

IDENTITY AND SOLIDARITY IN HYBRID SPACES:

NARRATIVES OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS IN SASKATCHEWAN AND GUATEMALA.

**A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon**

**By
Ruth Michelle Beveridge**

© Copyright Ruth Michelle Beveridge, June 2012. All rights reserved.

'I hereby grant to University of Saskatchewan and/or its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible, under the conditions specified below, my thesis, dissertation, or project report in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or for the duration of my copyright ownership. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis, dissertation or project report. I also reserve the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis, dissertation, or project report.

I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter that is included in my thesis, dissertation, or project report, allowing distribution as specified below. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as that approved by my advisory committee.'

ABSTRACT

The lives of ten Indigenous women political leaders are bound together with narratives of violence and healing, identity and citizenship, power and solidarity. Although they live in separate countries - the province of Saskatchewan in Canada, and the country of Guatemala in Central America – they share a similar collective history of colonial violence, assimilation and oppression. They are also connected through their work to assert themselves into political spaces that re-humanize and reclaim Indigenous land, rights and dignity.

This thesis explores the lives and ideas of these ten Indigenous women political leaders through their stories told in long interviews. Their ethnic identity *is* their political identity. They are grounded by their Indigenous worldview into which they re-insert notions of equality and women’s rights, reinvesting power and voice into the modern identity of an Indigenous woman. They lead by example, role-modeling to their families and communities a balance of “private” healing of self with the “public” challenges for self-determination to the state and dominant culture. They work in multiple and hybrid spaces, connecting local issues with international rights frameworks. The women’s stories also include non-Indigenous peoples, challenging us to understand the role we play in both the historical meta- narratives as well as the emerging narratives of solidarity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a collective endeavor that was only made possible through the support and patience of many people:

My advisor, Dr. Jim Handy, Dept. of History, who introduced me to Guatemala 12 years ago, and went beyond expectations to help me build a program that would reflect my interests. He gave me the space to work in my own way, while responding to my occasional flurry of phone calls with thoughtful questions that would set me onto a new path. Because of his guidance, this was an exceptional, and smooth, learning experience.

My committee: Dr. Bonita Beatty, Dept. of Native Studies; Dr. Kalowatie Deonandan, Dept. of Political Studies; and Dr. Pamela Downe, Dept. of Archeology and Anthropology, who supported me to follow the stories wherever they would lead me; and my external, Dr. Priscilla Settee, who offered me important advice and context before I even started writing my thesis. She, as well as Dr. Bonita Beatty, are also Indigenous woman leaders in our community, role models for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous women in this thesis kept the fire in my belly and the purpose for this thesis alive at every moment. When I wrote, I was always thinking, “Is this what they meant? What would they think of this? Did I get it right?” I was also privileged to become friends with many of the women during this process and that is the greatest gift of all.

To Sandra Moran, who made the Guatemala piece possible. Although she is mestiza, not Indigenous, it was her own story of strength and leadership that sparked my thesis topic, and it was her trust in me that opened the doors to meeting such powerful women in Guatemala.

And to my family, who all accompanied me to Guatemala: my parents, for bringing me cooked food on the bus and reviewing my chapters; my parents-in-law, Randy and Judy Warick, who looked after my children so I could go to class or study; my amazing children, Angelina and Taras, who gave up many hours these past years to Mommy working on her computer, and who turned “getting my Masters” into a game they would play. And to my husband, Jason Warick, this would not have been possible without him. He not only spent many weekends on his own - looking after the kids and managing the household while I was studying – but his belief in me and the potential of this thesis in contributing to a healthy relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, was the rock that kept me solid. Te amo.

*For my parents, Dan and Angelina Beveridge,
who gave me a 250-page book,
“The Slaves. An Illustrated History of the Monstrous Evil.”
Inside they inscribed, “Dear Michelle, To our loved daughter who is very
interested in the issue of Justice, may this book be interesting and thought
provoking. Our love and best wishes on your 10th birthday.”*

*Thank you for teaching me to challenge the narratives around me, and to
channel my outrage into education and political action.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue	viii
A Note About Names and Words	x
Chapter One– The Circle of Narratives.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Connecting Guatemala and Saskatchewan	14
Guatemala	16
Saskatchewan.....	19
Beginning the Narratives	22
Voicing the Narratives	24
Framing the Narratives	28
Ordering the Circles.....	31
The Eagle and the Condor.....	33
Chapter Two – The Early Years.....	34
Indigenous Worldviews	34
Guatemalan Resistance	35
Saskatchewan Isolation.....	44
Conclusion	54
Chapter Three– Building A Political Identity	56
Constructing Identities of Resistance and the role of tradition.....	56
Indigeneity and Identity	59
Worldview.....	60
Spirituality and Ceremonies.....	62
Place: Land and Home Community	64
Language.....	67
Clothing.....	68

Identities of “Woman:” Feminism and Motherhood	70
Identities of Difference	76
Conclusion	79
A side quote	79
Chapter Four – The Politics of Violence and Solidarity	80
Moving Within the Pores	80
Living and Understanding the Violence	81
Political Visions: Decolonization and Reconstruction	88
Leveraging Political Space	89
Leadership in Hybrid Spaces	94
Ethnic Identity and Cultural Hybridity	94
Self-Determination in Multiple Worlds	96
The Work: To Heal and To Defend	99
Leading By Example.....	99
Reclaiming Spaces for Indigenous Women.....	103
Struggling Between Frustration and Hope.....	107
Shaping Actives Spaces of Citizenship.....	109
Conclusion	112
Chapter Five – To Be In Solidarity	114
Transforming Relationships.....	115
Collective Knowledge and Action	118
Influencing the State in a Neoliberal World Order:.....	122
“Por Mi, Por Nosotros y Por los Otros.” For Me, For Us and For the Others	126
Epilogue	128
Appendix 1- Methodology	1
Saskatchewan Aboriginal women:.....	1

Guatemalan Indigenous Women:.....	2
Interview Process:.....	4
Interview Questions:	5
Childhood:.....	5
Identity:	5
Political experiences:	6
Appendix 2 – Lorena Cabnal discusses Xinka cosmovision.....	7
Appendix 3 – Ana López discusses Maya culture and ethnicity:	9
References	12

PROLOGUE

I am not Indigenous. Nor am I white. Although in the context of this binary, I would fall into a non-Indigenous category. I am uncomfortable with this binary but feel it asserts the existence of an ongoing historical political relationship. It is a critical political project to deconstruct this binary and substantially shift race and power relations, a project to which I hope this thesis, and my continued commitment, will make a contribution.

Margaret Kovach begins with a Prologue in her *Indigenous Methodologies. Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*.¹ It was introduced to her by Maori scholar, Graham Smith, to use within Indigenous research and narrative writing as a way to offer personal and contextual information for the reader to make sense of the story to follow.

Because this thesis explores identity and relationships, and the building and understanding of identities and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, I am introducing my own identity, as it shapes both my relationship with the Indigenous women in this thesis and my approach to justice and the struggle of Indigenous peoples.

My ethnic identity is not my political identity: my mother emigrated from the Philippines to Saskatchewan in her 20s, and has Spanish, Malaysian and Chinese ancestry. My father is third-generation Saskatchewan with Scottish, Irish, and Manx ancestry, and I was born on a rural development project in the African country, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), when it was Zaire. I have lived in Saskatchewan my whole life with the exception of my first two years in the DRC and the Philippines, and a couple of short stays in other cities for education.

I'm likely hybrid. It's not a term I would use to describe myself, but it does capture my mix of race and ethnicities which often creates a sense of connection, even allegiance, I feel with many people from different cultures. When peoples ask, "what is your ethnicity?" I always answer "half-Filipino," not to cancel out my white-ness, but because my brown-ness seems to be what interests people and prompts them to ask. And I am most often asked by other brown people, who guess I am either full Cree, full Mexican ("from the state of Guerrero, the women are bigger and look a bit Asian there"), or a mix that includes something they are: half-Guyanese, half-Ethiopian, or half-Guatemalan. So while my ethnic identity is not my political identity, it

¹Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies. Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, 3.

certainly contributes to my politics, and the relationships I develop with people in my political work.

My political work is integral to my identity. I am an advocate for social justice and worked for 12 years with the international development organization, Oxfam Canada. A central part of Oxfam's analysis, which I share, is that poverty and injustice will only end when women have an equal voice and play leadership roles in their communities and in policy-making. In 2007, a representative from an Oxfam partner organization in Guatemala, Sector de Mujeres (Women's Sector), visited Saskatchewan. Sandra Moran is one of three coordinators of this national organization and was interested in whether there were connections between the experiences of Saskatchewan and Guatemalan Indigenous women, particularly related to supporting women to be political leaders as a strategy for inserting Indigenous issues into the broader political agenda. The Guatemalan Indigenous women in this thesis consider Sector de Mujeres the primary actor in inserting women's - particularly Indigenous women's - rights into the country's 1996 Peace Accords that marked the end of a 36-year civil war, a reign of terror and genocide against Indigenous peoples that created a culture of violence and impunity, and continues to target Indigenous women.

Sandra's visit came a few years after Amnesty International put Canada on its human rights abuses list for the practice by members of the Saskatoon Police Force of driving Aboriginal men to the municipal garbage dump outside of town and leaving them there to survive - or not - the bitterly cold winter weather. It was also during this period that public attention began to focus on the many cases of missing Aboriginal women in Canada and community groups developed solidarity walks and organized conferences to commemorate the women as well as address the causes of this race-based dehumanization.

I was struggling to understand how to work on justice as it related to Indigenous peoples – locally and internationally – and felt I needed to dig deeper into the historical and contemporary narratives of racism and sexism. What does it look like, how is it expressed, how is it experienced, what does it make people do, how does one heal from it, how does it influence how one fights back, and how one works with others? This thesis is the path I took to understand my role, and how I could be useful to work in solidarity with the struggles of Indigenous peoples.

A NOTE ABOUT NAMES AND WORDS

NAMES: I have had the privilege of interviewing ten Indigenous women leaders in Saskatchewan and Guatemala. Of the ten, only two felt insecurity about having their names made public. For these two Saskatchewan women, I use pseudonyms - Leona and Starlight - and I have generalized or removed all identifying details in their narratives.

WORDS: There are a few words I use in this thesis that I feel require substantial clarification. Rather than insert them into the text and disrupt the women's narratives, I am introducing them in this note.

Indigenous: Within Canada, Indigenous people are referred to by the pan-Canadian term, Aboriginal, as recognized in the Constitution of Canada, specifically Inuit, First Nation (Indian) and Métis, as well as people considered non-status Indians. Aboriginal contains specific legal and political rights and histories according to whether it is a reference to Inuit, First Nation, or Métis peoples.² The words Aboriginal, Native, Indigenous and Indian are seen by some Aboriginal and First Nations peoples as being colonial constructions³ and further reproduced by the Canadian government in the Indian Act. In political response, in the 1970s, "Status, and non-Status Indians and Métis of the Prairies embraced the name "Native peoples" with the shared understanding of themselves as a cohesive indigenous body in common struggle against colonization."⁴ For similar reasons, the name "First Nation" was created in the 1980s period of First Nations political activism to "correct public rhetoric about the two founding nations," by reminding Canadian governments that the First Nations were the original sovereign nations.⁵ In Saskatchewan, many First Nations women and the academic literature move interchangeably among Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, and Indian, and I will use the terms they use in their particular context.

Within Guatemala, depending on state or civil society numbers, Indigenous people make up between 40 – 70 percent of the population, with the majority being Maya. This large discrepancy can be partially due to the fluidity of the Indigenous definition, as the majority of

² Beatty, "Saskatchewan First Nations Politics: Organization, Institutions and Governance," 200.

³ Monture and McGuire, *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*, 2.

⁴ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 7.

⁵ Beatty, "Saskatchewan First Nations Politics: Organization, Institutions and Governance," 200.

self-identifying non-Indigenous people (ladinos and mestizos) have Indigenous blood, yet deny their Indigeneity based on class position and acquisition of cultural characteristics⁶, or the “hostile markings of stereotypes”⁷ such as having an education, professional job, speaking Spanish, and/or wearing “modern” clothing. Their identity is “being everything modern and civilized that indigenous people are not.”⁸ There is even a Guatemalan joke, “What is a ladino? An Indian with money.”⁹ Ladino also “implies someone who represents a system which oppresses the Indian,”¹⁰ therefore, by extension, Indigenous, or Indian, implies someone who is oppressed by the ladino. Mestizos are considered an ethnic/cultural group between ladinos and Indigenous peoples and it is increasingly a political identity, expressing solidarity with Indigenous people by affirming Indigenous descent in their family.¹¹ When I use the term Indigenous, I refer to people who have self-identified as Indigenous, often due to their Indigenous worldview and practice of traditional customs, rather than their class position or non-acceptance of certain markers of modernity.

Political: My use of the term ‘political’ refers not only to the formal, elected political process, but also the discourse of politics and how people engage individually and collectively, formally and informally, to develop, shape, and resist public policy.

Solidarity: I borrow Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s definition of solidarity: “Mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together. Diversity and difference are central values here – to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances.”¹²

Inner- narratives: I use this term to describe a person’s internal and external ways of knowing that what they are experiencing, even if it is socialized and practiced all around them, is unjust. It is a concept related to, but not completely expressed, by Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* “the mental or cognitive structures through which people deal with the social world. People are endowed with a series of internalized schemes through which they perceive, understand,

⁶ Menchu, *I Rigoberta Menchu. An Indian Woman In Guatemala*, 249.

⁷ Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 128.

⁸ Hale, *Mas Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 17, also 25-31.

⁹ Nelson, *Reckoning. The Ends of War in Guatemala*, 22, also 128.

¹⁰ Menchu, *I Rigoberta Menchu. An Indian Woman In Guatemala*, (translator’s note) 2.

¹¹ Hale, *Mas Que un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 167-168.

¹² Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, 7.

appreciate and evaluate the social world.... Dialectically, habitus is the product of the internalization of the structures of the social world,”¹³ and Antonio Gramsci’s *hegemony*, “a dynamic lived process in which social identities, relations, organizations and structures based on asymmetrical distributions of power and influence are constituted by the dominant class.”¹⁴ While *habitus* and *hegemony* both explore how people interpret and internalize their social world, the concepts do not highlight expressions of spirituality - such as dreams - that can also act as motivators to challenge the dominant social discourse. I acknowledge that spirituality can also be categorized, academically, as an external influence. But in this thesis, spirituality is expressed as part of an Indigenous worldview that incorporates a continuum of relations among living and non-living beings, material and essence, time now and beyond, connected directly to the Creator.¹⁵ While some spiritual lessons are learned externally, there is another part of spirituality that is sourced from deep within. And for many of the women in this thesis, both of these sources are inner and hidden narratives, forbidden and shamed by society and sometimes the women’s own families as part of the project of assimilation.

Modernity: It has come to have many meanings and when I use it, I, too, am referring to a collection of many concepts: I appreciate Sudipta Kaviraj's definition of the “historical constellation of modernity:” (1) capitalist industrial production; (2) political institutions of liberal democracy and the evolution of a society based on the process of individuation; and (3) a gradual decline of communal forms of belonging yielding place to the modern form of interest-based voluntary associations.”¹⁶ Particularly in the context of building a modern, nation-state, there are also overtones of the Eurocentric notions of ‘civilizing,’ which imply a quest for homogeneity and a de-linking and de-legitimizing of tradition.

¹³ Ritzer, *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots. The Basics*, 175; see also Sayer in Lovell, ed, *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: Nancy Fraser and Pierre Bourdieu*, 91.

¹⁴ Mittelman and Chin, “Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization,” 18.

¹⁵ Cardinal & Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations*, 3;29-31; Rheault, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy Concerning Knowledge, Identity and Ethics*.

¹⁶ Menon, Nivedita. “Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlor? Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Feminist Politics.”207

CHAPTER ONE— THE CIRCLE OF NARRATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of narratives encircling each other, bound together by the lives of ten Indigenous women: meta-narratives of modernity and conquest, wrapped into stories of land, war, relationships, family; woven into what could be called inner-narratives, stories in the women's minds and subconscious that help them endure and challenge an oppressive social narrative, stories passed on through a collective process of conscientization,¹⁷ or received from a voice deep inside, from ancestors in a dream, or their own spirit, releasing a force for survival and resistance.

Leona,¹⁸ Cree woman from Northern Saskatchewan, Canada: “When I was 12, I pressed charges against my stepfather’s brother for hitting me, and then my Mom tried to say No, you’re not going to press charges, and I said, Yes. I am... We had a fireplace, so we had firewood outside. He had picked up one of those and hit me with that. And so I had lots of welts on my back. And then the police officer came to me and said, do you want to press charges? I said yes. And so we went ahead with it, and he was convicted... It changed where we lived, I think. You know, we moved.”

“It was a violent childhood... I just fought every day of my life up there... I fought white boys, I fought Métis boys, I fought First Nations boys, I didn’t fight any girls because they were too scared to fight me, but just the way they attacked somebody who they perceived was lower than they were.”

Ana López, Mam Mayan woman from Huehuetenango, Guatemala: “In 1982 I joined the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. That was my childhood from the age of 12 years old.”

“For me...the motive for joining with the guerrillas was the extreme poverty, the exclusion, the exploitation, a very strong discrimination toward my family, the community, and all that we are in Ixcán. The Indigenous farmers, they do not have access to the development, they do not have the capacity, [so] we organized into cooperatives to have the capacity to develop

¹⁷ An approach used in liberation theology to raise consciousness and build solidarity through education and political knowledge.

¹⁸ A pseudonym.

economically. But the first people who were kidnapped, they were the leaders of the cooperative. And that is when I first understood that the business people and the plantation owners did not want the poor to organize, and at first began to wipe out our ways of organizing, through cooperatives and communities, and then started to wipe out entire communities.

Rebellious counter-narratives that tell of colonization, racism and patriarchy are contained within the meta- narratives of imperialism and modernity. These counter- narratives are pushing out, interrogating the foundations on which the meta-narratives were built and re-narrating the storylines. Indigenous peoples are central actors in this counter-narrative, and in resistance, are creating a new story of decolonization - a re-humanizing, reclamation of land, rights and dignity.¹⁹ For many, particularly expressed in contemporary Indigenous politics, this re-positioning of roles and power demands a certain strategic essentialism:²⁰ a collective Indigenous political body, reasserting tradition as its authority and identity, and calling for autonomy, self-determination and sovereignty.²¹ Yet within this counter-narrative is another discourse that asserts the importance of gendered Indigenous representation, re-positions tradition alongside modernity,²² and builds solidarity with allies in hybrid spaces.

It is within this discourse that I find ten Indigenous women political leaders. This is a contested space: these Indigenous women leaders exist between layers of oppression; they act in multiple sites of resistance; and they collapse the binaries of private/public, urban/rural,

¹⁹ Emma LaRocque argues dehumanization is the heart of the colonial discourse, and Native resistance literature-fiction as well as social protest literature - is about refuting savagery and reclaiming their humanity. She offers many examples of how Native writers have shifted the discourse, particularly through making explicit the savagery of western civilization. LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 15, 24; O'Riley, "Shapeshifting Research with Aboriginal Peoples: Toward Self-Determination and Respect," 83-102.

²⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that essentialism is a tactic used by subalterns to create a clear image of identity to fight and resist their oppressor. (Ray, *Spivak: In Other Words*, 109). Edward Said discusses how "culture" becomes embedded in the identity of a nation, used to differentiate "us" from "them" and in colonized spaces, are used in opposition or reaction to multiculturalism and hybridity (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii). Anne Phillips states that while subalterns are resisting a homogenizing dominant mainstream cultural, their tactic of identity politics also requires assimilation to create a unified, stable group's identity, resulting in the suppression of more marginal voices within the subaltern group (Phillips, "Identity Politics: Have We Now Had Enough?" 38.)

²¹ There has been a resurgence among First Nations people to rediscover and implement their traditional cultural values as a guide for self-determination in their communities. See Gross, "Bimaadiziwin, or the Good Life as a Unifying Concept of Anishnaabe Religion," 16; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 111.

²² Nivedita Menon discusses the binaries of tradition and modernity and the oppressions within both, particularly for women in postcolonial societies. She argues that this binary is irrelevant – "what is called tradition, especially in postcolonial societies, is unavoidably located within modernity." Menon, "Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlor? Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Feminist Politics," 211.

Indigenous/non-Indigenous, male/female struggles. They talk about living - shifting - between worlds; and their political strategies for survival and for social change are based on how to maneuver through, and influence, their multi-layered reality. But what enables their adaptability to a complex world are their identities rooted in their ethnicity. They are Indigenous.

“I am a Mam Mayan woman,” “I am Dakota and Saulteaux,” “I am a Xinka woman living in the Mountains of Santa María Xalapán,” “I am a Northerner, a Cree woman,” are how they described themselves to me.²³

This firmness, this priority in ethnic identity, is the anchor around which all else moves. It is the core of their identity, yet for some of them, it was not until later, as adults, that they rediscovered, revitalized, and decolonized this part of themselves, and it is *this* part of them that gives them strength.

The interpretations or expressions of their Indigeneity are not static nor are they identical – they express it in different ways, emphasize different parts – but these parts all connect back to integral elements of an Indigenous worldview – their relationship with their land, their home communities, language, ancestral teachings, ceremonies, and clothing. They have taken these traditional concepts and resituated and/or gendered them to contain the tensions of modernity – how they live and experience the land is different from the traditional context, how they move back and forth from their home community is different, how and when they speak their language, how they wear their traditional clothing, how they re-interpret the role and power of women; these have all evolved from historical traditions, been adapted to a western, modern context, but are still Indigenous.

This emphasizes the evolution and adaptability of a cultural identity as well as a personal identity, challenging confining and competing notions of inauthenticity or assimilation:²⁴ one which seeks to control expressions of culture as part of a broader Indigenous political strategy to ensure distinct, collective rights within a dominant, modern culture; the other which seeks to erase distinct cultural rights as part of membership in a dominant modern culture. The women’s

²³ Ana López; Lois Isnana; Lorena Cabnal; Joan Beatty. None of the women described themselves as “Saskatchewan” or “Canadian” or “Guatemalan.”

²⁴ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 90; Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 130

political identities are not constructed hybrid identities,²⁵ but evolved ethnic identities, grounded in traditional, and authentic, Indigenous concepts. This differentiation is important to them personally as well as politically. The space to re-interpret and re-articulate how Indigeneity as a cultural identity is expressed is a pathway for survival and adaptation, for motivation, and to strengthen the healing and revitalization of Indigenous peoples and their authority in a hybrid, modern space.

This thesis explores the lives and ideas of these ten Indigenous women leaders in the province of Saskatchewan in Canada, and the country of Guatemala in Central America. They offer narratives of resistance and hope, reclaiming not only what it means to be an Indigenous woman in a space of modernity, but also an Indigenous leader living in multiple worlds. Their ethnic identity *is* their political identity, grounding and focusing them as they work in Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces. The women's stories also include non-Indigenous peoples: challenging us to understand and accept their worldview, their experiences of oppression, and how they are now reconstructing personal and collective political identities that resist and resituate locations of power. And this is a story of how we, as non-Indigenous people, can walk alongside their struggle.

The Saskatchewan women are:

Joan Beatty, Cree from Deschambault Lake, Peter Ballantyne First Nation. She was the first Aboriginal woman to have been elected a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Saskatchewan Government as well as a Cabinet Minister, and one of the first Aboriginal reporters on CBC;

Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, Cree from Lac La Ronge First Nation. She was the first woman elected as Chief in her community and has currently been re-elected three times;

Lois Isnana, Saulteaux and Dakota from Standing Buffalo First Nation. She is a Child Care Counselor and founder of a Victims of Homicide support group after her husband was killed, the first of its kind in her region;

Leona, Cree from Northern Saskatchewan living in Southern Saskatchewan. She is a leader in local and provincial environmental and social movements;

²⁵ I offer a more substantive discussion on hybrid identities in Chapter Four.

Starlight,²⁶ Dene from Northern Saskatchewan living in Southern Saskatchewan.

She is a leader in climate justice, environmental, and Aboriginal women's and human rights movements locally, nationally, and internationally.

The Guatemalan women are:

Lorena Cabnal, Xinka from Santa María Xalapán. She is the founder of Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María Xalapán, an Indigenous women's rights and environmental justice organization. At the time of the interview, she was under 24 hour accompaniment by Peace Brigades International due to the frequent death threats she receives from her advocacy to prevent mining concessions in her home community;

Lidia Laines, K'iche' from Santa Cruz living in Guatemala City. She is a Technical Assistant in the Women's Secretariat of the Guatemalan government;

Ana López, Mam Maya born in Huehuetenango, raised in Ixcán, living in Guatemala City. She is founder of Indigenous women's organization, Tzununují', and was Executive Director of the Indigenous Women's Defense League²⁷;

Rosalina Tuyuc, Maya Kaqchikel from Comalapa, living in Guatemala City. She is the founder of the National Association of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), and the first Indigenous women in Guatemala to be elected to Congress and the only Indigenous woman to serve as one of the Vice Presidents of Congress;

Bernaldina Yuman, Poqomam Maya from Palim, Esquintla. She is a teacher, expert of Poqomam Mayan language, and one of the founders of Asociación Palinca – Jawal Tinimit, an electoral observation and democracy building organization.

Considered leaders in their communities – although many were reluctant to accept this title themselves – they discuss their childhoods, their supports, the moments that changed their

²⁶ A pseudonym.

²⁷ She was replaced from this position one year after the interview was completed, in March 2012, as a result of the national elections which brought in a new President and government.

lives, their political work, and their vision for how Indigenous peoples can heal and strengthen their communities, and how non-Indigenous peoples can be in solidarity.

Their political vision and work are a reflection of their personal experiences located within the larger geo-political narrative of their regions. While there are similar themes running between both regions, there are also distinct approaches and priorities within each region, and, as to be expected, individual differences between women of a same region.

Both groups of women share a political vision that Indigenous peoples be respected and equal in modern, mainstream society, and especially for the Guatemalan women, that Indigenous *women* be respected and equal in Indigenous and mainstream society. This vision includes two simultaneous and interrelated approaches that I categorize as: decolonization - healing and recovery, a *reinvidicación*,²⁸ of the past; and reconstruction – development, self-determination, and leadership for the future.

The first stage is emphasized by the Saskatchewan Indigenous women, the importance of creating spaces to heal – themselves, their families, their communities – from the effects of the violence of colonization, poverty, and racial and gender discrimination.

The second stage is of a development that builds just and democratic participation of Indigenous peoples in the governance of their communities. This self-determination is more than in separate Indigenous-only spaces, but in all decision-making spaces that affect Indigenous peoples: Indigenous leaders, and Indigenous women leaders, in the Guatemalan or Saskatchewan governments and government departments. It also means a strong representation in civil society, Indigenous leaders holding their governments accountable to implement agreements – such as the Canadian Treaties and the Guatemalan Peace Accords - made to ensure Indigenous people are equal partners in society.

Racism is the starting point for their politics. Saskatchewan women specifically attribute this to colonization and focus their approaches on anti-racism and decolonization – of their minds as well as a decolonizing of the minds of non-Indigenous people.

Starlight, Saskatchewan - Everybody in this whole Canadian society has to decolonize. The colonizer and the colonized - sometimes the colonized

²⁸ A Spanish word used by Lorena Cabnal, meaning to recover, demand, recognize, vindicate.

become the colonizers to our own selves, and to others. And we all have to go through this process of understanding what colonization is, what it does, how we react to it, and what does a decolonized structure look like.

Defining racism in Guatemala is more complicated, as the majority of the population is Indigenous and even those considered non-Indigenous have Indigenous blood, leaving racism and discrimination to be commonly defined and expressed alongside economic and social relations and stereotypes.²⁹ But the impact of the racism, however defined, is equally oppressive as the Saskatchewan experiences.

There is a tension among the women in how they articulate and incorporate patriarchy into their political vision. For the Guatemalan women, addressing patriarchy - machismo – is just as critical as racism in their identity and work. And they are all explicit, except Rosalina Tuyuc, that their vision of a new Indigenous woman is a feminist³⁰ Indigenous woman. They layer racism and poverty with a feminist analysis to focus on how systemic and personal violence directed at women - primarily Indigenous women - affect the health and strength of families as well as the nation state. Also with the exception of Rosalina Tuyuc, they speak of receiving one or more political trainings that used a feminist framework. While Rosalina did not initiate a discussion on feminism, she does discuss how sexism – *machismo* - directly influences women's political participation. Ana López also discusses the political training of the guerrillas which was grounded in a class-based, Marxist framework.

The belief in healing “for all” is the approach of the Saskatchewan women. Rather than use words like patriarchy or sexism, they emphasize that men are also victims and must be included in the discourse of healing, particularly in violence against women. The Saskatchewan women who discuss patriarchy, do so specifically in relation to Indigenous leadership.

Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - This one time I went down south to when the Legislature was having a Beaded Mace Runner

²⁹ As discussed in the *A Note on Names and Words*.

³⁰ When asked to define what they meant by feminist, they ranged from offering a structural oppression analysis to saying they believe women and men should be equal and women should not have to walk behind men.

[Ceremony].³¹ So I went there, I had my buckskin dress on, I had my headdress on, I was talking to people, and then all the sudden, I get pulled aside, and this one guy says, Elders want to talk to you. So I said, oh, okay. So I just went over there. And then there were two men and two ladies from down south, and they said, you can't wear your headdress here. You're in our Treaty territory. And I said, why? They said, because you're a woman, and women don't wear headdress. And I didn't know what to do, because they caught me off-guard. So I took it off, and then he said, oh this guy will carry it for you. A helper, one of their helpers. And then it just hit me and I thought, how humiliating. Because I felt really degraded. So I went to the washroom and I phoned my husband, and I tried to tell him but it was really hard. Then I had some Visine in my purse so I put that Visine on, freshened my makeup, pretended like it didn't bother me, I just walked in and had the guy holding my headdress sit beside me. Then I thought, what about other women, if later on, this happens to them. So the next time I went to a Treaty Six gathering, I wore my headdress, and this guy came running up to me and said, you have to take that off. I said, why? He said, because you have to. I said, why? He said, uh, well you just have to take it off. I said, well if you want me to take it off, I'll leave then. I don't have to be here. No, no, no, don't leave. You just have to take it off. I said, why? I'm not taking it off. I'm wearing it because I'm the Chief. I'm not wearing it because I'm a woman. He said, well, everybody else is going to take their headdresses off. So he went over there and then all the sudden all the other guys took off their headdresses too. Because I wasn't going to put up with it.

The two Saskatchewan women who discuss sexism are part of civil society movements and had personal experiences with Indigenous male leadership insulting and ostracizing them. They also taught anti-racism, anti-colonization training during which patriarchy was discussed. But even they were hesitant to identify as feminists. There is a carefulness around the feminist discourse by Indigenous women in Saskatchewan (and Canada),³² remnants from the 1983 and 1985 Constitutional negotiations, followed by the 1991-92 'Canada Round' of Constitutional negotiations when the national, male-dominated Aboriginal governance organizations, led by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), were strategizing to achieve sovereignty and refused to

³¹ The Mace sits in the Legislative Assembly as a reminder of the Treaties made with First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

³² Joyce Green writes that Aboriginal feminists rarely publicly identify themselves as feminist because they have experienced harassment and persecution from other Aboriginal people, including women, who accuse them of not being traditional un-Aboriginal." Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 14-16.

acknowledge sexual equality or women's rights as an Aboriginal right, claiming it undermined Aboriginal collective rights. The Canadian government granted a comprehensive Aboriginal constitutional package to the AFN that saw Aboriginal collective rights "trumping" feminism and women's rights because of the AFN's argument that collective rights were deeply rooted in Aboriginal traditions, culture and history.³³ Women who had used this moment to press for women's rights to be acknowledged within the umbrella of Aboriginal collective rights found themselves silenced and shut out by the leadership and often their home communities.³⁴

Almost all the women in both regions emphasize the traditional concept of complementarity between genders before colonization - a gendered division of labour and authority where both roles are equally respected and valued.³⁵ Only Lorena Cabnal in Guatemala challenges this and asserted:

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - One of the thoughts that many women and Indigenous people express is that colonization did really bad things to Indigenous people and in particular to women. But I also believe that we already had a patriarchy in our ancestry, an ancestral patriarchy from our original peoples, there was an inequality between women and men and during the historical process of colonization, what happened was a re-working or a strengthening of the patriarchal system. The colonial system combined with the ancestral system, came together.

Self-determination is advocated for by all the women, although they identify concerns about preventing processes that can lead to cultural segregation, and at the same time, how to ensure self-determination is not undermined in a mainstream agenda that maintains an assimilationist sentiment. Both Saskatchewan and Guatemalan women, especially the women who held leadership positions in government, discuss the importance of Indigenous development

³³ Behiels, "Native Feminism versus Aboriginal Nationalism. The Native Women's Association of Canada's Quest for Gender Equality, 1983-199," 213.

³⁴ Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women's Activism," 127; Fiske, "The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body: Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement," 69; Green, "Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada," 725.

³⁵ Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women's Activism," 132; Mark Julien et al, "Keeper of the Drums: Female Aboriginal Leadership and the Saliency of Gender;" Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Women's Perspectives; Lopez, "Indigenous Women and Governance in Guatemala," 2.

based on access to mainstream, but Indigenous –targeted, health, education and job training.³⁶ While both groups discuss the need for Indigenous people to have separate spaces where they can re-learn their Indigenous languages and culture (particularly youth) and access traditional Indigenous healthcare, the Saskatchewan women also discuss the importance of providing supports for Indigenous people to be able to transition from their rural home communities into mainstream non-Indigenous society, particularly related to furthering education and accessing job opportunities in urban areas.

There is a significant difference in the organization of formal political participation between the two regions - Saskatchewan has a separate First Nations political structure that integrates local with provincial and national political structures. For example, Chief Tammy Cook-Searson was elected by the members of her Lac La Ronge First Nation home community and represents them at the provincial Federation of Saskatchewan First Nations (FSIN).

Guatemala does not have a separate political structure. A Guatemalan Indigenous person running for a political position is voted for by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (although many rural home communities have a majority of Indigenous people), equivalent to the mainstream political system in Saskatchewan, which has repercussions – in a racist society – of how exceptional it is when this happens.

In Saskatchewan, there are currently five Aboriginal people out of 58 elected as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the provincial government and until this most recent election,³⁷ Joan Beatty was the only Aboriginal woman to have been elected an MLA, and was so, twice. Her portfolio included being the Opposition Critic for Women’s Issues and Northern Affairs. She recently ran for position of Chief in her home Peter Ballantyne First Nation to give a platform to social issues which she felt were not being covered adequately by the current Chief and Council (the incumbent Chief won).

Lois Isnana’s husband and father-in-law were both councilors and her uncle-in-law was a Chief for Standing Buffalo First Nation Band. It was living those experiences that convinced

³⁶ First Nations women have consistently stressed the need for a holistic healing of their communities and on their terms- institutions, policies and services based on cultural values, as well as their active leadership in this healing; Chiste, “Aboriginal Women and Self- Government: Challenging Leviathan,”31; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Women’s Perspectives.

³⁷ Jennifer Campeau was elected on November 9, 2011 as an MLA for the Saskatchewan Party.

Lois she did not want to run for a political position and would work instead in the community, both in her job as counselor at the Aboriginal women's shelter in her community as well as founding an organization for victims of homicide. She saw how her family's political lives became an "open book" for everyone in the community to talk about, a scrutiny experienced by Chief Tammy Cook-Searson who called politics "a dirty game," and was also observed by Joan Beatty.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - We don't have to be nasty to each other. I didn't like that in the [Provincial] Legislature. It's the most useless exercise. What are we doing? To me that was just ego, an ego thing, you know. That's not the way I was raised. I was taught to respect other people and to listen. And I didn't want to do that running for Chief even. I don't need to be knocking people down... You know, if somebody said something, you could still make a comment, you could disagree, but not personal attacks, I didn't go for that.

Leona's family is tied into First Nations political leadership at a number of levels. She works for a federal First Nations institution and situates her political actions in social movements. Starlight works for a community-based Aboriginal cultural institution and participates in the climate justice and Aboriginal women's movements. All the Saskatchewan women emphasize that women are the real leaders in their communities - the ones that get the job done – although they are not represented in elected positions. They also note that this is changing and there is a noticeable increase in women running in First Nations elections.

