

We are More than Missing and Murdered:
The Healing Power of Re-writing, Re-claiming and Re-presenting

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Abstract

This study explores remembrances (life stories) of Jane Bernard as shared by her daughter (my Nokomis) to her granddaughter (the researcher). I investigate how intergenerational learning through letter writing for remembrance within a family contributes to understanding and honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) more broadly. The focus on the life stories of Jane Bernard, one among MMIWG and a community member of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation) of Lake Nipigon, inspires storytelling as a pedagogical method of Indigenous education about MMIWG. Using storytelling, letter writing, and conversation as the method, data were gathered through inter-generational written letters and the stories and conversations that followed. These methods evoked remembrances and life stories of MMIWG that are more than statistical representations and must be understood in wider contexts. Those contexts include the importance of Indigenous women's influences, leadership, mothering roles, and relevant political and historical issues, as well. The stories shared by my Nokomis illuminate findings of the spiritual and ceremonial significance of land and the importance of honouring as a form of life-long learning that empowers, heals, and functions as education for decolonizing. In addition, I intersperse findings with background literature and illustrations to provide a cohesive picture of how honouring the life experiences and oral narratives of My Nokomis and Jane can humanize MMIWG and honour their legacy, as more than murdered and missing. The study concludes that my Nokomis' stories of Jane as a MMIWG are inseparable from place (Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek). The study recommends storytelling pedagogy for Indigenous education, and for research on a broader scale in relation to Ojibwe women from Northwestern Ontario, specifically MMIWG.

Dedication

In loving memory of my great grandmother Jane Bernard

Acknowledgements

I want to say Miigwetch to Mishomis for this journey and guiding my being and spirit to live Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

Miigwetch to all my Ancestors, foremothers, grandmothers, and moms who guide me through my many stages of my life and dedication on honouring our women.

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Chapter One: I am Story/ies: Our Stories

It's hard to go on like this, not knowing who or why. I always found my mother to be very peaceful. She was very traditional. She was a Native woman who worked in the bush and knew everything about bush life.

(Irene Bernard, 2010)

Over the last two decades, academic researchers have increasingly turned their attention to understanding the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) in Canada. Much of this research has highlighted the importance of decreasing racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violence. Research has focused on Indigenous women from Eastside downtown Vancouver in relation to serial killer Robert Pickton (Benoit, Carroll, & Chaudry, 2003; Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pearce, 2013; Shannon et al., 2008), the murder of Pamela George and violent racialized injustices towards Indigenous women (Razack, 2000), the rates of Indigenous women as victims of racialized and sexualized violence, including human trafficking (BC Women, 2011; Brennan, 2011; Farley et. al, 2005; Lamontagne, 2011; Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2015; Ontario Native Women's Association [ONWA], 1989; Oxman-Martinez et. al, 2005; Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP], 2014) and rates of violence in relation to disappearances and homicides involving Indigenous women and girls across Canada (NWAC, 2010; Pearce, 2013). This groundwork shows patterns and creates new approaches intended to end violence against Indigenous women in Canada.

Some research has served to contextualize a deeper and more meaningful understanding of Indigenous women who have become MMIWG; these researchers see the women as more than their deaths and seek to learn from their lives (Anderson, 2016; Archuleta, 2006; Bateman, 2016; BC Women, 2011; Bear, 2014; M.C. Campbell, 2016; Johnston & Santos, 2013; NWAC,

2010; 2015; ONWA, 2010). In this thesis, I intend to contribute to this approach of honouring women's lives because I never knew or met my great-grandmother, Jane Bernard, who was killed. She is considered one of the earliest missing and murdered Indigenous women from northwestern Ontario and I employ stories as a way to learn about who she was in life. I utilize a desire-based research approach (Tuck, 2009) that I hope is significant for other Indigenous families who have lost loved ones.

Desire-based research does not deny the experiences of trauma, pain, or tragedy. Instead, this form of research draws on the experiences and wisdom of a knowledge sharer (Tuck, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2014). I draw on a knowledge sharer (my grandmother, Irene Bernard) to learn about and from Jane's life, by employing Indigenous research methods of storytelling and conversations, (also called storywork by Archibald, 2008) to explore the lived realities of my own family contexts of MMIWG in Northwestern Ontario. I bring to the surface the impacts on my family of having a loved one among the MMIWG. I then explore these impacts in relation to my family and community to understand who Jane was as an Ojibwe woman. I did not know Jane's life stories nearly as in-depth as the one violent event that took her life. The discourse on MMIWG knowledge, like my great-grandmother, is focused on one violent event that led to her death and this reality is true for many of the stories of MMIWG in media and in the research (BC Women, 2005; Brennan, 2011; Farley et. al, 2005; Lamontagne, 2011; NWAC, 2015; ONWA, 1989; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005; Pearce, 2013; RCMP, 2014).

Living with the understanding and historical trauma that is at the core of many families of MMIWG, I seek to humanize MMIWG and the research approach through a storytelling process with my grandmother, Jane's daughter Irene. My life experiences shape my approach to Indigenous research methods (Simpson, 2011; Smith, 1999; Tuck, 2014; Wilson, 2011) and

understanding of the Anishinaabe ways of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* (Debassige, 2010; Rheault, 1990; Simpson, 2011). Further, in this study I use storytelling methods to honour Indigenous approaches to storytelling research (Anderson, 2000; S. Anderson, 2016; Anderson et. al, 2013; Archibald, 2008; Desmoulins, 2009). Overall, I share an Indigenous woman's story and explore how I learn about Jane's life from the stories my Nokomis shared. As well, I employ these stories that she shares about Jane to explore how storytelling contributes to the history and knowledge of Indigenous women in wider educational contexts, and to advocate for them as *more than* murdered and missing.

