. *Pimâtisiwin* is your whole existence. The world around you. Your daily life” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). To be in this awakened state, through present awareness, is to realize your connection to

life and all that it moves in and through; active engagement with the world both facilitates and honours that connection. “When you feel that then, the truth of who you are is in that awareness” (Joseph, January 8, 2019); you are *being* in truth.

According to Joseph, “When you’re living in that place of embodiment, you’re living within a true state of being” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). It is from this place, which has been cultivated by the observational aspect of *mâmitonêyhta*, that the ability to detect untruth, discord, and misalignment in others is rooted. This ability to discern, also an aspect of *mâmitonêyhta*, has been strengthened by the commitment to a lived awareness that incorporates the wisdom of feeling. Trust in *feeling* has been cultivated through the honest watching of oneself and the increasingly aligned, responsive actions in the course of living; you trust your feelings because you trust yourself. Thus, you become less emotionally impacted by those who are not in their truth, who are not embodied, because “you know... because you know yourself” (Joseph, January 8, 2019). The energy of someone in that “complete state of knowing and being” (Joseph, January 8, 2019) is imbibed with truth and, therefore, carries with it the vulnerability and the opportunity for real connection. This degree of openness welcomes the truth of others and inhabits the truth of all existence- *pimâtisiwin*.

Joseph emphasized that this heightened degree of awareness and embodiment are processional and require one to move and to travel about (*papâmaciho*)- to engage with the world. The stories of his journey, the movement and orientation within the Cree culture, and the explorative quest out into the world, hold both a searching out and a finding out. The journey, which holds moments of falling down and getting up, calls out to the light of awareness and reveals the truth of our being across time. Guided by

embodied practices of observation, feeling, and movement, Joseph learned to attend to life with openness and self-trust, and a listening and watching with the mind, heart, and body. The wisdom of that integrated awareness has allowed Joseph insight into pimâtisiwin, as well as his own, expansive and connected nature.

Monica

The Art of Receptivity

Monica, through her journey with kidney disease, demonstrated the ability to confront major challenges with a perspective that is driven by an impetus to help others; to embrace the teachings of the experience and in turn share them through her gifts (as was seen in Chapter 4). However, in addition to childhood narratives that emphasize never giving up, it is important to understand the source and development of resilience within such major life challenges. The stories of Monica once again illustrate the importance of humility in support of growth. As a familial teaching, but also as a life teaching that can be thrust upon you in experience, she revealed that humility allows for the acceptance of support from others. Resilience is shown to be nested in this relational care, particularly in those times “when you’re so overwhelmed by everything that’s happening to you, that just one thing will drive you over the edge” (Monica, February 26, 2019). The journey with kidney disease further facilitated the transformation of perspective and being, as Monica’s inner reflection is necessitated in the quest for “balance” (Monica, February 26, 2019). The process fostered vulnerability, relatedness, self-reflection, and insight.

Monica believes that there are different kinds of wisdom, and without valuing one over the other, she recognizes that “different people bring different gifts, they’re that way for a reason” (Monica, February 26, 2019). She draws on the idea of the medicine wheel

to illustrate that the “ultimate in terms of seeking wisdom” (Monica, February 26, 2019) is the attempt to have balance and good health in those different quadrants of your life—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Chronic disease, she illustrated, is an optimal, though difficult, situation where this practice can be undertaken because the disease affects all four areas of your being. Furthermore, the quadrants interact and influence each other. Monica understands this quest for balance as requiring both individual responsibility and external support: “So I feel like as long as I’m doing my part. If I can [try to] keep myself balanced mentally, spiritually, physically, emotionally. And you know, I fall apart. Everybody does. But when you do fall apart, you don’t have to suffer by yourself. There’s always somebody there to help you” (Monica, March 6, 2019). The experience of wisdom, in this case within the quest for balance, is again interactive, imbued with the support of others, and inclusive of all aspects of being.

Despite Monica having experienced humility as a familial teaching, she is also strong-willed and self-directed, and admits that her challenge “has always been to ask for help because I’m a very independent person” (Monica, March 6, 2016). The extremity of the kidney disease provided its own lesson in humility in that once you have done “the very best you can to help yourself with what you know how to do” (Monica, March 6, 2019), you must become vulnerable and reach out for support. “Because if you have humility you will ask for help when you need it. You’ll set your pride aside and say, ‘Hey, I can’t do this alone’” (Monica, February 26, 2019). The calling on family or friends for help is not only an act of humility, but also an act of wisdom; it allows others to share their gifts with you by way of your vulnerability and their generosity. The wisdom is emergent in the act of relationship amidst the dissolution of the ego boundaries of the self

and the invitation to the other. This realization enhances the understanding of resilience beyond that of some type of individual power of will. Resilience, rather, is a collective achievement rooted in teachings/experiences of humility that facilitate receptivity, and in the availability of sound guidance and support. Thus, gratitude becomes a primary correlate of resilience, in that you are thankful to be able to receive help and that it's available to you. Monica humbly recognizes that not everyone has that good fortune, as her Elder Jane says, 'If you're feeling sorry for yourself and you're feeling hard done by, you go and you find somebody to help' (Monica, March 6, 2019). Getting this perspective, in support of gratitude, supports your own and others' resilience.