The Guatemalan women also believe in working *in* the state and *outside* the state, and the importance of keeping the two locations connected to ensure accountability and democratic participation of Indigenous peoples.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - And for many years, there have been people who have been put into important posts, but people who don't come out of the movement, don't come out of civil society. And I think it's really important that people come from the struggles themselves, and then when they get into these posts, that they don't forget where they came from, and so they can keep acting on behalf of the nation. That's speaking on a national level, but I think the same dynamic occurs on the local level in the town.

There has to be an organized society, to ensure that the local government acts on the priorities and acts to benefit the population.

Rosalina Tuyuc was one of the first Indigenous women in Guatemala to be elected to Congress as well as being the only Indigenous woman to serve as Vice President of Congress. Ana López was Executive Director of the Indigenous Women's Defense League - the government department created particularly to address the needs of Indigenous women. Lidia Laines works in the Women's Secretariat of the government. At the same time, Rosalina, Ana, and Lorena are also founders and leaders of Indigenous women's organizations.³⁸ And Bernaldina founded an organization focused on building knowledgeable citizen (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) participation in elections, as a first step to building a culture of democracy.

Like Saskatchewan women, they look for spaces that will allow real political participation in formal politics, refusing to engage when they feel their voices and issues will be undermined - or "co-opted" as Bernaldina stated - by the process.

Ana López, Guatemala - Political participation is a means but it's not an end to itself. The ultimate goal is to access integral development – health, education, housing, land, income, so to struggle for greater participation by women is good but not an end in and of itself. Even if we had 50 percent of the Congress people as women, if they didn't have a consciousness of women's issues, they wouldn't be producing laws that favour women.... And it's the same thing with Indigenous issues. Even if we had an Indigenous president, it wouldn't guarantee that the public policy would necessarily be a benefit to Indigenous people.

The women follow the multi-layered path of governmental, political and civil society participation to lead towards "integral" and "holistic" development for Indigenous people. They emphasize the specific voice and perspective that Indigenous women bring to policies and programs, a perspective they believe the country must respect if they are to move forward as a nation.

³⁸ Rosalina founded CONAVIGUA; Ana founded Tzununuji'; Lorena founded Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María Xalapán; and Bernaldina was part of a group of people who founded Asociación Palinca – Jawal Tinimit.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - I think that we as Indigenous women have a particular way of conceiving of the problems in Guatemala. And we have a particular way of living our life in our communities... we as Indigenous women have an enormous possibility of analyzing problems, particularly problems that affect women, and we have an enormous possibility to provide solutions that are important and that are integral. And solutions that come from us.

Where the women find solidarity is different. The Guatemalan women are all active in organizations that exist within social movements – most dominantly the Guatemalan feminist movement - through Sector de Mujeres³⁹ - which is made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, and the Indigenous peoples movement, which would include Lorena’s environmental work. The political struggles of the Saskatchewan women are also collective, but less formalized and integrated into existing social movements. Instead, many of the women initiated and participated in issue-based committees or organizations in their local communities, later engaging in either provincial and national organizations, or formal political party involvement. The exceptions are Starlight, who is involved in the international climate justice movement and Aboriginal women’s rights work; and Leona, who is involved in local environmental and anti-racist social movements. All of the women also participate in mixed groups of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The women have all experienced tragedies that dramatically changed their lives, in some cases, leading them onto a political path. In Guatemala, Rosalina Tuyuc’s husband and father were “disappeared” by the military during the civil war, as were leaders in Ana López’s community, and members of Lidia Laines’ family; Bernaldina Yuman’s father died when she was 21, forcing her to leave school to help support her six younger siblings. In Saskatchewan, Lois Isnana’s husband was killed by a member in their home community (who was not convicted); Tammy Cook-Searson’s baby son drowned and sister committed suicide after years of fighting depression; and Leona’s father died working in the bush. While Lorena Cabnal in

³⁹ Women’s Sector, a national umbrella organization that provides support and training to 32 women’s organizations throughout Guatemala. It provides leadership and political analysis and training, schools for facilitators, organizational capacity building, public campaigns and advocacy relating to women’s issues, particularly violence against women.

Guatemala and Starlight and Joan Beatty in Saskatchewan did not mention the impact of personal death in their stories, they did discuss the death of their communities – the suicide of young people, abuse of women, poverty, and sense of helplessness.

While many people are not able to move beyond such loss, these women not only survived, they fought back, they challenged, and they are making a difference.

Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala - It was as though the violence pushed us to take different measures for survival, to denounce the situation of the violation of our human rights. And later it pushed us to demand peace and justice for Indigenous women.

CONNECTING GUATEMALA AND SASKATCHEWAN

Choosing to explore the connections and variations between Indigenous women's experiences in the province of Saskatchewan and the country of Guatemala was not random. There are obvious geographic and demographic differences – Saskatchewan has a land base of 588,276 square kilometres and a population of 1,053,960,⁴⁰ of which 141,890⁴¹ self-identify as Aboriginal. Guatemala can be squeezed into one-fifth the size at 108,889 square kilometers and hosts a population 14 times greater at 14.38 million⁴² of which between 40 - 70 percent⁴³ are Indigenous. The United Nations Human Development Index⁴⁴ ranked Canada 6, Guatemala is 131. Canadian life expectancy is 79 years for men and 83 for women, Canadian Aboriginal

⁴⁰ April 2011 Government of Saskatchewan statistics, <http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/> (accessed Dec. 13, 2011).

⁴¹ StatsCan, 2006 Census of Canada, Aboriginal population Profile, Saskatchewan, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=47&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Saskatchewan&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=47> (accessed Dec. 13, 2011)

⁴² 2010 World Bank Country profile, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/GUATEMALAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:2254443~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:328117.00.html>, (accessed Dec. 13, 2011)

⁴³ There is no consensus on an exact number as the Government of Guatemala's statistics number Indigenous people at 40% and civil society organizations' statistics refute this and place it closer to 70%.

⁴⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles/>, accessed Dec. 13, 2011.

peoples' life expectancy is 73 for men and 78 for women.⁴⁵ Guatemala life expectancy is 66 for men, 73 for women.⁴⁶

Yet Indigenous communities in both Guatemala and Saskatchewan have shared similar historical narratives through the past centuries - resisting the same forces of modernity - imposed violently on their lives. Conquest and colonization were central to a European discourse of progress and modernity – an imperialism that twinned capitalist economies with racial hierarchies. It rationalized the exploitation of land, labor and women through a twisted morality that gave those in power, those white(r), and often those of the Church, the right to decide who was human and who was not.⁴⁷

The nation-building project, constructing the images of Canada and Guatemala as modern, homogenous nation states, continued along the path of progress by focusing priority on the “Indian problem,”⁴⁸ which often meant the disappearing of Indigenous peoples - through assimilation, containment⁴⁹, or death.⁵⁰ Ultimately, those in power acquired access and control over Indigenous peoples' land and labour to pursue their visions of modernity.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - When I stayed with my grandparents - I was in Pasqua - early in the morning they would already be up and they had the wood stove, and they would be talking their language, and it sounded so nice to me. So my grandma would be making her porridge, her oatmeal, and they'd be having their tea in the morning. They'd be talking, and it sounded

⁴⁵ StatsCan, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-645-x/2010001/life-expectancy-esperance-vie-eng.htm> (accessed Dec. 13, 2011)

⁴⁶ StatsCan, <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/health26-eng.htm>, World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/countries/gtm/en/> (accessed Dec. 13, 2011)

⁴⁷ For more discussions on how the elite legitimized their tactics for maintaining economic and political control, see: Forster, *The Time of Freedom. Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution*, 213; Arias, “Shifts in Indian Identity: Guatemala's Violent Transition to Modernity,” 230; Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 282; Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 65,69; LaRocque, *When the Other is Me. Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 3; Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. 5,10; Warry, *Ending Denial. Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 33.

⁴⁸ A phrase used in both Saskatchewan and Guatemala. French, 2010, 3; Regan, 2010, 236.

⁴⁹ On reservations in Saskatchewan and in Guatemala through a process of *reducciones*, forced settlements, or “congregations,” which became the basis for the municipalities. Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 7.

⁵⁰ This occurred through inadequate livelihoods and housing causing starvation and disease, as well as from violence in beatings or wars.

so beautiful. As soon as I'd wake up, or get up, and they knew that me and my cousins were awake, they'd go back to English. And they would never talk their language in front of us, so I learned then that I had to pretend to stay sleeping just to listen and to smell the wood burning, the wood burning stove, and just those aromas and the sounds, I would just pretend to be sleeping and listen to them talk. And it wasn't until later that they told us that they wanted their children to have good lives, to be assimilated, and they were afraid to speak the language to them because they would experience more racism.

Ana López, Guatemala - The army would take a machete and cut down our cornfields. And corn is very sacred for us because it gives us life. If there is corn on the ground, we can't step over it. And the army took a machete to the cornfields, cut them down in the Ixcán and all over the country wherever there were communities of population in resistance. Also we keep our corn, we store it in little buildings called trojas and the army would come and burn these down. And what they wanted was for us to die of hunger. Also in terms of our economy, the army killed off our animals – the cattle, the chickens that we had in our home, the idea was to exterminate everything.

For Indigenous people, land and labor are more than capitalist means to profit and wealth. Land is the provider of sustenance for body and spirit: a place of worship, the connection with ancestors and generations to come. Labor is their bodies, their dignity and strength, and intimately connected with how they use the land. The loss of autonomy over land and labor stole the foundation of Indigenous people's way of life. Combined with the racial hierarchy that either outright prohibited Indigenous peoples from expressing their cultural identity - languages, clothing, religions – or shamed and humiliated many into self-censorship, it was an appallingly effective devastation of Indigenous peoples.⁵¹

Guatemala

⁵¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, building on Fanon and Nandy, discusses the disorder and fragmentation that imperialism and colonialism brought to colonized peoples: “disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world.” Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 28. *Memory of Silence*, UN Commission for Historical Clarification Report, Conclusions, also states the brutal violence used to destroy and disempower Guatemalan Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

Guatemala is on the western end of Central America, encircled by Mexico in the west and north, Belize in the north, the Caribbean in the northeast, Honduras and El Salvador to its east, and the Pacific Ocean as its south border. For such a geographically small country, it has a diverse climate and topography – from the Petén rainforest in the north, through the mountainous highlands, to the coastal plantations to the south. Ruins spread throughout the countryside testify to it once being home to the ancient Maya civilization. Guatemala’s current inhabitants are made up of four distinct groups of people: the Maya (approximately 60 percent), the Ladino (approximately 39 percent), the Garifuna (less than 1 percent) and the Xinka (in danger of extinction⁵²).⁵³ It is one of only two countries in the Americas where the Indigenous peoples make up the majority of the population.⁵⁴ Most Indigenous communities lost their sovereignty to the Spanish colonial state in 1540, and Guatemala gained its independence from Spain in 1821.

In spite of its physical beauty and mysterious ancient history, it is perhaps Guatemala’s treatment of Indigenous peoples that is its most notable characteristic. Its civil war, the longest in the Americas occurring over 36 years and ending in 1996, was the site of “the most widespread example of genocide in the Americas in the 20th century.”⁵⁵ Telling the story of Indigenous communities during this period resulted in the Nobel Peace Prize being won by Rigoberta Menchú, the first Indigenous person in the Americas to receive the award. The United Nations also sponsored a truth commission, The Commission for the Clarification of History (CEH), to enable other people to tell of their experiences as part of a national reconciliation process.

The CEH acknowledged Guatemala’s history of dictatorships that served to protect the economic wealth and power of the minority elite.⁵⁶ Indigenous *campesinos* (farmers) played a critical role in the country’s early agricultural-based economy, and various laws regarding forced labour and land dispossession were developed to ensure the elites controlled productive wealth in

⁵² Lorena Cabnal is Xinka and one of her frustrations is with the “official” statistics numbers for Xinka people. She says, “The national institute of statistics said there are 16,700 Xinka. This is according to the census carried out in 2002. However, we have made our own accounting, and we have proof that the population in the mountains of Xalapán is over 85,000 people... We call this statistical ethnocide.”

⁵³ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, Map 2. Nelson sources Cholsamaj Press, a Maya-based cultural foundation, for these population numbers.

⁵⁴ Handy, *A History of Guatemala*, History 385.3 Course Outline. Bolivia is the other country.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Memory of Silence. United Nations Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification. Historical roots of the armed confrontation, 4.

the nation.⁵⁷ Participation in the export market through coffee production aggravated this dynamic,⁵⁸ and empowered the military to forcefully regulate the countryside and Indigenous peoples.

A progressive government in 1944 enacted land reform and laws that protected labor, but 10 years later, the United States' CIA would back a coup that overthrew the elected government, setting in motion another series of dictatorships and military governments that “tried to erase the memory of reform by murder, exile, and censorship.”⁵⁹ Resistance to the army grew into a revolutionary movement made up of ladinos and Indigenous peoples, with the state responding by increasing its violence. By the end of the 36 year civil war, over two hundred thousand people had been killed,⁶⁰ the majority Indigenous people, and four hundred highland, Indigenous, villages had been exterminated.⁶¹ The number of deaths accounted for by the CEH is similar to “the known total of all those killed in war and repression during the 1970s and 1980s throughout the rest of the western hemisphere.”⁶²

This is context for the Guatemalan CEH, which called the violence acts of genocide against Mayan Indigenous peoples and in 1996 asked questions that are not only still relevant but also no closer to being answered today: “Why did the violence, especially that used by the State, affect civilians and particularly the Mayan people, whose women were considered to be the spoils of war and who bore the full brunt of the institutionalised violence? Why did defenceless children suffer acts of savagery?... Why did these acts of outrageous brutality, which showed no respect for the most basic rules of humanitarian law, Christian ethics and the values of Mayan spirituality, take place?”⁶³

On June 1, 2012, in this country with increasing deathly violence against women and a culture of impunity, the Guatemalan government announced, “the effective closing of the “Peace Archives,” one of the most active and important institutions created in the wake of the 1996 peace accords to promote peace, truth and reconciliation. The closing of the Peace Archives ends

⁵⁷ Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 84-85.

⁵⁸ McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920.” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 104.

⁵⁹ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 9.

⁶⁰ Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 3.

⁶¹ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 9.

⁶² Manz, *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror and Hope*. xiii

⁶³ Memory of Silence. United Nations Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, Prologue.

an important source of support to human rights prosecutions in Guatemala, and may in part reflect the current government's particular distaste for the genocide cases.⁶⁴ In fact, the government's Secretary of Peace, responsible for this department, told the national newspaper, *el Periódico*, last February that "I am outraged that anyone would assert there was genocide in Guatemala."⁶⁵

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan means "swift-flowing river" (*kisiskâciwanisîpiy*)⁶⁶ in Cree, and is where the north and south branches of the powerful Saskatchewan River come together to continue eastward. Saskatchewan became a province of Canada on September 1, 1905, currently one of 10 provinces and three territories that make up the nation. The southern half of the province is Prairie, characterized by flatlands, bush, and temperate climate, useful for agriculture and ranching. The northern half of Saskatchewan changes from Prairie to Boreal Shield, with large lakes and forests, and smaller, often isolated communities.

Saskatchewan's climate is difficult, with extreme dry cold in the winter and extreme dry heat in the summer. Because of this, Aboriginal peoples and the settlers who arrived later, were intimately dependent on the land, animals, and each other to survive. "At its most basic, the history of Saskatchewan is the collective story of human groups adapting to harsh weather and an expansive landscape in order to survive and prosper."⁶⁷ The province has a long co-operative history, and in 1962, under the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation party, the province's Medicare program was introduced, the first system of socialized medicine in North America.⁶⁸

Aboriginal peoples began to see European explorers arrive in Saskatchewan in the 17th century with the beginning of the fur trade era, driven by competition between Britain and France. The rulers "claimed title to the land since they denied that Aboriginal occupation

⁶⁴ Doyle, Kate. "Notes from the Evidence Project: Guatemalan Government to Dismantle its "Archives of Peace."" The Archive. June 1, 2012. <http://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2012/06/01/guatemalan-government-closes-peace-archives/>

⁶⁵ Ibid. Secretary of Peace is Arenales Forno.

⁶⁶ Government of Saskatchewan website, In Brief. <http://www.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=f80c0ebb-f1c6-497e-8bc0-30c215a5441f>

⁶⁷ Cottrell, "History of Saskatchewan" in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/history_of_saskatchewan.html

⁶⁸ Ibid.

constituted true ownership”⁶⁹ and constructed trading posts, often located at traditional Aboriginal gathering places throughout Northern Saskatchewan. Missionaries came after fur traders, with Anglican and Roman Catholic churches showing an intense competition similar to the fur trading companies.⁷⁰

When the southern half of the province was discovered to be fertile for agriculture, the Canadian government began an aggressive settlement campaign that offered cheap homesteads and a nation-wide railway to transport people and goods, which were attractive to White settlers from mostly Ontario and Britain, who “sought to mould the new society in their own image.”⁷¹

The Canadian government also pursued its colonization policies, based on the sentiment that “there was little in Indian culture worth saving and that First Nations needed to be civilized, Christianized, and assimilated before they could take their place in Canadian society. Education was understood to be one of the keys to this transformation.”⁷² The Canadian government established schools for Treaty Indian children, where “upon admittance, their individual and cultural identities were erased. Stripped of their clothes and shorn of their braids, they were dressed in a standard uniform, given a Christian name, and forbidden to speak their mother tongue.”⁷³ The health conditions were also so horrendous that one of the Deputy Superintendents stated “that fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein.”⁷⁴ The last school in Canada closed in 1996, at Gordon First Nation in Saskatchewan, and approximately eighty thousand former students are still alive today.⁷⁵

The lack of understanding of what happened in the residential schools, and racism, among Saskatchewan non-Indigenous residents continues today. In towns where teachers have admitted to perpetrating sexual abuse against children, and been charged for these crimes,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Waiser, *Saskatchewan. A New History*, 26

⁷¹ Ibid, 60.

⁷² Waiser, *Saskatchewan. A New History*, 177

⁷³ Ibid, 179

⁷⁴ Ibid, 179. A reference to Deputy Superintendent General Scott who made the comment “callously.”

⁷⁵ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. 5

community people not only question the legitimacy of the sexual abuse but resent the financial compensation received by the victims.⁷⁶

The Canadian government issued a formal apology for the Residential Schools in 2008, acknowledging the multigenerational impacts that include “poverty, poor health and education outcomes, economic disadvantage, domestic abuse, addiction, and high rates of youth suicide.”⁷⁷ It has also established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the only TRC worldwide to “focus on Indigenous peoples, and more specifically on the historical experience of children who were subjected to systemic abuse.”⁷⁸ The TRC is currently holding national and community events across Canada giving “survivors, intergenerational survivors, their families, former staff, government officials and others affected by Residential Schools to share their experiences, safe in the knowledge that everything they say will be recorded, honoured and preserved. The statements gathered at the event will hold their rightful place in the history of this country.”⁷⁹

It will be important for Canadians to accept and live this narrative of reconciliation, rather than return to a colonial narrative of denial and discrimination, an attitude-- expressed by the government-- threatening Guatemala today.

The Guatemalan and Saskatchewan Indigenous women in this narrative lived through these unusual periods of extreme transition, violence and oppression in their communities. Indigenous peoples in both regions have since received a formal acknowledgement of the horrors and injustices experienced at the hands of the state during this time: in 1996 at the end of the civil war between the guerrillas and the Guatemalan state, expressed through the Peace Accords and the UN Commission for Historical Clarification report, and the 2008 Government of Canada apology for the Indian Residential Schools. Indigenous peoples are now living in a moment where there exists the appearance of legislative and political space for Indigenous peoples’

⁷⁶ Waiser, *Saskatchewan. A New History*, 486. Waiser gives an example of reaction to the recent compensation awarded to victims of sexual abuse at the Gordon Indian Residential School and school administrator William Starr who admitted that he preyed upon young boys for more than a decade.

⁷⁷ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

⁷⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website. The Saskatchewan national event is organized to take place on June 21-24, 2012. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/reconciliation/index.php?p=312>

rights, but the political will - and popular support - is either ambivalent or biased against such change.

Their stories of life are very much about survival, resistance, and a deep belief in the potential for change, as individuals, as Indigenous peoples, and as a respectful, multi-culture⁸⁰ society. Their relationships with their families, the state, and the political spaces within which they work offer both diverging and contrasting narratives of strength and solidarity, crucial lessons for understanding how to build communities of respect and equality, as well as underlining the responsibility of non-Indigenous peoples to be part of this struggle.

BEGINNING THE NARRATIVES

The ultimate reason Saskatchewan and Guatemala were chosen for this study was because of my own need to understand the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in my local community as well as my global community. As mentioned in the prologue, my political work is integral to my identity. I chose Guatemala to represent my global community because of a professional relationship I had developed. While working with the international development organization, Oxfam Canada, one of our partners in Guatemala, Sector de Mujeres (Women's Sector), visited Saskatchewan. Sandra Moran is one of three coordinators of this national organization and was interested in the work of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan and whether there were connections between the experiences of Saskatchewan and Guatemalan Indigenous women, particularly related to supporting women to be political leaders as a strategy for inserting Indigenous issues into the broader political agenda.

Sandra is mestiza, “mixed” between Indigenous and ladino. It is also a political identity, expressing solidarity with Mayas and affirming Indigenous descent in the family when ladinos have historically attempted to obscure this part of their genealogy.⁸¹ The Indigenous women in this thesis consider Sandra a strong ally and political leader, herself. It was because of her support and belief in me that I was able to meet with these women in Guatemala. At the beginning of my research period in Guatemala, I met with Sandra for the first time in four years.

⁸⁰ I use this spelling of “multi-culture” to distinguish it from “multicultural” which does not emphasize an equal partnership between cultures, but rather can be interpreted as the dominant culture allowing a certain space for difference, while maintaining connotations of assimilation.

⁸¹ Hale, *Mas Que un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 167-168

She went through her cell phone and gave me the names and personal phone numbers of 10 women she considered important Indigenous women leaders with a diversity of stories to tell, saying I could use her name when I introduced myself. One of the first emails Ana López sent me said “because of the POLITICAL trust I have in Sandra Moran, it is with pleasure that I will meet with you.” And because of the deadly nature of activism and politics in Guatemala, without Sandra’s support, as a foreigner, I would not have been able to interview such high profile leaders, nor had them engage as freely as they did. This process shaped the results of this thesis and it while it cannot be considered representative of all Indigenous women leaders in Guatemala, it can be considered an honor and privilege to hear their personal stories.

The process of finding Saskatchewan women leaders to interview was more random than the Guatemalan process. It was through a wide range of family and friend connections that I was able to meet the Saskatchewan First Nation women in this thesis. While their stories cannot be considered representative of First Nations women in Saskatchewan, they are an important and inspiring contribution to the history and future of this province.

There were a number of reasons I decided to concentrate on the experiences of Indigenous women political leaders. I felt their stories would contain more types of tension and therefore have more to learn from: how they coped with racism and patriarchy, as well as how they managed through oppressive local and national political manifestations in each region to become leaders. I had also heard in bits of conversations here and there, that Indigenous women are a force, that their time is coming, and when this happens, there will be a transformation of the cultures within which they live - both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Of course this intrigued me and I wanted to see if I could catch a glimpse of what that may look like.

Finally, I decided on this focus because there is a serious gap in literature offering voice and space to the experiences of Indigenous women. The literature itself identified little or no academic literature on urban Indigenous activism in Canada, an absence of literature on Indigenous women in Guatemala participating in local (rural home community) governance, and a lack of literature on Indigenous feminism in Canada as well as internationally. Saskatchewan is virtually invisible in all of the above. There is a strong Indigenous women’s presence in Saskatchewan urban activism, in rural governance and in international coalitions, but it was

nowhere in the academic literature⁸². Another gap is home community activism and political participation. In the Guatemalan literature, there was little reference to Indigenous women running for elected positions in their communities' formal political structures or organizing in civil society. In the Canadian context, there was no literature that looked at rural activism, other than the advocacy targeting the Indian Act, which would have obvious consequences for the rural communities. In terms of formal political participation, I could find nothing exploring Indigenous women in political roles in Western, non-Indigenous culture, and only one book⁸³ I could find on Indigenous women political leaders in their home communities, which did not have a profile on a Saskatchewan woman chief. While this thesis cannot do more than offer a small contribution to a few of the above, I hope it does acknowledge the tremendous roles Indigenous women play in their many communities.

I felt it was critical to explore the experiences of Indigenous women in Saskatchewan, alongside, or in relation to, the experiences of Indigenous women in another culture; how they are situated within a global space marked not only by imperialism and modernity but also people's resistance movements and internationalism between communities. And maybe, whatever I learned could be useful for the women in their work, and contribute to a broader movement building justice between peoples.

VOICING THE NARRATIVES

This thesis is for me a political project. I wanted to learn from the Indigenous women's stories what role I could have in building a healthy and respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. They are recovering their individual and collective voice, challenging the colonial narrative and its presentation of their identity, and reconstructing a new one. At the same time, it is not only their work, it is also the work of non-Indigenous cultures to adapt to and support this process. How to tell their stories without taking over their voices and speaking on their behalf was my challenge and what drove my methodology.

My priority was to learn from the women's own words, and to ensure their words were the central voice and authority in the thesis. I am aware of my position as a non-Indigenous

⁸² Priscilla Settee's recently published book, *The Strength of Women: Ahkameyimowak*, 2011, is the only one I found that includes Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's experiences.

⁸³ Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century. First Nations Women Chiefs*, 2008

woman and am conscious of the sensitivities around a non-Indigenous woman ‘researching’ Indigenous women and the historical power dynamic that is inherent within that relationship. Because of this, I have rejected traditional research methodologies that have positioned Indigenous peoples as objects rather than co-constructors in the research. I instead follow a narrative-based, life-story methodology that attempts to deconstruct the power dynamic between interviewer and interviewee, allowing the women to more fully direct the flow and content in the interview.

Narratives are stories, important instruments in pre-colonial and present Indigenous cultures as a way to “give meaning to experience.”⁸⁴

Stories are event-centered and historically particular, located in a particular time and place... Stories have plots. They have a beginning, middle and end, so that while they unfold in time, the order is more than mere sequence but reveal a “sense of the whole.” Stories show how human actors do things in the world, how their actions shape events and instigate responses in other actors, changing the world (and often the actors themselves) in some way. Stories also reveal the way events and other actors act upon someone, shaping her possibilities, the way she views herself and her world. Whether hinted at or baldly stated, stories explore the complex motives that drive individuals to act in some ways rather than others and they also reveal the constraints of environment, of body, of social contexts that delimit a person’s possibilities for action.⁸⁵

Narratives are also a form of resistance to colonization, a way for colonized peoples to defend and revitalize their culture and history,⁸⁶ to “mobilize identities and bridge differences.”⁸⁷ Garro and Mattingly refer to Jerome Bruner and Algirdas Julien Greimas’ argument that a story constructs two landscapes, “one of action and another of consciousness. The landscape of action focuses on what actors do in particular situations. The landscape of consciousness concerns ‘what those involved in the action know, think or feel, or do not know, think, or feel.’”⁸⁸ I explore how these two landscapes intersect and how they contribute to the larger meta- and

⁸⁴ Garro and Mattingly. “Narrative as Construct and Construction” in *Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing*. ed. Cheryl Mattingly and Linda C. Garro. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 1.

⁸⁵ Mattingly and Lawlor. “Learning from Stories: Narrative Interviewing in Cross-cultural Research.” *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 2000;7, 6

⁸⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xii.

⁸⁷ Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever. Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 4.

⁸⁸ Garro and Mattingly. “Narrative as Construct and Construction” in *Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing*. ed. Cheryl Mattingly and Linda C. Garro. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 2.

collective- narratives of Indigenous women coming to leadership. Not all narrative excerpts included and analyzed in this thesis constitute a 'narrative' in their own right in that they do not consistently contain a beginning, a middle, and an end. But they are each building blocks of the women's narrative strategy: a chronological ordering of events, thoughts, and hopes, that led to, and continue to, sustain their personal and collective stories of Indigenous female leadership.

I do not focus only on what the Indigenous women chose to talk about and the meaning of their words, but I also reflect on how they chose to say it - what they emphasize and what they slide over. An interview is, like any story, a constructed and crafted narrative where the speaker (both interviewee and interviewer) strategically centre certain topics and elaborate on particular points. I attend to those strategic choices and do so based on the belief that narrative strategic choices do not mean stories that "leave out" important facts, or should be considered untrue, un-factual stories, as some critics of experiential narratives assert.⁸⁹ Instead, as Stone-Mediatore,⁹⁰ Garro,⁹¹ Mattingly,⁹² and Polleta⁹³ argue, by valuing the experiential narratives of marginalized people, we not only re-embed authority into their voices but are able to better understand the complexity of their personal and (cross)cultural experiences - described in their own words - as actors challenging and disrupting dominant ideological narratives and their discourses.

As the women's narratives are intended to be the central voices in this thesis, my interventions are only to provide context, ordering, and in the final chapter, reflection. It is for that purpose that in the following chapters, it is their voices that are dominant. Throughout the research, interviewing and writing process, I have committed to continual reflexivity, "situating myself"⁹⁴ - my belief systems, experiences, even dreams - and being explicitly conscious of how they emerged and evolved through this journey of learning: how I responded to the literature, my

⁸⁹Stone-Mediatore refers to not only positivist scholars, but also some feminist and poststructuralist scholars who feel "such stories risk reinforcing the ideologically given categories of identity and difference." *Reading Across Borders. Storytelling and Knowledge of Resistance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 161-164.

⁹¹ Garro, "Cultural Meaning, Explanation of Illness, and the Development of Comparative Frameworks." In *Health and Healing in Comparative Perspective*. ed. Elizabeth D. Whitaker. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc. 2006

⁹²Garro and Mattingly. "Narrative as Construct and Construction" in *Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing*. ed. Cheryl Mattingly and Linda C. Garro. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 4, 17, 260.

⁹³ Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever. Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 167

⁹⁴ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies. Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, 112.

relationships with the Indigenous women I was interviewing, and how and what I chose to present in the many narratives of this thesis.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses 25 types of Indigenous research projects that contribute to a broad Indigenous Peoples' research agenda for self-determination. Five of these connect to how I hope my research can make a contribution to this agenda: Testimonies, Story-telling, Celebrating Survival, Gendering, and Sharing.⁹⁵

The concepts introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (subaltern's lack of voice), Nancy Fraser ((mis)representation), Paolo Friere and Homi K. Bhabha (the importance of autonomy over voice by marginalized and colonized people in their struggle for justice), have strongly influenced how I construct this narrative: balancing the multiple voices, situating myself, being mindful of the history and politics that lie within each story.

Over a period of seven months – two of which were in Guatemala - I did interviews with these ten Indigenous women. I had been previously introduced, fleetingly, to Leona, but I met the other women for the first time when we did our interview. The interviews ranged from 2 to 6 hours and took place in my home, an office, restaurants, a camp site, and a mother's home.⁹⁶ While not always the most ideal locations, I tried to create a looseness and openness that allowed

⁹⁵ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*:

1) Indigenous testimonies are a way of talking about an extremely painful event or series of events. The formality of testimony provides a structure within which events can be related and feelings expressed. A testimony is also a form through which the voice of a 'witness' is accorded space and protection... While the listener may ask questions, testimonies structure the responses, silencing certain types of questions and formalizing others (144).

2) Story-telling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point of the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place (144).

3) Celebrating survival accentuates not so much our demise but the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity. The approach is reflected sometimes in story form... They celebrate our resistances at an ordinary human level and they affirm our identities as indigenous women and men (145).

4) Gendering indigenous debates, whether they are related to the politics of self-determination or the politics of the family, is concerned with issues related to the relations between indigenous men and women. Colonization is recognized as having had a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations which reached out across all spheres of indigenous society. .. A key issues for indigenous women in any challenge of contemporary indigenous politics is the restoration to women of what are seen as their traditional roles, rights and responsibilities (152).

5) Sharing knowledge between indigenous peoples, around networks and across the world of indigenous peoples. Sharing contains views about knowledge being a collective benefit and knowledge being a form of resistance (160).

⁹⁶ For a full description of my research questions, interview process, and background to the interviews, see Appendix 1.

for not only what I wanted to learn but what the women wanted to say. At the end of our interview in Lorena Cabnal's mother's home in Guatemala City, she said:

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - I have enjoyed speaking. Because of the history that we have had, the voices of Indigenous women have often been silenced. And there are many reasons for this. One is the internalization of oppression and another is the racism and discrimination that makes the voice of indigenous women often invisible. How wonderful that you have interest in bringing to light the thoughts and political actions of Indigenous women. It is very important for me and it's very important for the women and the organizations with whom I work and I participate. It's very worthwhile to share a space like this. I felt very free today. I've participated in other interviews but they're too directed and they end up being just a partial sample of my thoughts. But this time, today I felt very free. So I thank you for that and also it's a way of having autonomy over my voice and my thinking to have it be that free, and so I thank you. And it's really been a space of reciprocity.

FRAMING THE NARRATIVES

I began thinking about a theoretical framework first through the concepts of *resistance* and *identity*, which overlap across a number of theoretical positionings, most relevant being postmodernism, postcolonialism, and feminism. Henry Giroux's discussion of power and the way black feminists are expressing how power translates in "difference, struggle, identity politics and narrative"⁹⁷ described what could be a parallel re-articulation by the Indigenous women; Gramsci's theories on hegemony and counter hegemony, challenging and resisting in the "interlocking realms of civil society, political society, and the state," through "wars of movement" and "wars of position"⁹⁸ had clear resonance with the work being done by the Guatemalan Indigenous women; James C. Scott's *infrapolitics*, "low- profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name... always pressing, testing, probing the boundaries of the permissible,"⁹⁹ immediately brought to mind the Saskatchewan women's stories about speaking Cree and Lakota when forbidden and parents not sending their children to residential school.

⁹⁷ Giroux, "Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy: Redefining the Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity," 469.

⁹⁸ Mittelman and Chin, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," 18-19.

⁹⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts*, 19, 199-201.

Tuhiwai Smith and LaRocque's writings from an Indigenous perspective on survival, resistance and identity¹⁰⁰ were critical, with LaRocque asserting that colonization cannot explain everything about who Indigenous people were and who they are today.¹⁰¹ She calls for a resistance through reinvention – to see beyond tradition as a signifier for “authenticity” and instead focus on humanness. Although I argue for a different conceptualization of political and ethnic identities, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity was central to how I considered the Indigenous women's construction of both their identities and their political strategies. Diane Nelson describes the new Guatemalan Indigenous identity as “syncretic, hybrid and firmly ensconced in history.... no longer a process of assimilation or of a lost identity, but rather the fashioning of a new and plural personality.”¹⁰² Florencia Mallon elaborates on this in her discussion of how Indigenous peoples in Latin America have been proposing an alternative model of citizenship based on “hybridity, difference and decentralization.”¹⁰³

Global feminists stress the oppressive results of colonial and national policies and make links between economic and political issues with sexual and reproductive issues;¹⁰⁴ while feminist intersectionality theory¹⁰⁵ structures those oppressions into a multilayered matrix of domination formulated around “intersections of social inequality”¹⁰⁶ such as race, gender, age, and religious beliefs. While this is a clear fit with the Guatemalan women, I felt the Saskatchewan women would feel misrepresented based on their hesitancy to self-identify as feminist.

The above theories were useful in deconstructing and identifying the layers and oppressions of what the women were experiencing, or how they constructed identities to maneuver through spaces that layered tradition with modernity, but it didn't feel right. The women's stories were about more than colonization or racism or patriarchy or modernity. That was actually the backdrop, and by making it more, it overshadowed the women's own agency and individual stories. What the women told me about were the power of relationships - with

¹⁰⁰ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 4, 19-28.

¹⁰¹ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me. Native Resistance Discourse 1850 – 1990*, 155.

¹⁰² Nelson, *Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 130.

¹⁰³ Mallon, “Pathways to Postcolonial Nationhood: The Democratization of Difference in Contemporary Latin America.” 287.

¹⁰⁴ Tong, *Feminist Thought. A More Comprehensive Introduction. Dimensions in Philosophy, Second Edition*, 226.

