

**“It Was Your Ancestors That Put Them There and They Put Them There For You”:
Exploring Indigenous Connections to Mazinaabikiniganan as Land-Based Education**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in
Education

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Abstract

This study explored Indigenous connections to mazinaabikiniganan (more commonly known as rock art or pictographs) and investigated how these sites contribute to land-based education.

Focused on the community of Batchewana First Nation and their relationship to the mazinaabikinigan of Agawa Rock located within Lake Superior Provincial Park, this study used snowball sampling to identify six knowledgeable community members who shared their stories, knowledge, and understanding of the mazinaabikiniganan as well as other sites of significance within their traditional territory. Using storywork and conversation as method, data was gathered through conversations held with community members rather than formal interviews. The stories collected indicate that mazinaabikiniganan must be understood from within a larger frame of reference, emphasizing the importance of geographical, political, and historical context. Additionally, stories showed the ceremonial and spiritual significance of place, affirmed Aboriginal rights and sovereignty within traditional territory, and highlighted the importance of life-long learning and decolonizing education. The thesis weaves together the findings and discussion to provide a cohesive picture of how the community values and perceives this site and concludes with recommendations on the pedagogic potential of mazinaabikiniganan on a broader scale.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of so many people. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Constance Russell, not only for her knowledge and insight, but for her cheerleading, reassurances, and understanding. I would also like to thank Dr. Kristin Burnett, my committee member, for her time and feedback. Thanks as well to Dr. Paul Cormier, my internal examiner and Dr. Alex Wilson, my external examiner, for their generosity, time, feedback, and support. Thank you to all in facilitating the completion of this thesis.

I need to extend the biggest thank you to the community of Batchewana First Nation and all those that welcomed and shared their stories with me. Miigwech to Dean – you are a busy man, doing good things for your people. I say Miigwech for introducing me to your community and your Elders and for sharing some of your wisdom with me. Miigwech also to Rodney, Irene, Greg, Percy, and Marian. I am humbled by your generosity and will cherish your teachings and stories for the rest of my life. I have learned so much more than what this thesis can contain.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who encouraged and supported me. Miigwech to my momma, for forging a path and showing me what is possible. Miigwech to my dad for helping me keep things in perspective. Miigwech to my partner, Shiishiip, my walking sounding board. Were it not for your seemingly innocuous comment, this research would probably not have happened.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Description of Research Study

My research explores mazinaabikiniganan¹ (more commonly known as rock art or pictographs) as a site for critical inquiry that can challenge dominant ways of knowing within education and where Indigenous peoples can reclaim histories, presence, and understandings of the world that have been disrupted through policies and acts of settler-colonialism.

This research focused on the community of Batchewana First Nation and their relationship to the mazinaabikiniganan of Agawa Rock, located within Lake Superior Provincial Park. Imbued with layers of meanings and connections for both Indigenous peoples and settler society, this site represents the intersection of two worlds. My thesis research, however, focused on how this site is valued from within an Indigenous paradigm and how mazinaabikiniganan at this site may be seen as a form of Indigenous knowledge that remains relevant today. In addition, this research sought to understand how mazinaabikiniganan and their attendant knowledge may be incorporated into Indigenous education. Through reclaiming and revitalizing the knowledge embedded within mazinaabikiniganan, Indigenous peoples can come to know their history as active figures on the land, rekindle or affirm relationships with water, land, and beings that occupy place, and offer an alternative story to the one typically presented in educational curriculum thereby challenging dominant ways of knowing.

¹ Colson (2006) takes issue with use of the term rock art, stating, “the term 'art' is problematic because it suggests that these images have primarily a decorative value and no intrinsic value or meaning of their own” (p.3). In keeping with this line of thought and in an effort to place these images within the fold of Indigenous knowledge, the Anishinaabe term “mazinaabikinigan”(sing.) and “mazinaabikiniganan” (pl.) is used throughout this paper. Other Anishinaabe words are used throughout this thesis but I have refrained from italicizing or otherwise setting them apart in the text because I feel that to do so is to set them apart as “other” which is not my intention. Additionally, I have adhered to the double-vowel writing system for consistency. For the most part, literal translations of Anishinaabe words are not given unless the general meaning is unclear from the context. Cordova (2007) recognizes that not all cultures and languages share the same concepts. As such, some Anishinaabe concepts cannot be translated into English and to attempt to do so only highlights the incommensurability of language.

Critical Indigenous methodology informs this qualitative study, using an Indigenous storywork method to explore community perspectives on mazinaabikiniganan within their traditional territory. Through individual qualitative interviews, I engaged in conversation with community members regarding their knowledge, understandings, and teachings surrounding the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa. A storywork method allows participants to direct the conversation towards what they feel is important to share and understand, which acts as a “way of recovering the voices of suppressed groups” (Thomas, 2005, p. 244). Rather than making assumptions about what is important as the researcher, I wanted to create room for important themes to emerge by openly engaging with the community. I analyzed the stories that were shared according to themes that emerged in order to tell the larger story of the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa from the various perspectives of Batchewana First Nation community members to provide insight into how mazinaabikiniganan are perceived and valued within this Indigenous community and to explore their pedagogical potential.

Personal Background

I am an Anishinaabe woman from the Pic Mobert First Nation. Within Indigenous cultures, storytellers are highly respected for story is one of the many ways that we gain knowledge. As Wilson (2008) writes, “it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling... [W]hen listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller’s life, it makes the absorption of knowledge that much easier” (p. 32). I hope that by sharing aspects of myself in relation to my research, readers may gain a better understanding of the story I am trying to tell.

My home community lies midway between Lake Nipigon and Agawa Bay, both home to some of the most significant mazinaabikiniganan in Northwestern Ontario. Growing up, I spent a lot of time travelling between Thunder Bay, Pic Mobert, and Sault Ste. Marie, giving little

thought to my ancestors who may have travelled those same routes in the past. It was only after my second visit to Agawa Bay, one of the most visited and accessible mazinaabikiniganan sites in Ontario, that I realized the landscape we travelled was visibly marked with stories of my people, from Agawa to Pukaskwa and Pays Plat to Lake Nipigon. Norder (2012) uses the image of the palimpsest to describe the layered meanings and historicity of landscape. While my own family travelled across this landscape, interacting and creating memories of place, this same landscape held the stories of my ancestors who travelled along the same routes.

These stories were never taught to us in school and I never learned to see myself as connected to this palimpsest of landscape. The lessons on “Aboriginal” peoples I received throughout elementary and secondary school were always broad and generic discussions of issues ranging from the First Thanksgiving to the Oka crisis or a lesson on the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. This left me with the impression that there were *those* Aboriginal peoples alive today (including myself) and *those* Aboriginal peoples of long ago, and these were two mutually exclusive groups. The idea that the people of long ago, with their stories, songs, language, and knowledge, continue to endure today is rarely affirmed in Euro-Western education. As an example, many mazinaabikiniganan have stood the test of time but I was not made aware of their existence until well into my university education. Like Kapyrka and Dockstater’s (2012) students, I asked, “Why were we not taught this before?” (p. 106).

Wanting to know more and fueled by a sense of injustice, I approached Professor Dennis McPherson, from the Department of Indigenous Learning at Lakehead University, and asked him what he thought of mazinaabikiniganan and how these facets of our history and culture could so easily go unacknowledged. McPherson suggested that I could read a book on the subject and directed me to Dewdney and Kidd’s (1967) *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes*. This answer did not satisfy me and I explained that reading a book written by non-Indigenous authors

was not going to solve the problem. Where were the books written from an Indigenous perspective? Where could I learn about our own communities' understandings of these places? I was tired of having to rely on the words of non-Indigenous researchers, anthropologists, and historians to learn about my history.

Hester and McPherson (1997) discuss this issue of Euro-Western academics being seen as “authorities” on Indigenous knowledge:

To the extent that these books are authored by Euro-Americans... there is the potential for them to be perceived as the authorities on Indigenous philosophy. This tragic irony is already well underway. Many Indigenous people are reading these books... seeking to understand themselves and their histories. Though some do so quite critically, many assume that these books... would not be offered if they were not authoritative. (p. 6)²

There is a danger in relying solely on non-Indigenous peoples as authorities on our own philosophies. My discussion with McPherson ended with him directing me to *do something* about this in relation to my interest in mazinaabikiniganan – that is, to provide an Indigenous voice on the subject rather than relying on the “authority” of non-Indigenous researchers.³

As salient features of the landscape, mazinaabikiniganan are reminders of Indigenous presence and knowledge. I propose that these images and the stories they tell are part of a rich epistemological tradition that connects Indigenous peoples to land, history, and cultural identity. By examining how this knowledge has been purposely excluded or erased through acts of settler-colonialism, we can better see the need for Indigenous peoples to reclaim and revitalize this knowledge within our communities. As an Anishinaabe woman travelling amongst and between

² APA guidelines stipulate that block quotations should be double-spaced. However, I have chosen to single-space block quotations throughout this thesis to improve readability and, most importantly, to make participant narratives in the Findings and Discussion chapters stand out.

³ While I am critical of non-Indigenous scholars writing about Indigenous philosophies, worldviews, and cultural sites, I acknowledge that Dewdney and Kidd (1967) and other non-Indigenous sources provide relevant and specific information relating to mazinaabikinigan sites such as location and numbers of images.

these sites of power, I hope to disrupt colonial narratives of empty wilderness and place our cultural knowledge firmly where it belongs: in the present.

Context and Rationale

The subject of Indigenous knowledge has always been contentious within the Euro-Western academic setting. In recent years, the topic has begun to gain more currency due to the efforts of Indigenous scholars in the academy (Battiste, 2002; Hampton 1995; Simpson, 2002; Smith, 1999). What is increasingly recognized is the systemic exclusion of Indigenous peoples and the knowledge they hold from mainstream Euro-Western education at all levels (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Doxtator, 2011). Further, it has been acknowledged that there is a wide gap in academic achievement between First Nations students and their settler counterparts (Ball, 2004; Mendelson, 2008; St. Denis, 2011a), which is most commonly attributed to a theory of cultural deficit⁴ (Hermes, 2005; St. Denis, 2011a) but forcefully challenged by critical Indigenous education scholars (Battiste, 2005; Hampton, 1995; Smith, 1999; St. Denis, 2011a). Often missing in Euro-Western narratives is the acknowledgement that Indigenous peoples have long had their own sources of knowledge and ways of learning about the world.

My research looks at mazinaabikiniganan as one example of the many epistemic traditions that endure in First Nations communities today. This study will provide insight into the domains of Indigenous knowledge that are embedded within mazinaabikiniganan, describe how the history of Indigenous peoples has been erased through colonial narratives, and provide a

⁴ Cultural deficit theory is “the perspective that minority group members are different because their culture is deficient in important ways from the dominant majority group” (Song & Pyon, 2008, p. 217). In this sense, Indigenous culture (or the lack of it) is blamed for poor academic performance, rather than examining the roles of larger systemic issues like racism.

rationale for the reclamation and inclusion of this knowledge within a contemporary, holistic education system.

Research Questions

My research sought to give voice to Indigenous people while exploring how Indigenous communities value mazinaabikiniganan and the knowledge they hold. Specifically, this research asked:

1. How are mazinaabikiniganan valued in Indigenous communities today and in what ways are they seen as a dynamic and relevant form of Indigenous knowledge?
2. How might mazinaabikiniganan and the knowledge they embody act as a form of critical, Indigenous land-based education?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Indigenous peoples have struggled and endured under Euro-Western dominance for centuries. A new struggle taken up by Indigenous scholars is the reclamation and centering of Indigenous knowledge systems and having this knowledge recognized as its own valid form of epistemology (Battiste, 2005; Dei, 2011; Simpson, 2011; Wane, 2013). For too long, systems of Indigenous knowledge have been explored through the fragmentary Euro-Western discourses of anthropology, art history, science, or cultural studies, and always through a historical lens suggesting that Indigenous peoples and the knowledge they hold are things of the past (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Burkhart, 2004).

A developing field of research revolves around the development of Indigenous education as *sui generis*, a thing unto itself, not defined by Euro-western systems or pedagogies, but as an education system created by and for Indigenous peoples (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Simpson, 2011). Deloria Jr. (2004) cautions against comparing Indigenous and Euro-Western knowledge by stating, “great care must be taken to identify tribal societies and Western thinking as being different in their approach to the world but equal in their conclusions about the world” (p. 5). By doing so, space is created for Indigenous knowledge to co-exist with Western ways of thinking rather than allowing one to dominate the other.

A key part of Indigenous education is the reclamation and revitalization of Indigenous knowledge practices. Battiste (2005) asserts that Indigenous knowledge “reconceptualizes the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples, and underscores the importance of their own philosophies, heritages, and educational processes” (para. 10). Similarly, Wane (2013) posits that, “Indigenous education challenges us to push and explore knowledge gaps, while speaking back to the West’s definitional power over what counts as valid knowledge” (p. 99).

Certainly, mazinaabikiniganan have rarely been explored as a form of valid knowledge for Indigenous communities. Frequently in the subjects of archaeology and anthropology research, mazinaabikiniganan are studied as static, unchanging artifacts created by a culture that no longer exists. My study attempted to disrupt settler-colonial discourse on Indigenous education by providing an exploration of mazinaabikiniganan as a relevant source of Indigenous knowledge that persists today. Due to the cyclic nature of Indigenous philosophical traditions, in the following sections of the literature review, I move back and forth between prevalent themes of Indigenous education and mazinaabikiniganan as Indigenous knowledge, all the while critically examining the ongoing effects of settler-colonialism on Indigenous communities. This review begins with a discussion of what Indigenous knowledge is, followed by the prevalence and history of mazinaabikiniganan within Northwestern Ontario, how mazinaabikiniganan are an embodiment of Indigenous knowledge, how connections to knowledge and place have been compromised through settler-colonialism, and the emergence of Indigenous environmental education. It concludes with a look at the role mazinaabikiniganan can play in contemporary contexts.

Contextualizing Indigenous Knowledge

To understand mazinaabikiniganan as a form of Indigenous knowledge, it is important to discuss exactly what is meant by Indigenous knowledge. Generally, there is no consensus on a clear definition within the literature. Indeed, because Indigenous peoples and nations vary widely in their worldviews, cultures, and philosophies, it is difficult to arrive at a universal definition (Hart, 2007). Battiste and Henderson (2000) claim that “comprehensive definitions cannot contain the diversity of Indigenous peoples or their knowledge” (p. 41) and argue that to construct such a definition is an imposition of Euro-western arrogance. Other scholars who discuss the difficulty in creating a universal definition offer a generalized interpretation of the

term, focusing on elements of commonality (Dei, 2011; Deloria Jr., 2004; Hart, 2007). Instead of identifying *what* Indigenous knowledge is, scholars and researchers typically turn to identifying the concepts that *characterize* Indigenous knowledge.

For many, a distinguishing feature of Indigenous knowledge is its holistic nature (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hart, 2007; Shroff, 2011; Simpson, 2011; Wane, 2008). According to this principle, knowledge cannot be compartmentalized or separated from context (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Simpson (2011) posits that in order to access knowledge, one must engage one's whole being: mind, body, and spirit. Thus, rather than examining knowledge from within distinct disciplines (i.e., art, science, history, philosophy), Indigenous knowledge systems engage these disciplines together (Hart, 2007). The holistic nature of knowledge results in engagement at all levels, from individuals to families to entire communities (Wane, 2008). This holism also refers to the acknowledgement of relationships and the belief that everything is connected (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Ray & Cormier, 2012; Shroff, 2011; Wane, 2008).

Indigenous knowledge requires creating and maintaining relationships not only with self, family, and community, but also with land and "other living beings and spirits that share their lands" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 42). Indigenous peoples consider wind, rocks, water, plants, and animals to be equal beings in this world, each with the same capabilities for thought and action as any human being (Deloria Jr., 2004; Overholt & Callicott, 1982). As such, Indigenous peoples have long cultivated relationships with these beings. Whether hunting, fishing, gathering, or praying, activities and ceremonies are carried out with the thought of creating balance and respecting these beings in the world (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Overholt & Callicott, 1982; Simpson, 2011). This interaction and exchange is part of what allows us to know what we know. Simpson (2011) asserts that knowledge is accessed "through the quality of our relationships" (p. 42), indicating that if any of these relationships are not properly maintained

or respected, knowledge becomes limited. Hart (2007) claims that the holistic nature of Indigenous knowledge allows for the inclusion of both physical and spiritual realms “since there is no division between science and spirituality” (p. 84) in Indigenous thought. Simpson (2014) supports this perspective by stating, “knowledge originates in the spiritual realm, coming to individuals through dreams, visions, and ceremony” (p. 10).

Indigenous knowledge is also said to originate from the land, which is one of its most important distinguishing features. Indeed, one of the main aspects of Indigenous knowledge is that it is centered on localized relationships to the land. Battiste (2005) clarifies that this relationship is “not to land in general but to particular landscapes, landforms, and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated” (para. 42). Basso (1996), in his study amongst the Western Apache, was told, “All these places have stories” (p. 48), and it is through these stories that relationships are revisited and affirmed. Moreover, specific sites and places are imbued with power that shape and influence human understandings of the world (Basso, 1996; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). For many scholars, land is seen as “the ultimate source of knowledge” (Hart 2007, p. 84; see also Dei, 2011; Simpson, 2011, 2014).

Indigenous knowledge entails experiential learning, which demands the ability to construct meaning through direct experience. In Western epistemology, a theory is created and tested empirically. Instead of empirically testing hypotheses, Indigenous peoples reflect on their own lived experiences to determine truths (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Burkhart, 2004; Deloria Jr., 2004). Deloria Jr. (2004) acknowledges that for Indigenous peoples, truth is a matter of perception and is arrived at through lived experience. Therefore, Indigenous knowledge allows room for different perspectives built on each person’s subjective experience. When considered collectively, these experiences form Indigenous knowledge.

Mazinaabikiniganan as Indigenous Tradition

The ideas of holistic experience, relationships with land and other-than-human beings, and knowledge that originates from the land can be applied to understandings of mazinaabikiniganan, placing them firmly within the firmament of Indigenous knowledge. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full analysis of Anishinaabe metaphysics, it is important to situate mazinaabikiniganan within such an Indigenous knowledge framework.

Mazinaabikiniganan have been typically examined through a historical lens in the various disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, and art history. Described by Dewdney and Kidd (1967) as “the mysterious red markings of the aborigine” (p. 5) and by Clottes (2008) as “the only concrete intelligible expression...of lost indigenous civilizations” (p. 1), the prevailing attitudes of Western scholars is made plain. Mazinaabikiniganan are presented as mysterious or unknowable and often attributed to cultures that no longer occupy the landscape. These disciplines have a long history of attempting to understand who created these images and for what purpose, working under the assumption that this knowledge is on the brink of being, or already has been, lost forever (Clottes, 2008).

Prevalence and endurance in Northwestern Ontario. Typically occurring on vertical cliff faces near lakes and rivers, mazinaabikiniganan are physical markings on the landscape that attest to Indigenous occupation and mobility (Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967; Norder, 2012; Rajnovich, 1994). Archaeology studies have indicated that red ochre, or onaman, the pigment primarily used in the creation of these images, has been in use for at least 7,000 years within the Great Lakes region and that the tradition of mazinaabikiniganan in Ontario may be up to 2,000 years old (Colson, 2006; Rajnovich 1994). Those who have studied mazinaabikiniganan often comment on the remarkable durability of the images painted with onaman. In Dewdney and Kidd’s (1967) survey of the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa, they note that these images have

been exposed to the most extreme weather for at least a century and a half, and yet they remain clearly discernable. Conway (2010) makes a similar observation and indicates that over time, minerals are washed over the images as run-off, leaving deposits that seal in the pigment, effectively staining the rock red.

According to Rajnovich (1994), Ontario is home to at least 400 of these sites in all. Most are to be found between Lake Superior and Manitoba, where Dewdney (1967) surveyed and recorded 152 sites. At each site there are multiple images; while some may contain a mere handful, others, like Agawa Rock, contain over a hundred (Conway, 2010). This prevalence and endurance indicates that mazinaabikiniganan were not simply art for art's sake but part of a larger framework of understanding that has existed for millennia.

Indigenous knowledge embodied within mazinaabikiniganan. The trend in anthropology and archaeology has been to focus on finding the meanings behind these images and determining who made them (Colson, 2006; Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967), rather than understanding what kind of knowledge they embody for Indigenous peoples alive today. Ethnographic data from Indigenous communities purport that people have little knowledge of exactly who created the mazinaabikiniganan or what the intended meanings are (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967; Norder, 2012; Wyndham, 2011). However, Norder (2012) claims that approaching understandings from a maker/meaning context is problematic since “the act of creation and specific meaning aren't necessarily the enduring aspects maintained in social memory” (p. 387). Dewdney and Kidd (1967) found that different information could be gleaned from Indigenous peoples when instead asked about the locations of paintings and associated geographical features.

I propose that to understand mazinaabikiniganan as a form of Indigenous knowledge, one must acknowledge that “we live in a 360 degree environment. Within this environment, the

living past, living future, and living connection in between are active. This environment is dynamic, interconnected, interdependent, and multi-dimensional” (Ray & Cormier, 2012, p. 169). Mazinaabikiniganan are a part of the living past and Indigenous peoples are a part of the living future. The knowledge that exists in both acts as the living connection, creating a dynamic, interconnected system that arises from experience on the land.

The images painted on rocks years ago are intimately connected to Indigenous people’s beliefs, legends, songs, histories, and collective identities. Battiste (2002) defines epistemology as “the theory of knowledge and pedagogy involving the process by which children come to learn or know” (p. 18). Therefore, one can argue that epistemology can be found in mazinaabikiniganan. In addition, mazinaabikiniganan can be considered as a part of Indigenous pedagogy when they are used as a tool for learning (Battiste, 2002).

Rajnovich (1994) states, “rock art occurs where the manitous[sic]⁵ lived” (p. 160). These places symbolize connections between the world above, the world below, and the earth in between, affirming the relationships between all things. Onaman, the pigment most often used, was considered a powerful medicine (Rajnovich, 1994), and is said to originate from the blood of a giant beaver that was hunted by thunderbirds long ago (Ray & Stevens, 1988). Sacred stories like this one “teach that Anishinaabe physical geography cannot be separated from the spiritual landscape of the region” (Bohaker, 2006, p. 38; see also Creese, 2011). Dewdney and Kidd (1967) suggest that the purpose behind the images was to convey messages – either to fellow persons or to other-than-human beings also occupying the land. Boone (2012) indicates that “the pictographs are mnemonics that cue knowledge already held in the memory of the historians” (p. 221). Moreover, Vizenor (2007) posits that mazinaabikiniganan “were created by visions and

⁵ A spirit, god, energy

sustained by stories” (p. ix). No matter how one states it, the message is clear that these paintings are intimately connected to the beliefs, stories, and histories of Indigenous peoples.

Mazinaabikiniganan are merely one record among many of Indigenous knowledges. For example, Battiste (1984) discusses the importance of wampum, notched sticks, petroglyphs, and pictographs as forms of Micmac literacy. Likewise, Boone (2012) firmly states that the recording systems of Indigenous peoples, such as wampum belts, winter counts, and mazinaabikiniganan “are inherently closer to indigenous epistemologies than are alphabetic documents, which by definition are trapped within the discourse structures of Europe” (p. 212). These systems are described as texts or literacies that represent the worldview of Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 1984; Boone, 2012) and catalogue “the immediate world of personal and tribal experiences” and “the spirit world evidenced through dreams, visions, and signs” (Battiste, 1984, p. 5).

