

Exploring well-being in a First Nation community: a qualitative  
study

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	2
Table of Contents .....	3
Abstract .....	5
<b>Chapter 1</b> Introduction .....	6
<b>Chapter 2</b> Literature Review.....	10
<b>Chapter 3</b> Methodology .....	47
<b>Chapter 4</b> Results .....	70
<b>Chapter 5</b> Discussion .....	101
<b>References</b> .....	138
<b>Appendices</b> .....	145
<b>Figures</b> .....	154

### List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Interview Guideline Questions
- Appendix B: Trip Schedule
- Appendix C: Photo-voice Instruction Sheet
- Appendix D: Consent Form
- Appendix E: Public Release Form
- Appendix F: Cover Letter
- Appendix G: Photo-voice Form 1
- Appendix H: Photo-voice Form 2

### List of Figures

- Figure 1: Picture portraying a traditional way of life through the prospector tent and outside cook station behind the tent.
- Figure 2: Picture of a storm cloud coming over Ginoogaming territory.
- Figure 3: Picture of the sun setting on Long Lake when the water is calm.
- Figure 4: Picture of a windy day and rough waters at Long Lake.
- Figure 5: Picture of the local mill which is located beside Ginoogaming First Nation.

- Figure 6: Picture of the cook shack that is located at the pow-wow grounds and used to prepare community feasts during traditional teachings week and the annual pow-wow.
- Figure 7: Picture of the arbour, where dancers, drummers and spectators gather during pow-wow time.
- Figure 8: Picture of the playground for youth in the community, located behind community member's houses.
- Figure 9: Picture of a condemned house in the community that has been spray-painted on.
- Figure 10: Picture of a condemned apartment duplex. It has been burned down since this photo was taken.
- Figure 11: Picture of a condemned house in the community.
- Figure 12: Picture of the community garden that is located at the pow-wow grounds.
- Figure 13: Picture of a garden box on the lawn of a community member.
- Figure 14: Picture of a sole raspberry on a raspberry bush.
- Figure 15: Picture of a fridge that is empty except for two water bottles.
- Figure 16: Picture of a bag of frozen vegetables.
- Figure 17: Picture of a bag of chips, a bottle of pop and a pack of cigarettes.
- Figure 18: Picture of a section of the community and the unpaved road that runs through it.
- Figure 19: Picture of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was present in a community member's home.
- Figure 20: Picture of the turtle monument that was erected in memory of past community members.
- Figure 21: Picture of the artwork that appears on the turtle monument.
- Figure 22: Picture of two eagles on a garbage box, which won a prize in the community's garbage box painting competition.
- Figure 23: Picture of a drum, a dream catcher and a medicine bag, which are all traditional aspects of the Anishnaabe culture.

## **Abstract**

First Nations people hold the worldview that all human and non-human beings are interconnected. This worldview is imperative to the well-being of not only individuals, but to the community and land as well because it promotes certain values. It is these values which foster healthy relationships, and foster wellness. When an individual is connected to other human and non-human beings wellness is enhanced and when there is a disconnection wellness is deteriorated. This research will explore in greater detail, an interconnected worldview as a framework for wellness in an Anishnaabe community and provide a deeper understanding of some of the factors that serve to connect and disconnect the individual.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Community members at Ginoogaming First Nations acknowledged the need to improve well-being in their community. One such effort aimed at the improvement of the well-being of community members is a community garden project that commenced in May 2007. The community garden project was developed by a community member employed by Ginoogaming First Nation and his father. They approached faculty at Lakehead University, and a partnership between Ginoogaming First Nation and Lakehead University was established, making the development of a community garden project a joint effort.

The community garden consisted of a large community garden and individual garden boxes for community members. Funding was secured by Ginoogaming First Nations and Lakehead University. Seeds, a rotatiler, tools, soil and various other gardening supplies were purchased. An individual from Lakehead University tested soil at potential sites for the community garden. Five environmental workers who were eligible for disability were hired to work in the garden (although all community members were welcome to participate). Six youth were hired as research assistants, and their tasks included assisting in qualitative and quantitative research being conducted surrounding the community garden project, supervising summer students and disseminating information about the community garden.

Despite these efforts, participation in the community garden was limited, and the large community garden had minimal productivity (partially due to environmental

conditions, but also because of limited efforts). In Trull's (2008) quantitative study he found no direct link between the community garden and the improvement of well-being in youth in the community. In informal and formal discussions, many community members felt that the community garden did not affect their well-being but that it had potential.

This incited curiosity within. If community members acknowledged the need to improve well-being, and seemed to have the means (funding and supplies), for a project with potential to improve well-being, why was there limited success? **This sort of conundrum is not only present in Ginoogaming First Nation it is not that there is something innately wrong with community members in this community.**

Ginoogaming First Nation is unique in its own respect, but it is also embedded within a larger historical context along side other First Nation peoples in Canada. Extensive literature exists on the ill health and well-being of First Nation peoples in comparison to the rest of Canada (e.g., Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995). Although the actual cost of the overall health care expenditure on First Nation peoples of Canada is unknown, what is known is that the overall trend is an increase in spending (Waldram et al., 1995). In regards to Federal health expenditures the Medical Services Branch increased its funding from approximately 398 million in 1985/6 to 697 million in 1991/2. Indian/Northern Health Services which allocates its funds among community health, management and services, National Native alcohol and abuse programs, hospital services, services under Indian control and environmental health and surveillance expended 357 million in 1985/6 and 654 million in 1991/2 (Waldram et al., 1995). Despite these paramount increases in funding the overall well-being of many First Nation peoples



across Canada continue to be in dire straits. Ginoogaming First Nation is not an isolated case, for many other First Nation peoples in Canada funding and resources do not necessarily lead to the improvement of well-being. **This does not mean that there is something innately wrong with First Nations people across Canada.**

It became clear to me that the well-being of Ginoogaming First Nation, as well as other First Nations communities, is complex and that it was very likely that it was defined differently than in the Western world. An equation for wellness encompasses a lot more than just materials and funds, but what is that something else? I wanted to learn more about the intricacies of well-being that affect First Nations at a community level, but literature was scarce. Community members in informal discussions had also touched upon a lack of knowledge on the dynamics of the community's wellness, and felt that this sort of information would be useful. As a result the foundation of my research question was formed. I wanted to explore well-being in the community with the reasoning that more knowledge on well-being in the community will lead to more informed decision making and capacity in respect to wellness in the community.

The research at hand will provide a deeper understanding of what well-being means to a First Nation community that is attempting to regain traditions in Northern Ontario. It will provide insight into what wellness means to community members, factors that affect well-being, and how these factors affect well-being. These questions are explored in an attempt to display the complexity and depth of the construction of well-being at the community level in a First Nation. Essentially the purpose of this phenomenological study will be to explore meanings and factors of well-being for community members at Ginoogaming First Nation so that it can be invaluable to

members of the community, policy advisors and health professionals when developing community programming and decision making in funding expenditures.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### *The Well-being of First Nations people*

##### *What is Well-being?*

Prior to the commencement of a discourse on wellness, the definition of wellness must first be explored. Going into the research I did not place any restrictions on the definition of well-being, and merely thought of well-being as ‘being well’ in any way that one can be, including, but not limited to happiness, mental stability, physical fitness etc. It is essential to first explore the definition of wellness because within the literature various definitions exist, and are implicit to the direction of the research. There are also terms used to denote similar concepts such as being well, and wellness. With that said, there are various definitions of well-being and what comprises a well person. Among the Cree in Northern Quebec, the term ‘well-being’ is non-existent in the language. The closest translation is *Miyupimaatisiun*, which Adelson translates into ‘being alive well’ (2000).

Since the publication of the World Health Organization’s (1946) definition of health which is, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (accessed online)”, strives have been made in the field of health toward more inclusive definitions. Despite this, biomedical definitions still tend to emphasize the physical aspect of well-being and are vague, using abstract concepts as descriptors. ‘Being alive well’ is not greatly concerned with the physiology of the individual, but rather is more socio-culturally rooted. The degree to which one is ‘being alive well’ is determined on a daily basis by the interactions the person has with

others and their ability to participate in activities that are essential to being Cree such as eating wild foods and participating in activities that provide a connection to the land (Adelson, 2000). This definition of wellness is very tangible in nature, instead of an abstract state of being. Essentially it is a way to live one's life. Turton (1997) supports this finding with similar results, insisting that 'living the Indian way' is essential to health promotion among the Anishnaabek.

Among the Anishnaabek, the medicine wheel is a visual representation of what wellness is, and is a tool that is used to teach future generations how to be well. There are various interpretations of the medicine wheel. For example the outer circle is a cultural symbol within some First Nation cultures<sup>1</sup> for balance (Turton, 1997) and is also symbolic of the circle of life which is an interconnected infinite timeless continuum (Hill, 2006). The four sections of the medicine wheel also have symbolic associations. For example the four sections can be associated with the stages of life (Turton, 1997), or a popular interpretation is that the four parts represent the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of well-being. Within this model the four parts are equally balanced and interconnected. Shannon (cited in Hill, 2006) supports this claim, by highlighting the importance of physical, emotional social and spiritual relationships and interconnection in defining an individual. A discussion on definitions of well-being can go on for quite some time, but the point I am trying to iterate is that there are various interpretations of well-being that are possible.

***The Current State of Well-being of First Nations peoples:***

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<sup>1</sup> Note that I say cultures instead of culture, because although similarities exist there is no pan-Indian culture within Canada and this point should be noted throughout this paper

Within the literature it is widely accepted that the current state of First Nation peoples' well-being, regardless of the definition, is less than that of mainstream society. As a result I will not provide a lengthy presentation of the plethora of evidence. Instead I will just provide a few measurements that have been published supporting this claim. For example the life expectancy is approximately ten years less for an Aboriginal<sup>2</sup> male or female than their male or female non-Aboriginal counterpart (Waldram, et al., 1995). Rock (2003) estimates that diabetes is 3-5 times higher among Aboriginals than the national average. This trend will most likely continue since the National Aboriginal Health Organization (2005) asserts that 42% of First Nations adolescents are overweight or obese and Barsh (1999) notes that alcohol and tobacco consumption (which is high among First Nations communities), and reduced physical activity serves to aggravate diabetes. Likewise, suicide rates in First Nations are 3 times higher among males, and 2 times higher among females, than their non-aboriginal counterparts, and homicide rates are 6 times higher in men and 4 times higher in women (Waldram, et al., 1995).

Warry (2000) estimates that on-reserve unemployment rates in North America range from between 60-90% and those who remain on the reserve can often only obtain temporary or seasonal work. In Ontario the welfare level is 9 times higher in First Nations populations than non-First Nations and in the age category of 19-24 only 50% receive an annual income (Warry, 2000). When employment is obtained the annual income is 50% lower than non-First Nations people and First Nations peoples are more likely to be in lower rung jobs (Warry, 2000). On-reserve housing statistics also reflect this dependency since on-reserve housing is not the property of First Nations peoples.

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<sup>2</sup> Note the use of the change in terminology. Through out this paper I use the term First Nations to generally refer to Native peoples of Canada, and the term Indigenous to generally refer to Native peoples outside of Canada. All other terminology is imposed by the authors that have been cited.

Sixty-five percent of on-reserve houses do not meet all housing standards, half are below adequacy standards and 31% are over crowded (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1996). Overall, using the point system of the community well-being index, it was found that income, housing and labour force were all still forecasted to be 8-24 points below the national average by the year 2041 (Sullivan, 2006).

Although the well-being of First Nations peoples was never perfect it is widely accepted that it was better pre-colonization. From the statistics presented in the last paragraph it becomes apparent that the Westernized approach that has predominately been used post colonization to promote wellness is lacking. McPherson and Rabb (1993) provide a warning that just because a worldview is useful to some it does not mean that it is an accurate depiction of the world. Overholt and Callicot suggest that the greatest test of a worldview is how well it helps those who hold the view to survive (1982). The Western approach is rooted in a Western definition of wellness and a Western worldview on what wellness entails. This approach to promoting wellness in First Nation peoples is inappropriate, and even tyrannical. An exploration of the worldview of First Nation peoples needs to be examined to provide an appropriate context of discourse on well-being.

### ***The Worldview of the Anishnaabek and other Indigenous peoples***

#### ***A worldview of interconnectedness***

An interconnected worldview can differ among cultures but essentially it is one in which an individual sees themselves as connected to a larger circle of life. McPherson and Rabb (1993) explain the interconnected worldview of the Anishnaabek people, as a complex reciprocal relationship with the land and its ecosystems, where personal identity,

culture and the environment exist in an intertwined, balanced system. Within this definition the interconnection of the people to the land is highlighted. The land plays a role in shaping who people are, yet at the same time it is who people are that determines how they interact with the land.

Adelson (2000) makes a similar point in her account of how wellness manifests within a First Nations community in Northern Quebec. She describes how “being Cree” is central to wellness, and “being Cree” is defined by one’s connection with the land, past and present. Participating in bush life (hunting, trapping etc), and consuming country foods is vital to how an individual defines themselves.

Adelson (2000) expands on the importance of ‘being Cree’. Not only does it foster a relationship with the land but it also provides a collective identity as a people, “the essence of what it means to be Cree and the substantiation of the Cree people as a distinct cultural group, is grounded in the oral historical record and in the recollection of familial and individual pasts” (p. 27). Thus, ‘being Cree’ connects the individual to the community because of a common history of the Cree. Collectiveness of an individual to a people is characteristic of many First Nations peoples and can occur in various ways by being a part of a particular First Nation, or on a larger scale as a part of a grouping of First Nations such as the Anishnaabek people or generally as a First Nations person. Kral (2003) notes this in his qualitative exploration of suicide in the north, articulating that a larger family is not only central to the Inuit but all Aboriginal peoples, and is captured by the phrase, ‘all my relations’.

Spirituality is essential to a worldview of interconnectivity. Connors (1999) refers metaphorically to spirituality as a skeleton because it is the frame on which life

begins. As with the human body it is what everything else on the body hangs off of. Thus without spirituality the individual would not be able to connect to a larger community, the land and its ecosystems. Hill (2006) supports this claim, stating that connectedness is a result of the dynamics of spiritual relationships to family, community, nature, creator, land, environment, ancestors and a traditional way of life.

McPherson and Rabb (1993) delve further to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of spiritual recognition, “[the] concept of other than human persons is extremely important. A person is someone who has a right to our respect, a person is someone whose relationship is evaluated morally (p. 89).” Let us dissect this statement. Although the land, and other non-human parts of the creation are not viewed as persons per se they can still be entitled to all the dignities of a person because of the encompassment of a spirit. This can be taken one step further. The acknowledgement of a being as a spiritual being not only provides the right to respect and morality, it also provides the means to having respect and morality, by providing a connection through the spiritual realm.

The Raramuri people, Indigenous peoples from Mexico, provide an example to highlight these key components of a worldview of interconnectivity. Among the Raramuri the concept of ‘Iwi’ exists. ‘Iwi’ refers to not only the soul itself, but the accompanying beliefs that everything that has a breath has a soul, and that all souls are interconnected because they share the same breath” (Salmon, 2000). This influences the epistemology of the Raramuri people and this way of thinking is referred to as ‘Iwigara’. The concept ‘Iwigara’ encapsulates the belief that the land, animals and winds of where the Raramuri people live shapes their way of knowing (Salmon, 2000). Essentially those



who hold the worldview of interconnectivity have their own version of “Iwigara’ and Iwi’. The concept of ‘Iwigara’ is similar to McPherson and Rabb’s description of interconnectivity among the Anishnaabek people, and Adelson’s notion of ‘being Cree’. The belief in non-human people is also paralleled in Raramuri belief systems (‘Iwi’), serving the same function of establishing interconnectivity as in Anishnaabe culture.

Driben & Simpson (2000) engaged in research with Long Lake #58<sup>3</sup> and documented this unique way of knowing which produces equality among the Creator’s beings,

“Plants, animals and minerals coexist and treated with utmost respect. It is inconsiderable to take more than need be and to not share. Plants, animals and minerals best regarded as nonhuman but intellectually and emotionally identical to human kind. Treating those with respect encourages the person to behave likewise and the humans who do so enjoy physically, mentally and spiritually good health (p. 7).”

Driben and Simpson (2000) expand on the literature of an interconnected worldview by providing purposive reasoning for an interconnected worldview. Interconnectivity serves to produce physical, mental and spiritual wellness for individuals who accept and live in accordance with this worldview. This is also an underlying message of the works of Adelson (2000).

### ***Providing a link between an interconnected worldview and wellness***

The relationship between connectedness and wellness becomes apparent through the Anishnaabe term, *bimaadiziwin*, which means ‘good life’. The concept of the ‘good

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<sup>3</sup> Long Lake #58 is a neighbouring First Nations community of Ginoogaming. Many relatives of Ginoogaming community members, both past and present, reside here.

life', "covers the relationship with the broader environment. So, for example, it teaches the necessity of respecting all life, from the smallest insects on up" (Gross, 2002: 19). McPherson and Rabb (1993) cite healer Ron Geyschick to explain the importance of interconnectedness, "In my stories I try to teach young people respect for everything: other people, trees, water, the spirits. I want them to know that the creator is in you and me. (p. 95)." In regards to wellness, the underlying premise is that individuals who have a view of interconnectedness will respect all things connected because in turn this will only serve to benefit oneself.

Arnocky, Stroink, and Decicco (2007) refer to this phenomenon as the metapersonal self construal. The metapersonal self is the concept that the self and all life are fundamentally interconnected. As a result, definitions of the self are created by the self's connection with all other living things (Arnocky, et al., 2007). Thus, if one were using the metapersonal self construal as a framework for wellness, one would want to have positive relationships with all other living things which are connected because that will ensure the wellness of the self. Stroink and Decicco (2008), refer to this reasoning as the ethics of divinity where it is in ones best interest to not disrupt the natural order of things.

Halowell (cited in McPherson and Rabb, 1993), takes a similar stance and argues that cognitive orientations exist in various cultures to provide order and reason in the cosmos instead of chaos. Within the context of this discussion the cognitive orientation would be a worldview of interconnectivity and the order and reason in the cosmos would refer to wellness, while chaos would refer to lack of wellness. Referring to Cross' (2003) argument of culture as a resource, a worldview of interconnection between the self and

community works as a protective factor against psycho-social, health and emotional difficulties. When this worldview is removed, the resulting loss of cultural resources can produce these difficulties in the community.

A worldview not only serves to promote the wellness of the individual directly but also indirectly protects wellness by promoting the wellness of the land. McPherson and Rabb (1993) describe how a moral obligation arises to protect the environment of other non-human beings, not simply for the purpose of hunting and trapping but also because they are members of Ojibway society. Within this stance the motivating factor is not necessarily a selfish act to ensure wellness of the self, but instead, because non-human beings are seen as part of the community, wellness of the self is ensured.

Arnocky and colleagues (2008) do in fact argue that protection of the land is a selfish act for those with a metapersonal self construal because the self is understood as being inclusive of the land. However, Arnocky and colleagues (2008) and McPherson and Rabb (1993) both assert the same belief that a worldview of interconnectivity promotes wellness. Within Arnocky and colleagues study (2008), the metapersonal self construal was a unique predictive factor of biospheric environmental concerns, as well as a predictor of cooperative attitudes in common dilemmas and ecological cooperation, environmental behaviour ratings and environmental conservation behaviour, all which are things that can have a positive impact on the environment.

Essentially an interconnected worldview promotes wellness because it fosters a space for the retainment and growth of reciprocal relationships. Among the Odawa, in order to obtain *pimadaziwin*, or 'the good life', acts of giving are maintained in the community (Irwin, 1996). Wilson's qualitative study (2004), which examined the

relationship between cultural identity and wellness among Aboriginal women in Manitoba also acknowledged the place of reciprocity in discourses on wellness. Many of the women in Wilson's study spoke to their personal responsibilities to the community and family members. They recognized that their health and the health of their communities were inseparable, and have a mutual investment and responsibility to each other.

McPherson and Rabb (1993), describe Callicot's defense of ethics which highlights the important role of reciprocity,

"Plants and animal species are, as it were, other tribes or nation. Human economic intercourse with other species is not represented as the exploitations of impersonal material, natural resources, but as reciprocal gift giving in which both parties exchange benefits (p. 89)".

They provide an example of this 'defense of ethics' through exchanges that occur between a hunter and a caribou. The hunter is provided with the skin and the flesh of the caribou and in exchange the hunter provides tobacco and artefacts to the spirit of the caribou. The hunter is able to maintain wellness by eating the nutritious meat of the caribou and the caribou maintains wellness because the offering of tobacco and artefacts allows it to be reborn.

Basil Johnston, an Ojibway author, ties interconnectivity and reciprocity together by identifying two prominent themes of an Anishnaabe worldview. He notes that the quality of life among parties is interdependent and that all life forms must be honoured (Turton, 1997). Essentially it is a basic cause-effect relationship, where because of A (interdependency), B (honour) occurs. Coates, Gray and Hetherington (2006) also provide literature to support the positive relationship between wellness and interconnectedness. They believe that reciprocity is a natural tendency because all

organisms wish to reach a state of co-existence through belonging because belonging allows organisms to thrive in a supportive, mutually beneficial relationship which is corroborated by Acton and Malathum's finding. They report an association between sense of belonging and wellness promotion behaviours (Hill, 2006).

### ***The role culture plays in a worldview of interconnectivity***

Cross (2003), categorizes culture as a resource arguing that culture allows one to make sense of things and can provide a means for healing. Culture is able to carry out these two tasks because at its base, culture is merely a pattern of responses intended to address ongoing basic needs (Cross, 2003). Cross (2003) provides examples claiming teachings or dreams are responses to mental needs and feasts and dancing are responses to physical needs. Abadian (2006) provides a similar argument of function, asserting that within healthy traditional societies, rituals such as sweat lodges and providing meat to widowed wives exists as a counteraction to terrible events that have happened.

Essentially Cross is describing what Weidman has coined 'health culture' which is the phenomenon of coping with illness and maintaining well-being by practicing a culture's traditional way of life (Turton, 1997). Connor (1999) supports this claim, stating that the three central goals of ritual and ceremony are: to order relationships between individuals, to connect people, which fosters identity and belonging and to promote the overall health of the mind and body, stimulating the spirit and restoring balance. Lavallée (2007) provides a concrete example explaining that within the Anishnaabe culture, tobacco, sage, cedar and sweet grass can be used to connect communities to the spirit world. Salmon (2000) documented this among the Raramuri.

Ceremonies and ritual dances associated with a drink referred to as 'batari-ki' strengthened relationships of the people to the land, plants, animals and each other.

Traditions associated with First Nations cultures can function to promote interconnectedness. Douglas Cardinal describes his obtainment of interconnectedness through his experience of a vision quest. On the second day of the vision quest he started to see and communicate with other parts of the creation and by the third day it, "seemed like he was a part of everything" (McPherson and Rabb, 1993: 61). The vision quest provides an environment in which an individual is in solitude and is deprived of food and water, which facilitates an environment for deep spiritual connection. Mattern (1999) describe how another tradition, the powwow, serves to foster unity and inclusiveness. The drum is symbolic of inclusion because it is a representation of the heartbeat of all living things. There are also inter-tribal dances which promote unity. In these dances, the drum, dance route of the dancers and seating arrangement of the spectators all take on a circular structure which provides a unifying and inclusive environment (Mattern, 1999).

Yellow Horse-Braveheart, (cited in Barrios and Egan, 2000), explains the importance of culture to interconnect individual and community, and the result of disconnection,

"Because native culture provides a psycho-social structure and focuses the life of the individual in the extended family-kin network, community separation whether voluntary or owing to government policies may lead to psycho-social, health and emotional difficulties (p. 211)."

Within Stroink and Decicco's study (2008) with North-Western Ontarian Aboriginals the metapersonal self construal (recall it is a worldview of interconnectedness in which one is defined through their relations with all of life), was correlated with increased Aboriginal

identity, participation in Aboriginal culture and participation in traditional activities. Cheah and Nelson (2004) also provided support for a link between traditionalism and interconnectivity, reporting that interdependence was more important in definitions of adulthood to traditional Aboriginal students than non-Aboriginal and non-traditional Aboriginal students. An interpretation of the data is that Aboriginal students who are traditional may practice traditions that enforce a belief system that values interconnectedness. As a result interdependence would be a trait that one finds valuable and hopes to obtain in adulthood.

### ***Quantitative studies, indices and scales***

Cooke (2005) describes various indices that exist that can be used to measure the well-being of populations (e. g., Human Development Index (U.N 1990), Ontario Social Development Quality of Life Index (Ontario Social Development Council, 1998; Forham Index of Social Health, Brink & Zelsman, 1997; Indices of the Well-being of Nations, Robert Prescott-Allen, 2001; Quality of Life Index, Diener, 1995; Index of Social Progress, Estes, 1984.) Although some value lies within these indices they are inappropriate and insufficient to gaining further insight into what comprises the well-being of First Nation communities. Firstly these indices fail to provide a wholistic approach to well-being. For example the Ontario Social Development Quality of Life Index addresses social, health, economic and environmental aspects of well-being (Cooke, 2005), but fails to address the cultural component of well-being.

There is no space within these indices to gain a deeper understanding of well-being which is characteristic of quantitative methods in which the main goal is to explain causes of change instead of understanding from a first person perspective (Firestone,

1987). The indices are pre-determined before research commences and are closed-ended in nature. This provides limited space to learn in-depth information on the factors included in the indices, and no space to allow for new factors that affect well-being to emerge. Pre-determined, closed questions also make it difficult for community members to have a voice within the research process which can result in a methodology in which research is performed on First Nations people opposed to research performed with First Nations.

These indices are problematic because they are too generalized. Bartunek and Seo (2002) agree stating that questionnaire style research does not provide understanding within a local context. First Nations peoples have lived experiences that are unique to First Nations peoples (e.g., residential school system, banning of ceremonial practices, failed treaty agreements, subject to the Indian Act), as well as lived experiences that are more pronounced in First Nations populations (e.g., poor housing conditions, diabetes, suicide). Thus, a template design that can be applied to various populations is inappropriate because there is no space to address these experiences and/or no space to highlight the degree of experience. Furthermore, if these are inappropriate to address First Nations as a whole, they most definitely fail to adequately address the dynamics of a unique community.

Lastly, these indices do not provide a historical context in which to frame the well-being of First Nations peoples, nor do they provide room to convey the complexity of the well-being of First Nations. This can be troublesome because without an accurate context to the research, negative stereotypes can be reinforced, or in the case of a pre/post test methodology, if no changes occur individuals may be viewed as non-compliant.



There are few indices in existence that attempt to be Indigenous specific. Internationally, the Australian Aboriginal Economic Policy Research Centre (1998) developed the Index of Relative Indigenous Socio-economic Disadvantage. Within Canada, the First Nations Community Well-being Index (2001) and the Inuit Community Well-being Index (2006) both published by Canada's Indian Affairs and Northern Development are among the few Indigenous specific publications. All three indices address income, housing quality, education and unemployment except the first was developed with the Indigenous peoples of Australia in mind while the latter were developed by the Federal government of Canada to utilize with First Nation peoples of Canada (Cooke, 2005).