¹⁰⁵ Developed by Black feminist scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins.

¹⁰⁶ Ritzer, *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots. The Basics. Second edition*, 204.

other people as well as with their land, their ancestors, and spirits – as expressed within an Indigenous worldview - that gave them strength and resilience.

And then I came across an article linking feminist intersectionality with complexity theory's complex adaptive systems, by McGibbon and McPherson. I was instantly stirred. Although it has its roots in physics, mathematics, and biology, it is now more inter-disciplinary and is used to explore “living, changing systems.”¹⁰⁷ With the voices of the women in my mind discussing holistic and integrated approaches, and their worldview that incorporates the circles and cycles of life and time, this felt right. The emphases on complex adaptive systems on entangled relationships, self-organization, ability to adapt and change according to changing environments,¹⁰⁸ all relate to how the women discuss their interconnected relations between family, community, spirituality, education, and health – all influences on their resilience and capacity to adapt and make change. The messiness and overlapping of relationships – a reflection of a real life - is emphasized:

Gender is not a dimension limited to the organization of reproduction or family, class is not a dimension equated with the economy, and race is not a category reduced to the primacy of ethnicities, nations and borders, but all of the processes that systematically organize families, economies and nations are co-constructed along with the meanings of gender, race and class that are presented in and reinforced by these institutions separately and together. In other words, each institutional system serves as each other's environment to which it is adapting.¹⁰⁹

McGibbon and McPherson also include a piece from chaos theory - “small, seemingly inconsequential events, perturbations, or changes can potentially lead to profound, large scale change”¹¹⁰ – which captured stories the women had told me about how a small impulsive decision – getting off a bus or seeing a little red truck¹¹¹ – had redirected their paths in life. And finally, because complex adaptive systems are about life cycles, it theorizes how “renewal and long term viability requires what complexity science calls *destruction*; a transformative breaking

¹⁰⁷ McGibbon and McPherson, “Applying Intersectionality & Complexity Theory to Address the Social Determinants of Women's Health,” 73.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Ferree, “Inequality, Intersectionality and the Politics of Discourse: Framing Feminist Alliances,” 2

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 74

¹¹¹ Leona and Tammy Cook-Searson's stories about these incidents will be told in a following chapter.

down of the old so that change can emerge.”¹¹² Not only does this apply to the moments that many of the women talked about in their own lives – tragic moments that served as the catalyst for personal change; but it also captures the discourses of decolonization and revitalization.

Each of the women’s lives is a complex adaptive system: their stories tell of their resilience in surviving personal and community tragedies, adapting to different lives and places, drawing on different supports to complete school, work, raise their families, while living a life that is changing the social and political boundaries of their communities.

ORDERING THE CIRCLES

Edward Said asserts narratives are a tool of imperialism through their “power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging.”¹¹³ He likewise attributes the same power to counter-narratives, to counter the imperialism, and that is my intention: to give space and voice to these Indigenous women to share their narratives, in their own voice. I have tried to create a thread of themes that follow along the women’s chronological lives in order to highlight the progression of connections between what happened in their childhoods - in their personal lives and their communities - and how it affected their life decisions and relationships, which then also influenced their identity, agency and political expressions. In many cases I will provide an introduction and context to a theme and then let their powerful stories on that theme stand alone.

Chapter Two is about survival in the Indigenous women’s early years – their childhood or for some, the time before they became political. This is where I introduce the centrality of an Indigenous worldview in the historical narratives of each region, underpinning the violence and oppression the women experienced in these early years, which motivated and pushed them to become involved in their communities. Many of their supports and sources of solidarity emerge in this period, as well as their early experiences of racism and sexism.

Chapter Three looks at the construction of their political identities: the intersection of “Indigeneity” and “woman.” The Indigenous women incorporate and express different elements of their ethnicity, revitalizing and politicizing the very markers of Indigeneity and tradition that

¹¹² McGibbon and McPherson, “Applying Intersectionality & Complexity Theory to Address the Social Determinants of Women’s Health,”75.

¹¹³ Said, *Culture and Imperialism* , xiii.

were categorized as backward and savage by the state. Into this, they re-insert the notion of equality and women's rights, reinvesting power and voice into the modern identity of an Indigenous woman. It is this last piece of their identity that makes them leaders.

Chapter Four explores the Indigenous women's political analyses, political vision and work: the political spaces within which they work; their leadership in a hybrid world, inserting ethnicity and self-determination into multiple spaces; and role-modeling what they believe needs to happen in the family and the state to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. Through their work, they are redefining personal and national identities, and reclaiming what it means to be Indigenous in political and popular culture.

Chapter Five is a reflection on solidarity: the role of non-Indigenous peoples in working for the rights and equality of Indigenous peoples. It is about constructing new narratives of reconciliation and respect that begin, rather than end with, an official apology, and genuinely pursue both personal transformations that shift into broader socio-political change as well as the re-structuring of formal institutions and models of governance to include equal participation of Indigenous peoples - particularly Indigenous women - within a neoliberal world order.

THE EAGLE AND THE CONDOR

I end this introduction with a prophecy.

Many of the Indigenous cultures of the world share a two-thousand year old prophecy about the eagle and the condor. It foretold an unbalance and tremendous conflict throughout the Americas from around 1500 to 2000. During this time the eagle, representing the mental, materialistic, modern, and technological world has driven the condor, representing the spiritual and indigenous people of the world living close to the land, almost into extinction.

According to the prophecy of the eagle and condor, we are at the beginning of a time when the condor will rise again and will once again fly together wing to wing in the same sky as the eagle and the world will come into balance. It is a time of partnership, love and healing, and a transition out of an era of conflict and turmoil into more sustainable and earth-honoring ways. It will be a time of great transition but also with some dangers. The condor will not soon forget the domination of the eagle. The eagle must also change to help restore the balance.¹¹⁴

It is a prophecy of Indigenous peoples, and speaks not only about a bringing together of peoples and ideologies, but also the importance of learning from what has come before and building connections that are grounded in and respectful of this knowledge. I hope my thesis will contribute to building these connections.

¹¹⁴Thanks to Leona for bringing this prophecy to my attention. Summarized from the Heart of the Earth website, http://www.heartoftheearth.org/articles/20020525_ActingFromTheHeartOfTheEarth.htm. Also described more fully by the Peace and Dignity Journeys Confederation of the Eagle and Condor Coordinating Council. http://worldprophecies.net/prophecy_of_the_eagle_and_the_co.htm (accessed Dec 18, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO – THE EARLY YEARS

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS

Stories, histories, begin with a worldview. The point of the story, the lesson to be learned, either validates or challenges, or both, a worldview that may or may not be explicit. To begin this chapter on histories – both regional political histories and the women’s histories – I am purposefully introducing two Indigenous worldviews. This chapter is also a history of competing worldviews, and this competition, this attempted conquest of Indigenous worldviews, shaped the Indigenous histories which would follow.

The cultural lens through which we see and understand our lives is our worldview, a frame containing collective historical concepts and beliefs that interpret and organize our present, and offer a guide for the future.¹¹⁵ These worldviews determine daily practices, livelihoods, forms of ritual, celebration and spirituality, and are embedded in our identity. For Indigenous peoples, the penetration of modernity – through assimilation and violence – shattered their frame, transforming confidence into shame, and autonomy into subservience and dependence. Yet in spite of the generations - even centuries - of colonized assault, many Indigenous peoples sustain their worldviews, as a source of support as well as resistance.

The following descriptions of the Saskatchewan First Nations worldview and the Mayan worldview are generalizations – each of the five First Nations ethno-linguistic groups in Saskatchewan and the two Indigenous groups in Guatemala (Maya, with 21 sub-groups, and Xinka) has its own specificities in how they remember, interpret and practice their worldviews. As well, they are extreme simplifications, as each worldview contains within it comprehensive and intricate interpretations of philosophical and divine beliefs and the rules for how these are to be expressed in daily life.

The First Nations traditional worldview is conceptualized as a circle. Representing the life cycle and an on-going connection between all beings and the Creator, it emphasizes equality, harmony and interrelatedness between nature and all living things.¹¹⁶ A central concept within

¹¹⁵ Cecil & Pugh *Maya Worldviews at Conquest*, 4

¹¹⁶ Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People*, 28

the worldview is *wahkohtowin*,¹¹⁷ which emphasizes that all beings are, and should be treated as, relations. This in turn shapes the community's economic and political interests. "All relations" extends beyond the immediate family to include layers of relationships with community, land, animals and the natural world, as well as through time, to include ancestors in the past and generations in the future, and into the spiritual world to include spirits.

The Mayan worldview is of an "infinite entity," a cosmic or spiritual force that unifies and gives life to all existing beings.¹¹⁸ Within this entity are a series of cycles containing smaller cycles: the solar cycle that organizes night and day as well as seasonal cycles, of which the corn cycle and other plant and fauna life cycles are a part; there is the human life cycle within which are gestational cycles; and there are intergenerational cycles. All follow the path of birth, death, and regeneration through a limitless duration of time. This entity is structured into two simultaneous worlds – the "visible world of humans' everyday experience and the invisible realm of the emanating forces, the creating and sustaining gods."¹¹⁹

While these worldviews threatened and disrupted the nation-states' pursuits of modernity, their expression and practice continue to be employed in varying degrees by Indigenous peoples. They thread through the women's stories as testaments and prophecies of personal and community resilience and survival.

GUATEMALAN RESISTANCE

The Guatemalan state (specifically the political and economic elite) established itself in a position of antagonism against Indigenous people, an attitude and posture that manifested itself in centuries-long struggles over land, labour and political autonomy.¹²⁰ Struggles over land, the most important local asset, were frequent and many, causing conflict between neighbouring

¹¹⁷ A Cree philosophy. Cardinal & Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*, 15.

¹¹⁸ Early, *The Maya and Catholicism. An Encounter of Worldviews*, 61.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 62

¹²⁰ Forster, *The Time of Freedom. Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution*, 153. Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 2-4; Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 9; Handy, "The Corporate Community, Campesino Organizations, and Agrarian Reform, 1950-54," 168; Smith, "Conclusion: History and Revolution in Guatemala," in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 79, 281.

communities¹²¹ and forcing many families to migrate out of their home communities in search of land.¹²²

The 1945-55 Revolution period and its promise of land reform ignited a sense of potential, not only for land, but also recognition of rights of Indigenous *campesinos*.¹²³ Until this time, any national reform programs had attempted to merge economic reforms with cultural assimilation and seen great resistance from the Indigenous *campesinos*. Land and labour were tied up in hegemonies of racism and classism, justifying the coerced labor of Indigenous people to work plantations,¹²⁴ perpetuated by reports detailing land conflicts as ethnic conflicts, or exaggerated Indigenous revolts to “incite fear and hatred.”¹²⁵ In actuality, Indigenous people were highly organized in asserting their rights and more often followed the legal route than take up arms.¹²⁶ The Revolution, a national transformative period of democracy, ended with U.S. interventions to oust the supposedly Communist President, Jacobo Arbenz, and undo the land redistribution that had been accomplished.¹²⁷

The Revolution acknowledged the strength of rural organizations in demanding their rights, and in response, the state turned the countryside into an on-going site of terror to destroy this strength: between 1954 - 1990, over 200,000 Guatemalans were killed or “disappeared” and over half a million people were physically displaced.¹²⁸ The most violence occurred between

¹²¹ Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 19; Handy, “The Corporate Community, Campesino Organizations, and Agrarian Reform, 1950-54,” 165; McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920,” 102,103

¹²² Manz, *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror and Hope*, 3

¹²³ Small peasant farmers or farm workers. Adams, “Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944,” in Smith (ed.) *Guatemalan Indians*, 158; Gleijesis, *Shattered Hope. The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, 162; Forster, *The Time of Freedom. Campesino Workers in Guatemala’s October Revolution*, 1-3.

¹²⁴ Adams, “Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944,” 153; Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 10,11,53,65, 69.

¹²⁵ Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 56, 105; Adams, *Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944*, 161.

¹²⁶ McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920,” 109.

¹²⁷ 72% of the land had been controlled by 2% of the farming units (Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 82). With the land reform, 100,000 families received land, benefitting 500,000 Guatemalans (Handy, “The Corporate Community, Campesino Organizations, and Agrarian Reform, 1950-54,” 170). Over half of this land was returned to the wealthy landowners (Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 197).

¹²⁸ Gleijesis, *Shattered Hope. The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, 387; Smith, “Conclusion: History and Revolution in Guatemala,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 272; *Memory of Silence*, CEH, Conclusions 1 & 2.

1980 – 1983 during the army’s scorched earth campaign through most of the country, burning down entire villages and their crops. Civil patrols were introduced by the army - with neighbours reporting on neighbours – empowering and escalating personal conflicts to be misrepresented as potential Communist activity, and creating a mistrust that reverberates today.

The negotiated end of the civil war was in 1996, marked by the signing of the Peace Accords between the state and the guerillas, the URNG, (with strong involvement by civil society). The United Nations called the violence acts of genocide against Mayan Indigenous peoples and attributed 93 percent of the human rights violations to the Guatemalan state. The Guatemalan Indigenous women in this thesis – Rosalina Tuyuc, Ana López, Lidia Laines, Lorena Cabnal, and Bernaldina Yuman – were children or young women during the 36 year civil war. The violence in their communities had a direct impact on their personal lives and communities, and for Rosalina and Ana, it was the impetus that pushed them into public, political lives. In the following excerpts from their stories, the themes of migration for work and education, conscientization, political involvement of family members, and organizational solidarity are introduced. The women also discuss the impact of racism and patriarchy on their identity - the beginnings of their political analysis – which would influence decisions they made as young women.

***Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala** - I think that the social activism that I have comes from the activism that my father carried out. He was an activist in the health field as well as in the religious arena and also in terms of arts and weaving and crafts. At that time it wasn't so much a political type of action, more of a social activism. The political activism came later. As a child, I accompanied my father when he would go heal sick people through the use of natural medicines, also in his religious activities which included work with youth, and also his work with co-operatives. And then when I became an adolescent there was the earthquake of 1976 and I deepened my involvement in social work and then later in the situation with the armed conflict it was no longer possible to continue this type of work because of army repression. And then with the fact that I lost my father because he was disappeared, kidnapped, by the military and my husband as well was kidnapped and disappeared by the military, that had a big effect.*

In reaction to this, Rosalina founded CONAVIGUA (National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala), an organization to provide support to women, mostly Mayan women, who had

lost their husbands in the war. It was a key civil society voice in the negotiations of the Peace Accords, demanding the establishment of the National Commission for Reconciliation as well as for the installation of the UN Mission. It also engaged in discussions around the content for the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, one of the sections in the Peace Accords.¹²⁹ Rosalina was also involved in Catholic Action, which originally formed in 1905 as “a church revitalization movement to purge “pagan” elements” and later, between the 1950s to 1970s, “became linked to Liberation Theology, to the popular and then to the revolutionary movement... articulating goals of social justice and land reform.... ” serving as a connector between different networks, including “now-prominent indigenous people.”¹³⁰

Ana López is the only one of the women to discuss her active participation in the internal armed conflict. She comments on how the armed conflict added another layer of intensity to the historical racial discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the attack against their worldviews and cultures.¹³¹ She credits her time as a guerrilla with her conscientization and the political skills she learned that have been critical in her political path.

Ana López, Guatemala - I was born in a village named Chejoj in San Sebastian Ach in Huehuetenango. When I was 4 years old my parents moved to Ixcán Quiché and the reason was that they had no land in San Sebastian. So they left in search of land.

From the age of 4 years old when I was brought to the Ixcán, my entire life has been in the Ixcán. I was 10 years old when the first kidnappings in the Ixcán took place as part of the armed conflict in Ixcán. And so I lived out the armed conflict in the Ixcán. The first kidnappings were in 1980s. Even before 1980 I noticed there was something odd going on in my home. The Ixcán was a very strategic place for the guerrilla forces and they did a lot of organizational work there and my father joined. Since I was a young girl, they didn't tell me because it was a very dangerous mission and children will go off and tell anybody anything. But I noticed that strange things were happening in the home and around the yard. Finally they had to tell me because I came across a guerrilla. So that was the beginning of my father's militancy. And in 1982 I joined the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. That was my childhood from the age of 12 years old and I was forced to become an adult

¹²⁹ Delpino, “Rosalina Tuyuc,” 29.

¹³⁰ Nelson, *Reckoning. The Ends of War in Guatemala*, 57.

¹³¹ Ana López discusses this in detail in Appendix 3, in the context of the Maya worldview.

at that time, to save my own life, to survive and I had to make certain decisions.

If we look at the reasons for the armed conflict, there are some strong reasons it took place – for one the poverty and the racial exclusion. And life for farm workers was very difficult. There was no access in and out of the region. But before I turned 12, I didn't really understand this. I had lived extreme poverty myself, but I didn't understand what that meant. When I turned 12, I was ready to understand the situation at a different level and that was when I joined the guerrilla forces.

So what did my life in the guerrillas mean? My childhood was left behind at that point. I matured. I had to think about the social and political problems of Guatemala. Not just in the Ixcán, because what was taking place in the Ixcán was also taking place across the country. And particularly in departments that were majority Mayan. The people who were most affected by the armed conflict were Maya, which make up 83 percent of the population. So I began to mature in my thoughts, I consider this to be when my social conscience really strengthened. I learned about the reality of the country and began to seek solutions to the military and political situation.

It was a life of sacrifice. But it was also a very valuable and honourable life. I learnt so many things. Many of the things I learned during that time have served me, helped me survive in my jobs that I've had since the signing of the Peace Accords.

The main thing I learned was political training. I had political training, political leadership to be a visionary. And to look at issues in the long term, with a long term view and to strategize, to see a problem and to figure out how to solve it in a long term way. And so for instance, looking at extreme poverty and understanding that that is caused by policies of the state that is exclusive and discriminatory, and we were not looking at small problems, but large scale social problems.

Lidia Laines' family left Santa Cruz, Quiché, because of the violence, disrupting their lives and causing them to face many challenges in rebuilding it when they returned to Guatemala.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - *The armed conflicts really became worse in about 1980-1981, and part of my family was involved in groups that defended our rights as Indigenous people, and for that reason, they were killed. My father was threatened, we were given a time period of about 8-10 days when we had to leave, or else we would be killed. And I was 4 or 4 ½ years old at the time. It was a really tough time. We would go out in our streets and just see people there who had been killed, and left there on the ground. We saw people hanging in the trees. We saw people whose eyes had been taken out. We saw*

people who were beheaded. And even though I was so young, this is a history that I have never erased from my mind. So during that time our family split up, as happened throughout the Quiché province in the country. So there was a lot of division of families, and the social fabric was torn.

We left the Quiché region and spent 13 years in Nicaragua, and at the end of 1993, my father decided to return to Guatemala. It was a really difficult situation because we didn't even have money to pay for our travel expenses, for instance, to come to school. It was a really tough time, particularly because our country is very discriminatory and racist. And the racism acts at a structural level, even from different institutions, from the Church. So it was very difficult.

[When we returned to Guatemala] it wasn't a good idea politically to go directly to the Quiché department. That was the time when there was still the process of transition into democracy and peace, and so first we just came here to the capital in 1993, and then in 1995 [part of the family] went back to Quiché. My father, brother, and sister all stayed here in Guatemala City, because we were looking to see how we could make ends meet economically, and my father said the key element is at the university, and at the time there was no university in Quiché. It was my father's dream to see all of us graduate from university. But because of the economic situation, it's been difficult.

So reflecting on my time in Nicaragua, we showed up without anything, but there were also these wonderful aspects of the experience as well. There were about 400 people all living in the same space, but my father was able to buy a piece of land, and then we were able to become more independent, because all those people living together makes for certain problems. And I really liked sports, and soccer, and I did lots of activities at school, and it really filled me up. And my dad always had strict hours that we had to be working, because we all wove. We would do different crafts, including bracelets and we would embroider blouses, and this was our survival. In Nicaragua we would sell them at events that took place, our crafts. So we had specific times to work, to play, and to study.

While not all the women discussed how they were personally affected by the war, they did all emphasize the underpinnings of the war - economic and racial discrimination. The racial oppression that permeated Guatemalan culture - the thrust of assimilation - had an impact on how the women were raised, how their families wanted them to be different, to not experience the racism and exclusion that they had. Their families emphasized education,¹³² working hard,

¹³² Ana is presently working on her Masters degree and has a university law degree; Lorena and Bernaldina both completed a university degree program; Lidia is in the process of finishing her university degree.

and often migrated for this to happen. In Lorena Cabnal's case, her education became her conscientization and motivated her to return to her home community, a decision her family saw as regression and she saw as recovery.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - I have a personal history of oppression that I lived through. I experienced racism and discrimination and this angered me a lot during my adolescence. I started to work at the age of 14 and I've had lots of different jobs along the way to finance my studies on my own. My first job was at a bookstore and I worked by day and studied at night. The few of us Indigenous women who have had the possibility to study a bit, it has been very important for us to grow and to blossom in terms of our conscientiousness, and I recognize that I am a privileged woman. I remember when I went to my first class at the university and the professor said for each one of you there are 100 Indigenous people who will never be able to come and sit here in this university setting. And so you have the responsibility to give back. And that really had an impact on me. And I wondered what am I going to be able to give back? And it also hurt me so much, it hurt me a lot to think that so many of my brothers and sisters would never be able to arrive in a university classroom.

And I'm also a child of a migrant family. Both of grandmothers migrated here [to Guatemala City], one from Cobán on my father's side, my Maya grandmother, and on my mother's side is from Chimalco, Sacatepequez. And being born here, in the city, gives us a different idea of what it means to be Indigenous in Guatemala... I grew up and spent my adolescence here and then as an adult went [to the mountains].

It was a very difficult time for me personally. It caused a breakage or rupture in my family relationships. For one thing, it was very difficult for my family to see me come out so strongly and visibly as an Indigenous woman and to define my identity in a visible way, as I was trying to recover the roots of my identity.

In some ways it meant that I was renouncing a life of progress and development. Because when people go to university to study, people say why do you go on in your studies and often the response is to have a better life, to have better living conditions, to be able to buy a home, to buy a car, and in my case it was completely different. I took a completely different path. And my vision was always how can I recover my own identity, how can I have my own recovery of identity? That was always my intent from the very beginning. My intent was also to do something for collective benefit of the Indigenous community in the mountains. And the fact that I was renouncing a possibility of having a very developed life caused a rupture with my family. I went to a place where the conditions of life were very difficult in terms of a dignified life because there was such a high level of poverty in that sense. But I took on this political decision to live there and to have my daily life carried out in the community.

This is the way my grandmother lived and my great-grandmother. And I had the chance to talk about it, to denounce it. To express it, but not as an outsider, but rather from within the community. I ate in the community, lived in the community, slept in the community. And basically it was returning to my place of origin.

Bernaldina's family worked hard to have her assimilated into Spanish-speaking culture, to the extent she felt isolated from them. She became bilingual by learning to speak their native poqomam language, and when her father died, it was her bilingualism that enabled her to find a job that could support her mother and siblings. Her conscientization also happened through education and involvement in an electoral observation organization, in a space made by the Peace Accords.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - *When I was 18 years old, I started realizing that there was something missing in my life, and it was my language because my parents had never really taught me the language because they were afraid of the discrimination that people experienced from speaking their language. My father lived it firsthand at school. He was beaten because he was speaking his language.*

They signed me up to study in a private school, so I never went to public schools. My parents made a great effort to send me there. I really have to thank my mother because she had a strong stance. She said no, it doesn't matter if I don't have enough to feed us I'll figure out how I can make miracles out of the food that we have in order to be able to send her to school and to pay for her tuition and for her school supplies. And we saw how sometimes she would have to sell pieces of her own clothing, or sell something to be able to pay. And so I really see it as an act of heroism. She really had to struggle against two men because like it or not my grandfather was really pressuring my father.

The negative influence that I received about machismo was basically from my grandfather. I didn't understand at the time why I felt this rejection of my grandfather. But bit by bit I began to understand why, that really he rejected us, particularly rejected me, it was worse with me because I didn't speak poqomam, there was an additional barrier. So really I was discriminated against by my grandfather for being a girl, for not speaking the language that would link us and also because my parents made such an effort to send me to school and he didn't think it was a positive thing, it was an investment that you're throwing away into the trash.

My father died when I was 21 years old and my mother cried so much. What am I going to do? What am I going to do with so many children? And at the time she was pregnant with the littlest one and so I felt a lot of pain. Not so much because of the absence of my father but more because of that whole

question of what are we going to do. My father had never let my mother work outside the home. And so she didn't know how she was going to defend herself or make ends meet, her hands were tied. And so I began to understand that I needed to be stronger.

And at this time I was the only one who was of age because the next oldest was only 15 years of old and so still in school. So I realized that I would have to leave and go work somewhere else. I had to find some way to make ends meet and support my six siblings and my mother. Because I had finished high school, I was able to get a job here that also worked in bilingual education but that paid me a lot better. I had to stop studying at some point. For one thing my work pretty much didn't allow me to do that and also economically it was getting more and more difficult to keep it up because all of my siblings were in school and I had to help feed them and cloth them...

It was in 1999 when I was involved in the electoral observation group that I realized a lot of different things took place... For instance I saw the types of manipulations that took place in dealing with documents in being able to vote or the fact that people didn't have access to the vote count, only the people who had high level posts were able to access that. 1999 was the first time I participated in that type of activity but I was still living and working outside of the community so I wasn't really linked to the people in that way.

But once I moved back to the community and started working there, the people who had been my fellow electoral observers had already organized and established an organization and I joined up with them and became involved and that's how I learned about Sector de Mujeres. And that's another element that participated in my formation as a person, with the training, because they had monthly workshops that were led by Sector de Mujeres.

Guatemala's lengthy civil war created a culture of resistance based on conscientization and collective politics.¹³³ Civil society groups – women's, Indigenous peoples, youth and democracy-building organizations – strengthened in the Peace Accords process through solidarity and the collective commitment to making change. Individual and collective identities were also fortified as they coincided with particular rights and movements.

While women's rights and feminism were (and still are) uncommon, and generally unpopular, expressions by any Guatemalan woman, there was enough solidarity built among the Indigenous women in this thesis that they felt confident in articulating feminism as an equal part of their identity alongside their ethnicity. Ana López even emphasizes that it is with women and

¹³³ Manz, *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror and Hope*, 50, 52, 67-68,106; Baines, "Refuge and Return: The Challenges of Transition for Guatemalan Women's Organizations," 115.

feminist organizing that she finds her solidarity. Part of this may be the particular location women occupied during the war – while the nation maintained a strict framework of patriarchal structures and practices, the war – specifically its resistance movements - disrupted this framework and required non-traditional roles and expectations of women.¹³⁴ This mixture of Indigeneity, feminism and political organizing directed at the state, principally in implementing the Peace Accords as they affect women and Indigenous peoples, would empower and shape the women’s political paths.

SASKATCHEWAN ISOLATION

Saskatchewan First Nations in the 20th Century were living in a culture of segregation and assimilation, a debilitating consequence of how Treaties signed between First Nations and the British Crown were being implemented – or undermined - by the Canadian government, and the *Indian Act*.

The Treaties were negotiated to establish the foundation for a lasting, peaceful and equal relationship between First Nations peoples and the white, European settlers. First Nations people understood them to be sacred, living agreements based on First Nations peoples’ principles of *wahkohtowin* (laws governing all relations, including with the land, animals, and the Creator) and *miyo-wicehtowin* (laws governing good relations between peoples).¹³⁵ These principles instruct people - individually and collectively - to conduct themselves in ways that create positive relationships with their extended community, which in the case of the Treaties, included the white, European settlers.¹³⁶ The Treaties were also meant to ensure *pimatisiwin* (a good life) and *pimachesowin* (the ability to make a living) for all peoples.¹³⁷ “Despite the rhetoric of the treaty negotiations, the federal government had a more limited view of the treaties, seeing them

¹³⁴ Grandin (*The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 134-136) and Stern (*Naming Security - Constructing Identity. ‘Mayan women’ in Guatemala on the Eve of ‘Peace,’* 211) emphasized the Marxist teachings women received in the guerrillas, in community resistance groups lead by the Church, and in exile in Mexico.

¹³⁵ Cardinal & Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations*, 14, 15, 22

¹³⁶ Settee, *The Strength of Women. Ahkameyimowak*, iv

¹³⁷ A self-determined journey to a good life and making a good living by individuals or a community. Beatty, *Pimachesowin (To Make Your Own Way): First Nation Governance through An Autonomous Non-Government Organization*, title; Gross, “Bimaadiziwin, or the Good Life as a Unifying Concept of Anishnaabe Religion,” 15; Rhealt, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy Concerning Knowledge, Identity and Ethics*. 11,30.

primarily as a mechanism for extinguishing Aboriginal sovereignty and land title, and as a means of segregating Aboriginal people on reserves in order to facilitate White settlement of the region.”¹³⁸

In 1876, two years after the first Saskatchewan Treaty was signed,¹³⁹ the Government of Canada passed the first *Indian Act* which was meant to establish guidelines for how the First Nations and settlers would live together. It had two goals, “to civilize the First Nations peoples and to assimilate them into Canadian society.”¹⁴⁰ Four years later, the first Residential School was opened, and would become the most painful and damaging institution for First Nations individuals, families and culture. The first schools opened in Saskatchewan in 1883 and continued until 1996. Children were often forcibly removed from their families, punished for speaking their language or practicing their culture while at school, and in many cases, suffered physical and sexual abuse from the teachers at the schools.¹⁴¹

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - This is an awful memory that I have, a lonely memory. Most of the kids as soon as you turn seven, you have to leave to go to school, and I remember there was this big long dock and no road there, and so the community, the planes would come pick up the kids, Cessnas, little planes, and they would start about five o'clock in the morning, and they would start landing one after the other. And this guy standing on the dock there, I guess he was the Indian agent, checking off, calling out names, and I remember the Moms, the kids were crying, the Moms too, dragging their kids down to the dock to see them go because they were told they had to go. And they would fly one after the other to La Ronge, I guess. For several hours, you know, until the kids were all gone. And then the community became dead. It was just dead. No kids, no sound of kids playing, because that's what we did all our lives, right. Out in the water, outside playing. It was just

¹³⁸ Cottrell, “History of Saskatchewan” in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*.
http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/history_of_saskatchewan.html

¹³⁹ 1974. The British Crown negotiated five Treaties with the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux and Nakota peoples in the area that was to become the Province of Saskatchewan. They are Treaties 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10. Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People*, 22; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 33, 53. Warry also discusses how the Indian Act was the start of an assimilation sentiment promoted by the government and “mainstream” society as the only solution to address the social and economic inequalities experienced by Indigenous peoples.

¹⁴¹ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 103. See also Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 4-5; LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 100-101

a dead community. It was so lonely, because all my friends were gone, all my cousins were gone. We were the only ones that didn't go.

Instead of peace and equality between two peoples: lines were drawn on maps to determine where Indigenous people would live, where they could move and where they would die. They were prevented from practicing their religions, raising their children, and moving across the lines drawn without permission from the Indian Agent. The cultural, psychological and emotional impacts of the *Indian Act* and the Residential Schools continue to cycle from generation to generation today and are “personalized and pathologized.”¹⁴²

This relationship between First Nations and the state created an increasing sense of powerlessness which shifted into passivity and dependency, “a period of voicelessness.”¹⁴³ Instead of revolting against the state, Saskatchewan First Nations felt tied, trapped, in Treaties whose foundational principles were being ignored. LaRocque describes three phases of colonization, with the third phase continuing today: there was “pre-Confederation, consisting largely of epidemics, explorers, missionaries, fur traders, and expansionists; Confederation, which effectively ended Native independence through displacement and legislation; and the post-World War II era, which roared in modernization... imposing urbanization and industrialization.”¹⁴⁴

For the Saskatchewan First Nations women - Joan Beatty, Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, Lois Isnana, Starlight and Leona - their family relationship is dominant in their stories, as the site of the abuse many experienced, as well as a source of support as they struggled to cope with violence and alcoholism¹⁴⁵ in their own lives and their communities. The importance of healing and having healthy role models is another theme that begins to emerge in this section, and for the Saskatchewan women, formed the foundation for their political work.

For Joan Beatty, her father and grandmother were her role models. Her mother's mom was a healer and midwife, respected throughout the community and the family member Joan

¹⁴² Hart, *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*, 31

¹⁴³ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 83.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 77.

¹⁴⁵ All five Saskatchewan women emphasized they were drug and alcohol free. Starlight, Tammy and Lois all struggled with alcohol abuse in their late teenage years; Leona drank occasionally but gave up alcohol when she decided to become a sun dancer; and Joan was raised in an alcohol-free home.

credits with passing along many traditional teachings. Her father made a decision when she was young (after many conversations with an evangelical missionary living in the community) to become a Born-Again Christian and no longer have alcohol in their home. This had a huge impact on the family and their community.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - The boozing, all that stopped even before I came along. That's been the biggest impact in my life. We weren't raised where there's alcohol and all those negative things. And for a long time, the men, the community turned against our family. But I also remember, late at night, like when alcohol started getting introduced in the 70s, with the road being built and stuff like that, they would come talk to Dad, we had an upstairs, and I would hear these men talk to Dad, crying, saying, how did you quit drinking, how did you quit? And that's when I started noticing people coming to talk to Dad.

Dad was always a leader in the community. That's when he started to get co-op fisheries, went to the trappers' meetings, always looking for things to improve the community. We had a co-op store, and our number was number 1, our membership card. He always worked for the benefit of the community. Whatever he did, was for the benefit of not just us.

I just had a desire to do that as well, to help others, and most of us were Aboriginal people but I also saw my father, when a conservation officer or police officer, RCMP, or anybody that was not Aboriginal, he came and sought out Dad. Because he was so accepting—everybody is human. It's not the color, you know he worked with everybody, right up until he passed away. He said there's good people and bad people everywhere. Not so good policies, some great policies, you just work and always think about where is it and how is it you can help the most.

My two sisters were gone to... a mission school. Dad knew people there, and thought that would be better than residential school. I went to the mission school... my brother came along the second year. So this is one thing that Dad did. He worked hard to get a school in Deschambault. And he did... And today there is a high school in Deschambault. So they don't have to go away for high school either.

That era was kind of exciting... We got electricity, we got a road, and I remember Dad talking about how he convinced government to build a road into the village, because they were building to the mine, right. And he said, why don't you come to the community, and the guy said, well we can't, there's too many lakes and too much rock. And he said, no, actually I'll show you, I've walked it lots of times. So he took this guy flying, and right here, this is the shortest distance, and then, they built a road.

Good things and bad things happened after that. You know, like our isolation got destroyed, well the roads are up, and more booze got in, and also I remember a welfare worker coming into the community. And Dad never wanted anything to do with welfare. I remember asking the man to leave. Dad always said, welfare, social assistance, was for widowers, people that

are widows, or old people who need that extra sometimes. That's the whole point of supports. Not for able-bodied people that are working.

Later on in life he worked with government, and these guys would go to him for advice. Even the deputy ministers would tell me later on, I would look forward to your Dad's reports. He would dictate to me, like I was still in high school and I would do these reports for him, to go to government. And so he was looked up to and well-respected, in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. And, so, that's what I grew up with.

And with my mother, she was a homemaker, you know, she had to raise all these [13] kids, and lots of times make our dresses, our clothes, our moccasins, and I thought, oh, my gosh, how in the world did you do that? And then after the youngest one was about eleven years old, because we were at a fish cooperative, she said to Dad, well I want to fish too. Because she used to be the fileter, helped Dad filet. And Dad said, yeah, you can, you have to go the meeting and ask to be accepted into the co-op membership, but I can't do it for you because I'm the president. You're going to have to come to the meeting, and there's no women there. And so she wrote a letter in Cree syllabics, had my uncle read it, and there she was. The first woman on the fishing co-op. So her and my auntie fished for a long time, and had their own outfit. I think about that today, that is really amazing. She just wanted to do it. She was independent in so many ways.

Leona's father died in the bush when she was young; her mother remarried and eventually moved most of the children to the stepfather's community. The new community had a strong racial hierarchy that put Leona's Cree family, who spoke a different dialect of Cree, at the bottom. And the new family was violent. At age 12, Leona charged her stepfather's brother with assault, against her family's wishes, and he was convicted. Her refusal to accept their violent home life affected her relationship with her mother and her whole family.