Clearly, mazinaabikiniganan contain a tremendous wealth of Indigenous knowledge. They embody Indigenous people’s history and connection to place (Norder, 2012), aid in the remembrance of sacred stories and songs (Rajnovich, 1994), and depict Indigenous ways of understanding and organizing the world (Bohaker, 2006; Creese, 2011; Rajnovich, 1994). Given that Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and created through subjective experience (Dei, 2011), mazinaabikiniganan can still inform and teach Indigenous peoples valuable lessons through contemporary re-interpretations (Norder, 2012). Further, mazinaabikiniganan are reminders that the land still has much to teach us (Simpson, 2014).

Impacts of Settler-Colonialism

Indigenous peoples have had a long history of occupying the land that is now Canada, animating the landscape through traditional knowledge systems that encompass lived experiences and a strong attachment to land. However, Indigenous peoples and their knowledge have been systematically denied recognition through ongoing acts of settler-colonialism

(Barman, 2007; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; McLean, 2013). Settler-colonialism is defined as “a system of inequity and privilege that moves through time, claims geographic spaces, and is perpetuated through material and discursive epistemic practices in social and institutional spaces” (Kerr, 2014, p. 88). It has also been defined as a system that “destroys to replace” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388), requiring the elimination of Indigenous populations in order to create space for new settler populations and their economic endeavours on the land. In Canadian society, this has been accomplished through policies aimed at assimilating Indigenous peoples, the perpetuation of myths that justify the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the exclusion of Indigenous histories and knowledge from education curricula (Battiste, 2002; Castleden, Daley, Morgan, & Sylvestre, 2013; Dent 2013). In this section, I discuss how traditional knowledge systems have been compromised through settler-colonialism, making specific reference to mazinaabikiniganan.

Erasing and replacing. Through myths and stories, Canada is often portrayed as a vast and empty wilderness (Dent, 2013; McLean, 2013) occupied by a benevolent and multicultural society (Ahluwalia, 2012; Doxtater, 2011; St. Denis, 2011b). These myths erase and exclude Indigenous people’s presence, which “reinforces the conviction that Native peoples are vanishing and that the conquest of native lands is justified” (McLean, 2013, p. 359). By erasing community histories and senses of place, Indigenous communities become divided, replaced by “doctrines of individualism and predatory capitalism” (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 603).

Not only are Indigenous peoples and knowledges erased in a theoretical sense, but mazinaabikiniganan are also, quite literally, being erased from the landscape. Lemelin, Dampier, Makin, and Cross (2014) indicate that, “in cases where...petroglyphs have been found, these objects are often associated with a bygone era now subsumed by colonial narratives” (p. 178). In some places, mazinaabikiniganan have been lost due to hydro-electric projects that have flooded

lakes and waterways (Colson, 2006; Rajnovich, 1994). In other places, sites have become more accessible through tourism and outdoor exploration, leading to vandalism of sacred sites (Norder, 2012; Rajnovich, 1994; Tobias & Richmond, 2014). By associating mazinaabikiniganan with a bygone era or cultural periods that precede modern Indigenous occupation, Indigenous peoples have been “written out of the control of their cultural sites” (Ndlovu, 2009, p. 64), causing governments, archaeologists, and cultural heritage managers to step in as “owners” based on the assumption that “no-one can claim direct descent from the painters and engravers” (Jeursen, 1995, as cited in Ndlovu, 2009, p. 64). As a form of cultural heritage, mazinaabikiniganan have been appropriated by the settler population as symbols of Canada’s past (Barman, 2007; McLean, 2013; Wolfe, 2006) and valued for their ability to attract tourism (Boxall, Englin, & Adamowicz, 2002; Deacon, 2006; Ndlovu, 2009). Their potential to generate revenue for the state makes this particular form of Indigenous presence acceptable, which Barman (2007) refers to as “sanitized Indigeneity” where such sites “provide an encounter with Indigeneity safely removed from real life” (p. 28). By removing Indigenous presence from the land, mazinaabikiniganan become a blank slate for consumption by non-Indigenous peoples.

Environmental dispossession. It has already been determined that Indigenous knowledge arises from experience in specific locations and is often referred to as “land-based” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Dei, 2011; Simpson, 2014). Through settler-colonialism, Indigenous knowledge has been compromised through the gradual dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land. Historically, the reserve pass system acted to keep Indigenous peoples from accessing sacred sites and performing ceremonies on the land (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). In more recent times, resource extraction and development has served to limit access to land in much the same way (Lemelin et al., 2014; Tobias & Richmond, 2014). For Indigenous peoples in urban settings, land within the confines of a city is

often rendered invisible or not considered an authentic place for Indigenous people, knowledge, and history to thrive (Bang, Curley, Kessel, Marin, Suzukovich, & Strack, 2014; Freeman, 2010).

As well, scholars have indicated the importance of language in understanding Indigenous knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bang et al., 2014). English and Euro-Western terms are unable to communicate ontological differences in knowledge and often subsume Indigenous understandings and concepts (Bang et al., 2014). For instance, Indigenous place names of mazinaabikiniganan sites hold significant knowledge about the physical locations in which they are situated (Conway, 2010). To replace these names with English terms strips away some of the significance and ways of understanding these sites. As Battiste (2002) reminds us, “Indigenous languages structure Indigenous knowledge” (p. 17). Thus, the renaming of sites using English terms is another form of environmental dispossession and erasure for Indigenous peoples. This has, and could continue to have, profound material impacts. Tobias and Richmond (2014) found that Elders were concerned about how “increased limitations on access to the land would reduce its importance for future generations” (p. 29). The perceived lack of interest in heritage, knowledge, and language on the part of Indigenous youth has been noted as a cause for concern within Indigenous communities and has been attributed to systemic racism and education systems that do not value Indigenous knowledge systems nor connection to the land (Battiste, 2002).

Epistemic violence. Through the imposition of a “zero point epistemology”⁶ (Kerr, 2014), Indigenous knowledge has been devalued within Euro-Western education (Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Castleden, et al., 2013). Rather than acknowledge Indigenous

⁶ Zero point epistemology is defined as “an epistemological location that places a privileged knowing body as occupying a detached and neutral point of observation and from this neutral place ‘maps the world and its problems, classifies people, and projects what is good for them’” (Mignolo, 2011, as cited in Kerr, 2014, p. 89).

knowledge and Indigenous perspectives, for the most part, formal education at all levels perpetuates willful ignorance in order to maintain the status quo (Godlewska, Moor, & Bednasek, 2010; Kerr, 2014). In Canada, the production of knowledge and the cultivation of ignorance is anything but innocent or neutral, often serving the interests of settler-colonialism (Battiste, 2002; Godlewska et al., 2010; Kerr, 2014).

The question of “whose knowledge is validated in educational enterprises” (Battiste, 2002, p. 22) remains a critical one. Briggs (2013) asserts that despite major advancements in the development of Indigenous knowledge systems, “there still exists that pervasive sense that Indigenous knowledge cannot be trusted or valued unless it is approved by formal science” (p. 235). In addition, the lack of Indigenous content in high school curriculum often reflects the gaps and silences in university disciplines of history, geography, literature, etc. (Godlewska et al., 2010).

Efforts to address the formal educational achievement gap of Indigenous students typically lead to the development and implementation of culturally relevant or multicultural curriculum (Battiste, 2002; St. Denis, 2011b), which some would argue only serves to “limit meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspectives into public schools” (St. Denis, 2011b, p. 307). Often, the discourse of multiculturalism reduces cultures to their material forms (St. Denis, 2011b) and the desire to create a curriculum that fits all schools reduces the localized and dynamic nature of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2002; Briggs, 2013). There is also resistance on the part of most educators to address “difficult knowledge” (Kerr, 2014), including Canada’s history of colonialism, with many opting instead to ignore it, using multiculturalism to “defend public schools against the need to respond to Aboriginal education” (St. Denis, 2011b, p. 312).

Despite the dominion of settler-colonialism and the centering of Euro-Western knowledge systems, Indigenous peoples show continued resilience in their communities and demonstrate that Indigenous knowledge is not forgotten. In recent years, scholars have turned towards reclaiming Indigenous knowledge practices and revitalizing cultural processes through Indigenous education (Battiste, 2005; Simpson, 2011; Ray & Cormier, 2012). Indigenous education has been defined as: the re-centering of Indigenous knowledge (Pete, Schneider, & O'Reilly, 2013); education that “is blended, balanced and inclusive of both Western and Indigenous values and knowledge systems” (Garcia and Shirley, 2012, p. 78); and a self-determined system built on Indigenous cultural knowledge (Hampton, 1995). What these definitions have in common is the inclusion and valuing of Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies in contemporary settings. Dei (2011) reminds us, “what we seek to ‘reclaim’ is not actually something that has been lost, rather it has been intentionally marginalized. What we are reclaiming has always been around” (p. 27). As such, Indigenous scholars strive to bring philosophies, pedagogies, and ways of knowing from communities to the forefront of Indigenous education.

Simpson (2011) posits that Indigenous peoples can flourish and achieve a good life through the reclamation of Indigenous processes and contexts: “This approach will ground our peoples in their culture and teachings that provide the ultimate antidote to colonialism” (p. 17). Understanding and acknowledging history from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples is also seen as imperative to engage educators in discussing “ways of knowing, teaching and learning for Indigenous people” (Wane 2008, p. 184). Smith (1999) further supports this by stating:

Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. (p. 34)

Environmental Education and Indigenous Land Education

Some educational research supports the notion that place-based pedagogies and environmental education can be used as sites for decolonization or critical inquiry (Bang, et al., 2014; McLean, 2013). However, traditional approaches to land-based or outdoor education have had two major limitations thus far. First, they are often embedded within Western intellectual traditions that rely on the denial and erasure of “Indigenous points of reference” (Bang, et al., 2014, p. 40; see also Tuck & Yang, 2012) and, second, they generally reproduce mythologies of innocence for non-Indigenous students in terms of their role as settlers in colonial violence and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (McLean, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Likewise, Calderon (2014) notes, “critical place-based education fails to meaningfully engage colonial legacies in education and particularly how conceptions of place have been involved in their continuance” (p. 25; see also Sato, Silva, & Jaber, 2014). Nonetheless, critical place-based education remains a useful field if infused with an Indigenizing, decolonizing framework, an approach that is distinguishable from “the general umbrella of environmental education” (Paperson, 2014, p. 115) and that is coming to be described as land education (Calderon, 2014; Sato, et al. 2014; Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014).

Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy (2014) state that: “Land education calls into question educational practices and theories that justify settler occupation of stolen land, or encourage the replacement of Indigenous peoples and relations to land with settlers and relations to property” (p. 8). In addition, land education is defined by the way it “puts Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land at the center, including Indigenous understandings of land, Indigenous language in relation to land, and Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism” (Tuck, et al., p. 11). As Wildcat et al. (2014) assert, “decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that

arise from the land” (p. i). As Root (2010) emphasizes, in order to decolonize environmental education practices, we must begin to recognize the specific connections that Indigenous peoples and communities have to geographical territories. According to Simpson (2002), any Indigenous environmental education program should strive to support decolonization and provide active engagement with the land while allowing space for both Indigenous and Western epistemologies to be compared and discussed (see also Scully, 2012; Simpson, 2014). Further, as Takano (2005) indicates, land-based cultural education can strengthen youth self-esteem and re-establish connections with land and culture. Land education can be a powerful tool in decolonization and, appropriately, is emerging as a growing field of practice (Lowan-Trudeau, 2013; Tuck, et al., 2014).

Indigenous knowledge can challenge Euro-Western discourses relating to “land, heritage, and environment in education” (Davis, 2011, p. 123). By exploring mazinaabikiniganan as a form of land education, Indigenous peoples can come to know their history and past as active figures on the land. These images offer an alternative history to the one typically presented in educational curriculum and challenge dominant forms of understanding land and environment.

Mazinaabikiniganan in Contemporary Contexts.

As noted earlier, while much of the research surrounding mazinaabikiniganan has come from the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, scholars are beginning to recognize the significant and diverse forms of knowledge that can be found within these images. The meanings within mazinaabikiniganan are dynamic and subject to constant re-interpretation (Norder, 2012). They embody places where people can engage with the land and the spirits that dwell there (Norder, 2012; Rajnovich, 1994; Vizenor, 2007), acting as signs or reminders of relationships and connections with other worlds (Wyndham, 2011). Mazinaabikiniganan provide a literal

picture of the elaborate kinship networks that served important social and political functions in Anishinaabe society in the Great Lakes region (Bohaker, 2006).

Mazinaabikiniganan are also powerful reminders of the importance of Indigenous languages. Some research has been done that transfers the linguistic approach of semiotics to mazinaabikiniganan, focusing on the signs, symbols, and metaphors present within each image (Rajnovich, 1994). Anishinaabemowin relies on the use of metaphors to express understandings of the world that are much wider than what Western thought and the English language allows (Deloria Jr., 2004). Within Anishinaabemowin, “a bird is a loon is an eagle is a man is a Manitou!” (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967, p. 69) and by understanding the use of metaphor embedded in language, a better understanding of the use of metaphor within mazinaabikiniganan can be gained. Reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous place names can also open up Anishinaabe understandings of geography and place (Conway, 2010). Many of the Indigenous names held by sacred places on the land have been replaced by English terms that typically associate these sites with “evil” (Tobias & Richmond, 2014, p. 29; see also Dewdney & Kidd, 1967). Understanding this usurpation of place-naming allows for critical discussions about the history and impacts of settler-colonialism on sites of Indigenous knowledge.

Mazinaabikiniganan also embody forms of empirical knowledge and science developed by Indigenous peoples. Some mazinaabikiniganan sites mark the locations of stone quarries or sources of red ochre (Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967). Other sites use natural stratifications, quartz veins, or markings on the rock to frame, align, or heighten the impact of each image (Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967; Rajnovich, 1994). The production of mazinaabikiniganan themselves held a certain degree of scientific knowledge. Indigenous peoples “knew how to use heat to convert the hydrous yellow ochre into the anhydrous red oxide” (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967, p. 21) and understood the properties of using various binders to

affix the red ochre pigment to the rocks (Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967; Rajnovich, 1994).

In more contemporary settings, mazinaabikiniganan and their associated stories can offer different and creative perspectives for researchers. For example, Nelson (2013) draws upon Mishibizhiw and thunderbirds, both prevalent figures in mazinaabikiniganan and Anishinaabe cosmology, to understand the contemporary issue of climate change, stating that:

Encoded within Ojibwe oral literature about Mishipizhu and Animikiig are subtle and complex teachings about this important ecological association between water processes and sky dynamics, the very matrix that constitutes the “climate.” (p. 224)

Embedded with a multiplicity of meanings and understandings, mazinaabikiniganan have much to offer in the way of Indigenous knowledge. While they are often presented as a relic of the past or a form of static traditional knowledge that has remained unchanged since their creation, mazinaabikiniganan have thus far proven to be a dynamic, resilient, and relevant form of Indigenous knowledge that continues to inform Indigenous people’s understandings of the world today. My thesis findings demonstrate this further. I turn now to the details of how I approached my research.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

As previously mentioned, this research sought to give voice to Indigenous people while exploring how a specific Indigenous community values mazinaabikiniganan and the knowledge they hold. Beyond my general commitment to education that centers Indigenous knowledges, I am interested in one particular form of Indigenous knowledge – mazinaabikiniganan – and how Indigenous communities perceive and value these sites and their attendant knowledge today. Using an Indigenous methodological approach that incorporates the principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility, my research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How are mazinaabikiniganan valued in an Indigenous community today and in what ways are they seen as a dynamic and relevant form of Indigenous knowledge?
2. How might mazinaabikiniganan and the knowledge they embody act as a form of critical, Indigenous environmental education?

Lens

Much like Smith recommended in conversation with Kovach, “I declare openly that I am arguing for my language, knowledge, and culture and against reproducing colonizing forces in my research” (Kovach, 2009, pp. 90-91). Therefore, I am using a critical Indigenous lens in this qualitative case study. As Neuman (2010) describes, using a qualitative methodology “can be highly effective in creating an authentic feeling for understanding an entire setting, for grasping subtle shades of meaning, for integrating divergent bits of information, and for switching perspectives” (p. 168). A qualitative approach allows the exploration of emergent themes and questions and provides flexibility in the research design (Creswell, 2014). Because this research aims to decolonize Indigenous knowledge and gain community perspectives on mazinaabikiniganan, it is important to approach this research using a critical Indigenous framework.

Kovach (2009) posits that, “Indigenous methodologies can be considered both a qualitative approach and not” (p. 30), stating that the interpretive nature of Indigenous knowledges could fit within a constructivist paradigm, while a decolonizing perspective could fit within both critical and transformative paradigms. However, she finds difficulty in “presuming that qualitative research, a Western tradition, can fully bring Indigenous methodologies under its wing” (p. 30). Similarly, Wilson (2001) asserts the need for Indigenous research to “reflect Indigenous contexts and worldviews: that is, they must come from an Indigenous paradigm rather than an Indigenous perspective” (p. 177). Weber-Pillwax (2001) takes a different view, stating that “to describe a methodology as Indigenous is somewhat problematic” (p. 172). Instead of defining a purely Indigenous methodology, she asserts that “any methodology will suit my purposes if it permits a fluidity that can encompass any social or cultural context that I choose to work in without breaking the boundaries of personal integrity” (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 172). For me, a qualitative approach permits this fluidity without compromising me as an Indigenous researcher because it does not rely on positivist, empirical evidence that is so often at odds with Indigenous knowledges and worldviews (Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2001).

Qualitative data allows us to develop explanations that tend to be “rich in detail, sensitive to context, and capable of showing the complex processes or sequences of social life” (Neuman, 2010, p. 509). In addition, a qualitative approach allows me the freedom to choose from a plethora of methods that are congruent with Indigenous ways of knowing (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999). Using a critical Indigenous lens to approach this research provided me with a framework and guided ethical considerations throughout the research process.

An Indigenous paradigm welcomes a decolonizing perspective in which Indigenous knowledge is centered and settler discourse is critically analyzed (Kovach, 2009). According to Smith (1999), Indigenous research is concerned with:

rewriting and rereighting our position in history. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. (p. 28)

Similarly, Absolon and Willett (2004) posit that, “Aboriginal research and writing...demand a reconstruction and revolution of representations and images” (p. 10) and that “the study of Aboriginal cultural phenomena through a non-Aboriginal epistemological lens can only yield findings that are distorted and incorrect” (p. 11). As Indigenous researchers, we have a responsibility to understand the role that research has played in colonization and to provide a critical analysis of colonialism within our communities (Absolon and Willett, 2004; Kovach, 2009). An Indigenous framework allows us the space to be critical of settler discourse while centering Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

Using Batchewana as a case study, I explored the mazinaabikiniganan site at Agawa within the context of this particular community, which allowed for in-depth exploration and generated future research directions to pursue a PhD if I choose. As Patton (2015) describes:

A case can be a person, an event, a program, an organization, a time period, a critical incident, or a community. Regardless of the unit of analysis, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, holistically, and in context. (p. 64)

Given that Indigenous knowledge can be characterized as “personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language” (Hart, 2010, p. 3), I believe that using a case study is in keeping with Indigenous epistemology due to its holistic and experiential nature. Because it is difficult to generate generalizable conclusions based on a single case study, this is also in line with the localized aspect of Indigenous knowledges, where knowledge should be understood from within the context in which it originated (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2001).

Research Site

The First Nation community of Batchewana was selected as the research site for this study owing to its proximity and historical relationship with the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa

Bay. The Batchewana First Nation is located within the Robinson-Huron Treaty Area in Ontario and is currently composed of four reserves: Rankin (where the majority of on-reserve band members reside), Goulais Bay, Obadjiwan, and Whitefish Island (Broad, Boyer, & Chataway, 2006). The traditional territory of Batchewana is considered to range from the rapids of Sault Ste. Marie, up the coast of Lake Superior as far north as the present location of Pukaskwa National Park, “including islands in the lake, and to the north and northeast beyond the height of land” (Sovereignty, n.d., para. 4); see Figure 1. The people of Batchewana have resided in small family-based communities throughout this territory for hundreds of years and continued to do so after signing the Robinson-Huron Treaty in 1850. In 1873, Christian missionaries noted, “there should be an Indian preacher...at Batchawana [sic], with Goulais Bay and Ogewaung in his boundaries, partially supplying the wants of the two hundred and twenty Indians and whites” (Krats, 1996, p. 186). In 1890, the Department of Indian Affairs reported as many as thirteen families resided at the Agawa River, and several fishing villages were established at Batchewana Bay, Goulais Bay, and Gargantua Harbour (Department of Indian Affairs, 1890, p. 10).

In 1944, the government of Ontario passed an Order-in-Council to establish Lake Superior Provincial Park in order to promote tourism along the Trans-Canada Highway, which was then under construction (Killan, 1993). Today, the park covers 160,810 hectares along a significant area of Lake Superior’s shoreline between Wawa and Sault Ste. Marie (Lake Superior, n.d.). The Trans-Canada Highway passes through 83 kilometres of the park, providing public access to lakes, rivers, beaches, and hiking trails (Park Location, n.d.); see Figure 1.

Perhaps one of the more impressive sites along Highway 17, the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa Rock were also included within the park boundaries. The site was first recorded by Europeans in the 1840s when Shingwauk, an Ojibwe leader, described the mazinaabikiniganan to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Conway, 2010; Dewdney & Kidd, 1967). Schoolcraft (1853) recounts

the story of Myeengun, an Ojibwe leader who raised a war party against the Iroquois and crossed Lake Superior. The success of the war party was later inscribed on the rock at a place known as Wazhenaubikiniguning Augawong, along the north shore of Lake Superior. However, Schoolcraft was never able to locate the site described by Shingwauk. It was not until 1958, when Dewdney located the site, that the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa were brought “to national and global attention” (Conway, 2010, p. 15). Since then, the Agawa site has become “one of the most visited indigenous archaeological sites in Canada” (LeMaitre, 2012, para. 2) and has been accessible to the public “since the opening of Highway 17 north of the Soo” (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967, p. 84), which is when Lake Superior Provincial Park built an access road and stairway to the site (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967).

Conway (2010) states, “none of the few recorded rock art sites on the north shore of Lake Superior match Agawa in size or importance” (p. 5). Because of its accessibility and location within Lake Superior Provincial Park, this site offers an opportunity to explore the relationship between Indigenous knowledge held by members of the Batchewana First Nation and their thoughts on how mazinaabikiniganan are presented to the public.