Monica's journey with kidney disease, due to the physical and mental effects, but also, the emotional and spiritual magnitude of the experience, has also facilitated a broadening of perspective through introspection. Monica stated, "Sometimes you have to go inward to be able to reach that place of understanding. And so, it's almost like Creator stopped me in my tracks. Because before I got kidney disease, I was going a thousand miles an hour" (Monica, March 6, 2019). She had been extremely active in the community and was very much embodying her core stories to live by through the roles she was carrying out. However, she readily admits that "one of the things that I didn't do enough of was reflection" (Monica, March 6, 2019). Monica, in reference to the moss bag teachings, states that "You have to be still in order to learn sometimes" (Monica, February 26, 2019), and kidney disease very much forced her into that stillness.

Prior to kidney disease, Monica stated that she did not originally have the awareness of her need to shut everything off and "find peace within myself and that inner voice" (Monica, March 6, 2016). As she saw her ability to vocalize things lessen at times,

her primary mode of processing through external communication was supplemented by inner reflection and journaling. The more internally oriented mode of knowing was instrumental in her recognition of purpose (as discussed in Chapter 4), as well as in addressing a critical question with respect to the disease: “So, you have to reflect on do you wanna stay alive? What is it you’re willing to do to stay alive?” (Monica, March 6, 2019). Monica would ultimately come to answer this question when a massage therapist told her, “you really need to feel what’s in your body” (Monica, March 6, 2016). When Monica ceased to dissociate from the pain of the body, she befriended the language of embodied experience; a language seamlessly inclusive of mind/body and inner/outer. It is the intuitive knowing of the self in its totality, and the place from which decision is certain. “I want to be here” (Monica, March 6, 2016), she answered.

Monica’s stories of her experience with kidney disease illuminate a wisdom of vulnerability. Humility and openness cultivate the receptivity for resilience and the courage to inhabit her body in the midst of pain and suffering. And though she seeks balance through her own volition and purpose, she also comes to understand the role of others as integral to this process. In Chapter 4 she demonstrated the sharing of this experience with others as a means of purpose and support; here, her invitation for help creates the space for others’ gifts and wisdom to find meaning in experience. “Being intuitive and being balanced and being resilient are all different forms of wisdom, but they also belong together. Because if you have humility you will ask for help when you need it” (Monica, February 26, 2019). Guided by the intuitive insight of embodied experience, Monica seeks balance (wisdom) through relationship and the lived experience of *being* with and helped by others.

A Spirit Journey

Monica, throughout the sharing of her stories, expressed the significance of the spiritual element in the human journey. Congruent with the stories she lives by, she shares that spirit is best served and developed in support of others in fulfilment of purpose; it is experienced and honoured through human connections and is also supported by the centredness that accompanies the quest for balance. She recognized a belief in the “everlasting life for your spirit” (Monica, January 29, 2019), and utilizes this belief to reinforce her earthly responsibilities, and as a source to draw upon for strength and guidance. Rather than something relegated as beyond the body, Monica’s story emphasized that although the spirit extends through time and the body does not, they are mutually supportive of each other during this human embodiment. Wisdom is cultivated in the strengthening of connection to others, and the practical consequences of making choices that embody spirit are both immediate and transcendent.

Monica described an experience of hearing a Hopi Elder by the name of Thomas Banyacya speak at World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education in 1987 and share a perspective on the nature of the spiritual journey; a perspective she also shares. In his lecture he drew two lines representing possibilities for the trajectory of life: one ascending at an angle and, the other, a horizontal line. He notes that our bodies have a limited time, and the horizontal line, or the “flatline” (Monica, January 29, 2019), is inhabited by people who value things more than people and think of themselves rather than others. The ascending line is the spiritual journey, and this is the line of people who care about others, value human beings, and honour the sacredness of human connection. “As human beings we always have a choice” (Monica, January 29, 2019), he said.

Monica emphasized that we make choices on a daily basis that determine what, inside ourselves, is being fed. She recognized the opportunity for consciousness raising when awareness encompasses the choices we make; in the honouring of our human connections and our deeper purposes do we affirm and strengthen our spirituality. Furthermore, as a practice, it facilitates the process of ego-decentering, demonstrates compassion, and regulates our actions. Commitment to the spiritual path is far from exclusively ethereal; it is in the embodied wisdom of the everyday that spirituality is grown and experienced.