The First Nations Community Well-being Index focuses on socio-economic factors and consists of the following categories: education, labour force participation, employment, income and housing (Cooke, 2005). The same arguments apply for this index, except this index to some extent attempts to be applicable to First Nation communities. For example employment is examined per capita, which addresses skewed results that may occur because the median age of First Nations communities is on average younger than the general population (McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004). Despite efforts, the index does fail to address some factors that may affect First Nation communities. McHardy & O'Sullivan (2004) critique this scale on the grounds that it neglects physical and psychological factors and that it may put too much focus on monetary value which may not be as important in First Nation cultures. Lastly the index measured education with high school completion and literacy as the criteria and no space was provided for traditional knowledge. The Aboriginal Lifelong Learning Model provides an example of

inclusive learning. In the model, sources of knowledge include but are not limited to the natural world, other nations and family and types of learning include but are not limited to intergenerational learning, adult learning, workplace learning and post-secondary education (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

The Inuit Community Well-being Index attempts to account for the diversity of Indigenous people by providing an index for the Inuit, but the attempt falls short. Acknowledgement of uniqueness does not go beyond the title and the same four prominent factors (housing, income, education and labour force) are examined, which makes this index subject to the same criticisms as the First Nations Community Well-being Index.

Armstrong (2001) tries to tailor his contextualization of well-being to Indigenous peoples and includes traditional ways and population structure as factors of interest. The measurement of what he calls 'traditional ways', was rigid and over-simplified with, 'traditional ways' measured by the percent of the population that speaks an Indigenous language at home, while the factor, 'young population', refers to the percent of the population that is less than 18 years of age (Armstrong, 2001). He found that some 'above average' communities had high speaking levels of an Indigenous language, but overall these communities appeared more 'modernized' than others with only 10% of these communities speaking an Indigenous language at home (Armstrong, 2001). Armstrong also noted that certain geographical areas had higher saturations of relatively good conditions as well as relatively poor conditions (Armstrong, 2001).

White and Maxim (2007) also explore the role of geography in well-being, using the same determinants of income, education, labour force and housing to measure well-

being. They found that when comparing reserves to similar non-Indigenous populations there were other factors related to the reserve system besides isolation and population size that impeded wellness (White and Maxim, 2007). Like other indices, little room is available to explore what these other factors of well-being may be, and they are further limited by a neatly packaged definition of well-being.

Various quantitative studies exist that utilize measurements such as those present in the above indices described. For example the British Columbia office of the provincial health officer (2007) published an interim update that aimed at addressing the health and well-being of the First Nations population of British Columbia. The report consisted of healthy growth and development (low birth weight, pre-term births, infant mortality, and birth to teenage mothers), and disease and injury premature mortality (PYLL, diabetes, all cancers, HIV disease, suicide deaths, alcohol-related deaths, smoking-attributable deaths and drug-induced deaths). The report provided no context, or understanding into the results given. It also worked within a tight-knit definition of well-being, providing little to no attention to other factors besides the physical, such as the mental, spiritual, social, political and historical.

Statistics Canada (2001) examined the affects of harvesting traditional foods among the Inuit using information retrieved from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). Statistics Canada (2001) linked harvesting of traditional foods to cultural and economic well-being and physical health, but no new knowledge was gained on why traditional foods affect wellness. The authors also made inferences to account for some of the data. For example individuals age 15-24 had lowest harvesting rates, and the authors explained that this may be a result of cost. Due to school they did not have well paying jobs and

were unable to afford supplies associated with harvesting. Qualitative methods could have been invaluable. Instead of the author's interpretation, Aboriginal peoples from the survey could have quite possibly provided more informative, comprehensive and wholistic explanations. Bartunek and Seo (2002) have made a similar critique on unrelated research,

“Like most quantitative studies, Kinnunen et al. (2000) pre-selected and predefined the key variables- perceived job insecurity, its antecedents, and its outcomes-based on previously developed theories and scales. In doing so, the researchers were making an implicit assumption that researchers and research participants share similar meanings regarding the key variables. But what if local meanings differ from researchers' meanings? What if different respondents' meanings differ from each other? (p. 23).”

### *Qualitative studies*

There have been various qualitative studies examining the relationship between various specific factors and well-being, but none attempt to provide a framework for understanding well-being as a whole. This is the aim of the research at hand. Wilson (2004) utilized group discussions and individual interviews to gain an understanding of how cultural identity has contributed to the wellness of Aboriginal women. There is invaluable information on how a more positive well-being is obtained. For example, women did not describe themselves separate from the community which was implicit to an innate sense of responsibility for others. Although well-being was explored, it was done so to provide a context for the discussions surrounding cultural identity. Thus much emphasis was placed on the role of an Aboriginal woman in wellness, where I am concerned with well-being from various perspectives in the community.

Holmes, Stewart, Garrow, Anderson and Thorpe (2002), are involved in a longitudinal study on the health and well-being on Aboriginal urban youth in Australia.

Like Wilson's research, it has relevance but does not address well-being at a community level. The study has a mixed methods design, utilizing survey data, interviews, focus groups and physical testing on participants. The study focuses on the physical aspects of well-being and its main concern is to gain knowledge on the prevalence and incidence of health problems, and to gain a greater understanding of contributing factors.

There is a limited amount of literature that attempts to provide a greater understanding of what comprises wellness in a First Nation population, let alone a community in and of itself. There is also no definitive way to go about asking this question as well as answering it, as seen through the various perspectives researchers utilize in their attempts.

#### *An environmental perspective*

In Wilson's study she explored the land as a therapeutic landscape, and examined how the land (the therapeutic landscape), affected the health of the community. Through various experiences (hunting, trapping, tobacco, ceremonies, food, etc.) community members were able to be connected to the land which resulted in positive effects on physical, emotional, spiritual and mental aspects of well-being. For example food could be consumed as a medicine which positively affected physical well-being, and the process of consumption of the medicine, which has a ceremonial aspect, improved spirituality. Overall the land was essential to *mno bmaadis*, or, 'living the good life'.

What this study lacks is total freedom for factors to emerge. The land as a therapeutic landscape was pre-determined as the focus of the research. No deeper understanding is gained on how given factors affect well-being at a theoretical level because the phenomena is explained within therapeutic landscapes conjecture. The main

goal is to expand the limits of therapeutic landscapes, with gaining an understanding of well-being in a First Nation community being secondary.

### *A historical perspective*

There is an abundance of literature on how colonization or what has been coined 'historical trauma' has altered the wellness of First Nations peoples throughout North America. Duran and Duran (1995) and Wesley-Esquimaux and Smoleski (2004) have both organized the process of colonization into stages. Duran and Duran provide an account of colonization within the United States, and outline 6 stages. Stage one is referred to as 'first contact' and attributes loss of culture, experience and spirituality to initial environmental shock. In stage 2, coined 'economic competition,' disconnect from the land occurs through destruction, displacement and commodification of land. Stage 3 is a continuance of land seizure through invasion and war while, stage 4, 'subjugation and reservation,' entails the relocation to reserve lands and further cultural losses. Stage 5, 'boarding school period,' aims at destroying the family unit which disconnects the individual from the community and lastly is 'forced location and termination' which involves relocation from reserves to urban environments.

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smoleski (2004), identify 5 stages of colonization which they refer to as 'stages of culture'. The first two stages are 'cultural transition stages'. Stage one 'the physical', describes the rampant nature of infectious disease and how Indigenous peoples began to doubt their beliefs and become hopeless because of the persistence of disease. The second, 'the economic', is forced removal from the land. This is where the largest disconnect from the land occurred which resulted in a loss of culture and spirituality. The third and fourth stages 'cultural' and 'social' respectively are

referred to as 'cultural possession stages'. The 'cultural' makes reference to Christian missionization and prohibition of Aboriginal culture, providing a means for a new non-Indigenous identity. The 'social' addresses the introduction of colonial settlements, alien social structures and non-traditional coping mechanisms. Within this stage the Western worldview is adopted. The last stage 'psychological', which is considered the 'stage of cultural oppression', acknowledges the marginalization and lack of control of Indigenous peoples and how it acts as a barrier to healing.

The general argument is that these historical traumatic events are internalized by the individual. The individual cannot take it out on the colonizer but needs to cope with the powerlessness and other negative feelings that resulted from the traumatic events. The result is that this powerlessness and other negative feelings are internalized within the self or externalized on other community members who are accessible (Duran and Duran, 1995; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smoleski, 2004). Hill (2006) refers to the traits associated with internalization and externalization as 'survival skills'. These include, but are not exclusive to denial, sour graping successful Indians and learned helplessness which is defined by Wesley-Esquimaux and Smoleski (2004) as a lack of motivation, response, depression, feelings of worthlessness, guilt and addictions that results from a lack of control over traumatic colonizing events.

The argument exists that these traits become the trauma for the next generation, resulting in the current status of well-being. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) refer to this intergenerational transfer as historic trauma transmission,

“Historic trauma causes deep breakdowns in social functioning that may last for many years, decades or even generations. The cluster of symptoms associated with specific disorders that manifest themselves as a result of historic trauma may be passed to the next generation in a form of socially learned behavioural patterns.

In a sense symptoms that parents exhibit (family violence, sexual abuse) act as trauma and disrupt adaptive social adjustments in their children. In turn these children internalize these symptoms and, not to trivialize, catch a ‘trauma virus’ and fall ill to one of the social disorders. In the next generation the process perpetuates itself. (p. 66).

The literature provides a thorough explanation of how stages of colonization and stages of cultural loss lead to a deteriorated state of well-being but what this literature base neglects is fundamentally what was the essence of wellness before the changes occurred. We know from this literature why the current state of wellness is in continuance but what is not known is a framework for recovery. Essentially what was the function of what was lost?

#### *A social perspective*

There is a growing body of literature on the role social determinants play in developing wellness, yet it is not First Nation specific. Helliwell and Putnam (2004), argue that there is a strong link between social capital (defined as both physical and human capital) and well-being, where well-being is defined as happiness and life satisfaction. A list of protective or risk factors labelled the ‘social determinants of health’ have also been produced. The social determinants range from larger social forces to individual characteristics and consist of social structure, social position, social/material environment, behavioural/psychological factors, illness and injury and result in a social consequence (Graham, 2004). Graham’s critique of the social determinants of health is that it provides a focus on the determinants themselves but does not place emphasis on the larger forces at hand creating these social structures (Graham, 2004). I agree with Graham’s critique and also provide the same argument as with previous works, what are the underlying functions of these social structures?



The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has released a publication on the resilience of residential school survivors. Essentially at its simplest definition someone who is resilient is someone who has overcome adversities to be well. Similarly to the structure of the social determinants of health, resilience is described as occurring as a result of protective and risk factors. Risk factors and protective factors were taken from Mangham and colleagues, and included individual, family and environmental categories (Stout & Kipling, 2003). Examples of Mangham and colleagues' risk factors in each category respectively included anti-social behaviour, exposure to violence and poverty and examples of protective factors respectively included self esteem, quality parenting and community involvement (Stout & Kipling, 2003). Stout and Kipling (2003) argue that culture is linked to resilience and serves the function of promoting these protective factors in two ways. Firstly culture can promote a strong identity which manifests self-esteem which is a protective factor and secondly cultural norms influence parenting styles which can promote protective behaviours. Although I applaud the means and an end argument which was not afforded by other research, there is a great emphasis on the process of socialization. The goal of this research is to understand the process of how wellness is able to occur in residential school survivors, so within this context emphasis on socialization is appropriate, but it provides limited options for those who wish to regain wellness at a later stage of their life.

### ***A political perspective***

Warry (2000) argues that community politics are essential to community healing,

“Participation in the politics of community life enhances self reliance and contributes to personal healing. Individuals are self-determining. Their health emerges from a sense of self and well-being that is connected to their cultural identity (p. 240).”

Earlier on in the work, Warry (2000) had explained that cultural identity is related to healing because cultural identity is linked to self-esteem and feelings of personal control. Although I agree that self autonomy does play a role in well-being I am cautious to present it as the source of wellness but in Warry's (2000) defense he has provided a context so this statement does not come off as victim blaming. I do however feel that this provides limited options for those communities whose cultural ways have been lost or are not easily accessible.

Adelson (2000) provides a similar argument, emphasising the importance of the 'politics of community life'. Within the study, *miyupimmaatisiun*, or, 'being alive well', encompassed health, politics and a Cree identity. The land was central to community life and although at times was threatened by industry, provided a link to a Cree identity for community members.

### ***Exploring connective and de-connective factors***

Within this paper, in its simplest form I provide the argument that connection of the individual, community and land is what produces wellness within Ginoogaming First Nations.

#### ***The individual and land***

The traditional area of Ginoogaming and surrounding First Nations has been contaminated and destroyed largely as a result of industry. Simpson and Driben (2000) address this issue in their research. In 1938 the hydro-electric commission of Ontario (now Ontario Hydro), began the Long Lake diversion project. The project was intended to transfer run off from James Bay into the Great Lakes so that inter-basin pulpwood

transportation and power generation for Southern Ontario could occur. This converted Long Lake into a large reservoir and changed the direction of the lake. This resulted in less fish, unusable campgrounds, the destruction of grave sites and the shoreline being washed away. A past chief of Ginoogaming First Nations, Gabriel Echum, speaks to the negative impact the hydro development project has had on Ginoogaming,

“Ginoogaming people have suffered immensely from hydro development. Our river systems were diverted, our Elders recall, the rivers became confused. Along with the river diversion, other industries used other water systems for transporting logs. We began to witness the deterioration of our waters. The aquatic life began to deform and disintegrate.

Today we cannot eat the fish from this lake; our children cannot walk to the beach and enjoy an afternoon swim. This lake will take decades upon decades before it is restored. It is contaminated by industry, and no Industry is willing to take responsibility for the destruction of the waters.

The people of Ginoogaming will never forget the tragedy experienced when we saw our lands flooded, the four legged relations dislocated and our scaled ones became deformed (accessed online).”

The forestry industry has also played its role in the destruction of the land. In September 2001 a settlement was reached between Canada and Ginoogaming First Nation. The settlement resulted from Ginoogaming’s assertion that in the 1930’s substantially more timber was cut than had been given in the original estimate, that the Crown was aware of this and did not act upon it, that the Crown failed to enforce a six-inch cutting diameter restriction and that the sale of the land to Charles Cox in the 1920’s violated timber regulations (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004).

The literature provides evidence that destruction of the land causes a disconnection between individual and land. Wilson (2003) found that the land is more than just a physical location but is a representation of the physical, symbolic, spiritual and social aspects of a First Nation cultures and their interconnections. These

interconnections occur in many ways. The land not only provides food but medicines such as cedar and sweet grass which Wilson labels as the, “fibre optic cable that provides a direct link to the creator (p. 89). Wilson also discusses the role of hunting and fishing and says that it is, “like a cleansing’ (p. 90), creating emotional benefits because of the social and physical aspects of hunting and fishing.

The happenings at Grassy Narrow provide an example of how destruction and contamination of the land leads to disconnection and subsequently a deterioration of wellness for community members. As a result of industry the community was exposed to mercury (Wheatley, 1997). This resulted in loss of subsistence for the people of Grassy Narrows which transitioned them into a new lifestyle that was less active and less social (Wheatley, 1997). As a result of this new lifestyle, low self esteem from an inability to provide for others, a loss of traditional values (respect, sharing and caring), and hopelessness occurred. This resulted in higher rates of chronic disease, violence, substance abuse, suicide and loss of fitness (Wheatley, 1997).

The contamination of Akwesasne First Nation highlights the important role of food within the relationship of individual and land. In Akwesasne, dams and power stations flooded farmlands and bush land. As a result of the production of cheaper power, industrial activity increases and pulp and paper mills moved in with their toxic waste. Traditional food sources became contaminated and depleted which lead to a high carbohydrate, high junk food diet and diabetes rates that are four times the national average when 50 years prior, these issues were non-existent (Wheatley, 1997).

There is also more at stake besides a decrease in physical health as a result of lower consumption rates of traditional foods. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal

Peoples (1996) asserts that traditional foods and preparation are holistically intertwined with culture, identity and health, serving as contributors to a cultural heritage. For the Inuit the consumption of traditional foods is a way to practice the connection they have with the land and its yields (Statistics Canada, 2001). Thus, food and food preparation not only connects the individual to the land but it also connects the individual to the community and its absence can serve as a further disconnection.

Food can have symbolic meaning, and eating a particular food can aid in producing a certain collective identity. For example wild rice is symbolic of being Anishnaabek (Vennum, 1988). Similarly for Middle Eastern Jewish women they prepare food because it is a way to ensure the connection of their children and grandchildren to a larger Jewish network (Sered, 1988). It is also a way for them to connect with other community members because preparing the food is a way to show that they care for other Jewish people. Lastly the Jewish women prepare bread and bless it and see it as a way to connect other community members with divinities (Sered, 1988). A similar process occurs within Anishnaabe culture, when tobacco is given in exchange for an animal's life. The animal becomes the medium in which this spiritual connection to the land is made. Hunting, food preparation and eating can all be events that create social ties between the individual to the community. Consumption or preparation of a similar food source at a later day can also produce food memories for an individual which reinforce these social ties. For example, within these food memories the individual may recall the social event in which they consumed the food, an outing on which the food was gathered or a conversation with a friend. Vennum (1988) noted that the Anishnaabek people associated the harvesting of wild rice with memories of a traditional camp.

### *The individual and community*

The literature describes various negative internal and external reactions that an individual has to a historical disconnection which in turn serves to further disconnect the individual. Although these internalized and externalized responses can provide a disconnection from the land the literature speaks foremost to the resulting disconnect between individual and community. For example, Waldram and colleagues (1995) describes substance abuse as a way to cope and compensate for loss of social activities in many Aboriginal communities. Various authors, (e.g.: Abadian, 2006 & Turton, 1997), support this claim by presenting the case that traditional activities, which are often social, enforce connection. Battiste agrees stating that when a traditional way of life is not accommodated, and is in fact opposed by Canadian society, alienation and substance abuse can result (Cheah & Nelson, 2004).

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smoleski (2004) present a similar argument, listing addictions as a trait of learned helplessness, which results from the internalization of traumatic events that are out of one's control. Within the context of First Nation peoples the trait of learned helplessness was a result of colonization which the authors have classified into stages of disconnection. The authors also describe learned helplessness as a contagion,

“If the traumatic experience should endure across time and should be applicable across settings, then failure in the present should create generalized expectations for failure in the future. Eventually, via the learned helplessness phenomenon, the trauma enters into the psychological makeup of people. In consequence, even if a person finds herself or himself in a situation where she or he could act and react to outside pressures, she or he fails to make any attempt to do so” (p. 67).

Essentially a disconnection is occurring between the individual and community because the individual shuts themselves out so to speak. Further disconnection can also occur because the traits associated with learned helplessness can act as a traumatic event for others.

Duran and Duran (1995) provide further evidence citing a positive correlation between high amounts of social disintegration of culture and high levels of substance abuse, and a correlation between high levels of traditional interaction, low levels of acculturation stress and low levels of substance abuse problems. Multiple interpretations can arise from this data. Lack of culture and traditional events can result in substance abuse, substance abuse can cause a lack of participation, or it can be an ongoing cycle in which a lack of culture and traditional events (disconnection) causes substance abuse, which in turn reinforces the disconnection. Similar findings occurred in Cheah and Nelson's study. They found that traditional Aboriginal youth drank less than their non-traditional counterparts because they were more connected with their family and community who encouraged compliance with the norm of not becoming intoxicated. In Alkali Lake a healer was brought in to reintroduce the community to traditional healing approaches. This lowered rates of alcoholism as well as other associated social ills such as violence and sexual abuse (Waldram, et al., 2005).

Similarly to substance abuse, lateral abuse plays a dual role in regards to wellness. It is a cause for disconnection but also a result of disconnection. There is an abundance of literature on the role colonization plays in the development of lateral abuse (e.g., Friere, 2007; Duran & Duran, 1995; Hill, 1995). All three sets of authors attribute lateral violence to the internalization of the oppressor. This internalization results in various

forms of self depreciation which is externalized through lateral violence, or what Friere refers to as horizontal violence. Abadian (2006) explains that when an individual experiences a lack of control, helplessness and fear in a traumatic situation they go into a state of crises where they feel betrayed by those in authority. These individuals will often provide themselves with a false sense of empowerment through lateral violence. It is the acts of lateral violence (physical, sexual and emotional abuse), that are a cause for disconnect between the individual and community, and it is the lack of worldview of interconnectedness that provides a space for lateral abuse to occur. This corroborates with Waldram and colleagues' (1995) finding that lack of exposure to traditional culture was correlated with anti-social behaviour because exposure to traditional culture would enforce social behaviour encouraging healthy relationships for wellness.

Intergenerational transfer can promote wellness if the internal and/or external reactions are positive. Antonucci, Jackson and Biggs (2007), found that feelings of intergenerational solidarity and support can reduce the likelihood of mental and physical illnesses that are associated with a low socio-economic status. Arjouch (2007) conducted research on the relationship between health and well-being and intergenerational relations in Arab-Americans in Detroit. Arjouch (2007) found that for older adults, a healthy relationship with their adult children protected against health disparities associated with lower levels of education.

The literature also shows that the relationship between younger and older generations is reciprocal in nature, providing positivism to the younger generation as well. For example Barrios and Egan (2002) studied bicultural identities in Aboriginal women and found that women who early on in their life had received information from



grandmothers or other elderly females were more resilient and connected with their heritage. Furthermore, research conducted by Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) found that young adults who had close relationships with their grandparents had reduced stress about strained relationships with their parents.

Up until this point the term community has been used in its most common form, to make reference to the community members that make up the community. At this time one should note there are two types of community discussed in this thesis. The first is the one defined above and the second type of community is the global community. The global community is the larger community of influence on Ginoogaming. It is predominately influenced by a Western epistemology, and is multi-functional in regards to wellness. The associated Western worldview can create disconnection in various ways, but a connection with the global community can lead to wellness.

Irwin (1996) noted that the polar view of one or the other is an adoption of the Anglo European worldview. In contrast, an interconnected worldview can bridge the gap between differences. The literature shows that if one is able to maintain an interconnected worldview, they can also maintain a connection with the global community, even though grandiose differences appear to exist between communities, because a traditional interconnected worldview provides space for interaction with the global community. Hill (2006) and Connor (1999) both agree that within the American Indian worldview the individual is seen as an extension of the family, community, nation and universe. Among American Indian youth, traditional activities served to strengthen traditional values and pride which provided youth the skills to blend the strengths of their culture with the opportunities of Western society (Lafromboise, Hoy, Oliver & Whitbeck,

2006) instead of alternatively having to deal with the stressors associated with an either or approach which can limit opportunities and wellness.

The literature provides a deeper understanding of how this worldview functions to promote inclusiveness, explaining that within the view of interconnectivity the underlying meanings take precedence over details, appearances and interpretations. For example it is not the teachings of the church but their interpretations of them that was traumatic to Aboriginal peoples (Hill, 1995). The importance of underlying traits opposed to packaging is highlighted in an interview with Douglas Cardinal. He says that Indian people do not see things in regards to race but instead by traits, giving the example that the term for white people is somebody controlled by money. When the interviewer says that he does not think that is always true, Cardinal replies, “That’s right, so lots of white people are Indians (McPherson & Rabb, 1993: 80).” Through this dialogue it becomes obvious how inclusiveness occurs, although individuals and their ways of knowing are different as a whole and are not easily changed, the traits that encompass them are flexible and can be universally relatable.

There are some instances where connecting with aspects of a global community can cause a disconnection between an individual and community. For example one way in which disconnection was incited was through treaties made with members of the global community. Ginoogaming First Nation is governed under Treaty 9 and under Treaty 9, a square kilometre per family of 5 was reserved for First Nation peoples. This land was and continues to be held by the crown for the people of Treaty 9. Thus if a claim were put in for the land it would be against the Federal crown because they hold the legal title (McPherson & Rabb, 1993). Various implications have risen out of Treaty

9 that affect the wellness of community members. The allotment of small individual land base demotes an ideology of collective survival and promotes individuality, and small individual land bases makes personal subsistence difficult. Thus, as a result of Treaty 9 a transition has been made from dependence on the community to structural dependency, for members of Ginoogaming First Nation.

Little evidence exists in the literature to directly tie structural dependency to a loss of interconnectedness. McPherson and Rabb (1993), describe how community dependency promotes connectedness noting that distributing food resulting from bush activities is a way to reaffirm social relationships within the community. In turn, people who do not participate in bush activities can also engage in strengthening relationships by offering hunters meals or a place to stay. One can assume that the welfare system would diminish this system of food distributing, weakening these interconnections within the community. Warry (2000) agrees and states that erosion of mutual support in the community is caused by welfare.

There is a greater abundance of literature on structural dependency indirectly causing disconnection by the role structural dependency plays in creating traits that are associated with disconnection such as lateral violence. Elias (1996) provides an in-depth discussion of the literature surrounding the relationship between social ills and dependency. Essentially Elias (1996) argues that “poverty, dependency, and unemployment are notorious hallmarks of Aboriginal communities, and social pathologies such as abuse, self depreciation and alcoholism are identified as the effects of exactly these socio-economic conditions” (p. 13).

The larger community's perceptions of First Nation peoples can also create disconnection. The Western worldview and its affiliated media can be very influential, and it can be problematic when this view does not provide a space for First Nation peoples and their worldview. Corenblum (1996) explains that the majority group (Western society) acts as a reference group for minorities. Thus, as social identity theory highlights, a positive social identity can be obtained by a minority by leaving their group if deemed undesirable and joining one that is deemed more valuable. This assertion is not only theoretical but exists in praxis as well. For example, Bajovic and Elliot (2006) explain that the media can play an important role in shaping the perceptions and attitudes of pre-adolescents. In a study conducted with grade 8 Cree children it was found that 92.3% picked rap music as their favourite genre of music which is promoted within Western media outlets. The media also influenced their future aspirations and for some of the pre-adolescents it uprooted the pattern of finding role-models within the family and community. Instead, the children wanted to be like media celebrities and heroes. This in turn uproots the connection of individual and local community that was provided by a role model relationship. More currently, Stroink and Decicco (2008) conducted a study with 59 Aboriginal peoples from North-Western Ontario and found that an increased identification as Canadian was correlated with an increased participation in Canadian culture and a decreased participation in Aboriginal culture.

Recall earlier in this review that social theory dictates that individuals will leave their group if it is seen as undesirable. Historically, the Western view of First Nation peoples has been grim. For example, any male Indian who was over the age of 21, who could read and write (English or French), had good moral character and was debt free,

could be enfranchised (McPherson & Rabb, 1993), because those were qualities that were considered to be incompatible with being an Indian. Berkhofer (1978) provides an excerpt from a minister in the Americas to project the perception of the savage and heathen Indian, "They live naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering. There names are as naked as their bodie: They esteem it a virtue to lie, deceive and steale as their master the divell teacheth to them" (p. 19).

It is these negative perceptions of a larger community that are influential in disconnecting the individual from their community. A body of literature is in existence on the internalization of negatively projected images by others of the self. Weaver (2001) combines her thoughts and the argument of Taylor in "Politics of Recognition" to articulate the affects,

"Identity is shaped in part, by recognition, absence of recognition, or misrecognition" 'A person or group of people can suffer real damage. real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.' This misrecognition has oppressed indigenous people and has imprisoned them within a false "Indian" identity" (p. 243).

Barrios and Egan (2002) agree, warning that when individuals identify with their own and dominant culture, bicultural tension is created and it becomes negative when the dominate culture's negative attributions of their culture are internalized. This results in a negative self identity, denying ones own heritage and quarrels on who is Indian (Barrios & Egan, 2002) which results in a disconnection.

### *Present Study*

According to Western measurement of wellness, the current state of wellness of First Nation peoples is below the standards of non-First Nations. For example Armstrong (2001) when comparing socio-economic indicators of wellness found that, “the First Nations communities with the best socio-economic circumstances compare only with the poorest regions of non-aboriginal Canada” (p. 22). As a result new, non-Western ways of understanding need to be acknowledged and applied to promote the wellness of First Nation peoples. One solution which seems appropriate is to use an interconnected worldview (which is common in First Nation populations), and First Nation’s definitions of wellness as a foundation.