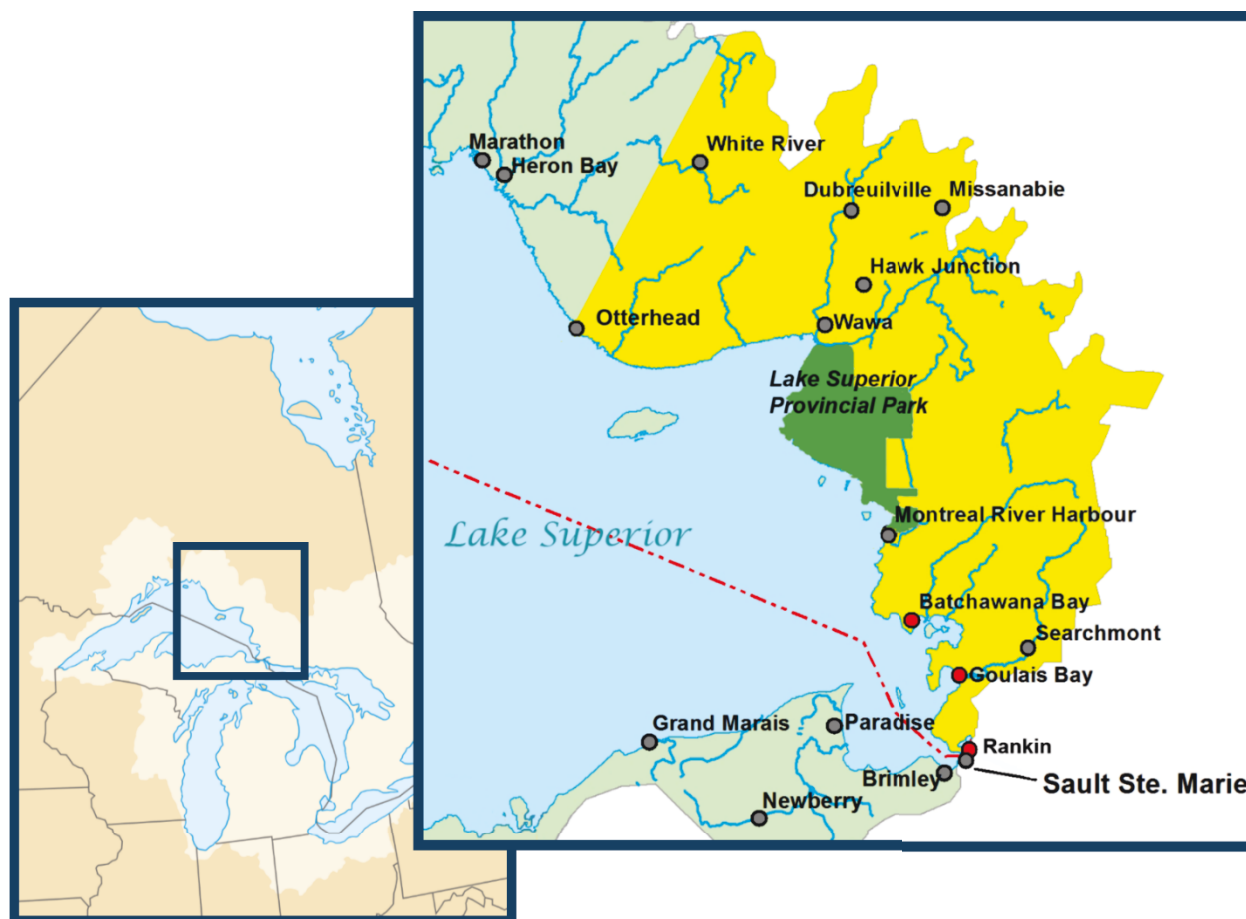


Figure 1. Map of Research Area⁷

Participants

Owing to the historical nature of this site, I focused on members of the community who were knowledgeable in their community's history and culture as key informants. As I do not have close ties with the community, I used snowball sampling to identify eight potential participants after an initial meeting with the community's Chief, Dean Sayers. Snowball sampling is described by Patton (2015) as "an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases" (p. 298) where the researcher "start[s] with one or a few relevant

⁷ This map is intended to give the reader a sense of the research area, depicting the approximate boundaries of Batchewana First Nation territory, reserve communities, and location of Lake Superior Provincial Park within this territory. It is not an accurate or complete depiction of Batchewana First Nation's traditional territory. Adapted from: Environment Canada. Lake Superior Water Shed [map]. 1cm=25kms. Retrieved from <http://infosuperior.com/blog/2013/10/17/downloadable-lake-superior-watershed-maps/>

and information-rich interviewees and then ask[s] them for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different and/or confirming perspectives” (p. 270). Out of the eight potential participants identified by the Chief, six took part in the study. As per the research agreement between myself and the band, the Chief accompanied me throughout the interview process to introduce me to participants and to help explain what my research was about. After personal introductions were made, participants were given a brief verbal introduction to the study and received an official letter explaining the study in detail (Appendix A) as well as a consent form (Appendix B). These forms were exchanged in person and were intended to inform them about my research, confidentiality issues, and make clear that their participation was voluntary and that, if they chose to participate, they would be able to withdraw at any time.

In all, two women and four men participated. They waived their right to anonymity, allowing me to use their real names throughout this thesis, which is not uncommon in Indigenous research. Wilson (2008) points out that the use of real names “goes against the rules of most university ethical research policies. However, how can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with these people if I don’t name them? How can they be held accountable to their own teachers if their words and relationships are deprived of names?” (p. 63). Using real names encourages accountability between me as researcher and those who participated in this research.

My participants included Chief Dean Sayers who has worked for his community for a number of years and is part of the hereditary line of chiefs of Batchewana First Nation. Greg Agawa is an Elder and fisher who resides in Goulais Bay. He has served on Council numerous times and has in-depth knowledge of the relationship between Batchewana First Nation and the government through treaty history and his own experience as a commercial fisher. Rodney Elie is a traditional healer and Drug and Alcohol Prevention Worker for Batchewana First Nation. Irene Stevens is an Elder of Batchewana First Nation and is well known for her traditional

knowledge and teachings. Percy and Marian Agawa are husband and wife, currently living in Goulais Bay. Both are Elders who have extensive historical knowledge of the community.

Data Collection/Methods

According to Kovach (2009), the methods used to conduct my research should align with the philosophy set out in my methodology. Data was collected using an Indigenous storywork method. Smith (1999) explains that stories “contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place” (p. 144), honouring the contributions of individuals to our communities as a whole. Storytelling is also a “useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control” (Bishop, as cited in Smith, 1999, p. 145). Similarly, Kovach (2010) posits that conversation and storytelling can be seen as a “culturally organic means to gather knowledge within research” (p. 42). Further, Archibald (2008) indicates that “research as conversation is characterized as an open-ended interview with opportunity for both sides to engage in talk” (p. 377), signifying that storywork is an active and engaging process for both the researcher and the participant.

Similar to narrative interviews that are “based less on a previously developed interview guide” (Mertens, 2015, p. 294), Indigenous storywork and conversation allows freedom within the data collection process for the participant to relay what information they feel is important. As Mertens (2015) describes, “the listener’s role is to encourage the narrator to provide more details and deeper understandings” (p. 294). Thus, conversations encourage the exchange of ideas and are inherently more dynamic than interviewing due to the relational and reflective nature of stories. This means the researcher must work as an active listener and participant throughout the entire process. Kovach (2010) indicates that through this process, research becomes less extractive, relationships with participants are deepened, and stories provide “highly

contextualized, powerful source[s] of knowledge” (p. 46). Using this storywork method, I developed a set of guiding questions (Appendix C) to initiate conversation but allowed the participants to lead from there, sharing their perspectives and stories as they saw fit. In the few instances when participants were unsure of how to proceed, I returned to the guiding questions to direct the conversation.

Central to Indigenous research is the idea of relationality (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2010), which makes research “a collective responsibility” (Kovach, 2009, p. 35). As Indigenous people, we are answering to all of our relations when doing research (Wilson, 2010) and a key assumption is that “knowledge gained will be utilized practically” (Hart, 2010, p. 9). As Smith (1999) indicates, “Cultural protocols, values, and behaviours... [are] an integral part of methodology” (p. 15). In keeping with the traditions of the community, tobacco was given to each participant prior to the interview session “to show acknowledgement of the relationship and respect for the insights being offered” (Kovach, 2010, p. 44). By offering tobacco, I made a commitment to use the knowledge that I gained purposefully and with good intentions. By asking participants within the community of Batchewana First Nation to share their stories, I hope to support the community at a local level by documenting and recording a part of the community’s oral history and connection with the mazinaabikinigan at Agawa. In a broader context, I hope to support Indigenous education by providing a community-based understanding of land and its role in lifelong learning.

Data Analysis and Member-Checking

Beginning in late August 2016, I made several trips to Batchewana First Nation to meet with community members to gain insight and perspectives on the mazinaabikinigan at Agawa Rock. I wanted to discuss the connection between the community and the land and the lessons that can be learned from this sense of place. In all, I met with six community members and each

visit lasted anywhere from one hour to an entire afternoon. I was invited into people's homes, we met at gatherings and pow wows, we shared food together, and I was given stories. My last visit occurred in the middle of September when the leaves were beginning to change colour and Lake Superior turned from the deep blue of summer to the slate grey of fall. During this time, countless stories were shared with me and I was shown great generosity from the people of Batchewana.

As I listened to each person tell their story, I could see connections emerging between what they were telling me, my own experiences, and my observations within the community. While each story was unique, common threads linked the stories together, generating a larger picture of the meanings, values, and connections associated with mazinaabikiniganan. Informal member-checking took place throughout each conversation as I re-stated parts of their stories, asked for clarification, or related what other participants had told me to affirm their statements. Observations were recorded in a notebook as I attended events throughout the community and notes were written after each conversation, to provide context such as setting, atmosphere, mood, and the overall experience. These notes allowed me to generate questions for follow-up or to ask the next participant. Field notes were also taken when conversations occurred spontaneously or when audio-recording would have interfered with the conversation.

When I returned home, I listened to the audio-recordings I had gathered and re-read the notes I had taken. I was able to re-live those moments and make more notes, trying to find the connections between the stories and determining the best way to piece it all together. I transcribed the audio-recordings myself, editing for clarity and readability. When the interviews were transcribed, I read over the transcriptions and my field notes, highlighting words and phrases that were repeated regularly. From this initial coding, I was able to identify five broad themes: commercial fishing, treaty history, spiritual/sacred places, ceremony, and Anishinaabe

roles and responsibilities. I listened to the audio-recordings again, this time with the transcriptions in front of me to ensure accuracy and that I had not missed any information. I then copied and pasted quotes from the transcripts and my field notes into a table according to the themes I had initially identified. Once relevant quotes were sorted, I was able to identify and organize the data according to more refined themes focusing on context, interpretations, and community understandings. Audio-recordings were listened to several more times throughout the writing process to check details and ensure accuracy.

Ethics

Kovach (2009) states, “an Indigenous perspective finds it impossible to separate ethics from the totality of research” (p. 142). An important facet of storytelling and conversation is that method, ethics, and care are interrelated (Kovach, 2010). Archibald (2008) explains: “the four Rs of *respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity* are traditional values and teachings demonstrated toward the story, toward and by the storyteller and the listener, and practiced in the storywork context” (p. 373, emphasis in original). In keeping with the four R’s identified by Archibald (2008), I initiated contact with the Chief of Batchewana First Nation to establish a respectful research relationship (Menzies, 2001). The Chief responded enthusiastically to my proposed research and directed me to the Cultural Coordinator in order to gain approval from the Cultural Committee. As a researcher, part of my responsibility is to ensure the community understands my intentions and is involved in the research process from the beginning. Once this initial contact had been made, I explained my research project to the Cultural Coordinator, sent a letter detailing what I was asking of the community, and asked for a letter of support from the community. Chief and Council approved my research project at a council meeting held on May 12, 2016, with the understanding that I would adhere to the Band’s policy regarding research. In

addition to formal approval from the Cultural Committee of Batchewana, approval was obtained from the Lakehead University Ethics Board prior to data collection.

At the request of the community, some of the data and research findings remain the property of Batchewana First Nation. As such, once the thesis has been formally approved by the university, the community will be given copies of the research documents for their own use, namely the interview transcripts that have been edited to protect confidentiality and copies of the final thesis. The original transcripts will be securely stored in a locked storage area in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University for five years, after which the data can be destroyed. A complete copy of the final thesis will be sent to Chief as well as Council and the Cultural Committee. A summary of the findings also will be given to each participant. Both the final thesis and summary of the findings will be available to anyone in the community who requests it.

Limitations

Time constraints, funding, and the scope of an MEd thesis contributed to the limitations of this study. While it is an exploration of a narrowly studied topic, a wider range of Indigenous perspectives on mazinaabikiniganan or a comparison between communities could yield different results. However, exploring this subject as a case study with a focus on one community was still beneficial. An in-depth investigation such as this provided insight into a topic that has been little studied from an Indigenous perspective and may determine future research directions in my own work or that of others with shared interests.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

I came to Batchewana expecting to gather stories about the meanings and beliefs represented by the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa Rock. What I received was a much larger story in which mazinaabikiniganan are but one small piece. On my initial meeting with Chief Dean Sayers, I was told that the pictographs cannot be looked at in isolation: “They are connected to everything – what’s out there, what’s coming – land, history, politics, and place.” The importance of context was re-affirmed by Greg Agawa who stated “everything is all connected in some way or another, eh”. Indeed, community members were able to situate their understandings of the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa within the larger context of the Robinson-Huron Treaty and ongoing relationship with the provincial government, commercial fishing practices, and the spiritual/cultural significance of land and place. This challenged my own assumptions about the significance of mazinaabikiniganan, namely, that this location exists in isolation and can be known as a thing unto itself. It also made it challenging from an organizational point of view as many of the ideas presented here are interconnected in complex ways. There were a number of other issues I could have included but this would have led to a thesis that far exceeded the page limits set by the Department. In the next few paragraphs, I share the structure of this chapter to help the reader navigate through my research story.

Throughout each section of my findings, I present relevant narratives provided by community members and discuss them at the end of each section. This is intended to make connections with larger conversations more immediate and to avoid repetition throughout the thesis since there are many closely related ideas presented. The first section of findings is entitled “**Situating Mazinaabikiniganan**” and will discuss the larger context surrounding the

mazinaabikiniganan and the community of Batchewana. These findings were coded according to the following themes or common threads:

Water as traditional territory. Perhaps most surprising, fishing was a strong theme that occurred in every conversation. Conversations emphasized the importance of fishing to the history and livelihood of the community. These conversations also describe the relationship the community has with Lake Superior, the amount of knowledge necessary to navigate the water and to harvest fish, and the importance of intergenerational knowledge. Taken together, these findings indicate that Batchewana First Nation's traditional territory includes a large portion of Lake Superior wherein specific knowledge is needed to sustain their livelihood.

Resisting settler-colonialism. Throughout my conversations with community members, stories about settler-colonialism arose again and again. Often charged with tensions regarding treaty rights, jurisdictional conflicts, and the ongoing impacts of residential school, the conversations I had with people demonstrated a resistance and commitment to maintaining their rights to look after their territory. Batchewana First Nation continues to assert their rights as a sovereign nation and this is reflected in the attitudes and perceptions of band members.

Spirits occupy place. A common thread that was woven throughout each story was the spiritual or cultural significance ascribed to various locations, including the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa. Rather than viewing the land as a vast and empty wilderness, the people of Batchewana recognize that places have histories, stories, and spirits attached to them.

The second set of findings relates to the significance of the mazinaabikiniganan themselves and the community's understandings of them. This section is titled, "**Interpreting Mazinaabikiniganan**" and discusses mazinaabikiniganan as a place for ceremony as well as the contemporary understandings and interpretations of these images. The final set of findings is entitled, "**Learning from Mazinaabikiniganan**" which focuses on how mazinaabikiniganan are a tool for education, decolonization, and a site for life-long learning.

Together, these themes support a central idea of the roles and responsibilities we have as Anishinaabe people. We have obligations to fulfill our roles upon the land, in relation to all living things. This encompasses the need to assert our sovereignty within traditional territories, to learn and understand our histories and languages, to continue with sustainable livelihoods and ways of being, and to recognize and continually affirm the spiritual connections we have within our territories. My story will end with a discussion and reflection on this unifying idea.

As a wise Elder, Thomas King (2003) once said, "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (p. 2). Visiting Batchewana First Nation, travelling through their territory, and meeting their Elders has left its mark on me and that becomes part of my own story as both an Anishinaabe and as a researcher. Now, it is my responsibility to tell these stories and present them as they came to me. So, let me tell you a story about the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa and the people tied to that place. Let me tell you a story about the spirits that dwell there and the importance of history. Let me tell you a story about the government and provincial parks and all the ways that we have carried on despite the attempts to displace, rename, assimilate, and placate us. Let us begin.

Situating Mazinaabikiniganan

In order to understand the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa, it is important to understand the context and setting in which they occur. Dean was helpful in identifying appropriate and knowledgeable people to speak with and he came with me to introduce me and my work to potential partners. Through conversations with band members, I learned that the story of mazinaabikiniganan are indeed much larger than what I had assumed.

Water as Traditional Territory

“We’re talking about that lake out there. We never gave that up.”

– *Percy Agawa*

Dean and I sat down with Percy and Marian Agawa in their kitchen one afternoon. Marian prepared coffee while a stew was cooking on the stovetop. Their home overlooks Goulais Bay – you can see Lake Superior from their living room window. As we talked, I got a glimpse of the enormous history the community has with fishing on Lake Superior and the knowledge that comes from centuries of navigating the lake. Marian Agawa showed me a collection of photographs and remembers:

...this is my dad and his friend, Frankie Daigle, in the fishery out at Otterhead in 1951. But I mean, that was towards the end of the fishing. They fished up there for many years before that, from Gros Cap onwards. I was born in 1946, so my dad was in the army and he had just come back from the army. He had a job at Algoma Steel for a little bit but he quit that and he came back to fishing. He fished right up until he passed away... It would have to be around '77, around there, when my dad passed away. But he fished before going into the army, as a young man, eh?

Fishing in Marian’s family goes back farther than that, however. As she remembers:

My grandma was born somewhere around 1850 and she used to tell us stories about fishing too; how years ago they had made nets or bags out of moose hide. Those bags were anchored out in the water and they stayed in the water... They didn’t pull them out until the following year. When they needed fish, the old women would paddle out in the canoes and they’d scoop – the fish were still alive – and they’d scoop a couple out and bring them home and it was a community thing. It wasn’t just one family’s net, it was the

whole community's net. They would fish until the white man came and then they started fishing with nets and that went out the window.

Likewise, her husband Percy talked about the history of fishing within his own family. He made a clear connection between his family's clan and their dependence on fishing as their livelihood:

Dean also made the statement that we were Loon Clan – loon hunters. What do loon hunt? They're fishermen! I had a picture for my grandson here – they had nets they set along the beach here, it shows you how young that gets started...I almost forgot to tell you about my 2 uncles. They both passed but they used to be big captains on their own fish tugs. People used to hire them to fish off their tugs and they'd go all the way up to Otterhead.

Traditional territory. The people of Batchewana practiced fishing within a large traditional territory, bounded by Baawating, or Sault Ste. Marie, in the East to Otterhead, in Pukaskwa National Park to the Northwest (see Figure 1). Marian describes the area her father fished:

They fished all over... He fished from all the way up there, all the way down: Otterhead, Michipicoten Island, down to Michipicoten Harbour. I remember staying there with my father. They'd also transport fish from the island to Mamainse Harbour and trucks would pick up fish from there and take it to the Sault and take it to the buyer, I guess, in those days. It was a common thing.

Each participant had stories of specific locations within this territory, from previous generations into the present day, indicating that this territory is still widely used and figures prominently in the community's idea of itself. Dean and I spent a day together, driving 145 km from Sault Ste. Marie to the Agawa site. Along the way, we visited the villages of Goulais Mission and Batchewana Bay where community members of Batchewana First Nation live. Throughout our car ride, Dean was able to talk about events that took place at nearly every river, bay, and hill we passed. Clearly, this territory is full of history and stories.

Speaking with Percy and Dean, they discussed being semi-nomadic in the past, before being confined to reserves. Percy recalls:

We lived at the Montreal River and went to school at Sand Bay. Batchewana, 67, back of Chippewa [River], lived in Goulais Bay, Garden River, Gros Cap, and Sault Ste. Marie.

Similarly, Greg describes living around the Agawa River and following the fish as they moved up and down the lake and historically, the migratory patterns of the fishermen on Lake Superior:

I was in that area for a lot of years. I camped around there, I camped on Montreal Island, I camped in quite a few places. I just came up in the summer and fished.

When the fishing is good there, the fish move up that way. You got to move with them. That's the way we were, long time ago. Wherever things were good to live, we moved there. . .

I remember a long time ago that people used to live there [at the Agawa River]. People weren't living there so [the government] didn't take anyone into consideration. What we used to use it for, since I was a young fellow was a harbour. A fishing harbour, eh? But before that – way before that – people used to live all along there. They never had a permanent place, eh, they just lived all over.

Rodney Elie also mentioned living around Agawa Bay as a teenager to practice commercial fishing. He states: “I fished all over there when I was a kid, around 14. Commercial fishing? I lived up there.”

While much of the discussion focused on the area indicated in Map 1, Percy and Dean both alluded to the idea that Batchewana's territory exceeded these boundaries at some point. As Percy states:

My son was down in Manitoulin for a couple of years and he was fishing there but they got different rules – they need licenses and whatnot – but there's an island down there called Agawa Island! Now how could that be? Did one of our ancestors go down there? Live on that island?

Likewise, Dean provided a story of how far Batchewana boats ventured in the past. While we were at the mazinaabikiniganan site, he identified one of the images as “Batchewana's boats” with this description:

...we were one of two bands that actually exercised deep water commercial fishery around the Great Lakes. The other one was Wikwemikong. Our research shows that our boats were built bigger than any other boats around the Great Lakes because our boats were built to withstand that [pointing at Lake Superior rollers]... Ziibasing, Manitoulin Island, was where the repairs on the boats were done, as you travel down towards Detroit.

Batchewana boats were seen as far away as Grand Bend on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, down as far as St. Clair River. We managed the deep water fishing from here all the way from Pukaskwa all the way down to there.

Intergenerational knowledge. Not only was the fishing territory of Batchewana far-reaching, but the knowledge necessary for navigating and living within this territory was vast. Landmarks and places remain in the memories of people I spoke with, along with stories of how dangerous the lake could be. Marian grew up on her father's fishing tug and frequently travelled between Gros Cap and Otterhead. Although she says she "had to trade in my rubber boots for a dress" at the age of nine, she is still able to accurately recount certain locations on Lake Superior to her son:

[I was] explaining to him the way Otterhead looked when I was a little girl. I can see the water as we're coming in and it's like big pillars of sandstone under the water as you're driving in the channel. You're coming up on them and you have to be able to steer that channel. As you come up into the harbour, there's the lighthouse across the slip and all this here was houses, bunkhouses, and wooden walkways. I told that to Seagull, so when he went to Otterhead, and he saw that, he said, "Holy crow, mom! I can't believe you remember all that!"

Marian says, "All my dad had was a compass, a piece of paper, and map. He'd measure with his tape and he'd know how many miles by that measurement." Her husband, Percy, added that the "speed of the boat and landmarks" could also help navigate the waters of Lake Superior:

In them days, that's all you know... This is where you make your living and you're out there since you're knee high to a grasshopper, so there's nothing that no one's going to tell you when you're 25 years old that you didn't already hear from your uncles or dad or whoever.

Without proper knowledge of the terrain and how to navigate the waters, Lake Superior could be quite dangerous. Marian recalls:

One time we were out on the lake and a big storm came up. We hit a storm in the middle of the lake. Waves knocked the window right out of the boat... You could hear the old radio, "Charlie! Charlie! Where are you?" My dad was trying to tell them where he was, but he was off course. Next thing you know, I remember my dad and them walking in water, past their knees!... He finally managed to get on the radio and tell them where he

thought we were. We were 4 hours off course and finally pulled into shore, to the dock. We had a lot of close calls like that.

Her husband added that knowing the shoreline was a matter of safety. “There’s little ports where they can hide here and there.” Percy had his own stories of tragedy on Lake Superior. As he states:

I had an uncle that drowned fishing on Lake Superior, up near Otterhead. About 40 years ago. Another cousin, that was my godson to me, he drowned too. Scott Agawa. There was not enough experience and they were just missing the mainland. When you get into the snowsqualls in the fall of the year, you can’t see nothing. You always watch the wind. You look around and watch everything around you. That stays in your head and you know the last thing you see and then you go and sure enough, 9 times out of 10, you’re right on the money.

Likewise, Dean recalls working out on the boats with his own father, doing what he called “fathoming out the line” where he took depth soundings based on the knots in a rope. Dean said there were many techniques for navigating the lake including lining up specific landmarks with each other to maintain your heading. According to Percy, “Today, it’s better because they got depth sounders and GPS.” Embracing this technology has made navigating Lake Superior safer for the people of Batchewana. Ceremony plays a significant role in navigating the waters of Lake Superior as well. As Dean states, the people of Batchewana did ceremonies when crossing certain parts of water and this ceremonial knowledge was needed to navigate safely.