In addition to the role of human connection in the experience and development of spirit, Monica identifies that connection to the land and nature is instrumental to this intuitive wisdom. She recognized that there are “times in our lives when we're spiritually lead and times when we're not as in tune,” and as we get caught up in financial matters and material things we can “forget sometimes that we're spirit beings” (Monica, February 26, 2019). Retreats into nature, which pull you away from distraction, facilitate a peace with the earth, a peace within yourself, and a peace with your surroundings, suggested Monica. There is a harmony and a connection that is inherently existent and is revealed simply by creating the opportunity for it and allowing awareness to be absorbed in it. Monica told a story of an Elders' gathering and the profound affect the experience held. Gerald, one of the organizers and Director of the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP), said, “I've seen a lot of Elders speak in the city, in buildings. But I have never seen them as powerful as they are here. When they're here on the land” (Monica, February 26, 2019). She described how the embodied practices of fishing daily, scraping and tanning hide, and living the traditional lifestyle were acts of connection that contributed to creating that profound “element of spirituality that changed the whole

gathering” (Monica, February 26, 2019). Acts and experiences in and with nature are not only practical in that they serve to strengthen spirituality and expand our scope of awareness towards the universal, but also foster a tuning in with the natural environment that is conducive to our protecting it. Monica suggested that we must seek out and cultivate those experiences in the same way that we seek out those human connections on the spiritual journey. There is, similarly, the opportunity for elevating our consciousness in our interactions with the environment to embody respect, care, and responsibility. A spiritual orientation supports these embodied, earthly actions and again our spirit is reciprocally touched and enhanced by this lived wisdom.

In the same way that Monica demonstrated humility in asking for help and support amidst her own challenges, she also utilized prayer as a way to nurture herself spiritually. Spirituality is nurtured through prayer as a practice in which we ask for things for others, which reminds us we are not just here for ourselves and ask for guidance from our ancestors who have passed. She described the elevated consciousness and quality of energy field of an Elder, Edward, who had developed himself spiritually up to the time of his passing: “By the time Edward was dying, just before he passed into the spirit world...you could see his aura. It was like, he’s done what he came here to do and now he’s on the other side and he’s gonna help from there” (Monica, January 29, 2019). Monica’s understanding of the importance of fulfilment of purpose and strengthening of oneself spiritually expands the importance of our spiritual evolution beyond our ability to help others when we are embodied beings; spiritual growth while an embodied being prepares us for continued acts of guidance and support when we, as spirit beings, move on from the vessel of the body. She noted that though this is “considered supernatural by

some, it's actually part of natural teachings" (Monica, January 29, 2019) and is further impetus for growth in the wisdom of spirit in support of others as a responsibility.

Monica's understanding of the spiritual, though also inclusive of the transcendent element of prayer and connection to ancestors who have passed, is rooted in the value that it serves in our human embodiment. By consciously engaging in acts that enhance human and earthly connections and that align with the sharing of our gifts and purpose, we honour and experience spirit. It is part of the process of knowing oneself through interaction with the world, and the awareness of your spirit allows access to an "inner knowing" (Monica, March 6, 2019) as intuition. For Monica there is "an inextricable connection" between the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intuitive and as we "try to be ourselves as much as we can" (Monica, March 6, 2019), the more trust is cultivated to know and be intuitively; it is wisdom of *being* felt through and as spirit.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 illustrated the necessity of a foundational sense of self, rooted in familial and cultural narratives, so as to have the ability to reach out into the world, relate, and embody oneself in support of others. In this chapter, the narratives demonstrated how both confidence and humility allowed for the opening up to others and to experiences in such a way that was transformational to perspective and self-understanding. The expansion of perspective, by way of the willingness to be helped by others and to attune to the lived body, emphasized the importance of receptivity and feeling in concert with action. This act of vulnerability, embraced through embodied experiences and practices, facilitated the felt realization of expanded and deepened connection with other people, as well as to the broader, non-human world. The allowance to be touched by both others and by the natural environment facilitated an awareness of spirit that informs and directs one's way of being with and through the world. The participants revealed that spirituality is necessarily lived, and that the awareness of the vast web of connection in which they reside is imbued with practicality; the wisdom of the spirit is embodied, intuitive and fundamental to the consciousness raising that creates better acts of living. The honouring of spirit is continuously informed by the humble engagement in and watching of experience so as to transcend the fixed notion of self to the expanse of an infinitely connected being.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION: EMBODIED WISDOM

This narrative inquiry was guided by a curiosity around the idea of wisdom and the practices or experiences that might support its development from the perspective of three Métis individuals. As I listened to the stories of the three participants, Cort, Joseph, and Monica, and continued to inquire into them over time, it became abundantly clear that I was witnessing the sharing of life stories that were imbued with developed perspective. In honouring the ontological position of narrative inquiry, and the essential Deweyan notion that experience is continuous, it was essential that wisdom was sought to be understood across varying times and contexts, within and across the participants' stream of experience (Clandinin, 2013, p.17). The stories of the participants aligned with this approach in that in no way was wisdom expressed as an achievement or a destination (nor did any of them claim to possess it!). Rather, wisdom was experienced at varying points in time, in different relationships and in different places. The continuity of those relational experiences, narratively expressed, revealed threads of understanding and congruence that facilitated insight to different manifestations of wisdom along the participants' life journeys. Narrative inquiry, as a methodology, necessarily provided the opportunity to make meaning from these diverse experiences as it granted insight to the "internal and existential whole that is ultimately of interest" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 414). Dewey's notion of embodiment, which is fundamental to his theory of experience, allowed for a comprehensive understanding of these stories lived and told, for it is through the lived body that wisdom is seen to exist and be experienced through acts of living.