Various studies have made an attempt to include First Nations peoples in explorations of wellness but many have failed to provide the underlying essence of what is needed for wellness to occur. Some studies made use of quantitative methods which did not provide an adequate space for the voice of community members which resulted in a knowledge base that was lacking thick rich descriptions and the interpretations of First Nation peoples. Qualitative studies were successful in including First Nation peoples, but were interested in understanding how certain aspects of First Nations affected wellness, instead of gaining an understanding of well-being as a whole.

A closer examination of a worldview of interconnectedness between the individual, community and land can aid in deconstructing colonial frameworks of wellness, as well as constructing more appropriate models. The interconnected worldview can produce spiritual relationships that promote respect, concern and responsibility between humans and between humans and non-human beings which promotes wellness. Factors that connect the individual to community, land and an

interconnected view promote wellness, while factors that cause disconnection jeopardize wellness. There are various studies and rhetoric that examine many of these disconnecting or connecting factors but they have not been examined within this framework for wellness. Thus the research at hand is a useful addition to the current literature base. It adds the voice of Ginoogaming First Nation and an Anishnaabe perspective to the on-going dialogue on the well-being of First Nation peoples. It also aids in filling a sizeable void that exists in the literature in regards to frameworks for understanding First Nations well-being.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *A Community Context*

Ginoogaming First Nation is located approximately 300 km North-East of Thunder Bay, Ontario. The community is a member of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation and is a party of Treaty Nine, also known as the James Bay Treaty, which was signed July 12, 1905 (McPherson & Rabb, 1993). One of the stipulations of the treaty for Ginoogaming was that the government controlled the influx of European traders, trappers, prospectors, settlers, liquor traders and railway builders, which was agreed upon despite the expansionist agenda of the government (Campbell, 2003).

The population of Ginoogaming is 175, which is approximately a 25% decrease in population over the last 5 years (Statistics Canada, 2006). The population is also young, with a median age of 28.5 years, and only 10 individuals over the age of 65 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The land mass is 68.34 km<sup>2</sup>, and the population density is 2.6 per square kilometre (Statistics Canada, 2006). This statistic can be misleading because there is only a small portion of the land that contains housing. There are 55 houses located on the reservation (this number also includes condemned houses), and 45.5% of these houses are in need of major repair (Statistics Canada, 2006). All community members are knowledgeable of English and 145 community members listed English as their mother tongue, while 160 responded that it was the language most spoken at home (Statistics Canada, 2006). Over 66% of community members over the age of 25 have not completed high school and the unemployment rate is 13.3%.



Susan Campbell (2003) in her article entitled, “White Gold” versus Aboriginal Rights’ provides an excellent overview of the history of struggles the community has faced in regards to their land in the 1900’s, and I will refer to this in some length. Despite stipulations, in 1915, 41 acres of land was ceded to Northern Ontario Railway (now Canadian National Railway) (Campbell, 2003). Further development encroached in 1937 when the Ontario government authorized the Hydro Electric Commission of Ontario to store water in Long Lake<sup>4</sup>, and a dam was built illegally. Only 5 years later did the Federal government approve and the project was coined the Kenogami-Long Lake Diversion. At the same time permission was granted for logs to be floated from Long Lake to Lake Superior (Campbell, 2003). After World War 2, the dam and generating station expanded and started supplying Longlac Pulp and Paper (now known as Kimberly Clark) with electricity<sup>5</sup> (Campbell, 2003).

Within a similar time frame, the logging industry was also infringing on Ginoogaming’s territory. The provincial government granted a 21 year lease for crown land to be clear cut, and in 1949 Kimberly Clark and the Department of Indian Affairs signed a logging lease for 27 square miles, over an 18 year period (Campbell, 2003). Then in 1951 Kimberly Clark leased 22 acres of Ginoogaming land, located near their residential area, for a saw mill but due to extreme erosion had to relocate (Campbell, 2003).

In 1969 the Ministry of Natural Resources surveyed the marine life South and North of Long Lake and found seepage from mines, sewage, pollutants from the mill, high levels of mercury in fish and triaenophorus crassus on whitefish. In the 1980’s

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<sup>4</sup> Ginoogaming First Nation is situated close to the banks of Long Lake, and the lake was essential to a traditional way of life.

<sup>5</sup> Ginoogaming First Nation did not receive electricity until the 1960’s (Campbell, 2003).

community members were warned not to eat the fish or swim in the water (Campbell, 2003). In 1975 Chief Gabriel Echum became vocal of environmental detriments and complained of the erosion, and scattered logs in the water, arguing that people cannot launch their boats in the water. After various attempts to challenge the claim, 'erosion that reduced land base' was acknowledged in 1987 (Campbell, 2003). In 1993 a compensation claim was filed against the Federal government, but was dismissed. In 1996 a specific claim report was filed against the Federal government. The argument was that the government ignored their responsibilities as set out in the treaty, and as a result loss of land and a way of life occurred. Burial grounds were destroyed, fish spawning grounds damaged, plant and animal habitats were destroyed and marshy land which resulted from high water levels drowned wild rice beds (Campbell, 2003). In 1998 a \$4.9 million settlement was reached with Hydro Electric Commission of Ontario (now Ontario Hydro). On top of the settlement Ontario Hydro agreed to construct a cultural/healing centre, provide funds to protect the shoreline, post-secondary scholarships, to renegotiate lease of land every 10 years, to manage water levels as close to natural as possible, and to build a turtle shaped monument that is dedicated to the ancestors (Campbell, 2003).

### ***Methodological Framework***

The research method is qualitative in nature and occurs within Ginoogaming First Nation Ontario. My original role was to qualitatively research the effects of the garden on the community's well-being. As time progressed through community comments and observations the research expanded to an exploration of community well-being as a whole. This evolution of inquiry is encouraged by Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef, and

Rutherford who urges researchers to follow community direction on research questions and subsequent research pathways (1996).

A phenomenological approach was utilized. The origin of phenomenology is rooted in the works of Kant, Hegel and Vandenberg (Groenewald, 2004). Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher is seen as the father of the methodology and coined the term phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004). Husserl believed that one cannot be sure about experiences that are not personally experienced and should thus be ignored (Groenewald, 2004).

Phenomenology aims to understand social and psychological phenomena from the people who experience the phenomena (Groenewald, 2004). Thus, the lived experiences of people involved with the research topic are targeted (Groenewald, 2004). In this instance the lived experiences of community members is essential to gaining a greater understanding of community well-being. It has been established that the focus of phenomenology is placed on the lived experiences of the participants, but there is space for the lived experiences of the researcher. Phenomenology holds the belief that the researcher's belief system, which is influenced by lived experiences, cannot be compartmentalized and as a result should be addressed (Groenewald, 2004).

The utilization of a phenomenological approach is appropriate because it has been identified as a method that is compatible with Indigenous peoples (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Phenomenology highlights the importance of the environment and provides a space for culturally constructed meanings to be explored. (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Essentially, the emphasis phenomenology has placed on capturing the essence of the people, the place and overall lived experience, facilitates a wholistic

approach that illuminates Indigenous people's voices. Other methodological frameworks may produce a more fragmented account (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005) that may lose the voice of the participants. Thus, phenomenology provides a means to a greater understanding of the lived experience of Indigenous peoples which is useful to pinpointing changes necessary for improving health (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005).

### *Qualitative Methods Used*

Methods used to collect data included photo-voice, interviews and field notes which were compatible with a phenomenological approach. These methods typically employ in-depth narratives to obtain insight into the lived experiences of the participant from their point of view (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005).

#### *Photo-voice*

Photo-voice can be defined as, “[the] process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders and potential catalysts of change in their own communities” (Wang & Burris, 1997: 369). Essentially what it involves is community members taking pictures on a given topic as a way of non-verbally expressing their thoughts and insights on that topic. Within this research realm, the topic of concern was community well-being. Community members communicated information on factors affecting well-being, how the factors affect well-being and the interconnectivity of factors with photographs developed from disposable cameras.

The development of photo-voice is attributed to Wang, Burris and colleagues who first used the method with rural women in China (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) Photo-voice is a method most often used with vulnerable populations. Many of the village

women of Yunnan have no formal education and photo-voice provides a means for these women to communicate their thoughts on their well-being without presuming that they can read and/or write (Wang & Burris, 1997). Nimmon utilized photo-voice as a tool to examine health literacy among ESL-speaking immigrant women (2007). Photo-voice was an appropriate technique because it enabled a way for these women to communicate despite the language barrier. Thus, photo-voice is an appropriate method to be used with Indigenous peoples because of its ability to address literacy and language barriers which are often present in Indigenous communities. It is also compatible with a phenomenological framework. Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, and Bell discuss that people are experts of their own lives (2004) and with phenomenology the underlying assumption exists that people's lived experiences of a phenomena is the most accurate way to grasp the phenomena's essence.

The ethics of photo-voice is one for discussion. Positively speaking, photo-voice provides a means to address issues surrounding the participants as objects and the notion of 'bad research' that do not benefit the community. Since community members are involved in the research process they are not just an object of research. They can also shape the pathway of the research so that the learned material can be relevant and useful to the community. This method provides respect for the community's autonomy, as well as the promotion of social justice and the avoidance of harm (Wang & Redwood Jones, 2001).

An underlying premise is that community members have an advantage over researchers due to their familiarity with the environment (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). This negates notions of the researcher as the expert. In regards to the participant

as an object, the use of a camera that may otherwise not be accessible allows community members to be pro-active partners instead of passive subjects (Wang & Burris, 1997). The camera also allows the community member to create meaning (Wang & Redwood, Jones 2001) which is historically the researcher's role, and this can be a way to deconstruct the participant as a voiceless object.

The ability to create meaning can be a double edged sword because instead of creating a power imbalance between the researcher and community members, a power imbalance may be created between community members with cameras and those without (Wang & Burris, 1997). In an attempt to reduce the impact on class stratification all community members were welcome to participate in photo-voice. The reasoning behind this was that I, as the researcher, could not control who would want to participate in photo-voice but I was a gate-keeper to who was a candidate to participate. The community members who chose to participate did acquire more power, becoming experts on the community, but all community members had equal opportunity to be in this position.

When an individual takes part in photo-voice they are committing a political act (Wang & Burris, 1997). There is no harm involved in the actual process of photo-voice, but there is always the potential for backlash against a political act. Since harm cannot be reduced in this circumstance, awareness was key.

### *Interviews*

Interviews were approximately 1 hour in length and consisted of two parts. First were general questions on individual and community well-being developed by my co-supervisors and me (Appendix A). These questions were added to build upon

understandings obtained through observational data on how community members define individual well-being, community well-being and the relationship between the two. This section was also developed to provide insight into how the participants viewed themselves within the context of their own community.

The second part was the showing of pictures taken by community members. These pictures were used as a loose interview guideline, which facilitated an informal interview environment. Community members were made aware that veering from pictures was welcomed. Although direct questions were asked by the researcher, many pictures did not have questions attached to them, and were presented to participants, allowing them to provide their own commentary, direction and interpretation. This facilitated a dialogue between the researcher and participants and resulted in interviews that were unique in content and structure. Groenewald (2004) notes the importance of informality during the research process because it allows participants to provide the context in which the themes are to be discussed.

A community context was also established by the pictures. Within their phenomenological framework, Welman and Kruger (1999) discuss forming questions that highlight participants' feelings, convictions and beliefs about the theme being researched. Pictures taken by community members provide a means to ensure the presence of community member's feelings, convictions and beliefs within the interview process.

As a result of lower than expected participation rates in photo-voice, interviews were conducted with community members who did not participate in photo-voice. This may have affected the space for community member's feelings, convictions and beliefs.

The following questions were paraphrased at the end of each interview to those who did not participate in photo-voice as a means of supplementation:

- 1) Out of all the pictures that you have seen during the interview, which ones or one provide the best representation of your individual and/or community well-being?
- 2) Is there anything you have not seen in this interview that you would have taken a picture of?

Before the interview began, participants were given a cover letter (Appendix F), the photo-voice instruction sheet (a means to provide a context to the pictures for those who did not participate in photo-voice; Appendix C), and a written consent form (Appendix B) that was optional. For individuals who did not feel comfortable signing a consent form, I recorded the date and time that oral consent was given. In addition to this, I reiterated that they did not have to discuss any material they felt uncomfortable with, that the pictures were only guidelines and they could veer the conversation in any direction they may wish, and that they had the right to end the interview at any point in time.

The interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder, and with the sound recorder application on a computer used exclusively for research, as a back up method. Participants were aware that they could refuse this method of recording, but all participants agreed. These recordings were transcribed. A small portion of the interviews were of low sound quality and transcription could not occur which resulted in the loss of stray words in some interviews.

### ***Observations***



Neuman (2000) discusses the importance of field notes in qualitative data. They are the backbone of field research data. Three types of field notes were taken: observational, analytical and reflective. Observational notes consisted of descriptions of the phenomena being researched. Analytical notes contained information to gain an understanding of the phenomena and reflective notes consisted of my lived experiences and its influence on the research.

Various scholars provide warning against over analysis of data during the collection and organizational stages (Fouche, 1993; Lauer, 1958), arguing that the researcher's interpretations can cloud the true essence of the participants (Groenewald, 2004; Creswell, 1998). Therefore, observational notes were taken during or shortly after events had occurred and the majority of analytical and reflective notes were written at a later date than the observational notes as an attempt to grasp the truest form of the phenomena.

Originally in the proposal the bulk of my time was to be spent within the community garden, which would imply that the majority of my field notes would be within the garden context. As the community garden unfolded less community participation occurred than had been expected. Community members voiced that they felt a community wellness assessment was in order. Community members described the need to identify factors that influence the community and gather community member's opinions on what they think is important to the community. This led to the formation of new questions. As a result, the need for a larger participation base and newly emerging questions were the motivations behind the primary setting becoming the community as a whole. Observations were made at community events and meetings (examples include

traditional teachings week, community garden meetings, the annual pow-wow, elders meeting, community luncheons and feasts and bingo) as well as within everyday life (examples include 'hanging out at the band office', walking around the community, and visiting with community members).

### ***Role of Researcher***

In phenomenology, context and experience are central to knowing and the knower influences what is known (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Similarly, an individual's biography can influence their actions, perceptions and feelings (Roberts & McGinty, 1995). Thus, I would like to take the opportunity to provide somewhat of a life history for the reader so that any bias I may have consciously or unconsciously introduced into the research can become transparent to the reader. As Behar (1996) suggests, more subjective social science may very well be the most objective.

Firstly, I identify myself as an Anishnaabe woman and am part of Red Rock First Nation. Madan states,

“[A] Native anthropologist has a stake in the nature of his society and that he must therefore become an agent of social change, give a push to history in a particular desired direction, unlike the outsider, he cannot have the luxury of a value free social science” (1982: 61).

Although not an anthropologist per say, not a he, and I do not agree that outsiders are stricken from subjectivity and perform 'value free' social science, the general notion of the quote is what I would like to highlight. If the research is not framed so it is useful for the community it would be research for the sake of research which may be 'objective', but is it ethical (Smith, 1999)?

I grew up in Nipigon, Ontario, which is 2 km west of my reserve, Lake Helen. To provide a context, Nipigon is one hour north-east of Thunder Bay, and two hours south-west of Ginoogaming. Language and ceremony were not part of my family life, but bush life was and currently I am engaged in an on-going process to learn Anishnaabemowin.

I left the community 6 years ago to obtain an undergraduate degree from McMaster University. I graduated in 2006, with an honours B.A in anthropology and minor in Indigenous studies. It was at this institution where I decided my pathway to pursue Aboriginal health research. In 2006 I returned to North-Western Ontario, and made Thunder Bay my residence, as a means to pursue my Masters of Public Health at Lakehead University.

As an Aboriginal researcher one has to be careful not to play the role of the expert because this may deny the voices of community members and promote internal inequality (Jones, 1995). Throughout this research process I have been conscious about this, and have sought to avoid transferring my experiences and analyses of my own life and of my community to Ginoogaming. Although certain issues are prevalent in many First Nation communities due to similar histories of colonization and continued systemic oppression, each First Nations community is unique. The role I have taken which Jones (1995) deems more appropriate is to be seen as aligned with the community instead of as a homogenous cohesive unit.

### *Ethics Approval*

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research conducted is ethical in nature. This research was submitted and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Review Board. I attended an Indigenous Health Research Development

Program (IHRDP) conference on ethics and publishing and this research adheres to IHRDP ethical guidelines.

### *Field Entry*

I was able to become a part of a pre-established community garden project being conducted in partnership by the Lakehead Food Security Research Network and Ginoogaming First Nation which was commencing in June 2007. My co-supervisors, (Mirella Stroink & Connie Nelson) along with a liason from the community had developed the ground work for this new community garden.

On April 24, 2007 a community meeting was held. The meeting served as an information session on gardening and research, a forum for discussion and decision making by the community in relation to the garden, a means to obtain informal consent from community members and a meet and greet. The meeting was attended by elders, the band chief, the band economic development officer, the band manager, a band councillor, a band community health representative and community members. Seedlings which my colleagues and I had planted at the Lakehead greenhouse were presented to the community for the garden.

Due to the historical relationship between First Nations people and researchers, there is often uneasiness when an outsider enters the community. Kowalsky and colleagues (1996) refer to 4 stages of entry into the community: stopping, waiting, transition and acceptance. I acknowledged and respected the community's history and apprehensions by allowing time for these stages to naturally occur. I did not experience the stopping stage, but the waiting stage was ongoing for 3 months. Transitioning occurred in late July with the commencement of photo-voice. By late August I had

developed rapport with community members. Community members felt comfortable with myself and the research, and openly engaged in light-hearted as well as serious discussion. I felt I had reached the acceptance stage and formal interviews began at this time.

I believe community members gave me access to the stage of acceptance for a few reasons. Being an Anishnaabe woman from a nearby community, I was relatable to many community members, sharing similar experiences, humour and having acquaintances in common. As a result of similarities between my own community and Ginoogaming First Nation, my attitude of strangeness was weaker than a non-First Nations person or perhaps an individual from an urban setting. This affected my viewpoint, as one of identification opposed to difference (Behar, 1996) which aids in building rapport with community members. One should note that it could provide a barrier to describing phenomena in observational notes and I remained conscious of this throughout the data collection process.

Kowalsky and colleagues (1996) discuss various traits or circumstance that I found I possessed, that can influence whether a researcher can gain access to the acceptance stage. Firstly is recognition of the community's control, and patience, which I exhibited by the flexibility of research questions, and the grace period before photo-voice and interviews commenced. Secondly is the number of researchers, with the implication that fewer researchers will be more successful. Although there was a larger research team most visits consisted of me or one other colleague and myself.

Integral to the qualitative approach is participation in the community both socially and economically. I attended events within the community, such as Aboriginal day

festivities, a community luncheon, as well as personal invitations for tea. There is limited economic development in Ginoogaming but I did support what was present which consisted of the community bingo and vendors at the annual pow-wow. Lastly, Kowalsky and colleagues (1996) advises that the researcher should be ready to share and make their knowledge accessible. Reciprocity was a concept that I felt was important to the research process. While still maintaining a level of professionalism there was a social exchange; I shared about myself, while learning about others within the community. Intellectual exchange also occurred. Community members shared their expertise on the well-being of the community and a colleague and I produced and taught a research methods workshop for 7 youth in the community.

### ***Sampling Techniques***

Qualitative data (photo-voice, interviews and observations), was collected at Ginoogaming First Nation between April 24 2007-April 15, 2008. Seventeen trips were made to the community between these dates, with each trip lasting within the range of 1-5 days (Appendix B).

#### ***Photo-voice sampling methods***

On June 28, 2007 photo-voice commenced. Ten disposable cameras, a photo-voice instruction sheet (Appendix C), a consent form (Appendix D), A public release form (Appendix E), a cover-letter (Appendix F) and 2 photo-voice forms (Appendices G and H) were given to research assistants. The research assistant's role was to distribute the cameras and other materials to potential participants throughout the community, with the option to take their own pictures, as well as to inform potential participants that

photos obtained from photo-voice would provide the guideline for the interviews and ask for their participation in the interview process.

I returned on July 6, 2007 to collect the cameras for development and less than half were completed. I made the decision to postpone development of the photos and informed the research assistants that I would return in two weeks time. Upon arrival fewer cameras were submitted this time than on the original submittal date. Subsequently, all photo-voice data collection after this event was performed by me utilizing convenience sampling. Sampling occurred until August 19, 2007 and overall 8 cameras were collected. The sample consisted of males and females (n=8), from the approximate ages of 18-50.

***Interview sampling method:***

Boyd (2001) urges that at least 2-10 participants be interviewed to reach saturation in a phenomenological study. Eighteen male and female community members between the approximate ages of 18-65 participated in interviews that were conducted between the dates of August 9, 2007 to December 5, 2007. Each interview was approximately 1 hour in length. Two group interviews were conducted that contained 3 participants each (It should be noted that one participant participated in both focus groups). Thirteen one-on-one interviews were conducted. Six of the eighteen participants had taken part in photo-voice. Twelve of the eighteen interview participants I recruited personally, the other 6 were participants from photo-voice that had been recruited by research assistants.

Aside from the group interviews in which I secured a location, all other interview settings were chosen by participants and took place within the home or the workplace.

I defined a potential participant as anyone who currently resided in the community, worked in the community, or had previously resided in the community but still had ties to the community. Although participants under 18 were allowed to participate in photo-voice none did. After viewing the pictures community members had taken, I decided that the interview material had the potential to be sensitive and discomfoting. Therefore I decided that participation in the interview process would be limited to those who were 18 or older.

Three types of sampling methods were employed: convenience, purposive and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling was used for my initial interviews. These interviews consisted of participants provided by the research assistants and people in the community that I was familiar with through my association with the garden project.

Later, I utilized purposive in order to obtain a wide range of perspectives. I targeted individuals based on age and sex in the community. A large majority of my initial interviews were with females within the community and no elders were present within the sample at this time. Therefore I asked males in the community if they would like to participate.

Elders in the community were not as accessible, so snowball sampling was an appropriate sampling method. In the second phase of interviews, which utilized purposive sampling, I asked community members that had been interviewed if they knew of any elders that may be interested in an interview. At the end of each interview I also asked if there was anyone who participants would like to see interviewed. This question was asked for a means to identify community members that the community thought had important perspectives on the themes. It was also a means to involve the community



within the data collection process since I felt this was not adequately achieved in research assistants' attempts during photo-voice.

### ***Observational sampling methods***

Field notes were collected over a 7 month period from April 24, 2007-December 6, 2007. A convenience sampling method was used. Most observations are from a public setting due to accessibility, but some observations were also made in private dwellings. Observations include events that I was apart of and events where I was a silent observer. The sample includes approximately 50 males and females of all ages. All observations were recorded out of sight of community members, with the exception of events that transpired at the pow-wow. For a day of the pow-wow notes were taken publicly.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

Creswell and Miller (2000), define validity as, the accurate representation of participants' social phenomena realities and the credibility received by these participants. Eight procedures have been identified by Creswell and Miller (2000) to ensure validity: triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying research bias, member checks, prolonged engagement in the field, thick description and external audits. They urge at least 2 of the 8 procedures are conducted.

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I have obtained my data through field observations, photo-voice and interviews. Negative case analysis involves looking for evidence that is disconfirming to established themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I have found that many factors affecting well-being have a dual role (this notion is beyond the scope of this discussion of validity, but will begin to reveal itself in the discussion section). In regards to research reflexivity I have

reflected on and disclosed my biases in a previous section within the methodology chapter. Member checking procedures in which participants review data have also been utilized. On April 14-15, 2008 interview transcriptions were given to participants and a presentation of my interpretation of the data was given in a community forum. Subsequent to this was a discussion period where feedback and questions were welcomed. Creswell & Miller (2000) discuss how some ethnographers stay in the field anywhere from 4 months to one year in a discussion on prolonged engagement in the field. There is no set time agreed upon as prolonged engagement in the field so I will instead just say that I visited the community 17 times over the course of a year.

In terms of collaboration with community members, it was most identifiable during data collection with photo-voice, but was also present in the formation of research questions and through discussions of the interpretations at a community meeting. Part of the thesis process is appointing an outside examiner, this would aid in providing validation in regards to an audit trail where individuals external to the research provide credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Thick rich description which is the description of participants, themes and the setting in rich detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000) was also utilized. Field notes were taken on a day to day basis when in the community. I should note that this was my first experience in field note taking, so at times they provided thick rich description, improving with time, but reflecting on earlier notes some were lacking. Events or actions were written down, but the details that could recreate a vivid image of events were missing. Essentially some initial notes were summaries opposed to rich thick descriptions. Lastly, to fulfill the peer debriefing requirements, which is the review of someone familiar with the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000), a reader with the

department is appointed to review the thesis, a presentation of emerging themes to the public health faculty and fellow students was conducted, various meetings were had with my thesis supervisors and discussion was on going between myself and another researcher within the community.

Throughout the research period, efforts were made to minimize my ecological imprint on the community. I aided in the planting and the harvesting of the garden, acting as a liason to bridge the community with the Lakehead Food Security Network throughout the summer and fall. In addition I was able to transfer skills and knowledge to youth within the community who were hired as research assistants on the garden project, by being a co-instructor and producer of a two day research methods workshop. I accepted an invitation by a co-ordinator of traditional teachings week to prepare a presentation for youth on career choices and community health research, presenting it at the local high school. Lastly, I produced community kitchen packages for Head Start<sup>6</sup> and the health centre, which both host community kitchens. The packages contained two sets of information. The first explained how individuals could conduct their own community kitchen and the second contained recipes with ingredients that could be found in the community garden and surrounding woodland gardens, and methods for storing and processing fruits and vegetables.

### *Limitations*

Despite minimizing efforts, some disruption may have occurred. The interviews conducted dealt with individual and community well-being, and may have provided slight discomfort for some participants.

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<sup>6</sup> Head Start is a government program developed for toddlers and young children.

Secondly, an individual who I was affiliated with was simultaneously conducting graduate research as well. Since the method was quantitative a more intrusive approach had to be taken. Examples are providing food, and cash prizes in exchange for survey completion.

Emerson Fretz, and Shaw (2001) state that community members may acquire expectations of what should be written down when the researcher is taking notes in the community. They may be concerned or even slighted by failure to record an observation or alternatively the recording of an observation that is controversial or sensitive. I began taking notes publicly at the annual pow-wow due to an overwhelming amount of information. I was not met with strong disapproval but sensed some uneasiness from individuals attending the pow-wow, and received questions from visitors as to who I was and what I was writing down. I decided at this point to stop taking notes in public.

In regards to field notes, Emerson and colleagues (2001) also discuss that due to short hands and personal abbreviation systems field notes are often not comprehensible to others. I am guilty of this, but my original field notes have been typed. Although it is not the original, a secondary copy of my field notes is accessible.

Despite being conscious about obtaining a variety of perspectives for the interviews, all but 2 individuals were employed which is not representative of the employment rate within Ginoogaming. There were two reasons for this occurrence. Employed community members were more physically accessible, and were likely to be identified by other community members as individuals they wished to be interviewed. It should also be noted that some individuals were employed seasonally through the community garden project and became unemployed shortly after the interview.

Many of the participants were a part of the community garden project as a paid worker or an owner of a garden box. Thus, this population is overrepresented in the research. There is the possibility that these individuals may have certain traits in common. Community member's participating in the garden project may be more apt to be involved in the community, be outdoors, or feel a sense of empowerment.

### *Explication of the data*

Within phenomenology, findings are displayed in the form of themes. Themes can provide a greater or new understanding of everyday events, practices and skills (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005).