Another important piece of knowledge required for fishing on Lake Superior is an in-depth understanding of fish species and their seasonal patterns. The people of Batchewana have relied on whitefish and trout for their fishing subsistence for hundreds of years. This lengthy relationship is evidenced in their ability to predict where and when to set their nets. When we were talking during the pow wow, Dean described how whitefish move according to the seasons. In springtime, whitefish will wash themselves on the sand on shallow sandy beaches before moving off to deeper water. The whitefish are found near Nanabozhung, Gargantua Harbour,

during this time. Throughout the summer, yellow scum collects at the edge of the lake. In the fall, the equinoxal winds blow away the scum and clean the beaches. This makes the water clean for the fish to spawn. According to Dean, when the whitefish are spawning, they are to be left alone.

By providing a larger discussion of the context in which the community is situated, one can see that the community does not just value land as traditional territory. Rather, the water of Gichi-Gaming, Lake Superior, is also looked upon as traditional territory over which Batchewana First Nation has not given up jurisdiction or governance, which has made the relationship with Batchewana First Nation and the province of Ontario a rocky one.

Discussion: Water as Traditional Territory

For First Nations people, the conversation around water is often a murky one because “the treaties make little or no reference to water directly, except in descriptions of the lands being given up by the First Nations (such as the tract that was surrendered was bordered by a certain river)” (Phare, 2009, p. 8). Additionally, there has never been a court ruling in Canada “that has unequivocally established or denied Aboriginal rights to water” (Laidlaw & Passelac-Ross, 2010, p. 2). Water governance is an area that is fraught with jurisdictional issues (Laidlaw & Passelac-Ross, 2010; Phare, 2006; Walkem, 2004). What is clear is that, too often, water is excluded from notions of what constitutes traditional territory. My conversations with community members from Batchewana clearly demonstrates that water, especially Lake Superior, is as much a part of their traditional territory as the land. This is something that the community has asserted for themselves under Aboriginal title.

Batchewana First Nation maintains jurisdiction over the eastern shore of Lake Superior, an area that extends along 150 miles of coastline and reaches out into the center of the lake.

Navigating a body of water this large requires a wealth of knowledge, and a long history of use develops a connection with the area that cannot be denied. At a recent gathering to commemorate the signing of the Robinson-Huron Treaty, it was stated that our territories hold our histories. If we are to consider Lake Superior as part of the territory of Batchewana First Nation then we must consider that Lake Superior also holds the community's history. This was evidenced in the amount of stories and knowledge shared by community members in this regard. Some of these stories stretched back over centuries and many are unfolding today, establishing a firm connection between the community and waters of Lake Superior. Lytwyn (1996) states:

It is evident from the historical records that First Nations who agreed to live on Reserves at the edges of the Great Lakes did not intend that they would be deprived of their livelihood or identity...the Great Lakes continue to be an intimate part of the territory of the First Nations despite the delineation of boundaries and the enactment of laws and regulations imparting jurisdiction to other governments, (p. 26).

Resisting Settler-Colonialism

“After you learn your rights, after you learn your treaties, there’s not anything you can’t do in your own lands. But if you don’t know anything about that stuff, that’s where they get you.”

– *Greg Agawa*

Greg and I met for coffee on an afternoon in late August. Speaking with Greg, one gets a sense of pride in the history of the community and the achievements they have made in terms of asserting their Aboriginal and treaty rights. I asked him what he could tell me about the mazinaabikiniganan site and he responded, “I don’t know any stories about the actual pictographs. I was never told any of the stories because of a lot of stuff that happened.” Nevertheless, Dean felt it was important for me to speak with Greg as he holds significant knowledge about the history of the community and their connection with Lake Superior fishing. Like many other Indigenous communities throughout Canada, Batchewana has experienced dispossession from their lands, limited economic opportunities, residential schooling, and loss of

language. Each community member I spoke with touched on a variety of these topics during our conversation together. While Greg was unable to share stories about the mazinaabikiniganan themselves, he still values them as a part of the community's story. He states:

To me, visiting that [place], it's part of us. We don't have to go and visit it to know that it's there. Do you know what I mean? It's kind of different for us because it's a part of us. It's like my arm! I don't have to go and look at my arm to know that it's there.

Along with this understanding of place as a "part of us," Greg had many stories to share about his experiences, including fishing on Lake Superior, challenging the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), and never relenting in his own assertion of his rights as an Aboriginal person.

Community members are aware of their history as signatories to the Robinson-Huron Treaty and have their own interpretation of what that treaty entails. Every community member I spoke with expressed how settler-colonialism has impacted their lives or their families in one way or another, and the conversations were imbued with a spirit of resistance. Rather than being passive victims of settler-colonial forces, the people I spoke with embodied what Vizenor (1998) terms "survivance," which he defines as "a native sense of presence, the motion of sovereignty and the will to resist dominance. Survivance is not just survival but also resistance, not heroic or tragic, but the tease of tradition, and my sense of survivance outwits dominance and victimry" (p. 93).

It wasn't lamprey that killed all the fish, it was the white man. Batchewana First Nation has a well-documented history of commercial fishing on Lake Superior and Lake Huron (McNab, 1999; Morrison, 1993). This history often reverberates with clashing interests between First Nation fishers and the settler population. This topic alone could fill pages, however, it is well beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the finer nuances of Indigenous peoples'

involvement in the commercial fishing industry. Nonetheless, the people with whom I spoke shared their own personal thoughts and experiences in terms of the impacts settler-colonialism has had on the fishing industry. As the commercial fishery declined and the fish numbers dwindled, sports anglers, commercial fishermen, and the media often blamed Indigenous fishermen. Greg states:

... they used to blame us for everything. When they first started on the fishing, if there were no fish over there, they would put a big thing in the newspaper – Natives Deplete Fish in the Area. They used to do that a lot of times, eh.

However, in the mind of the community, it was the other way around. As Percy describes,

At one point in time, it was one of the main fisheries here in Goulais Bay. What happened way back then, we had a lot of Americans coming here and they come..., there wasn't anybody keeping track of them or anything. Eventually, they were chased out of here because they were just fishing in the wide open. So often you hear it wasn't lamprey that killed all the fish, it was the white man. They went to smaller nets and chased those trout that were barely even minnows. Apparently it takes a trout 7 years to mature and lay eggs.

Marian added, "Our native fishermen had only so many yards of net to fish with. They were so poor too, their nets had big holes in them. They were practicing conservation without even trying."

In addition to increased competition with non-Native fishermen, both recreational and commercial, other factors contributed to the decline of commercial fishing having significant impact on the community. Dean relates that, in 1941, smelts and alewives were introduced to Lake Superior. Smelts are an acidic fish and soon became the prey of lake trout. Soon after, the lake trout population showed signs of sickness – their stomachs were ulcerated when they were gutted. Additionally, salmon were introduced to boost the commercial fishing industry and as a predator species to deal with the invasive alewives. However, the salmon preyed upon trout fry, causing more damage to lake trout populations.

Fishing for Indigenous peoples in Ontario is fraught with legislation and precedents regarding licensing, management, jurisdiction, and Aboriginal rights. Batchewana is one of several communities in Canada caught up in the conflicting interests between stakeholders involved in fishing on the Great Lakes, leading to expressions of frustration, regret, and sometimes outrage. Irene Stevens is a respected community elder who is well into her nineties. She has witnessed many of the tensions between the community, the government, and non-Indigenous stakeholders. She bitterly reminisced:

My dad...didn't have to get a license at that time. But later on, they had to get a license to fish, trap, and hunt. That's what they got to do to live. A thousand years ago, the Indians didn't have to have no license. That's the Indian Act for you.

Batchewana has been resisting government pressure to obtain fishing licenses for decades now, instead issuing their own licenses to community members. According to Greg, “We issue our own licenses to our own people. That’s because of that court case that I went through there a long time ago.” Here he’s talking about his own court case against the province of Ontario that began in 1981. He was still fighting it in court when the Sparrow Ruling came down in 1990 (McNab, 1999). *R. v. Sparrow* was a Supreme Court decision that applied Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 which states: “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed” (*Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada*, 1982, s 35(1)). Under this ruling, the Court found that the Musqueam people had an existing Aboriginal right to fish, setting a precedent for other First Nation communities. The case also created a set of criteria known as “the Sparrow test” to determine whether “governmental infringement on Aboriginal rights was justifiable, providing that these rights were in existence at the time of the Constitution Act, 1982” (Salomons & Hanson, 2009, para. 1). If *R. v. Sparrow* had not been resolved, Greg’s own case could have likely set the precedent on this matter.

Dean talked about a co-management agreement that was set up between bands on Lake Huron and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources that he described as “hoodwinking.” Under this agreement, Indigenous fishermen are required to obtain a license and are subject to a quota.

Percy provided a spirited discussion of his impressions on this matter:

Now, Chief and Council passed a resolution for my friend, giving him a license so he could fish the area and when he showed that to the Ministry of Natural Resources, they wouldn't even recognize it and charged him and everything. So, he went to see his [then] Chief and Council and they wouldn't back him up. If it were me, somebody's ass would be getting sued. They'd have to get me a living for the rest of my life. When I think about the fishing that we have down below, my son just asked me, “Dad, why don't you go fish down in Lake Huron?” Well, I'm going to be 71, you think I want to have more wars on my hands? I'm content to stay here and do a little bit of fishing. He says, “We got a quota down there.” Don't even go there! Don't even go with this quota thing! That's saying you accept that. I don't want to do that! That's not the thing to do. I still don't know why First Nations down below don't go ahead and just fish like we do... All my life, I been told First Nations people, we own this, we own that, but try to exercise that right – look at how much time you guys spent in court over logging. How many years with the fishing? It took Nova Scotia fishermen to have open season here for us. If the Sparrow case never came down, we'd still be fishing under a license.

Batchewana First Nation contests the notion that they never gave up their rights to waters surrounding their traditional territories and many families continue to fish as their source of livelihood. Because Batchewana First Nation continues to assert their sovereignty and jurisdiction within their traditional territory, there are often conflicts and tensions between the band and the provincial government, especially the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

Batchewana First Nation is involved in a number of court cases today relating to land claims and jurisdiction over resources within their traditional territory, including the right to access traditional village locations, logging, and commercial fishing. The latest case being fought in courts is over logging. The band hopes that the case will be settled in court in order to set a precedent for Indigenous peoples in Ontario. If the province dismisses the charges, then as Dean states, “The cloak of immunity will be removed. The province will have to prove their case and

they have nothing to stand on.” Included in the defense case is the illegality of the 1859 Pennefather Treaty⁸ as well as the illegal establishment of Lake Superior Provincial Park. Part of Batchewana First Nation’s negotiations is to assume control of the Park and to re-establish the traditional Anishinaabe names in the area.

I didn’t know you need a license to hunt. Since 1981, Greg has been asserting his right to fish Lake Superior and has been involved in several court cases dealing with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. In a recent case, members of Batchewana First Nation went to reclaim access to Nanabozhung, also known as Gargantua Harbour, within Lake Superior Provincial Park. This site has been a harbour for BFN fishermen for hundreds of years and Dean referred to it as “the spiritual place of our people.” The site had road access for a number of years until the provincial park blocked the entrance, removed culverts, and closed the road. Chief Sayers led community members in an action to reclaim the road and to restore access to the site for the community. Greg recounts:

We went down there [to Gargantua]. The first time we were going to go down there to do some stuff, eh. But the park people said, “No, you can’t go down in there. The place is locked”. Well, that’s our land! We’re going down there. They said, “No, you can’t go down there. We’re not opening up the gate for you.” We said, “Well, guess what? We’re going to!” We went down there and they had two big gates there, so we lifted them up and set them in the bush. They charged us and took us to court and they didn’t have a chance in court because it’s our right. They didn’t like that.

During my drive with Dean to the mazinaabikiniganan site, we passed by the old village that was situated on the Agawa River. An old road entrance is still visible from the highway but it has been blocked off with a gate and a provincial park sign that states motorized vehicles are not permitted. Dean pointed out:

⁸ After signing the Robinson-Huron Treaty in 1850, the Batchewana band was set aside a reserve that extended from Gros Cap to Batchewana Bay, an area that covered 246 square miles. In 1859, the Pennefather treaty left the band with little of the original reserve set aside for them. They retained Whitefish Island in the St. Mary’s River, with the promise that each family would receive 40 acres of land in Garden River. However, promises made under the Pennefather Treaty were never fulfilled and in 1879, the band began purchasing back portions of land to form the reserves they have today (McNab, 1999; Syrette, Syrette, & Corbiere, 1976).

This was the village and they had their buildings that they built when they were developing this area, and they eventually turned it into a junior ranger's camp. So we're reclaiming those. Our people have indicated their intention to use them for themselves. You could drive in there up until a couple of years ago – the houses are still there. But they blocked it off now, like they did before when they took Whitefish Harbour or Gargantua or when they took all of these different places. They tried to limit our access, thinking that if they limited our access to it, eventually, we would stop wanting to go there. But we still accessed and used it from the water, so it didn't really matter. We still had access. They closed it, see? They put a bunch of garbage in the front there.

The ruling in the Gargantua case was in favour of Batchewana First Nation. Nearly all charges against the band were dropped, except for one count of obstruction of justice regarding the possession of firearms. This case has been well documented in the media (Martin, 2008; Petz, 2015; Richardson, 2015) and is seen by the band as a step forward in having the government recognize their rights within their traditional territory. However, Dean's remarks about limiting access to place touches on another issue concerning the band's history. This would be the forced dispossession of land that began with the signing of the 1850 Robinson-Huron Treaty and continued into the mid-1900s.

They never thought land could be sold. As noted, Batchewana First Nation is one of the signatories to the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. Percy remembers his father's version of what took place during that time:

The story that my dad used to tell, he called us – he said, “We're maanoo⁹ people”... the HBC [Hudson Bay Company], they would put a trading post up and there were Métis coming in and trapping for them. When a family would move in, we moved over. Maanoo, let them stay there. Another one comes, you move over. Eventually, there was no other place to move. All that trapping that took place in there was unbelievable. That left the people there without any food. All the animals they trapped, they ate the meat and used the fur. But they went in there and stripped it of its riches so there was nothing left to eat! So they kept migrating from there down to Goulais Bay, back and forth. There used to be too many people there. When they came to Goulais Bay, this was back around 1850 Treaty, that time, they weren't really aware of the Treaty being made. They never thought land could be sold.

⁹ Let it be

While the Anishinaabe people did not think that land could be sold, the federal government was initiating treaty negotiations all along Lake Superior in order to establish mining claims in the area. Percy also talked about the government's way of dealing with bands during this time.

Often, the government would appoint someone as Chief despite what may have already been in place within the community. This would cause disputes between the government-appointed leaders and the community-based leadership. As Percy describes:

They [each band] had their own chiefs or principal men. When the government came in, the government said, "Because you can read and write, you can be chief." It wasn't the people's choice, it was the government's choice. So, the government would try to negotiate with these men but when the principal men tried to kick that person out of that area, they would go back and tell their superior that no one wanted to negotiate with them. So they were told they would be made a bigger chief to speak over all those little ones.

Additionally, Batchewana First Nation signed the Pennefather Treaty in 1859 through which the band would "surrender and yield up for ever" the lands that had been reserved for them under the Robinson-Huron Treaty. Percy states:

When they weren't satisfied by the land they got in the 1850 Treaty, they left too much behind. So they came up in 1859 and made up the Pennefather Treaty. Now that's supposed to be as fraudulent as a three dollar bill, but nothing's ever written about it. The people at Goulais Bay were upset! There was a man of principal living here at that time named Peter Kakiash and he was supposed to be the son of Shingwauk. We were supposed to move from here to Garden River or Manitoulin and he said, "No, those people don't want to move." That probably would have been my great-great-grandfather. He said, "No! We're not leaving here, this is our home!" He worked out some kind of satisfactory thing with the government so Goulais Bay was made into a reserve at that time.

I had asked Greg why the community would sign away their reserve lands merely 9 years after the original treaty signing. His response was that the Pennefather Treaty was signed under duress. As he states, "We were forced to sign them. They made another treaty in 1859 – the Pennefather Treaty. They brought in the military and we were forced to sign away our land," adding that if the band did not sign, the government would not supply rations or benefits to other

bands in the area. This history has already been documented (Chute, 1998; McNab, 1999; Morrison, 1993) and it is important to note how these topics arose in every conversation I had with people. Everyone I spoke with had something to say about their treaty history and the gradual dispossession from their lands. For example, Percy said:

I want to talk about the land. Every time the government would put his official in these places, the Indian Agents, he would go from house to house, telling people they can have a much better life. Encouraging them to move to town: “You should enfranchise and you’ll get a little money here.” We were savages! Labelled that. In order to be enfranchised, you couldn’t be a savage. The only one that could say you’re a good man is another white man. They signed the papers and now the Indian Agent says in order to be a responsible man, you need to be a landowner. So, you got to buy 40 acres from the reserve you’re leaving. You can’t buy land in the city. They were trying to do away with the reserves. You see chunks of land taken out of reserves, here and there... I’ve seen that here! We talked about how that came about. Now when I go back to think of that, I talk to the Band lawyer and she says that’s not so. Those native people never paid tax in their life. They can’t pay the taxes, so where does the land go? Back to the government! You can’t win!

When asked about what happened to the people living along the Agawa River when Lake Superior Provincial Park was established, it was stated matter-of-factly by Rodney, “They burnt them all down and made them all move to Batchewana Bay.” Rodney had heard this story from his grandfather who was in his 90s when he passed away. He continues:

There was another community about 30 km past that – Gargantua, Gargantua Harbour, Nanabozhung. That’s another one of our sacred spots... But there’s a harbour there and there was a community there also. They burnt them out of there and made them all move to Agawa. Burnt them out of Agawa and made them move to Batchewana Bay. Then they bought this property here, in Rankin, and they tried to make them all in Batchewana Bay and Goulais move here. Dean’s great-grandfather, and my great-great grandfather, Nebenaigoching, said, “Nope. Not moving anymore. That’s enough,”

This was the same story told by Dean on my first meeting with him in the Band Office. He stated that Ontario established the Lake Superior Provincial Park in 1941 without the consent of the band. People were made to leave the area because their houses were burnt. Greg also mentioned that people used to live at the Agawa River:

I remember a long time ago that people used to live there. People weren't living there so they [the government] didn't take anyone into consideration. What we used to use it for – since I was a young fellow – was a harbour. A fishing harbour, eh? But before that... way before that, people used to live all along there.

You know, the Indians didn't call that place Agawa. When it comes to language and place-names, Agawa, like many other locations, is a corruption of a former Anishinaabe name. According to everyone I spoke with, the Anishinaabe name for the place was Oquaio, so named for a man who lived in the area who is a direct ancestor of the Agawa family today. According to Percy:

In 1862, my great-great-grandfather lived here... He told them, "Oquaio" – that meant "Neck of Earth." I didn't have a problem figuring out how they came up with "Neck of Earth" because when you live within the interior and you're using the rivers, it *is* a neck of earth... You need to visualize where he lived. The highway into the interior was the rivers. You can only follow a river so far up, and that river becomes a little creek and eventually it becomes nothing. I can't see it any other way. It has to do with the place and what it looks like. That's the way our language always was. It describes things.

As for how it became corrupted, band members indicated that the name had not been written down before. When government officials came to take census information, they approximated the spelling of the name. As Irene states, "Oquaio... That's one of the Elder's names. My grandfather used it..., we never used Agawa. What's that mean anyways? He was given the name Agawa because he was there getting his treaty money." She continues:

Yeah...it's too bad, the Indians lost out. Indians had names. Trees had names. The earth had names. All of them had a name. Indian names! Not the white man names...Indian names! Even the Indians had Indian names! No one had John, or...they all had their own Indian names. Oquaio...that's Agawa! Oquaio! How you spell it, I don't know. That's what the white man told us..., they said your name's going to be Agawa from now on. You can't use Oquaio. Why? I don't know. Because that's an Indian name, Oquaio.

Environment. People I spoke with also expressed concern over the environment and the impact that development and industry has on water and climate. Marian brought up the idea that the land had been entrusted to the government to look after but that the government and Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources is ultimately failing in their obligations to the environment. As she states:

When I went down to the water meeting in Serpent River there – I could just feel their anger – how mad they were about Natural Resources and what Natural Resources did to their area; how they wrecked their water and all that. We got water problems in the Mission [Goulais Bay] here too, but ours is a natural phenomenon. It's not because someone put in a paper mill or anything else whatever. Ours is a natural thing. Theirs is man-made from the paper mills and everything else in their area. The reason I could relate to them really, up until last year, every year I'd journey to Long Lac and when I get on top those hills over there, I looked back. My sister wanted to stop and I said, "Okay! We'll stop at the top of this hill and we can look out in either direction"... When I looked back, my god! It's just clear-cut as far as the eye can see! Just like desert! Nothing but little woodchips. All those little creeks where we used to fish pickerel and speckled trout – the creeks are all dried up. There's no more moose in Long Lac. They got to go miles away to hunt moose. Those are the people we entrusted with our land. They're supposed to look after our land! They're not looking after it! They killed it! ...What can we do?

Greg similarly pointed to a concern for the environment and climate change. However, he also stated the important role that Indigenous knowledge has in addressing these issues. He states:

One of the main things I wanted to do is protect our Mother Earth. You see all those storms going on out there? You know why they're happening? Don't they realize that if they hurt Mother Earth, Mother Earth has to fight back somewhere and somebody is going to get the brunt of it? They're cutting the forests down and they wonder why the weather's changing around here. I never went to school for any of that stuff but we know it! There was a professor that was at that Nawash meeting a long time ago. That professor got up..., he says, "There are several professors out here in the crowd. . . we've learned a lot of things from books and we got as far as we can but we're not even close to being as smart as the Native peoples are... We have to learn it, but they already know." That kind of stuck with me, the way he admitted that. The stuff that we know is really important for us here.

These insights indicate a need for better environmental protection and are a call for the government to fulfill their end of the obligation to protect lands and resources within our traditional territories.

Residential school. The legacy of residential schools has recently been exposed to settler society with the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) findings and

final report. However, the impact residential school has had on people and communities has been well known to Indigenous peoples for decades. In our conversations, band members revealed how residential school impacted their knowledge, beliefs, and relationships. For example, Greg states:

My dad was in residential school, so he never talked to us about anything because of that. In fact, he never even taught us our language. He was scared to teach our language because he was afraid we'd get beat up like they did. That was one of the things that hurt me the most I guess, was not learning my culture from my father, eh. He knew a lot – the last 15 years of his life, he started telling me about the residential school and different things, eh. All the stuff that happened to him down there. I couldn't understand why he was so mean. He wasn't really mean to us but you could see it in him, eh. I used to wonder why he was like that. I couldn't understand it, eh? Then after he told me what happened to him then, then I -- I used to be a Catholic... I never went back to that.

Not only did his father's school experience negatively affect the relationship he had with Greg, it also affected what he was willing to pass on to his children, including the language. Greg asks, "I wonder what kind of education I would've got if I didn't go to residential school? I was there for 3 years. I ran away," and states that, "They never taught us anything, all they taught us was to sit down and pray." He continues: "Everything is all connected in some way or another, eh. I wish I knew more about the pictographs but I never did. The residential school did a number on me too, eh?" Despite this disconnect and interruption in deepening his Indigenous knowledge, Greg has been able to reclaim some of what he feels he missed out on:

Since I gave up on the Catholic Church, I been learning a lot about my own stuff, eh. And it almost seems kind of funny..., like I actually know it, but I don't know that I know it. Because there's some of the things that were going on and people ask me about it and I turn around and answer them but I don't know where I got the answer from, you know what I mean?