Leona, Saskatchewan - *That was the turning point of when I think she stopped taking a lot of abuse. You know, she was being abused by my stepfather... He stopped hitting her when we moved... And then, I mean they were still pretty violent with us, until I was sixteen. And I told them at sixteen, next time you hit me, I'll charge you. And that's when it stopped for me. I went through, you know, just the statistics. Everything, every statistic ever told about Aboriginal women, I went through that. And that's why I left, when I was eighteen.*

I tried to get help from the school when I was sixteen. But I picked the wrong guidance counsellor. But she wasn't any help. I was basically trying to tell the truth, and was told I was lying. So I just got out of there. I mean, I felt

bad about my siblings, but at that point it was either [leave] or die. So I decided to join the military. I couldn't take it anymore.

[After the military] I went to [a different city] and went to school. I was travelling on the bus coming back from school, and I go by this clinic every day and I'd never been inside this clinic before. And then one day, I thought, I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna go in there and ask for a psychiatrist. And that's what I did. I went in, and I said I really need to talk to a psychiatrist, because I'm having problems. I had started to have nightmares, I was trying to deal with, by myself, trying to deal with becoming more mentally strong so I could deal with my family. But I couldn't do it on my own, and it was starting to interfere with my daily life—I was starting to be afraid of heights, I was afraid of enclosed places, and I was afraid of bugs... It just got worse. I said, I need somebody who can prescribe me drugs, because I'm not telling my story again. And then they made me wait. They wouldn't let me leave, for four hours. And the psychiatrist came in and, it was a white man. [laughs] Which was really ironic, because a lot of the problems that I had as a child, they all started with colonization, the residential school, and intergenerational violence... He just kept seeing me, for six months, before he got paid [by Health Canada] for all the treatment he'd given me. At the end, he told me, I can't help you anymore. You've got to go find your elders, he said. I said, I don't have any elders. And he said, well you must have some, you're First Nations. And so that's what started me on my path to learning about my culture.

While I was going through therapy I actually pressed charges against my stepfather for sexual abuse. And when I did that, all my sisters turned on me except for one. They basically all told me, she's lying, it never happened.... And we were raised Christian, and so one of my sisters took to calling me and quoting Bible scriptures about forgiveness and stuff like that, and it really damaged our relationship. So I didn't hear from my family, my immediate family, for about, I don't know, a good four or five years.

I didn't want to cut ties, you know. I don't know how to describe it. I have this idea of what a family could be like, and I know how my sisters are. I know who they are inside. But all this dysfunction interferes with that, and I can see who they can be, you know, and that's what I've always wanted for them. To be who they can be, and be who they really are, and so it just kept me going.

My family is in a lot better place than we were back then, we're getting there, and I think part of healing should be about healing families first... All my siblings have gone through some kind of therapy. My mum and stepfather went through court-ordered therapy when I pressed charges... My oldest sister, she got involved in drugs when she was quite young. When she left when she was fifteen, she went to the reserve and got involved in drugs and alcohol, so her kids grew up with her being alcoholic and drug-dependent. And it wasn't until they were teenagers that she got cleaned up. She always maintained a job, though. Like she's always independent financially, because that was the one thing that was kind of pounded into us as kids, that

we have to pay our way. And that's why for me, welfare wasn't an option. I didn't even think of it when I was leaving home. I had to have a place to go and have a wage to look after myself, and that's why the RCMP and the military were the places.

Lois Isnana experienced abuse, alcoholism, and assimilation in her childhood years that carried on into her marriages. But it was the violent death of her second husband that pushed her to begin work on stopping the cycle of violence in her family and her community, with strong support from her mother and her husband's family.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - All of my [dad's] family, my aunts and uncles, were quite successful. My grandparents had the biggest farm on the reserve [Pasqua]. My dad and his siblings all had some sort of post-secondary education. My dad was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from Qu'Appelle here, in the school, Fort Qu'Appelle high school. But they were ashamed of who they were, and it was so evident, like I could feel it from when I was a young child. And in talking with my cousins now, my cousins never knew that their grandparents lived on an Indian reserve—it was called the farm. And nobody knew it was an Indian reserve, until they were older, and they were shocked to find out, some of them were shocked to find out they were actually Indians.

When I was a young adult, my grandparents were sick in the hospital... I got a traditional healer to come and see them, and it was then I found out that my grandpa actually had a pipe and they had their traditional knives and I found out so much about them and they were so happy to have, in their last days, to have that traditional healer come and help them. It was so sad that they weren't able to express it throughout their lives.

In contrast, my mom's family who are from Standing Buffalo as well, they are very proud of their heritage. My grandmother was from the Lakota Nation and they were so proud of who they are, you know the Mighty Sioux it used to be called. And I don't remember a time where we were ever ashamed. We could be proud of who we were there... So I had these two contrasting families, right? [laughs]

Both my parents worked and both my parents were alcoholics. When I was quite young, I was sexually abused by a grandfather. He wasn't my blood grandfather, but he was a grandfather figure, and that went on from the time I was five until I was eleven. That's important because it helped to shape who I was, who I am today. And, so when I got to be about fourteen, well at eleven my parents separated, and at fourteen I started acting out... fifteen I was pregnant, sixteen I had my first baby. Seventeen I got married, eighteen I had my second baby, and by nineteen I was separated [laughs].

My first husband was very abusive. One of my biggest role models of my life, she was a teen parent worker in Saskatoon, and she came to see me once a

week or once every two weeks at a teen parent support group, and we did fun things and because I was being abused at home with my husband, it was an avenue where I could feel safe. So when I was only nineteen, I got enough nerve to leave, I moved to Regina with my mom, and she helped to look after the children and I started to go to university. I had gotten a GED grade 12 and I applied to university and I was a mentor for another young mom, and I knew that's when I wanted to go into social work. And so then, I kind of liked alcohol for a part of my life there for a couple of years. Then I met Lloyd and we had our children, so by the time I was 24, I had all my four children.

Right from the day after my husband [Lloyd] died and it was splashed all over the paper, I knew I needed support because I wasn't going to survive... I knew for my healing and from formal education I needed to reach out and not to contain myself because almost every day I wanted to crawl into a hole and never come out. But I knew I couldn't, not for my children, and then not for him.

The hardest part was knowing he had an alcohol problem and that's why he was at that party, that morning. That was harder to work out than the actual - that he died through murder. That was harder to work through because that was one of the things I felt ashamed of.

And it was on Father's Day, of all things. He went into surgery that morning and I was worried about him. I knew he was really hurt... And he was conscious and he was lying on the side of his bed and he said, "I'm sorry." And there was a tear... that 'sorry,' that was another motivator for me, was what got me through all those years. And I know how fortunate I am to have had that, to have been able to have time like that before he [died].

So then the police were there. I was just trying to get to grips with losing my husband and all of a sudden the police were there. He - the police officer - allowed me to spend time with [Lloyd] alone. I was able to say to myself, "Say whatever you need to say to him because if not, you're going to regret it somewhere." There was something in the back of me saying that. So I thanked him for my children, our children, and I thanked him for the years we had together, the good years. I forgave him for anything and I asked him for his forgiveness if I ever hurt him and then I just said all these things that I needed to say to him. And you know, that in itself was so healing too. You know that's really sustained me through these years you know. And I don't know where I got the strength to do that. But I just knew that I had to in order for me to move on and for the kids, I had to come up with some kind of plan real fast.

It's been life changing to say the least, you know. I've had to reconstruct myself. I kind of knew who I was before but I hadn't had to bring myself out fully, to expose all the negatives to everybody on provincial news and paper. In black and white... I could have lost it and went back to a lifestyle that... I grew up with, with alcohol all around me. It was [about] how do I keep it so that [the kids] get help here as opposed to falling into what's all around us, the negative things in our home and in our home community.

All of the First Nations women, except Starlight,¹⁴⁶ lived in rural Saskatchewan during their childhoods. Many First Nations families experience cycles of rural to urban migration, which affects not only the families' relationships and opportunities, but also the state's categorization of them and therefore the supports they receive.¹⁴⁷ In contrast, these women's families (with the exception of Starlight) either remained rooted in their rural home communities or for Tammy and Leona, moved to small communities nearby their home communities, enabling them to retain strong connections to the land and extended family. It was the women, themselves, as children and young adults, who would leave their families and home communities, moving frequently to fulfill their families' expectations of education¹⁴⁸ and hard work.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - I started kindergarten in Otter Lake, but then we also went to the residential school too, when I was seven years old, and I cried too much so my mom took me home because I couldn't handle it. It was too tough. Then I attended school in my grandmother's community and then in two other towns for a bit and then back to the residential school when I was grade eight. Then I went to school in Stanley again, and then in PA I went to high school for a bit. I went to school all over the place [laughs]. Then I went to school in Churchill High School here. Well, I dropped out for a bit... There was all this social stuff that happened in my life at that time too, just getting into drinking and drugs and stuff. Then I went back here to La Ronge, I ended up moving in with my aunt and she was saying, go get a job, get work, and then I went to try and get work but they wouldn't hire me right away. So she said, just go there every day. Just keep going. There's always somebody that doesn't show up. So I kept

¹⁴⁶ Starlight's family moved regularly and she would not return to Saskatchewan until her early 20s.

¹⁴⁷ Peters, "'Our City Indians,' Negotiating the meaning of First Nations urbanization in Canada, 1945-1975," 75-88; discusses the contradictory responses of the Canadian government to First Nations people moving into the cities, reflected in the types of policies and programs they developed. The urban migration challenged the government's colonial notion of "Nation" that positioned First Nations people in isolated "primitive" spaces on the outside of modern society. The movement to cities was interpreted by the Canadian government as a leaving behind of traditional culture and an attempt to assimilate into modern, Canadian society and therefore transitional supports would be needed to make this adjustment. A new category of Indian was even developed – the "reserve Indian" and "city Indian" – each group expected to be internally homogeneous and distinct from each other. In contrast, Peters suggests that many of the First Nations people considered the move temporary – continuing to maintain relationships with home communities and eventually return. Additionally, First Nations people wanted to maintain their traditional culture in the city as well as participate in decisions around support programs and policies pertaining to them. This was yet another challenge to notions of citizenship vs. the colonial relationship of being wards of the state.

¹⁴⁸ Starlight has a Masters degree; Lois Isnana has a university degree in Social Work; Joan Beatty and Leona both started a university program but decided not to complete the degree. Chief Tammy Cook-Searson went through an entrance program for university but then got a job instead.

on going every single day, two weeks straight, every day I went to go look for a job to do waitressing. And then they hired me. So I've been working ever since.

I kinda worked three jobs... so I could afford my own vehicle. And then I was walking by this place, and there was this nice little truck there, it was a red little truck, and I really wanted to buy it. But I thought, oh, it'd be hard to get a vehicle on minimum wage. So I decided to enroll myself in school... quit drinking, I joined AA, and I was sixteen...[laughs].

When I was in high school I didn't get very good marks. So I decided to take this university entrance program because it gave you better marks and a better start. I had a baby when I was in high school, then I was accepted into that university entrance program plus I had [another] three-month old baby, and then I ended up losing my son. He was two. That was in July, 23rd, I lost my son, and then I was supposed to start school in September. I almost didn't go, but I said, I'll just go. So it was pretty dark, but I drowned myself in my schoolwork. I just kept on going to those classes, I ended up having the highest marks in that. And I worked at the women's shelter, too, as a casual, and I worked for emergency services on call... and I ended up getting a job with Indian Child Family Services and they hired me fulltime. So I didn't go back [to university].

My parents, they've always worked, and they've always been self-sustaining people. My dad is 66 and he's still out in the bush working. And he says, I can out-work those young guys. And then my in-laws are the same. They're just really hard-working people. Actually, you know, when I first met Jim [husband], my reading and writing wasn't that good at all. But when I went to that university entrance program, and I was learning how to write essays and paragraphs and stuff like that, my mother-in-law would stay up with me until 2 and 3 in the morning, because she's a teacher, and she would stay up with me all the time and help me with my homework.

When the women finished high school, they became more involved in community organizations and social movements. The opportunities for participation were more available for the women living in the larger urban areas: Joan was active in the early years of the First Nations movement for self-determination and sovereignty; Leona became involved in social movements working on issues important to First Nations peoples; and Starlight found solidarity with the American Indian movement.

Starlight, Saskatchewan - Student protests were going on in the US and Canada, and I started questioning everything. Something was inherently wrong. At that time, racism was so bad, friends were committing suicide because they couldn't handle it. I handled it with drugs and alcohol and started fighting back. I got involved in the Indian Movement and the anti-war

movement. I was reading about racism, colonization, and realized the root of what was making me feel like this. I was 17 years old. I was so angry to realize this, I was a very angry person. I got involved in the American Indian Movement and that's where my healing began. I met Elders, they got me off drugs and how to be proud. They gave me help with the anger.

But even for Tammy, who remained in the smaller, more rural community of La Ronge, and Lois, who returned to Standing Buffalo and Fort Qu'Appelle after living in Regina, much of their energy and time was contributed to organizations that focused on healing. This was a significant step towards their goal in building *pimatisiwin* (a good life) for their communities.

CONCLUSION

The Indigenous women in this thesis lived in families and communities that were experiencing intense change – war in Guatemala and the Indian Act and Residential Schools in Saskatchewan. Their worldview and way of life were attacked and undermined in a push for modernity, convincing many of the women's parents to surrender to assimilation, particularly around language and education. In all cases, the acquisition of a western, mainstream education and language separated the women from their families, either geographically or emotionally. The additional stresses of assimilation – expressions of racism and capitalism – placed enormous pressure on families and communities, and created cultures that normalized violence and abuse, further escalated in Guatemala with the army's reign of terror against Indigenous peoples.

The violence and oppression the women experienced and saw in their early years motivated and pushed them to become involved in their communities. They found solidarity in organizations and social movements, in many cases started their own organizations, to heal from and challenge the oppression. They balanced multiple jobs with school and raising their children, in some cases, also their siblings. Family and community members – Indigenous and non-Indigenous - were role models and supporters while the women worked to heal themselves and their families.

Amidst the oppression and uncertainty, many of the women's families continued to live by their traditional worldview, even if quietly, and the women internalized those traditional teachings. As they became more politically involved, those teachings formed the core of their

identity and much of their political work would focus on a *reinvindicación* and revitalization of their worldview into their modern reality.

CHAPTER THREE— BUILDING A POLITICAL IDENTITY

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES OF RESISTANCE AND THE ROLE OF TRADITION

An oppositional binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous was created in the drive for a modern nation, which demanded cultural homogeneity and was implemented through assimilation. Indigenous peoples were to become non-Indigenous, defined and expressed as “Canadians” or “Guatemalans.” In the Guatemalan context, racial/ethnic diversity was reduced to two oppositional groups: the dominant ruling class, the “ladino,” which refers to “the minority of Guatemala’s twelve million citizens who are of mixed European – usually Spanish – and indigenous ancestry; and “Indian,” which refers to the majority of Guatemala’s population who are members of the twenty-one academically defined Maya ethnolinguistic groups:”¹⁴⁹ which include Kaqchikel, K’iche’, Mam, and Poqomam, the languages spoken by the Maya women in this thesis. Lorena is Xinka, which is not a subgroup of Maya. As discussed earlier,¹⁵⁰ the majority of ladinos have Indigenous blood, yet deny their Indigeneity as they define it according to “hostile markings of stereotypes,”¹⁵¹ such as having an education, professional job, speaking Spanish, and/or wearing “modern” clothing. Their identity is “being everything modern and civilized that indigenous people are not.”¹⁵²

A similar binary of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal was constructed in Saskatchewan. Within Saskatchewan, there are five Indigenous First Nations¹⁵³ ethnolinguistic groups: Cree,

¹⁴⁹ French, *Maya Ethnolinguistic Identity. Violence, Cultural Rights, and Modernity in Highland Guatemala*, 2.

¹⁵⁰ In the Author’s Note about Names and Terms in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

¹⁵¹ Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 128.

¹⁵² Hale, *Mas Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 17.

¹⁵³ In Canada, associated categories of rights and social hierarchy were further complicated by the Canadian Government’s definition of who was “Indian” in the Indian Act, which distinguishes between “Treaty Indians,” members of First Nations who are descendants of the signatories to one of the Numbered Treaties. “Non-Treaty Indians” are members of First Nations, primarily the Dakota, who have reserves and are recognized as having Indian Status under the Indian Act, but were not signatories to treaties. (Government of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Peoples, <http://www.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=d35c114d-b058-49db-896a-4f657f5fd66e>.) Interventions and services of multiple jurisdictions – federal and provincial – were directed at individuals rather than communities, further differentiated according to the federal government’s definition of who was treaty and non-treaty. The Indian Act also included a complicated equation that determined whether women (and their children) were Indian or not depending on the status of their father or husband, which had a significant impact on the rights and political space for Aboriginal women.

Saulteaux, Nakota (Assiniboine), Dakota (Sioux) and Dene.¹⁵⁴ Métis people, whose ancestry is composed of a mix of European settler and Indigenous ethnicities, are also considered members of Saskatchewan's official Aboriginal groups, and there is much diversity among Métis people in how they politically and culturally express their Indigenous identity. Non-Aboriginal people were originally white, European settlers but now include a diversity of peoples, particularly as many recent immigrants are from non-European countries.

Hegemonic categorizations of Indigenous peoples within these binaries presented their worldview, expressions of tradition, and ethnicity, as “inherently backward, uncivilized, and ignorant,”¹⁵⁵ a position that shaped and determined how and where Indigenous people would assimilate, but also how and where they would resist. Binaries are not merely categories of opposition, but articulations of power imbalances,¹⁵⁶ and these same markers of an “uncivilized” tradition and ethnic identity are being reclaimed by Indigenous peoples to revitalize and ground Indigenous cultural rights and self-determination movements. As violence and oppression in the nation-state intensified over the past 150 years, so too did the politicization of an “Indigenous identity” into an identity of resistance. Leaders in Indigenous rights movements aimed to create this collective cultural identity, a pan-Indian identity, out of a diversity of Indigenous groups whose strongest ethnic and cultural identifications were, and continue to be, determined by “local” markers, often of land and home community. Tradition became – and is – what ties the differences together. Constructing the unified identity of resistance remains an ambitious negotiation: to contain diverse ethnic and cultural articulations in one political identity; and to position and validate tradition – through claims of “authenticity” – as a tool to demand sovereignty and self-determination within a multicultural, modern state.

The many threads of tradition can be unraveled to reveal its varied influence on the construction of personal identities, political resistance movements and national policies.

¹⁵⁴ Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People*, 27

¹⁵⁵ Office of the Treaty Commissioner, *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People*, 3; also LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 15, 24-25, 39-47. She deconstructs what she calls the Canadian master narrative positioning European white settlers as civilized and Aboriginal peoples as savage, asking, “How many civilized traits would a savage need to qualify as civilized? (47), an ironic question, considering the savagery inflicted on Indigenous peoples by “civilized” non-Indigenous peoples, and also relevant to the identity of Guatemalan Indigenous peoples, whose categorization as Indian or ladino was based on the acquisition of “civilizing” characteristics: Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 128.

¹⁵⁶ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 56.

Considered fixed and backward within the modern, nation state discourse, tradition is also positioned as fixed in Maya and Aboriginal rights political movements, a strategic essentialist¹⁵⁷ move in order to be authentic, legitimate, and acknowledged by the state as “distinct” and therefore deserving of distinct rights. I support Emma LaRocque’s argument that tradition, and how it is interpreted and used by the Indigenous women in this thesis, is flexible and fluid, moving and evolving through time and place.¹⁵⁸ “Indigenous traditions are not static; their strength lies in their ability to survive through the power of tribal memory and to renew themselves by incorporating new elements Their power lies not in how closely they adhere to their original form, but how well they are able to develop and remain relevant under changing circumstances.”¹⁵⁹ In addition, I believe that while the modernist vision was of homogeneity, the local and personal experiences of assimilation and resistance to modernity are diverse enough to assert its heterogeneous character.¹⁶⁰ In this manner, the articulations and understandings of both tradition and modernity have evolved, are heterogeneous, and it is within these diverse and shifting sites of culture and power that the personal and political identities of the Indigenous women leaders in this thesis are constructed.

The Indigenous women define their identity as having two parts – their Indigeneity and their woman-ness – each constructed to contain varying tensions (modernity, tradition, woman,

¹⁵⁷ Gabbert, *Becoming Maya. Ethnicity and Social Inequality in Yucatan since 1500*, xv, writes “essentialist assumptions that consider ethnic groupings as a substratum of common language, culture, or descent, and have presupposed a continuity of the “Maya people” from prehistoric times that rests on an unspecified quality of “being Maya.” this view runs the risk of conflating the presence of cultural traits (such as language) with ethnic consciousness and organization.”

In the Saskatchewan/Canadian context: Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” 726-727, also argues that while tradition is a “powerful means of resisting colonialism” its premise on authenticity and “hostility to change” can lead to “rigidity and irrelevance.”

¹⁵⁸ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 135-138 discusses the perspective that Native culture is static, which offers only two options - to be part of an “authentic,” “prehistoric” and disappearing culture or to assimilate. She also argues that culture and traditions are fluid, and that the challenge is in defining, or recreating, an Aboriginal cultural identity and representation that properly captures the diversity and uniqueness of what it means to be a Aboriginal person. Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, Chapter 5, also argues in favour of the evolution of Aboriginal culture, particularly in response to those he calls neo-conservatives who claim that Aboriginal people have assimilated and their culture has disappeared, based on a rigid notion that culture cannot change without disappearing. He points to the flaw in this logic – as European culture has evolved and responded itself over the centuries. Warry emphasizes that while culture and tradition evolve and change, the values embedded in them continue and are recreated to ensure the strength and persistence of the culture.

¹⁵⁹ O’Riley, (quoting John Borrows) “Shapeshifting Research with Aboriginal Peoples: Toward Self-Determination and Respect,” 87

¹⁶⁰ French, *Maya Ethnolinguistic identity. Violence, Cultural Rights, and Modernity in Highland Guatemala*, 130

professional), as well as the tensions of being raised amidst continuing violence. For the Saskatchewan women, their Indigeneity is their primary identity, and for the Guatemalan women, it is the equal combination of Indigeneity and feminist that shapes them. I have also added a third part - which they discuss less explicitly - their sense of different-ness, of being the “black sheep” and causing conflict in their family and community, which I believe set them apart at an early age and influenced their movement into leadership.

The first part of this chapter explores the importance of an Indigenous worldview in the women’s political identity and lives. I have organized this section according to the elements of their worldview that the women discuss, and acknowledge there are overlaps between elements. I begin with broader thoughts on the worldview, and follow with their stories about spirituality and ceremony, land and home community, language and clothing. Kinship is another central organizing concept of Indigeneity and is a prominent expression throughout all the themes in this thesis. Because of that, I cannot separate the women’s thoughts about family and kin into one section, but rather let it emerge in the many places it does.

Within both Saskatchewan and Guatemalan stories, there are unique mixings of the traditional and the modern. I feel the women’s words stand autonomously without introduction or interpretation and I give only the briefest background for land, language and clothing. The second part of the chapter looks at their identity as women and the balance of traditional and feminist notions of motherhood as well as with their activist and professional roles. The final piece of the chapter presents their reflections on their own strength and courage, manifested in their different-ness.

INDIGENEITY AND IDENTITY

The Indigenous worldview forms the essence of the women’s identities. They express it in different ways and emphasize different parts – but these parts all connect back to integral elements of an Indigenous worldview – their relationship with their land, their home communities, language, ancestral teachings, ceremonies, and clothing. They have incorporated these traditional concepts - in their re-situated and/or gendered form – into their identities. This is not a constructed hybrid identity, but an evolved ethnic and cultural identity - grounded in “authentic” traditional Indigenous concepts - constructed to resist and influence the dominant culture. The space to re-interpret and re-articulate Indigeneity as an ethnic identity is a pathway

for survival, for motivation, and is the central part of their political strategies to strengthen a collective Indigenous identity in a hybrid space.¹⁶¹

Worldview

***Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan** - People, especially the elders, they like it that I'm friendly, and that I talk to them, and I'm respectful, and they like it that I speak Cree, and that I understand their culture and the history and where we come from and the connection to the land. I hear that lots from people all the time. And that I joke around and like to laugh. I'm proud to be Native. Because, before, I think that we were made to feel ashamed of who we are and where we come from. There's been a lot of work done, for us to be proud of where we come from, our language, our culture. When I go to Treaty Day, a lot of the young kids, if I'm wearing my headdress, they'll say, hey, there's an Indian!*

***Starlight, Saskatchewan** – An Indigenous worldview affects everything I do in activism. Because that's who I am and that's how I act, and when things are happening around me that are out of sync with that, I get upset. To me, Indigenous is, it's your identity, it's your culture, it's your traditional worldview, and it might not necessarily be bloodlines, especially because of what they've done here. I mean, there's Métis that are really full blood and there's full blood that are really Métis. To me, it's, adhering to a way of life, living that way of life, being part of that community. It all goes back to community. You have to be a part of a community to be part of it and to understand and to live it. And I guess that's Indigenous here.*

***Ana López, Guatemala** - A number of our customs had changed during the armed conflict and our spirituality had as well. Our spirituality during the armed conflict was primarily Catholic because of the few priests who had accompanied us during that time. And so this is really a different culture for us between the time of prior to, and after, the armed conflict. In the OMR (Women's Resistance Organization of Ixcán) we talked about this, how our religion had been and our beliefs. And some of the things we identified as our cultural elements that were still maintained even during and in spite of the armed conflict were our community, our communal ways and our respect. Those are things that did not get lost during the armed conflict. But there*

¹⁶¹ Fischer, *Maya Identity in Thought and Practice*, 14, discusses the use of tradition “not as determinant in and of itself but as a resource that plays into the ongoing construction of agency and structure.”

were many gaps. A lot of people lost language, there was a big language loss during the armed conflict because people from different language groups were coming together and so the easiest and quickest way to communicate was in Spanish, and it was also, honestly, a way to defend our own lives. Because if the army was coming we had to shout in Spanish, the army's coming. Because in the time it would have taken us to translate to Quiché or Mam, the army would have grabbed us and killed us.

You asked about tensions that arise from identity, and for me, as Ana, these are the tensions that I have mentioned, the tensions that occur because of the internal armed conflict and the way that it affected our values, as women, and as Maya people. The army came in and didn't give a thought to the fact that for us everything was sacred and had meaning. And one of the really sad things was that most of the military were forced to join the military. Many of the people who burned down our corn, who burned our homes, who killed our animals, who massacred and killed people, some of those people were children or siblings of Mayas themselves. But because they found themselves in a place between life and death because of decisions made by the top leaders of the country, they were part of the military.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - We began to revive and rebuild our cosmovision, our worldview, our cosmic view. We as Xinkas have been taking ancestral elements of our universe but also incorporating concepts based on our ability as women as we revive elements of our identity. And so we see not only the world but the entire cosmos, the galaxies as a circle of energy that is always in motion. And we identify four different types of energy. One is green, which represents a large volcano for the Xinka people, called Tecuan, which also represents all of nature from the largest trees that exist to the smallest trees and it represents the mental piece of the body, the mental dimension.¹⁶²

When I say this word, *reinvidicación*, to me it starts off with a deep, strong sense of why we struggle. And once we have that deep feeling, we can understand the reality of our oppression and we seek ways to free ourselves, to emancipate ourselves from it. And one way of doing that is through visibility that others see that we exist. This concept helped us in recovering and defending our territory and land, particular referring to the green. Why do Indigenous people focus on land in this way? We don't see it as a property. Or we don't have the same terms that are used by the model of economic development that sees people as owners who have power over the land as a property. Rather we see the land as something that is in harmony with life and is used for collective benefit. And that means you take care of

¹⁶² Lorena's complete explanation of the Xinka cosmovision can be found in Appendix 2.

the land, the land is the space that allows us to be in the world with dignity. So for instance, we don't say something like I walk on top of the land. Because that defines power. We say walk with the land because that's the type of relationship.

Spirituality and Ceremonies

Leona, Saskatchewan - *I never made a conscious decision to go sun dance. It was my mom that made the decision for me. When I had cancer, she said, we're going to bring you to a sun dance, she said. I had no idea what that meant, you know... And I went to a Dakota sun dance the first time I went to a sun dance. And I never knew there was other types of sun dance, I just knew this one kind.*

Right after I found out I had cancer, I had surgery, and so they had to cut across here, taking out, and sending away, and it came back five days later and they said, it's cancerous. We want you back in surgery this week. And I'm thinking, oh my god. So I called my mom and she said, well you gotta come home. She goes, let me think about this. So she called me back two hours later, she said, you gotta come home, there's a sun dance next week, I want to take you there, she says. So I said, alright. I'll come home. So I drove with my daughter [from a city in Ontario], she was almost two at the time.

For me the sun dance is about, basically, the simplest explanation is reaffirming your relationship with the earth, and you're giving thanks for everything you've been given over the years, and then preparing for next year, asking for help. And all the people you're dancing with, and giving, and affirming your relationships... You're just a human, and part of a web of life. And that just seems so hokey to say, but that's what it is.

I didn't know what was going on, because they were talking in Dakota. And I just followed along, what my mom was doing. And she didn't really know, she was in a Dakota sun dance, which is totally different from a Cree sun dance, so I didn't know she didn't know what she was doing. [laughs] But we just went there, went to the tree, did a giveaway and did a ceremony for my healing, and then we went from there.

So we paid for the sun dance, and then she took me to a shake tent, which is another, it's a correction ceremony, and it's equal to the sun dance... what they do is they bring in the ancestors and they unwind what's been done to you, and they fix the problems you've had, or whatever. And so she brought me to the sun dance and brought me to the shake tent, two of the strongest ceremonies we have on the prairies.

And she's a Christian at this time. Strong Christian. But she knows what works. So anyway, at the shake tent, they told me, because they asked me what I wanted to do - the ancestors - and I said, well I've never been raised this way, no offense, I wasn't raised this way, I want to take the drugs, I want

to go for surgery. [laughs] And they said, okay, we can go with that. But we'll come and see you, and make sure that when they cut, they're cutting the right spot. They're not mixing it up, they said, and we'll make sure when the drugs go in, they're working the right way. We'll come and we'll make sure you're okay. That's what we'll do for you, they said.

What I didn't know was they're going to come visit me. They gave me all these dreams about how our people are supposed to live, and I didn't know it was a bargain. I really didn't know. I didn't know what I was getting involved in. I just went because my mom brought me there. So that year, the year 2000, I just had all kinds of dreams, and being taught things by old people in my dreams, that my Mom recognized, these old people. Some of them she doesn't recognize. But just being taught stuff about our culture, I don't even know how to explain it. And then being woken up in the middle of the night and being told, you need to go for a sweat. I didn't even know what a sweat was.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - About two or three weeks after my husband died it was our annual sun dance. ...So we went and it was the hardest, very hard to do, but we did it. And we got through the four days, I don't know how I did that, of the sun dance ceremony. .. the final day is pretty dramatic and you know four days of praying and being together and we were sitting getting ready for the formal feast. We were having a rest, it was really hot. And I said, look at this dragonfly, it landed on my foot. And I tried to shake it off and it came back and it landed on my foot again. And so I shook it off again and it came and it landed on my hand. And then the fourth time it came and it landed here [on her heart]. And it was the same dragonfly. And I said, I think this is my husband. I started to cry. And you know it became a symbol for our family, the dragonfly. Because that dragonfly never left me.

It was a few years ago [during] the trial, when there were so many court appearances... And so this one morning we were getting ready for the court and I was just nervous and shaky and I went outside on my back step and I was praying, just asking for strength. I give everything to you today, Creator. And it was in August. And there were all these dragonflies and three of them came and they landed right here again [heart]. And I just [knew], whatever happens, I knew I would be OK. Well they kept him [the man who was charged with killing her husband] in jail that time. They kept him in jail until January of last year. You know that dragonfly symbolizes a lot to our family. Even my daughters. Especially my youngest. When she graduated from high school last year, she wore dragonfly earrings.

Without the traditional or the spiritual side I don't know how I would have ever made it. That was always part that kept me sane, strong. Or in my weakness it kept me going. To be able to give it to the Creator, to a higher power, it was so much easier than trying to bear it alone.

When a family member passes away in our Dakota tribe, we go through a year of mourning. And in that year of mourning, we start preparing for the first anniversary date of that person's death. And so we do that by collecting giveaway items—towels, blankets, food, and on that date of the anniversary, we gather all those things, we bring them together, we invite people who helped us through that time, and we have a memorial giveaway and feast. And then, so once that's over, then our mourning period is over, but if somebody, like for us, we weren't done, right? And what we wanted to do was still to honour Lloyd some more. He worked at the school prior to his death, so what I did was I began a Spirit Award for the students of our school, and so one of my biggest criteria of winning the award is for the student to show non-violence within the community. So the first year we had one recipient, and I promised it for four years. So then the second year we had two recipients, third three, and this is going to be our final year and we're going to have four recipients, and what we do is at the annual awards day, we're going to give a monetary gift of \$100 and I'm making them each a star quilt. So, because this is going to be our last year, we're all asking that the young boys who know how to sing, if they can sing a memorial song, and we're going to finish it off that way.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *I believe that there is a spiritual side to all of us, and I pray, I'm always thankful, and I think about, like sometimes when I'm out for a run, I think about people who are sick and I'll run for them, and sometimes I'll feel a little bit heavier, because it's like I'm with them, and then I run for them and just think about them.*

I've never done a sweat or anything. But we have hands-on healers, traditional healers, and I believe in their works, because I've seen the results of their work. I wish I could see, you know how some people can see energy, I want to do that. [laughs] I want to do that.

Place: Land and Home Community

Land and home community have a special significance in Indigenous people's identities.¹⁶³ “Indigenous governance and knowledge systems, languages, and cultural and

¹⁶³ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 20; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 40

ceremonial practices are rooted literally in the landscapes of traditional territories.”¹⁶⁴ For both the Saskatchewan and Guatemalan women, they identify themselves through ownership of and connection to land, as well as being members of a specific ethnic group whose collective identity is located in a particular community (and often language group), rather than as part of a more broad identity of Indigenous.¹⁶⁵ Indigenous communities were built and sustained on the strong connections of family which then influenced economic and social decisions and loyalties.¹⁶⁶ The Indigenous women in this thesis who no longer live in their home community return frequently throughout the year, when possible, to retain their ties to the land and their family.¹⁶⁷

Also for both regional groups, land is sacred, the connector between humans and other living beings with the Creator, and was also historically communally used and owned.¹⁶⁸

In the context of western Guatemala (which I believe would also have resonance with some of the Saskatchewan Indigenous women), Indigenous people can “shed most of Mayan dress, speech, livelihood, and customs, yet they still retain a strong, at times, militant, sense of local identity,” particularly in relation to surrounding non-Indigenous communities.¹⁶⁹

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - My first lens [for making decisions in government] was a northern, or I guess, as an Aboriginal. You know, how is this going to impact on an Aboriginal person? Is there an Aboriginal community nearby? How is this going to help out? How is it going to impact my home community? What are the challenges in my community? Because I

¹⁶⁴ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 223

¹⁶⁵ Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*, 18; Adams, “Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944,” 152; Carmack, “State and Community in Nineteenth Century Guatemala: The Momostenango Case,” 122; Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 304; Watanabe, “Enduring Yet Ineffable Community in the Western Periphery of Guatemala,” 203.

¹⁶⁶ Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century. First Nations Women Chiefs*, 23; Menchu, *I, Rigoberta Menchu. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*; Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*; Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 131.

¹⁶⁷ In Guatemala, Lorena and Bernaldina both lived away and then returned to live in their home communities; Ana, Rosalina and Lidia live and work in Guatemala City but return to their home communities throughout the year. In Saskatchewan, Tammy and Joan lived away and then returned to live in their home communities; Lois moved from her father’s home community to urban centers and then to the home community of her husband where she continues to live; Starlight and Leona live in urban centres and return frequently to their home communities.

¹⁶⁸ Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, 7; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 40.