Data analysis was conducted without any software. Data was analyzed through the emergence of themes which is compatible with the methodological framework utilized (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). The following process took place while constructing themes:

First time was spent familiarizing myself with the data, by repetitive reading and listening to recorded interviews. After I felt I captured the overall essence of the data I extracted large passages and sections of the data which would be the workable material to construct themes.

Next I constructed themes, repeated the reading step and reconstructed themes. Themes were constructed by describing passages and events with single or few words. If one of the description words was prevalent it would remain and become a theme. If it was not prevalent it would be incorporated into a theme already established or would be put in a stray word category if the meaning was too dissimilar. After a list of themes was developed I reviewed the themes and categorized these themes into six major themes,

which is a more workable number. Throughout this process discussion was ongoing with my thesis supervisors who challenged my categorizations, and helped in revisions.

As a validity check, I created a power point presentation that I felt captured the essence of the data, and contained main themes. On April 14, 2008 I presented this to the community at the local health centre. Another researcher was also present and presented his quantitative findings on related research. Prior to the presentation posters were disseminated in the community to inform community members about the presentation. Participants that were interviewed were notified directly of the presentation via phone, e-mail or in writing. Five community members attended the presentation which lasted approximately two hours. Two of the five community members participated in a dialogue about the presentation. They both felt that I had adequately captured the essence of the community's lived experiences.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### *Question One: What are community members' perceptions of well-being?*

##### *Wellness begins with a worldview of spiritual interconnectedness among the community, individual and land*

*"I think what's important for community well-being is that we all come together in unity for each and everyone of us to prosper in every direction whether it's gonna be an education, social or even just as an individual. We strive to be successful in life and in order to be successful in life we need everyone to be involved. You know like if I were to open up a store I'm gonna need the community and everyone's well-being because I live with these people you know and we just need to get along you know. Be healthy and happy, for everybody's well-being we need to be strong individuals, strong when we are together."*

*"Like to me the community should be a big family."*

*"There are too many leaders, no Indians"*

*"I guess that's the biggest difference between now and a long time ago, now everybody sees you on your own. You can be hanging and they aren't going to come and help you and I guess our community has got to get back to that."*

*"To me that [the drum] means the circle means like the whole community to be like one. To be a whole person, being one like the circle. To keep it going and not just stop and then the dream catcher, just follow your dreams, the dreams of the community. For me I see a lot of big changes, before people used to be together and used to be one and now it's kind of for themselves, all separated and different. It's kind of hard to get people back together, so the community can heal so they can start to make it better."*

*"The community has to grow as unity as one to promote well-being, promote wellness in the community, because if the community doesn't get involved then the youth suffer, the elder suffer and the whole population suffers."*

*"I think it would be hard for me to stay healthy in an unhealthy community because I think I would either you do or you die thing."*

*"My own well-being I look after my kids, my family, my parents, my brothers and my community members."*

*"You can heal if your community is strong but if the community is not strong it tends to reflect individuals."*

*“You need to be well inside yourself and try to live your life as balanced as possible in order to contribute better to a community. So being whole yourself before contributing to the wholeness of the community.”*

*“I myself need from the community, and what the community can give back to me. I think that’s pretty much for them and them for you.”*

*Picture portraying a traditional way of life through the prospector tent and outside cook station behind the tent (Figure 1).*

*Picture of a storm cloud coming over Ginoogaming territory (Figure 2).*

*Picture of the sun setting on Long Lake when the water is calm (Figure 3).*

*Picture of a windy day and rough waters at Long Lake (Figure 4).*

*Three community members felt that bad weather during the pow-wow was occurring because of substance use and lack of unity in the community. It meant the spirits were not happy.*

*A community member who is employed in a position that provides helpful services to the community makes himself open to mentoring youth in the community after work hours.*

*The loss of past ways, including woodland gardening, and wild rice harvesting was acknowledged at the community garden meeting as a factor that was affecting the well-being of the community. This was linked to diabetes.*

*“We [as a people] love the outdoors. That’s what I believe.”*

*“I like sleeping out at camp, and I used to have a trailer, but I like tents better because you are right on the ground.”*

*Some community members collect food for the community, “there’s about eight of us that go out every time there’s a change in the seasons like with respect to fishing...we go out and we harvest lake trout at a particular time, pickerel, spawning times you know, our traditional customary times that we go out and gather food, the moose we do it about three times a year, the geese you know once a year.”*

*“When I first sobered up, I’m walking in the bush and I see this big tree, branches way out. Wow I say what a beautiful sight. I wish my grandfather was here. Then a voice comes to me and says, ‘grandson I’ve been trying to tell you that all your life, that’s what I’ve been trying to tell you.’ So lots of times you can’t see the forest. You can’t see the tree because of the forest. When I want to be alone that’s where I go...a little square of one foot, they all get along. Roots are all like that yet they all get along with each other. That’s what the bush teaches me.”*



***A world view of interconnection leads to respect and hope for individual, community, and land***

*“You see the kids with the fish and their eyes poked out and they’re hanging up there full of rocks, and the fish there is no respect for that fish. Like it’s meant for a reason, why they are swimming in our waters for people who need, but you can go to the store and buy fish, everyone can go to the store and buy a fishing rod. No connection with kids with the land, the teachings nothing.*”

*Potatoes from the community garden were used during the potato dance competition at the pow-wow. After the competition was done the youth were smashing the potatoes.*

*“The youth are not paying much attention to the land now because it’s just being destroyed. It’s going against our beliefs; you’re supposed to respect Mother Nature you’re supposed to not just act like a leech on a fish. You know you’re not supposed to take it for granted so to speak, it’s all an intriguing system that supplies oxygen for us to breath all the foods that we eat, the plants, the vegetation the medicines that are out there and you don’t see that interaction anymore because people don’t care anymore, they’re just seeing it as a commodity to create wealth.”*

*“The only unhealthy thing I think about is when people take more than they need, and you hear a lot of stuff about that like people overdoing like fishing and when they spawn going to catch fish they always take more than what they need cause it’s all about greed.”*

*“My dad taught me the bush, taught me to respect the laws of the land, the animals, the birds, the fish. My dad taught me that.”*

*In regards to high nicotine consumption levels an elder said, “There is no respect for tobacco.”*

*“Water for me means respect, you learn to respect it, it gives you life but it can also take away your life. A lake for me you have to, for me a lake, water they all have a spirit so you have to talk to that spirit ask them to be kind.”*

*“The elders came to eat and there was nothing there. It’s a lack of respect; it’s lost. The elders and respect for the elders.”*

*“You don’t feel proud of your community when you see broken stuff just lying around. You know collecting mold and broken houses. You don’t feel proud of your community. Like why should you have respect for your community when it looks like that?”*

*One community member was disappointed and frustrated at the turn out of one of the initial group interviews. She felt people did not take the research seriously because they did not really see the larger picture of how the program could be good for the community.*

*“He [woman’s child] would rather stay inside than play around and hang around with the little guys outside who don’t do anything, or do stuff or talk bad...I am trying to prevent my kids from seeing stuff like that and I don’t want them going around where there are people doing things like that. My kids don’t even leave the house. It’s not that I don’t want them to leave the house, but they know enough not to go around people like that.”*

*“Someone who does drugs or pills, all that kind of things, I wouldn’t even allow my kids to go near that person, no you’re not joining that youth group you know. I would never allow my kids to join stuff like that you know. I know there are some parents who won’t allow their kids too, and then they will have that 5 or 6 kids that will be there because they are into that.”*

*“I guess what’s unhealthy is the acceptance. It tells me that our community we don’t care.”*

***Interconnectedness, respect and hope promote wellness of the individual, community and land***

*“I feel connected to my dead relatives, I feel good when I go there [to the monument].”*

*An individual discussed how he is a recovering alcoholic because of the ‘power of the circle’. At a pow-wow, prayers were given to give him the strength to fight his addiction and he has been sober ever since.*

*“We had good weather this pow-wow because lots of people kept that stuff away. Like usually every year it rains bad on us because people are using drugs and alcohol.”*

*A boy stole a sacred pipe and broke it. The pipe was connected to a drum and as a result when the pipe was recovered a ceremony had to be done to separate it from the drum and it was buried. The owner of the pipe explained that when the pipe went missing high winds and rain began because of its separation from the drum.*

*A man and his friend were in a trapper’s cabin and thought that they had seen somebody outside, but when he looked he could see no snowshoe prints in the snow. Thinking nothing of it they went out trapping and a storm came in, making for terrible winter conditions. As a result they both fell through the ice. His grandfather told him if your feet are warm you will be okay, so he ripped apart a blanket and tied it to his feet along with the hood of a parka to make moccasins. They carried on and within one spot in the bush it was warm. They stayed there feeling the warmth all around them until they were ready to move on. They made it to another cabin and were safe. He was fine because he had followed his grandfather’s advice but his friend was shaking from the cold and needed to be cared for. The man said that the man at the window was the trapper’s spirit telling them not to go out in the first place. This is why no foot prints were present. The*

*trapper's spirit also provided warmth in the one spot to help them survive after they ignored the initial warning.*

*"It's the mentality of trying to be like mainstream society, a lot of people don't take much pride in being Aboriginal...they do want to have a cigarette and think it's cool looking like a rap guy on T.V smoking away...basically I remember with our older people it used to be something more or less you were supposed to share with the spiritual world and for giving like when you take down an animal, tobacco is used in offering and also just for spirituality."*

*"That's where I feel good, when I go in the bush, I feel happy, my spirits just up every time."*

*"I learned to just enjoy nature, just by going for walks in the bush, or setting snares, trapping you just listen to nothing which is nice, you know your mind is at peace and you don't feel like anything can bother you, you feel like nothing can harm you, you basically, you're at ease with mother nature"*

*"Some families you can see in how they dress, in their eyes, in their faces, the hopelessness. In others you can see some hope and in others you can see the affects of the past."*

*"They're depressed [community members], the state is depressed. It's more like they gave up."*

*A woman shared a time when she tried to introduce change to the community, "I was trying to talk to this one woman, trying to share some ideas with her. She's the same age as I am. She said why don't you just leave it like this. Like I didn't bother pushing because she wasn't ready for me."*

*In regards to the delay of the forest guardian program, "It's just like everything else in the community. People have ideas but never carry them out."*

*"There are all kinds of ideas out there it's just people have to use their imaginations and motivation, which becomes difficult because of the past histories. A lot of our kids find they're not motivated because of that sense of loss, that sense of loss of hope, hopelessness...and resign themselves to just being on the reserve on welfare and I've even had kids say to me, 'I'm going to quit school and go on welfare.' What's wrong with that picture?"*

*In response to the affect on well-being of a picture of an individual lying in bed, "They're missing a good day"*

*"There's no one in the community I can spill my beans to or cry to, or go through that process, that's what makes it harder to heal."*

*“[We should] not be accepting of people yelling around and busting beer bottles on the street. We shouldn’t be accepting people fighting at 2-3 o’clock in the morning we should be in an uproar. If we are not accepting that then we will become where you can go for a walk, you go for a week, you could leave your axe there and nobody would touch it. Maybe somebody would come and take it but they would bring it back cause they wanted to use it, but they would always bring it back.”*

*“I guess what is unhealthy is the acceptance. It tells me that our community we don’t care for it. We should be demanding that these homes be fixed. I guess that’s what the big difference between now and a long time ago.”*

*“When you’re depressed I don’t think you eat, you don’t eat as healthy as you should be, you don’t function normally, you don’t exercise and depression plays a big role there too.”*

*A community member in an interview discussed that before substance use was prevalent within the community there was a lot more socializing.*

*A male discussed how he loved his community but was unable to live there because if he did he would be influenced to start drinking again.*

*A male left the community because he was frustrated with the lack of change that was occurring in the community despite his efforts. He was stressed out and worn out and knew it was his time to leave.*

*“Rezzed out to me means here I am you change me. That is it, dead end. Here I am like take it or leave it; don’t wake me up because I might have to change.”*

*A female in the community discussed her frustration with the lack of change in the community and felt it was her time to leave.*

*A male in the community felt that time went by too slow at home, and that he needed to heal but that it could not happen at home.*

*A male in the community left to pursue an education, but due to circumstances had to come back to the community a few days a week. He had good marks, but once he had to start coming home he said his marks declined because he was unable to complete his work in the community. He did not finish his schooling and struggles with alcohol.*

***Wellness is understood holistically, to include the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental, and their interconnections***

*“Yourself as a whole person, being healthy...to have harmony, to have spirituality, to be physically fit, to be emotionally ready for anything that comes at us.”*

*“Well-being, of course it has to start with the types of foods that you eat and spirituality and physical fitness, your family plays a big part in your well-being also.”*

*“Well-being means taking care of myself, my health, my culture, all my beliefs, taking care of me.”*

*“Your foundation is your cultural identity. If you don’t have that then you’re kind of lost sometime, and the way it’s being raped right now there’s no respect, lack of respect. The well-being does depend a lot on your cultural background.”*

*“I feel lifted [when I hear the drum], makes you feel good, makes you want to dance.”*

*“I think the first time I heard a drum it went right through me and I learned about that at the right time in my life. I was comfortable enough not to turn my back on it.”*

*A man discussed how he felt incomplete and could not put his finger on it but there was something missing in his life. He was dancing at a pow-wow and a man came up to him and presented him with eagle feathers, and he felt complete.*

*“Well-being to me is not just physical well-being but being healthy emotionally, mentally, spiritually and taking care of all those areas in your life and living in balance, being as balanced as you can.”*

*At the initial community meeting community members from various positions within the community were present including elders, chief and council members, economic development officer and the band community health representative.*

*At the community meeting the link between diabetes, wild foods and the loss of culture and traditional knowledge was established*

*In a discussion on positive changes to well-being that could occur from the community garden, physical improvements were addressed first. An increase in healthy eating and physical activity, and a decrease in diabetes were thought to occur.*

*“When we eat too much junk food then we tend to gain too much weight and that’s the same thing with children too.”*

*[Well-being is] “Being healthy, staying active.”*

*“I recall some of our youth back when I was younger, and I think there was only one obese kid out of maybe 20 of us, but now it’s like 2-3 fit kids.”*

*A man recalls that when he was younger there was a man who lived till 118 years, and carried a canoe on his back until he was 100. He told of the decrease in life expectancy. His father lived till 80 and his grandfather had only died ten years prior to that.*

*"I do have an illness, arthritis. I'm in pain everyday. I sort of try to make myself healthier, try to stay away from drugs and doctors cause they're not really healthy."*

*Two women discussed how they both had lived with diabetes for 15 years.*

*A woman told of how her daughter at a very young age passed away from diabetes.*

*A woman discussed how her well-being had recently suffered because she had just been diagnosed with diabetes.*

*Community members injected themselves with insulin. I witnessed this on several occasions in a home setting.*

*"That's the arbour, that's good well-being right there. Like to me the pow-wow that's once every year we should have more though."*

*Elders wanted the community garden located somewhere that had spiritual significance. The pow-wow ground was chosen as the location of the community garden because it is a sacred place and had been blessed by previous elders.*

*When a young boy was crying because he had gotten a stone thrown at his head, another young boy brought a medicine bag and put it on his head to calm him.*

*"I guess well-being it looks like a clean area but getting down to where we had logging out of this lake, it polluted our lake a little bit to affect our lifestyle of fishing and I know some members of our community don't go fishing because of that reason."*

*Community members felt the garden could benefit well-being because it could aid in regaining traditional knowledge and traditional foods and herbs such as sage, sweet grass, beans, potatoes, corn and berries into community member's lives.*

*[Well-being is] "Praying"*

*[Well-being is] "Being in your right mind"*

*[Well-being is being] "Okay with yourself"*

*[Well-being is] "Keeping your mind going"*

*[Well-being is] "Emotionally ready"*

*"To do your physical activity and be in your right mind. If you're not in your right mind you're not going to be doing any activities."*

**Question Two: What impedes and enhances community members' well-being?**

***Disconnection among the community, individual and land impedes well-being and connection among community, individual, and land enhances well-being***

***Contamination and destruction of the land***

*Picture of the local mill which is located beside Ginoogaming First Nation (Figure 5)*

*Turtle monument erected in memory of graves lost from hydro development*

*Elders meeting on protecting traditional lands from the forest industry*

*A community member discussed how he believed that the underground of the reserve has been mined.*

*A community member discussed how a railway runs on their traditional land but no compensation is received. Logging trucks also travel on their land and they do not receive any compensation for passage or indirect economic advantage such as community members employed to drive the trucks, or as the supplier of fuel for transports.*

*“Like what the heck happened to the bush, the real bush? I used to go camping down that end you know and there is no bush there anymore it’s all cut out.”*

*“What you don’t see there is that nice shoreline, when I was growing up they never used the power so much down south but now they need the power so this is a reservoir lake. This lake, all the water rushes into Hayes like and supplies the power to the hydro dam so in there you don’t see a shoreline. When I was growing up there was a shoreline, you could walk a good 20 feet sometimes, and then you used to be able to go swimming and take walks on the beach. There’s beach all over here, you don’t see it though it’s so flooded. That’s probably why you don’t see anybody swimming there or you don’t see a shoreline. So with the demand of mainstream society again, it affects our way of life too, the way we grew up, the kids don’t get to enjoy that no more, I can’t take my boys down for a walk down by the lakeshore.”*

*“You don’t see the berries too that used to grow along side the shore. Used to have this, I can’t pronounce how you say that in English and you used to have 4 different kinds of berries that used to grow along the shore, just like little apples, and there were some that were purple red. Used to bite it and it was sour, wild cherry like, and there was another one that looked like a little apple. You bit it and you could actually here the crunching. There was a seed in the middle. So you know I never saw those the past 10 years I swear to God I never saw them that’s because there’s such a big demand of power down south.”*

*“When I was a kid I used to swim everyday at that lake and fish at the bridge, and be happy to bring home the fish, but then stories about the logs being in the water. Skin was*

*starting to change and stuff like that. I don't know just kind of told us not to swim or fish in the lake anymore, but they never gave us a complete reason why. It kind of did stop the fun later. Harm on the bridge, once you jump off the bridge there's sharp sticks, just scary stuff like that."*

*"I know some of our community members don't go fishing because of that reason [pollution] and stuff with the near by mills...that lifestyle was just there to create revenue for the nearby mills where the First Nation was not compensated for any of that because water is part of life and trees are part of life, for hunting areas and that, harvesting. It was abused by companies who, came and left."*

*"[there's not too much fishing] because a long time ago hauling logs away from here, and that was the log transportation from here to Terrace Bay...they thought and they did find some worms, so they tend to turn our diet."*

*Many (not all), community members stated that they do not eat fish from the local lake because it is polluted. A local saw mill used to ship their logs on this body of water.*

*At an elders meeting the MNR fish guide was a topic of discussion, and elders were concerned about the limit of fish that individuals were able to consume at a safe level in local lakes. Especially the levels allowed to be ingested by pregnant women.*

*A community member discussed how the knowledge he learned from his father on moose hunting is no longer relevant. The hunting patterns were passed down to him are no longer applicable because the moose aren't where they used to be due to clear cutting.*

### **Cultural conflict vs. cultural connectedness**

#### **Monetary value vs. Traditional values**

*There are limited employment options on the reserve. In response to the affect of the local mill on well-being a participant said, "It's our bread and butter for our home."*

*"Right now we have limited economic, but we do have the mill which is ours, we are in partnership with them so we do have that benefit for our people to work there if they choose."*

*"Since its partnership with Ginoogaming it gives more people the chance and opportunity to have a job and to have a good paying job...it's good money, and I hear all the trees have to get cut down and fighting for trees. They're taking our forest and fighting over forest."*

*"The corporate world is taking over, it's kind of eroding our cultural beliefs, our spirituality...we just get crumbs basically, economic development. Sure there are partnerships, a lot of times they use us and basically we're just doing the same things they do, just raping the resources from the land. We're not in a position to go off and*



*sustain ourselves economically. The treaties don't give us enough power to go out into the real world and try to make a buck for the community."*

*"The bureaucratic system has to be changed in the way Indigenous people are received and how we do have our own systems our own culture, our own spirituality, our own traditions and they need to be respected just like any other cultures. So if I could change something it would be that right there, because right now when we live together so close like this it reflects mostly on mainstream society like the cities. Like if we were spread out a little bit, create own time and space, you have more time to reflect and then you're not so worried about what is going on in the outside world.*

*"We were dancing for ourselves you know and dancing for the pride that we had when dancing, but now people dance for money. I don't like it at all it's small kids learning that to go dance you'll get money."*

*Youth crowded elders when collecting honorariums, and could not wait patient but ran to the money.*

*One female youth told another that she lied about where she was from so that she could get a larger honorarium.*

*The annual traditional pow-wow that Ginoogaming has was not as busy because many people from the pow-wow circuit went to a large competitive pow-wow in Thunder Bay.*

*A woman discussed how when she was camping at the pow-wow grounds for the pow-wow, another group of people came and said that they were camped in their spot."*

*"More community members have to learn that not everything is paid for in life. They got to learn to volunteer to make things better for everybody not just them."*

*"I went to a pow-wow when I was younger and all we did was dance and no one got paid and it was small and now it's like \$50, 000 to run a pow wow."*

### ***Christianity and Traditionalism***

*"Everyone needs faith, some sort of faith. It doesn't matter where you get it from."*

*"I can go to mass on Sunday morning and smoke a pipe Sunday afternoon...my grandfather told me when I was young, you're going to pick things up here, you're going to pick things up there. If you don't need it leave it there, if you need it take it and use it."*

*"I balance it myself you know. I'm a church goer too and I try to practice the traditional way too."*

*At the pow-wow grounds, the contents of a woman's tent included a bible, a game boy and a dream catcher.*

*"A lot of people choose not to go any way, maybe because it's confusing or because they don't understand. I know from myself personally growing up in the Catholic church I never understood a damn thing until now as an adult, I understand what the priest is saying now, what he was doing, he was teaching us about life."*

*"I think it's confusing for the young ones, even myself I find it confusing. Should I be a Catholic or you know go traditional, and how would I do that? I really don't know."*

*"I think they [the youth] want to be connected to something. A lot don't know they know they're Native but they don't know why they do these things, why the four corners, why is the arbour there, why are the drums, what's the reason for the drum, why are they singing, why is tobacco used, why is that dance, you know all these questions, I think we need to teach our kids about these things."*

#### ***Expected, desired and realistic self-image***

*Many young males in the community listen to hip-hop music and dress in labels and styles associated with hip-hop culture.*

*A youth was dressed in urban wear and was listening to hip-hop, according to a family member he had taken no previous interest in bush life, but on this day decided to learn how to chop wood. His family was surprised and happy but a family member commented how city boys don't chop wood.*

*"I rather see us slim and trim like the pictorials on T.V like you ever watch, let's say, Dancing with Wolves, do you see a fat Indian there? They perceive us as being lean and muscular at times, like a Tarzan type person, like the Indigenous peoples of Africa, the Amazon people. You don't see no fat person in there, it's because how they were brought up. I wouldn't mind if we could go back to that."*

*"It's cost and advertisement. It's the thing to be cool to eat all this junk food, soda pops. I lecture my children quite a bit I don't like to see them grabbing all this preservative food for lunch."*

#### ***Substance abuse vs. substance use***

##### ***Substance abuse***

*"I think it is a big block [of] the hurting."*

*"[it's] getting the next best thing that can numb them, the alcohol numbs for a little while till you wake up the next morning, where prescription drugs can numb you longer."*

*Two youth were getting high on the pow-wow grounds*

*“They had regalia making up at the clinic. These girls they were taking material and selling the outfits after, for pills you know.”*

*“With more and more drugs that go around in this community it’s not healthy for our pow-wows. Before our pow-wow used to be big where we had 10-12 drums and now there were maybe 4 or 5 drums this year.”*

*A woman in the community explains that she has been sober for 14 years and subsequently has been married for the same period of time. They have a happy marriage because they do things together; they help their community and family. She said she “would like to see more sharing and healing in communities because a result of addictions is that it breaks up the unity of the community. It kills communities.”*

*More than one community member was seen intoxicated by themselves in mid-day in the community.*

*Woman said that Aboriginal Police Services (APS) told her to use the prescription drugs prescribed to her for her personal use only.*

*In a participatory exercise where youth at the local high school conducted a mini community wellness assessment one of the issues identified as plaguing the community was drug use. Students showed low participation rates through out the exercise, but when this topic was introduced conversations flourished. Students named a wide array of drugs, both legal and illegal, and were knowledgeable of street names and standard terminology.*

*“A lot of them [teenagers] are into pills today, I wouldn’t lie about that. It’s getting pretty bad”.*

*A community member had this response when asked what could occur to further hinder the well-being of the community, “I can’t think of anything that can make it worse, the community I don’t want to see it go any worse than what it is now. When I see it to be good, to change for the good, people to get along more and all the alcohol, the drug abuse, the main things that are happening right now, with not only the adults, it’s coming down to the kids and It’s going down to the kids and it’s going. The age level is going down and down and closer to the children, they’re not just teenagers anymore. I don’t know it’s worse.”*

*One elder felt, “the caring and the love in the community is gone. It wasn’t like that before...I think the alcohol did a lot of damage and the drugs. Lot of I guess abuse started with the alcohol and drugs and that’s really sad to say, and that’s where most of the changes, drastic changes started happening.”*

*"I don't really like what I see around here, it's depressing for me anyways...drugs and alcohol."*

*"You know people are more into their drugs and don't want to look after their own kids and just let their kids wander around and do whatever they want...I notice there are lots of families that don't look after their kids because there are too much drugs in the community. Like I look around at the garbage that is lying around, kids are not home and just throw garbage on the ground."*

*"They [the youth] are into drugs and all that and they don't care about the history of the reserve anymore."*

*Currently nicotine consumption is high in the community.*

### ***Substance use***

*"Go back into the old days. My mom never spoke English or drank or smoked and she always spoke Ojibway."*

*An individual routinely struggles with alcohol abuse. Abstinence is possible when traditional responsibilities are required such as participating in the pow-wow or fire keeping.*

*In a group interview the participants felt there was a connection between elders who were traditional and nicotine consumption. Elders who they felt were traditional did not smoke cigarettes. In a one-on-one interview a participant who was asked the same question was not sure if there was a connection.*

*"They smoke a pipe but they don't inhale it though, they blow it back out."*

*"Sometimes it's a way to escape, let things go, otherwise they wouldn't of created and god wouldn't of created the magic mushroom for us to take in once and a while in our spirituality."*

### ***Lateral abuse***

*"Everyone has to learn the model of walking in another person's moccasins. Don't judge them by who they are, you can't just judge a person by their face and by their first impression you have to walk a mile in their moccasins. You have to see how they are, but I think the well-being would be a lot better if we were to not judge each other as much."*

*"They look down at you, criticize."*

*"Like say you were walking down the street having a good day, there is always someone that will bring you down...they criticize people for the way they dress, the way they act, not what they know or who they are."*

*"How much money"*

*"Yeah or how much money they have"*

*"They don't look at you for the person you are."*

*"I don't know if you heard about that crab syndrome, one is trying to get out of a hole and everyone else is pulling you down. That's what happens cause someone is trying to dig themselves out of that hole they have been in and people try to bring you down. They call your business down or don't support it or they say bad things so other people will get discouraged of coming there. We say you're just trying to be too good but they don't understand you're trying to better yourselves and others around you."*

*A female discussed how she felt she could not be herself around people because if so judgement would be passed on her, and she feared being labelled an apple Indian (an apple Indian is a slang term that originated because of the colouring of the apple. The skin of an apple is red and the inside of the apple is white. It alludes to a First Nations person (red), who 'acts' Caucasian (white)).*