Chapters 4 and 5 laid out four central elements in the process of the development of wisdom in the case of the participants- the wisdom of having foundational stories to live by (identity), the wisdom of sharing one's story in support of others and affirmation of self, the wisdom of expanding one's story through broadened perspectives, and the wisdom of transcending finite notions of self through awareness of spirit. Although it is tempting to view these elements along a linear progression, wherein one type of wisdom makes possible the next developmental stage, it would be an oversimplification. There is certainly a continuity of experience, wherein earlier wisdom experiences influence the nature of future experiences of wisdom that come to follow. However, it must be kept in mind that the telling of these life stories, which is happening in a particular here and now, allows for the perspective of time and the influence of subsequent experiences to impact the understanding and tellings of those that preceded them. There is a circularity in the interaction of these wisdom stories when it comes to composing life narratives, understood as stories to live by. Aligned with the ontological basis in continuity, within the "stream of experience" (Clandinin, 2013) there is always the possibility of renewed understandings and, therefore, the opportunity for wisdom experiences to deepen and inform one another.

Although the participants have varying life experiences and stories, common narrative threads within the stories of Cort, Joseph, and Monica illuminate understandings related to the development of wisdom across the lived experiences of these three Métis individuals. These understandings, though not prescriptive, open up possibilities for educational practices in both formal and informal contexts, as well as for the field of wisdom research. The threads, once again, do not exist in isolation and are

necessarily interrelated. Life challenges central to identity, humility, embodiment, transcendence, and storytelling provide salient points of inquiry and insights into life experiences that foster wisdom in ways that deepen and broaden relationship and connection in support of being. Through a journeying inward, outward, forward, and back (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) into the stories of the participants and into the research experience itself, the narrative threads that follow emerged relationally and illuminate possibilities for the transformation of experience and the continual creation of new stories to live by.

Life Challenges

Previous wisdom researchers have posited that challenging life experiences and crises in peoples' lives broaden perspectives and foster wisdom (Ardelt, 2005; Bluck & Glück, 2005; Glück & Bluck, 2014). Yet, limited focus has been placed on the nature of those challenges and the way in which those challenging experiences are transformed into wisdom. The experiences of Cort, Monica, and Joseph, provided insight into difficult life situations the participants faced both in childhood and later in life. The nature of the methodology, which "allows for the intimate and in-depth study of individuals' experiences over time and in context" (Clandinin & Caine, 2013, p. 166), facilitated an understanding of not only the challenges themselves, but the way in which they were overcome and how they impacted perspectives of self.

Knowing Who You Are

Cort's experiences in early childhood were wrought with the dysfunctional behaviour of his mother, who had been institutionalized, and the racism he faced both in and outside of school because of his Indigeneity. Both these experiences destabilized sense of self, and it was through the support of his grandmother that he was able to

become connected and develop a sound identity in response. ‘Standing on the stories of his grandmother’ grounded him in his understanding of being Métis, what that meant, and instilled the values of humility, generosity, and resilience in the stories he lived by.

Monica, as a child, faced the death of her mother, being moved with her siblings to a German community in Ontario where she encountered racism, and other non-disclosed traumatic events. Through the support of her family, particularly her older sibling Jenny, family teachings of resilience, kindness, communication, and humility were maintained, and fostered an identity rooted in the familial narratives that mediate adversity. Joseph faced a similar challenge to his identity, though at an older age and in the absence of any family relationships. Following the destructive effects of residential school, he was left completely disconnected from family and culture and had no sense of self; he had nothing with which to relate to. It was through the stories of the Elders and immersion into the Cree culture that he regained a sense of self from which to interact with the word and begin his process of healing.

The facing of these challenges was supported by interaction with others who facilitated the integration of familial and cultural narratives, in the case of Cort and Monica, and cultural narratives, in the case of Joseph. These stories to live by, and their interwoven valued ways of being, were fundamental to the participants’ transformation of these early life challenges, and to their way of living throughout their life. The experiences supported their understanding of identity as relationally constituted, and that *help from others* is essential when facing life challenges that threaten one’s sense of self. It is in this relationship of support that wisdom is shared with and felt by the participants through grounding in connection to others and is affirmational of self.

Perspective

Later experiences revealed a similar means by which challenging life experiences were resolved and the learning which arose through them. Cort addressed the dysfunction in his relationship with his mother by attending Alcoholics Anonymous, and through the support of his sponsor was able to gain access to what ‘he didn’t know he didn’t know.’ The result was the transformation of perspective in how he saw and understood himself. Joseph, on his healing journey in trying to make sense of where he’d come from and the trauma he experienced, was met with the support of musicians, artists, and intuitives that reinforced both who he was as a Cree man and human being. Through these “other teachers who were on the path of knowing and searching” (Joseph, January 8, 2019), he was exposed to knowledge and perspectives that helped him make meaning of his own experiences and how he fit in the world. Monica’s battle with kidney disease necessitated the reaching for help from others because she simply could not do it alone. As a person who was quick to give help, but slower to ask for it, Monica had her humility strengthened, and experienced the wisdom and connection that accompanies the vulnerability of being open to receive.