¹⁶⁹ Watanabe, “Enduring Yet Ineffable Community in the Western periphery of Guatemala,” 202.

would go home, maybe every two weeks, I always did that all my life, because I needed to touch base, be on solid footing. And also, a woman's lens. I think it's our responsibility to try to keep what we have. I think the language is critical. Where I am now, in Deschambault, even the trapping, the fishing, the way we were raised, is starting to die off. We still do it, the kids still love to be out there, in the bush and in the water, you know, they're out there fishing, but that's a dying industry as well. I don't know how long it's going to go on, because of the costs of things.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - Lately I feel like I'm in a chaotic fog because of all the busy-ness, and anytime I'm driving, I think, oh I should just pull over there and just sit there. Because I like just sitting on the ground. Like even when we come here [to the picnic-ground], it's nice. Just being connected to nature and knowing that everything you need is right there, you just have to know how to get it, and I go camping with my parents a lot, or even berry-picking. I'm so addicted to berry-picking.

Ana López, Guatemala - When I talk about ethnic identity, I'm really focusing on, marking it out as cultural values of Maya people. And the cultural ethnic identity can be broken up into two broad areas or aspects. One is material and the other is spiritual. In terms of material aspects, the first element of that is our way of having land ownership. The land issue is a really tough issue in terms of social problems in Guatemala. In our culture, the lands are ours to be used to benefit the community and the families. The lands are cultivated but we are never concerned with having legal title to the land. It was out of our control, or it wasn't by our own will it was sometimes even without our own realizing that the history of over more than 500 years, in the beginning the Spanish came and started creating legal titles for our land. They made these papers and they included us along with the land. And they expropriated and stole our land.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - At a certain point I felt a huge responsibility to return to my community, to be there and to strengthen my Indigenesness. I returned to the mountains out of a political decision of recovering or revitalizing that piece of myself. The experiences that I had in terms of relating to my identity had to do with my grandmother, as migrants, or we could even call them displaced people because there was a whole history of displacement behind their being here in the city. I grew up and spent my adolescence here. And then as an adult went [to the mountains of Jalapa].

Language

Language is a profound expression of culture and ethnicity, and the western nation-building project focused on the erasure of Indigenous languages as one of its primary tools of assimilation. In Saskatchewan, children were prohibited from speaking their languages at many (but not all) Mission and Residential Schools.¹⁷⁰ In Guatemala, “during much of the twentieth century, national visions for creating a unified Guatemala were predicated upon and committed to transforming Mayan-speaking *indios* into Spanish-speaking *guatemaltecos*.”¹⁷¹

Both Guatemala and Saskatchewan have since shifted from this linguistic assimilation thrust: in 2003 in Guatemala, the National Languages Law was passed, giving official recognition to Indigenous languages and culture, and initiating the inclusion of Indigenous languages in schools; in 1989 in Saskatchewan, a partnership between the Saskatchewan Government, Department of Education, Training and Employment and the Indian and Métis Education Advisory Committee developed an Education policy that emphasized the importance of teaching Indian/Métis Studies and Indian languages.¹⁷² But the actual implementation of these policies, teaching Indigenous culture and languages, is inconsistent,¹⁷³ and much has already been lost. A major concern for the women in this thesis is this loss of culture and identity that comes with loss of language.

¹⁷⁰ The policy of prohibiting Indigenous languages in Residential schools was unevenly practiced by missionaries in the schools who may or may not have agreed with the policy. Miller, 2011.

¹⁷¹ French, *Maya Ethnolinguistic identity. Violence, Cultural Rights, and Modernity in Highland Guatemala*, 1

¹⁷² Government of Saskatchewan, Department of Learning website, Aboriginal Languages: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten to Grade 12. An Information Bulletin for Administrators. August 1994.
<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/indlang/infobul/pur.html>

¹⁷³ In Guatemala, Ana López discusses in her interview her constant struggle with the Ministry of Education to attach sufficient dollars to implement Indigenous education programs. In Canada, in 1973, the Canadian government did accept an “Indian Control of Indian Education” policy directive enabling Status First Nation communities to choose the format of education for their elementary schools, but it has not been passed as legislation and can be rescinded at any point. In addition, the Canadian government does not fund the school systems of Status First Nations communities on par with the provincial public and Catholic school systems: First Nations bands receive \$6,400/student; provincial public schools receive \$10,300/student; French immersion schools receive \$18,800/student (Jason Warick, “Sask. First Nations Say Students Shortchanged,” The Saskatoon StarPhoenix, December 22, 2011, A1). Federal investment into implementation of Indigenous language programs is similarly inconsistent (Anuik. 2011)

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - While I was working for different organizations in bilingual education I had the idea to learn my own language, I needed to have a complete identity. I wear the traditional clothes of my community but there was always this element missing which was my language. And I achieved my goal. I learned how to speak the language as well as read and write it. I've even written books in poqomam. I used to be illiterate in my own language. So I've achieved it, and now it's my siblings who consult with me when they want to pronounce x or y word and I explain to them. ...So now I feel that I am a complete Indigenous woman, because I have all the elements to defend it.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - So when we were told [at the Mission school], you cannot speak Cree, I listened, and I remember for a few months hardly speaking at all, you know other than yes, no, because I couldn't complete a sentence. Closer to Christmas, I remember thinking okay I got to complete a sentence in English now. And when I came home in June, I couldn't complete a sentence in Cree, and my grandma and Mom, they didn't speak English, but thank goodness they didn't because again I spent time with Grandma, and of course Mom, and I got it all back.

Tammy Cook Searson, Saskatchewan- I like the fact that I speak Cree, and that I can speak for people that don't speak English. And I can have a connection with them. I'm able to interact with them and talk with them because I can understand the language and I can speak the language, and I know the culture and history and background. I run for them. I know there's a lot more to it than that, but I always think about people like that.

Leona, Saskatchewan - You know, a lot of people don't have their language. And the people that don't have their language are considered less of an Indian.

Clothing

In Guatemala, the *traje* is a distinctive blouse worn by women, specific to their Indigenous ethnic group and home community. Many Indigenous men stopped wearing their Indigenous clothing, and as Diane Nelson asserts, this leaves the women to represent the “authenticity” and tradition of the community as well as the Maya movement. “Mayan women

maintain the link to traditional culture so that some Mayan men can modernize, in order to demand rights without losing their identity.”¹⁷⁴ Wearing *traje* during the civil war was a risk, as it identified which community the woman was from, which, with the army’s paranoia of Communism and Guerrillas, could result in the woman being disappeared. After the war, it became a strong political statement of Indigeneity and resistance and, ironically, with the state’s new commitment to Indigenous rights, an opportunity.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - There is like a war against Indigenous peoples, but those who are most affected are Indigenous women. Because men in many municipalities have lost their traditional clothing, and those of us who are maintaining our identity are women. And so in the end it’s the women who end up paying the price.

There’s been sometimes when he [her husband] says, why don’t you put on a pair of pants, and after that thirteen years of living in Nicaragua, and after taking on once again this aspect of my identity, I don’t want to go back to wearing those clothes. But sometimes he’ll say, let’s go to the movies, why don’t you put on a pair of pants? But I say, no, this is how I am, and if you can’t accept me like that, we’ll end right now. We’ll end our relationship.

This whole idea of being ashamed of our culture, is very contradictory, but is a reality in many situations. There are even men who have made their wives stop wearing the traditional clothes. Maybe in their case they didn’t care so much, but in my case it has a really strong significance.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - But now there’s an interesting thing, for instance female lawyers who exchange their suits and their pants with Indigenous clothing in order to make it to different jobs or different posts, and because now that the Indigenous women have greater opportunity and greater spaces, there are people who use that for their own benefit. And we have very clear examples of women who have gotten scholarships to go to France, and see it as a way to live in France, and they leave behind their mestizo clothes and then started wearing the traditional clothes of Palim. And in the end they gain something out of it. But it’s not as if they’re doing it out of love, or that piece of their identity. Rather, it’s more out of their own interests, something they are going to profit from.

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 21.

IDENTITIES OF “WOMAN:” FEMINISM AND MOTHERHOOD

“Aboriginal women construct their identity in the context of two “antagonistic discourses:” that of the state and of their own male leadership. They find where along the line they can balance “an Aboriginal identity in common with male counterparts and distinct from that of European Canadians; and more problematically, to construct a gendered identity distinct from non-Aboriginal femaleness.”¹⁷⁵

“Their self-defined political identity is multiple: they are ‘Mayan women’, not just Mayan, not just women”¹⁷⁶...“Each identity position, such as that of ‘woman’, is produced out of a confluence, or ‘intersection’ of inter-relating power relations in a complex and dynamic play of power also imbuing other identity positions (such as ‘poor’, ‘Mayan’, ‘Guatemalan’) with meaning.”¹⁷⁷

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - I would identify myself as an Aboriginal woman first, as opposed to a Canadian or a woman in general.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - I identify myself as a feminist Indigenous Maya Xinka woman, that’s my political identity and my ethnic identity.

The Indigenous women in this thesis emphasize gender equality in their identity as women, expressed either through a return to traditional notions of gender complementarity or through feminism. The gendered division of labour of pre-conquest and colonization periods is remembered (and imagined) as offering complementary and equal access to economic, political, and ceremonial decisions and participation. Only Lorena Cabnal in Guatemala challenges the notion of gender complementarity and asserts an ancestral patriarchy that was fortified by the patriarchal system of colonization. I will also note that among the women’s communities and across time, there was much diversity in gender roles within and between communities, and how this was disrupted by conquest and colonization was also as diverse.

¹⁷⁵ Fiske, “The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body: Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women’s Movement,” 74

¹⁷⁶ Stern, *Naming Security - Constructing Identity. ‘Mayan Women’ in Guatemala on the Eve of ‘Peace,’* 11

¹⁷⁷ Stern, *Naming Security - Constructing Identity. ‘Mayan Women’ in Guatemala on the Eve of ‘Peace,’* 32.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - *In the past there is this different concept of women and I know this especially from Mayan spirituality. The cultural emphasis was that women are a complement to nature, a complement for the cosmos, and a complement to man.*

I'm not saying either that it was all paradise before the conquest, I can't say that. But we do believe that since the time of the Conquest that there was a big change and women began to be governed and they were no longer seen as a complement but rather someone to govern and conquer... I think this is generalized. It doesn't matter what economic class someone is in or social level, it's so deeply rooted now in the society and also in political system and also in the justice system.

Colonization and national policies fundamentally altered the political voice and space of Indigenous women. Women were formally excluded from social and political roles and responsibilities and a culture of sexism, accompanied by violence, was created within mainstream and Indigenous culture, and perpetuated through the generations.¹⁷⁸

In Canada, the *Indian Act* allowed only “Indian” (defined by the federal government) men to officially participate in governance. The colonial agenda persisted on, into residential schools, the provincial education system and mainstream popular culture. It “taught generations of indigenous youth to incorporate colonial norms, one of the most fundamental of which is patriarchy. In Canada, to be female and Aboriginal is to be disempowered by the state. Too often, it is also a good predictor of disempowerment by band governments.”¹⁷⁹ Colonization stripped Aboriginal women of their rights, disabling them from being full citizens in their communities.

¹⁷⁸ Re Guatemala: Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 136; Forster, *The Time of Freedom. Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution*, 7.

Re Saskatchewan: Barker, “Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women’s Activism,” 133; Barker, “Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women’s Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada,” 259-162; Denetdale, “Claiming the “F” Word: Native Women, Feminisms, and Visions of Sovereignty”; Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” 725; Ladner, “Colonialism Isn’t The Only Obstacle: Indigenous Peoples & Multilevel Governance in Canada,” 4; McGrath & Stevenson, “Gender, Race, and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia,” 51; Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century. First Nations Women Chiefs*, xvi.

¹⁷⁹ Green, “Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada,” 725.

In Saskatchewan, when amendments to the *Indian Act* were passed re-acknowledging Aboriginal women's status and rights, it aggravated power dynamics in Aboriginal communities resulting in many Aboriginal women being either denied membership to their home community or further marginalized by male leadership, a reflection of the "troubled relationship between considerations of nationhood, (de)colonization and the gendered disconnect between contemporary realities and Indigenous traditions."¹⁸⁰

The women's public advocacy on women's rights became associated with being "untraditional," "unAboriginal,"¹⁸¹ and "dangerous to Indian sovereignty."¹⁸² An irony is that these Aboriginal women leaders were in fact reinterpreting the notion of women's rights into a gendered Aboriginal sovereignty that reflected the equality of gender roles as understood in a traditional Aboriginal worldview. Because of this chill, there remains a hesitancy among Saskatchewan Aboriginal women to identify as feminist, although there are more Aboriginal women academics who have begun to use "Indigenous Feminism" as a theoretical and political framework in their work.¹⁸³

Starlight, Saskatchewan - There had been this big self-government push by all the male leaders and they left women out of the discussion. NWAC was not involved. Aboriginal Women's Council wasn't involved, women were not involved, but we were asked to sign on and endorse it, no matter what. We talked about it and came to consensus in our groups and said, we cannot support self-government until we know what their plans are for women, children, and off-reserve First Nations. Until we know, we cannot say yes. It's not that we're saying, no we don't want self government, but before we throw ourselves behind this, they need to talk to us. They need to include us and tell us what's happening there.

Aboriginal Women said, well you're articulate, you go be the spokesperson. And I did. I paid a very high price for this.

¹⁸⁰ Ladner, "Colonialism Isn't The Only Obstacle: Indigenous Peoples & Multilevel Governance in Canada," 5.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 728.

¹⁸² Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women's Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada," 128; Fiske, "The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body: Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement." 1996; Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas*, 112.

¹⁸³ Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 30 ; St. Denis, "Feminism is For Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity," 33-50.

Leona, Saskatchewan - *All my life I've considered myself equal to anybody, and I've fought for that space. So in a way, that is being feminist. But that's the space my people took. That's the space the women in my own community would have been given automatically. Back then, that's what my people had. That's what the women had. They had the right to who they were. They were expected to uphold their own. They were expected to be able to have a say with what's going on with their bands. They were expected of that.*

In Guatemala, the women's lives were "deeply constrained by the multiple orthopaedics of poverty, racism and misogyny,"¹⁸⁴ which were both intensified and transformed by the violence of the civil war: many women were empowered through either their participation with the guerrillas or in political education workshops given to women in Mexican refugee camps.¹⁸⁵ Women's organizations, many explicitly feminist, became key participants in the negotiations of the Peace Accords, influencing where the women experienced power and solidarity, and consequently, their identity. For many of the women in this thesis, a modern Indigenous woman is a feminist Indigenous woman.

Ana López, Guatemala - *A big part of my identity came out of my experience in the OMR (Women's Resistance Organization of Ixcán), and particular with my conscientiousness related to Maya peoples. And it wasn't so much in the guerrillas that my identity was strengthened, even though in the guerrillas we did talk about the fact that the violence was racist, there was discrimination, we had a very political and broad view. But still it was in the OMR that we really worked... to recover our cultural values as women. For one thing we had been forced to stop wearing our traditional clothing because during the armed conflict there was no way to purchase it. We think that machismo doesn't see borders of culture. We know that the machismo exists in Maya culture, Xinka culture, Garifuna culture, it also exists in Canada, Spain, Italy, in France, we hear it is even worse in France. In Guatemala, in the rural areas, it exists as well as in zone 15 which is where all the rich people live. Professional men as well as illiterate men are sexist and so I really believe that in our culture, yes there are the principles of equality and complementarity. Those are things that did exist, but they no*

¹⁸⁴ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 67

¹⁸⁵ Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 134; Baines, "Refuge and Return: The Challenges of Transition for Guatemalan Women's Organizations," 115-117.

longer do. Now there is a lot of violence that's lived and there's been a lot of devaluation of those types of principles.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - In order to understand the situation and condition of Indigenous women in Guatemala it's important to have a particular political ideological thought process. This is what I and other women who were active in the mountains of Xalapán have developed. For me it's very necessary to have a historical structural analysis of the oppression that Indigenous women experience. And this oppression has two dimensions: One of them is the patriarchal ancestral dimension and the other is the patriarchal western dimension. Also in terms of the situation of Indigenous women in Guatemala, both Maya as well as Xinka, and as women who are organized in the mountains of Santa María Xalapán, we thought about why it was important for us to express what we believe and we realize that the only way we could express ourselves was making an analysis that would be political, ideological and feminist. And so we started to grant greater importance to feminism as we began to recognize our rights, our epistemic rights, our ability to recognize ourselves as women, to recognize that we are able to build ourselves and to name ourselves based on our identity as women.

We began to realize the importance of having our political thought structures, ideas, because at the beginning of our organizing work we had a really small scale or weak understanding of our identity as women. Because in our community there are only 5 places where women can go: we could go to the river to bring water; we could go to bring back firewood; we could go to the Catholic church; we could go to grind our corn to make the corn dough to make tortillas; and we could go work in the fields.

This thought, this proposal of recovering and defending our first territory, which is our body, is evidently feminist.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - During the internal armed conflict, many women joined the guerrillas, and they left behind their traditional clothes and put on boots and pants and participated in that. Now, though, there is a problem because there's also machismo. In my work experience, talking to women in communities, when we ask them if they participate, they say, well, let's go get permission from their husbands. And if he lets them, they come, but if he doesn't, then they can't. Or sometimes he'll let them participate but he'll come along with them. Or he'll let them participate but only if it's with someone who is well known, like female leaders in the community, or a midwife. And it also depends what the women are going to do and what they are going to talk about. So for instance if they're going to go to a meeting to

talk about raising livestock, pigs, and chickens, then the husband will give them permission to do that. But to talk about political participation and rights, well they don't, because they say, then the women are going to rebel.

Incorporating “mother” into their identities as professional women required many of the women to adjust how they managed their work and family balance. All of the women except Joan Beatty have children and rely heavily on immediate family to provide support for their children as they continue with their work, or have reduced their volunteer work until their children are older. Others have challenged this separation between work and family and integrated their children into their work lives where possible.¹⁸⁶

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *I thought I'll run for Chief. And then I ended up getting pregnant. It was in November I got pregnant, and then the elections were in March. So I didn't tell anybody I was pregnant right away, until I knew what I was going to do. I didn't even tell my mother-in-law or anybody. I just kept it with Jim and I until I knew what I was going to do for sure. So once I decided, I went to talk with my mother-in-law, because she's the one that helps me with the kids the most out of anybody. So I went and talked to her and I told her that I was expecting, but it was hard to tell her, because I knew that the deciding factor was her, to say yes or no. So she said, well, if it's God's will, but if not, then it's okay too. So I decided to run, I went to the clinic to get a pregnancy test to make sure I was pregnant, and I was. I phoned people and told them I was expecting but was still going to run, as many people as I could. And then, everybody said, yeah, go for it. And then, I only took two days off after I had my baby. [laughs] But I should have taken at least a month off.*

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - *[It was] working with the Sector de Mujeres that brought in the feminist element and the idea of constructing a new woman, and then the political element with the whole youth leadership program. And so these 2 elements are like 2 crutches that support me in both here and here, in my heart and my head.*

¹⁸⁶ In Guatemala, both Ana López and Lorena Cabnal brought their daughters to their interviews with me. Rosalina Tuyuc was known for having her baby in a sling when she went to meetings and gave presentations, even in Congress.

Citizen participation, women's participation, being a professional, and being a mother, and I'm really worried, I don't want to leave any of these spaces unattended, but there will be times when I need to dedicate more of my time to being a mother, and I might have to lower the percentage of my participation in the other areas. That, in fact, has already happened. In the organization, I already asked for some time off and some space, because I need to give more space to being a mom. In the previous board of directors I was the secretary but then I asked to step down from that post because of my baby and so now I am a member at large.

Starlight, Saskatchewan - *Colonization, racism, and residential schools have put so much fear in people. It's freeing yourself from that fear. When fear guides you, you're not going to dare. But I was silent for a long, long time after paying the price I did. I was. I was afraid. I had kids to support. I was afraid to dare. Then my kids moved out and I got unfearful again. [laughs] It's like, well, whatever. I can starve. My kids are taking care of themselves now, now I can dare again.*

IDENTITIES OF DIFFERENCE

Since their childhood, the Indigenous women in this thesis have had experiences that set them apart from others in their communities – whether it was how they responded to the violence in their community or how they balanced between traditional Indigenous teachings and western education. They identify this sense of difference in themselves and reflect on how it continues to separate them from their families and community while at the same time, models an alternative way of living that actively confronts traditional and modern concepts of gender, race and justice.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala – *If I enact what I am learning in the women's movement, I am going to have problems at home, with my family. And in fact that is what's happening. At home, I'm the one who doesn't do things for my brothers, for instance. It's not because I don't want to help them, but I want to show them that they also need to do things for themselves. They shouldn't depend on their sisters. For instance, my one brother says, oh, can you iron my shirt? I've never ironed my brother's shirts. My brothers wash their clothes, but my mother sometimes makes a face at me, like, well, you should be doing that. And my mother does wash the clothes for them. My brothers, if they get hungry, they come and make something for themselves, and that's something that my father never did. He never cooked. So there are all these small changes.*

But my family doesn't always agree with me because they see me sort of like a phenomenon in the family, I'm the only one who participates in this organization, my siblings aren't involved. My siblings studied or they work but it's for themselves and not so much as going out to act on behalf of the community. And I think there are lots of people like that - that work for themselves and when they learn something it's for themselves - I learn something, it's for me. I work, it's for me. I study, it's for me. And it's very self-centered.

The economic factor comes into play here. People say I can't give away my time. It takes a lot of time to do this type of work. Or they'll say if someone is doing this type of work they must have extra money that they're able to do that. My mother kind of thinks this way and sometimes we get into fights around this. But you know what, sometimes someone has to be a little disobedient.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *And sometimes I think, oh I'm not good enough to do this job, I should just not do it. But then I just think, why give up? Because there's people that will just keep pushing you, pushing you, pushing you to the edge until you say, forget it, I'm done. I've had different experiences like that, and I just think, no, I'm not going to let them get to me. I'm just going to get up and fake it til I make it. And then I just get up and I just keep going. I don't want to give the people that want me to quit, the satisfaction that I quit. If I quit every time I ran into something, then I don't know where I'd be. But I just keep going. Even if things get tough. I always try to find, like how do I get out of this, how do I do this. Because my father-in-law always says, if there's one way of doing something, there's always another way.*

Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala - *We as women are basically trying to change the system of discrimination and racism. And for me, maybe it's hard to say that there are particular people that I've known, other women, who have been my role models because there really haven't been that many. Really it's more that the injustice is what makes us commit ourselves to making change. It's a situation of injustice that we live constantly and the racism that we suffer at school, at work, and in society that make us take on these types of commitments. But it's also important to recognize that our mothers and our grandmothers struggled against the system.*

Leona, Saskatchewan - *When I came back to Saskatchewan, [the racism] was just so overt, like everywhere you went. I remember deciding not to*

leave my house when I first moved back because I didn't want to deal with racism, and my sister was just being annoyed with me because I didn't want to go to a block party. And then when we finally get there, this little old white woman comes and pats her on the back, and says oh it's so nice to see Aboriginal women spending time with their children. That's so good. You're a good little mom. [laughs] At this block party. My sister was just bursting. She didn't know what to say. She just started freaking out on her. And I said, this is why I didn't want to come.

And then, the guy who's organizing it, just right after she says that to her and my sister is freaking out, this guy who's organizing it says, he makes a joke about Indians. I was just like, this is why I didn't want to come, but I'm not letting this go. I walked up there, and I was standing right underneath him, and he was standing up on this truck platform, and I said, I want you to apologize for that joke you just made, and I want everybody to hear it. You apologize from up there. I'm not leaving until you do, and I'm going to keep yelling at you until you do it. And I was yelling at him. [laughs] And my sister was just, she was ready to walk out as soon as he said it, and she goes, I like the way you did it better.

He apologized. But the way he said his apology was just like, it was a joke, right? And I went up to him afterwards and I said, you know what? Someday, somewhere, something is going to come bite you in the ass. You're going to remember this day. I said, because that's the way it happens with our people. [laughs] He said, well I have Indian friends. Well then what the fuck are you thinking, I said? You know? I was so mad. It was just that kind of overt racism made me want to stay home.

I think my sister told somebody what I did at that block party, and so somebody invited me to some organizing committee they were doing. [laughs] We need her there, because she just told him out. I was like, I don't do anything different than anybody else should do. Somebody should tell him he's being an asshole, I said. And they said, but nobody says that. Most Aboriginal people here, if they would have heard it, they would have just turned around and ignored it. She said, you're the only person saying it. And I'm like, why? Why am I the only person saying it?

I'll tell you one thing, the obstacles I experienced, when I was organizing around Darrell Night, anti-racism, treaties, I was told off by FSIN, by the Métis Nation, by any political leadership in Aboriginal country, that I shouldn't be doing this. First of all because I'm too freaking young. Elders told me off. No elders wanted to participate in what I was doing. Because treaties are meant for old people to teach, and the FSIN refused to get involved because white people were going to be involved. And academics didn't want to be involved because they didn't want to go against FSIN. So I did it anyway. And the elders that came forward to help, went against FSIN, you know.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - My husband, he has supported me throughout this. At the beginning he didn't want me to study. He said, what good is that going to do you? But I said, no, I'm going to do it. And before we got married, my parents explained to his parents that I work, and that I study, and so after we got married, they couldn't say, hey you can't do that, because it was already said from the get-go. And also my attitude to my husband was you have to accept me as I am, or I will leave you... In his family I am kind of like the black sheep, and they say things to me like, why are you out doing work? You should stay at home and cook in the kitchen and manage the household. But I say, this is my life.

CONCLUSION

Within the women's identities are intersecting layers of "Indigeneity" and "woman," each containing re-interpretations of tradition, modernity, and power that challenge the dominant culture. The women revitalize and politicize the very markers of Indigeneity and tradition that were categorized as backward and savage by the state. Into this, they re-insert the notion of equality and women's rights, reinvesting power and voice into the modern identity of an Indigenous woman. It is this last piece of their identity that makes them leaders. They are modeling to their families and communities a synthetic, reconstructed identity that redistributes power to Indigenous people and women, and they are actively asserting this power in multiple sites of resistance. This is the identity that balances the "private" healing of self and family with the "public" challenges to the state and the dominant culture. This is the political identity, of an Indigenous woman leader, working in hybrid spaces with a diversity of allies, demanding a reconstructed society and state that enables equal and healthy participation of all peoples.

A side quote

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - I remember talking to a co-worker. And I said I think of myself as an Indian person first. I think it was before Canada Day and she was like, "Really?" And I was like, "Yeah. Don't you identify with your ethnic background?" "Well, I don't have an ethnic background. I'm Canadian." And I was like, "Oh yeah." But the only time that I really felt proud to be Canadian was last winter when that Sidney Crosby made that goal. In the Olympics. Yeah, I was proud to be Canadian. [Laughs.]

CHAPTER FOUR – THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE AND SOLIDARITY

MOVING WITHIN THE PORES

It is the collective narrative of violence and injustice, acted out in personal stories, that drives the political work of the Indigenous women in this thesis. They work in local and national contexts “over-determined by violence,”¹⁸⁷ produced and accumulated over generations, from manifestations of racial, patriarchal, and economic inequality. It compels them to imagine a different narrative, and to build nonviolent relations within their families, between peoples and with the state. Punctuating the localized narratives of violence are globalized counter-narratives of justice and rights (women, Indigenous peoples, the environment) and internationalism, articulating solidarity and support that contribute to the opening of political space for Indigenous women.

The women’s political analyses emerge out of the personal obstacles they experience and feed their particular political visions, approaches, and strategies. While they acknowledge particular events and agreements that shifted the balance and legitimacy of Indigenous women’s political participation, they assert that it was primarily due to them - Indigenous women - working with allies, that formal and informal political spaces were transformed to include their issues.

This political work blurs and mixes the boundaries of its many discourses (stratifications according to race, gender, class, geography) and instead agitates in the spaces of fluidity and “porousness.”¹⁸⁸ obstacles are motivations, private betrayals become public struggles, and Indigenous self-determination is interlocked with the creation of a democratic, multi-ethnic state.

This chapter discusses the Indigenous women’s political analysis, vision and work: the political space within which they work; their leadership in a mixed and hybrid world, inserting gender, ethnicity and self-determination into multiple spaces; and role-modeling what they believe needs to happen in the family and the state to improve the lives of Indigenous people. Through their work, they are redefining personal and national identities, snapping the hegemonic

¹⁸⁷ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 48

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 27.

tightness of what it means to be Indigenous in political and popular culture, and constructing an active citizenship in a hybrid state.

LIVING AND UNDERSTANDING THE VIOLENCE

The Indigenous women's experiences of violence - whether from racism, sexism, or poverty - are what compelled them to become politically involved, often first in small community-based organizations. It was there, as part of a collective experience (with mixed and non-mixed groups of Indigenous men and Indigenous women, or Indigenous and non-Indigenous women), that many began to develop a political understanding and analysis that made sense of what they had been experiencing and that encouraged them to continue participation and political organizing, many moving into provincial, national and international political spaces.

Both mainstream and Indigenous cultures have made gendered delineations between private and public spheres - where women are seen to occupy the private, domestic sphere and men occupy the public, political sphere. In the context of women's organizing, feminist theory has introduced an additional concept of practical and strategic gender interests. These emphasize the types of organizing that occur in the private or public sphere, and the blurring of issues and activism that occurs between spheres. For example:

Practical gender interests emerge directly from concrete life situations and include such immediate perceived necessities as food, shelter, water, income, medical care..... And do not generally challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them.

Strategic gender interests are defined as necessary to overcoming women's subordination. ... may include all or some of the following: abolition of sexual division of labour... removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination such as right to own land or property... Establishment of political equality... adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.¹⁸⁹

Many of the Indigenous women in this thesis began organizing around both practical gender and strategic interests simultaneously, developing a political analysis that often layered practical gender interests (how can I get out of this violent home life?) with strategic ethnic interests (how do we stop the violence from men who are suffering racism and oppression?). The

¹⁸⁹ Maxine Molyneux in Narayan and Harding, eds, *Decentering the Center. Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World*, 13.

Guatemalan women explicitly discuss their political analyses, focusing on both race and gender, and developed as part of a collective civil society response to the violence of the civil war and subsequent Peace Accords process. There has been a shift from the formalized violence of the military during the war into informal, criminal and vigilante violence (often gendered and targeted at Indigenous women), continuing the legacy of violence that lies underneath people's relations with each other and thrives in the culture of impunity. It has prompted Indigenous women to connect with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, inside and outside of their local and national contexts, to develop strategies of resistance and solidarity.

***Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala** - Really the situation of discrimination on gender lines and ethnic lines is what made me take a step forward and move into national political life. And really the situation of violence, in the moment that my father and my husband were disappeared, kidnapped, and I began to see the serious situation of injustice and sexual violence against women, that's what made me take on this commitment. We're not going to do it alone. It's not just a matter of us changing a guard of people, it's really the system that needs to change.*

***Ana López, Guatemala** - I was working with women [in Communities of Population in Resistance during the civil war] and I wasn't just in one community, but we would visit all the communities. And we would walk for two, three, or four hours to reach some of these communities and it was dangerous. It was also very tiring because I would carry Noelia [daughter] on my back. But at the same time, I felt very good about this work. I felt satisfied because I was moving from the sort of guerrilla phase to a more political phase of work with the Communities of Population in Resistance and on the particular theme of women.*

I identified two levels of violence taking place against women. One was political violence which was carried out by the military and other such groups. The other was violence in the home particularly regarding machismo.

There were other women working on this at the same time. So we decided to divide our work into two different arenas. One was defending our rights in the context of political violence and it had to do with state policies. And the other was to visualize, and this was tricky for us, the issue of sexism or machismo. It was really hard to work on the issue of machismo. This was the most difficult period for me in that work. Because we had many allies when we discussed our rights in general or our rights in terms of political violence – our husbands, children and communities in general supported us when we

talked about those issues. But then we started to talk about machismo it was the opposite situation. And so we heard comments like, it's OK for you to talk about your human rights but we don't want to hear about machismo. In some cases, we were made fun of. Or people said we must be prostitutes. I was there with the father of my two daughters. But people said oh her one husband isn't good enough for her, she's out looking for other men, that's why she goes to different communities.

It was even hard for women to accept or to hear about these issues and we had to give real specific examples of the types of suffering that they were going through, examples from their own lives, for them to understand what it was that we were getting at. But people bit by bit became more conscious of this issue and it took us about two years to make headway on this topic. It wasn't from one day to the next that we were able to make a difference. Because one of the issues we were talking about wasn't just domestic violence, but also women's political participation. And this set off a whole other debate with men because in general in the community, women were given the role of reproduction and not given any sort of political role. The local structures, the authorities, basically had no women in them. And so we started to generate greater political participation by women in local structures and this was the product of the two years of our hard work.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - *Consciousness of ethnic identity or of historic oppression doesn't come from one day to the next. In my case, it was possible because of the historic work that women have done here in this country and because of alliances among diverse groups of women, not just Indigenous women but women around the world who have worked so hard in order to clarify, to make clear the existence of women around the world. And so I highly value the women who have contributed in my life to make me understand. For example, I really value all that I've learned through Sector de Mujeres in terms of feminist political ideology. Sector de Mujeres has shared with us since 2004 in different types of political training schools.*

I also value all that's been written by western feminist women and by Latin American feminist women and also the thinking of Indigenous feminist women. I also have to value the chance that I've had to be part of the Guatemalan Indigenous women's movement and to be in different continental caucuses with other peoples and other nationalities of the America, and also the chance to participate in the feminist trainings. All of these elements have really strengthened my analysis.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - *We're absorbed by a culture that is machista, patriarchal, that's consumerist and really tried to hold us back*

when we have the desire to move out of that, move out of a certain zone. I've had certain training that's allowed me to move out of that.

In terms of my participation in the women's movement, there were other women in our local organization who started to have contact, in terms of communication, with women involved in the women's movement. And I got involved through them. They'd say, let's go to the training for these things, they're really important, they're good, let's go. And so, basically, two of us became the links between our local groups and the organizing group in Guatemala City. And so we would come to the capital every month to receive training. In the beginning I didn't really understand why, or understand the importance, it was something very foreign to my culture, but things in my culture are different. But in time I began to feel the essence of what it was all about, and why it was so important, and I realized that it wasn't, the women's organizing wasn't, just based on the needs of one group or one class. It was really a need that we all have in being women. The need to take care of our rights, to take care of ourselves as women.

Saskatchewan Aboriginal women's political understanding and motivation is strongly centered on racism. Starlight and Leona, active in social movements, participated and taught anti-racism and anti-colonialism training and articulate a political analysis that also includes environmental rights. Even for those who did not receive any kind of formal political training, a clear anti-racism, anti-oppression understanding runs through their stories of healing and community involvement. While they don't use the terms "feminism" or "women's rights," they discuss their experiences of domestic violence and abuse, primarily suffered by the women in their lives and initiated by the men in their lives, and the need to challenge and change men's behaviour toward women.

***Starlight, Saskatchewan** - The biggest obstacle is racism. And then sexism. And then colonization. And then ego. Those are the big ones. The racism is the hardest one. Because there are so many people that are subconsciously racist, and don't understand that they are. It's not even a conscious racism. It's so deeply ingrained—they're reacting to things and they don't even know it. So sometimes the most progressive person is still racist.*

My motivation for getting political was justice. I couldn't stand it. And I couldn't stand what had happened to me, and I couldn't stand what had happened to the world. Because I had internalized all that racism so bad that I just thought I was no good, I was ugly, worthless, unwanted, it was a mess. And then when I started to learn that it had nothing to do with me and it was what society's view of me was, I got angry. And it was like, I'm gonna get

you. I'm gonna get you for everything that you've ever done to me, to all peoples, especially to Indigenous people, I'm gonna get you. I was angry, and I was gonna get them. And I mean, that morphed later on, the anger was gone, and it was just this sense of I want a different world and I want justice.