*A female discussed how when she was married she would stay at home engaging in household work. She would clean the entire house and be pleased with her efforts, but when her husband came home he would ask her what she did all day. It was at this point everyday where she would stop feeling good about herself and the stride of her walk would change to a slump. She felt that a lot of people in the community walk around this way.*

*"Don't put people down that's what I say when they talk about my family...what they got they earned."*

*"There is a lot of jealousy, envy when somebody does do something successful, they don't want to say right on, how did you do that? Can't ask for help."*

*"I've gotten most of my pats on the backs from white people, not so much from my own community. I feel the respect but they won't come out."*

*"I think the community is supportive, its just role models are there, they got to come back to the community and tell them what they did."*

*"I'm not used to being traditional in front of my people, I feel intimidated or someone might be jealous of me, I want to keep something secret."*

*"They're scared to open up, it's confidentiality. This person comes to you and they can't trust and trust has been lost in this community for years and years and it's time to regain that trust with people. Make them feel safe to open up and come. That's why nobody wants to come because they don't want other people to know what's going on in their life, they're scared, and that's what keeps them bottled up after and makes their own situation worse, because they don't have the proper resources."*

*"Yeah people talk that's why I struggle here, talk about problems or you almost have to be secretive or you have to go to Thunder Bay where no one knows you."*

*"It was nice and good when we were teenagers living on the reserve. Like no bad things happen you know, but now more and more bad things happen. You know violence where kids fight each other."*

*A male youth punched another male youth in the nose because they were fighting for their place in the food line at a traditional feast.*

*At the pow-wow one male youth threw a rock at another male youth's head after they had been fighting. A separate male youth commented on this situation and said, "if that was me I would have thrown one right back at his head."*

*A female youth was not getting along with another female youth and commented; when someone hurts me I want to hurt them back even worse.*

*Two houses were burned down completely, leaving only the charred frames of houses and a third was attempted.*

*"I wake up like I'm burning...there are still more houses that are up...they will do it again and somebody will get hurt in there, that is my fear."*

*"It's too bad the kids destroyed them (condemned houses), and that's the people in the community."*

*A male in the community was in an abusive relationship, and has scars from a violent attack.*

*A man's car window was smashed by a relative because he did not have any pills or other narcotics to give to him.*

### ***Intergenerational transfer***

*"[The] major problem with Ginoogaming is unhealed people trying to help others and having kids. The blind leading the blind. People having kids at a young age. An elder said there are stages of life and that sometimes people skip them. Adolescence is important and part of the reason people are screwed up, is that the order is screwed up. Adults are acting like adolescents, partying, and the kids skip adolescence because their parents have addictions so they have to look after kids or themselves."*

*"I think they're lost [the youth]. Somewhere from the elders to the youth, somewhere in between there something went wrong."*

*An elementary school boy shared how he had no money to spend at the pow-wow because he lent money to his dad because he wants to make his dad happy.*

*“Educating young parents to good parenting can decrease the use of drugs and alcohol here.”*

*“I guess it comes from the family. A lot of people have problems but they still never dealt with...they don't even realize they're teaching that to their kids, their grandkids.”*

*“The younger generation watch from us that they're in society, we have to be somewhat of a role model to the younger generation out there, and we have to somehow benefit in our ways from getting our teachings from people that are older than us too.”*

*“I think relying on the government is just not helping them promote their lifestyle, getting up day to day and going to work, like these people are on social assistance and a lot of it is family upbringing, family values, why should I work when my dad never worked and he made it through life.”*

*“It's coming down to the kids [drugs and alcohol], the age level is going down and down and closer to children, they're not just teenagers anymore.”*

*“It [the bingo hall] was supposed to be our gymnasium as teenagers, as kids we had equipment, sporting equipment in the community in the hall. But then meanwhile where's the chance to use it?, We had to clean up all the chairs, take them down put them back up so we can play floor hockey.”*

*“It can be partly rebelling you know, trying to get attention or something, a cry for help.”*

*“[youth] would become better role models [if they participated in bush life], not for themselves but for other youths too.”*

*“I showed him [youth], how to sew it [beadwork keychain], you put one bead and you make your design and he really took interest and I didn't think he would. He kept going, he was really proud of that stuff.”*

*“He was raised in the bush, he was always going hunting and fishing and trapping. Now he's learning his sons.”*

### ***Lack of opportunity to connect vs. connection facilitated***

#### ***With community members***

*“They [the youth] want to be taken care of while they're playing, even though they are not playing in a safe area where there are things that can be broken.”*

*“Their parents won't pay attention to them so maybe someone will pay attention to them if they go and do stuff like that, vandalize stuff.”*

*"We don't have nothing. It's so isolated, we don't have stores, restaurants, where people are busy. Do stuff."*

*Some community members felt vandalism was a result of boredom. In response to why youth spray painted on condemned houses a community member commented, "they're bored, angry, angry and bored".*

*Some kids parents don't pay attention to their kids, their kids are all over the place all the time or don't buy their kids anything so their kids have nothing to do so they go and do reckless things just to keep themselves busy and occupied."*

*Youth will hang out by the band office because it is where the most traffic in the community is.*

*"It's a lack of facilities, to promote anything to get them out of their residence to actively participate in things that they want to participate in. I bet there's lots of people in the community that want to do different things like come out swimming."*

*"I'd like to see more...a hall that can be utilized for sporting events, a swimming pool for teachings kids how to swim...there's nothing here for that so that's why they kind of sit at home.*

*"It [youth rallies] gets them [the youth] away from drug and alcohol abuse...it gives them more knowledge towards a healthier well-being, than actually staying home doing nothing."*

*"Feasts usually bring the community together. When you eat you're happy."*

*Picture of the cook shack that is located at the pow-wow grounds and used to prepare community feasts during traditional teachings week and the annual pow-wow (Figure 6)*

*"It [the pow-wow] does bring the whole community together because to run a pow-wow it doesn't take one person it takes everyone."*

*"I enjoy seeing my community come together [at pow-wow time]. Some people travel far, near and far we come. Sometimes it's the only time you will see people from the community."*

*Even though community members are in walking distance to the pow-wow grounds they will routinely camp during pow-wow weekend and the days leading up to and after. People are seen walking around from camp site to camp site, having breakfast with each other and laughing.*

*"It's strictly pow-wow where everybody has their mind, no conflict I guess during pow-wow really."*



*"We have community feasts and that's well-being too. Everybody comes together and everyone has a big smile on their faces."*

*Picture of the arbour, where dancers, drummers and spectators gather during pow-wow time (Figure 7)*

*"That's part of our tradition, prospector tents, they're nice and big, can fit a whole family in those."*

*When there is a sacred fire there is a fire keeper, who is not allowed to leave the sacred fire unattended. The individual day and night is outside with the fire, unifying the individual and the land. Other community members will take on the role of taking care of the fire keeper because they cannot leave the sacred fire. Examples include going to keep the fire keeper company in the middle of the night and bringing food.*

*At the pow-wow there is a give-away dance. At the pow-wow gifts are given to people who are attending. Everyone who has a gift has to take part in the dance.*

*The potato dance is a dance where two individuals have to balance a potato between their two bodies. They have to work together or else the potato will fall.*

*"Your cultural background has to be in tact because if we aren't culturally heading in the same direction it tends to create too much diversion in our paths as a community, as a whole and then we are not together. So then in a common fight if we are supposed to go to battle on some sort of political issues we all need to be on the same page."*

*"He wanted to create that [turtle monument] for everyone, to see that both communities (Ginoogaming and Long Lake #58), will always be close together."*

### **With land**

*Picture of the playground for youth in the community, located behind community member's houses (Figure 8)*

*"I think the playground is really remote for them to go back there...you're sending your kids in the back by themselves."*

*"That's so beautiful. Living here we see that everyday. We see the lake, we see the woods and again the kids have forgotten, we don't go out on our land."*

*"There's probably like 3-4 families that hunt and trap every year."*

*At a community meeting, community members decided that the community garden would be situated at the pow-wow grounds, but some community members complain that it is too far away and will not go.*

*In interviews many participants felt that the playground was not utilized by youth because it was too secluded and close to the bush, “[the youth] are probably afraid cause it’s a lot of bush.”*

*“They should smoke their fish eh but that’s what’s missing here, the old people like the ones that are old now are like civilized. They should smoke fish down the hill and go set a net. Smoke your meat, my grandmother was still doing that when I was 12-13. She was still smoking fish.”*

*Community members have discussed that many youth will stay in doors to play video games, instead of being outside. An example is stories told about when youth who were summer workers at the pow-wow grounds could not be found. Later it was discovered they were indoors playing video games, and had indents in their thumbs from playing for so long.*

*Many parents felt that it was too hot for the summer students to do work and they should be indoors.*

#### ***With elders***

*“It’s kind of like they’re scared of one another you know. They don’t interact with each other in a positive way. I’d like to see more interaction between youth and elders because kids can learn a lot from their elders and they are our teachers you know.”*

*“What I noticed was there was, they were lacking communication with each other, like have more little group sessions, get the elders to talk to the younger people.”*

*“I don’t think there is a lot of sharing because the elders now a days, not speaking negative about them but they have their own perception of lifestyle now, opposed to the elders of the past who taught you about your traditional lifestyle, your traditional way of life, your traditional language.”*

*“Teaching from elders and speaking with elders is accessible, just with the time slots and time frames it’s kind of a difficult situation.”*

*Many community members in interviews felt that the identity of elders and youth was too distant, making a common ground difficult. As a result interaction between elders and youth was limited.*

*“There were a lot more elders involved. Like they would have young people cooking for our elders. We were quite involved with our elders, but you don’t see that too much anymore.”*

*A man described how when he was young he would watch his elders carve and engage in discussion during the process learning from them, but today youth are into technology.*

*“Kids can learn a lot from our elders they are our teachers you know. They are the only ones that know what went on back then you know when we weren’t around, how people lived before. We don’t want to lose that, we want to keep that going”*

*“The elders should get more involved with the younger generation instead of saying they will learn on their own. They’ll learn it’s a computer age now, like to sit and talk with a young kid sometimes you have to initiate communication as a person like I’m not a computer.”*

*“[We need to] use our elders as teachers and having the youth sit with the elders, to understand where they are coming from...they think the elders are so mean. If they understood what kind of life they lead you know then it would give them a better understanding of who they are and why they have become who they have become.”*

*Youth sat around a sacred fire and learned how to use a sling shot from older community members.*

### ***Structural dependency vs. community capacity***

#### ***Structural dependency***

*That’s the thing with youth , I used to be like that too, like always expecting things to be given to me instead of you know working for it...they want things done for them, they want things to happen to them.”*

*“Nowadays an Aboriginal kid does not feel so much pride...they feel somewhat inferior because they’re dependent from tax payers.”*

*“The treaties never did us any good, a lot of politics play in that role as why the community is so, oppressed is a big word that comes to mind I think back in the days in the 40’s and 50’s before welfare assistance programs we were a lot more happier community because we went out and lived the migratory life, and not so much depends on welfare or the government to solve our problems.”*

*“You’ve lived this way for 60 years, nothings happened, nothings changed, all your waiting for is your welfare cheque, monthly basis and eating whatever and somebody comes over and gives you, suppose you brought a box of food and saying here this is good for you. How do I know it’s good for me when I’ve been eating this muck for a long time, you know.”*

*“I think a lot of it is the social problems, and I guess it’s too easy, they get paid every month even though they don’t do anything.”*

*“A lot of people expect too, but they don’t want to work for it, it’s too easy, why work.”*

*“They’re waiting for the government for the handout. Instead of taking pride saying got to get up tomorrow morning this is what I have to do, go to work for 8 hours and get paid for the day.”*

*“I find the community involvement has declined, it’s declined because the fact that a lot of people are looking for I guess they call it gratuity payments, everybody looks for a source of payment to be involved with stuff ”*

*“I’ll tell you if I was one of the warriors that saw Columbus set foot on this continent I wouldn’t so much shake his hand today. It’s sad but we were a giving society back then and we helped the Europeans on this, in order to live in this continent and we’re not given any recognition nowadays, like share the wealth, share the resources.”*

*There are no businesses or industry present within the community. There are limited full-time job opportunities in the community (APS, head start, band office, health centre, high school), and some seasonal contract jobs.*

*Housing on the reserve cannot be owned by individuals.*

*“These houses look like this because there is no money in the community and if there was money in the community these houses wouldn’t look like that.”*

*“There’s no money for reserves anyways...it’s so hard to get a brand new house around here because all the money that is owed for the other houses, so that’s why there is no money to make new houses.”*

*In regards to why people do not build their own homes a community member replied, “It wouldn’t be a band house, won’t get looked after or things like that or you won’t get help from the band.”*

*Picture of a condemned house in the community that has been spray-painted on (Figure 9)*

*Picture of a condemned apartment duplex. It has been burned down since this photo was taken (Figure 10)*

*Picture of a condemned house in the community (Figure 11)*

### **Community capacity**

*“I think it would be a great benefit to know how our people lived before because you know a long time ago our people worked together to survive, we helped one another, fed each other, if one caught a moose the whole community caught that moose, so it would bring more unity I think if our young ones knew how we used to live.”*

*“A long time ago we had warriors that took care of our people, a group of warriors, two from each family...we’re looking for too much welfare to supply us with food you know*

*deals at Wal-Mart, when we should be more capable of providing ourselves again like in the time of immemorial."*

*"We need to see revenues coming into the community. We need to generate our own funds so that we can develop another economic base."*

*Picture of the community garden that is located at the pow-wow grounds (Figure 12)*

*Picture of a garden box on the lawn of a community member (Figure 13)*

*At a community meeting a community member felt that a barrier to higher participation rates in gardening was that many community members did not know that it was a traditional practice.*

*"I think it's a healthy idea for people, something to take care of, something for them to learn, to respect and to watch grow cause they're the ones that are maintaining their garden box and taking care of it. I think that's a healthy way, some people don't have a chance to have things to watch them grow, take pride in that."*

*"If everybody was interested and going to the garden you would all, you would go to the garden at your own time and see other people and talk and ask questions about what they are growing and what you see."*

*"I think it is a good thing that these gardens come to our community because like you said it gets us more involved with each other, talking to one another you know. Just going to garden, it's a good thing, talking to someone, especially your neighbour..."*

*"The garden means a lot to us because it brings healthy food in there and we don't have to go to the store all the time when we can grow our own, once it gets going."*

*"They can have something to look forward to doing next year in the spring."*

*"I think it does have potential, just an opportunity to teach people that whatever you grow is good and it doesn't have to be fast food all the time and take pride in the things you grow."*

*In casual conversations with community members benefits of the garden included, providing a means to bring youth and elders together and increase traditional knowledge by having elders garden with youth, and use the gardening experience to teach about traditional foods, herbs or as a time to tell stories while gardening.*

***Lack of healthy food consumption and diabetes vs. consumption of healthy foods***

***Lack of healthy food consumption***

*"You have to go up north now, where before you could see 17 [moose] in one night."*

*"It's not like you have a freezer full of moose meat all the time, where we can have tonight. The only moose you get is when someone offers you a piece of meat, that's it."*

*Community members attempted to catch a moose for traditional teachings week, but were unsuccessful.*

*"We used to pick them [berries], they just aren't growing like they used to."*

*Picture of a sole raspberry on a raspberry bush (Figure 14)*

*At the initial community garden meeting a community member said, "Nobody grows anything anymore."*

*"I think the younger generation we should be taught how to make more traditional foods."*

*"A lot of the younger generation is starting to get too much into fast foods and preservatives, and it doesn't look good."*

*"I don't cook traditional foods. Wild animal foods, I'm not into that."*

*"In my house it is [breaded and fried], tastes better."*

*"Yeah it's better than boiled"*

*"Oh my god that is so gross"*

*"When you catch a beaver you can see all the bugs."*

*"Ewww don't go into detail."*

*"I want to go detailed, you know how you would have lice in your hair."*

*Picture of a fridge that is empty except for two water bottles (Figure 15)*

*Participant who took the picture said, "It's less stress if you know where your next meal is coming from, you're not worried about your fridge being empty, you need that security."*

*"We have sometimes emergencies where we have to get groceries for someone in the community. Lot of people that aren't working so, not you know an everyday thing, but maybe once every two months maybe we get emergencies."*

*"Some individuals don't have food because they are on welfare, plus they spend their money someplace else like on booze or bingo."*

*An individual has gone without food because he was unable to prepare his own while under the influence on more than one occasion.*

*“Some people don’t have a job you know, low income and stuff like that, some peoples’ fridges do look like that...like maybe they will have milk, juice, a carton of eggs, but it’s not stacked just the basics...that’s what I think most people have in their fridge and maybe a little salad dressing.”*

*Picture of a bag of frozen vegetables (Figure 16)*

*Picture of a bag of chips, a bottle of pop and a pack of cigarettes (Figure 17)*

*“It’s the cost because I have a job and I go shopping in the store and it gets quite expensive, and you are trying to buy healthy foods but it’s too pricey.”*

*“I think the smaller the place the more expensive.”*

*“It’s much easier to buy the junk food than to have the healthy foods.”*

*“It’s [fried bannock] cheaper than bread.”*

*“Time shopping for those things [vegetables], that’s what we notice.”*

*“All you got to do is open it [bag of chips], with carrots you got to clean them, you got to cut them.”*

*Evaporated milk and whitener are present in some kitchens because milk may spoil before community members can get to the store again.*

*“We have to travel to town to buy groceries instead of buying them on the rez, and take taxis for people who don’t have vehicles and for the people who do have vehicles use gas money a lot.”*

*Some community members get rides from others when they can. This sometimes results in groceries done at a local convenience store open till 11 pm which also sells gas and cigarettes at a lower cost because it is located on a nearby reservation. For example a woman got cigarettes, chips, wieners, milk and a sub.*

### **Diabetes**

*Community members discussed the absence of wild foods at the initial community garden meeting, and related this to higher rates of diabetes. One community member said, “Nobody grows anything anymore.” Another discussed the medicinal properties of blueberries. The root of the blueberry plant can provide insulin and the leaves of the plant can be used to lower blood sugar levels. Yet another community member told of growing up in the bush. Her diet consisted of rabbit, moose, and berries such as blueberries, and there used to be no cancer and diabetes.*

*“I just don’t feel well enough to do anything”.*

*"I am recently diagnosed with diabetes so that's kind of an unhealthy thing where I was choosing not to eat healthy, or I was choosing not to exercise daily, So I guess my well-being is here and there..."*

*Bending over to plant seeds in the garden was a challenge for some with diabetes. Everyday obstacles are also present such as getting into and out of a truck.*

*On several occasions community members were absent from work because they did not feel well enough because of diabetes.*

*A community member had to leave a group interview to medicate, but returned afterward and continued the interview.*

*A participant had diabetes and his sister also had diabetes and was in need of dialysis 3 times weekly.*

### **Consumption of healthy foods**

*"I hardly see anyone eating beaver today and bringing them home. Like back in the day my granny and grandfather used to always have beaver every Sunday we would be eating baby beaver sometimes big ones, and I miss that. That was good, mmmm"*

*If a picture was taken to represent well-being, "I would like to take a picture of my mom cooking in her gazebo. That's where she cooks her wild food, and that's all she cooks is healthy foods."*

*"Sometimes I fry, not that often, when I do my traditional native cooking I do it outside in my fire pit, open fire."*

*Moose meat, moose stew, corn on the cob, goose, sturgeon and soups were served at feasts during pow-wow weekend.*

### **Negativity surrounding First Nations peoples and a traditional way of life vs. positivism surrounding First Nations peoples and a traditional way of life**

#### **Negativity**

*"People are just starting. Years ago they never had because of the Indian residential schools. That's why some of us don't speak our language because I'm one of the ones that went to the boarding schools, 7 years old I first went to the boarding school."*

*"I think the residential school has had an effect on the whole community because my mom was a victim, also she got told not to speak native."*

*"When we went to the residential school everything was taken from us."*



*“The settling of Europeans on Turtle Island, controversial... we did have spirituality we did have a belief in the great spirit and I'm sure in some ways we can relate to mother Mary and Jesus and all the doctrines of the Catholic religion and there is so much out there but they all have the same rhetoric of having a great power I think for it to be combined though it's kind of confusing at times. I see a lot of communities do it because they were put in residential schools or the Jesuits did accomplish their mission or trying to. We were perceived as savages, living in a savage world but yet we did have our own structure as a human race.”*

*Community members worried that a crow may be infected with West Nile Virus. Community members said they called the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and said that the MNR was on their way. The MNR never showed up.*

*Picture of a section of the community and the unpaved road that runs through it (Figure 18)*

*No paved roads in Ginoogaming. Road leading out of Ginoogaming First Nation is unpaved, and from the local mill there is a lot of industrial traffic, noise and air pollution.*

*“Our fore fathers when they signed treaties they were under the impression that we would be given adequate homes. Now some people can say that when this home was built it was adequate but the quality control wasn't behind it. They were just plopped there on muskeg, it's not in a good location. Sure we could have taken care of the house a little bit better but the fact that when we signed our treaties we were told that we were going to be given free housing. Back in the 1900's I would of signed a treaty too that stated that but it failed.”*

*“Like some people would say geez no pride they don't give a shit but it's not that, where's the money to do this?, to fix the roads, where is the money to change things? Well that becomes something that is not within the power of the community it's that patriarchal history of government keeping Native peoples dependent. As much as they publicly say that they want independence the government from first contact right on to today and still going on has two aims: to keep us dependent and assimilate us.”*

*“I guess the fact that when you don't have no sense of pride, because of mainstream society taking away your pride.”*

*At a Nishnawbe-Aski chief's meeting a presentation was done that presented the facilities of APS as lesser than that of the OPP. Examples included inadequate locks on doors, inadequate plumbing, old buildings, inadequate jail cells, lack of staff, lack of funds, no gym and small spaces.*

*Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) were present to do the investigation on the cases of arson in the community. Some community members felt that other community members*

*did not take APS seriously, and had a lack of respect because they were from the community.*

*Picture of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was present in a community member's home (Figure 19)*

*A majority of community members are Catholic, and there are very few traditionalists in the community.*

*A woman wanted a priest to marry her and her partner at the pow-wow grounds, but a priest would not.*

*Christian Evangelists were in the community in the summer months.*

*A woman had a dream that her Christian friends turned their back on her when they discovered that she smudged.*

*"There are probably one or two families that are not Catholic around here."  
A community member commented that the few traditionalists keep their belief and practice to themselves, and are not open about it with the community.*

*"I hate telling people where I am from...how can you be proud of where you come from when you have houses that look like that."*

*"Like is that me, is that how we live, is that how people look at us."*

*"Who wants to ride around and see abandoned houses? Like there's almost half the whole street in that other end, like holy I live on this reserve and I kind of feel ashamed."*

*"See that area [street with condemned houses] there is like the projects kind of where people think bad things happen and that bad people always live there."*

*"I don't let it bother me, I know it doesn't look appealing but it still doesn't stop us from keeping our home looking nice, cutting our grass... [When] people ride around in the community it's just showing them, educating them that our community is poor."*

*"Kids don't have proper bedrooms."*

*"[Why no children are seen on the playground:]It's because a lot of our younger families have been forced to move out of their parents houses and move into town or into Thunder Bay and that means that we are lacking housing."*

*"It's like the mentality of trying to be like mainstream society. A lot of people don't take much pride in being Native, Ojibway, Cree."*

*"[The youth] are into their peers I guess where they don't want to be seen doing this or doing that, cause I found my daughter too she doesn't really want to dance. She's usually into it every year."*

*"I should say this is my own opinion about this, like they are not proud of being Native. Their self-esteem is gone, they're just existing. I hate to say it."*

*"Then they'd feel proud, it would help them to feel proud of who they are, they would get their identity back, cause I see a lot of these youth here they have no identity they don't know, they're messed up in the drugs and booze, but they get it from somewhere."*

*Man discussed how he lives in a city but got his car rez ready by putting old tires on it, and making other un-improvements.*

*During the community assessment activity at the high school, students were asked for solutions to the problems highlighted. Solutions were materials developed by the Western world including pamphlets, videos and brochures. Similarly at the health centre many brochures exist, and the majority are on the physical aspect, and focus on tertiary care which is characteristic of a bio-medical approach.*

*Father told his son that he did not have to do work because he had a rez job.*

*Idea of 'Indian time'. That things do not start early in the morning and that they are never on time.*

*Idea of 'apple Indian'. Woman felt she had to 'dumb herself down' so people did not call her an apple Indian.*

*"Some of them stop there [working at the mill] instead of doing their education. Instead of becoming a little more ambitious and more achievers. I don't know if self-esteem has to do with it, like again pride. If you took pride in what you are doing maybe they're proud of where they are working but some of them seem like they are stuck. Nobody is telling them this is what you could do, become."*

*Some youth and parents felt that the curriculum[at the First Nation school] was easier than at the public school.*

*"There's the attitude I think, it's our money, whereas when you had to go to provincial schools when we were transported from here to town, if we missed certain days then we were kicked out."*

*"I would like to see everything [in the community] that we see on TV because then they [the youth] won't so much act like people in New York City or Toronto."*

*A young male dyed his hair blonde and another boy said, "why did you dye your hair blonde, are you ashamed to be Nish."*

## **Positivisms**

*A youth showed me an eagle feather that he had gotten from his father who had gotten it from his father, there was a grin on the youth's face and he looked proud.*

*At the pow-wow youth carried themselves with more pride and respect when dressed in regalia. One girl was very worried that someone may step on her dress. Youth were sitting on blankets so that their regalia did not get dirty. Youth were seen adjusting their regalia. Before the main entrance one girl asked a woman if she could fix her shawl.*

*"It's easier to be offended by racism and discrimination if you don't know the history because the history will make you strong."*

*"It's not welfare. Those treaties mean something to them too, not only us. It lets them stay in Canada, they don't realize that."*

*Picture of the turtle monument that was erected in memory of past community members (Figure 20)*

*Picture of the artwork that appears on the turtle monument (Figure 21)*

*"I think they would have a different attitude if they remembered how people did it before. How hard they had to work to get what they needed, what they wanted, from here to there. Now it's pick me up I want to go here, hello I need this, I guess it would help a lot."*

*"I'll go to the store and I will buy a dollar something. I'll give them my status card and people ask me why. Because my grandfather was a free spirit, he used to go from here down to Terrace Bay, down to Lake Nipigon and come back this way. That was his territory and he always travelled and he survived, that's his survival tools. So when the white guys came and said if you stay here this is what we're going to give you, we're going to give your kid's education, their health whatever. He stayed in this one circle, this one square mile so that I was able to use my status card. Lots of young kids don't realize what was given up."*

*"It's [the monument] is very important because it shows our young ones how important our elders and how they did in the past and what did happen, you know, the cause of why we have hydro you know. The impacts that we did have."*

*"They don't remember their past, their history. I guess if they did do it annually [remember the monument] like each and every time of year more people would respect."*

*"When I was growing up I had lots of cultural activities going on, as a child growing up until I was a teenager and then for a number of years it stopped and then I slowly see it coming back. They [the youth] would feel proud if would help them to feel proud of who*

*they are, they would get their identity back cause I see a lot of these youth here that have no identity they don't know. They're messed up in the drugs and booze."*

*"A lot of people may not think like I do but I'm proud of doing what I'm doing, like I say I'm just learning how to read and write and I'm having fun with it. I don't put myself down for it. It's not my fault I couldn't read or write, it's just the way things were going for me." Some people blame themselves for not knowing anything...there's nothing to be ashamed of Like we're our own worst enemies. Taking pride in eating bannock... I learned how to make bannock when I was 10 and I was real proud because it turned out good. I remember that."*

*Picture of two eagles on a garbage box, which won a prize in the community's garbage box painting competition (Figure 22)*

*Picture of a drum, a dream catcher and a medicine bag, which are all traditional aspects of the Anishnaabe culture (Figure 23)*

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### ***Question One: What are community members' perceptions of well-being?***

***Wellness begins with a worldview of spiritual interconnectedness among the community, individual and land***

The interconnectivity of the individual, community and land is central to community members' conceptualizations of wellness. The connection with the land is something that is seen to be ingrained within a collective identity as an Anishnaabe people, *"We [as a people] love the outdoors that's what I believe."* A similar philosophy is found among the Cree, where a large part of 'being Cree' is living off the land (Adelson, 2000). Thus a disconnection from the land cannot be seen exclusionary from a disconnection from other community members and even a larger Anishnaabek community.