Throughout these particular challenges, sense of self remains central to the experience undergone, and the relational necessity for furthering self-understanding is made clear. *Help from others* through the brutal honesty of Cort’s sponsor, the comradery and encouragement of Joseph’s friends on the path, and the hands-on and emotional support of Monica’s friends and family, unveiled new perspectives in support of self-knowledge. Cort was made aware of his own ways of being that he was unconscious to, Joseph experienced joy, belonging and affirmation, and Monica realized the power of

receiving. Challenging situations, once threatening to the self, were transformed into self-knowledge through mutually affirming relationship. Resilience, a quality demonstrated and valued by all three participants, is often thought of as an individual characteristic. However, these stories suggest that resilience is influenced by both the openness to being supported and the availability of quality support around you. This is an important consideration when exploring how a wise person might confront and evolve from challenges. For these participants, humility allowed the acceptance of support and guidance from others and opened the possibility of learning about oneself through the situation and the deepening of relationship with those who supported it.

Humility

Intellectual humility, or the recognition of the limits of one's knowledge, has been a primary component in the definition of wisdom across several different wisdom-related studies (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Jest & Vahia, 2008; Levitt 1999; Yang, 2001). As was seen in the stories of the participants, humility was integral to their experiences of wisdom. For Cort and Monica, humility was taught as a familial/cultural value to be practiced. According to Cort, the Elders teach us about our humility and that "when it's about lifelong learning, I always have something to learn so that I can move forward in a good way" (Cort, January 10, 2019). Similarly, Monica was taught and frequently reminded of the principle of e-kanawêhtamâsawîn- "don't think you're better than anybody else" (Monica, January 29, 2019). Their stories demonstrated an ability to exhibit humility and approach the perspectives of others and diverse experiences with an openness and receptivity that was conducive to learning. In addition to embodying familial teachings and the *practice of* humility, Monica said that sometimes "you're

basically gonna get taught humility. You're gonna get kicked on your ass" (Monica, January 29, 2019). Major life challenges experienced by all the participants demanded and strengthened the humility necessary to both ask for help from others and consider outside perspectives. The role of humility in the development of wisdom cannot be understated; it is fundamental to the continued engagement on the path of life learning, is necessary for confronting life challenges in ways that illicit support when needed and *is* the confidence to engage in relationships and experiences with the openness that allows for the possibility of transcending one's previously held perspectives, including of oneself.

Embodiment

Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, which provides the theoretical foundations of narrative inquiry (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013), allows for the study of experience that acknowledges "the embodiment of the person in the world" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). This embodiment, from a Deweyan perspective, posits a lived body that exists within and as an interpenetrating part of the environment. "The environment with which a human transacts is not only comprised by nature as we tend to think of it: the social and cultural dimensions of environments also have particularly powerful roles in the process of embodiment" (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2013, p. 22). Thus, through interactions, implicitly active and felt, we simultaneously shape and are shaped by relationships between ourselves and the environmental whole— people, places, and things. This shared and co-constituted nature of experience aligns with the findings from the inquiry that suggest that wisdom emerges and is felt in relationship, and that enhanced connectivity through action in the world is the essence of wisdom. Wisdom is a shared experience, facilitated by the actions that offer ourselves to others, as well as open us to receive;

ultimately, it is the dissolution of the ego boundaries and the felt connectivity resonating as spirit. Our practice both supports this realization and is supported by those moments when we are fortunate enough to experience it.

Action

The stories to live by that the participants came to know by way of familial and cultural narratives, both told and lived, were necessarily integrated through action in the world. The values learned through experiences that were foundational to identity came to be expressed through modes of action that aligned with their own experiences of coming to know. Guided by principles of generosity, humility, and care, the participants shared their stories with others as a means of support, connection, and mutual affirmation.

Monica, true to her understanding of her cultural roots and family experiences, embraced her role as an interpreter and advocate, and fostered understanding between people and of their own challenging experiences. She honours her gift of communication and the perspectives gained through her own experiences to help others. In the case of Cort, the value of being connected and affirmed through experiences alongside his grandmother is carried forward within his role as an educator. Through his ability to relate to the experiences of the students by way of his own story, and by offering alternative ways of knowing that foster connection, Cort grounds and connects the students in the same way that he had come to know. Joseph's particularly embodied way of coming to know through song, story, and ceremony provided the most effective medium from which to communicate his own story. Echoing his own journey to self-understanding, he offers this experience to all types of people in support of felt experiences of joy and community.

The benevolent actions of the participants, anchored in their stories to live by, furthered

connection with others and affirmed, and further formed, their sense of self as a way of being.