Leona, Saskatchewan - *I think that's the biggest problem with our leadership today. Even in my own community, their biggest problem is dealing with the racism, because they're so blinded by their hatred of white people that they can't see a way of working with the allies that exist there.*

Back, after the shake tent, I was told to do some things. And one of those things was that the earth needed help. And I needed to go and talk to the people that were harming the earth. And it was actually the Great Lakes that asked me to go and talk about water. And so I had to go and visit all these environmental groups, and tell them that there was an issue with water. And so that's how it started for me. It was going out of my comfort zone to go and tell these white people, listen, you gotta go tell your people this is what they're doing, and this is what needs to be done. Basically what I saw as my role was to connect whatever white groups, because in Saskatchewan there was a lot of organizing being done around the environment, but they were being done in isolation from the First Nations communities that were being impacted. And that was happening, I think, across the board at that time, across Canada.

[An organizer in the community] kept bringing me to different groups, because [s/he] couldn't find an Aboriginal person that was willing to go, and tell people that this is Treaty territory. And so I went to the Sierra Club, and a bunch of, I can't even remember all the groups I went to. A whole bunch of campus groups, and then some church groups got involved. Then I started talking to farmers about anti-racism and that went on for a few years after that. Talking to church groups and campus groups and unions. It started off like really kind of small and gradually grew into bigger groups. And at first it was like I was the token person. I really felt token because I was the only Aboriginal person in the room most of the time, or visibly Aboriginal. I call myself visibly Aboriginal, and I was the only visibly Aboriginal person in the room, talking about racism, you know, and after awhile, it just, I left it because a lot of times I am the only visibly Aboriginal person talking about it, so I have to walk away. It was just too strange. So I told [the organizer], it's your job to educate white people.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - *One of the things that I saw in Saskatchewan, because I had worked with CBC radio, was no Aboriginal reporters. And I thought, they're not covering our stories at all. The only thing that I heard, because these are the easiest things to do, was pick up the crime reports.*

And I remember thinking, that's not who we are. A lot of us are working, we have good lives, that's not who we are. And so, we organized this big community meeting, and we called it Racism in the Media. Guess who came out? A whole bunch of people—it was a good title!

When I started work with CBC TV, I did it so people see that I'm here, so other reporters, and other Aboriginal people will get in there. So that was my thinking. I didn't want to be on camera, you know. I was the only Aboriginal person in there, and the camera man told me later on they had cross-cultural training, and he said, because we knew you were from the north, nomadic, and they have an issue with time. He said, I almost expected you to come dragging your traps behind you when you came in, you know, and late.

I always got to work early, and did my work, and my research, and came up with these stories that I did, and they were, a lot of them were Aboriginal stories, and this producer said to me, pulled me to the side, and he said, do you know Joan, I don't think you should be doing Aboriginal stories. And I says, why? He said, because you're not going to be objective. And I says, why? These white reporters are doing white stories every day, why? Are they objective? You know. And he didn't really say much. And I said, okay, just to prove a point, I'll do my white token story once in a while, just to prove I can do it. And I'll do these, this is what interests me. And they were good stories, really good, and people started phoning me, from the Aboriginal community, with really good solid stories that needed to be told.

I also got into documentary stuff, we got good comments, too, from the non-Aboriginal community too. It was just an education, for me it was a form of educating the bigger audience. These are the issues, this is why it's happening, it's deeper than just the surface, you know. That kind of a thing, and we started winning awards, and I noticed in the newsroom, other folks started researching Aboriginal stories. They took a little bit more time, and they knew that it could be done, I guess.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - *I know the family that murdered my husband, or the man and his family, and they have been affected by generations of abuse. And so they went from this prestigious position... to generations after that of alcohol and drug abuse, and having a residential school trauma, so there's a part of me where my heart is just aching for them, when is it going to stop? You know? And a part of me also recognizes that they need the help to make those changes within their family. But it has to be up to them to make those changes, and when are they going to be able to do that, and is it going to be—will it be the whole family? I doubt it. So, I just, I thought, like my heart, I don't hate him, but as I'm thinking about it now, as I'm able to think about it more objectively, I am angry at the whole system, and that the more and more I think about it, the justice system, and society in general, for*

allowing our people to be this, to be at the bottom of the ladder or whatever, and we're just fighting amongst ourselves, which makes it really, really sad. There are so many men where I work who are the abusers. Within my job, we need to look at dads, we need to look at the men - because they're part of the family unit - we need to work with them, find a way of working with them. Find a way to get involved with them because otherwise, like I was telling the young boys, You guys are our modern warriors now. It's not about gangs, it's not about gangs but education. An elder said education is our buffalo now. And so you need to go out there and get the best education you can, it's up to you. We all make mistakes but how we come through and learn from our mistakes that will make you guys healthier. And some of these young men are dads already. And I said, Don't you want a better life for your children than you have? But when I said, You are our warriors now, this light clicked on for them. Not through gangs, but this is what you do. Instead of fighting, a warrior always took care of their family. Took care of the weaker parts of the community, that's your job now. Giving the best you can. We can't all be chiefs. But we can all be the best person we can.

And for men, I'm sure there are many healthy men, but again there's some of the men there that just want everything handed to them. Just like the accused in my husband's murder, "They won't give me a job." [Laughs] You know? I always remember that. But people have been so accustomed to having things given to them. I don't know, they're waiting for this magic something to come and make things better for them and it just doesn't work that way. You have to be able to go out and get it yourself.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *Some people just have this mentality that you're Native and you can't work, or I don't know, they just underestimate what First Nations people can do, and I think it goes back a long way, because you think about, we just got given the right to vote in 1960, and just recognized as people in 1960, so it's just, ingrained. Maybe it's just the way people are taught, or there's just not enough awareness, like yeah, we can work, we are hard workers, and we're smart people, and I always know, like our people are really smart people, they're hard working, because if they weren't, I wouldn't be here today. Because of all the stuff our people had to go through, the residential schools, not even being able to leave the reserve, being displaced, and you know, your land taken away. You sign a Treaty in good faith and partnership to share, with the newcomers, and then all of a sudden you're being pushed off slowly and if you say anything, well you don't have a voice, you don't matter, you can't get a lawyer, all these things. So, I just think that our people are resilient, and I'm here because of them. Or we're still here.*

POLITICAL VISIONS: DECOLONIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The political visions of the Guatemalan and Saskatchewan Indigenous women are centred on building a healthy society based on respect and equality: between the state and citizenship, among peoples, among genders, among families, and respect and balance within the self. This vision includes two simultaneous and interrelated approaches that I categorize as: decolonization - healing and recovery, *reinvidicación*, of the past; and reconstruction - development and leadership for the future.

The Saskatchewan women in particular have a strong local focus and discuss the importance of creating spaces to heal from the effects of the violence of colonization, poverty, and racial and gender discrimination. The Guatemalan women “transcend local while still being grounded in local,”¹⁹⁰ by incorporating national and international strategies, even when their purpose is to improve their local community. Their priorities could be generalized as the recovery of rights – of Indigenous peoples, women and environmental rights – targeted at state policies and laws as well as those of international institutions.

The second approach is of a development that builds just and democratic participation of Indigenous peoples in the direction and governance of their communities – from local to national levels – to ensure their specific issues are addressed in the planning of their own future. While this clearly resonates with the first approach, it focuses on building leaders and political participation and decision-making at multiple levels. Often taking the form of self-determination (which also overlaps with the healing and recovery approach), it is more than influencing separate Indigenous-only spaces, but for all decision-making spaces that affect Indigenous peoples: ensuring Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous women, are in leadership positions in the Guatemalan or Saskatchewan governments and government departments. It also means a strong representation in civil society: Indigenous leaders holding their governments accountable to implement programs, legislation and agreements – such as the Canadian Treaties and the Guatemalan Peace Accords - made to ensure Indigenous people are equal partners in society.

¹⁹⁰ Grandin, *Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 148. Through individual actors, Grandin explored this political relationship between local and national movements and discussed the “tension between an extending political horizon and local struggles, cultures, conflicts and identities” (Ibid, 182). The Guatemalan women in this thesis reflect on some of the same tensions, but focus primarily on the gender dynamics in their political relationships, which Grandin does mention, but not substantially.

This section explores how these Indigenous women are working toward their political vision by moving into and expanding their political space, demonstrating a new type of leadership and proposing different types of policies. Their priorities and style also demonstrate a clearly holistic vision - in their policies, strategies, and partnerships – as they bring together many elements and disparate alliances to achieve their many-layered goals.

LEVERAGING POLITICAL SPACE

Indigenous people in Guatemala have historically engaged with and asserted their rights in relation to the state, but a contemporary movement of organizing began in the mid-1980s, during the 36 year civil war, centered on addressing racism and the acknowledgement of Indigenous, primarily Maya, collective cultural rights and identity.¹⁹¹ The signing of the Peace Accords, in December 1996, was a negotiation between the Guatemalan state and guerrillas (with substantial participation by Guatemalan civil society) and consisted of seven accords; one of which one was the Accord on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (signed earlier in March 1995). The preamble of this Accord acknowledges both the country’s history of racial discrimination against Indigenous peoples and the need to eliminate it.¹⁹² The Catholic Church’s “Nunca Más. Recuperation of Historical Memory” Report (REMHI)¹⁹³ in 1998 and the UN Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) report in 1999, “Memory of Silence,” focused on the violence and terror inflicted on Indigenous people by the state before and during the civil war. As the UN Commission stated:

The main purpose of the [CEH] Report is to place on record Guatemala’s recent, bloody past. Although many are aware that Guatemala’s armed confrontation caused death and destruction, the gravity of the abuses suffered repeatedly by its people has yet to become part of the national consciousness. The massacres that eliminated entire Mayan rural communities belong to the same reality as the persecution of the urban political opposition, trade union leaders, priests and catechists. These are neither perfidious allegations, nor figments of the imagination, but an authentic chapter in Guatemala’s history.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Hale, *Mas Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 14

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 75

¹⁹³ “Nunca Mas” means Never Again.

¹⁹⁴ *Memory of Silence*. United Nations Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, Prologue.

While legitimizing Indigenous people's experiences, the reports also emphasized the work that must be done to construct a nation of respect and equality between peoples.

The completion of these agreements and reports was due to the energy and strength of multiple social actors and created a period of cautious collaboration among many civil society organizations that continues. In addition to the Indigenous rights, or Maya movement, key among the organizations was the women's movement, also strengthened by leaders who had been organizing against the state during the war and were able to insert women's rights into both civil society consciousness as well as the Peace Accords. This period is credited by all the Guatemalan women as opening up the political space for them to engage as citizens and play a role in influencing state policy.¹⁹⁵ It also allowed them to build strong civil society networks and alliances that would work together to both influence and keep the government accountable.¹⁹⁶ These networks of alliances have a complex and heterogeneous character: a layering and fusing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, women and men, old and young; a diversity of actors intersecting with others at multiple points as they work on a variety of issues in local, national, and international spaces.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - I would dare to say that the political space that exists has been created by women themselves. One example is the framework of the Peace Accords, the entire negotiating practice around the Peace Accords is what made Sector de Mujeres form as an organization. It included the participation of Indigenous women because if the women hadn't been involved there wouldn't be anything about women's advancement in the Accords. No one else was talking about it, none of the other sectors, the students, the religious sector, the business sector or the trade unions. Without the Sector de Mujeres the Peace Accords would have been completely

¹⁹⁵ Also discussed by Remijnse, *Memories of Violence. Civil Patrols and the Legacy of Conflict in Joyabaj, Guatemala*, 297.

¹⁹⁶ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 115, argues the Guatemalan state's more tolerant attitude towards Mayan demands, for example policies promoting cultural rights, is portrayed as an economic decision – Mayan culture has market value, positioning the country within a “post-industrial transnational world.” While this is valid, it should not undermine the international pressure that contributed to the Peace Accords or the Indigenous women's own strength and persistence in advocating for Indigenous rights issues to be included in the Peace Accords and other national laws and policies. Hale, *Más Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 12,49, also questions the increasing acceptance of cultural rights by the Guatemalan state and proposes it is a strategy to pursue a path of neoliberal political and economic reform. I engage more with these arguments in the final chapter.

masculine and there wouldn't have been anything about Indigenous people either.

Elements in the Peace Accords that the current institution has to follow and the different mechanisms of women's political participation, there are very few. And the few that do exist came out of a historic struggle. And there are some examples, for instance, the creation of the Presidential Secretariat for Women, the Indigenous Women's Defense League, a third would be particular advances in legislation in favour of women, and this has all come out of proposals and initiatives by women. One example is the law against femicide. The fourth is the coordination to prevent domestic violence. And now the government and political parties and lots of other organizations say well we allow women to participate we give participation to women. But I would say it's because we, as women, have created these spaces ourselves – in the streets and through politics – we have carved out these spaces for ourselves. And so I would say that the political will that the government shows, well, actually I wouldn't even say it's political will, I would say that because of so much pressure, the government has basically had to yield spaces to women. But it's been because of the work that women, ourselves, have done.

Ana López, Guatemala - *The first challenge of Indigenous women is the struggle against classism, poverty and racial discrimination and the defense of our Indigenous identity. The second challenge of Indigenous women is coming up against the machismo system. The good thing is that there are more Indigenous women working on this. We are making alliances, for instance, we are making alliances with a few Indigenous men who are conscious of this issue. Because unfortunately there are Indigenous men, some of the great leaders, but even though they are really great Indigenous leaders, they still have machismo attitudes. We are very conscious of the fact that we have to make different kinds of alliances. We know that mestiza women and business women suffer machismo as much as Mayan women.*

And so I really move in two different spaces. And at these two different levels. So when we talk about depending on land, our natural resources, and racial discrimination, that's one level, and then we have certain alliances. And then the other level is women's issues and I've identified for that issues I need to work with feminist groups and groups of mixed types of women. The first part of our strategy is to know which alliances and which places to move. And where is there political space? Since the Peace Accords, which were an opening to act and to demand our rights as women and as Indigenous people.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - We began as an Electoral Observation Group because the Peace Accords had recently been signed and for the first time people were allowed to sign up through the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to achieve accreditation as electoral observers. And that really motivated a lot of us and [we] are still involved in that. It's a very mixed organization, made up of men and women, mestizos as well as poqomames¹⁹⁷, it's made up of elders as well as youth and we're always defending this mixture. For instance, the elders have a particular experience that we can't discount and the youth have enthusiasm and we can't discount that either. We really try to weave in all these different elements because we recognize for instance that the elders have a lot of understanding and experience even if they don't have much schooling. And the youth often come with a high level of schooling but they don't necessarily see certain elements of reality of our situation, and that's where they begin to see it in these types of experiences when they come together.

There have been a number of key political phases that mark the shift in political space for Saskatchewan Aboriginal women's political participation. After existing as non-citizens with the inception of the *Indian Act*, changes to the Act in 1951 formally acknowledged women and permitted them to legally participate (vote and run for office) in the governance of their home communities/reserves.¹⁹⁸ The Indian Rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s, in which Starlight and Joan Beatty participated, and the continuing cultural revitalization movement, also influenced the various levels of state (provincial and federal) to acknowledge the rights of Indigenous peoples and ensure their increasing participation in governance.¹⁹⁹

Coincidentally, one month before the signing of the Guatemalan Peace Accords in December 1996, the Canadian Government published its Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) which proposed new legislation, institutions, resources, and a redistribution of land as part of a 20-year plan for change to rebuild Aboriginal nations, governments and communities. RCAP identified four key areas: healing, economic development, human resources development, and the building of Aboriginal institutions.²⁰⁰ In the RCAP chapter on Women's Perspectives, the report stresses the key role women play in healing and re-building

¹⁹⁷ People of the Indigenous group, Poqomam, a sub-group of Maya.

¹⁹⁸ Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century. First Nations Women Chiefs*, xvi

¹⁹⁹ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 64

²⁰⁰ Hurley & Wherrett, "The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," 1

contemporary Aboriginal communities and reviews the relationship between specific Federal government legislation and its implication on women's experiences (eg., on access to housing, membership, status and benefits). In its recommendations, RCAP proposes women be actively involved and consulted in developing culturally-appropriate parallel institutions that address the specific needs of Aboriginal communities.²⁰¹ Other research similarly concluded that Indigenous women must play a "direct and indispensable role in any emerging forms of self-determination in the community."²⁰² It particularly noted that male-dominated reserve administrations generally did not focus resources on "women's issues" such as family violence, daycare, and education. This identifies two critical themes that emerge in the Aboriginal women's stories in this thesis: the distinct priorities of and role performed by Aboriginal women in leadership, and the utility of self-determination in the development of new models of governance.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - I think the province is starting to wake up, hey we've got to do something here, whether it's in education, whether it's industries wanting to hire, more recruiters that are Aboriginal, or how can we reach out to the Aboriginal community? What is it that we can do different? Why is this program doing well? Things like that. So there's a lot of models, I think, that can be used.

Starlight, Saskatchewan – Women are getting more control in Indigenous communities. Why is it happening? For a whole bunch of reasons. Spiritually it's supposed to happen. I remember even my deceased elder, awhile back, he had a dream, and grandmother moon came to him and said, it's time to give the women the power back. So part of it's just a universal law that's happening. Another part is, come on, women outnumber men. [laughs] We do! Something's happened in biology and there's more women than men in this world. So that's number two. Number three, I have this theory about what happened in residential schools. That's just my own theory again, about not just residential schools, but residential schools, colonization, and everything. Because the role of a man was to protect and to provide, and they took that away. I mean, they squashed that. To this day.

²⁰¹ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Government of Canada. 1996. Women's Perspectives Chapter.

²⁰² Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century*. *First Nations Women Chiefs*, 15, referring in part to Judge Arnott's 1997 study of Indigenous political structures.

And the woman was to caretaker the future generations and to transmit culture, and you know, take care of those home fires. And so, no matter what they did to us, we could still keep that role. And yes, they sterilized a lot of women, but they could still nurture their nieces, their nephews, the kid that was abandoned. They could still have that role of the woman. Not as strict as what happened to men. So when you can still have that inherent role, identity, you can survive better, and you're more resilient.

It seems like women on reserve are stronger. I mean, that's where you've seen women chiefs come in. Look at our Indigenous organizations in the cities—it's mostly male-dominated. Like the leadership. The technicians are all women, but it's male dominated. And yet on the reserves, there are Indian women chiefs.

LEADERSHIP IN HYBRID SPACES

While the Indigenous women in this thesis have a wide range of personalities and styles, they share similar expectations of leadership priorities and approaches, which they model in their many spaces. They emphasize the need for integrated, holistic approaches to policies and partnerships, attending to intertwined social, emotional, mental and physical needs in their communities, working at multiple layers of self, family, community and the state. These layers are also hybrid, incorporating shifting popular and political contexts that reflect overlapping multi-cultures broadly categorized as Indigenous, white, and ladino, (further stratified by categories that include rural, urban, northern, southern) all influenced by global media and capitalist cultures. The Indigenous women articulate notions of hybridity in a range that moves from as personal as their spiritual beliefs to as public as their attempts to create a “democratic, participatory, multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural”²⁰³ state. Influencing and inserting their priorities into such a messy, popular and political fusion requires an equally diverse network of alliances, strategies and a strong focus, rooted in identity.

Ethnic Identity and Cultural Hybridity

The hybridity of the Indigenous women's external cultures is also present in their personal and political beliefs and strategies, but as I have argued in previous chapters, I do not characterize their identities as hybrid. While many discussions on hybridity propose constructing

²⁰³ *Memory of Silence*, UN Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, Conclusions and Recommendations.

a hybrid identity is a purposeful, political choice,²⁰⁴ these women emphatically state their identity as Indigenous (and feminist for the Guatemalan women). They have incorporated elements from non-Indigenous culture into their identity; they have also reinterpreted traditional Indigenous concepts and resituated them into a modern, Indigenous and non-Indigenous space. But, they still emphasize that the essence and core of their identity, especially their political identity, is as Indigenous women. I would also assert that “Indigenous” and “woman” are not static identities with fixed meanings, and that this evolution of meaning is critical to their political work of reconstructing the dominant culture to include Indigenous peoples. The meanings contained within their identities have evolved and have been rearticulated for the political purpose of being able to maneuver within a hybrid space without losing their “Indigeneity” or “woman-ness”. These reconstructed identities are determinedly not hybrid; they can, however, function effectively in hybrid spaces.

The women’s expressions of their identity and political work also challenge statements that postmodern identities are “rootless and in constant flux.”²⁰⁵ Rather, these expressions affirm the postmodern concept of “re-embedding what modernity dis-embedded,”²⁰⁶ which resonates with the healing and recovery work the Indigenous women facilitate. I like the description that “Aboriginal culture and peoples are “traditional, modern and postmodern””²⁰⁷ because it captures this sense of movement, evolution and strategic positioning between worlds and within identities.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - We can't be isolated anymore. I look at Deschambault, everybody's got Facebook. Everybody. Everybody's got TV. The kids dress, you know, the big hats, the big pants, whatever, they're all in to that. And there's a struggle, there's an attempt, to hang on to that language, to rebuild it, because a lot of the kids, they don't speak Cree. So we're losing there, too.

²⁰⁴ McDowell, *Gender, Identity & Place. Understanding Feminist Geographies*, 212; also Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*, 6; Werbner and Modood, eds, *Debating Cultural Hybridity. Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, 5; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 88, 108.

²⁰⁵ Werbner and Modood, eds, *Debating Cultural Hybridity. Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* 1997, 16.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁰⁷ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 96 (as cited in Cairns, *Citizen Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State*, 206)

I look at kids that made an attempt, after going to school in Deschambault, not necessarily having access to all the right subjects they needed, to make it in the outside world. They come out [of the home community], they have to try to catch up, spend a year in urban, sometimes you get in trouble, racism sometimes, you know, they go back home. Some of them make it through... they got their degrees and even had a kid while going to university here. And went back home. Now they're helping out in the community. To me, that's a success thing. I see their kids are pretty modern too, though. But they've also lived in both worlds.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - *I kind of walk in two worlds now. Right now, as it is and what's happened to my family, I live on reserve, but I feel comfortable, like I work for an Aboriginal organization, but a lot of my other work, volunteer work or whatever, are for non-Aboriginal organizations. And sometimes when I feel myself like my dad, [laughs] valuing money more than people, then I go, Whoa, give yourself a shake and I think about my traditional values and culture, and my dad is a wonderful person, and has been there for me whenever I've needed him in the past, but he values his money, his material possessions, and so I have both my parents' blood running through me, so it's a constant fight.*

The Indigenous women reflect on these different contexts, or worlds, and the importance of being able to move between and be equal participants in them all. The Saskatchewan women talk about living in “two worlds,” and the Guatemalan women discuss the need for “integral” or “integrated” development, alluding to an existing fragmented world, fragmented not only in terms of policy approaches but also a world violently torn apart by racism and gender discrimination. To reconstruct a world that is integrated, and a self that integrates into that world, the women highlight the need to be able to work on many levels and with many different allies – a strategy that rejects a self-determination promoting segregation, but instead inserts self-determination within a larger hybrid space.

Self-Determination in Multiple Worlds

The acknowledgement of living in multiple worlds is especially apparent in the tensions around Indigenous self-determination, the importance of having autonomy over key institutions, specifically related to culture, without being segregated or isolationist. It is a discourse of power

- having the *real* authority and capacity to make political, economic, social and spiritual decisions that are not pre-determined or constrained by external jurisdictions, for example municipal, provincial and federal. It also refers to the notion of a collective right to shape these decisions: an active citizenship rather than decision making by a few individuals.²⁰⁸

The Indigenous women in this thesis are working to influence policy and legislation at all these levels. They do not call for complete self-governance in all institutions; instead they advocate for a hybrid model that combines self-governance of cultural and health institutions, with mainstream non-cultural institutions which would also contain Indigenous-specific policies, developed with the participation of Indigenous peoples.

Both Saskatchewan and Guatemalan women emphasize the importance of Indigenous economic and social development based on access to mainstream, but Indigenous -targeted health, education and job training. Both groups discuss the need for Indigenous people to have separate spaces where they can re-learn their Indigenous languages and culture (particularly youth) and access traditional Indigenous healing. They recognize, however, that Indigenous people also need access to mainstream health and education institutions. The Saskatchewan women also discuss the importance of providing supports for Indigenous people to be able to transition from their rural home communities into mainstream non-Indigenous society. This is especially important in terms of furthering education and accessing job opportunities in urban areas.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - It's good to have the Aboriginal content [in schools], I think that is very important, but at the same time we have to realize that we are existing in a white world, or in a mixed world, not even a white world anymore. There's a lot of immigrants coming in there, there's other cultures, you know, but we're going to be a majority, in pretty high numbers, in no time, in Saskatchewan alone. We need to teach the proper history, the right history. To me that was crucial. Languages, culture, those are the two core things. So for sure we

²⁰⁸ My understanding of self-determination is pulled from the following authors: Beatty, Pimacesowin (To Make Your Own Way): First Nation Governance through An Autonomous Non-Government Organization, 140-148; Beck, "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Self-Determination in an Urban Indian Community," 117, 118; Green, "Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada," 716; Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 167

need that strengthened. And if we go to the mainstream system, it's not there. It's not there at all. So we need these institutions. But I guess I'm saying, we can't be too isolated either. We can be so isolated, because I'm met people that are so isolated, so into themselves, don't want to deal with white people, they reject what they believe, I don't think that's proper either. There has to be, we have to walk in both worlds, literally. That's what it has to be.

Leona, Saskatchewan - *To me self-determination doesn't mean segregation. To me, I mean, I could have had a better experience going through my cancer if there was an Aboriginal healing unit right next door. I wouldn't have had to come all the way to Saskatchewan to go to the ceremonies that I needed for my healing. Because I truly believe that without going to those ceremonies, I think the cancer would have gotten worse. There isn't a space where medicine and the way Indigenous people heal themselves, there isn't a place where they're really together, working together. And I do agree that there should be Cree immersion classes. But whose Cree do you teach now?*

But at the same time, I can see why they're wanting it. I think it's because, and I'm really hesitant to say this, but a reactionary measure against residential schools. And those survivors are the ones in charge right now, and they're the ones saying this is what we need. And they hate white people. They don't want to work with them, they don't even want to be in the same room as them, a lot of them.

What our people need to know is how to live in this society today. What we need to do is be able to use that, because you know, our traditions aren't static, they've always evolved with the time. What we need to do is, whatever our traditions were, live them today. And I think we can do that successfully. And I don't think we need to be segregated to be able to do that. But we're not going to get there while the residential school survivors are in charge. And are scared. And that's where the leadership is going right now, is segregation. And I don't agree with that at all. Because that doesn't help my daughter. That doesn't help my nephews, my nieces. It's not going to help my grandchildren.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - *It is difficult for Indigenous women to find opportunities. And the government hasn't upheld its duty by providing our right to work and education that must be based on our own culture. And if it's difficult for someone who's already finished 8 semesters of university courses, how is it for the women who have had no education? They are in the maquilas, the factories, or in people's homes. And it's not because they like to cook, it's because there aren't any other options. And they put up with any kind of treatment that they receive.*

Ana López, Guatemala - Because I was a Mayan woman, leftist woman and a woman coming from a rural area, the Women's Secretariat said I could choose which ministries I wanted to work with. There are 9 different axis in government, and so I got to choose the ones I thought were most crucial to the development of Indigenous and rural women. So I chose the Education Ministry, I think education is so important for women. It's a fundamental base for women. Education is important for work. The work can bring in economic income and a woman with money can have good health, good food and opportunities. At the same time, this is really linked in to health. So I also chose the Ministry of Health. I also wanted to promote Indigenous people's identity, for instance in the Ministry of Education through bilingual education. And in the Health Ministry, through the different systems of health that we have in our culture and the way that we use health through midwives, healers, and bone setters and even our spirituality as well, heals. And that's why I chose health. I also chose other institutions such as the Institution for Agriculture, called MAGA, because of the possibility of productive projects for women in the rural areas. I also chose the Environmental Industry because of the whole issue of natural resources and their exploitation is very important to me.... And my role in all of this was to bring policy to these institutions so that they would implement it.

THE WORK: TO HEAL AND TO DEFEND

I have tried to be representative of the women's thinking and work in this chapter, struggling to organize it according to themes that emerged in our conversations without pulling them apart so much as to disconnect from the full narrative. There are clearly places where threads emerge repeatedly in several themes, and where one theme has more resonance with one regional group than another. There are also themes where certain individual women dominate, and this is not because I believe their work is more important than other women's, but because how they described a particular theme captured a depth and intensity that other women also reflected, but not with such detail. The selections below are also not complete representations of all, or even the most current, of the women's work, but illustrations of their political leadership, in a diversity of spaces, issues, and in solidarity with multiple allies. My intention is to demonstrate both the heterogeneity of their narratives as well as the powerful places their stories overlap.

Leading By Example

The Indigenous women follow a leadership style that is rooted in family, community and traditional Indigenous values.²⁰⁹ They consciously choose role-modeling as one of the ways they lead; themes that run through their narratives reveal how they work for balance in their lives: a healthy, respectful lifestyle (explicitly including gender equality for the Guatemalan women) as well as the struggles of living in two worlds (a specific concern for the Saskatchewan women).

***Starlight, Saskatchewan** - In the truest sense, the leader serves the people. The people direct, the leader takes that and says, okay I'm going to be the front person for that, and I'm here to serve you. So if you're looking at it like a triangle, the people are up here, the leader is down here. When you look at it in the mainstream, it's flipped over—the leader is up here and the people are down there. A leader should be humble and a leader should serve the people and a leader should listen to the people and do the bidding of the people.*

We are so colonized. We are so bloody colonized that we can't even get our heads around our own traditions, and that's the problem. And then you bring in people that want power, and that colonized structure gives power. That colonized structure fans egos, and we have too many egos.

Leadership, it's for the people. And the voice of people, and women, and youth, and elders. That is the key elements. Most of all respect, that we must always be respectful. And that respect is the key element, not power, not control, it's respect.

***Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan** - I decided to run again and I asked this one elder to see if she would nominate me, and she said, she wasn't sure if she would. She just said that she got concerned right away. She said, well don't let it get to your head. She said, if you get in, so many leaders, they forget who their family is. They forget where they came from, and they forget about God, and they forget about everything. They start drinking, they start running around, they just forget where they come from. She said, just don't do that. But I wasn't expecting that, you know. I thought, oh, yeah, for sure. I'm glad that she said that because it stuck with me all these years.*

²⁰⁹ Prindeville, "A Comparative Study of Native American and Hispanic Women in Grassroots and Electoral Politics," 78. From her interviews with Native American women leaders, she concludes that many see their role as leaders to facilitate other people to become politically active citizens in their communities, "They conceptualized power in terms of their ability to share their knowledge, experience, and influence with others for the purpose of empowering them."

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - So, at least four spaces or roles that I have, I take them on because of, emphasis on because of, because of my daughter, because of my family, because of my organization, because of the community, and because of society.

The organization is really my means, the tool I use, but I also do a lot of work at home with my siblings, my family, my daughter. Hopefully my daughter will have a very different life from my own. But I am focusing first at that level and then the community because you can't go out and point other people's errors if you are making the same mistakes in your own home.

I see a lot of people here, both male and female, who really help out a lot, who really participate, but their daughters and their sons don't really follow their example, and they don't move forward academically. I want my daughter to move ahead. I also want her to participate in the movement, and I want her to understand me. But I've seen many cases where women who participate in women's movements have children who are the exact opposite.

Maybe in the simplest terms, I want to be an example as a woman, as a person with human feelings, as a professional, I want to set an example for other women so that they can see that getting academic or other types of training is good, so people can say, look how she is, she doesn't need someone else to support her, or to move forward. She can be on her own and doesn't need someone. And in spite of the difficulties she's encountered, she's still been able to move ahead. I don't want to be famous, but I think it's important to be an example and to recognize the example of other women. There's also women who have set out to break down fear and to break down different schemes that are out there. And that's really important, to applaud the efforts of other women, and to laud women who make it forward. And I really want my daughter to be proud of me. I want her to say, yeah, that's my mom. It's not about my ego, or about me thinking this of myself, but I just want my daughter to feel good. To me, my mother is everything to me, and I hope my daughter also has a really close relationship with me.

Leona, Saskatchewan - In a way, I've started with my family. I think you have to work from your family out. To work on relationships between your family, and then start to work into the broader community, and that's how I've been putting a lot of effort into my larger extended family and making sure I go and support them when they're having any kind of issues... So I was told to work with my family and then to work with community, like in concentric circles, to work out, and eventually, so that our nations go back to their ways. So I was told that one day what we should be doing is walking our own ways but living in today's society, and I would model that. And I don't know how to model that to people. But I'm trying to model it to my family.

I used to go out of my way, and I volunteered sixty hours a week when I was talking, to the detriment of my own family—I didn't work, I did all this volunteering. And so it took so much out of me and out of our, like we lived in an apartment, and I thought, this is backwards, I need to do it in a way that's healthier for me, so I've just been concentrating on what I can actually influence with what I have. And it seems like I've gotten, I've come down to a smaller level, but I think what I am modeling now is how to live in both worlds.

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - *I was very demanding of myself, and I'm also demanding of my child. Maybe not demanding, but what I try to do is involve him in all the activities that we have. Let's do this together, let's put away our things. This is how they learn to see and to value what life is and what our work is.*

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *When the apology came out, and the signing of the residential school agreement, and people getting compensated, they start coming out with what happened to them. And you think, oh, my god, you know, it's amazing that they're still here and that they survived, because there are just really horrid stories and horror stories of what happened to our people, and yet they still came home, and they kept that all inside and never said anything to anybody. And I think part of healing is admitting what happened, and just doing something about it. Because if we don't heal ourselves, then how do we expect our kids to heal, our grandkids, or our community.*

You heal by working on yourself. Working on your issues, looking at yourself, looking at your own issues and making a conscious decision to make a change in your life. And when things get tough, you find a way to, like for me, I'm still, I go to therapy, all the time. Whether it's once a month, or sometimes maybe three times a week, it depends on what I'm going through, but we're all human beings and we all go through crisis I guess, or we're all going through different things, but I just think if I'm not healthy or if I don't know how to handle myself, then how do I help people, or how do I better my life? But at the same time, I know that I can't be healed right away, so I have to still keep doing my work, and doing my work at the same time trying to understand my own life and make time for my kids and my family, and get ready because nobody else will come with a magic wand and say, you're healed.

Reclaiming Spaces for Indigenous Women

The Indigenous women in this thesis engage in many different types of political work, but each have gone through a similar process of identifying spaces where Indigenous women, or more broadly Indigenous peoples, have been left out: absent in politics, both in decision making as well as policy; ignored by a justice system (particularly in Guatemala) which fails to address the deadly physical and sexual violence experienced by Indigenous women; overlooked by the scarcity of social services able to provide support systems for women experiencing violence; prevented from achieving minimal education levels, which condemns Indigenous girls to a lifetime of the violence of poverty and disempowerment; and removed from their lands by the resource extraction of foreign companies.

All the women have responded to these institutional and social absences by developing their own organizations and/or leading programs that fill these spaces, to reclaim and re-insert the presence and voice of Indigenous women. They emphasize holistic models and approaches that bring people together to heal together and struggle together.

Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala - *In different ways I have supported the creation of numerous organizations, including co-ed co-operatives, women's co-operatives, youth groups, both religious and co-operative groups. I've also supported the creation of women's organizations, and I contributed to the creation of a political party with the idea that it's not to just criticize from outside the workings of the state but it's important to work from within to try to make structural changes and political changes and to improve your country for women and for victims of the armed conflict.*

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - *The justice system isn't there to help you. And it's the same thing in the health services. If you go and you've been beaten and there's often no record of it because we've gone to try to get statistics of violence from health services and they say oh there's no statistics because they prefer to leave it, have it be kept silent. So I think that it's so deeply rooted now that it seems really hard to eliminate these problems but I think that as organized women with a conscience what we can at least do is weaken some of these problems that are so deeply rooted. I think that of all the actions that we've done, there have been results even though it's a very slow process. I had this negative experience that I mentioned in the public prosecutor's office but then that changed when I sought help somewhere else, I had a very different experience. I sought help*

with the center in support of women victims and survivors of violence, CAIMUS.

These are very new institutions, about 4 or 5 years old, and they grew out of the demand, or they were created in the response to the demands of women's organizations here in Guatemala City. They were established because of all the rallies that we did, the petitions that we made to particular government institutions and since I've been going I've had professional support in terms of therapy and legal aid. So all the actions that I did in the past with the women's movement are actually bearing fruit for me currently. I didn't earn a salary all those years but now I'm firsthand feeling the results of that work. And it's not just for me, it's for so many women that finally are seeing these results. For a long time I didn't understand these problems because I hadn't gone through such a situation myself. But now I do and it's really the result of the national movement – women who just kept the pressure on.