Irene also talked about the loss of language and the inability to perform ceremonies on the land. She describes how a group of Elders wanted to conduct a ceremony at the mazinaabikiniganan site together:

We went there one time. We had pipe ceremony. Even the white man..., when they first got there, he said, “No fire and no pipes.” But why? That’s their culture! But still, they wanted us to stop that; wanted to take away their language. The language is the main thing that the Indians got. They talked that language to the animals, to the wind, to the Creator.

Rodney also discussed how difficult it can be for Anishinaabe people given the legacy of residential school. He states:

It’s difficult, it’s hard being Anishinaabe... Growing up, when I was a kid, I went to residential school – dealing with priests and nuns and getting beat everyday – it was difficult. It was a hard life for me.... Kindergarten to Grade 4, a bunch of us were shipped from Batchewana Bay. It was a Roman Catholic school called St. James and we were taught by priests and nuns there. A nun was the principal and she used to give us the strap everyday almost.

Discussion: Resisting Settler-Colonialism

It might be tempting to speculate, given the findings above, that connections to *mazinaabikiganan* have been severed because of the effects of settler-colonialism. However, what the community of Batchewana has demonstrated is a spirit of resilience and a thriving connection with cultural knowledge and belief systems. Tuck (2009) cautions against what she terms “damage-based theory” where communities are pathologized as victims of their situations, be it poverty, addiction, or other challenges. As she states:

In damaged-centered research, one of the major activities is to document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe. Though connected to deficit models—frameworks that emphasize what a particular student, family, or community is lacking to explain underachievement or failure—damage-centered research ... looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. (p. 414)

Batchewana cannot be defined by the effects of settler-colonialism. What the findings indicate in this section is that the community has not been a passive victim of settler-colonialism. Rather, their actions, attitudes, and beliefs were characterized by an attitude of resistance and hope, in spite of the impacts settler-colonialism has had on the community.

Batchewana has a well-documented history as signatories of the Robinson-Huron Treaty and in their role within the commercial fishery on Lake Superior (Morrison, 1993; McNab, 1999). It has been noted that:

The fisheries department of the province of Canada had begun... to limit treaty fishing rights by the late 1850's... and by the turn of the century, Robinson treaty beneficiaries were being consistently fined or jailed – and having their equipment confiscated – for exercising their treaty rights to hunt and fish on unoccupied Crown lands and waters. (Morrison, 1993, p. 7)

This treatment is described by Greg in his own encounters with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, showing how long this treatment persisted for the fishers of Batchewana (see also McNab, 1999). However, as Morrison (1993) notes, “the Ojibways of northern Lakes Huron and Superior did not remain silent in the face of such treatment” (p. 8). While the fishers of Batchewana continue to have run-ins with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and compete with non-Indigenous anglers on the lake, they have successfully asserted their right to fish within their traditional territory. By issuing their own licenses, the band is not subject to the same quotas and restrictions as other commercial fishermen and they are able to control the deep-water fisheries as they have for centuries. Greg talked about his involvement with a court case in the late 1980s where he was challenging the right to commercially fish without a provincial license. According to McNab (1999), “the issue and this litigation were only eclipsed by the parallel British Columbia case of Ronald Sparrow” (p. 139). The Sparrow case was “a significant victory for those interested in the affirmation of Aboriginal rights” (Kulchyski, 1994, p. 212). Today, Batchewana has not signed any agreements with the provincial government regarding fishing rights as they continue to assert their Aboriginal right and sovereignty within their territory. As McNab (1999) states, “Through all of this persecution and litigation, the Batchewana fishers have gone out in their boats, put out their nets and have continued to fish” (p. 139).

There are many other instances in which the Anishinaabe “did not remain silent” (Morrison, 1993, p. 8). As Morrison (1993) notes, many of the issues regarding the Robinson-Huron treaty were brought up well over a century ago. In my initial meeting with the community, I was made very aware of the community’s history with the Robinson-Huron treaty. I was impressed with the depth of knowledge and understanding that community members possessed, and with the amount of research the community has conducted to have their treaty properly fulfilled. While most people I spoke with acknowledged experiences of residential school and some of the effects that has had in their lives, they also acknowledge that they have not been completely limited by those experiences. Knowledge and understandings continued to be passed down between generations, people recognized the values and knowledge instilled in them beyond the residential school experience, and many have strived to maintain an Anishinaabe identity despite their experiences in residential school. These are stories of survivance; these are not just reactions to settler-colonialism, but active resistance to it. The band’s actions to assert their sovereignty within their traditional territory is an example of this resistance. Historically, the band has always opposed government attempts to exploit lands and resources without their consent and without prior negotiations. It has been recorded that the band opposed the initial mining claims and logging operations that sparked the creation of the Robinson-Superior and Robinson-Huron Treaties (McNab, 1999; Morrison, 1993). This is a tradition that the band carries forward to this day, as evidenced by the number of court cases asserting the community’s Aboriginal and treaty rights (Canadian Press, 2014; McNab, 1999; Richardson, 2015).

While the government and missionaries may have tried to sever connections with land and with spirituality, they ultimately failed, as evidenced in my conversations with Batchewana community members. The people of Batchewana still very much maintain a connection with

sites that were deliberately made inaccessible; they also retain stories and memories of places that have since been renamed or re-purposed. The mazinaabikiniganan thus are set within a socio-political context that has been touched by settler-colonialism. Rather, they are a part of a community that has been very active in negotiating and asserting their rights to maintain, access, and operate within their traditional territory. The duress endured by the ancestors of Batchewana First Nation is not forgotten and it is woven into the history of the community. However, through that duress, the ancestors of the community have been able to negotiate a treaty to benefit future generations, which allows the community to maintain a measure of control within their territory. Not only that, but they have also maintained traditional beliefs and practices within the community despite repeated attempts by the Canadian government to assimilate Indigenous peoples. McPherson and Rabb (2011) “maintain that it is the nature of Native American philosophy that gives native people the strength to maintain their ways of being in the world in the face of systematic attempts by government-sponsored residential schools to eradicate Native cultures” (p. 142). I now take a closer look at examples of the persistence of Anishinaabe philosophy and worldview in the following sections.

Spirits Occupy Place

“We know this lake and we’ve always known this lake – the shoals, the bays, the ranges. We know how to do ceremonies, how to cross the bays, how to work with the spirits in the area.”

– *Dean Sayers*

On a sunny day in September, Dean and I drove up Highway 17 to visit the mazinaabikiniganan. Along the way, he pointed out landmarks, side roads, rivers, and bays. Each place had a story attached to it, whether that mountain is where they once collected copper or the bay is where the community once had a fish cannery. He pointed to Batchewana Island and

explained that is where Batchewana derived its name – Obadjiwanung – referring to an underwater eddy or current that exists at the northern point of the island. Dean explained:

At the head of the Batchewana River, the river's headwaters are in a bottomless lake. That's where Mishibizhiw¹⁰ lives. When it's going to storm, the Mishibizhiw return to the river to hide in the bottomless lake. My dad could tell the weather based on the colour of the water. You could tell when a storm was coming because Mishibizhiw would stir up the sand and mud, trying to get back up the river. Sometimes they don't make it and you can see trees knocked down and the water is murky. That's where the thunderbirds fought with them.

The place Dean spoke of was not a vast and empty wilderness, but a local and familiar place populated by spirits. This was a common theme that emerged from the conversations I held with other Batchewana band members. I was told that the Creator put spirits in certain places to help us, and it was our responsibility to maintain a connection with those spirits, to seek them out for guidance or protection. Dean elaborates:

The Frog Woman sits in this one place where we would be coming across regularly on our way to Baawating... There was a natural rock formation – there's a spirit that sits on the edge of the water, like, water up to your knees, and she's sitting there. Her legs are crossed and there's a natural tobacco bowl in her lap. When you get there, to help with the calming of the water so your people can go back to the village..., everyone puts their asemaa¹¹ into that bowl and, as soon as you do that, the water will calm down, the wind will calm down, and the Elders would say, "Okay everybody, hurry up, get in your boats!" and it would all be in the language, of course. "Everybody get in, let's go! Gotta go!" and they'd get in their boats and they'd row across and when they got to the other side, the wind would pick up again. That was the Frog Woman that sits there, that was a helper.

Spirits are embodied on the landscape through physical landmarks and natural rock formations.

Like the Frog Woman, Old Woman Bay is another place where spirits reside. According to Marian:

My grandma used to tell us a story about Old Woman Bay. There was an old woman – I don't know where she was from – might have been Goulais Bay, might have been Batchewana, I don't know. But anyway, they called her Chikwewiss. She was a bad old lady and she did things to the people. Practiced bad medicine on them and all sorts of things. Punishment in them days was banishment so they banished her. They banished

¹⁰ An underwater spirit resembling a lynx or panther.

¹¹ Tobacco

that old woman out of whatever reserve that was. When they were chasing her down, she broke her leg going down to the ice in wintertime. Grandma used to say, the story is when you're on the ice, you can hear like, "Chk-chk-whoosh, chk-chk-whoosh." That's the old woman dragging her leg, going up the lake. She was banished up to Old Woman's Bay. That's how far she crawled. She tried to crawl up the land and she crawled up the rocks on the mountainside and that's how Old Woman Bay is supposed to have gotten its name. When we were kids, we would go by Old Woman's Bay and my dad would point out, "There she is in the rock!" You could see her face in the rock and her hair would come down like that.

These stories illustrate how the land is populated by stories and legends. In the case of Old Woman Bay, the rock formation on the south side of the bay is an embodiment of Chikwewis, which serves as a reminder of the story that took place there. These types of places can serve as mnemonic devices, imparting lessons on history, cultural etiquette, and governance structures.

Not only is land occupied by spirits, but some sites are spiritual or sacred in nature. In speaking about Nanabozhung, or Gargantua Harbour, Rodney states:

That's another one of our sacred spots. There's a chair there out in the water, by Devil's Warehouse, Devil's Frying Pan, those are sacred spots. The church renamed that in order for our people not to understand that or believe in our culture, you know? But that chair they say is where Nanabozho sat down and rested there when he was making all of creation. You can just imagine how powerful that is, just in saying that. Nanabush,¹² the original spirit that helped make all of creation, sat down there?

Dean emphasizes Rodney's statement about the significance of naming and renaming places.

There is an understanding that the Church attempted to sever connection with sacred places in order to undermine traditional beliefs and ceremonial practices. Dean asserts:

That was a powerful place for us. So they [missionaries] had to minimize it, change our thinking about it and condition us, because that's bad there... Nanabozho's Chair or his frying pan – because the water is bubbling there. That's the devil – jiiibay.¹³

Percy also alluded to the idea that a spirit may dwell near the Agawa River and Agawa Rock. As a child, his brother would draw images of beings that breathed fire and had horns on their heads that often frightened his mother. He goes on to say:

¹² There are many ways to spell Nanabozho and the final vowel is often dropped in contemporary speech.

¹³ Ghost or spirit.

He was not a shaking tent guy or anything – I don't know where he got that from. Jesse Agawa was living in a senior citizens place and I asked him to draw me a picture one time. He drew me a picture and it was really similar to what my brother would draw as a kid and he called it “the Oquiao spirit.”

So perhaps the images his brother had drawn as a child were in fact images of the spirit or spirits that dwelt near the Agawa River and mazinaabikiniganan site?

According to the people with whom I spoke, the spirits are still very much present on the land. While we talked about the fasting ceremony that takes place at the mazinaabikiniganan site every year, Rodney described an encounter with Mishibizhiw, the underwater panther:

Everyone that goes fasting sees him out in the water... That guy that just went by? He's seen him out in the water. He's seen that big serpent first, probably 100 feet long, about this big around [holds up his hands about two feet apart]. Black. It started to get really stormy out. That's when Mishibizhiw comes around. They say that he comes around because he's trying to cleanse things, because things are happening in a certain area that's not supposed to happen there. With bad weather, it sort of washes everything away, pushes things away. They say that good spirits come on really strong gusts of wind. So, we've endured winds of 90 miles an hour. Broke our tipi! Tents were rolling across the parking lot. It was just like a big gust and it would stop. Gust and stop. We were all sitting around the tipi there, just laughing. We'd grab onto a pole because the wind was coming. The ones that were out fasting say they saw him out on the water. He was bringing that storm across Lake Superior.

Similarly, Dean and Irene shared stories of their encounters with Mishibizhiw. Driving along Highway 17, the road curves along the length of Agawa Bay. Dean describes one incident:

Maybe 10 years ago or so, this is where I'd seen Mishibizhiw. I looked over here to the left, and he was out there sunning himself. The lake was like glass that day and you could see this big, long, black shape out on the water. So I always look out for him when I drive out this way... He's still around. Maybe you'll meet him.

Irene described an event where Mishibizhiw raised his tail, raining water down on the Elders who were present. She described Mishibizhiw as “the Indian's friend” and stated, “He can cure you or he could kill you.” While spirits were put upon the land to help and to guide the Anishinaabe, the spirits also sought reprisal if they felt they were being disrespected or that

people were not conducting themselves appropriately. Irene describes what can happen if the spirits are disregarded:

I tell you..., the pictographs? When the spirits say don't take no pictures, don't take it! But there's a guy came along and he had a canoe or a boat or something. The man that was looking after the place said, "You can't go close to them pictographs," and [the man in the boat] says, "Who's going to stop me?" So that guy didn't say no more. That guy put his boat in the water with his camera and he went towards the pictographs. Those water spirits – because everything is all spirit – that water spirit washed right over him and took him down. That's why they say when you're not supposed to go there, don't go there! The spirits don't like that. But the white man, he won't listen – he never did.

Rodney made a similar remark about being aware of the presence of spirits. He says, "You have to understand that there's spirits there all the time, spirits everywhere and they see and hear everything. They're always there."

Discussion: Spirits Occupy Place

There are three things I'd like to say in this section. First, these stories indicate that the world is not an empty wilderness as is commonly perceived by Euro-Westerners (Cronon, 1995; Nash, 2001). Rather, it is a place that is animated by stories and memories that speak of a community made up of spirits, humans, and other-than-human beings. Second, the stories that are shared here are stories that have been passed down from generation to generation. They are stories heard from grandparents and shared with younger generations, indicating the importance of intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Third, perhaps spirits and other-than-human beings deserve as much respect as human beings.

Believing that spirits occupy the landscape is common in the Anishinaabe worldview. There are many narratives that take place on the land, some that describe supernatural events or the experiences of figures like Nanabush, while others describe lived experiences and memories of human beings. Dumont (1976) explains:

These legends, these myths are... no mere childish tales of how a world began, or why human and animal beings have the peculiar features and characteristics they do. Nor are they fanciful explanations for the landscape and the atmosphere being filled with liveliness and strange superhuman beings. Rather, they speak of how meaning and life, that seems of another reality, is brought into the ordinary reality we are born into. "They make a home out of the world." (p. 39)

It is this idea, that stories make a home out of the world, that is significant. For the Anishinaabe people, our territories hold our histories and those histories do not just include the time span of human history, but the time before – when Nanabozho and other spirits walked the earth. Those histories are embedded in the places and the stories that have been passed down from generation to generation within our communities. The church would not have renamed these sites if there was not already a strong spiritual attachment to this place for the Anishinaabe. These sites are imbued with power by their very nature. In telling the story of Nanabozho sitting and resting at Nanabozho's Chair, we are animating the landscape with our own understandings of the world. It is grounding the landscape in what we know and believe as Anishinaabe people, which is something that missionaries have tried to take away for hundreds of years. By renaming these sites as "Devil's Armchair" or "Devil's Warehouse Island," the spiritual nature of those places becomes subverted and usurped by Euro-Western understandings and aims. Smith (1995) elaborates:

Myth... enacts the world of meaning and value in such a way that it at once legitimates and reflects participation in a community of subjects. In this Ojibwe life-world this community consists...of persons, both human and other-than-human, who act with varying degrees of power and beneficence. Without the memory of myth this community might be reduced from a rich and consonant sacred environment to the nonsensical, amoral, and religiously barren life-world into which the Jesuits thought they had wandered. (p. 22).

These stories give insight into the worldview¹⁴ of Anishinaabe people, which is important in understanding the context in which the mazinaabikiniganan are set.

It is important to understand that stories affirm relationships with other-than-human beings and that by looking at the land as a place where spirits dwell, there is a moral obligation to look after these places. Many of the stories shared spoke of Mishibizhiw, the underwater panther, as a living being who continues to inhabit the land. Smith (1995) describes Mishibizhiw in this way:

His power extends far beyond the control of underwater “game.” The underwater Manitou may have been entreated for success in fishing, but most frequently he was asked simply to allow humans to travel on the water in safety, for he controls the water itself as well as all creatures which “people” it. (p. 97)

The stories that describe Mishibizhiw reveal a relationship with this spirit that is based on reciprocity and respect. Mizhibizhiw is often depicted and written about as a monster – something to be feared and revered. However, the Anishinaabe of Batchewana have developed a relationship with this spirit that is maintained by offering asemaa and conducting appropriate ceremonies. Rather than viewing this spirit as a monster, the people of Batchewana see him as an occupant of the land, one who lives here to help us fulfill our obligations as Anishinaabe and who will remind us of our responsibilities should we begin to forget.

Spirits and stories about spirits and the sacred natures of places create landscapes that are familiar and comforting within an expansive territory. By sharing these stories and acknowledging the spirits that dwell in places, it’s like visiting old relatives or being surrounded by “home.” This idea will be explored further in the final section that discusses what can be

¹⁴ Here, worldview refers to what Kawagley (2006) describes as “the principles we acquire to make sense of the world around us” (p. 7). Overholt and Callicott (1982) similarly describe worldview as “a set of conceptual presuppositions, both conscious and unconscious, articulate and inarticulate, shared by members of a culture” (p. 1). Worldview is inherently embedded within cultures and “enables its possessors to make sense of the world around them, make artifacts to fit their world, generate behaviour, and interpret their experiences” (Kawagley, 2006, p. 8).

learned from mazinaabikiniganan. For now, suffice to say that the Anishinaabe people of Batchewana occupy a vast territory that is populated with spirits and other-than-human beings which create spaces that are at once local and familiar. It is not a vast and empty wilderness, but home to Anishinaabe peoples, their stories, their histories, and all of their relations.

Interpreting Mazinaabikiniganan

The mazinaabikiniganan are set within a rich and detailed context that is specific to geography, history, and place. The findings in the previous section attest to the specificity of this context and firmly establish the setting in which the mazinaabikiniganan occur. This section describes the significance of the mazinaabikiniganan site and shares community interpretations of the mazinaabikiniganan themselves. Overall, community members described the mazinaabikiniganan as a teaching place, a ceremonial place, and view them as a part of the community's history with strong ties to traditional territory.

It is important to highlight from the beginning that interpretations varied from person to person, attesting to the notion that there is no one universal or 'correct' way to view these images. Participants made it very clear when speaking to me that they were providing *their* own understandings of the mazinaabikiniganan and that in no way did they intend their interpretations to be a singular definition of the images.

Mazinaabikiniganan as a Place for Ceremony

I met with Rodney at the Batchewana First Nation annual pow wow. My sister sat on the grass while Rodney and I stood leaning against the back of a pick-up truck parked underneath some of the pines that circle the pow wow grounds. While eating french fries and drinking cans of pop, I asked Rodney what the mazinaabikiniganan meant to him. As a traditional healer, Rodney's view of the mazinaabikiniganan is rooted in the idea that this is a ceremonial place. He

states, “the pictographs are a traditional fasting site” and he’s been holding fasting ceremonies there every spring and fall for the past 13 years. Returning the fasting ceremony to Agawa was part of Rodney’s own personal journey as a traditional healer: As noted earlier, he went to residential school and endured physical abuse at the hands of the priests and nuns there. Despite these hardships, Rodney recognizes that his experiences have brought him where he is today:

That’s one of the things those spirits show us... I know what they were doing to me back then... they were preparing me for stuff I have to go through today. It’s difficult; it’s hard being Anishinaabe. It’s hard making sure that you’re being humble with the gifts that you carry. It’s a difficult life, you know.

He brought the fasting ceremony back to Agawa after working as an oshkaabewis¹⁵ and learning from various traditional healers. He describes the journey that led him to conduct the fasting ceremonies at Agawa:

I was working for Anishinaabe Health Toronto as an oshkaabewis... The Royal Ontario Museum contacted us and they said... they were going to display Tecumseh’s sacred bundle there. We went down to check it out and they had it out on this table and we looked at it. They had his regalia, his war club, his pipe... Anyways, we looked at it and I started asking them, “What’re you’re going to do with this?” The curator at the ROM, she said, “We’re going to put this in this backroom storage room where we have many other First Nation items” ... and she says, “Oh, we probably have about 75,000 different artifacts here.” ... my heart just dropped and I couldn’t believe it! I said, “Well, what do you have?” Ranging from water drums, war clubs, pipes, eagle feathers, regalia to everything. So, I say, “Am I able to go in there to view these things?” And she says, “Sure, we’ll take you in there.” So, then, I brought a healer with me... I took him in there and we looked at all these items and he said, “We need to do a ceremony in here – it’s really heavy”... So I started to do that. Then I was talking with the curator and she asked me, “Where are you from?” I told her Batchewana Bay and she said, “Oh, you’re from the land of the Agawa pictographs.” I looked at her and said, “You know about those?” She says, “Yes, I been there many times. That’s your old fasting grounds, eh?” I was amazed! She was First Nations but you would never tell by looking at her.

So, all this stuff was evolving and all coming together for me. As I walked out of that Royal Ontario Museum, I had tears in my eyes that second time we were there. I walked outside and took tobacco and I walked up to a tree in the back property, in the back part there... I put out tobacco by that tree and I said, “Someday, I want to do these ceremonies and bring them back home to our people and I want to take some of these

¹⁵ A ceremonial attendant or messenger.

items out of here too.” So it took 6-7 years before this all came to evolve. For me to go up there to start doing those fasting ceremonies up there and that was about 13-14 years ago now. Each time we do it up there, it’s very powerful. Our ancestors are up there.

The fasting ceremony is an important part of Anishinaabe spirituality. As a rite of passage, it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and its purpose is “to gain a vision that will serve as a spiritual and moral compass to guide the individual in making future choices” (RCAP, 1996, p. 612).

Dean describes the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa as “one of those places that are really a connecting point to the spirit world.” He states:

There is a really strong, really clear window here – a clear way of communication with the spirit world. But there’s lots of them, lots of places like that. Portals, I guess. So we close this park every year, every spring and every fall. We come here to do ceremonies. We pray, we try to fulfill our obligations. Also historically, this place has been a place for our people to get clarity on what are our responsibilities. What are we supposed to do? How can we hone or clarify the work that we need to do? What kind of guidance and support can we get from the spirits here? How can they help us in our work that we need to do as Anishinaabe? So you come here and it’s a place of vision so you can get that clarity. The fasters come here and they get that clarity on their roles and responsibilities and I understand that’s always been the case for this particular place. It’s a window and it’s always been a really strong place for us.

Similarly, Percy described the mazinaabikiniganan as a place for seclusion during ceremonies:

The whole thing about the pictographs was it was spiritual people – shaking tent people. That was one of the main places at Agawa River where Native people lived. In behind, there was seclusion. Native people would go and seek out seclusion at the times of having ceremonies.

The very nature of the mazinaabikiniganan site makes it ideal for seclusion and fasting.

The fasters sit perched on top of towering granite cliffs that overlook Lake Superior. The mazinaabikiniganan are at the base of those cliffs. Rodney describes the area:

It’s such a beautiful area. You put yourself on an open rock, you’re going to be in trouble, but if you go back a little bit, you can still see the lake and you have all the animals that come there. Bears, moose, wolves, coyotes, fox, raccoons, eagles... You’re up high so that eagles can fly right at your eye level. If you’re above the pictographs, there’s a wall straight down, about 150 feet up..., some of the eagles will land in the trees nearby and they’ll sit there if you’re really still. We could host probably about 30 people there.

There's lots of room. There are powerful things that happen. You can hear people drumming and singing and that's the spirits doing that, not individuals.