Benevolence, an oft cited component of wisdom (Ardelt, 1997; Jeste & Vahia, 2008; Sternberg, 1998; Takashi & Overton, 2002; Yang, 2001), embedded in action makes possible the shared experience of wisdom. The act of *helping others* supports resilience and fosters insight into the connected and relational nature of the self for all parties involved; it gives meaning and purpose to the challenging experiences undergone by relating those stories with the experiences of others. It is mutually beneficial. As Dewey (as cited in Grean, 1984) stated: “the kind of self which is formed through action which is faithful to relations with others will be a fuller and broader self than one which is cultivated in isolation from or in opposition to the purposes or needs of others” (p. 283). In consideration of *practical wisdom*, it is perhaps in the context of helping others that the practicality of wisdom is most significantly realized. Quite simply, self-knowledge gained through relationally understood experience, when shared with others, supports resilience and relational becoming; simultaneously, it integrates and affirms one’s own stories to live by through embodiment. This act of embodiment, then, is both “generative and expressive” (Harrison, 1999, p. 504)– the living of oneself in the world births possibilities for connection, transformation of experience, and generation of meaning. As Aldrich and Cutchin (2013) stated, “Embodiment is always a type of collective process because of the communal and social aspects involved. The more integrated into communal life one becomes, the better the potential for growth. In turn, enhanced individuals promote enhancements in the community” (p. 22). Embodied wisdom, therefore, is lived wisdom shared in relationship.

Feeling

As was previously recognized, receptivity and openness to the support and perspectives of others unlocked the possibility of enhanced self-understanding, expansion of perspective, and greater connectivity. This aligned with previous wisdom research that incorporated consideration of other's perspectives and broader contexts into an understanding of wisdom (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Glück, Bluck et. al, 2005; Jeste et. al, 2010; Webster, 20003). In addition to interactions with others, experiences had with and through the body provided participants with the same opportunity for learning; most notably, experiences that resonated with and as feeling called out to their attention and awareness. These types of experiences, had amidst new ways of knowing, were seen in the stories of the participants through practices that encouraged both trust in feeling and growth in intuition. The embodied wisdom of intuition, self-awareness, and perspective was experienced.

Joseph's journey to develop his intelligence based on his own experiences in the world, intuitively led him to embodied practices that simultaneously affirmed his Cree ways of knowing and being, while exposing their interwoven nature with different cultural approaches. Experiences in Buddhism and working with intuitives and psychic phenomena fostered the feeling aspect of awareness, exercised his own discernment within experience, and integrated his own stories through conscious acts of embodiment rooted in listening. In Cort's stories, he overcomes "stubbornness of mind" through the ceremony of the sweat lodge, which immediately holds the felt experience of deepened relationships with people and the natural world that he had not known before. Similar to the practice of smudging, the embodied, communal practices connected storied elements

of the ceremony with the physical, sensorial experience to facilitate new understandings and perspectives primarily felt and intuited. Women of the Rock, during her struggle with kidney disease and attempt to seek the balance of her medicine wheel, needed to turn to her inner voice and the embrace of stillness. Ultimately, insight and knowing was experienced intuitively when she opened herself to the voice of the body, her own embodied knowing, which revealed what needed to be done.

Action and Feeling

In order to demonstrate ways of embodiment, experiences that were notably action or feeling oriented were provided above; yet action and feeling are not abstracted from each other in lived experience. “Experience like breathing is a rhythm of intakings and outgivings” (Dewey, 1934, p. 54). For example, the participants’ embodiment of stories to live by through actions that support the well-being of others required the felt interaction to achieve the significance of the experience. Similarly, the felt and embodied knowing that accompanied receptivity first required the active engagement in experience. As Garrison (1997) stated, “the primordial qualitative whole is grasped immediately and intuitively through action and feeling” (p.105); action plunges one into the subject-matter and feeling informs answering activity in response to the totality of the situation sensed (Dewey, 1934). Feeling, therefore, is essential to subsequent action. “An experience has a pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alteration but consists of them in relationship...This relationship is what gives meaning” (Dewey, 1934, p. 44). These embodied experiences, so expressive and informative of one’s sense of self, required humility and vulnerability; and, ultimately, trust in the meaning intuitively felt

and known. Wisdom is embodiment in its truest form, and flowers in authentic relationship.

Spirit

Cort, Joseph, and Monica offered stories that gave insight into experiences of an ever-expanding web of relationship that was simultaneously individuality felt and collectively encompassed. They realized boundary-less relationship with life itself, resonating with and as *spirit*. These experiences, had with other people and one's natural environment, resemble Dewey's (1934) understanding of aesthetic experience and contain a "qualitative wholeness and unity of human experience" (Shea as cited in Grean, 1984, p. 285). Dewey (1934) explained the type of religious feeling that can accompany experiences of this intensity: "We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves" (Dewey, 1934, p. 195). The participants' understanding of deepened connectivity and expanded sense of self were cultivated by embodied practices supporting human connection and interaction with the environment. Furthermore, enhanced awareness of oneself and consciousness raising through their ongoing interactions with the world were practical means by which to experience and honour spirit.