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala - *We had to begin by denouncing sexual violence in our community. And this is a path that we took on with responsibility in order to defend our first territory, our bodies. Many Xinka women are kidnapped, taken from 11 to 14 or 15 years old, they are stolen, taken away in a very violent way and placed into marital bliss. In the majority of cases it is against the girl's will. This is a practice in the communities of Xalapán that is seen as normal, the community legitimizes it. The Indigenous government have not given any opinion against it and the families put up with it because it is the way things are. But if you ask the girls what she thinks of it, she'll say well that's what life is like. Or that's what women are born to do.*

We also began publicly denouncing why don't the majority of Indigenous Xinka women not know how to read and write in the western system? And the Xinka language is pretty much no longer a maternal language, it's almost extinct. We also discovered a research report that was published in year 2006 through the support of a collective, called Education for All, of which we are a part. And the publication called the lack of access to education for girls, a form of discrimination. Of every 100 girls who start off with a traditional education system in the mountains, only 14 finish. We began an national and international process of denouncing this situation because girls of 14 or 15 years of age in the mountains no longer go to school because they are no longer in the age range established for learning, according to the people there. And so we made this announcement within the context of the worldwide week for the right to education. Throughout this we were part of this movement that was struggling for these issues but within that movement the voice of Indigenous women was not being heard so we were very clear in our political declaration that lack of access to education for girls and women was also a kind of violence against women.

Why have we as women had this strength of defending the territory, the land territory. The struggle that we've lead has been around the mining

concessions. Currently there are 31 licenses for metal mining and it was women, we as women, who launched this struggle. We didn't do it alone but we were the ones who began it. And it's because we understand it's about harmony. And the responsibility of both women and men. This really helped us to go say to our community governments we have to do something about this issue. And we had interviews and mobilizations - over 20,000 people from the mountains mobilized to go to the urban centers and approach the congress people from Jalapa because there's a lot of information about all the mining and it even lead us all the way to the president. Because it's the executive branch of government that gives the concessions for metal mining and they were doing this without once consulting with our people in spite of agreements such as the International Labor Organization treaties and the Universal Declaration of Indigenous People's rights, at the UN. And so we as women rose up to defend our territory and we struggled against mining and we united with other social organizations in the mountains and we formed an organization called community action, the Xinka Xalapán Community Action. And it's a territorial level coordinating body.

Ana López, Guatemala - *I started to work on the process of formulating a national policy to promote and develop Guatemala women from the years 2001 – 2006. This launched a new stage for me as a Mayan woman. It's had its challenges because I've had to join the state apparatus. There's an important difference – to be out in the street, holding your sign, yelling People With Hunger is a People Without Peace, or Without Women's Political Participation There Won't Be Revolution... Within the government, the work is much more technical. And really my work was to make sure that the content and the goals would be implemented by appropriate public authorities. And the goal was for integral development of Guatemalan women.*

So part of my strategy as an Indigenous woman even though I was part of the state, I knew that the ministry had a sexist, machista, exclusive attitude, so I always kept communications, alliance, with the women's movement in civil society.

I also started the women's organization Tzununija'. Mostly it's women from civil society and also some from government and it's a new movement. This is the first time there's an organization that deals with health and education and land and housing, productivity, economy, violence, and political participation.

My long term vision is really a part of what I do now – it's to defend and promote the rights of women in general, both Indigenous and Mestizo women, but particularly Indigenous women because we have our own particular situation. However it's not easy to achieve integral development and there are times when I ally myself with Indigenous men and other times they oppose what we are doing particularly in terms of domestic violence. So

there's different factors that make it hard. But I've known how to walk it. I know which paths to take and which paths not to take. And which times to make alliances and which times not to.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - *When I was in university, I took some classes in political science, and I thought, okay, which [political] party is going to help us the most. And I looked, and none of them. None of them represent me. So I'm not going to vote no more. Made that decision. Then I thought, that's not going to solve anything. Okay, what's the closest one. Which one would relate to a lot of the northern issues we are dealing with?*

And it was the NDP. So I went to their meeting, and I got roped off in the visitors' section, because only the delegates would go in. But I could hear, and they were dealing with things like uranium mining, and I think there were one or two people that were Aboriginal, and I said they're passing resolutions about us! And I knew about resolutions through the trappers and the fishermen. To me they were powerful things.

And so I said, how do I get beyond this rope, you know, next year? You have to be elected a delegate in LaRonge. I didn't even know there was a constituency. So I went to the meeting there, and I became a delegate. The next year, there became a handful of us, and we would be racing from panel to another where there was a resolution dealing with Aboriginal people so we would have a voice. That's how I got started in, you know, party politics, because I thought, we need to change things in government. And we did change policies to be more reflective of our issues.

And then within the NDP we started the Aboriginal wing of the party. Because you had the women's wing and the youth wing, and I said, where's the Aboriginal wing? Well, we got to change the constitution. Okay, let's change the constitution. So we did. And we created an Aboriginal wing of the party so that more people could become delegates, and become part of the resolutions and make decisions that would impact on policy when they're in government.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - *The other day we had to speak at this other conference I was at, we had to speak to our program, what we're doing in each one of our shelters, give a highlight of each one of our shelters. So I got up there and we did a program called "I am a Kind Man, I Choose a Good Life with Her" program. It's a seven-eight week program, but it's based on seven grandfather teachings of the Anishinabe people. And it's about treating your partner with love and respect and the teachings that we've had in our tribes.*

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *We are building a wellness treatment center in La Ronge. To be successful, we are bringing in everyone to work together. Even if we do it as a band, it wouldn't be successful. In order for it to be successful - and to get money from the provincial and federal government - you need to work together. If you try to close up and not work with people, even if you don't always agree with them, you close doors. But if you can find a way to work with people you can make it more successful.*

Struggling Between Frustration and Hope

There is a difficulty in being the one to model living differently, to work with different people, to be the one that says what everyone else is thinking but can't say out loud. While the Indigenous women express a sense of determination and accomplishment, they also speak of the darker moments of frustration, of burning out, and of being angry, discouraged and not knowing where to go next.

Starlight, Saskatchewan - *In the international movement they have gone through a lot of anti-racism, anti-oppression workshops, ally-building, the roles of allies, decolonization, they've gone through a whole process, so there's people that really understand Indigenous rights, they understand anti-oppression. They understand their role as allies. But in the real, real climate justice movement, I feel a solidarity, and I can just be me. But I think what frustrates me, is I'm so used to this international movement and people that are so aware, and then I come back here and what I'm facing and I'm so tired. I'm just so tired of having to spend energy educating people. I'm tired of it. I've done it for forty-some years and I'm tired of it. It's like, you should know by now. And then I go at it and go at it, and they probably don't get it in the end anyways.*

Leona, Saskatchewan - *I was a kid when I knew, I was sixteen, and I knew I didn't want violence in my life. I wanted to be able to walk and have a normal life without all the dysfunction that was going on in my family life. And I knew I had to stay in my home in order to finish education, my high school, to get out and to be able to get a job. I made that plan, to get out and go into the military after I got out of high school, when I was sixteen. And it was a plan. And if I didn't do it, I know why there's suicide in our communities, because I've lived there.*

But education isn't the only way to get out of that. And it shouldn't be promoted as the way to get out. I think, and a lot of people say, oh yeah, the healing way is the way to get out of this dysfunction. Well, what the hell is the healing path? Nobody ever tells me, they just assume you know. But you know what? I never knew what the healing path was. Everybody talked about this famous red road, you know, in our communities. The traditional people say, oh yeah, you need the healing path, you need the red road. Well, I know it now, but it's not even a red road, it's not even a healing path. It's basically dealing with your shit that you were raised in, because your past makes you who you are today. And if you don't change it, you're going to keep making the same damn mistakes that your past made you make up to this point. You can't change anything, because of automatic reaction. You're going to always be in reaction mode, until you confront what's making you react.

And I think that's the problem our community is facing. We have all these people, traditional, saying, this is the way we gotta go. We've gotta follow this red path, you've got to follow this. And there's these academics saying, oh yeah, you gotta get education so you know how to position yourself, so you know who or what you are, you know how to make your identity, right? And then we have these politicians saying, our people need more handouts, our people need more handouts. We need to have jobs. We need to have jobs. Well, I think we need to get that all together, and put it all together in a way that makes sense to our people.

Because none of those made sense to me. I went to the military and that made sense to me. And what the military gave me was the discipline to be able to complete a job, the confidence in myself that I had as a person to be able to survive in this world, it gave me security, having a bed where I wasn't abused. I mean, I wasn't free of violence when I was in the military, there was still a lot of sexism going on, I was going in when they didn't want women in the military, there was a lot of sexism and stuff like that, and I almost got raped twice in the military. But from the violence I came from, to the barracks I had, I was safe in the military. I had that safety that I knew people weren't going to come and beat me up in my bed as long as I did my job. And my job was to perform as a teammate. And I could do that.

I'm not saying that Aboriginal people should go in the military. I am saying that they need to find a place, to learn in a safe place.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan –*You feel kind of alone after awhile. And I know I'm not the only person, but sometimes it feels that way because I'm forging ahead and we're trying to get a group going, and if I could get a core group going where we can talk and be a close-knit group where we can just, you know, give each other encouragement and hope and whatever else we need, but it's not there yet. So, still looking. And I have had go-between, like every*

day I go between being hopeful and then you know [laughs] then the frustration kind of sets in, like “Oh, why do I even try.” But again, this morning I was enlightened and got more hope again when my son said, “You know when we went to that conference,” he said, “in Edmonton three years ago, and we listened to that lady who actually forgave her husband’s killer, and was working with him to try to prevent similar violence,” he said, “I just carry her words with me.” And I was like, WOW, for him to have that type of understanding, and he’s never said that to me in three years. But to have that type of understanding.

SHAPING ACTIVE SPACES OF CITIZENSHIP

This final section is specifically focused on the usefulness that the Indigenous women attribute to both formal political positions of leadership as well as active citizenship. While a few have held formal elected positions, many, specifically the Guatemalan women, remain skeptical or cautious of the real space in national government to make change. All of the women do emphasize the importance of building citizen engagement, and of a model of governance that ensures this active citizenship in Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces, within and outside of the state. There is a sense that Indigenous people, and Indigenous women, must be involved in order for their interests to be represented at the many decision-making tables.

Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala - *So I would say in a general level that our political system was not made with the needs of women in mind and much less with the needs of Indigenous people. We are greatly affected by racism, by exclusive structures that exclude Indigenous people and for over 100 years, Indigenous people have struggled to participate within the political system but it hasn’t been possible due to the level of exclusion.*

I am focusing my work a lot in Conavigua in terms of training for leadership for self-esteem, in terms of repairing the damages that were caused by the armed conflict, the search for justice as well as community development. We do small-scale development projects for women. That’s my work with Conavigua. At the same time, my work with the Political Associations of Mayan Women, Moloj, is mainly to transfer experiences from Congress in the executive branch to support women and to support a new model of citizenship in terms of promoting an ethical voting and doing political training at a local

level, at a legislative level, and also at an international level in terms of lobbying efforts.²¹⁰

Ana López, Guatemala - I have been 11 years in government, lived through three government administrations. I have not been affiliated with any political party although there have been three systems. I've been offered different candidacies. They want to showcase Ana, but I said no thank you. I have a strong commitment to Tzununuji' and that's where my energy is focused now.

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala – In the 2003 elections, we as an Electoral Observation organization held a panel discussion and invited all the candidates as panelists and lots of people came. They wanted to hear about what the platform was of each candidate, what their plan was for government. But none of them had any plans. They all just had pretty words and good speeches. But when we asked what's your plan they said oh it's still in the process.

Given all the work that we've done, many political parties have come to us with different proposals to take the president of our organization and set him up as a candidate. The same thing happened to the vice president and to me, we've all been proposed to be on the different lists of candidates by the different political parties. And so we made a decision to not participate in political parties and really for two reasons. One was that it would really delegitimize our organization, we'd have to leave our organization because you can't be part of our organization and be part of a political party. And the second reason was because we had all these different proposals but from different parties and so it really would have been a way to split us up and we would no longer be united.

It's not necessary to be part of the local government to be able to act in the local community. I think citizens, if we are taking on our obligations in the municipality, that's enough. I really want the citizenry to be well-informed, and to know the situation, and at some point down the line, there could be more spaces or more political participation, that they be based on mature, legitimate elections. Not just legal elections, but legitimate ones. Because these days, the elections are legal, but they are not legitimate. But first there still is the stage of training, and creating an environment in which people can

²¹⁰Because of interview time constraints, Rosalina Tuyuc did not discuss her experiences as the first Indigenous women in Guatemala to be elected to Congress and the only Indigenous woman to serve as one of the Vice Presidents of Congress.

be more analytical, and not just criticize, but also propose, make proposals. And I really would want electoral participation to be completely transparent, and those who get elected receive the support of the people that they're going to represent, because the elected officials are not there to govern, but to represent.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - *A week before the elections there was a stabbing on Standing Buffalo. It wasn't a member, but there was a house party and these people came from another community and a girl got stabbed. And I just thought, you know, it doesn't have to be like this. This is not what I wanted. In my mind, I tried to choose people [in the election] who would bring these issues up and they would want to help. But not one woman was elected this last time. There were lots of women who ran. And the chief, he ran against two women. I feel if there were more women, they would make a bigger change. There would be more work done for our children and for issues such as violence in our communities. They would bring more feeling.*

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan - *It does help to be in a political position, you're able to have more contact with people and more back-up. Because if I wasn't chief I wouldn't be able to talk to certain people or to mobilize like this. The wellness treatment center I'm trying to get built is going to take a lot of time and energy. People need to buy into it, to trust you. Many of us are in denial about the different issues in our community - a lot of addictions and social issues - and sending people away to be incarcerated isn't the answer, we need to get to the root of it. We can't keep incarcerating, we need to own the problem and it's our issues and we need to deal with it, need to get back to talking to people, not ignoring the problem, and participate in what we're going to do about it.*

I think there are some male chiefs that will do more preventative work like this wellness center, or a women's center. But I think women bring a different perspective to leadership, a different energy, when we clean up the house, it's different than how men would do it, we get into the corners. Yeah, that's a metaphor for my leadership style [laughs]. And it's about caring. I care about my work, and doing a good job, and I care about the little things.

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan - *I always believed we "must be sitting at the table" to bring about change, to create greater understanding of who we are as Aboriginal people, as northerners, as women. That is why I did not hesitate to sit on Boards or committees because once people got to know you as a person, they looked beyond colour and they could truly appreciate what*

you had to offer or say. However, there is a greater responsibility of not forgetting where you come from, of always being in touch with your roots and those you represent.

As a northern MLA and as a Minister in Cabinet, I was given that opportunity to speak, to question, and to be heard in the highest inner circles of government. I also found, there was an expectation of not only being a Northern MLA but Aboriginal people across the province also expected you in their communities. It was very hard to say no so I was constantly on the road on weekends and in the Legislature and daily Cabinet meetings during the week. I was lucky to get home every other weekend. Yet this was where my basis for sanity was; my foundation, my source of strength and rest, and a reminder of why I was doing this. It was so important for me to get home and to be with family.

I believed it is important to be in an elected position, especially where there are few Aboriginal people and not enough women. It's hard work but it's the process of creating change, of being able to share and resolve issues with others sitting at the table, of looking at the bigger picture and looking ahead so that the everyone in the province benefits, not only a few... I did not always have my way but I was heard and I believe I educated others in the challenges we face as Aboriginal people, as Northerners, and as women.

CONCLUSION

The Indigenous women's political lives have been a long journey. For many it began with the experience of violence – from racism, sexism or poverty - in their homes and it has taken them into positions of leadership in their communities and nations. Their Indigenous and feminist identities – layering tradition with modernity – ground their self and their work, enabling them to maneuver through their multiple and hybrid worlds. They model healing, respect, and equality in their personal lives, to their family and community, and promote the same holistic and integrated solutions at national and international levels. They are also constructing a model of governance that combines self-determination and sovereign Indigenous institutions with mixed mainstream institutions. The active citizenship they advocate is engagement in all spaces of governance that affect Indigenous peoples and women. In addition to their own courage, energy and skill, they succeed at influencing political spaces through the relationships of solidarity they have built with many and diverse groups of alliances. Exploring the role and responsibility of allies in creating worlds where Indigenous people are equal participants, is the discussion in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE – TO BE IN SOLIDARITY

Bernaldina Yuman, Guatemala - From the moment that we recognize our identity, from the moment that we don't allow others to discriminate against us, we begin our political participation.

This is not only about Indigenous peoples struggling for their rights. This is about the role of non-Indigenous peoples in this same struggle. From the moment we recognize both our historic and future role in the struggles of Indigenous peoples for equality and respect, we begin our political participation, we activate our responsibility as actors and as allies in fighting for these goals. This is about working in solidarity to shift relationships of power, to decolonize and reconstruct the power dynamics between peoples and within structures.²¹¹

Rebuilding and democratizing relationships begins with constructing new narratives, narratives that are located in a counter-history that acknowledge a colonial violence concentrated along lines of racism and patriarchy, the far-reaching damage of social and economic assimilation. Instead of ending with a reconciliation based on an apology and financial reparations,²¹² it begins there, and genuinely pursues a radical re-formation of actors, structures and ultimately power. Equal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples call for multiple narratives, from inner and familial narratives, to national multi-culture and political narratives, to global narratives challenging corporate governance and neoliberalism.

This conclusion is not a summary of what I have learned from these Indigenous women leaders, but a reflection of what I feel is important to do, based on what I have learned. Not only

²¹¹Paulette Regan, Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, poses a similar question of Canadian “settler” (white, non-Aboriginal) people, “What is our role and responsibility... Is it to determine that we who carry the identity of the colonizer and have reaped the benefits and privileges of colonialism must do to help ourselves recover from its detrimental legacy? How will we do so in ways that speak to truth, repair broken trust, and set us on a transformative decolonizing pathway toward more just and peaceful relations with Indigenous people?” Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 2. Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, 7, argues the decolonization process demands “profound transformations of self, community and governance structures” through resisting structures of psychic and social domination.

²¹²Taiaiake Alfred in Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, x; and Nelson, *Reckoning. The Ends of War in Guatemala*. 303.

have I built a relationship with these women, but I have built a relationship with their struggle, our struggle, and a collective journey. I believe it is important to bring more people into this journey, and that this journey begins in our hearts and heads: how do we change what we believe and feel, and what do we need to learn: how can we integrate the spirit of the Canadian Treaties and Guatemalan Peace Accords into how we live our lives? How do we challenge our own inner-narratives and re-learn what we mean by “difference,” so that to be different does not mean unequal or less valid?

The Indigenous women’s stories offer a guide for this journey. They role-model working from inside (self) to outside (state), simultaneously. They advocate on specific issues such as language rights and domestic violence laws, as well as on principles such as self-determination and environmental sustainability. And always along the way are allies, working in spaces of solidarity that in themselves reconstruct and model equality and respect in a mixed, hybrid world. This final chapter discusses these three intersecting pieces: shifting personal transformations into broader socio-political change; re-structuring formal institutions and models of governance within a neoliberal world order, and being in solidarity. This final chapter could be a thesis in and of itself, and I am aware of some of its deficiencies. But it is not intended to be a substantial reflection, which comes at an end, but a proposal for change, marking a beginning.

TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS

Leona, Saskatchewan - One of the things my daughter always asks me is why do you do the things that you do? And I say, because I want you to have a better life. And when she was about seven, she asked me, well why didn't your mom do that for you? And I said, my mom did what she could, and you will do what you can, because where we got to today, it didn't happen overnight. It didn't happen in one generation. It's going to take generations to change. I think it's going to take a while, but I don't think it's going to take that long. Because our women are changing... Women have more voice, like even down here in the south, they have women's councils that feed into the chief and council.

I think maintaining relationships on the fringes for now, and allowing them to grow on the fringes, is probably the best thing you can do right now, in Saskatchewan, is helping those, whatever relationship-building that can be done on the fringes, happen. Because there's no space in the middle right now, in the centre.

You need to go out there and work in your own communities, and teach your people what it is you know, so that when my people are ready, there'll be

people there ready to meet them, with a hand out. Because my people aren't going to put the hand out first.

Starlight, Saskatchewan - I'm telling you, young people are breaking those chains. And they're daring, maybe it's their rebellion, and they're daring to be different and look at a new world, a new structure. They came to me, how do I support Indigenous people's rights? What do I do? How do I do it? And then somebody said, well how do we get Indigenous people to come to us? They won't come. And I'm going, well, you're gonna have to be that model first. When people have been oppressed, they're not gonna just jump in. I said, if you see somebody facing racism as you're walking by—help them. As you start reaching out and making people comfortable, they will come. And they were right into it, like how do we do it, what do we do, yes this is so important.

Leona and Starlight raise key points: that this is a multi-generational struggle; that change is happening; that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people must work separately in their own communities (which may not be so much about a segregation of the communities as a reference to the dominant race/ethnicity and worldview of those communities) as well as together; and finally, that non-Indigenous people must take some initiative in building this relationship, and have ready, a hand extended in support.

This notion of readiness reverberates in spaces of the heart and head that I mention above, and the women discuss it throughout their narratives: beginning with the presence of respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, respect for women's rights, and expressed as humans to humans. For many, this begins with an understanding and acceptance of their history as individuals and as Indigenous peoples: their home community, their worldview, their experience of oppression, and how they are now reconstructing a personal and collective political identity, to resist and to resituate locations of power.

Reconciliation as resistance.²¹³ Illuminated Individualism.²¹⁴ Decolonization through self-determination and “self-reflexive collective practice.”²¹⁵ These proposals for

²¹³ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 214

²¹⁴ Wise, *Color-Blind. The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equity*, 157.

reconceptualizing and reconstructing power in relationships, communities, and states, to include women and marginalized people equally, all share a similar premise. Start with the self and move to the collective. Regan promotes a social transformation and reconciliation process similar to those created by global grassroots social movement leaders who believed in the “logic of peace – a cycle of non-violence” and became role models for “ordinary” citizens to make peaceful and significant change in the world. She states “real socio-political change will not come from hegemonic institutions and bureaucratic structures” and sees the struggle for reconciliation, in the context of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadian relations, as a “liberatory form of non-violent resistance,”²¹⁶ to the same hegemonic and bureaucratic structures. Wise’s proposal of Illuminated Individualism calls people to:

Resolve to consider race and all the impact of racial identity on the lives of others and on ourselves. We must weave into our personal thinking and our institutional settings practices, procedures and policies that account of race and its meaning, and in recognition of that meaning, resolve to do everything possible to minimize the likelihood of discriminatory treatment... If those who proclaim a commitment to racial justice and equity were to collectively move to implement color-conscious, racism-conscious policies and practices in our workplaces, schools and communities, we could begin the process of transformation, even if the state remains hostile to such efforts.²¹⁷

Central to Mohanty’s prescription for decolonization is a self-reflexive collective practice that involves transformation of the self, reconceptualizations of identity, and political mobilization.²¹⁸

Regan writes about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations from her self-identified position as a settler, non-Aboriginal, Canadian, woman as well as Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Wise is a white, American, author and educator on racism and racial politics. And Mohanty is an India-born feminist, living and

²¹⁵ Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. 8

²¹⁶ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 214-215

²¹⁷ Wise, *Color-Blind. The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equity*, 157-159

²¹⁸ Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. 8

teaching in the U.S., straddling between the One-third and Two-thirds worlds.²¹⁹ They all cross political borders, incorporating both end-sites of culturally-constructed binaries into their political identities and work. These reconstituted binaries conceptually redistribute relations of power, among race and class – with gender layered into both - binding both sides together in articulations and models of solidarity.

COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

In my previous Oxfam life, my work simultaneously revolved around three prongs: public educator, campaigner, and policy officer. We organized our work around the belief that to make social change, we need to educate people about the issues, offering structural analysis as well as the human stories that demonstrate the impact of those structures on people’s lives; we need to em-passion and empower people to mobilize and act, individually and collectively; and we need to offer political and policy alternatives in the decision-making processes and spaces. I see these same elements reflected in the personal and collective political strategies and work of the Indigenous women leaders in this thesis, a combination of education and action, “in the street” and “at the table.”

There are two parts of the education and knowledge-building process I would like to highlight: education that contributes to a better understanding or analysis of power relations and responses to it; and the internalization and activation of that understanding. The Indigenous women in this thesis discuss both types, in different contexts. The Guatemalan women discuss it in the context of conscientization of rights, and then how they, through collective political movements, inserted and advocated for those rights in non-Indigenous and patriarchal spaces. The Saskatchewan women emphasize rights embedded in historical commitments made between Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal peoples (particularly the Canadian Treaties), and that non-Aboriginal knowledge and support for the implementation of these rights – in all spaces of governance and interpersonal relations - are foundational for re-building an equitable relationship.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 227. She refers to these concepts (attributed to Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakesh) to replace First World/North and Third World/South because they emphasize social minorities and majorities, based on quality of life experienced by peoples in all hemispheres, moving away from “misleading geographical and ideological binarism.”

Joan Beatty, Saskatchewan – *I think we just have to, we have to learn how more to learn about each other. I used to do some cross-cultural education sessions. I said, I've studied about you. I've studied your history. I know how you got here, and I know what our people had to give up to make sure you got here. You have to study, you study about me now. And you learn about me, in the right way. Not just from the surface, either. I was really involved in Treaty education. That's the way I feel, and that's the way I tend to live my life.*

The outside community has to work with us as well because if we succeed, if our culture is strong, if our education is strong, they need us as contributing citizens. And to me, that's the essence of those Treaties.

That's what I think about. We as leaders today, as people today, not just leaders, but everybody, citizens today, we have to work together to make sure those Treaties are intact, and they're respected, and we treat each other right.

Tammy Cook-Searson, Saskatchewan – *I find a lot of people are not informed enough about Treaties and the historical Treaty relationship. And they think First Nations people, we get everything for free. But we don't, we pay and even then our education dollars are less, not even equal. The money we get from INAC to teach per student is less than what the province receives from the federal government to teach per student.*

There needs to be more understanding. I hear, when are you guys going to stop crying about Treaty rights? I just think they're stereotyping. And there's still a lot of racism. There's some improvement, but it's such a long history, it's so entrenched in their thinking. If you point it out they recognize it, and I do point it out sometimes, but reluctantly, I don't want to look like I'm making a big deal.

Yet Wise suggests that “making a big deal” is exactly what is needed to politicize knowledge and begin a collective transformation of power relations. He advises that just as important as “acknowledgement of languages, cultures, traditions, and racialized experiences” is the illumination of “our personal biases... to check the tendency to disadvantage and exclude.”²²⁰ He cites research – on race and gender bias – where biases, when they remain “sublimated” continue to influence behaviour and perceptions (this is the obvious part). When individuals are

²²⁰ Wise, *Color-Blind. The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equity*, 21.

challenged explicitly to think about them when making decisions (and they have sufficient knowledge to do so), they could “neutralize” those biases.²²¹ Wise goes on to suggest:

When whites are confronted with comprehensive information about ongoing racial disparities, the structural reasons for those disparities and a critique of the common belief in meritocracy, they are often willing to support progressive social policy aimed at producing racial equity. On the other hand, simply discussing racial disparities without the structural analysis and explanation for those disparities, or without a critique of the deeply internalized faith in America as a meritocracy, often backfires and causes greater opposition to such efforts.²²²

This resonates with Regan’s advocacy for public education strategies that “empower the public to act,” and she suggests that to enable crossing over the border from education to empowerment is hope, crossing from head to heart. Quoting Henry Giroux, she advocates that “hope is the transformative force that connects education to struggle in ways that are constructively subversive: “Hope makes the leap for us between *critical education*, which tells us what must be changed; *political agency*, which gives us the means to make change; and the *concrete struggles* through which change happens.”²²³ I find this has echoes of liberation theology and the conscientization that many of Guatemalan women underwent as part of resistance movements during the civil war.

Hope is perhaps an unexpected concept to be discussing. But when we reflect on the many struggles undertaken throughout the centuries by people experiencing the most horrific injustices, including the Indigenous women in this thesis, hope is absolutely integral.²²⁴ Education and hope. They enable us to understand and believe - in a powerful, emotional way - that change is necessary and is possible.

Lois Isnana, Saskatchewan - I do get hopeful, sitting on the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, their board. And seeing what is

²²¹ Ibid, 160.

²²² Ibid, 167.

²²³ Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, 216.

²²⁴ LaRocque refers to the Saskatchewan Metis author/poet, Maria Campbell’s, book *Halfbreed*, where she states, “it was not simply poverty that drove people to shame and despair, it was lack of hope, which comes from oppressive dispossession.” LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 103.

happening at a national level gives me hope. And then hearing, you know, about Guatemala, as you shared, that gives me hope. I go back home and I always think about these things: Okay, well, if all these people are doing things, then I can get up and get out there and do some things, and I can do something more tomorrow.

Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala - *What gives me great joy is that increasingly more and more women are becoming aware of their rights and becoming active both nationally and even internationally in terms of denouncing the situation and seeking justice and finding dignity for the memory of all the women who fell before us and who died and whose memories and whose footsteps we must continue to follow in our work.*

I believe that collective experiences, in particular, social movements, are significant sites for offering both politicized education and being able to sustain hope. Based on my involvement with community organizing and global social movements, when people come together, learn together, believe together, and act together, they feed off each other's energy and escalate the sense of possibility. One of the gaps in this thesis is the lack of substantive discussion on the role of social movements and civil society in influencing the intertwined relationship of public support and political will. Collective action and involvement play a key role in the political lives of the Indigenous women in this thesis, and I feel an exploration of the diversity of civil society engagement, at local and global levels, would have greatly contributed to this final chapter of working in solidarity.²²⁵

Unfortunately, I will only mention briefly the layered engagement of the women in this thesis at the local and global levels, and introduce the concept of "glocalization." People:

[I]ncreasingly inhabit a cultural space that is simultaneously local, national, regional, and global... continuing to have a local life, but make sense, interpret their world with influences from the globe...

²²⁵ For discussions on local and global civil society within a neoliberal global governance model, I recommend: Amooore, *The Global Resistance Reader*; Capeheart and Milovanovic, *Social Justice. Theories, Issues, and Movements*; Hytrek and Zentgraf, *America Transformed. Globalization, Inequality, and Power*; Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*.

Global processes take place within culturally-local contexts. Culture then has to be seen as a complex, overlapping disjunctive order that cannot be understood in terms of simple dichotomies such as local and global, similarity and dissimilarity, or heterogeneity and homogeneity.²²⁶

And in local spaces that are politically constrained, many strategies include extending the struggle into the global space – relying on international rights frameworks and broader (and perhaps better financed) solidarity movements - to apply pressure on the local space. I mention this concept to emphasize both the existence and significant potential of overlapping geographical and virtual political spaces. These are spaces that are being occupied by Indigenous women (and non-Indigenous allies) in pursuing responses to localized narratives of racialized and gendered violence and oppression, particularly as local and national political spaces are increasingly overpowered by the global forces of neoliberalism.

INFLUENCING THE STATE IN A NEOLIBERAL WORLD ORDER:

Lidia Laines, Guatemala - I'm very satisfied in that I was able to participate in putting together the national policy for women's holistic development. And in particular, a plan of equity between men and women. And this is a new experience for me, and it's very interesting for me and for other women, because we have two things that are included, a gender focus and cultural identity focus. Which includes respect for Indigenous peoples. They built it into issues of health, education, and political participation. And the policy includes that we need to work on racism and violence. So it's a very important experience for me, in how they put together this policy, and I realize that you know, one never stops learning.

And I've also been working, as part of my job, working with the Ministry of Health, which has also changed in the last period of years. And there's more space for Indigenous women. I'm getting to learn more about our life, for instance the [ILO] Convention 169 that has the Indigenous people's rights. And more and more we are recognizing that they are rights, and no longer as easy for people to just tell us to shut up, to be quiet. So it's really, really helping to be working from within the state on these two elements, gender and cultural identity. And they are finally no longer seen as the whim of certain people but now seen as the duty of the government.

²²⁶Hytrek and Zentgraf, *America Transformed. Globalization, Inequality, and Power*, 68,70.

The Indigenous women are all rooted in community-based and/or civil society organizations that work outside of the state, and most also believe in the importance of working *with*, or *in*, the state, and keeping the locations connected to ensure accountability and democratic participation. But this strategy becomes more complex as the autonomy and authority of the state weakens, due to “increasingly brutal” global economic and political processes that “exacerbate economic, racial, and gender inequalities”²²⁷ and consequently shrink the space for both national political change and the ability for economically marginalized (often determined by race and gender) people to determine their own day-to-day choices.²²⁸

To work on justice requires working at multiple levels in shifting and overlapping spaces. Nancy Fraser’s *Integrated Theory of Justice*²²⁹ conceptualizes these interconnected, multi-dimensions in a way that is extremely relevant to the Indigenous women’s political work. She begins with the assertion that injustice is rooted in the inequalities of the economic order causing economic (mal)distribution and in its related status order causing cultural (mis)recognition. Her third dimension is political (mis)representation: who is a member/citizen/subject that deserves just economic distribution, cultural recognition or political representation? The accountability and legitimacy boundaries are blurred by globalization and actors at local, national, regional and transnational levels, but also because the impacts of (mal)distribution, (mis)recognition and (mis)representation are intertwined with, and encompass each other. I would argue that any social or political transformation must address all three, which seems like an overwhelming damper on building a sense of hope. But I would also argue that this does not mean all Indigenous people and allies work on all levels. Some do use a “glocal” holistic strategy, as evidenced by some of the Indigenous women in this thesis, but I believe it is where they insert themselves into the diversity of local and global spaces that creates a critical opportunity: at the intersection of self-determination and hybrid spaces.

The Indigenous women bring to this discourse – at any level – their priority on Indigenous, and women’s rights. When working in the climate justice movement, on local homelessness issues, or national health policy, they demand an acknowledgement and inclusion

²²⁷ Mohanty, *Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, 230.

²²⁸ Brodie, “Globalization, Governance and Gender,” 254; Mohanty, *Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. 229.

²²⁹ Lovell, in *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: Nancy Fraser and Pierre Bourdieu*, Chapter 5.

of Indigenous peoples and women's rights and that Indigenous peoples and women be full and active participants in determining the direction and outcome of the work. To me, this is self-determination in hybrid spaces, and this strategy is not only relevant, but it also opens up space for non-Indigenous peoples to work with them at many levels.

What this means at the state level is a transformation of structure, process, and citizens, an acceptance and inclusion of peoples who challenge the historical, homogenous notion of a modern citizen, and instead assert difference and distinctiveness as their citizen rights. This goes beyond multiculturalism and cultural rights to acknowledge the interface with economic and political rights. If capitalist ideologies and structures of the state are not also challenged, there is a risk of multiculturalism becoming a more subtle form of assimilation, "offering enticements to the racially marginalized and placing sharp limits on the terms of inclusion, limits held in place by the threat of coercion,"²³⁰ both physical (as it was - and is - in Guatemala) as well as economic, through marginalization in the capitalist market place. I will make the links - between economic (mal)distribution), (mis)recognition, and (mis)representation - more explicit with this statement by Chandra Talpade Mohanty:

Global capital in racialized and sexualized guise destroys the public spaces of democracy, and quietly sucks power out of the once social/public spaces of nation-states. Corporate capitalism has redefined citizens as consumers – and global markets replace the commitments to economic, sexual and racial equality....²³¹

Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty have the potential to transform the links binding economic (mal)distribution), cultural (mis)recognition, and political (mis)representation together: to undo the chains of injustices that are experienced and embedded in being "Indigenous" "women" citizens, and turn them into tools of justice. This would produce a tremendous shift of power, and is therefore threatening. In Guatemala, Nelson notes that demands for self-determination remain highly contested struggles between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples at the state and international level, bound up in definitions of who are "Indigenous" and therefore acknowledgement of and the extent of their accompanying rights.²³²

²³⁰ Hale, *Mas Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*, 49.

²³¹ Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. 235.

²³² Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 295.