Dean also describes the importance of the setting. Because the site is difficult to access from both land and water, it makes the place more meaningful. You have to be deliberate in your actions if you want to visit the mazinaabikiniganan:

So you can see that from this perspective, coming from this way, how hard it is. You have to be fit and you have to have been living a good life to be able to come here... It's more than just the pictures – it's the work that has to happen to find a good life. It's not easy. It has to be arduous. It has to be challenging. Anything good takes work. If you want medicine from the spirits, you have to meet the spirits halfway... You have to do your part... The harder you have to work for this medicine in this spiritual place, the more benefit you're going to reap. That's balance with semaa. We're going to be taking something from here whether that's physical, spiritual – we have to give too. Give of your energy, your semaa, shiny things, good things come when you have to work hard at it.

Accessing the site by water is equally difficult:

... it's just as hard to get here by the water. To get here by the water, you had to do ceremony, you had to work with the elements and with the spirits. These are northwest winds and it's wide open. Prominent, powerful northwest winds protect this place. You couldn't get in here with a boat unless you knew how to get in here by negotiating and praying and working it out with the spirits.

Even while we were visiting the mazinaabikiniganan, the waves became bigger and bigger until they were washing over the rock ledge. Dean stated:

Right now it's reminding me of how we go here, how we're supposed to come down there... That's powerful. Five minutes ago, it was basically dry and people were walking there. We can't go out there now. We could! But we'd end up in the water. Look at the danger out there! How it's protected!

Dean's statements indicate there is some reciprocity that takes place when you come into these ceremonial places. The idea of offering semaa to ask permission to enter these places suggests that we are negotiating and entering into a relationship with the spirits that occupy place. Dean also brought up the idea that by conducting ceremonies, we are maintaining our relationships with those spirits. He states:

The Elders say if you don't use these spirits, because they were sent here to help us, they'll go back. If they go back, then you'd go to this place and ask for help and they won't be there. We went back about 15 years ago to look for Frog Woman and we had a big ceremony. We built a lodge and had a ceremony because she's a good helper for our fisherman and our people on the lake. We did the ceremony, we fed Mishibizhiw, we wanted to feed all of them. After the ceremony, we went looking for the Frog Woman, up and down the coast for miles and we couldn't find that Frog Woman. I went back to the Elder and she said, "Well, that's because we're not using ceremony, we're not using semaa, we're not doing the feasts anymore and that spirit didn't feel as though they were needed anymore so they went back to the spirit world." And she said, "That's what we need to be careful of. We have to look after these spirits because they were sent here to help us and if we don't look after them, they're going to go back to the spirit world."

The mazinaabikiniganan are a ceremonial place, prized for its seclusion and the difficulty in accessing the site. It is a place where spirits dwell and a place where the ancestors of Batchewana First Nation sought guidance and direction in decision-making and in life.

Discussion: A Place for Ceremony

The conversations held about the significance of place illustrate that not only are the mazinaabikiniganan themselves significant, but their location is equally important to consider. This was not a place for picnics or for a day of hiking or for a casual canoe trip. Instead, this place requires that you approach it with care, respect, and appropriate attitudes. Until the Park opened in the 1940s and road access was later established, this site needed to be accessed by water or overland by walking through the bush. Since the Park's establishment, hiking trails, interpretive signs, commemorative plaques, fencing, and even stairs have been put in to make the mazinaabikiniganan more accessible to visitors. At one time, thick ropes and chains were even staked into the rocks to aid in navigating the slippery rock ledges. You can still see the metal stakes and frayed ropes.

What this means is that this is no longer just a place for ceremony. This is one example of the layers of meanings that accumulate in places over time. If we accept Norder's (2012) view

which “situates landscape as both a palimpsest of history that humans deposit upon the world and subsequently draw from, and engage with” (pp. 387-388), we can see that this site contains a rich and multi-layered historical complexity. For Indigenous peoples, it continues to be a ceremonial place. However, for tourists and settlers, it has become a place for recreation – a place to visit and something to consume. For those visitors, a deeper understanding of the significance of this place might be out of reach. In their analysis of Lakota/Dakota metaphysics, Meyer and Ramirez (1996) note:

To *say* that the Lakota and Dakota see the world holistically as one spirit is not the same as to *see* the world that way. For another to see the world that way would require a kind of gestalt switch involving a shift in “styles of reasoning” as well as ways of perception. It would entail responding to the world according to the exhortation; Mitakuye Oyasin! – “We are all related!” (p. 105)

This place may never be completely understood within a Euro-western frame of reference because it lacks understanding of what it is that gives this site power and significance. Because of its location within what is now a provincial park, this site becomes produced as a “white space” where settler identities can be confirmed (McLean, 2013, p. 360).

The banning of certain ceremonies under the Indian Act also impacted relationships to this place. As evidenced by Rodney’s testimony, the fasting ceremony was something that needed to be brought back to the community, indicating a time when this ceremony did not take place here. He also spoke about how forty years ago, Indigenous people could be jailed for performing the ceremonies he conducts today. As such, ceremonial and sacred places are not to be taken for granted. It is ceremony that reaffirms relationships within the Anishinaabe worldview. Through the fasting ceremony, for example, Anishinaabe people are able to relate and orient themselves to other-than-human beings, community, and place. According to Deloria (2001):

The Indian world can be said to consist of two basic experiential dimensions that, taken together, provided a sufficient means of making sense of the world. These two concepts were place and power... Familiarity with the personality of objects and entities of the natural world enabled Indians to discern immediately where each living being had its proper place and what kinds of experiences that place allowed, encouraged, and suggested. And knowing places enabled people to relate to the living entities inhabiting it. (p. 3)

Deloria (2001) defines these concepts in this way: “power being the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe, and place being the relationship of things to each other” (p. 23). If we think about the mazinaabikiniganan site as both power and place, we can see that through ceremonies like fasting, Anishinaabe people can connect with the living energy of the universe and come to know their respectful place in the grand scheme of things. Not only that, but relationships amongst and between human beings and other-than-human beings can be established and affirmed. Geyschick (1989) provides a description of his own experience with the fasting ceremony, stating “this is the way I learned how to be an Indian” (p. 42). And McPherson and Rabb (2011) explain that “through the vision quest, one is transformed... one begins to see the world in a different way, in a way which has a profound influence on thought and action” (p. 158). This is closely connected with ideas of land as pedagogy and learning through ceremony, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

A Variety of Interpretations and Understandings

There are various understandings and interpretations of the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa Rock. Everyone with whom I spoke had their own ideas about the meanings behind the images, nonetheless there were common themes between these understandings. What stood out the most was the discrepancy between the Euro-Western interpretations put forth in the literature and the understandings held by community members. The stories I was given commonly refuted Euro-Western interpretations, instead offering locally informed meanings that included the

significance and power of spiritual beings such as Mishibizhiw and cultural or historical teachings embedded within the mazinaabikiniganan.

Refuting Euro-Western interpretations. Dewdney is credited for bringing national attention to the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa (Conway, 2010), but there is no denying that the Anishinaabe people were aware of this site long before he ventured onto our territory. As Percy states, “There’s no Indians around that didn’t know where those paintings are. They claim that they found that, it was never lost!” Not only was the site “never lost” for Anishinaabe peoples, the connections to this place continue to be maintained today.

In my conversation with Rodney, he shared a story from his childhood. He asked his grandfather what the images meant and who put them there. He states:

My grandfather, Tommy Agawa, took me up there in 1976. We walked in – back then you had to walk from the highway. It was a difficult walk and we got down to the pictographs with all my family, my grandparents, siblings, cousins. We actually used to cook down there. My grandparents, my mom, and aunties would all prepare food for us and we’d just sit around and talk and eat. So one time I asked my grandfather – I asked him, “Who put that on those rocks down there?” – he was really quiet and I said, “Why did they put them there?” He was sitting there really quiet and then he said, “Those been there for a long time – since forever is what I was told. It was your ancestors that put them there and they put them there for you”, and he pointed at us, us kids. I never thought much about it... I never really asked him any more because we were just kids and we were playing around there and stuff. It wasn’t until I started walking this traditional way of life... all of this has come back to me, and I’m trying to understand.

This interpretation runs counter to the Euro-Western claim that these images were created in the 1800s and that they were put there to record a successful war party expedition (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967; Rajnovich, 1994). Rodney’s story emphasizes the persistence of these images as well as that the site was intended to be a space for reflection and was meant for future generations to see.

Other interpretations of the site also contradict Euro-Western interpretations of the mazinaabikiniganan. As noted earlier, Dewdney’s interpretation was based on a story recorded

by Schoolcraft in 1850 (Dewdney & Kidd, 1967) whose interpretation was based on a story that was told by Shingwaukonse (Schoolcraft, 1853). In this story, it was said that the exploits of a war party led by a chief named Myeengun is recorded in the mazinaabikiniganan (Schoolcraft, 1853). I asked Dean about this interpretation and he responded:

Shingwaukonse had an island out here that's probably 100 miles across, not far from here. Does he have the awareness and knowledge that was in this area? He may have, but there was a primary Clan and Chief and people that would have responsibility for this particular area and it was Wabacheechak and Nebenaigoching that would have the in-depth understanding of this place. There was a real reluctance to be cooperative with settlers and probably ceremonies about warning. We had to be careful with who we cooperated with. We had to be careful of the two faces and we had to choose carefully which one to engage with and how we were going to engage. As a leader, you'd be reluctant to take our people down that road of engaging with two faces.

In this line of thinking, some stories were offered to settlers to obscure the real significance of place as a measure of protection. Along the same lines, I asked about the source of onaman used for painting the images. Percy responded:

I'm sure it's closer than you think. Everybody was looking for gold or minerals of value, they might have known where to find it but didn't tell anybody. If you don't tell anybody, no one will come and show up there.

Again, this attests to the notion that Indigenous peoples deliberately misinformed or withheld information in order to protect places and knowledge from settlers.

If the story of Myeengun's war party is incorrect, then what other stories are offered in its place? I asked Rodney about his thoughts on the interpretation given by Schoolcraft. He relates:

I used to bring busloads of our kids up there and I'd teach them about these pictographs, what they mean. Define them or whatever. I had a group of them waiting on top and there's like a couple of stairs you go down and then there's that ledge. So the park warden, a young girl was taking tours down there. She asks, "Do you mind if I go first?" So I said, "No! Go ahead!" So I'm standing there listening to her and I said, "I'm going to come with you down there. I just want to come and watch what you're doing." She says "Okay"... So we're going down there and she's telling the story of the canoes – the three canoes and there's people in the canoes and there's symbols in front of the canoes. To her, her definition of it, was that it was a war party – they're going to war, these are their totems in front of their canoe and those are the warriors – I'm just laughing – what a bunch of Hollywoodized bullcrap, you know? Anyways, so we went back up and I

brought the kids down, 5 or 6 at a time, and I start explaining and I got to that one and she says, “Do you mind if I come down and listen to your interpretation?” I said, “I don’t care.” She came down and she goes, “What are these ones? What are these canoes?” [I say], “These guys are people coming here to fast. Those totems are the chieftain clans.” That’s what that was. It was always the chieftain clans. It was the chiefs that would come here and look for a vision, right? In the physical world, sometimes you need that spiritual help. You need to go to the spiritual world to better see things that you need to see because some major decisions were happening back then and that’s what that was... all these people are helpers and the one standing up is the one going fasting. That’s all it was! And that girl stands up and she says, “Who told you that?” and I told her, “My grandfather taught me that. He taught me this when I was just a little kid. Who the hell taught you yours?” They did, the Park did, so it was all bullshit.

Rodney states outright: “It’s not a war party.” Clearly, Rodney’s version conflicts with the interpretations given by Park staff. How many people have been told what Rodney calls “bullcrap” over the years?

Depictions of Mizhibizhiw. I discussed the notion that spirits occupy place earlier in the thesis and there is no denying that the mazinaabikiniganan have a deep spiritual significance. I have also described community relationships with Mishibizhiw in connection with ideas about animated landscapes previously. However, it is worth a deeper examination here given the most prominent mazinaabikinigan at Agawa is of Mishibizhiw and several smaller underwater serpents depicted in front of and beneath a canoe. As people who rely on Lake Superior for their livelihood, the people with whom I spoke had a familiarity and understanding of this spirit as a living being – one who persists in the world today. While we were visiting the mazinaabikiniganan, Dean talked at length about Mishibizhiw and his relationship with Anishinaabe people. According to Dean, “Mishibizhiw is a big part of the Lake Superior Management system” and by properly acknowledging him through ceremony, the people of Batchewana can maintain a sustainable livelihood upon the lake. Dean also describes the power of Mishibizhiw, making a connection between this spirit and the qualities of mineral. He also

describes having to know how to work with and understand this spirit. In some ways,

Mishibizhiw is an embodiment of or metaphor for the power of Lake Superior:

He's so powerful. He's mineral. He's gold, and silver, and copper. He's all those minerals. He's all those things. He's so powerful, spiritually, that you have to know how to live with him and work with him and understand him. There's songs, culturally, about him.... We found that our boats were built bigger than any other boats around the Great Lakes because our boats were built to withstand that [indicating the rough waves on Lake Superior]. We had to live in harmony and work with and understanding of the power and enormity of Lake Superior.

While Mishibizhiw is viewed as a powerful spirit that needs to be approached with caution, he is also a spirit put in place to help the Anishinaabe. As Dean states:

Mishibizhiw is one of those spirits that's still here. He's still being called on and still has a big job and supports us and helps us, so we have to look after that spirit. We have to do ceremony, we have to honour and recognize that spirit, all of those things that come with that.

The power of reflection. Several interpretations of the mazinaabikiniganan revolve around the idea of reflection, both physical reflections such as mirror images and contemplative reflection. Through symbols of reflection, mazinaabikiniganan can be a powerful tool to understand Anishinaabe history and understandings of what took place in the past. Similarly, through contemplation and mindful practices, mazinaabikiniganan can act as a window into a deeper world of self-understanding and awareness. Rodney and Dean both talked about the importance of reflection.

To Rodney, as a ceremonial place, the mazinaabikiniganan can be used for introspection. As mentioned previously, the mazinaabikiniganan are at a traditional fasting and ceremonial site. Given the personal and inward nature of the fasting ceremony, reflection is a part of the inherent nature of this place, encouraging contemplation in individuals. Rodney describes:

Ever see the one with the two spirits holding the drum looking at each other? So, if you go up there to the pictographs and look at them, you'll see a white line of quartz in between them. As you know, quartz...., what you make out of quartz is a mirror. So you

have the exact same figure looking at each other and then there's that quartz line in between. So, let's say a thousand years ago, that person put that specifically with that quartz line in between them. It's because you're coming there to look at yourself. That's what that means! ... Just imagine how powerful that is. They never knew about mirrors, and yet they put that quartz line in the perfect spot, at the perfect height.

Literal depictions of reflection also provide insight into the beliefs behind the treaty relationship between the Anishinaabe and the Crown. Earlier, Dean described the significance of metallic and shiny objects within the Anishinaabe worldview. He states:

When we entered in the treaty, the only time we saw a reflection of ourselves is from the shine, that's from the spirit world – from the water – you could see the reflection from the water – it's a spiritual thing. Copper, silver – they're all shiny, and the spirits like that. It's part of the spirit world. It's a beautiful thing, the power of the shining of those metals.

The power attributed to metal is also closely associated with Mishibizhiw as noted previously. By connecting ideas of the power and significance of shiny minerals and reflective surfaces to ideas of treaty relationships, we can see the power and accord attributed to the Crown throughout treaty negotiations. Talking about one particular mazinaabikinigan according to Dean's understanding:

This looks like a reflection in a canoe – like the reflections on the water from the sun in the afternoon. When we would go into treaty, when we're in our lodge, we expected that whoever was doing the agreement, [making] promises with each other, the spirits had to connect face to face in order for that contract or agreement to be valid... When we entered into treaty here with the visitors about how we were going to share this, our spirits needed to connect and [the visitors] said, "Well, Queen Victoria isn't going to come here" and they did this with a lot of treaties, they sent medals. They're shiny and it's spiritual. It's very powerful. In this particular instance, her reflection and her picture was in the medal. She was powerful! ... She isn't really here but she is here. She's here in this medal so we'll enter into treaty because she's honourable. To be able to come in that form, [our ancestors] believed in that. So you see chiefs wearing medals of different kinds. They'd hold them up and say, "I remember what she said to me, I remember our lands being red with the blood of our people, I remember what you promised us when we entered into these agreements." It was important to have that spirit with us in all of our agreements.

Talking about another mazinaabikiniganan, one that is commonly interpreted as containing paddles in a canoe, is understood to actually be reflections of the paddlers. Pointing, Dean says:

This one here, I think that's what this one is about. It's a reflection. Their spirit has affected here. They're here, they're coming. All these people are here that said they were coming. They've all had an effect on our thinking. Our history isn't measured by a particular instance. Our stories are about our unity and how we met. The clans must have met and talked about these relationships that are going to be struck that talked about reflection in the water and it was blessed discussion that we had because it was a very spiritual place that we came from.

The idea of reflection depicted in the mazinaabikiniganan at Agawa can provide insights into the treaty relationship between Anishinaabe peoples and the Crown as well as the ongoing relationships with settler Canadians. By providing alternative points of view and interpretations, we get a much larger sense of the significance of mazinaabikiniganan and what they mean to Anishinaabe communities.

Visionaries and time travelers. In the stories told by the people with whom I talked, they offered insights into the possible makers of the mazinaabikiniganan. Various described as visionaries, time travelers, ancestors, and shape shifters, the people who created these images are perceived to be spiritual people with a special kind of foresight. Rodney explains:

The pictographs have evolved as time goes on... One of them has two lines and there's four circles and there's a man riding a horse and a symbol of a cross and a symbol of a bug and what that pictograph means is that someone had a vision. They had seen those two lines and they represent the roads. So if you look at 1,000 years ago, he'd seen those roads that are going to be crossing Turtle Island, the highways. He'd seen that white man that was coming on horseback because we never had horses. He'd seen that they were bringing that symbol of the cross, which is religion, and along with that came that bug which is disease and smallpox which killed thousands and millions of our people. He had a vision of that and he put that there. You know, we understand the translation of it, but there was nothing that anyone could do when that disease came because they did it to us on purpose. So that's not the definition, that's not why I was told they put it there. The actual reason why he put it there was because it was for us and our generation and our kids, to teach our children that they have the ability to be just as visionary as that

individual was. Because the blood that runs through the arms of that person that drew that painting on that rock runs in the blood of their arms. That's what we share with those young ones.

Percy had a similar explanation about the makers of this place. He describes them in this way:

Time travelers is what they were. He would vision all those things that you see. What he visioned is what was painted. He couldn't tell you to describe something. I think to myself, "Where the hell would you see a horse here 500 years ago?" ...These people travelled too... When you look at that, you go from one scene to the next, it's scary! That time traveler was the only one able to do that. I always got a kick out of that bug. You never take nothing from nobody, because you never know what's going to be in that blanket. He's telling you things.

Percy's statements are similar to Rodney's: this particular image describes things that are coming, which could be interpreted as warnings. This interpretation also connects with the idea that this was a ceremonial place prized for its seclusion and its power. Percy reminds us that there is more to interpret than the images themselves. He states:

If you really take a look at those pictures, it's easy to look at the figures. You have to look at how long it took them to paint that, what kind of preparations did they take? How did they do that? It tells me many things. This person was a time traveler ... He's making a statement here. Who knows? Years ago, if they could put a scarecrow out to make gardens..., they could put a painting that scares away people. Maybe you're not welcome there.

Discussion: Interpretations and Understandings

So, perhaps the story told by Shingwaukonse was not the real story. Perhaps there was a reluctance on the part of community leaders at the time to share the actual significance of the site with an outsider like Schoolcraft. Perhaps Shingwaukonse did not understand the full history of the place as he was not one of the people responsible for this particular area. Like many mazinaabikiniganan sites across Canada, we can say that for Agawa, "no unfiltered Indigenous account of the meaning or purpose of the rock's markings is available" (Hunter, 2015, p. 14). Certainly, the interpretations of community members today cast doubt on the accuracy of the

story recorded by Schoolcraft and re-told by Dewdney and others. Warren (2009) discusses the difficulty in sorting out fact from fiction when dealing with Anishinaabe stories, stating:

it is difficult... to procure from them what may have been their pure and original belief... it requires a most intimate acquaintance with them as a people, and individually with their old storytellers, also with their language, beliefs, and customs, to procure their real beliefs and to analyze the tales they seldom refuse to tell, and separate the Indian or original from those portions which they have borrowed or imbibed from the whites. Their innate courtesy and politeness often carry them so far that they seldom, if ever, refuse to tell a story when asked by a white man. (p. 28)

This may well be the case of what occurred between Shingwaukonse and Schoolcraft, resulting in the perpetuation of a myth over time. It is difficult to know for certain, but another question could be asked to further trouble that interpretation: if the images were depicting a war party, where are the weapons?

Some researchers have criticized the search for singular definitive interpretations of mazinaabikiniganan. Bednarik (2001) argues that:

by far the most common interpretation of meaning in rock art is the iconographic interpretation of motifs by the observer. We are told what the beholder of the art thinks it depicts. In many cases, the motif has such outstanding diagnostic features that these identifications do sound convincing, but in many other cases the picture is not at all clear-cut. Moreover, many researchers define various aspects of the motif in an entirely subjective fashion: they tell us that the subject is running, falling, swimming, pregnant, praying, dead or whatever else they happen to perceive in the art.

According to Bednarik (2001), the only value in such interpretations are what we can learn about “the perception of the person interpreting the art”. This means that interpretations of mazinaabikiniganan will always be subjective and relative to the person interpreting the images. In my conversations, participants were always careful to provide disclaimers like, “This is my understanding” or “This is what I was told” or “That’s what this means to me.” Statements like these show an understanding that meanings are derived from a very specific context that is not universal. It is also an acknowledgement of the plurality of meanings that the mazinaabikiniganan offer. This is particularly evident in my conversations with Rodney and

Dean who each offered different interpretations of specific mazinaabikiniganan, reflecting their personal understandings. For Dean, as a community leader dealing with governments, lawyers, and asserting the rights of the community, the mazinaabikiniganan reflect community history, governance, and relationships with settler-society. For Rodney, a traditional healer, the mazinaabikiniganan reflect clans, connections with spirits, and inward contemplation. As Norder (2012) posits,

Rock art sites... are typically not remembered in terms of their specific meanings or even origins. Their importance emerges as part of the historicity and agency of landscape. These sites are remembered as places of engagement between people and the spirits, and remain within social memory as places of power where contemporary First Nations peoples can still go to in order to pray and re-engage with these spirits through these places. (p. 398)

It is important, then, to realize that no definitive interpretation is being offered in this thesis as the ‘correct’ one. Rather, it is my intent to show that mazinaabikiniganan can be interpreted in a multitude of ways and that each person creates their own meanings and understandings. Crane (2001) posits that “cognitive subjects are not simply determined by the symbolic order in which they exist; instead, they shape (and are also shaped by) meanings that are determined by an interaction of the physical world, culture, and human cognitive systems” or in other words, “meaning is anchored...by a three-way tether: brain, culture, discourse” (p. 24).

By offering insight into Indigenous interpretations of mazinaabikiniganan, we may balance out the discourse that typically surrounds such places. We need more Indigenous interpretations and understandings to stand up to and even refute the meanings that have been ascribed by Euro-western society. The interpretations offered by Batchewana community members affirms the Anishinaabe worldview and relationships between history, place, and other-than-human beings. It demonstrates the metaphorical thinking that is inherent in Anishinaabe philosophy (McPherson & Rabb, 2011; Rajnovich, 1994). The interpretations offered also

support what I discussed earlier, that despite settler-colonialism and efforts to eradicate spiritual beliefs and connections to the land, these beliefs and connections persist within the community and continue to inform their perceptions and understandings of the world. I turn now to the final section of this chapter: what participants felt could be learned from mazinaabikiniganan.