Closeness with the land can also provide a sense of closeness to the community through a collective identity, and can provide a means to foster relationships between community members, *"There's about eight of us that go out every time there's a change in the seasons like with respect to fishing...we go out and we harvest lake trout at a particular time, pickerel, spawning times you know, our traditional customary times that we go out and gather food, the moose we do it about three times a year, the geese you know once a year."* Within this commentary, hunting and fishing together as well as distributing bush foods all serve to strengthen the connection between the individual and community. This has also been observed by McPherson and Rabb (1993).

For some community members a strong connection to the land is still felt, *“I like sleeping out at camp, and I used to have a trailer, but I like tents better because you’re right on the ground.”* While for others it is not. Many community members spoke of a loss of connection between the younger generations and the land and spoke to the signs of a disconnection occurring, *three community members felt that bad weather during the pow-wow was occurring because of substance use and lack of unity in the community. It meant the spirits were not happy.* Within this example the bond between the land and a collective people is also displayed. The bad weather is seen as a sign of disconnection, and symbolic of the lack of wellness in the community. Lateral abuse and substance use prevent the individual from being fully invested in the pow-wow, and as discussed in the literature, a pow-wow as well as other traditional activities, are ways for connection to the land and community to occur.

Community members did speak to the role of interconnection between individual and community in a way that was both inclusive and exclusive of the land. One participant’s response was reminiscent of what Wilson (2003) would describe as a therapeutic landscape, *“I feel connected to my dead relatives, I feel good when I go there [to the monument].”* The monument served as a therapeutic landscape, providing a space for a spiritual connection to occur between the participant and a part of their community, which may have otherwise not have occurred.

Less inclusive of land, were discussions of the role of inter-dependency between the individual and the community in order for wellness to occur. The wellness of the community was seen to be essential to the healing of an individual, yet a healthy community was dependent on the state of being of members of the community. For

example one participant noted, *“You can heal if your community is strong but if the community is not strong it tends to reflect individuals.”* Another said, *“To me that [the drum] means the circle means like the whole community to be one. To be a whole person, being one like the circle.”*

Although community members acknowledged the value of unity within the community, they also spoke of a lack of unity, *“There are too many leaders, no Indians”*. With this comment a community member articulates the lack of connectedness of community members to each other, as well as a lack of a collective identity. Instead they all want to be their own leaders.

Crucial to the worldview of interconnectedness of the individual, community and land is spirituality. Those who hold a worldview of interconnectedness also uphold the belief that the creation is infused with spirits. This belief has been captured by various community members, such as by the individuals who discussed the bad weather occurring because the spirits are not happy. An acceptance of non-humans as spirit holders is essential to a true view of interconnectedness because it allows for all beings to be placed on equal footing with each other (as noted by various authors, e.g. Driben & Simpson 2000; McPherson and Rabb, 1993), which fosters a healthy relationship, *“Water for me means respect, you learn to respect it, it gives you life but it can also take away your life. A lake for me you have to, for me a lake, water they all have a spirit so you have to talk to that spirit ask them to be kind.”*

***A worldview of interconnection leads to respect and hope for individual, community, and land***

It has already been established that spirituality leads to an interconnected view of the individual, community and land. What has not been adequately addressed is how a



worldview of interconnectivity results in wellness. Although the worldview of interconnectedness of individual, community and land is necessary for wellness it is not sufficient in and of itself. A worldview of interconnection is important to wellness because it leads to respect and hope, and it is respect and hope that lay the foundations for wellness.

Within Ginoogaming community members had a tendency to discuss a lack of connection synonymously with a lack of respect, *“You see the kids with the fish and their eyes poked out and they’re hanging up there full of rocks, and the fish there is no respect for that fish. Like it’s meant for a reason, why they are swimming in our waters for people who need, but you can go to the store and buy fish, everyone can go to the store and buy a fishing rod. No connection with kids with the land, the teachings nothing.”*

The youth do not see the fish as interconnected because fish are a commodity for sale at the local store. As a result of Western trademarks such as commodification and over-consumption the fish are not seen as having a spirit and secondly they are not seen as necessary for survival. As a result they are not respected and treated in a manner that does not promote the wellness of the fish, nor in a way that encourages the fish to want to engage with them.

Although there are various terms such as a metapersonal self construal (Arnocky, et al., 2007) or ethics of divinity (Stroink & Decicco, 2008) describing this phenomenon, they all support the same underlying assumption that it is in an individual’s best interest to promote the wellness of something that is seen directly related to the self. Thus ill treatment of the fish is acceptable because it is seen to cause no threat to the self. To further illustrate the point the opposite scenario is presented, where a connection has

resulted in respect for non-human parts of the creation, *“My dad taught me the bush, taught me to respect the laws of the land, the animals, the birds, the fish. My dad taught me that.”*

Hope is also a result of a worldview of interconnectedness. As with respect, discussions of hope and connectedness had a tendency to be phrased in the negative, *“He [woman’s child] would rather stay inside than play around and hang around with the little guys outside who don’t do anything, or do stuff or talk bad...I am trying to prevent my kids from seeing stuff like that and I don’t want them going around where there are people doing things like that. My kids don’t even leave the house. It’s not that I don’t want them to leave the house, but they know enough not to go around people like that.”*

Within this example this reasoning implies disconnection. That it is possible to completely shut out other community members. As a result of this disconnection from the community, hopelessness is able to transpire in the form of avoidance. The same principles of ethics of divinity and the metapersonal self construal can be applied to hope as it was applied to respect. If the community member felt that other community members were included within the self, there would be more motivation to improve the wellness of those community members, and it would be understood to be impossible to separate the self from the problems of those community members through avoidance.

Another example of hopelessness within the community is the presence of condemned housing and the subsequent internalized feelings that result from the presence of condemned housing. Avoidance of the issue occurs because community members are not actively engaging with other community members to see the problem addressed. Community members are able to do this because of a ‘someone else will do it, it’s not my

problem' frame of mind, which essentially is able to occur because of a worldview that disconnects the individual from their surroundings. The result is even more hopelessness among community members and further disengagement as a result of coping mechanisms that the individual instates because interconnectivity is no longer an option for strength, *"You don't feel proud of your community when you see broken stuff just lying around. You know collecting mold and broken houses. You don't feel proud of your community. Like why should you have respect for your community when it looks like that?"* Various scholars (e.g., Wesley-Esquimaux & Smoleski, 2004; Duran & Duran, 1995) have forewarned of the negative implications that arise from these coping mechanisms which themselves occur as a result of disconnection. They only serve to create barriers to connection and healing.

***Interconnectedness, respect and hope promote wellness of the individual, community and land***

Within Ginoogaming First Nation, the need for interconnection between the individual, community and land for wellness to occur was acknowledged, *an individual discussed how he is a recovering alcoholic because of the 'power of the circle'. At a pow-wow prayers were given to give him the strength to fight his addiction and he has been sober ever since.* Interconnection wears several hats in this example to enable wellness. First, a worldview of interconnectedness is present among the recovering alcoholic's support system or 'circle' which allows for them to have hope in the individual and invest in the individual. Secondly, it is the support from the interconnectedness or, as the community members describe, the 'power of the circle,' that allows for wellness. Another community member provides evidence of this by

describing difficulty in healing as a result of absence of the circle, *“There’s no one in the community I can spill my beans to or cry to, or go through that process, that’s what makes it harder to heal.”*

The benefit of connection to the land is also seen in the community, *“That’s where I feel good, when I go in the bush, I feel happy, my spirits just up every time.”* As with the monument the bush can function as a therapeutic landscape since within a traditional interconnected worldview the bush is infused with a spiritual presence. Sometimes it is simply the engagement of spirits that promotes wellness.

The offspring of an interconnected worldview are also directly addressed by community members in discourses on wellness. A lack of hope (recall that hope is fostered by a worldview of interconnectedness), resonates negatively among the youth, *“There are all kinds of ideas out there it’s just people have to use their imaginations and motivation, which becomes difficult because of the past histories. A lot of our kids find they’re not motivated because of that sense of loss, that sense of loss of hope, hopelessness...and resign themselves to just being on the reserve on welfare and I’ve even had kids say to me that say, ‘I’m going to quit school and go on welfare.’ What’s wrong with that picture?”*

Essentially individual, community and land are all able to stay well because the inter-connective worldview (with the implicit encompassment of hope and respect), fosters reciprocal relationships and this is supported by the literature (e.g.: ‘defense of ethics’, Overholt cited in McPherson & Rabb, 1993). Community members described the role of reciprocity in wellness. Giving a whole, balanced self to the community will produce a well community that will in turn be a nurturing environment for the self as one

participant clearly described, *“I pretty much need from the community, and what the community can give back to me. I think that’s pretty much for them and them for you.”* Implicit to this, as described by community members, is the need for the community to grow towards wellness in unison, *“The community has to grow as unity as one to promote well-being....”* Although to some extent community members felt that it could be possible to be well, in an un-well community, it was deemed extremely strenuous on the individual. These testaments are similar to those in Wilson’s study (2004), which examined the relationship between a cultural identity and wellness amongst Aboriginal women in Manitoba. Many of the women recognized that their health and the health of their communities were inseparable, and both entities (the individual and the community) have a responsibility and investment to each other (2004).

***Wellness is understood holistically, to include the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental, and their interconnections***

There are various definitions of well-being, and what comprises a well person and/or a well community. Among the Cree in Northern Quebec, the term “well-being” is non-existent in the language. The closest translation is *Miyupimaatisiun*, which Adelson (2000) translates into ‘being alive well’. The idea of ‘being Cree’ was present in Ginoogaming in its own form. Essentially the worldview of interconnectivity between the individual, community and land and the offspring of this worldview results in ‘being Anishnaabe’, *“Your foundation is your cultural identity. If you don’t have that then you’re kind of lost sometime, and the way it’s being raped right now there’s no respect, lack of respect. The well-being does depend a lot on your cultural background.”*

Another participant discusses how barriers to ‘being ‘Anishnaabe’ hinder wellness, *“I guess well-being it looks like a clean area but getting down to where we had logging out*

*of this lake, it polluted our lake a little bit to affect our lifestyle of fishing and I know some members of our community don't go fishing because of that reason."*

Up until this point the definition of wellness has been overlooked. What results from being Cree, or being Anishnaabe? Community member's perceptions of well-being were wholistic in nature, *"Well-being to me is not just physical well-being but being healthy emotionally, mentally, spiritually and taking care of all those areas in your life and living in balance, being as balanced as you can."* And highlighted the importance of balance between all aspects of wellness, *"well-being to me is not just physical well-being, but being healthy emotionally, mentally, spiritually and taking care of all those areas in your life and living in balance, being as balanced as you can."*

This wholistic view of wellness coincides with the teachings of the medicine wheel which is a popular icon and synonymous with many First Nations, including Anishnaabe traditional beliefs. Community members addressed all four parts of the medicine wheel in their own way. For example a spiritual aspect of well-being was acknowledged by one community member through the drum, *"I feel lifted [when I hear the drum], makes you feel good, makes you want to dance."* while another displayed the importance of spirituality through actions, *When a young boy was crying because he had gotten a stone thrown at his head, another young boy brought a medicine bag and put it on his head to calm him.*

The way in which community members went about describing wellness was also unique to the individual. Some participants utilized a straight forward approach, *[Well-being is] "Being healthy, staying active."* While others chose narratives to express themselves, *a man recalls that when he was younger there was a man who lived till 118*

*years, and carried a canoe on his back until he was 100. He told of the decrease in life expectancy. His father lived till 80 and his grandfather had only died ten years prior to that.*

It is also worth noting that there was no definitive line separating what is First Nations wellness and what is Western wellness. I believe that to some extent there will be cross-cultural similarities because we are all human beings. For example poor housing conditions were of concern for many community members, and housing is a measure that is often used in Western discussions on well-being. There are various inferences I can make to account for these similarities. It may be that First Nations culture, as any other culture is fluid and living. To suggest that the need for adequate housing is a Western concept and a part of a colonial definition of wellness, may be colonial in itself, by creating images of First Nations culture as static and historical. It also could be that community members have internalized these Western concepts of wellness, not as a natural change but because of scrutiny and pressures of the West to conform, similarly to how these community members inherited these houses in the first place. Or it could also be that difference lies not in what is a part of wellness, but why it is important for wellness. For example, as argued below inadequate housing works to sever connections in the community, the importance is not in cosmetics and the social status title connected to the house, which is typically an important function of Western housing. These suggestions may offer some understanding but to disentangle why these similarities in definitions of wellness exist between the West and community members is beyond the scope of this paper, and is perhaps impossible.

## ***Question Two: What impedes and enhances community members' well-being?***

***Disconnection among the community, individual and land impedes well-being and connection among community, individual, and land enhances well-being***

### ***Contamination and destruction of the land***

The traditional area of Ginoogaming and surrounding First Nations has been contaminated and destroyed largely as a result of industry (Simpson & Driben, 2000). This resulted in less fish, unusable campgrounds, the destruction of grave sites and the shoreline being washed away as one participant describes, *"What you don't see there is that nice shoreline, when I was growing up they never used the power so much down south but now they need the power so this is a reservoir lake. This lake, all the water rush into Hayes Lake and supplies the power to the hydro dam so in there you don't see a shoreline. When I was growing up there was a shoreline, you could walk a good 20 feet sometimes, and then you used to be able to go swimming and take walks on the beach. There's beach all over here, you don't see it though it's so flooded. That's probably why you don't see anybody swimming there or you don't see a shoreline. So with the demand of mainstream society again, it affects our way of life too, the way we grew up, the kids don't get to enjoy that no more, I can't take my boys down for a walk down by the lakeshore."* The destruction and contamination of the land results in disconnect from the land because the individual is no longer able to engage in a reciprocal relationship with the land. The land is not able to provide the foods needed for subsistence as it once did, and some of the food sources when ingested may actually cause community members to be unwell, as one community member noted, it was worrisome that there were worms on



the fish. Many of the activities carried out on the land that provide closeness with the land are attached to subsistence such as hunting, trapping and fishing and contamination and destruction of resources deter individuals from these activities. The polluted state of the land in itself also serves as a means for disconnect. When the land is in a state that is not well it is hard to see its spirit.

Once an initial disconnect with the land has occurred a cycle of disconnection occurs making it difficult to reconnect. This results in a lack of stewardship, which leads to less protection of the land from industry. For example the first elders meeting on clear cutting of traditional lands was held only months ago. This phenomenon is similar to results showing that the metapersonal self construal was associated with environmental concern and conservation behaviours (Arnocky, et al., 2007). Community members can also take on a similar mentality of industry, where respect for the land is lost, as seen in the example of the youth poking the eyes out of the fish they had caught. As further destruction and contamination occur the disconnection continues to grow, as seen in the community already. Most community members found that the largest disconnect was occurring among the youth.

As a result of destruction and contamination of the land, some of the traditional ecological knowledge is obsolete, *a community member discussed how the knowledge he learned from his father on moose hunting is no longer relevant. The hunting patterns were passed down to him are no longer applicable because the moose aren't where they used to be due to clear cutting*, and some of the land becomes non-usable as well. For example people can no longer walk on the shoreline, or swim in the waters. As a result of contamination and destruction, food sources may be scarce or poisoned. Thus the

exchange between the animal and the individual occurs less often which causes disconnection to the land. In some cases it cannot occur at all because parts of the creation have been lost forever, *“You don’t see the berries too that used to grow along side the shore. Used to have this, I can’t pronounce how you say that in English and you used to have 4 different kinds of berries that used to grow along the shore, just like little apples, and there were some that were purple red. Used to bite it and it was sour, wild cherry like, and there was another one that looked like a little apple. You bit it and you could actually here the crunching. There was a seed in the middle. So you know I never saw those the past 10 years I swear to God I never saw them that’s because there’s such a big demand of power down south.”*

Disconnection within the community also results from less participation in hunting, trapping and fishing. These are opportunities for community members to socialize and teach each other. For the participant above he loses a part of his closeness with this father by not being able to practice his teachings. The people out on the land can build bonds with others by giving meat to community members, and having the reliance of community members for food, *“When I was a kid I used to swim everyday at that lake and fish at the bridge, and be happy to bring home the fish, but then stories about the logs being in the water. Skin was starting to change and stuff like that. I don’t know just kind of told us not to swim or fish in the lake anymore, but they never gave us a complete reason why. It kind of did stop the fun later. Harm on the bridge, once you jump off the bridge there’s sharp sticks, just scary stuff like that.”* The ability for bush activities to strengthen social relationships was also noted by McPherson and Rabb (1993)

***Cultural conflict vs. cultural connectedness***

Recall, Overholt and Callicot (1982) suggest that the greatest test of a worldview is how well it helps those who hold the view survive. In Ginoogaming there are some individuals who are able to survive in their environment and then there are those who struggle. For example one participant notes, *"I can go to mass on Sunday morning and smoke a pipe Sunday afternoon...my grandfather told me when I was young, you're going to pick things up here, you're going to pick things up there. If you don't need it leave it there, if you need it take it and use it."* While another individual struggles with infusing the two religious worldviews, *"I think it's confusing for the young ones, even myself I find it confusing. Should I be a catholic or you know go traditional, and how would I do that? I really don't know."* Note the difference between the two quotes. Within the first, smoking a pipe and going to mass are not exclusionary of each other and an association with either is not necessarily attached to one's identity. There is also less emphasis on distinctions. Traditional items are things that can be picked up and catholic items are things that can be picked up. Within the second quote there is a clear distinction and identity attached. One can be catholic or be traditional. There are also only two options, one can 'be catholic' or 'be traditional'.

This restrictive, categorical way of thinking is not part of a traditional knowledge system but instead a Western construct. Hill (2006) and Connor (1999) both agree, noting that the individual is not only connected to other community members but to the global community as well. I argue that when individuals throw away tightly wound definitions of community and adhere instead to this more wholistic definition of community it is easier to overcome cultural collisions and individuals become more culturally competent. If you recall Armstrong's (2001) findings within this context of

community they make sense. He found that modernity was associated with above average communities, yet there were above average communities that had many speakers of an Indigenous language. At first these findings may seem contradictory but in fact these 'above average' communities are all able to connect to some sort of community.

Cultural competency is feasible when the focus is the underlying meaning instead of the packaging, "*Everyone needs faith, some sort of faith. It doesn't matter where you get it from.*" Within this quote this traditional worldview is in place. More concern is placed on underlying commonalities than on providing excuses to create distance and barriers.

For example, within the community there is concern that monetary value is overtaking the role of traditional values, "*We were dancing for ourselves you know and dancing for the pride that we had when dancing, but now people dance for money. I don't like it at all. It's small kids learning them that go dance you'll get money.*" And, *Youth crowded elders when collecting honorariums, and could not wait patient but ran to the money.* Although at a first glance it appears that cultural conflict is inevitable, this does not have to be the case. Traditionally those who performed a service for the people (e.g. dancers, healers etc.) were taken care of by the community. This occurred through providing food, a place to stay and other necessities. As a result of the influence of the Western world, this system of exchanges is not as prevalent as it once was, and the giving of money can be a reflection of that. Monetary gifts do not have to be seen as an incentive or bribe to dance but instead as a way to show gratitude for the dancing. If the underlying values that a traditional exchange functions to produce are taught and

understood, this contemporary exchange can aid in building relationships through reciprocity.

With this said, there are cases where it is difficult to infuse the two worldviews. This can occur because the value systems appear to be conflicting to outsiders. For example, *a priest would not marry a couple at the pow-wow grounds.* Within this example it is not the couple that is struggling with cultural conflict, but it is something that is imposed upon them. There are also times where even with an interconnected worldview it is hard to find a common value, and this can be aggravated further by a lack of compromise by the outside world, *“Since its partnership with Ginoogaming it gives more people the chance and opportunity to have a job and to have a good paying job...it’s good money, and I hear all the trees have to get cut down and fighting for trees. They’re taking our forest and fighting over forest.”* and *“the corporate world is taking over, it’s kind of eroding our cultural beliefs, our spirituality...we just get crumbs basically, economic development. Sure there are partnerships, a lot of times they use us and basically we’re just doing the same things they do, just raping the resources from the land.”* It is cultural conflicts such as these that are of greatest cause for concern in the community because acceptance or tolerance of the industry and its values will result in further destruction of the land and further disconnect. Internal turmoil can also grow to paramount levels for some community members, as conveyed in the above commentary, because they have limited economic opportunities and must work within the industry. An individual is directly participating within a value system that serves to extinguish a worldview of connectedness.

***Substance abuse vs. substance use***

Substance abuse plays a dual role in regards to wellness. It is a cause for disconnection but also a result of disconnection as one participant explains, “[it’s] getting the next best thing that can numb them, the alcohol numbs for a little while till you wake up the next morning, where prescription drugs can numb you longer.”

Substance abuse is a coping mechanism to deal with pain that can result from initial disconnection. Recall Wesley-Esquimaux and Smoleski (2004) who list addictions as a trait associated with the internalization of traumatic events (colonization/disconnection).

The coping mechanism in itself is also a way to disconnect, because although addictions can serve to alleviate the pain, they also alleviate the individual from sources of wellness such as family, community, and traditional values and ways of life “*They had regalia making up at the clinic. These girls they were taking material and selling the outfits after, for pills you know.*” Within this example the need for addictions has resulted in disrespecting and exploiting traditional regalia. In the next example it serves to disconnect the individual from the community, “*the caring and the love in the community is gone. It wasn’t like that before...I think the alcohol did a lot of damage and the drugs. Lot of I guess abuse started with the alcohol and drugs and that’s really sad to say, and that’s where most of the changes, drastic changes started happening.*” Since substance abuse ‘numbs’ the individual, the individual is able to isolate themselves from other community members and/or abuse fellow community members which cause distance between individual and community. A participant addresses this isolation, “*you know people are more into their drugs and don’t want to look after their own kids and just let their kids wander around and do whatever they want...I notice there are lots of families that don’t look after their kids because there are too much drugs in the*

*community. Like I look around at the garbage that is lying around, kids are not home and just throw garbage on the ground.*” In this example substance abuse has disengaged the individual from their children. From the garbage outside the house it also appears that disengagement from the land has occurred.

Connections between traditionalism and alcohol were found within the research, *an individual routinely struggles with alcohol abuse. Abstinence is possible when traditional responsibilities are required such as participating in the pow-wow or fire keeping.* I argue that abstinence is able to occur because when the individual is engaging in traditional responsibilities he or she is connecting with the community and land. For example a keeper of the sacred fire is spiritually connected to the fire which is a part of the land as well as just physically present on the land. The sacred fire is also a gathering spot, providing a means for the fire keeper to socialize with others. Further connection to the community occurs through reciprocal relationships with other community members. Other community members will bring food, tea or other items that may be necessary to the fire keeper while the fire keeper is in exchange performing the act of fire keeping.

Disconnection from the land and the resulting deteriorated wellness can also occur through commodification and over consumption of medicines provided to the Anishnaabek people from the creator, *“Sometimes it’s a way to escape, let things go, otherwise they wouldn’t of created and god wouldn’t of created the magic mushroom for us to take in once and a while in our spirituality.”* In this example the participant is addressing the abuse of wild mushrooms. Another example is the consumption of nicotine. Recall that traditionally it is a way to connect to the spiritual world but it is now bought at stores, smoked and chewed. Removing tobacco from its original context,

removes the spirituality of the tobacco which allows it to be disrespected and over-consumed. The over-consumption of tobacco is linked to cancer and cardio-vascular disease among others.

*Lateral abuse,*

Similarly to substance abuse, lateral abuse plays a dual role in regards to wellness. It is a cause for disconnection but also a result of disconnection. There is an abundance of literature on the role colonization plays in the development of lateral abuse, whereby survivors of colonization internalize the traumatic events and feel a sense of false empowerment by externalizing those events on fellow community members, who are the most accessible (e.g.: Friere, 2007; Duran & Duran, 1995; Hill, 1995). This mentality is illustrated in the following commentary, *a female youth was not getting along with another female youth and commented; when someone hurts me I want to hurt them back even worse.*

Essentially what is happening is a disconnection occurs from those in authority (spiritual and political leaders, Ojibwa worldview). It occurs because the authority has failed to protect the individual from the trauma (colonization). The individual does not want to feel disempowerment and self-depreciation anymore but cannot take it out on the colonizers so instead takes on the role of colonizer and performs acts of lateral violence as a way to feel empowered, similarly to what the initial colonizers did (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). A community member describes her experience with lateral violence, *“I wake up like I’m burning...there are still more houses that are up...they will do it again and somebody will get hurt in there, that is my fear.”* The participant is referring to the arson of condemned housing on the reservation. Although



there are larger socio-political forces at work which account for the presence of condemned housing in the community, the community is the target. Thus, a disconnection occurs between the victims of the fire and the community members who committed arson. The individuals responsible also experience disconnection from the community and land, when they leave the community to go into the judicial system.

Judgement and criticism is another form of lateral violence that is occurring in the community and is a way to prevent individuals from connecting to the community (global and local), *“I don’t know if you heard about that crab syndrome, one is trying to get out of a hole and everyone else is pulling you down. That’s what happens cause someone is trying to dig themselves out of that hole they have been in and people try to bring you down. They call your business down or don’t support it or they say bad things so other people will get discouraged of coming there. We say you’re just trying to be too good but they don’t understand you’re trying to better yourselves and others around you.”* It is a mechanism which distracts individuals from wanting to connect to the community, *“There is a lot of jealousy, envy when somebody does do something successful, they don’t want to say right on, how did you do that? Can’t ask for help.”* and a way to discourage participation in traditionalism or other things that that can cause or reinforce connection, *“I’m not used to being traditional in front of my people, I feel intimidated or someone might be jealous of me, I want to keep something secret.”*

### ***Intergenerational transfer***

Intergenerational transfer causes disconnection by providing a means to transfer other factors that cause disconnection (substance use, violence, dependence etc) to future generations, *“I guess it comes from the family. A lot of people have problems but they*

*still never dealt with...they don't even realize they're teaching that to their kids, their grandkids."*

Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) refer to intergenerational transfer in their model of historic trauma transmission, in which clusters of symptoms such as violence and addictions are a source of trauma for the next generation causing a destructive behavioural pattern. Community members have acknowledged the transfer of these 'symptoms', *"I think relying on the government is just not helping them promote their lifestyle, getting up day to day and going to work, like these people are on social assistance and a lot of it is family upbringing, family values, why should I work when my dad never worked and he made it through life."* And, *"It's coming down to the kids [drugs and alcohol], the age level is going down and down and closer to children, they're not just teenagers anymore."*

A positive relationship with the community and/or land can counteract the negative traits associated with intergenerational transfer, *A drummer at traditional teachings week told the youth that if they needed to talk to someone or needed help to bring tobacco to the trees, a rock or any part of the creation and it can provide support.*

Participation in traditional activities was a way to facilitate positive intergenerational transfer, *"I showed him [youth], how to sew it [beadwork keychain], you put one bead and you make your design and he really took interest and I didn't think he would. He kept going, he was really proud of that stuff."* And, *"He was raised in the bush, he was always going hunting and fishing and trapping. Now he's learning his sons."* By participating in traditional activities the youth is strengthening his relationship

with the teachers helping him, as well as strengthening his cultural identity which engages him within a larger collective community.