In the Canadian context, Warry refers to a “huge and objective body of social science literature that demonstrates that the solution to Aboriginal poverty, ill health, and marginalization – all the legacy of colonialism – lies in Aboriginal self-determination.”²³³ Wise argues that race-specific or gender-specific policies must be implemented to equalize the inequalities.²³⁴ I would add that the race and gender-specific policies must also be determined and in many cases implemented, autonomously, by the peoples most affected by them. Warry reiterates the need for Aboriginal autonomous social and political institutions as separate and part of the broader mainstream Canadian institutions, acknowledging that this will not only “change contemporary notions of Canadian citizenship,”²³⁵ but be a significant movement in the direction of decolonization.²³⁶

Principles of Indigenous self-determination have the potential to challenge the current form of economic development and investment that the Canadian and Guatemalan economy promotes: a rampant neoliberalism that widens the gap of economic, social and political power between peoples and genders, most notably affecting marginalized peoples and communities. Real priorities on traditional Indigenous values can play a critical role in the negotiations occurring with transnational corporations on large-scale economic development in rural Indigenous communities. A commitment to resource revenue sharing is another critical piece to be addressed. As LaRocque notes, “Native peoples continue to lose massive amounts of ecological space and resources to megaprojects to extract hydroelectricity, lumber, gas and oil, and uranium and other minerals... what is left of Native lands is being threatened with sound and chemical pollution, foreign businesses, deforestation and destruction of animals.”²³⁷ In Guatemala, the Chixoy dam is considered a sound investment, now generating 60 percent of the country’s electricity. But, as Nelson suggests, “it’s other face is the massacre in 1982 of 450 people who refused to leave their ancestral village of Rio Negro... this imposed ‘development’ project was a horrendous, global crime.”²³⁸

Neoliberal impulses permeate deeply into many local and national realities, but they are not the only influences, nor the only sites for resistance. Nelson is correct to caution against

²³³ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 30.

²³⁴ Wise, *Color-Blind. The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equity*. 17.

²³⁵ Warry, *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*, 108.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 188.

²³⁷ LaRocque, *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*, 76.

²³⁸ Nelson, *Reckoning. The Ends of War in Guatemala*, 309.

“both overvaluing the power invested in the global system and of evacuating the nation-state of its power to create effects” and instead suggests we conceptualize the state as a “productive site, a terrain of struggle and compromise.”²³⁹

This is important. While the nation-states of Guatemala and Canada are sites of colonization, assimilation, and worse, they still carry considerable potential, and responsibility, in positively affecting the lives of Indigenous peoples and women. They are partners in the Canadian Treaties and the Guatemalan Peace Accords, commitments that the Indigenous women in this thesis emphasize as starting points for political action and social change. In calling for the implementation of these agreements, expressed through models of self-determination and sovereignty, Indigenous peoples are demanding a “radical reconstruction”²⁴⁰ of the state, one that equally endows Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples with respect and rights. This is not a new demand. But its implementation has been stifled and oppressed in the pursuit of an homogenous and unified modern nation-state and national identity.

This is an unjust model of governance and a false national identity, based on the denial or erasure of an Indigenous counter-narrative. Equality and justice for Indigenous peoples and women requires a nation state that is heterogeneous, plural, and democratic. It must be committed to reconcile and rebuild its relationship with Indigenous peoples through the implementation of citizenship with distinct rights and privileges that include self-determination and sovereignty in the areas most critical to their identity and social, economic, environmental health. This model of governance, with its “project of citizenship,” is a struggle that implicates Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and requires us all to believe and work in solidarity.

“POR MI, POR NOSOTROS Y POR LOS OTROS.” FOR ME, FOR US AND FOR THE OTHERS.²⁴¹

Lorena Cabnal, Guatemala – I think that this work is like a weaving. Each woman brings a thread to a weaving and we bring it with intentionality

²³⁹ Nelson, *A Finger in The Wound. Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*, 309.

²⁴⁰ Mallon, “Pathways to postcolonial nationhood: The Democratization of Difference in Contemporary Latin America,” 286.

²⁴¹ One of the slogans of Sector de Mujeres in Guatemala.

because that's very important. Our intentionality makes us strong as women. And so I have no problem with different friends coming from different parts of the world, from Italy, from Africa, from whichever place, because I recognize that we are all joined by being women and what we do is legitimate. Sometimes it seems as though they have a different opinion or they don't think the same way that we wish they would, but really I think it's not so much that, it's more that each woman has her own rhythm and space and story and time. And each woman participates in this difference we make. I like difference more than diversity. What we make together is a weaving of a thousand colours, or a thousand symbols. And that's what allows us to transform the current world and build a dignified life.

These are the circles of the narratives. The lives of ten Indigenous women political leaders binding together stories of violence and healing, identity and citizenship, power and solidarity. These are many narratives, distinct yet connected, demonstrating courage, vision, and a deep hope in equality and respect among peoples. These Indigenous women are reclaiming what it means to be an Indigenous woman, and in their journeys, reconstructing spaces of governance and solidarity to be diverse and democratic. Their stories are difficult, and for that they inspire people to join them in struggling not only for the rights of Indigenous people and women, but for a world of justice, between all peoples and between humanity and the earth. This is an endless project and it demands us all to be actors.

Ana López, Guatemala - I dream of many things in this life, I need to make more connections internationally and nationally. Together united we can share so much and break the silence. It doesn't matter where I am, I will carry my conscience in my blood and in my mind.

EPILOGUE

*She woke up on the slope of a hill looking down towards a stand of trees. The hill was dry and sandy with wild grasses and rocks bound up together. It was late afternoon, the sun was low and warm. When she looked to the west, she realized she was actually sitting in the northeast corner of a large circle of stones that had one edge close to the top of the hill and the other at the bottom near the trees. She realized she was not supposed to leave the circle until she understood it.*²⁴²

*She was standing with a group of people near a large dense forest, darkened into silhouette by the dusk light. Suddenly, out of the forest emerged a jaguar. People ran screaming in all directions but she stood still, waiting, with fear but not terror. The jaguar came up to her, jumped onto its hind legs to put its front paws on her shoulders and then leaned down and bit the inside of both forearms, just above her wrists. She winced with pain, but knew she had to endure it. The jaguar turned and disappeared. She looked down at her wrists and was shocked to see the skin had not been broken, rather the teeth-marks had left indentations in the shape of full moons. She had been marked by the jaguar.*²⁴³

These are my dreams. The first came to me about 10 years before I began my Masters, the second was the week after I had completed all my interviews with the Indigenous women in this thesis.

I have not left the circle.

I have been marked more than I yet can understand.

²⁴² The Medicine Wheel, a symbol in North American Indigenous spirituality (particularly in the Canadian Prairies and Northwestern U.S.A.) to represent “harmony and connections and is considered a major symbol of peaceful interaction among all living beings on Earth. Of the many theories to their purpose, the two learning theories are: the wheels contain significant stellar and cosmological alignments, and/or, the performance of specific rituals and ceremonies that have been long forgotten.” (<http://www.medicinewheel.com/>)

²⁴³ The limited research I did on jaguars in Indigenous mythology offer a few meanings which resonate with this thesis and my dream: a symbol of power, strength, and leadership (traditionally in the form of warriors and rulers); the Maya also believed the jaguar to have the ability to cross between worlds, the living and the earth are associated with the day, and the spirit world and the ancestors are associated with the night. The jaguar is believed to part of the underworld, facilitating communication between the living and the dead. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaguars_in_Mesoamerican_cultures; http://www.montanadreams.net/symbology/animals/anim_1.html)

APPENDIX 1- METHODOLOGY

SASKATCHEWAN ABORIGINAL WOMEN:

Family and friend connections were critical in connecting me with the Saskatchewan Aboriginal women I interviewed. Starlight was recommended by a community activist and Native Studies professor for her local and global work on Indigenous peoples' environmental rights. She was my very first interview and I met her first over a two-hour coffee in a Regina restaurant and then four months later at a meeting room at the University of Regina.

Lois Isnana was recommended by a social worker in her community for her advocacy for victims' families after her husband died from a violent injury in their home community. (A man in the community was charged with murder for his death, but after several years and many court appearances, the charge was stayed due to the change in a witness' statement. Lois continues to refer to her husband as being murdered by this man throughout her interview.) We also met twice, I interviewed both Starlight and Lois in the December before I went to Guatemala, I wanted to do a couple of interviews to see what kinds of issues might come up, or what to pay attention to, so that my Guatemala interviews would have some context. I hadn't developed my full interview questions yet, so when I returned from Guatemala, I did follow-up interviews with Starlight and Lois to make sure I asked the same questions to everyone. I interviewed Lois both times, 3 hours each, at the Bistro restaurant in Fort Qu'Appelle.

Leona was suggested by a community activist and city councilor for her anti-racism and environmental work. We also met in a restaurant in Regina, and over dinner, which lasted the first part of the 4.5 hours, did the interview.

I had heard about Joan Beatty, the first Aboriginal woman elected to the Saskatchewan Legislature in 2003. She also served as a Cabinet Minister in the posts of Minister of Culture Youth and Recreation and later as Opposition Critic for Women's Issues and Northern Affairs. After confirming with one of my committee members, Joan's sister, Bonita, that it would not be conflict of interest, I called a J Beatty listed in the phone directory for what I thought was a community in Northern Saskatchewan close to where I thought Joan was living. It turned out to be her mother, who only spoke Cree (which I do not), except for phone numbers in English,

which she gave me and lead to Joan. I interviewed Joan in Saskatoon at my old Oxfam office when she came into the city to visit family.

My fifth participant was my only pre-interview and my last interview, and someone I had also been following in the media. Chief Tammy Cook-Searson is the third-term elected leader of the largest First Nations band in Saskatchewan, Lac La Ronge band. Before deciding I was actually going to do this research, I was discussing with a family member whether this could be useful for anyone, and he said he knew Chief Tammy, who was in the city, and maybe she'd have time to meet me. The next morning for breakfast I was sitting across the table from her asking her what her experience was like as a Chief, and it convinced me to continue. The next time I met her we were in the Lac La Ronge campground, sitting in the sun on a picnic table, with my tape recorder plugged into the electrified post, for three hours. I have also contacted her three times for short follow-up interviews on specific issues.

These five women were the first five I asked to participate and after they agreed, I did not ask any other women. Starlight, Leona and Lois Isnana were interested in reviewing the transcript of their interviews, so I sent those to them and had some back and forth, mostly with Starlight, about how to present her narrative without identifying details.

GUATEMALAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN:

I went to Guatemala for the first two weeks in January 2011 to practice my Spanish at a Spanish immersion school, Centro Linguistico Maya, in Antigua, where I had studied for a month ten years earlier. I would categorize my Spanish as “almost functioning.” I can carry on a fairly decent conversation, usually understanding the main points being made, but definitely not the nuances, jargon, or sometimes even exact verb tenses. For that reason, I arranged to have a translator accompany me in my interviews and do simultaneous translations, which I would also capture on my tape recorder. When I later transcribed my interviews, I transcribed the English translation only and had another friend who speaks fluent Spanish listen to the tapes and transcribe the Spanish, as well as check and revise the interpreted version to ensure the English translation was accurate, which it was. I then sent the Spanish versions to Ana López and Lorena Cabnal, who were interested in reviewing their interviews.

During these two weeks, as mentioned in Chapter one, I met with Sandra Moran for the first time in four years at her office at Casa Artesana in Guatemala City. We chatted and then discussed what I was hoping to do with my thesis. I had asked earlier by email if she would have

suggestions of women I could interview, and at this meeting, she went through her cell phone and gave me the names and personal phone numbers of 10 women she considered important Indigenous women leaders with a diversity of stories to tell, saying I could use her name when I introduced myself. Because my Spanish was not very good and I hadn't met my translator yet, I waited until I returned to Saskatchewan for the last two weeks of January to contact them. I had a friend who works as a Spanish interpreter call the phone numbers and the six women we managed to connect with all expressed interest and asked for further information by email. I communicated via email with them, and all but the sixth, Rigoberta Menchu, committed to an interview. Rigoberta's assistant initially thought it would be possible, but when I arrived in Guatemala, the federal election was gearing up and her assistant said Rigoberta was too busy preparing her party to run in the elections, and herself to run for President.

Over the next two months, I interviewed these five Indigenous women in Guatemala City, except for Ana López, my first interview. Although she was eight months pregnant, she preferred to take the public bus to Antigua for what would be a 6-hour return trip (normally one hour by car if it is not during rush hour, and I had offered to pay for her to come by taxi), with her two teen-aged daughters and my translator, Alexandra Durbin (an American woman working with many Guatemalan Indigenous and women solidarity groups) . I had rented a house to accommodate my family (husband, two children, and depending on which week, my parents, parents-in-law, brother) and friends who all came to visit while we were there. We had planned to have lunch together first and then we would do the interview while her daughters explored Antigua. But when Ana arrived, she wanted only a glass of water and then to start the interview immediately because she had been thinking of what she wanted to say all night. We talked for four hours, snacking on bananas and cookies, while her daughters walked around the city, came back, napped on the terrace and played with my children.

My second interview was with Bernaldina (Dina) Yuman at Iglesia Hermana, a U.S. church-based solidarity organization in zone 2. She came in by bus from Palim and after 3 hours of our interview, had to go to work. I assured her we had covered almost all of my questions, but she was insistent that there was more she wanted to say. So we organized a second interview a few weeks later, same place, also for three hours.

Lorena Cabnal was my third interview in her mother's home in zone 7. Her mother looked after Lorena's daughter while we chatted, although she came to visit us off and on

throughout the three hours, to eat mangoes, cake, and to press buttons on my tape recorder. Very early into the interview, Lorena started lighting candles and incense, and rubbing herbs into a saucer in front of me. Later on, she told me it was because she could feel a certain energy coming off of me, perhaps my blood pressure was too low or I might be getting sick, and she was trying to counteract the energy. She said her mother was a healer and consulted with her about what herbs I should be using, and her mother even offered to go into the market to buy a very specific type of herb to help me, but our schedules to coordinate reconnecting wouldn't work. Instead, they sent me home with a bag of three different herbs, for congestion, digestion and low blood pressure, which I faithfully boiled and drank as tea the remainder of my trip in my constant struggle against the pollution in Guatemala City.

Rosalina Tuyuc was my fourth interview, in the CONAVIGUA offices in zone 1. It was the most formal of the interviews and she was extremely busy, arriving late from one meeting and giving her interview to me while a foreign journalist was waiting in the hall to also interview her. We spoke for less than one hour.

Lidia Laines was my final interview. We also met at Iglesia Hermana and talked for two hours between her getting off of work early and having to rush home to her child.

INTERVIEW PROCESS:

I usually began the interviews with an introduction of myself and the research, describing the three main areas I was interested in: their childhood – their role models, family experiences and involvement with politics; their identity - what role ethnicity and gender play, what does it mean to be an Indigenous woman in her community; and their political work now – their vision, goals, experiences. In preparation for the interviews I developed a very long list of questions, just to help me formulate how to get to the kinds of stories I was interested in. I never actually used all of the questions as I tried to let the women direct where the interview would go, within the broad framework I had introduced, and I followed up with questions based on what they had already said rather than what was next on the list.

After I gave the broad introduction, I would say, “Where were you born?” and they would begin to talk, starting wherever they felt their story began and moving where they wanted to go. I would often listen for up to 15 minutes without saying a word.

The exception was my interview with Lorena. I had arrived an hour early because her mother's home was in a more dangerous party of the city and my driver was unsure about what

route he was going to take and how much traffic we would come across. Rather than having me wait in the car after checking to make sure we had the correct address, Lorena invited me in and I sat with her and her daughter in the kitchen, drinking coffee and fresh papaya juice, waiting for my translator to arrive. Lorena immediately began to talk about feminism and Xinka beliefs, and it was only after we were over an hour into the interview with the translator that I introduced my broad research interests and began to ask questions in those areas.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Childhood:

Where were you born, raised, year?

What was the community like? How long did you live there? Why did you leave?

Tell me about your family? Parents, children? Involvement in politics or community activities?

What did they think of politics? Or women in politics?

Who did you consider role models or leaders when you were young?

What do you consider a leader?

What is your relationship with your home community?

Identity:

How do you describe your identity?

What role does ethnicity or gender play in your identity? What does it mean to you to be Indigenous?

How do you express your Indigeneity? How does it affect the way you see the world?

Does it influence your approach to politics? Strategies? Vision?

Is your ethnic identity different than your political identity?

What is the role of an Indigenous women leader in her community? How is this expressed? Has this changed?

What Indigenous groups are you a member of? A women's organization? Both? Feminist? Why?

What are the challenges, benefits of being in these organizations?

When did you become politically active? Was there a trigger? What issue? Experience?

How did you become active? Through an organization? What was your experience in this?

What was the space or context like for organizing then? As a woman? As an Indigenous woman?

What has impacted this space? How?

Is it, and how, important for Indigenous women to have their own political organizing space? Where is this space?

Political experiences:

Education background? Political training? Where, was it useful?

Do you see a specific role for Indigenous women in the life and politics of Guatemala/Saskatchewan?

What is your political vision?

What is your work now?

Where are there opportunities to make change?

What are the greatest obstacles?

Are you engaged in, or feel there are opportunities to work and have an impact at local, national, international levels?

APPENDIX 2 – LORENA CABNAL DISCUSSES XINKA

COSMOVISION

We began to revive and rebuild our cosmovision, our worldview, our cosmic view. We as Xinkas have been taking ancestral elements of our universe but also incorporating concepts based on our ability as women as we revive elements of our identity. And so we see not only the world but the entire cosmos, the galaxies as a circle of energy that is always in motion. And we identify four different types of energy. One is green, which represents a large volcano for the Xinka people, called Tecuan, which also represents all of nature from the largest trees that exist to the smallest trees and it represents the mental piece of the body, the mental dimension.

Then in terms of red, this is the colour that has accompanied us since ancestral times, and our grandmothers have passed on a lot of knowledge to us, and wisdom, and it represents the blood of women and men as well as animals. Red also represents body and it represents the four cosmic equilibriums and the balance between nature and body, between mind and body, between the responsibility that women and men have for harmony with nature and respect and responsibility towards nature.

This concept helped us in recovering and defending our territory and land, particular referring to the green. Why do Indigenous people focus on land in this way? We don't see it as a property. Or we don't have the same terms that are used by the model of economic development that sees people as owners who have power over the land as a property. Rather we see the land as something that is in harmony with life and is used for collective benefit. And that means you take care of the land, the land is the space that allows us to be in the world with dignity. So for instance, we don't say something like I walk on top of the land. Because that defines power. We say walk with the land because that's the type of relationship I relate to water.

Another energy is the yellow energy which has to do with the initial planting of crops and also with social energy.

There's also the dimension of black energy which has everything to do with ancestors, with night time, with understanding and wisdom. It also represents the spiritual dimension and when we talk about spirituality we understand it to also encompass spirituality that Indigenous women have access to because there is a tendency of most spiritual guides being men and so we wondered when we wanted to approach spirituality why it would have to be intermediated by

men. And we said why don't we make our own spirituality, we have freedom to do that, we have freedom of thought, freedom of body.

So we recognize that there's been a historic oppression against nature and against our bodies because we haven't been able to exert freedom in our bodies and the decisions that we make about our bodies or that are taken about our bodies. We haven't had access to spirituality and as women we haven't had much participation in government or in Indigenous government and so now that's why we say this whole system is in imbalance. It's a cosmic imbalance between women and men, and also between human beings and nature. And that's true not just of the mountains [of Jalapa] but of the entire world.

APPENDIX 3 – ANA LÓPEZ DISCUSSES MAYA CULTURE AND ETHNICITY:

A number of our customs had changed during the armed conflict and our spirituality had as well. Our spirituality during the armed conflict was primarily Catholic because of the few priests who had accompanied us during that time. And so this is really a different culture for us. Between the time of, prior to and after, the armed conflict. In the OMR we talked about this, and how our religion had been, and our beliefs. And some of the things we identified as our cultural elements that were still maintained even during and in spite of the armed conflict were our community, our communal ways and our respect. Those are things that did not get lost during the armed conflict. But there were many gaps. A lot of people lost language, there was a big language loss during the armed conflict because people from different language groups were coming together and so the easiest and quickest way to communicate was in Spanish, and it was also, honestly, a way to defend our own lives. Because if the army was coming we had to shout in Spanish, the army's coming. Because in the time it would have taken us to translate to Quiche or Mam, the army would have grabbed us and killed us.

When I talk about ethnic identity, I'm really focusing on, marking it out as cultural values of Maya people. And the cultural ethnic identity can be broken up into 2 broad areas or aspects. One is material and the other is spiritual.

In terms of material aspects, the first element of that is our way of having land ownership. The land issue is a really tough issue in terms of social problems in Guatemala. In our culture, the lands are ours to be used to benefit the community and the families. The lands are cultivated but we are never concerned with having legal title to the land.

It was out of our control, or it wasn't by our own will it was sometimes even without our own realizing that the history of over more than 500 years, in the beginning the Spanish came and started creating legal titles for our land. They made these papers and they included us along with the land. And they expropriated and stole our land.

In terms of agriculture, which is also part of our cultural identity, we use the solar system in terms of our agriculture. We used the solar calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar. We look at the movement of the sun and the moon in terms of knowing when to plant and when to

harvest our crops. In terms of the economy, we consider the economy to be everything at the community level, such as our crops, our agriculture, the raising of the animals. But now a lot of this has been mixed up with things that contaminate society and things like chemical fertilizers that damage the earth. Or certain concentrates given to animals so that the meat that we eat is no longer natural in the same way that if we just eat a chicken that was grown in someone's yard in a rural area. So we're talking about the material elements of our culture, things we can touch, and also things like trees and hills.

In terms of spiritual elements we can include the ways that we eat, the ways that we prepare the foods, the clothes that we wear, our languages, for instance I speak Mam Mayan. And our religion, the way we practice our spirituality, and the way that we do that is we look for space outside of the community, in the hills or underneath a meaningful tree, at water sources, at the river, by a large stone. But now people practice spirituality also at the archeological centers. And so these are our points of references for our spirituality. We believe that when we are connected to supreme sites we leave our problems and our concerns and our negative energies there. Whereas for catholic people they would go to a catholic church and the evangelicals would go to an evangelical church.

Another element is the way in which Mayan peoples are organized. We have councils of elders, we have a whole series of structures for resolving problems and for administering justice as a community level. For example, if there was a problem of domestic violence, first the two sets of parents would get together, of the couple, would get together and intervene and if the problem wasn't solved at that point, it would be brought to the elders council. If it still wasn't solved then it would be brought to the community authorities. There's lots of ways for organizing. And another element is about participation at a community level.

In terms of your question, the internal armed conflict affected and in some cases wiped out these cultural elements. For instance in terms of material elements, the population was forced to leave their land and was displaced from their land, and their spirituality was not allowed at all, nor was land ownership. We really believe in water sources as important and we believe in our homes as an important part of our culture, and the army came in and burnt our homes. So that was a really strong message that the army was trying to kill off, to exterminate everything. We weren't able to practice our religion because it was prohibited. And this wasn't just during of the armed conflict, but really over the 500 years that we've been told our religion

is witchcraft, that it is evil or that it's backward. And same thing with our food. We've been told that our food is not up to date, that it's out of date and backward.

Other values were also affected, for instance the army would take a machete and cut down our cornfields. And corn is very sacred for us because it gives us life. If there is corn on the ground, we can't step over it, we can't sit on top of corn because corn gives us strength, it gives us life. And the army took a machete to the cornfields, cut them down in the Ixcan and all over the country wherever there were communities of population in resistance. Also we keep our corn, we store it in little buildings called trojas and the army would come and burn these down. And what they wanted was for us to die of hunger. Also in terms of our economy, the army killed off our animals – the cattle, the chickens that we had in our home, the idea was to exterminate everything.

Values that continue to be practiced that we were able to rescue in the Communities of Population in Resistance in the Ixcan, were the community forms of organization and our justice system, our administration of justice because we didn't have contact with outsiders, so there were no lawyers or judges or courts, so we resolved our problems at a community level.

Part of your second question you asked about tensions, that arise from identity and for me, as Ana, these are the tensions that I have mentioned, the tensions that occur because of the internal armed conflict and the way that it affected our values, as women, and as Maya people. The army came in and didn't give a thought to the fact that for us everything was sacred and had meaning. And one of the really sad things was that most of the military were forced to join the military. Many of the people who burned down our corn, who burned our homes, who killed our animals, who massacred and killed people, some of those people were children or siblings of Mayas themselves. But because they found themselves in a place between life and death because of decisions made by the top leaders of the country, they were part of the military.

REFERENCES

- Adams, Richard N. "Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944," in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. Edited by Carol A. Smith. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992
- Anuik, Jonathon. Email correspondence with author. Nov. 30, 2011
- Arias, Arturo. "Shifts in Indian Identity: Guatemala's Violent Transition to Modernity," *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988*. Edited by Carol A. Smith. 230-257. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992
- Baines, Erin K., "Refuge and Return: The Challenges of Transition for Guatemalan Women's Organizations." *Canadian Women's Studies*. Vol 19. No. 4, 2000
- Barker, Joanne. "Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women's Activism." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. Volume 7, Number 1, 2006, 127-161.
- Barker, Joanne. "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women's Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada." *American Quarterly*. Volume 60, Number 2, June 2008, 259-266
- Beatty, Bonita. Pimacesowin (To Make Your Own Way): First Nation Governance through An Autonomous Non-Government Organization. Edmonton: University of Alberta, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Spring 2006
- Beatty, Bonita. "Saskatchewan First Nations Politics: Organization, Institutions and Governance." *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre*. Edited by Howard Leeson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2008. 199 – 217
- Beck, David. "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Self-Determination in an Urban Indian Community." *Wicazo Sa Review*, Volume 17, Number 2, Fall 2002, 117-141
- Behiels, Michael D. "Native Feminism versus Aboriginal Nationalism. The Native Women's Association of Canada's Quest for Gender Equality, 1983-199." in *Nation, Ideas, Identities. Essays in Honour of Ramsay Cook*. edited by Michael D. Behiels and Marcel Martel. Don Mills ON: Oxford University Press, 2000
- Brodie, Janine. "Globalization, Governance and Gender" in *The Global Resistance Reader*. edited by Louise Amoore, New York: Routledge, 2005, 244-256
- Capeheart, Loretta and Milovanovic, Dragan eds. *Social Justice. Theories, Issues, and Movements*. NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007

Cardinal H., and W. Hildebrandt. *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations*. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press. 2000

Carmack, Robert M. "State and Community in Nineteenth Century Guatemala: The Momstenango Case," in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. edited by Carol A. Smith. 116-136. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992

Cecil, Leslie and Pugh, Timothy W. Eds. *Maya Worldviews at Conquest*. Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2009

Chiste, Katherine Beaty. "Aboriginal Women and Self-Government: Challenging Leviathan." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. Vol 18:3, 1994, 19-43

Cottrell, Michael. "History of Saskatchewan" in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/history_of_saskatchewan.html

Delpino, Nena, "Rosalina Tuyuc." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 10714839, Jul/Aug 97, Vol. 31, Issue 1

Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. "Claiming the "F" Word: Native Women, Feminisms, and Visions of Sovereignty." Presentation made March 3, 2010 and posted on blog of First Peoples : New Directions in Indigenous Studies website (Joint Collaboration of Four University Presses: University of Arizona Press University of Minnesota Press University of North Carolina Press Oregon State University Press) <http://firstpeoplesnewdirections.org/blog/?tag=indigenous-feminism>

Doyle, Kate. "Notes from the Evidence Project: Guatemalan Government to Dismantle its "Archives of Peace." The Archive. June 1, 2012. <http://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2012/06/01/guatemalan-government-closes-peace-archives/>

Early, John D. *The Maya and Catholicism. An Encounter of Worldviews*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006

Ferree, Myra Marx. "Inequality, Intersectionality and the Politics of Discourse: Framing Feminist Alliances" in *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policy-Making*. edited by Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, Mieke Verloo. New York: Routledge, December 2008

Fischer, Edward F. *Cultural Logics and Global Economics. Maya Identity in Thought and Practice*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001

Fiske, Jo-Anne. "The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body: Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement." *Studies in Political Economics*. 51, Fall 1996. 65-95

Forster, Cindy. *The Time of Freedom. Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001

French, Brigettine M. *Maya Ethnolinguistic Identity. Violence, Cultural Rights, and Modernity in Highland Guatemala*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010

Gabbert, Wolfgang. *Becoming Maya. Ethnicity and Social Inequality in Yucatan since 1500*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004

Garro, Linda C. "Cultural Meaning, Explanation of Illness, and the Development of Comparative Frameworks." In *Health and Healing in Comparative Perspective*. Edited by Whitaker, Elizabeth D. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc. 2006

Garro, Linda C. and Mattingly, Cheryl. "Narrative as Construct and Construction" in *Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing*. edited by Cheryl Mattingly and Linda C. Garro. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000

Giroux, Henry. "Postmodernism as Border Pedagogy: Redefining the Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity." In *A Postmodern Reader*. edited by Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon. Albany NY: State University of New York, 1993

Gleijeses, Piero. *Shattered Hope. The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991

Grandin, Greg. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004

Green, Joyce, Editor. *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2007

Green Joyce, "Canaries in the Mines of Citizenship: Indian Women in Canada" in *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, XXXIV:4 (December/décembre 2001) 715-738

Gross Lawrence W. "Bimaadiziwin, or the Good Life as a Unifying Concept of Anishnaabe Religion," in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, v26 n1, 15-32. 2002

Hale, Charles R. *Mas Que Un Indio. Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2006

Handy, Jim. "The Corporate Community, Campesino Organizations, and Agrarian Reform, 1950-54." in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. edited by Carol A. Smith. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992

Handy, Jim. *A History of Guatemala*, University of Saskatchewan, History 385.3 Course Outline. Fall 2010.

Handy, Jim. *Revolution in the Countryside. Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994

Hart, Michael Anthony. *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*. Halifax: Fernwood, 2002

Huhndorf, Shari. *Mapping the Americas*. Cornell University Press, 2009

Hurley, Mary C, and Wherrett, Jill. "The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples." *In Brief*. Parliamentary Research Branch, Library of Parliament. Government of Canada Revised August 2000.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb9924-e.htm>

Hytrek, Gary and Zentgraf, Kristine M. *America Transformed. Globalization, Inequality, and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008

Julien, Mark, Zinni, Deborah and Wright, Barry. "Keeper of the Drums: Female Aboriginal Leadership and the Salience of Gender." *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*. Volume 27, 2009

Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press, 2003

Kellogg, Susan. *Weaving the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies. Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Krouse, Susan Applegate and Howard, Heather A., Editors. *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009

Ladner, Kiera L. "Colonialism Isn't The Only Obstacle: Indigenous Peoples & Multilevel Governance in Canada," (Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Ottawa, May 27-29, 2009) <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2009/Ladner2.pdf>

LaRocque, Emma. *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse 1850-1990*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2010

Lopez, Meeilyn Lorena Mejia. "Indigenous Women and Governance in Guatemala." *Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL)*, March 2006. http://www.focal.ca/publications/articles/2006_e.asp

Lovell, Terry, ed. "Nancy Fraser's Integrated Theory of Justice: A 'Sociologically Rich' Model for a Global Capitalist Era?" in *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: Nancy Fraser and Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Makokis, Leona. "Teachings from Cree Elders: A Grounded Theory Study of Indigenous Leadership," Doctor of Education diss., University of San Diego, 2001

Mallon, Florencia E. "Pathways to Postcolonial Nationhood: The Democratization of Difference in Contemporary Latin America." in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. edited by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, Jud Esty. London: Duke University Press, 2005

Manz, Beatriz. *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror and Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005

Mattingly, Cheryl, and Lawlor, Mary. "Learning from Stories: Narrative Interviewing in Cross-cultural Research." *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 2000;7:4-14

McCreery, David. "State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920." in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. edited by Carol A. Smith. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.

McDowell, Linda. *Gender, Identity & Place. Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999

McGibbon, Elizabeth and McPherson, Charmaine. "Applying Intersectionality & Complexity Theory to Address the Social Determinants of Women's Health." *Women's Health and Urban Life*, Vol 10 (1), pg. 59-86. May-2011

McGrath, Ann and Stevenson, Winona. "Gender, Race, and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia." *Labour/Le Travail*, 38 (Fall 1996) *Labour History*, 71 (November 1996) 37-53. Athabasca University Press.

Memory of Silence. United Nations Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification. 1999. <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/t006Fc.html>

Menchu, Rigoberta. *I, Rigoberta Menchu. An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. London: verso, 1984

Menon, Nivedita. "Between the Burqa and the Beauty Parlor? Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Feminist Politics." in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. edited by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, Jud Esty. London: Duke University Press, 2005

Miller, Jim. Email correspondence with author. October 31, 2011

Mittelman, James H. and Chin, Christine B.N. "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization" in *The Global Resistance Reader*. edited by Louise Amoore. New York: Routledge, 2005

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Monture, Patricia A. and McGuire, Patricia D, Editors. *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*. Toronto: Inanna Publications & Education Inc., 2009

Narayan, Uma and Harding, Sandra, eds. *Decentering the Center. Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000

Nelson, Diane M. *A Finger in The Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. Berkeley California: University of California Press, 1999

Nelson, Diane M. *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009

Office of the Treaty Commissioner. *Treaty Essential Learnings. We Are All Treaty People. Field Test Draft*. Canada: August 2008.

O'Riley Patricia. "Shapeshifting Research with Aboriginal Peoples: Toward Self-Determination and Respect," in *Native Studies Review*; 2004, Vol.15 Issue 2, 83-102.

Ouellette, Grace J.M.W. *The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002

Peters, E.J. ““Our City Indians”: negotiating the meaning of First Nations urbanization in Canada, 1945-1975,” *Historical Geography* 30, 2002, 75-93.

Phillips, Anne. “Identity Politics: Have We Now Had Enough?” in *The Politics of Inclusion and Empowerment. Gender, Class and Citizenship*. edited by John Andersen and Birte Siim. NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004

Polletta, Francesca. *It Was Like a Fever. Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Prabhu, Anjali. *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

Prindeville, Diane-Michele. “A Comparative Study of Native American and Hispanic Women in Grassroots and Electoral Politics.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2002), 67-89

Rheault, D’Arcy. *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy Concerning Knowledge, Identity and Ethics*. Peterborough, Ontario: Debwewin Press, 1999

Ramirez, Renya K., “Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging.” *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*. Volume 7, Number 2 (2007): 22-40

Ray, Sangeeta. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: In Other Words*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009

Regan, Paulette. *Unsettling the Settler Within. Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010

Remijnse, Simone. *Memories of Violence: Civil Patrols and the Legacy of Conflict in Joyabaj, Guatemala*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2002.

Ritzer, George. ed. *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots. The Basics. Second edition*. NY: McGraw-Hill, 2007

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Government of Canada. 1996. Women’s Perspectives Chapter.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: First Vintage Books Edition, 1993.

Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

- Settee, Priscilla, *The Strength of Women. Ahkameyimowak*. Regina: Coteau Books, 2011
- Smith, Carol A., Editor. *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999.
- St. Denis, Verna. "Feminism is For Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity" in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. edited by Joyce Green. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2007
- Stern, Maria. *Naming Security - Constructing Identity. 'Mayan Women' in Guatemala on the Eve of 'Peace.'* New York: Manchester University Press, 2005
- Stoll, David. *Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009 Edition
- Stone-Mediatore, Shari. *Reading Across Borders. Storytelling and Knowledges of Resistance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.
- Tong, Rosemarie Putnam. *Feminist Thought. A More Comprehensive Introduction. Dimensions in Philosophy, Second Edition*. Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998.
- Voyageur, Cora. *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century. First Nations Women Chiefs*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008.
- Warick, Jason. "Sask. First Nations Say Students Shortchanged." *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, December 22, 2011, A1
- Warry, Wayne. *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues*. Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press. 2007
- Watanabe, John M. "Enduring Yet Ineffable Community in the Western periphery of Guatemala," in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1640 to 1988*. Edited by Carol A. Smith. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992
- Waiser, Bill. *Saskatchewan. A New History*. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd, 2005.
- Werbner, Pnina and Modood, Tariq, eds. *Debating Cultural Hybridity. Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed Books, 1997.
- Wise, Tim. *Color-Blind: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat From Racial Equity*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010