Learning from Mazinaabikiniganan

The importance of education and lifelong learning was a common theme in my conversations with community members. They emphasized that education is vital to understanding who we are as Anishinaabe peoples, which includes learning about where we come from and becoming aware of our obligations to our people, our land, and ourselves. Education for Indigenous peoples has never been a neutral process in settler-colonial times. Some conversations touched upon how education through residential schooling failed the community. Others discussed the value of learning from the land and how, through gaining life experiences, we grow and mature and our understandings of things change. Altogether, the overwhelming sentiment is that mazinaabikiniganan can be a powerful tool for lifelong learning.

Learning Through Ceremony

As a place for ceremony, the mazinaabikiniganan offer a space of reflection for youth coming into their own. Through the fasting ceremony, youth receive traditional teachings that strengthen their identity as Anishinaabe people, partake in roles and responsibilities around the camp which provides a sense of purpose, and gain a sense of pride in themselves by confronting their fears. Rodney states:

It gives them self-esteem and it gives them the understanding that our people have something beautiful to offer and our people are powerful. The zhaganaash¹⁶ were so afraid of us that they outlawed all of our ceremonies until 1976. If you got caught doing this ceremony back then, I could have been thrown in jail, or maybe even killed! Or caught carrying a pipe or drum or doing sweat lodge, you know? That's the reason why.

¹⁶ An Englishman, also used as a general term for people of Euro-Western descent.

They can't lie to us. They can't tell us any different when we have that ability and the children! You should see them when they're done their fast. Facing their fears, being out there alone, coming down that hill and having their parents standing there waiting for them, saying, "I'm so proud of you." Just that alone speaks for itself. That's what our kids need. That's their identity.

The learning that comes from participating in ceremony is not just intended for younger generations. When asked what the mazinaabikiniganan can teach us, Rodney explained:

There's a lot and it's not just for young people. It's for everyone. But, for the young ones, it teaches them seven grandfather teachings, for instance. A big one they need to understand is patience when you're young! Especially if they come from the city. They want everything to happen now! There was this one guy, he couldn't stand still! He was from Toronto. He had to stay in the circle and he had it all tramped down. It teaches them respect for themselves and for the opposite sex and identity. It teaches self-esteem – we have something beautiful to share with the world – the ceremony teaches them about themselves and where they are in their own spiritual journey. Some of them I name right there and I teach them about their names. There's so much! They help build the sweat, they help build the camp, working together, relying on each other. Trust – that's another huge one. Residential school and all that crap – we need to let go of that stuff and move on. The ability to be outspoken. A lot of our kids are withdrawn but it gives them the ability to find their voice and to believe in themselves, to ask questions – not just sitting there, you know? That's really, really important.

As a traditional healer, Rodney is able to see positive changes in those who participate in ceremony. He emphasizes the importance of place and the sacred nature of the site when he describes the changes that he sees:

Yeah...it was really powerful for those young ones. They're religiously there. They see the importance in just believing in themselves. The stuff they share at those sunrise ceremonies, it's amazing. You see those kids going from being really withdrawn and quiet to talking openly and sharing their feelings at sunrise. That's a huge step in itself. It has nothing to do with us! It's all to do with the spirit of that sacred place and the spirits of the ancestors there. You can put words to it, but you need to go down there and experience it for yourself.

Rodney's experiences emphasize the importance of identity, self-esteem, purpose, and belief in self for Anishinaabe people. Through the fasting ceremony, people are given roles and responsibilities to ensure everyone cooperates and that the camp runs smoothly. Rodney's

grandfather told him the ancestors created the mazinaabikiniganan and they were put there for future generations, and Rodney has come to understand that:

Defining those pictures and what they mean, there's significant meaning to them, but, overall, it's understanding for those young ones – you have the ability to be as visionary yourself. It just takes those teachings and time to be respectful and work hard and help people. Getting direction to be a good person. That's what the overall meaning is. They put it here for you. That's what my grandfather meant. I'm 52 and I never knew that as a kid.

What Rodney's stories indicate is that ceremony is a part of lifelong learning. By engaging in traditional ceremonies, we are given the chance to seek clarity and reflect on ourselves as human beings. As we accumulate lived experiences, our understandings and interpretations change, allowing us to grow spiritually and emotionally.

Discussion: The Hermeneutic Circle

Rodney relates that “the pictographs have evolved over time,” indicating that their meanings change. They are dynamic and remain relevant in the community today despite those changing meanings. Additionally, on an individual level, understandings of the mazinaabikiniganan can become clearer over time. As Rodney stated, “I'm 52 and I'm just starting to understand all that.” Mazinaabikiniganan, and by extension land and place, are a form of text, something that can be interpreted. As demonstrated earlier, interpretations are subjective and based on specific contexts comprised of discourse, worldview, culture, and environment. McPherson and Rabb (2011) contend that we can “dialogue with text” through philosophical hermeneutics, creating deeper understandings of what that text is telling us. Neuman (2010) defines hermeneutics as a qualitative method of research, the purpose of which is to make the obscure plain. According to McPherson and Rabb (2011), “Accepting that it is impossible to avoid bringing one's prejudices or ‘pre-judgements’ to the text to be interpreted, the point of philosophical hermeneutics is to permit the text to confront those subjective prejudices and, in a

sense, speak for itself . . . Interpretation thus turns out to be a kind of dialogue or conversation with a living text” (pp. 202-203). They go on to say:

Our pre-understandings or pre-judgments are continually modified in dialogue with the text we are attempting to interpret. We continue returning to the text with our modified pre-understandings gaining deeper insights, but also having our pre-understandings modified even further. This is what is meant by dialoguing with text. (McPherson & Rabb, p. 204)

By dialoguing with land, place, and mazinaabikiniganan, we continually modify our understandings of what those things mean. Visiting the site as a young boy, Rodney was told a story by his grandfather which he did not understand at the time. With continual visitation and engagement with this place, Rodney’s understandings have deepened and clarified over the years. The same is true for myself – I first visited the site as a teenager with my mother and my sister. I had a different set of pre-understandings and pre-judgements then that made me view this place in a particular way. However, returning to this site as an adult with a more critical understanding of history, place, and identity, allowed me to engage with and understand the mazinaabikiniganan in a deeper and certainly more nuanced way.

Not only do we learn more each time we engage with this place, but participating in ceremony does much to inform and educate us as well. Morcom (2014) asserts that:

When Aboriginal students do not see their culture’s knowledge and societal contribution recognized in the classroom, the content carries far less meaning for them, and they are led to assume that this knowledge is less important and sophisticated than Western knowledge. (p. 12)

As Rodney stated, participating in the fasting ceremony demonstrates to our young people that Anishinaabe culture is something to be valued and be proud of. Having the opportunity to construct a culturally relevant social lens enables youth to begin building a positive identity for themselves. In turn, positive self-concept and cultural pride contributes to a sense of self-esteem

and worth which is linked to academic success (Ball, 2012; Morcom, 2014; Whitbeck, et al. 2001). As Whitbeck et al. (2001) notes:

traditional culture imbues children with pride in cultural heritage and gives them the direction they need to negotiate their way through the cultural contradictions inherent in their contacts with European American society. (p. 50)

Again, this is demonstrated by Rodney's experiences with youth who go from being withdrawn to outspoken, able to express themselves and feel pride in who they are. As Rodney affirms, that's their identity and that's what they need to learn. The fasting ceremony affirms that identity and creates feelings of positive self-worth.

Through continually engaging with a place, we are able to gain deeper insights into ourselves and our relationships with that place. By participating in ceremonies and gaining traditional knowledge that originates in place, we can also gain self-esteem, identity, and positive self-worth. Further, there is much to be learned in the fasting ceremony itself. McPherson and Rabb (2011) assert the need to understand the fasting ceremony or vision quest "as something to be taken seriously, as an experience from which knowledge can be derived" (p. 63). Cardinal describes his own experience with the vision quest, at the end of which his Elder asked, "Are you afraid of death?" to which Cardinal replied, "No. I'm just afraid I ain't gonna live right" (cited in McPherson and Rabb, 2011, p. 75). As demonstrated in Rodney's stories, "the experience of fasting for a vision often leads the seeker to discover and plumb the depths of his [sic] inner self as well as leading him to a new way of perceiving the outer world" (RCAP, 1996, p. 612).

The Urban Generation

Speaking with community members, I got the sense that they all felt that it was important for younger generations to learn about family and community history. Because Batchewana First Nation is divided between three communities, the people with whom I spoke commented on differences between those who grew up in the Rankin reserve adjacent to Sault Ste. Marie and

those who grew up in the more remote locations of Goulais and Batchewana Bay. Most notably, community members perceived a lack of connection to the land in those living in the more urban setting. Percy states: “I try to tell young people, they’re not the same. To people here, the kids are different between here and there”. Dean affirmed that statement, saying that he noticed that difference as well. Percy elaborated, stating:

I feel truly connected [to the land]. If you live in Rankin, you’re not a bush Indian. You don’t have the same values I have. It’s like a bear coming in here. He’s from here! They live in town, the bear lives in town, they’re not the same.

The connection to the land is most often embodied through subsistence activities like hunting, collecting maple syrup, and trapping. These activities are connected with memories of older generations. Marian states:

I do everything that our old people did. I make maple syrup, I try to do all the things that I remember seeing old people doing. Us, we live here, we almost live off the land. Sure, I’ve got lots of canned goods, but we eat moose, my friend brings me a caribou, my grandson gets rabbits and partridge. Him and I, when he was a little boy, we used to put snares all over, but I’m getting too old for that now.

What these stories indicate is that the land offers more than just subsistence and livelihood. Like participating in ceremony, it strengthens identity as Anishinaabe people, providing a link between older generations and the present. It also instills a different set of values in people. There is a perceived lack of opportunity to make meaningful connections to land for people living in the city. For the community members with whom I spoke, this goes hand-in-hand with connections to community and notions of belonging. Percy comments on community infrastructure and how that impacts families and connections with place. Speaking to Dean, he states:

I didn’t go to your last meeting... because I was frustrated with housing. It’s not the housing that upsets me, it’s the subdivision. You know? In our days of growing up, I’m the parent, I live here. My son is going to build beside me and my daughter is going to build beside me... You’re connected! When you go into a subdivision, your name might not come up for a house and you get moved to another subdivision and you don’t even

know your neighbours! When you talk about the white man making us the same as him, it's happening, people! It is happening. We're adopting their ways and we're the only ones that don't know it.

Percy also emphasized the importance of passing on the same values and traditions with which he was raised to his children and grandchildren. Those values and traditions stem from living a life on the land, in the bush. As he states, "I believe if we had been urbanized, we would have been taken away from our parents and we wouldn't have learned this way of life." He and Marian recount how food used to be shared in the community long ago. They also describe how families took care of one another in times of need. Percy states:

The way we were raised, that's how it was done. There was a lawyer guy who used to come from Toronto and he would visit us when he had court here in the Sault. About the third time, he said, "Every time I come here you put food in front of me. Do I look hungry?" My wife said, "No! That's tradition!" He felt bad because he didn't know his teachings. That's what I mean about urban and bush Indians. We still do these things. You see people walking around with drums and feathers and little bags tied on their sides, dancing around. Do they really know what they're doing? It doesn't start with a dance! It starts at home! That's not what we're about. We have to live that every day – the kindness, the sharing. That's part of our life. We take it for granted, but you know.

As evidenced in these conversations, learning the values and teachings that come from the land is perceived as important, but there are doubts as to whether the younger generation cares about these things. As Percy states, "Our stories are waiting too long. We won't be around forever... There's a big history. I got a lot of teachings but nobody wants to listen." When asked if it's important for the urban generation to learn about this history, Percy stated: "It's going to fall on deaf ears. They don't want to know about that." Marian added:

Maybe if you approach the younger generation. I always say that about the language. I've been trying to teach it in this area for about 30 years. I can't read that double vowels – the thing is, even though you write it, they can't have the proper pronunciation because they've never heard it. They should have gotten – they should get the people together that can talk a little bit. They can put it in the band office and play it twice a week and maybe people would hear it and pick it up.

Discussion: Intergenerational Transfer of Knowledge

The stories and impressions recorded here indicate two things: First, the increasing urbanization of younger generations is perceived to cause a loss of fundamental values and cultural traditions. Second, knowledge and inherent values are passed on from generation to generation, which is why Percy is criticizing housing subdivisions that divide families. If we connect these ideas within the larger context of understanding land as both power and place as previously discussed, we can begin to understand exactly what is perceived as ‘lost’ or ‘different’ for urban Anishinaabe people.

McPherson and Rabb (2001) argue that “we are who we are, we are the individuals we are because our voices resonate with those of others in our wider community, the ecosystems in which we live, or rather through which we interrelate. Such interrelations should be thought of as *place*” (pp.152-153). This notion of place is populated with beings who are bestowed their own sort of personhood – they include trees, rocks, rivers, lakes, and entire ecosystems within the Anishinaabe worldview (McPherson & Rabb, 2011). In a sense, when a person is removed from a specific place (the reserve or the bush), they are changed individuals since their voices would no longer resonate with those living in those places. What Percy and Dean perceive as a difference in values between people living in the city and those living in more rural or natural settings might be accurate. Deloria Jr. (1994) describes how this difference in values can affect communities:

A good deal of the political turmoil on the reservations today is between traditional people and more assimilated people over the use of the land and resources. Traditional people generally want to use the land in the same way as their ancestors while the more assimilated people want to use it as an economic resource. (p. 212)

The older generation of community members who live on reserve and continue to live in traditional ways perceive that younger, urban generations are losing their connections and

relationships to land and place, which are fundamental to maintaining Anishinaabe values and identity.

I would like to point out here that these are the attitudes and perceptions of a specific portion of the community and may not be reflective of all that is happening in the urban generation. Young people may perceive that they have a healthy and thriving relationship to land and place. Certainly comparing relationships to land between younger, urban generations and the older, reserve-based generations would be an interesting area for further research. Additionally, Restoule (2008) indicates that core values and cultural identities persist in urban-raised Anishinaabe while Cordova (2007) asserts that despite assimilation efforts that included displacement from the land, “there was... a context to being ‘Indian’ that eludes the attempts at eradication” (p. 79).

So how do Anishinaabe people maintain their cultural values today? I believe the evidence is in Percy’s concerns over subdivision housing that separates families from one another. Restoule (2008) found that for Anishinaabe people raised in urban environments, “values associated with Aboriginal cultures continued to be passed on in the family” (p. 26) According to Brant-Castellano (2000), there are three sources from which we acquire knowledge. These are identified as traditional knowledge which is passed from generation to generation (as in the case of narratives and storytelling); empirical knowledge which is gained through observation (as in modeling Elders); and revealed knowledge which is acquired through ceremonies, dreams, or other spiritual means. This underscores the importance of family connections and participation in activities that foster knowledge acquisition. By living in urban environments, away from extended family and kin, with perceived limited opportunities to participate in traditional activities, it is plain to see why older generations may be concerned

about the urban-raised generations. However, as Restoule (2008) notes, “externally highly visible symbols of that culture are not always obvious... the internalized values and how they are lived and expressed are a truer indication of cultural continuity” (pp. 26-27). According to information from the 2011 Canada Census, 56% of Canada’s Indigenous population live in urban areas, constituting one of the fastest growing segments of the Canadian population (Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). It is no wonder, then, that the lived experiences of urban-raised Indigenous peoples is of growing interest to researchers (see Friedel, 2011; Paperson, 2014). Similarly, this statistic supports the notion that there is “the need for pedagogies that examine and experience the urban as storied Indigenous land” (Tuck, et al., 2014, p. 8; see also Bang, et al. 2014). As such, Indigenous connections to urban spaces are beginning to be increasingly explored (e.g., Bang, et al., 2014; Barman, 2007; Edmonds, 2010; Paperson, 2014).

Education as Decolonization and Reconciliation

While learning values based on living off the land is considered important for being a good person, formal education can also be used for empowering Indigenous peoples. Efforts to resist settler-colonialism require an awareness and understanding of colonial processes and how those affect communities. Learning about family and community history offers one way of creating that awareness.

As an active fisherman on Lake Superior, Greg has had more than his fair share of run-ins with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. However, the history and knowledge of treaties that was passed down to him from his father allows him to stand up for his rights as an Anishinaabe. He states:

Growing up, my dad taught me all about the treaty agreements. I asked my older brother, “Did he ever talk to you about that?” and he said, “No.” He must’ve knew I was the one that was going to carry on, I guess, I don’t know. He never told [my brother] and he’s two years older than I am. That’s why when I go to meetings, everyone knows when I

start talking... I'm the treaty guy. Then I get mad at some of our own people because they don't seem to learn about it. They don't seem to want to carry on or to challenge it and I can understand that because from what my dad told me, we were terrorized way before the treaty started. Long time ago. They used to kill our people if they got up and caused trouble against the visitors. I don't know how long it started, but according to my dad, they killed thousands of our people. It's kind of sad.... But after you learn your rights, after you learn your treaties, there's not anything you can't do in your own lands. But if you don't know anything about that stuff, that's where they get you.

While formal education has been used as a tool of assimilating Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years, what also needs to be acknowledged is the way Indigenous peoples have used the knowledge imparted to them to challenge and resist further settler-colonialist policies. For example, Batchewana First Nation was charged when they reclaimed the road to Nanabozhung but the court ruled in their favour, resulting in all but two of the charges being dropped. When asked about how the relationship between Batchewana First Nation and Lake Superior Park changed as a result of this encounter, Greg states:

Oh yeah. Now they know who's boss. They can't do nothing. Our First Nation, we're doing a lot of things, but there's a lot of things we're not doing. They're terrified of us, eh? They shouldn't have sent us to school!

Greg's statement indicates that by being formally educated, members of Batchewana First Nation are able to assert their authority over their territory with confidence in Canadian and Ontario courts. At the same time, he indicates there is more the community could be doing in terms of standing up as Anishinaabe people, stating:

Sometimes we're our own worst enemies. I've often told people on our own council, "I wish we had eight councilors like me and a Chief like me." We'd own the place now.... Dean is part of that [hereditary] line. Nebenaigoching was the chief when they made that treaty. I don't know how far that line went back. That's what I'm advocating for, us to change our system so that it will reflect us more. Right now it doesn't reflect us. It reflects them [Canada] and that's the worst part of any First Nation that I know of. As long as they do things the way the white man wants them to do things, they're not going to go no place. Unless we get out of that system and into our own system – it doesn't have to be the same as it was a long time ago, it just needs to be the way we want it. Because everything changes from time to time. I kind of hope we'd be there someday.

There is also value in learning in Euro-western institutions. As Greg states, “All those things we got to learn because when we take over, guess what we’re going to do? The system will be our own! The funding will be our own and we can do what we want!” Learning Euro-Western knowledge is not wasted in his opinion. It allows Indigenous people to understand how the law operates and how it can be used to further Indigenous rights and governance in Canada.

Acknowledging the empowerment that comes with formal education nonetheless also requires the decolonization of education. As mentioned previously, education has been used as a tool to assimilate Indigenous peoples for hundreds of years, too often suppressing Indigenous histories and narratives to further the agenda of settler-colonialism. As Percy states:

What happened to a lot of our history, whoever gets mentioned is usually the ones they want to mention. It bothers me! I want every name mentioned that I know because they were participants as well. My dad said this happened because if Indians were ever to tell our history, it wouldn’t be the same as what the white man wrote down.

He goes on to state that, in terms of the mazinaabikiniganan, “When you think about that, there’s no Indians around that didn’t know where those paintings are. They claim that they found that, it was never lost!” In this statement, there is a refusal to accept Dewdney’s claims of ‘discovery’ that are perpetuated in the discourse surrounding the images at Agawa. Part of Percy’s statement is a recognition of the need to bring Indigenous perspectives and understandings into conversations about history and education.

Greg too pointed to the need for education that supports Indigenous history, not only for Canadians but immigrants moving into the country. He states:

We’re meeting with Garden River. They’re talking about building a school somewhere out in Garden River or Batchewana. It’s nice if you got your own – where I lived we had a school in Goulais Bay for a long time. That’s where I started going to school before they sent me to residential school. They never taught us anything. All they taught us was to sit down and pray... You have to tell the true story. That’s what I was hoping Trudeau would be doing. Telling the true story. When immigrants come into our lands, they should be taught who we are and the treaties and everything else – all that stuff that’s

going on – but they don't. They've been hiding us for years and now we're just starting to come out and people see it as a threat I guess.

Rodney echoed this sentiment. Running the fasting ceremony every year requires that the park be closed down while the ceremony is taking place. However, tourists still enter the site from time to time. Rodney shared the following story with me about how he talks with and educates visitors who happen to come across the ceremony:

My friend was talking to two vans full of people. I just happened to be coming out of the bush when I saw what was happening. I asked him what he was doing and he said he was just telling these people that they had to leave. I said, "No, no, you don't have to do that." I said, "Come here! Come on in, we got coffee and tea, come into the tipi here, I'm going to talk with you." They said, "We just want to see the pictographs." They were Europeans, eh? I told them, "That's fine," but I told them, "There's people fasting so you got to be respectful, keep your voice down, and if you see somebody sitting in the bush by themselves, don't go over and start talking to them, please." Eventually, they didn't even go down there, they just wanted to see what we were doing. So what that indicated to me, was that we needed to teach them about these things... Educating them and helping them understand we are still here and we have something beautiful to offer. By sharing that love and kindness with them, it's in our culture. Like I said, a lot of them don't even go down to the pictographs, they just want to know what we're doing. "We thought you were all gone." That's what one of them told us. I couldn't believe that! "Back home, we're taught that you don't exist anymore!" Well, we're still here! We don't live in that tipi, but we're still here! If I had a map, I'd be able to put a pin in that whole thing ... It's unbelievable the people that come there to view those pictographs – I never had a clue.

There is a deep and unfulfilled need to educate the wider public about Indigenous peoples, our histories, and our territories. Rodney does what he can to impart some of that knowledge to people he encounters, but there needs to be a much larger effort on the part of the Canadian government and provincial school boards to further this step in reconciliation.

Discussion: Decolonization and Reconciliation

In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created as part of the mandate of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The Commission collected statements, documents, and other artifacts that testify to the residential school experience of Indigenous peoples across Canada. From this evidence and testimony, the TRC put

forth 94 Calls to Action to facilitate reconciliation and to address the complex legacy of residential schools in Canada. Many of these Calls to Action centre on education. As the TRC (2015) states:

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. (p. 7)

The TRC also acknowledges that most Canadians know very little about the history of settler-colonialism and Indigenous peoples. They state that:

This lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and for Canada as a whole. In government circles, it makes for poor public policy decisions. In the public realm, it reinforces racist attitudes and fuels civic distrust between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. Too many Canadians still do not know the history of Aboriginal peoples' contributions to Canada, or understand that by virtue of the historical and modern Treaties negotiated by our government, we are all Treaty people. History plays an important role in reconciliation; to build for the future, Canadians must look to, and learn from, the past. (p. 8)

This is the same sentiment expressed by Greg when he states that we need to start learning the true history of what happened. The need for visitors and newcomers to this country to learn about Indigenous peoples and treaty history was also mentioned throughout my conversations.