Monica spoke to the necessity of the spiritual element on the human journey and illustrated that the choice to be on that path is made daily by honouring one's purpose and gifts (spirit) within the sacredness of human connection. Experiences in nature were shown to serve as reminders of our spiritual essence, expand our scope of awareness to include the non-human, and foster a sense of responsibility as caregivers of the earth. Raising one's consciousness through intentional embodiment resonates with and

strengthens spirit. Cort described that spirit is felt in connection to things- personal relationships, community, and nature. He echoed the importance of self-knowledge in that the more he knows himself, the more he can feed his spirit. Thus, through ever deepening understandings of his relational self and the felt realization of kahkiyo ni wakomaganak through relationships with people, on the land, and in ceremony, the more able he is to cultivate that resonance of spirit through embodied actions of being.

Similarly, Joseph emphasizes the importance of awareness in our daily walk. Living in truth is an act of embodiment rooted in the practice of heightening conscious observation and recognizing “that this is who I am and this is what needs to be done” (Joseph, December 5, 2019). When this level of awareness permeates everything one does, the experiences is of pimâtisiwin- the all-encompassing life force. It is the purity of connection realized through the honest expression and watching of the mind and body; it is truth in being.

Spiritual wisdom can perhaps be best understood as the felt realization of ultimate connectivity through embodiment and the honouring of that connectivity through embodiment. The participants’ experiences resembled the transcendental wisdom of intuitive knowing and cosmic unity (Curnow, 2011; Swartz, 2011; Trowbridge, 2011), and grant insights into the practical ways in which it comes about and what it serves. As in their other wisdom experiences, there is an interaction of doing and feeling, a merger of awareness and action, and a softening of the elements of experience into a qualitative whole. Like aesthetic experience, the experience holds a heightened vitality that “signifies active and alert commerce with the world” and “at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events” (Dewey, 1934, p.

19). This is demonstrative of a felt transcendence of an isolated self, made possible through the embodied actions and feelings that allow for the felt “continuity of the organism and the environment” (Alexander, 1987, p. 196). This transcendence of self towards that of enhanced relationality can, in fact, be understood in all of the wisdom experiences so far discussed. By offering one’s stories and gifts to the world and by opening oneself with receptivity to experience, connectivity and transcendence is practiced. Furthermore, it is indeed these practical actions, the wisdom of the everyday, that foster experiences of heightened realization of unity in all forms of relationship and affirm our spiritual walk. Thus, spirit can be seen both as the quality in which things are done and received, as well as the growth in connection that results. It is the feeling of wisdom shared along the path towards most fully embodying oneself.

Storytelling

For all the participants, storytelling was a primary mode in which their experiences were shared with others as an act of support. As Brunner (2004) indicated, “We seem to have no other way of describing “lived time” save in the form of narrative” (p. 692). This act of engaging in story is embodied by both the teller and the listener, and, as Cort indicated, it offers the opportunity for connection and affirmation,

And so, when I share my stories with you, it isn't just that you're hearing them. You're experiencing them. So again, when I tell you that we touch our spirits. I think that's what our stories do. Personal stories touch our spirits...it's those personal stories that build the relationship and make that connection happen. That bonding. I think that's probably why I tell those stories. Is just to make a connection. I want them to resonate with you, so I tell them. (Cort, January 10, 2019)

In addition to personal stories, Cort also addressed the impact of traditional stories in not only educating on familial values, but in making the connection to the broader culture of which you are invited to be a part. “It's part of your spirit. Again, it's still making that connection, but it's connecting not just you and I now...Our traditional stories are connecting all of us. All of us. That's its purpose, is for you to see yourself in the circle” (Cort, January 10, 2019).

Similarly, Monica, addressed the value in storytelling, both of traditional and personal stories, for the process of learning:

So storytelling can be a very powerful tool because it allows you to see yourself in that story. And then you think about that story and how might it apply to you.

And is there something that you need to learn from that? So, storytelling is a very important tool for teaching about self-reflection, self-awareness and self-growth.

(Monica, January 29, 2019)

In identifying self-reflection, self-awareness, and growth as learning outcomes of shared stories, Monica touches on facets of her own experiences of wisdom. Thus, storytelling is undoubtedly seen as pedagogical tool in the facilitation of wisdom through relationship with others; both as a means to establish the connective value of wisdom in support of identity, and to encourage the humble practices of awareness and reflection in a process of lifelong learning.

In addition to the value of storytelling for the listener, the sharing of one's stories over time opens possibilities for this act to be conducive to enhancing the perspectives and self-understandings of the teller. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized, “Telling stories of ourselves in the past leads to the possibility of retellings” (p. 60).

Therefore, the act of telling and retelling offers new possibilities for living, renewed and better stories to live by. Randall (2012) emphasized the significance in narratives for enhancing knowledge of the self, and that this understanding is essential in the development of and understanding of wisdom. Future research in the field of wisdom, particularly in cultural contexts where emphasis is placed on narrative as a tool for the sharing of wisdom, can benefit from the inquiry into the process by which self-narratives foster perspective and insights felt and experienced as wisdom.