***Lack of opportunity to connect vs. connection facilitated***

Within the community there are individuals who would like to connect to others and to the land but they just feel that there is a lack of opportunity to do so. Community members described that many youth want to connect to their family members, *“Some kids parents don’t pay attention to their kids, their kids are all over the place all the time or don’t buy their kids anything so their kids have nothing to do so they go and do reckless things just to keep themselves busy and occupied.”* As well as other members of the community, *“they [the youth] want to be taken care of while they’re playing, even though they are not playing in a safe area where there are things that can be broken.”* In the latter case the need to connect to others in the community is so strong that the youth put themselves in an area that is not ideal for playing because it is an area where more people pass by. Community members noted that when the connection is not made it results in negative behaviours such as substance use or mischief. This can provide the opposite result than was intended by the youth. The negative attention received serves to create distance instead of closeness with others in the community. An example of this is when community members avoid other community members who display negative behaviour, *“Someone who does drugs or pills, all that kind of things, I wouldn’t even allow my kids to go near that person.”*

Accessibility of connection is not just an issue with youth, *“We don’t have nothing. It’s so isolated; we don’t have stores, restaurants, where people are busy. Do stuff.”* Adults in the community would also like to be more active in their community but

find there are limited opportunities to engage with other community members in a social setting. For community members who have no to little connection to the land this isolation becomes more severe because there really then seems like there is ‘nothing to do’. This is because bush life is an outlet for community members to connect, *“That’s part of our tradition, prospector tents, they’re nice and big, can fit a whole family in those.”* Other aspects of a traditional way of life also facilitate connection between the individual and community but do not occur on a regular basis in the community. Two examples include feasts, *“Feasts usually bring the community together. When you eat you’re happy.”* and pow-wows, *“It’s strictly pow-wow where everybody has their mind, no conflict I guess during pow-wow really.”* Traditional activities such as feasts and pow-wows are great outlets to connect because they have a social as well as a spiritual component. For example, gathering together for meals provides a space for people to share stories and talk about the food if an ice breaker is needed. At a deeper level community members are able to engage in deeper social exchanges with other community members by the sharing of food, and with the land by ingesting traditional foods.

Community members have voiced the need to connect with the land, *“That’s so beautiful. Living here we see that everyday. We see the lake, we see the woods and again the kids have forgotten, we don’t go out on our land.”* But physical and mental barriers exist that limit the opportunity for community members to connect with the land. Destruction and depletion of resources has resulted in the perception of the land as unsafe, and many traditional foods hard to access. Since this barrier exists fewer and fewer people are engaging with the land, *“There’s probably like 3-4 families that hunt and trap*

*every year.*” This is problematic because a disconnection from the land manifests itself as feelings of fear of the unknown, *in interviews many participants felt that the playground was not utilized by youth because it was too secluded and close to the bush, “[the youth] are probably afraid cause it’s a lot of bush.”* This fear in itself creates a lack of opportunity to connect to the land.

Various barriers are in existence for the connection of community members to elders. The elder 100 years ago is not the same as today and community members are struggling with the new face of the elder, *“I don’t think there is a lot of sharing because the elders now a days not speaking negative about them but they have their own perception of lifestyle now, opposed to the elders of the past who taught you about your traditional lifestyle, your traditional way of life, your traditional language.”*

The fear of the unknown also acts as a barrier to connection, *“It’s kind of like they’re scared of one another you know. They don’t interact with each other in a positive way. I’d like to see more interaction between youth and elders because kids can learn a lot from their elders and they are our teachers you know.”* The new face of the elder and the fear of the unknown are currently barriers but may work to counteract each other. On one hand community members want an ideal elder, yet feel a barrier is in place to connect with elders is fear of the unknown which results from a lack of common ground.

Perhaps connection can occur if community members embrace their elders and in turn their elders embrace their struggles which can be relatable to many community members.

A Western influence can also limit opportunities to connect with elders. One community member discussed the fast-paced environment of the current day, *“Teaching from elders and speaking with elders is accessible, just with the time slots and time*

*frames it's kind of a difficult situation.*" And multiple community members discussed the need to compete with technology for the youth's attention, *A man described how when he was young he would watch his elders carve and engage in discussion during the process learning from them, but today youth are into technology.* Video games were seen as a huge barrier to connection. In one conversation I joked with an elder, saying that there is a need for elders-live, which is a spoof of the popular online video game interaction available with the X-box console, referred to as 'X-box live'.

If connection with elders is occurring it provides a means to interconnect with the land and the community through a history of the people and traditional teachings, *"Kids can learn a lot from our elders they are our teachers you know. They are the only ones that know what went on back then you know when we weren't around, how people lived before. We don't want to lose that, we want to keep that going"*

#### ***Structural dependency vs. community capacity***

The guidelines of Treaty Nine encouraged a system of dependence which has continued to ensue, *"the treaties never did us any good, a lot of politics play in that role as why the community is so, oppressed is a big word that comes to mind. I think back in the days in the 40's and 50's before welfare assistance programs we were a lot more happier community because we went out and lived the migratory life, and not so much depends on welfare or the government to solve our problems."* Warry (2000) estimates that on-reserve unemployment rates alone in North America range from between 60-90%.

On-reserve housing is a current example of how infra-structure creates dependency, *in regards to why people do not build their own homes a community member replied, "It wouldn't be a band house, won't get looked after or things like that*

*or you won't get help from the band.*" Since reserve land is not the actual property of First Nations people they cannot own their own homes and land. This affects connectedness in two ways. Firstly it does not provide an environment in which community members are invested in economically and emotionally, which can weaken the community. Secondly, the maintenance of the houses is not the individual's responsibility making the community members dependent on the government for housing, (which has further implications).

Structural dependency essentially at its root, causes disconnection because the individual no longer needs to be connected to the community (both global and local) or the land for survival, *"I think a lot of it is the social problems, and I guess it's too easy, they get paid every month even though they don't do anything."* A traditional way of life fostered the growth of community capacity which in turn connects the individual to community and land at times, *"I think it would be a great benefit to know how our people lived before because you know a long time ago our people worked together to survive, we helped one another, feed each other, if one caught a moose the whole community caught that moose, so it would bring more unity I think if our young ones knew how we used to live."* An individual no longer needs to depend on the land to provide sources of subsistence but can instead buy meat, produce and herbs at the grocery store. In terms of community connection, it is also diminished because traditionally subsistence is a community effort.

Currently a community garden project is in existence which aims to capture some of the lost connection between individual, community and land. Gardening was a traditional means of subsistence at some point among the Anishnaabek (in

Anishnaabemowin, *gitigaaning*, means place of gardens), (LaDuke, 2005). Waisberg and Holzkamm (1993) contend that traditional Anishnaabe agriculture was vibrant until the 1880s and that produce was part of a well rounded diet of the Anishnaabe. Only after the loss of gardening among the people did the consumption of large game increase (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993).

Within the numbered treaties, agriculture was an important component and even an incentive to signing (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). For example in Treaty 4 (which governs what is known today as the Fort Frances/Rainy Lake area), proper tools and materials for gardening, land to garden and further knowledge on gardening for the Anishnaabe people were terms of the treaty. The promises made within Treaty 4 were not upheld. Tools and materials were scarcely given, land dwindled and there was limited teaching, done by missionaries and Indian agents who had little knowledge on the topic at hand (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). Gardening was hindered further because dams and lake water regulations were put in place that paid no attention to the needs of the Anishnaabe people to garden and produce wild rice, and in 1881 the Canadian government prohibited the sale of produce to non-Indians, without the written permission of the Indian agent (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). Gardening among the Anishnaabek declined after these occurrences.

Gardening as a traditional Anishnaabe practice is often forgotten about, *at a community meeting a community member felt that a barrier to higher participation rates in gardening was that many community members did not know that it was a traditional practice.* A community garden can be a means to reclaim control over knowledge and



practices. This in itself is a powerful thing, and can empower community members down a path of reconnection.

Community members have acknowledged the potential of the garden to reconnect to the land, *“I think it’s a healthy idea for people, something to take care of, something for them to learn, to respect and to watch grow cause they’re the ones that are maintaining their garden box and taking care of it. I think that’s a healthy way, some people don’t have a chance to have things to watch them grow, take pride in that.”* And to each other, *“it gets us more involved with each other, talking to one another you know. Just going to garden, it’s a good thing, talking to someone”*. Similarly to other traditional activities there is a social as well as a spiritual component, as well as a reciprocal exchange. Community members tend and care for the land, and in turn healthy foods are provided which nurture the self.

#### ***Lack of healthy food consumption and diabetes vs. consumption of healthy foods***

As with many of the factors, lack of healthy food consumption is a result of disconnection as well as a way for disconnection to occur. Destruction of the land as a result of industry has resulted in making traditional, healthy foods less accessible, *“You have to go up north now, where before you could see 17 [moose] in one night.*

Addictions and dependency also results in the inaccessibility of healthy foods, *“Some individuals don’t have food because they are on welfare, plus they spend their money someplace else like on booze or bingo.”* And *“It’s the cost because I have a job and I go shopping in the store and it gets quite expensive, and you are trying to buy healthy foods but it’s too pricey.”*

Food serves more of a purpose than for subsistence. The ingestion of food and food preparation provided a means to connect to the land, *“When I do my traditional Native cooking I do it outside in my fire pit, open fire.”* It can also have symbolic meaning and eating of a particular food can aid in producing a certain collective identity. As described by Sered (1988) in regards to Middle Eastern Jewish women. This was also noticeable in Ginoogaming. Bannock was extremely popular in the community and the only food deemed traditional that was easily accessible throughout the year. Similarly with engaging with the land, eating bannock was a way to be Anishnaabe.

Hunting, food preparation and eating can all be events that create social ties between the individual to the community. For example at traditional teachings week the cook shack was not only a place for cooking but it was also a place for people to gather. Consumption or preparation of a similar food source at a later day can also produce food memories for an individual which reinforce these social ties. For example, within these food memories the individual may recall the social event in which they consumed the food, an outing on which the food was gathered or a conversation with a friend. Vennum (1988) noted that the Ojibway people associated the harvesting of wild rice with memories of a traditional camp and a community member associates eating beaver with fond memories, *“I hardly see anyone eating beaver today and bringing them home. Like back in the day my granny and grandfather used to always have beaver every Sunday we would be eating baby beaver sometimes big ones, and I miss that, that was good, mmmm”*.

Lack of healthy food consumption is a contributing factor to diabetes in the community. *Community members discussed the absence of wild foods at the initial*

*community garden meeting, and related this to higher rates of diabetes. One community member said, "Nobody grows anything anymore." Another discussed the medicinal properties of blueberries. The root of the blueberry plant can provide insulin and the leaves of the plant can be used to lower blood sugar levels. Yet another community member told of growing up in the bush. Her diet consisted of rabbit, moose, and berries such as blueberries, and there used to be no cancer and diabetes.*

Diabetes can affect the physical, *bending over to plant seeds in the garden was a challenge for some with diabetes. Everyday obstacles are also present such as getting into and out of a truck, and emotional wellness of an individual, "I just don't feel well enough to do anything"*. An individual who is not as physically or mentally well may face barriers to connecting to the community and land. For example they may not be able to attend community functions, participate in bush life or may be taken away from the community for medical treatment. Certain diet regimens may also be in existence for individuals with diabetes limiting their ability to engage in community meals, or to eat foods that are symbolic of a collective identity, such as fried bannock.

***Negativity surrounding First Nations peoples and a traditional way of life vs. positivism surrounding First Nations peoples and a traditional way of life***

Historically, the Western world's perception of First Nation peoples and their traditional ways of life was negative, *"We were perceived as savages, living in a savage world but yet we did have our own structure as a human race.* As a result of this "less than" view, direct measures were taken to disconnect First Nation peoples from their traditional way of life which encompassed the community and land. One way was through residential schools, *"People are just starting. Years ago they never had because*

*of the Indian residential schools. That's why some of us don't speak our language because I'm one of the ones that went to the boarding schools, 7 years old I first went to the boarding school."*

Currently, the overtly direct methods of assimilation are not taking place, but a negative view of First Nation peoples and traditional ways still persist and lead to the disconnect between individual, community and land, *"I guess the fact that when you don't have no sense of pride, because of mainstream society taking away your pride."*

Disconnection from the land, and community can occur when this 'less than' attitude is internalized. Social identity theory suggests that one way that a positive social identity can be obtained by a minority is by leaving their group and joining one that is deemed more valuable. There were various examples that placed Western society as the more valuable group. For example there are *no paved roads in Ginoogaming. The road leading out of Ginoogaming First Nation is unpaved, and from the local mill there is a lot of traffic from industrial vehicles, noise and air pollution.* A community member comments on the lack of infrastructure, *"Like some people would say geez no pride they don't give a shit but it's not that, it's you have to take everything in, where's the money to do this? To fix the roads, where is the money to change things? Well that becomes something that is not within the power of the community it's that patriarchal history of government keeping Native peoples dependent as much as they publicly say that they want independence the government from first contact right on to today and still going on have two aims: to keep us dependent and assimilate us."*

There are also examples of this transfer from an Anishnaabek way to a Western way occurring, *"There are probably one or two families that are not Catholic around*

*here.”, a community member commented that the few traditionalists keep their belief and practice to themselves, and are not open about it with the community and “I would like to see everything [in the community] that we see on TV because then they [the youth] won’t so much act like people in New York City or Toronto.”*

There was evidence that this negative perception of ‘the Indian’ was internalized. *A father told his son that he did not have to do work because he had a rez job and a woman felt she had to ‘dumb herself down’ so people did not call her an apple Indian.* This last example still carries the underpinnings of the enfranchisement act. If one recalls one of the conditions of enfranchisement was if an Indian was educated.

As a result of negative internalization a negative self identity is manifested which only encourages further disconnection, *“I hate telling people where I am from...how can you be proud of where you come from when you have houses that look like that.”* And *“I should say this is my own opinion about this, like they are not proud of being Native. Their self-esteem is gone, they’re just existing. I hate to say it.”*

Re-connecting with a traditional way of life can be a way to regain a positive self-identity and reconnect with the community and land. One way to reconnect is through traditional activities, *at the pow-wow youth carried themselves with more pride and respect when dressed in regalia. One girl was very worried that someone may step on her dress. Youth were sitting on blankets so that their regalia did not get dirty. Youth were seen adjusting their regalia. Before the main entrance one girl asked a woman if she could fix her shawl before the main entrance. and “When I was growing up I had lots of cultural activities going on, as a child growing up until I was a teenager and then for a number of years it stopped and then I slowly see it coming back. They [the youth] would*

*feel proud it would help them to feel proud of who they are, they would get their identity back cause I see a lot of these youth here that have no identity they don't know. They're messed up in the drugs and booze.*” As well as through knowledge of the history, *“It's not welfare it's not, those treaties mean something to them too, not only us. It lets them stay in Canada, they don't realize that.”* A knowledge of the history and participation in traditional activities can be a source of strength for an individual to reconnect, shed a different light on some of the negative perceptions that are in existence about ‘the Indian’ and the ‘Indian way of life’ as well as be a means of reconnection in itself.

### ***Conclusion***

Overall, a worldview of interconnectedness between the individual, community and land can provide a pathway to wellness which the community has defined broadly as a balance between emotional, spiritual, physical and mental aspects. An interconnected worldview allows space for spiritual relationships between the individual, community and land which fosters hope, respect and reciprocity. It is then essentially hope, respect and reciprocity that connect the individual, community and land and it is these connections that lead to wellness.

Thus, at its basic level the answer to the question, what impedes and enhances well-being in Ginoogaming, is simply disconnection and connection respectively. There were various factors in the community that served to connect and disconnect the individual from the community and the land. Contamination and destruction of the land, lack of healthy foods and diabetes were the main factors that caused a disconnection from the land. Lateral abuse, intergenerational transfer, addictions and lack of opportunity to connect were the largest barriers to connections within the local community, and issues

causing disconnection within the context of a larger community included cultural collision, structural dependency, and negative perceptions of First Nation peoples.

A traditional way of life was the greatest facilitator of connection, but was not always accessible as a result of a loss of traditional knowledge and various aspects of Westernization such as development. Bush life, ceremonies and traditional activities often played a dual role in connection, containing a social as well as a spiritual aspect which functioned to connect the individual to the land and community simultaneously.

### ***Future Directions***

This thesis has served to provide a deeper understanding of what wellness is and how it transpires in Ginoogaming First Nation. Essentially the argument is that interconnectedness between the individual, community and land results in wellness where as a disconnection between any of the three can result in a deteriorated state of well-being. It has also been revealed that interconnectedness is essential to wellness, because it allows hope and respect to resonate and encourages supportive reciprocal relationships between the individual, community and land.

What has not been revealed at large is how can connection occur? Throughout the paper the role of a traditional way of life has been offered as a suggestion to reconnection. Regaining aspects of a traditional way of life would be ideal, because it is entrenched with activities, ceremonies and a way of thinking that promote this interconnectedness, and it holds a deep history and meaning to those who are a part of that history. With that said, in this account of well-being we have also seen glimpses of cultural blending which is most prominent in discussions on the definition of well-being and cultural fluidity. Within these sections we see that cultural strands cannot be easily

untangled from one another, which in many cases creates negative outcomes, but can be positive when a fluidity of culture is observed. To provide a framework for wellness that suggests only a traditional way, denies the realities of community members, the fluidity of culture and puts forth a naïve view that we live in a post-colonial age in which First Nations peoples can easily return to the way things were. Thus, I would like to place emphasis on the function of the activities, ceremonies and way of thinking instead of on a traditional way of life itself. My intention here is to not to take anything away from a traditional way of life, but instead to provide an alternative route to wellness for those who cannot easily access aspects of a traditional way of living, or who are deeply entangled in various cultural strands.

There is evidence in the literature that non-traditional activities can serve to fulfill some of the functions of those that are traditional. For example, social leisure can be a means to facilitate interdependence and connectedness by placing emphasis on the importance of collective strengths for success (Iwaski & Bartlett, 2006). Social leisure was defined loosely including more structured events such as a pow-wow, but it also included sporting events, dancing and storytelling. Iwaksi and Bartlett (2006) found that it promoted identity, satisfaction and enjoyment of life as well as spiritual and emotional renewal.

Lavaleé (2007) had similar findings through the practice of martial arts. Participation in martial arts promoted a sense of community, relieved isolation and solidified identity, resulting in an overall better state of mental health. Strides were also made to incorporate aspects of the Native culture, and one participant in the program noted that he felt the same energy that he does when he is in the bush.



Although community gardens are a part of a traditional way of life, I feel the need to address their potential in promoting interconnectedness within this section for three reasons. Firstly, I feel that gardening has been an activity that has been Westernized and in the current day is rarely affiliated with Anishnaabe culture (especially in the north), and secondly because it is a venture that is happening in Ginoogaming and community members felt the potential for positive affects was great and had not reached its potential. Lastly, if reclaimed, gardening can be an activity that provides both the spiritual and social connections as other bush activities would, but may be a more sustainable activity due to the current destruction of the land.

A community garden can serve to connect the individual and the community in various ways. If it regains its traditional status, the act of gardening, like eating bush foods or hunting, can serve to provide a collective identity for the individual. Within LaDuke's (2005) account of recovering the sacred, a woman noted that her grandmother used to tell her that one cannot be a traditional Indian if they don't have a garden.

It can also bring people together, by being a common goal and source of pride for the community. Community gardens are reported to improve the attitudes of community members towards their community, increase social support and emphasis on informal networks, as well as increase levels of pride and the amount of litter picked up (Armstrong, 2000). Astbury and Rogers (2004) also found community gardening promoted a sense of community and social support but also found an increase in self respect and a decrease in criminal activity.

In regards to connection to the land, the physical act of gardening gets community members outdoors providing a superficial connection. Deeper connections can also arise

out of this reciprocal relationship of tending to the garden and in turn being provided with foods and medicines to ingest and prepare. Astbury and Rogers (2004) found that community gardening promoted wellness by getting people back to nature and working together and that an outdoor environment relieved anxiety, depression and promoted relaxation. There is also the most obvious benefit of providing fresh and accessible produce (Armstrong, 2000).

Essentially martial arts, leisure activities or community gardening can be a starting point to connection that may be more familiar to those who have had much of their traditional way of life taken. I am certain that more possibilities exist, as this commentary is only an introduction to possible directions. What I hope is taken from this discussion is that it is the underlying values of these activities that provide possibilities for the future of community wellness.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Interview Guideline Questions*

- 1) What does well-being mean to you?
- 2) What do you think well-being means to your community?
- 3) Describe your own well-being
  - a. Why would you describe it that way?
  - b. What would have to change to make it better or worse?
- 4) Describe your community's well-being
  - a. Why would you describe it that way?
  - b. What would have to change to make it better or worse?
- 5) How does the community affect your well-being?
- 6) Did the garden project have any affect on your well-being? If so how did it affect your well-being, if not why do you think it did not affect you?
- 7) How do your pictures represent well-being? Which ones capture the community's well-being the best?
- 8) Is there anything that you would change about the pictures that you took?
- 9) Have your relationships with other people changed as a result of the community garden project? If so, can you describe how?
- 10) Has the garden project been a catalyst for thinking about your cultural identity? If so, how?

### *Appendix B: Trip Schedule*

- Trip One: April 24, 2007, Initial Community Meeting at Ginoogaming
- Trip Two: May 10, 2007, Initial Community Meeting at Aroland
- Trip Three: May 25-26, 2007, Preparation for the Community Garden
- Trip Four: June 6-7, 2007, Planting the garden
- Trip Five: June 21-22, 2007, Observations
- Trip Six: June 27-28, 2007, Research Methods Workshop/Photo-voice commences
- Trip Seven: July 5-6, 2007, Photo-voice
- Trip Eight: July 26-27, 2007, Photo-voice (1<sup>st</sup> stream of cameras picked up)
- Trip Nine: August 2-3, 2007, Interviews commence
- Trip Ten: August 15-19, 2007, Traditional teachings week/pow wow weekend/photo-voice ends
- Trip Eleven: August 28-29, 2007, Interviews
- Trip Twelve: September 10-11, 2007, Interviews
- Trip Thirteen: September 21, 2007, Interviews
- Trip Fourteen: October 17, 2007, Interviews
- Trip Fifteen: November 21-22, 2007, Interviews
- Trip Sixteen: December 4-5, 2007, Interviews end
- Trip Seventeen: April 14-15, 2007, Presentation of results, interview transcriptions returned.

## *Appendix C: Photo-voice Instruction Sheet*

### **Photo Vision Instructions:**

Your job is to take pictures that you feel represent what you think health is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. As well as to take pictures that represent this in your community. The pictures can be of anything: people, places, things etc.. They can be pictures of things in their natural setting or you can set something up and take a picture of it as well. The pictures can also be of good health or bad health, or both. Whatever you think is a best representative of the community. It is all up to you because there are no right or wrong answers to this exercise. You can also take as many or as little pictures that you want. When you are done if a previous time has not been established just contact the research assistants and they will come and pick up the camera. You will then be contacted at a later date, when your pictures are developed to discuss them. This can be done in discussion groups or it can all remain anonymous if you like.

Some questions to think about when you are taking pictures:

How does food affect the health of our community?

Do you think the garden will help shape the health of the community? If so how?

How does ones relationship with the land and traditional teachings affect health?

How does ones relationship with other community members affect health?

*Appendix D: Consent Form*

(Letterhead)

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to take part in the in the qualitative study called Well-being, Social Capital and Cultural Identity in Cultivated and Woodland Gardens: A Qualitative Study in Two First Nations. As a volunteer, I will be sharing my knowledge about health and well-being within my community. I have read over the cover letter and understand the purpose of your research and what is expected from me.

I understand that I can refuse to answer any question, refuse to participate in any part of the research or withdraw entirely from the study at any time, even after signing this consent form without it affecting my participation in community garden events. **Furthurmore I understand that confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed within the focus groups, but that I have the option of an individual interview.** I also understand that the data collected will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. I have been provided with contact information for you and your co-supervisors at Lakehead University. Any information that is collected about me during this study will be kept confidential and if the results are published, I will not be identified in any way, unless I decide in a separate consent form to allow you to acknowledge my contributions to your thesis.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ **Guardian Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix E: Public Release Form*

(Lakehead University letterhead)

I \_\_\_\_\_ have consented to take part in the in the qualitative study called Well-being, Social Capital and Cultural Identity in Cultivated and Woodland Gardens: A Qualitative Study in Two First Nations. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, even after signing this consent form. I have been provided with contact information for you and your co-supervisors at Lakehead University. Any information that is collected about me during this study will be kept confidential and if the results are published,

I have decided to allow you to acknowledge my contributions to your thesis. Please identify my contributions as

\_\_\_\_\_.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Third Party Witness

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## *Appendix F: Cover Letter*

(Lakehead University Letterhead)

### **Research Title: Well-being, Social Capital and Cultural Identity in Cultivated and Woodland Gardens: A Qualitative Study in Two First Nations**

Dear potential participant and/or parents/guardians,

My name is Lana Ray. I am a graduate student completing a Master of Public Health at Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario. P7B 5E1. Phone (807) 343-8110. Dr. Connie Nelson, Department of Social Work and Dr. Mirella Stroink, Department of Psychology are supervising the research.

As part of the requirements for my degree, I am completing a thesis. I am interested in doing my research with the members of Ginoogaming First Nations and Aroland First Nations, as I am from a neighbouring First Nation, Red Rock First Nation. The topic that I am interested in is how people define their well-being and why.

More specifically, I am interested in learning if and if so, how the garden project has changed your views on your own community's well-being and if cultural identity or social capital helped you to do this. There are many meanings for the word social capital but within this research social capital refers to how close and supportive members of the community are with one another. I am also interested in if the garden project did not change your views on your community's well-being, and why not.

The purpose of my research is to learn from you about what well-being means to you, why well-being means this to you, and how the meaning came about. As a volunteer and community member, you would be assisting me in gathering this information. **The active role community members would have would be to take photographs of what they feel are representations of health and wellness, and then to discuss these photos in focus groups or if uncomfortable, in individual interviews. This process would occur twice. Once at the beginning of summer and once at the end.** We can decide to what extent you wish to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions or to participate in any part of the research, and at any time if you no longer want to participate that is fine and it will not affect your participation in any of the garden activities. When possible and appropriate I will gather the information on a digital voice recorder. At other times, I will take print notes. I see no risks to your participation as all information is to be kept confidential. All data will be gathered and handled in such a way as to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

When all the data is collected it will be used for my thesis, as well as for publication within a journal. A final copy of my thesis will be stored with one of my two supervisors

for 7 years. I will also be providing your community with a copy of the thesis and the publication when they are complete.

I am interested in spending time with you so that you can share with me your knowledge about well-being and what this means to you.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (807) 683-7630 or [lray@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:lray@lakeheadu.ca), my co-supervisors Connie Nelson (phone) and Mirella Stroink (phone) or Ethics Chair (phone).