As Lowan-Trudeau (2015) argues,

learners new to Canada and their peers will benefit even more when provided with the opportunity to reflect upon and contribute their own culturally based understandings to critical discussions of Western, Indigenous and other knowledge systems. (p. 36)

Interestingly, the TRC (2015) recommends two Calls to Action that address this need:

- 93) We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples, the challenge of reconciliation of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.
- 94) We call upon the Government of Canada to replace the Oath of Citizenship with the following: *I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples, and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.* (pp. 314-315)

As Rodney has stated, people come to Agawa in hopes of seeing pictographs and are surprised to find living, breathing Anishinaabe people there. We need to change the messages and the systems that allow people to believe that we do not exist anymore. As the TRC (2015) states,

In the Commission's view, all students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—need to learn that the history of this country did not begin with the arrival of Jacques Cartier on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. . . . Canadians need to learn why Indigenous nations negotiated the Treaties and to understand that they negotiated with integrity and in good faith. They need to learn about why Aboriginal leaders and Elders still fight so hard to defend those Treaties, what these agreements represent to them, and why they have been ignored by European settlers or governments. They need to learn about what it means to have inherent rights, what those are for Aboriginal peoples, and what the settler government's political and legal obligations are in those areas where Treaties were never negotiated. They need to learn why so many of these issues are ongoing. (p. 287)

The TRC believes that education can help bring forth reconciliation throughout Canada. Their Calls to Action support the need for Canadians to learn about the history of settler-colonialism and the contributions and vitality of Indigenous peoples. Education can certainly be a tool for empowerment and change, a sentiment that is echoed in contemporary writing regarding Indigenous education (McPherson and Rabb, 2011; Stonechild, 2006; Simpson, 2011).

Understanding Roles and Responsibilities

Throughout our conversations, the idea of roles, responsibilities, and obligations kept coming up, time and time again, whether it be obligations to community, responsibilities as clan members, our roles as individuals, or our responsibilities to spirit, land, and territory. The responsibilities we have as Anishinaabe people are passed down from generation to generation. There is a concept that is often spoken about in Indigenous discourse that refers to this intergenerational transmission. This concept originated in the Iroquois Great Law of Peace and is commonly known as the seventh generation principle. It is understood to mean that when making decisions, we have an obligation to look forward to the next seven generations (Lyons, 1980).

However, Dean gave another interpretation of this concept from his own understandings. He states:

The hard part is to find what we need to be to be balanced and to live a good life... A hundred years ago, our average lifespan for us was 120 years old and that was because we know that Haley's comet comes every 60 years. We know that. We know the cosmos, we know the stars. We would, on average, be able to see three Haley's comets in our lifetime. That was the average. That's how they measured that. It wouldn't be uncommon to reach 140 years old, but 120 was the average age. You'd see one when you're born, you'd see one when you're 60, and you'd see one when you're 120... If you were born today, you could see 7 generations in front of you still walking here and you could learn from all those Elders and by the time you were 120 you could look back and see 7 generations behind you... that's what I understand. So when you're 120, you have the responsibility to the next 7 generations and you would have the opportunity to learn from them. We have responsibilities to the people that are here and that are coming.

Dean's idea extends the notion of seven generations to not just looking forward in our actions, but to also learn with and learn from the seven generations that are living with us concurrently. I want to emphasize this statement: "We have responsibilities to the people that are here" as well as those "that are coming." We have as much responsibility to learn from the previous seven generations as we do in passing on those teachings to the future generations. This idea is reinforced by Rodney's grandfather who stated that it was the ancestors who made the mazinaabikiniganan and they put them there for us, for future generations.

Transferring knowledge from one generation to another is just one of the responsibilities we have as Anishinaabe people. Another responsibility that was spoken about was maintaining relationships with spirits and fulfilling our obligations to territory and land. Dean discusses the importance of maintaining those relationships with spirits. In discussing the possible departure of Frog Woman because of the discontinuation of ceremony, he relates:

So we have to be conscious of the maintenance that comes with and how to look after Mishibizhiw, those spirits. She [the Elder] also said, "If we need a spirit, and we need help with something, on our maintenance and management of these areas that we have as obligations from the Creator, the Creator will provide us with the tools we need and provide us with the spirits that we need to help us look after these lands so we don't need to work in isolation." You have ceremony and ask the Creator for what you need

and that spirit will come back. And other spirits will come back and help you in different places along the coast...

For the people of Batchewana, there is a large reliance on Lake Superior for their livelihood.

There is also a vast amount of knowledge necessary to successfully navigate and rely on the lake for subsistence. Part of this knowledge is understanding the relationship between people and spirit. Irene stated that Mishibizhiw sank the Edmund Fitzgerald because the Anishinaabe were being restricted on the lake because of licensing and settlers were on the lake at a time when the waters were to be left alone:

If you made him mad, he'd come around and kill you. That's what he was. He took down that boat... the Fitzgerald. There was a white man – I think he was a teacher – and he said, “What kind of evil spirit would do that?” ...Because he didn't like the white man! It was only the white man that could go on Lake Superior to fish and to hunt, but the Indians couldn't! They had to buy licenses and if they didn't buy a license, they would put you in jail. Why? Because the Indians never had to do that years ago!

Dean elaborates on Irene's story, stating:

In general, there might have been concern that the Anishinaabe weren't doing their job. Yeah, you weren't supposed to be on the lake at that time of the year. Mishibizhiw was aware that was happening, ceremonies need to be done as part of our obligations. He was concerned. It wasn't just the Edmund Fitzgerald. We were being told by the government, we were done, but no, we need to look after the lake. That's part of our job. We were complacent and we were told we need to do your work, Anishinaabe. I think that was an indicator at the same time. Trying to compel us to hear him, so we can then start to do ceremonies to revitalize our fisheries and live up to our obligations. So around the same time as the Fitzgerald went down, there were other things to remind us... mnemonic devices that were being used... Mishibizhiw is a big part of the Lake Superior Management system.

Dean's statement makes clear that part of the job of being Anishinaabe from Batchewana is the continuity of fishing practices on Lake Superior and looking after the lake. He also mentions the idea of a Lake Superior Management system in which both humans and spirits play a role.

Referencing the mazinaabikinigan of a turtle, Dean states:

Turtle looks after the spirit for us, they guide us. This [indicating the entire panel] is all embraced by the turtle and that path, as I look at it, it looks like a path of the evolution of

the Ojibwe. It's a teaching tool for people that come here. It's going to be hard to know this. You have to work hard to know this and to respect it.

As noted, ceremony is an important teaching tool for Anishinaabe people. Through ceremony, we can come to know our roles and responsibilities to our communities, ourselves, the spirits, and our territories. There are other tools that can help us learn these things as well. Dean describes the use of names as mnemonic devices. He makes reference to his own children and grandchildren, stating that their names give them a responsibility. His son was named for a group of stars that were often used to tell the weather. In referring to his son's name, Dean states:

Nobody's left that knows that... That's going to be his job, to help us remember that... We can't just sit there. We have to do work, we have to be Anishinaabe, we need to stand up and do things! Names are mnemonic devices for the people. It relates to the bigger picture of our connection with how we're going to live with the zhaganaash. It's part of the spiritual story... What else am I going to be shown about our people? About all these elements?

Mazinaabikiniganan can be powerful tools for teaching both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. They are closely tied to ceremony, kinship, and history for Anishinaabe people and can act as a site for lifelong learning. For non-Indigenous peoples, mazinaabikiniganan offer a window into the connections that Anishinaabe people have with the land and with territory. However, this connection needs to be affirmed in the interpretation offered within the site.

Discussion: Roles and Responsibilities

Dean and Rodney both mentioned how as a fasting site, the mazinaabikiniganan can provide clarity on our roles and responsibilities. Earlier, Rodney described how one image depicts chiefs or the heads of clans coming to the site to gain clarity on decision-making during a time of turmoil. Similarly, Percy spoke about the obligation to name participants of stories, to mention who was present out of respect and to refute Euro-western versions of history. All mentioned the responsibility we have as Anishinaabe people to look after the territory in which we live, which includes conducting ceremonies on the land that reinforce our relationships not

only with place, but the other-than-human beings that dwell there. As Hill and Stairs (2002) state:

In order for education to be truly relevant, this is where we need to begin – with the knowledge of our ancestors, and where better to find that knowledge than in the land we have shared with them and in the learning that comes from it. (pp. 282-283)

McPherson and Rabb (2011) point to the importance of the narrative tradition in Anishinaabe culture. Through narratives, individuals are able to develop a respect for other-than-human beings and see their own role in maintaining relationships with those beings, whether they be rocks, trees, animals, or spirits. They also posit that ceremonies like fasting serve to reinforce traditional values and allow individuals to develop a moral compass based on the realization that “there is no distinction between the individual and . . . the rest of the universe” (p. 100). They state:

[The narrative] tradition feeds into and to some extent governs the vision quest, just as the vision quest in its turn feeds into and re-enforces the narrative and other traditions. We can say, however, something more about the *result* of this mutual interaction. It results in individual persons who, in active ways, will the good of other persons, both human and other-than-human, in their mutually shared community. Further, these individuals in turn expect each individual in the community to do the same. (p. 101)

In this way, “There is . . . a moral obligation to protect the habitat of the moose, the beaver, the muskrat, and the lynx; the habitat of geese, ducks, grouse, and hare . . . because these other-than-human persons are also extended members of Ojibwa society” (p. 91).

This reflects well what Dean is talking about when he speaks of roles and responsibilities. If we perceive ourselves as part of a larger community that includes lakes, rivers, trees, rocks, and animals as ‘persons’, then we also have moral obligations to these beings, which are clarified for us through ceremonies like fasting! This narrative tradition is also closely connected with the idea of learning through hermeneutics, as discussed previously, as well as the seven generations

principle. In a hermeneutic approach, it is the responsibility of individuals to make meaning from within their own frames of reference. As Simpson (2014) states,

This is how our old people teach. They are our geniuses because they know that wisdom is generated from the ground up, that meaning is for everyone, and that we're all better when we're able to derive meaning out of our lives and be our best selves. (p. 8)

We are each responsible for our own learning and our own meaning-making. Simpson's words resonate with the tone of my conversations with community members:

this is why you'll always hear from our Elders what appears to be them "qualifying" their teachings with statements that position them as learners, that position their ideas as their own understandings, and place their teachings within the context of their own lived experience. (Simpson, 2014, p. 11)

Indigenous education, as a holistic system, necessarily engages people throughout every stage of their life. Within Indigenous education, learning is a lifelong process. And while we may be responsible for our own learning, we are also responsible for passing on what we have learned to others. As Simpson (2014) describes, "once an individual has carried a particular teaching around to the point where they can easily embody that teaching, they, then, also become responsible for sharing it according to the ethics and protocols of the system" (p. 11). In this way, we become responsible to the next seven generations to pass on a plurality of truths that form the collective of Indigenous knowledge.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Wilson (2008) has stated, “If research doesn’t change you as a person, you haven’t done it right” (p. 158). My thesis began as a critical examination of Indigenous connections to mazinaabikiniganan and looked to draw upon the tradition as a form of land-based education that values Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. While my initial aim certainly stands, what arose from the findings and discussion was so much more than what was anticipated. What I discovered as an Anishinaabe researcher were insights into Anishinaabe philosophy and worldview that I did not previously know (or rather, to be more accurate, I did know, I just was not conscious that I knew). The original question that led to this research was born out of my need to question a tradition. When my partner stated, “Some people think you shouldn’t take pictures of those pictographs,” I had to ask: “Who? Which people?” and “Why?” Much of this research journey thus was in many ways about learning things for myself as an Anishinaabe person. McPherson and Rabb (2011) indicate that this type of questioning is important for Indigenous peoples:

To keep their traditions healthy and alive, Native people must assess their own traditions from their own perspectives. They must decide for themselves which authorities continue to merit their allegiance, which traditions continue to be enabling, and which may no longer be helpful. This is the only way traditions can support a healthy culture. (p. 206)

By engaging in this research, I was able to learn more about myself as an Anishinaabe person and what that means from a wider perspective.

Just as Percy states, “We have a big history but no one wants to hear it,” he’s identifying a need within the community – his statement can be seen as a call to action for Indigenous students to “listen for and articulate the voice of their own communities” (McPherson & Rabb, 2011, p. 209). In order to transform education for Indigenous peoples, we need to learn about our histories, our territories, our ways of being in the world, and ultimately, ourselves. And this

begins with research, broadly defined. As Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) states, “As Indigenous peoples we have our own research needs and priorities. Our questions are important” (p. 198).

McPherson and Rabb (2011) argue the merit of community-based research such as what I have done in this thesis, stating:

When Native students write about their own cultures they are not only transforming those cultures, they are also transforming themselves, for they are given the opportunity to discover and transform their own pre-judgments... Native students in learning more about themselves by writing their own culture are keeping that culture alive by actually making the culture conscious of itself. In other words, they are, quite literally, the culture becoming conscious of itself. (pp. 205-206)

Waziyatawin Wilson (2004) makes a similar argument for the valuing of Indigenous knowledge and cultural values. She states:

The revaluing of our traditional knowledge has to begin in our own communities and among our own people, not only because we are the major holders of the knowledge and the major impetus for decolonization begins there, but also so that we can prevent that knowledge from being appropriated by the colonial system. (p. 362)

By inquiring into stories and histories of place, this research demonstrates that “the recovery of Indigenous knowledge is Indigenous empowerment” (Wilson, 2004, p. 371) and supports the argument that “there is a holistic relationship between Indigenous peoples, their lands, their health and well-being, and the education of Indigenous children” (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007, p. 49). After years of systematic discrimination and policies aimed at assimilation, it is time to value Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing. Mazinaabikiniganan open the door to wider conversations about history, connections to land, and what it means to be Anishinaabe in today’s world.

Implications for Land Education

Is there space for mazinaabikiniganan and their attendant knowledge in land education? Yes! Arguably, this thesis was an exercise in land education, addressing and incorporating many of the elements that are foundational to land education, as defined by Calderon (2014), including

centering land and settler colonialism, privileging Indigenous place names, and destabilizing commonly accepted Euro-Western notions of place. Given the popularity of Lake Superior Provincial Park as a tourist destination in Ontario and the possibility of Batchewana First Nation taking over the management of the park, the mazinaabikiniganan could be a site that opens up space for exploration of notions of reconciliation and decolonization. As Calderon (2014) argues, land education:

must start from the supposition that all places were once Indigenous lands and continue to be... there has to be an acknowledgement of this reality to critically examine what it means to inhabit lands that were once (and continue to be) the homelands of Indigenous nations. (p. 27)

From such a starting place, mazinaabikiniganan can act as a window, a portal, just as Dean described.

For settler society, understanding mazinaabikiniganan as “storied place” (Goeman, 2008) can offer a perspective that values Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and history, teaches about connections to territory, and “positions native resistance to colonialism squarely within modern... history, rather than some pre-national past” (Paperson, 2014, p. 124; see also Calderon, 2014). For Indigenous peoples, it is a way to decolonize and reinhabit land and to explore and affirm their own identities, knowledge, and beliefs (Calderon, 2014; Simpson, 2014). Sato, et al. (2014) state that:

in the process of decolonization, land education teaches us to fight against the forces of the oppressors, to be able to choose our freedom, promote education to respond to the question of *for* whom we are practicing environmental education, and essentially *against* whom we need to shape land education. (p. 112)

Stories are embedded in the land and while there are layers of stories that may seem contradictory (e.g., Provincial Parks as white space vs. mazinaabikiniganan as sacred space), part of the challenge is to hold these opposing views in tension and in dialogue with one another (Gruenewald, 2003; Simpson, 2002). Land education can allow this critical inquiry to happen by

exposing and interrogating settler-colonial myths, and offering alternative ways of knowing and doing (Calderon, 2014; Paperson, 2014; Sato, et al. 2014).

Recommendations for Further Research

Given the limitations of an MEd thesis, especially the page limits that I have already exceeded, I had to carve out many pieces of information and bits of knowledge as they would have taken me onto side trails that might have been interesting but were somewhat beyond the scope of my thesis or I felt that they would lead me down rabbit-holes that warrant further and deeper investigation. For example, the role of language to land, history, and culture is an area that requires further study and was an issue raised throughout the interviews that never made it into this paper. There is so much more work to be done and many more stories to tell. What is clear is that mazinaabikiniganan have much more to teach us. I imagine that further insights could be gleaned by exploring the relationships and connections other communities have with their mazinaabikiniganan. Investigating youth perceptions and relationships with place would provide insight into cultural continuity and how youth may be connected with land in ways that might surprise their elders. Additionally, I highly recommend that other Indigenous students partake in their own community-based research projects to learn for themselves and for their communities. By doing so, we truly engage ourselves in decolonizing education.

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Appendix A



Faculty of Education

Information Letter

Mazinaabikinigan, Traditional Knowledge, and Indigenous Education

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Melissa Twance and I come from Pic Moberg First Nation. I am currently working on my thesis for the Masters of Education program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON.

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled: MAZINAABIKINIGAN, TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND INDIGENOUS EDUCATION.

Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate or not to participate there will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Before you make a decision you will need to know the purpose of the study, the possible risks and benefits of being in the study and what you will have to do if decide to participate. I am going to talk with you about the study and give you this letter and a consent form to read. You do not have to make a decision now; you can take the letter and consent form home and share it with friends and family.

If you do not understand what you are reading, do not sign it. Please ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in this letter or consent form. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign the consent form and a copy will be given to you. Keep this letter, in it you will find contact information and answers to questions about the study. You may ask to have this letter read to you.

What is the purpose of the study?

I am doing this research to learn more about mazinaabikinigan (commonly called "pictographs" in English) from an Anishinaabe perspective and to see if this knowledge can be used in education for Anishinaabe or other people. This research is being done to fulfill the thesis requirement for a Master's in Education from Lakehead University.

Why was I asked to participate in the study?

You are being asked to join this study because you are a member of Batchewana First Nation. You have been recommended to me based on your knowledge about your community's history and connection to the mazinaabikinigan at Agawa Rock. What you have to share is important to this study because it will help me to document your community's perspectives and values concerning mazinaabikinigan and their use in education.

How long will I be in the study? How many other people will be in the study?

This study will take place over a period of two weeks. This means that I will ask you to take part in one face-to-face interview with me that will last no longer than one hour. This interview will be audio-recorded with your consent. If you do not wish to be recorded, I will take hand-written notes of the interview. You will be one of 6 people in the study.

Where will the study take place?

Interviews will take place in Rankin, ON at a location agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. Each participant will be contacted by Melissa Twance to schedule the interview for a time that is most convenient to the participant.

What will I be asked to do?

1. You will be asked to return this signed consent form to me when I return for a follow-up visit.
2. I will arrange an interview time that is most convenient to you on this follow-up visit.
3. On the scheduled date of interview, a designated member of Batchewana First Nation and I will meet with you to conduct and record a 1 hour interview. You will be asked to verbally reaffirm consent for audio recording. If you decide to withdraw your participation at this point, the interview will stop immediately, your name will be removed from the study and all records will be immediately destroyed by me.
4. In the next several days after the interview, you might be contacted by me again if I want to clarify some of the information you provided or to ask you further questions.

What are the risks?

There are no known risks for participating in this study. However, if answering some of the questions makes you uncomfortable or triggers a painful memory, please let me know. We can stop the interview for a few moments, you can skip a question, or you can decide to stop participating. I will have contact information for community support (i.e., local counselors, psychologists, or other mental health support) that I can give to you if you feel the need to talk to a professional.

How will I benefit from the study?

There is no direct benefit to you. However, your participation will provide your community with a better understanding of the value that mazinaabikinigan have for Anishinaabe people. This study will provide information to future researchers and students on a subject that is not often studied from an Indigenous perspective. In the future, this may help in the development of educational materials and methods for use in schools and communities.

What happens if I do not choose to join the research study?

You may choose to join the study or you may choose not to join the study. Your participation is voluntary.

When is the study over? Can I leave the study before it ends?

The study is expected to end after all participants have completed the interviews and all of the information has been collected. You have the right to drop out of the research study at any time during your participation. There is no penalty if you decide to do so.

If you no longer wish to be in the research study, please contact Melissa Twance, at (807) 286-2212. Any data that has been collected up to this point will be destroyed. There will be no consequences what so ever if you withdraw from this study.

How will confidentiality be maintained and my privacy be protected?

I will make every effort to keep all the information you tell me during the study strictly confidential and anonymous unless you tell me that you want your name used. The data from this research project will be published in a final thesis and may be presented at conferences or used in later publications. Although I will report direct quotations from the interview, you may choose a fake name (pseudonym) for yourself to be used in the audio-recordings, transcripts, notes, and final report unless you tell me that you would like me to use your real name.

There are limitations to maintaining confidentiality within this study. The name of the community will be used throughout the final report. The participants in this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other. It is possible that you may be identifiable to other people in the community based on what you have said. In addition, a designated member of Batchewana First Nation will be with me during the interview process, as requested by Chief and Council.

Who will be able to see the information I provide? Where does my information get stored?

Information collected during this study will be kept by me and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team (which is me and my supervisor, Connie Russell, and the designated community member). When the study is finished, a copy of the research materials will be given to Batchewana First Nation for their own use. Your name will not appear on the audio-recordings or transcripts unless you tell me to include your real name. All of the data will also be stored at Lakehead University under lock and key for a period of 5 years. After this time, the data will be destroyed.

Will I be able to see the final report?

Yes. A summary of the research will be mailed to each participant. Batchewana First Nation will be provided with copies of the final thesis to keep for their archives. I also will leave my contact information with Batchewana First Nation so that community members may request a summary of the results if they wish.

Who can I call with questions, complaints or if I'm concerned about my rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me, Melissa Twance, MEd Student, at (807)286-2212 or mktwance@lakeheadu.ca. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Connie Russell at (807)343-8049 or crussell@lakeheadu.ca.

This study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at (807)343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research.

Sincerely,



Melissa Twance

Appendix B



Faculty of Education

Informed Consent Form

Title of the research project:
Mazinaabikinigan, Traditional Knowledge, and Indigenous Education

Researcher Information:
The research is being conducted by:

Melissa Twance, MEd Student, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON, P7B 5E1
Email: mktwance@lakeheadu.ca Tel: 807-286-2212

With supervisor:

Dr. Connie Russell, Faculty of Education
Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON, P7B 5E1
Email: crussell@lakeheadu.ca Tel: 807-343-8049 Fax: 807-344-6087

I consent to participate in the study entitled **MAZINAABIKINIGAN, TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND INDIGENOUS EDUCATION** by Melissa Twance.

By signing this form, you confirm:

- I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.
- I understand that this study involves an interview and that it will be audio-recorded with my consent. I understand that Melissa Twance may quote parts of the interview within the body of her thesis.
- I understand that a community member from Batchewana First Nation will be present throughout the interview.
- I understand that I will remain anonymous in any publication or public presentation of this research. I can choose to use a fake name (pseudonym) or I can choose to use my real name throughout the study.

- I agree to participate in the research project understanding that my participation is voluntary, that I may refuse to answer any question, that I am free to withdraw participation without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect me now or in the future.
- I understand that the information I provide for this study will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of 5 years once the project is completed and that a copy of the audio-recording and interview transcripts will be kept by Batchewana First Nation for an indefinite period of time.
- I understand that a summary of the research findings will be mailed to me when the project is complete and that a complete copy of the final thesis will be available through the Batchewana First Nation Band Office.
- A copy of the Information Letter has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

I agree to be audio-recorded Yes No

I allow my real name to be identified in any publications resulting from this study. Yes No

My copy of the research summary should be mailed to me at the following address:

Researcher's Signature (to be signed when oral consent is given):

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C

Guiding Questions

1. What can you tell me about the pictographs at Agawa Bay?
2. Do you know any stories about the mazinaabikinigan at Agawa?
3. What can you tell me about Batchewana First Nation's history within the Lake Superior Provincial Park?
4. Are these places something that young people should learn about?
5. What can these places teach us?
6. How do you feel about these images being in a provincial park?
7. How do you feel about people taking pictures of these images?
8. Are there other mazinaabikinigan that you know of in the area?
9. What can you tell me about Devil's Armchair/Devil's Warehouse Island/Gargantua Harbour?
10. What are some of the stories that you know about these places?
11. What is the significance of these places?