Summary of Narrative Threads

The experiences of the participants were diverse yet illuminated common threads of educative value with respect to the experience of wisdom. Humility, as both a cultural teaching and a result of challenging life situations, provided the grounds for openness and the receptivity to others and experience. Guided by foundational familial and cultural narratives, the participants embodied themselves in the world in ways that resembled their own way of coming to know and brought to life the wisdom found in helping others by their ability to genuinely relate. Vulnerability, by way of humility and growing confidence through self-integration, allowed the continuing evolution of self-knowledge. Joseph, Cort, and Monica were impacted by the perspectives of others and through illuminating experiences that offered new ways of seeing, expanded ways of coming to know, and broadened forms of relationship. Embodied practices that were committed to the experience of sacred connection, to both the human and non-human, facilitated an awareness of spirit and a wakefulness to one's daily walk. Doing, feeling, and watching with an understanding of the contextual whole heightened the responsibility for one's way of being. An honouring of self is synonymous with honouring of all relationship; to do so means to share one's gifts, receive those of others, and refine one's actions in

alignment with the truth. Thus, wisdom is the practice of embodied connectivity on the human journey.

Methodological Contributions

Narrative inquiry as a methodology proved an invaluable approach to the study of wisdom. As wisdom is often believed to be the result of experience, narrative inquiry allowed the in-depth exploration of the types of experiences that might foster wisdom in and through time, allowing rich understandings of context, and the social and personal factors that shape and integrate those experiences. The narrative ontology which holds “that experiences are continuously interactive, resulting in changes in both people and the contexts with which they interact” (Dewey, 1938; 1981 in Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576) was reinforced by the nature of the participants’ stories and their interweaving and mutually supportive significance. Further, the epistemological commitment that “experience is knowledge for living” (Clandinin and Caine, 2000 as cited in Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576) was reflected in the participants own stories and was a derivative of the inquiry as a whole. The journey into the stories of Cort, Joseph, and Monica demonstrated the centrality of the stories we live by, and how identity understood in this way allows for the possibility of growth through the sharing of stories and the embodiment of stories through living. The fact that “thinking with stories is primarily thinking relationally” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30) suggests that the study of wisdom in this cultural context, wherein an emphasis on a relational way of knowing and being and on the use of stories was seen, aligned with the inquiry method. The study opens valuable questions for us as the readers as to our own stories Monica stated, we have the opportunity to see ourselves in stories, to reflect, and to grow with awareness. In

our interactions with these stories heard and inquired into lies the possibility of the experience of wisdom.

Personal Lessons

Clandinin (2013) stated that “No one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged” (p. 23). I can attest that to be true for myself. Having been witness to the stories of these dear Elders and sitting with them over time, I began to feel them touch me more and more. The ability to think with stories was a slow development, as I always had an aversion to the idea of a storied life, in that it seemed more confining than it did opportune. However, as the stories of the participants and my lived experience of our relationship gradually became a part of me, I started to understand my own stories in new ways. The narrative beginnings, which originally felt like a research formality, became imbued with meaning and revelation in consideration of the Elders stories. It did not stop there. I started to pry into familial narratives, sources of aversion to a solidified identity, my journeys into alternative ways of knowing, personal deficits, ways of being, gifts, and what it means to be Métis. All, as if encouraged with a gentle hand. I started to feel that wisdom was being shared with me.

In our first meeting, Cort told me that to get through my stubbornness of mind, to allow my perspectives to change with respect to my identity, it needs to happen in my heart, and not my head. Simply, it had to be felt. In the sharing of their stories with me, the Elders welcomed me into the circle and affirmed me. Through the exhibition of the qualities of humility, openness, generosity, and vulnerability they embodied a seemingly infinite strength in their way of being. In my relationships with each of Cort, Joseph, and Monica I experienced a resonance of spirit, and a feeling as if they were sharing some of that strength with me. Perhaps they were assisting in my resilience amidst my own

healing journey; maybe the connection enhanced my confidence to enter the unpredictable realm of feeling. Regardless, what has emerged is a commitment to honouring and inquiring into my foundational stories, a commitment to sharing my gifts freely, and a choice to practice *being* through my daily walk, receptive to the feedback of people and experiences on that path. Through the stories of the participants, I see much clearer now the Métis ways of being in my grandfather, and humbly recognize some of these in myself. His hard work, resilience, entrepreneurial spirit, resistance to government authority, and commitment to family were all lived stories I had the opportunity to experience alongside him for a time, and I am honoured to have witnessed them. I also gained meaningful insight regarding the courage it takes to hold within you and negotiate multiple perspectives and paradoxes. It is an emerging practice to keep open the opportunities for wisdom to emerge in the course of a day, and to explore and embody the truth of who I am with courage, confidence, and compassionate awareness. I am grateful that Monica, Joseph, and Cort allowed me to experience their stories, which in turn supported the understanding of my own.

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