Sincerely,

Lana Ray



*Appendix G: Photo-voice Form 1*

<b>Participant Number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>

**Camera Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix H: Photo-voice Form 2*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Photo Number</b>
	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
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	11
	12
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	25
	26
	27

**Camera Number** \_\_\_\_\_

*Figures*

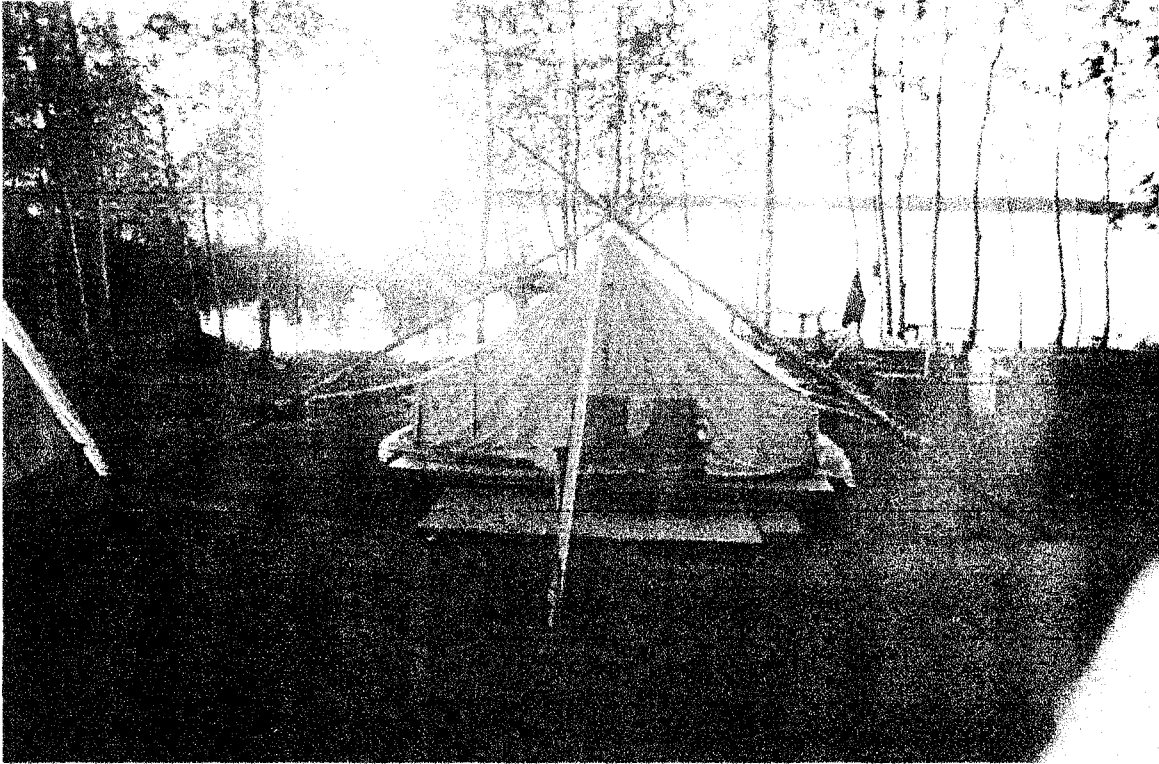


Figure 1. Picture portraying a traditional way of life through the prospector tent and outside cook station behind the tent.



Figure 2. Picture of a storm cloud coming over Ginoogaming territory.



Figure 3. Picture of the sun setting on Long Lake when the water is calm.



Figure 4. Picture of a windy day and rough waters at Long Lake.

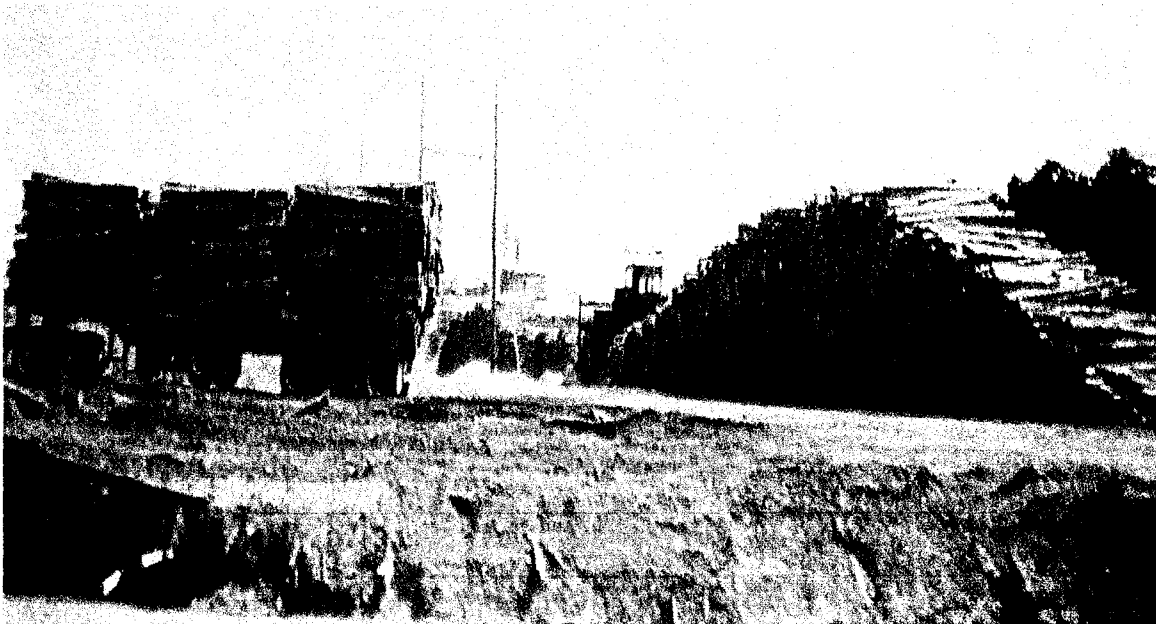


Figure 5. Picture of the local mill which is located beside Ginoogaming First Nation.

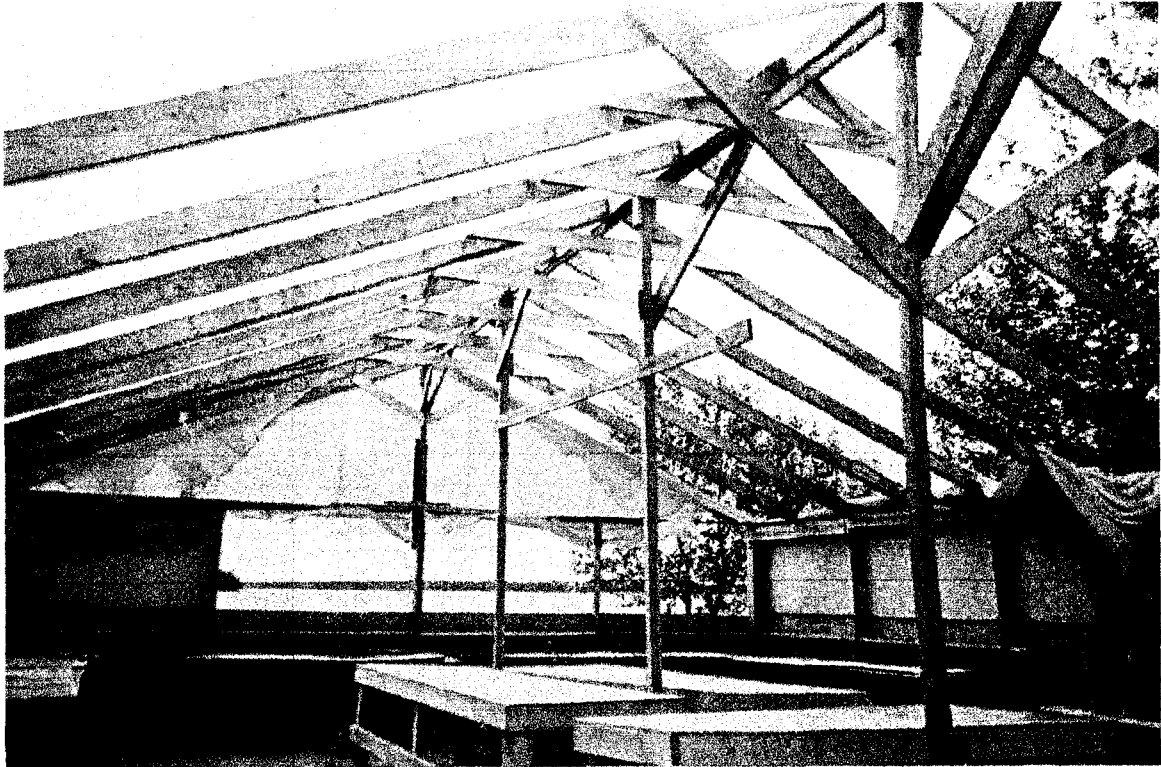


Figure 6. Picture of the cook shack that is located at the pow-wow grounds and used to prepare community feasts during traditional teachings week and the annual pow-wow.

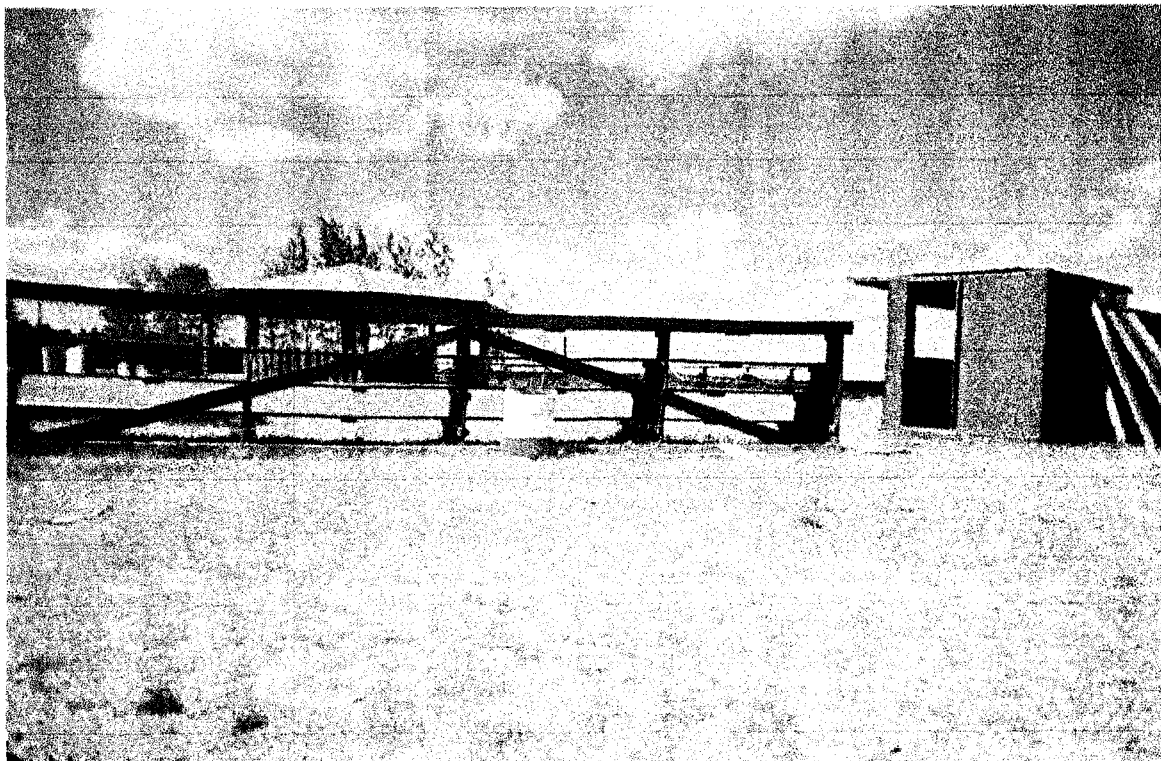


Figure 7. Picture of the arbour, where dancers, drummers and spectators gather during pow-wow time.

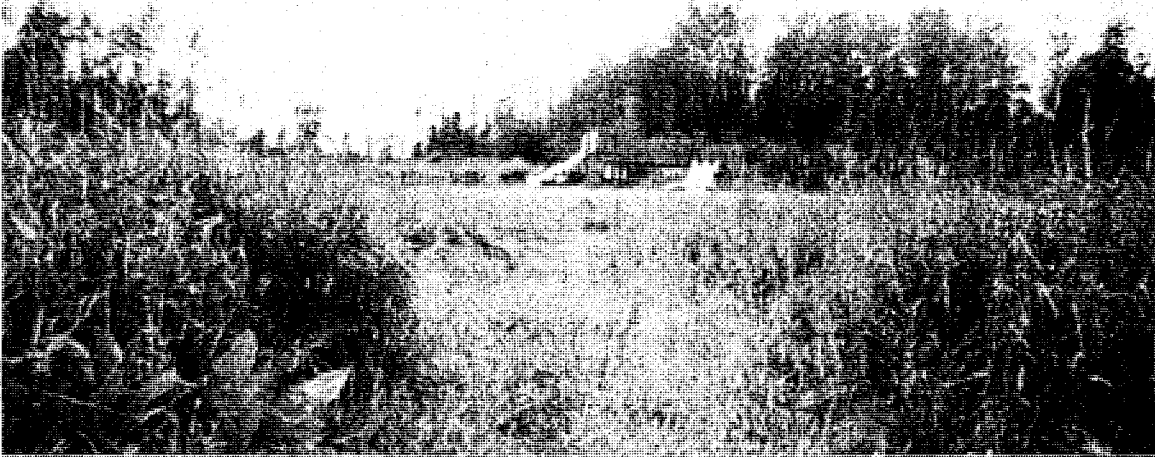


Figure 8. Picture of the playground for youth in the community, located behind community member's houses.



Figure 9. Picture of a condemned house in the community that has been spray-painted on.



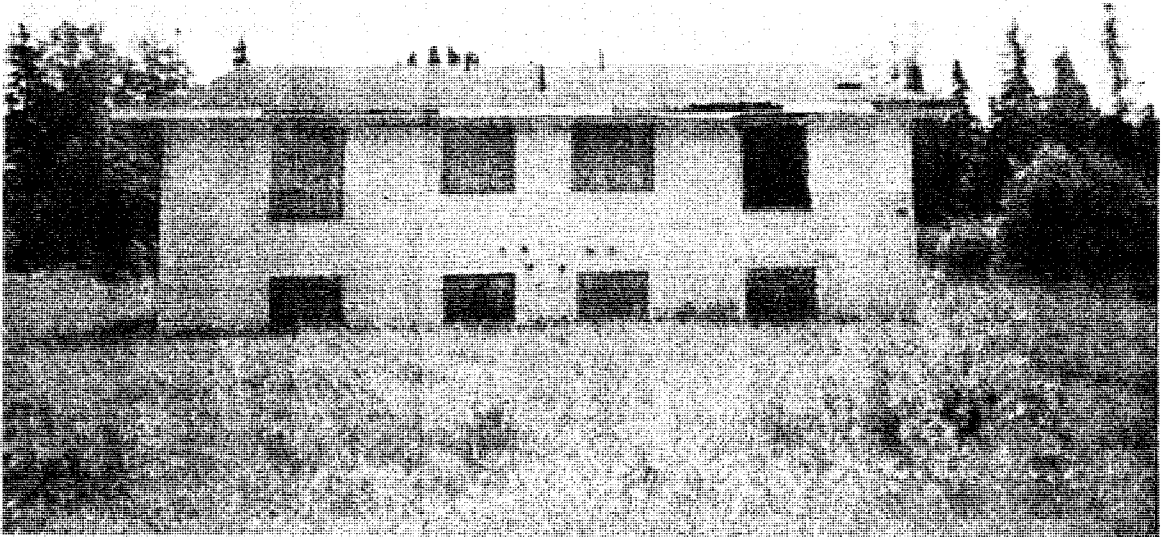


Figure 10. Picture of a condemned apartment duplex. It has been burned down since this photo was taken.



Figure 11. Picture of a condemned house in the community.



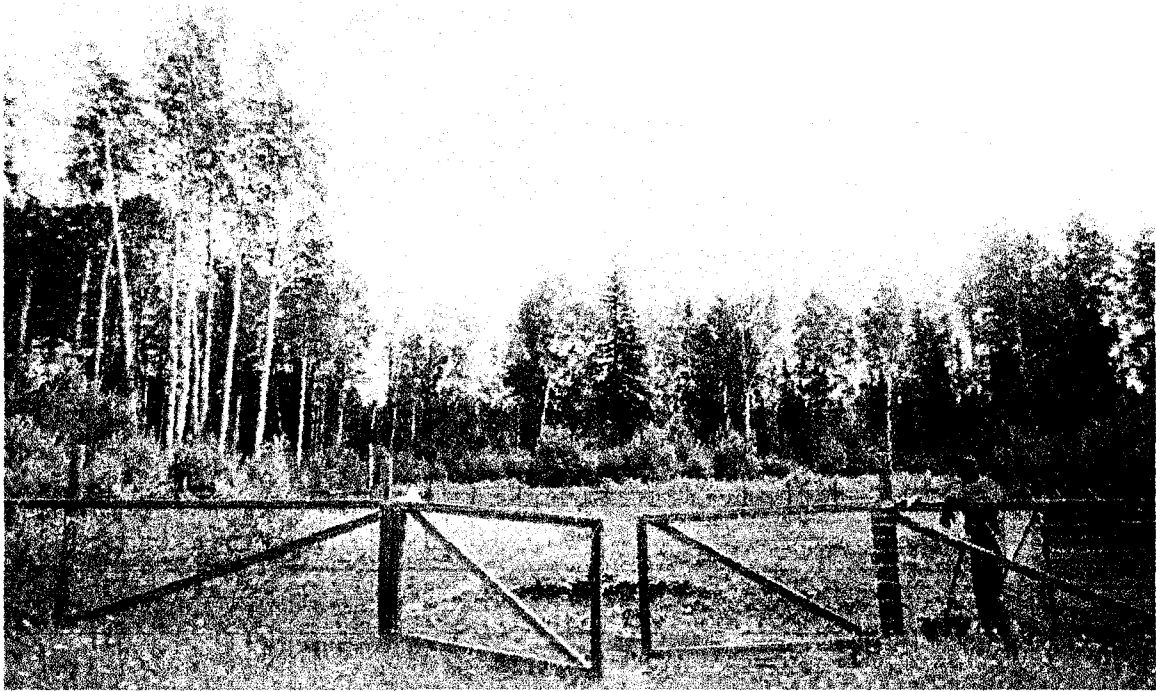


Figure 12. Picture of the community garden that is located at the pow-wow grounds.



Figure 13. Picture of a garden box on the lawn of a community member.



Figure 14. Picture of a sole raspberry on a raspberry bush.

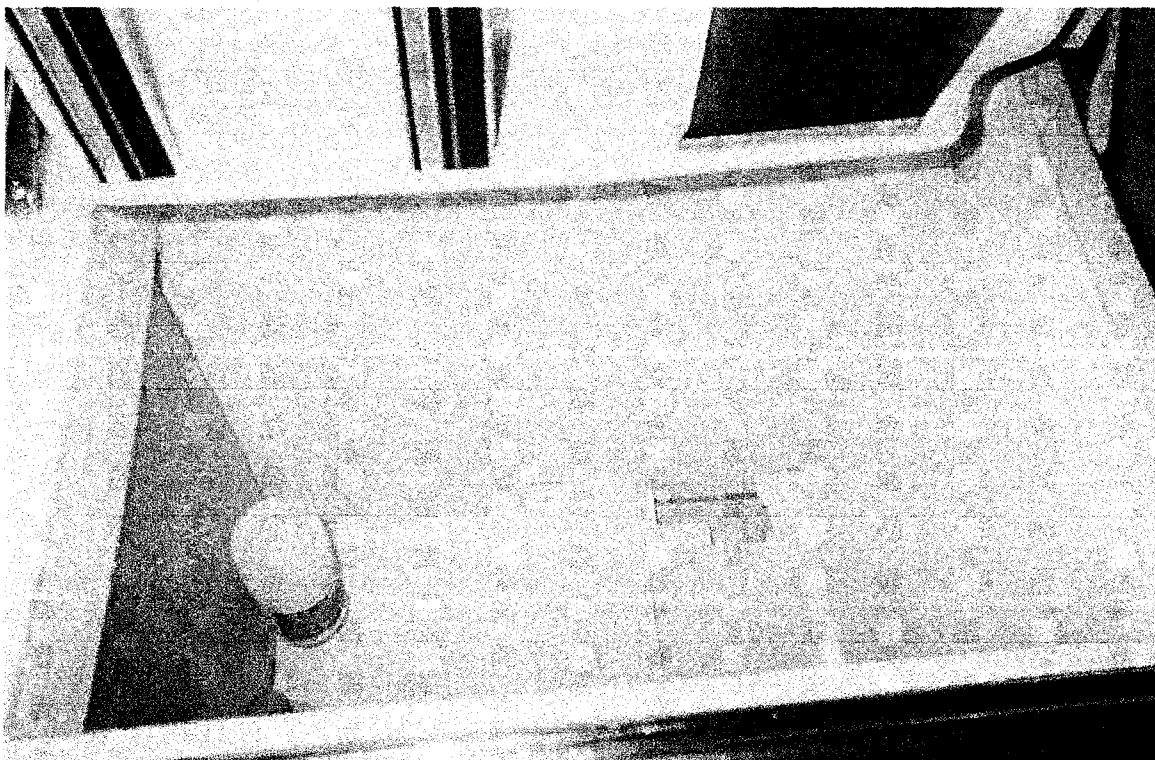


Figure 15. Picture of a fridge that is empty except for two water bottles.

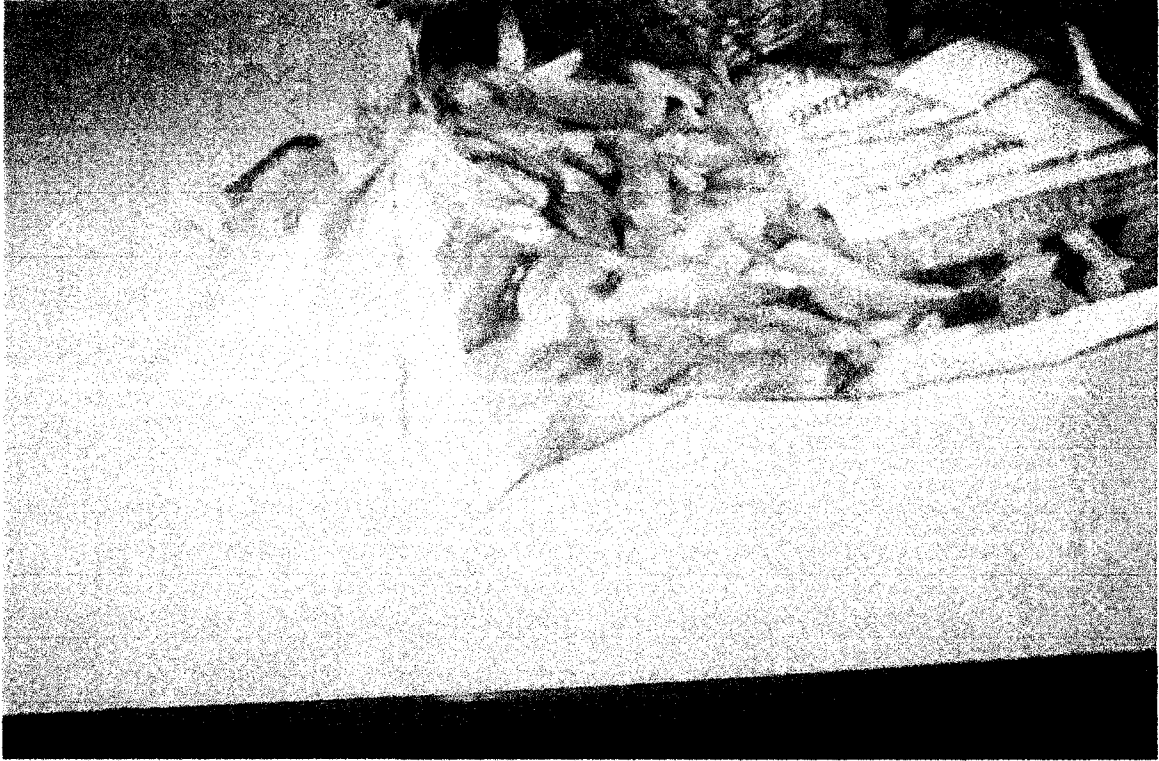


Figure 16. Picture of a bag of frozen vegetables.



Figure 17. Picture of a bag of chips, a bottle of pop and a pack of cigarettes.



Figure 18. Picture of a section of the community and the unpaved road that runs through it.



Figure 19. Picture of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was present in a community member's home.





Figure 20. A picture of the turtle monument that was erected in memory of past community members.

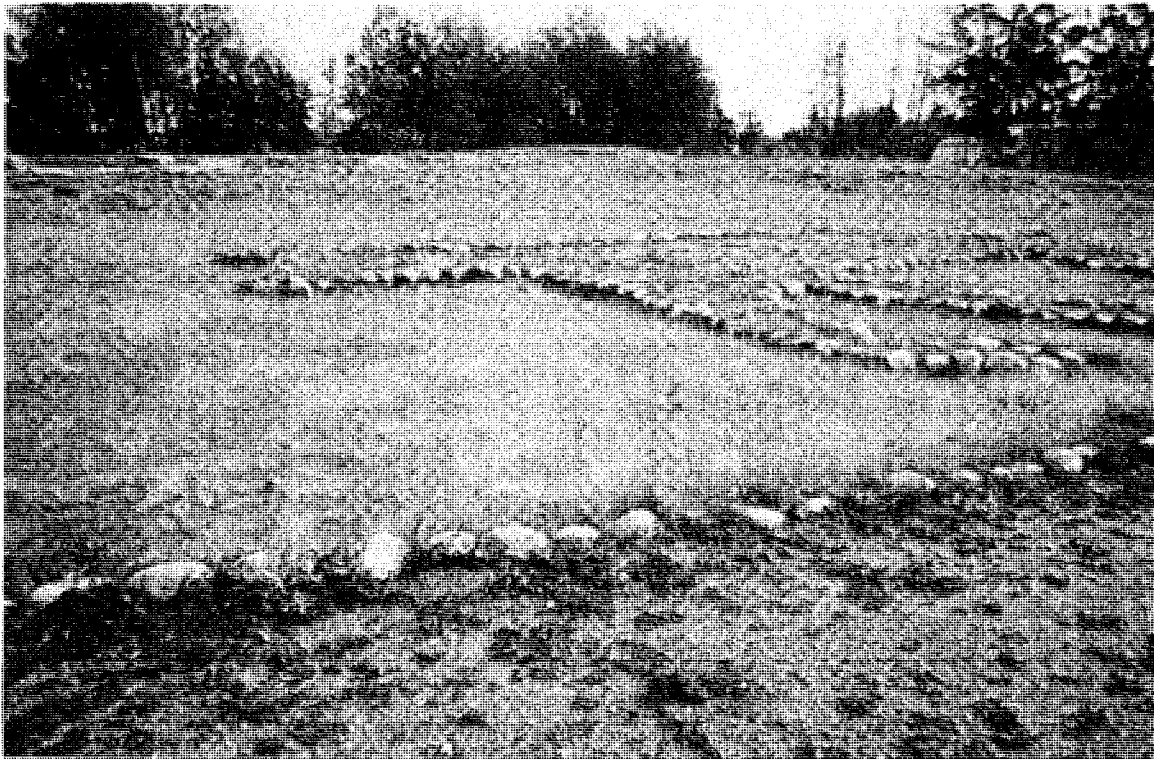


Figure 21. Picture of the artwork that appears on the turtle monument.



Figure 22. Picture of two eagles on a garbage box, which won a prize in the community's garbage box painting competition.



Figure 23. Picture of a drum, a dream catcher and a medicine bag, which are all traditional aspects of the Anishnaabe culture