Terminology

This section introduces and defines terms used in the thesis.

Anishinaabe. The Ojibwe peoples are referred to as Anishinaabe in the language, meaning the original people, or Anishinaabek, meaning "Aboriginal Peoples" (Absolon, 2011).

Anishinaabekwe. The term Anishinaabekwe refers to the Ojibwe peoples; Anishinaabe, meaning "the people," and Kwe, meaning "woman" (Absolon, 2011).

Indigenous. I use the term "Indigenous" in reference to all nations of Indigenous peoples across Canada. Additionally, the term Indigenous refers to international human rights laws and standards that are established to acknowledge all original inhabitant descendants of the land and illustrates the strides that have been made in the social sciences to move towards more inclusive holistic concepts and definitions of Indigenous Peoples (Amnesty International Canada, 2004).

Storywork. Storywork is storytelling that encourages the researcher to carry on conversations that are open-ended and informal so that both sides may engage in discussions (Archibald, 2008). I applied the method of storywork to storytelling letter-writing in that my grandmother reflects on her life with her mother and freely discusses topics beyond the research questions.

Storytelling letter-writing. The exchange of writing stories in letters and responding to stories to encourage continuation of the story relationship between letter writers – responder and writer.

Traditional Knowledge. Traditional Knowledge (TK) is often defined as practical knowledge that is “handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (Berkes, F., Kislalioglu, M., Folke, C., & Gadgil, M., 1998, p. 9). In addition to traditional knowledge referring to pragmatic skills for living, traditional knowledge is also fluid in that the transmission of story and teachings share values, beliefs, land-based activities, observations, and reflections that are “woven out of the individual and collective experiences” (Stryes, 2017, p. 83).

Nokomis. Refers to grandmother, female Ojibwe Elder and storyteller from Lake Superior region (personal conversations, M.N., July 2017).

Mino-Bimaadiziwin. *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* means to “live the good life” through the activation of honouring the past, present, and future grounded in Anishinaabe social wellbeing teachings and spirituality (Debassige, 2010)

Introductory Stories

To begin this thesis, I share my own story and then introduce my great-grandmother (posthumously), my Nokomis, and Marilyn, the traditional Elder who guided this research between my grandmother and me. Before that, I connect myself to storytelling letter-writing.

During the process of storytelling letter-writing, I share parts of myself to offer insight into the deep-rooted relations, complexities, and experiences that influence my socio-cultural location. These acts of storytelling letter writing also address the history of fragmentation and disconnection within my family and the perseverance needed to move forward. This study provides a reflection on what I have come to know through ceremony, and is about self-love,

self-worth, and honouring. Kovach (2010) highlights that a researcher's stories of self are "about being congruent with [the] knowledge system that tells us we can only interpret the world from the place of our experience" (p. 110). Further, sharing my stories and connections alongside the research "ensures that the individual realities are not misrepresented as generalizable collectives" (Kovach, 2010, p. 111). This is where I begin.

Boozhoo, Aanii, I am Tamara Bernard; my spirit name is Shining Eagle Woman, and I am from Mukwa (bear) clan. I am a Scottish-Anishinaabekwe from Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation). I carry my experiences and the stories of other Indigenous women who have survived violence. We are all individuals with our own identities, but the collection of our shared voices, stories, and histories ultimately calls for a collective response to gender-based violence against Indigenous women. These stories indicate the need for attention, healing, and research to be implemented in Ontario on violence towards Indigenous women. I speak as I am: story/ies¹, because the survival stories that strong women and girls (kwe) have shared with me can never be forgotten, and are now carried with me.

I carry stories of survival within my blood, heart, and spirit. As an Anishinaabekwe, I have come to know my culture through my birth mother, my Nokomis, as well as traditional teachers, and Elders. Growing up, I remember my Nokomis sharing stories of family-based knowledge. As an adult, I now recognize the significance of her stories; they are always about our family members in relation to the land, traditional knowledge and lifestyle, and family history. These stories transmit knowledge from generation to generation. Unfortunately, traditional knowledge shared through stories has been disrupted because of imperialism and

¹ I use the term story/ies to emphasize I am more than one story. I have stories based on my own personal experience of surviving violence, intergenerational through my bloodline, my mother and my Nokomis's stories of survival, and the stories of survival from other Indigenous women. I am story/ies.

colonialism on Turtle Island² (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Anderson, 2016; 2016; Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Reading & Wien, 2009). Despite that disruption, I believe that by positioning myself – and my heart – within the research process, I honour my Nokomis’s story/ies, and her stories shared about Jane. Moreover, my great-grandmother Jane’s story is one among many MMIWG and their collective experiences indicate a deep need for healing and further recognition of the ongoing cultural genocide in the modern era.

Storytelling is a cyclical learning process in which I share story/ies, and other women, in turn, share story/ies (Anderson, 2016; Archibald, 2008). This approach is based on personal processes. I offer my own stories to honour the missing and murdered Indigenous women to illustrate the personal processes of learning, healing, and exploring, as well as understanding “honouring” within a holistic Indigenous approach through activation of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*.. My story is a part of these collective stories.

As a researcher, I seek to add knowledge to the legacy of my great-grandmother, Jane Bernard. The women and girls who make up the Missing and Murdered *are* story. Jane is story. Irene, my grandmother, is story. Marilyn is story. I am story. Thus, I share the story of what is known about my great grandmother, Jane Bernard, one among the MMIWG, who I introduce posthumously below. And this is where it begins.

² Turtle Island is an Anishinaabe term referring to North America (Snyder, 1974)

My late great-grandmother, Jane Bernard.

Figure 1: Jane Bernard, photo used on OPP media releases (2010)

What is known about Jane in the public records are the details of her disappearance. Jane was 43 years old when she was last seen alive getting into a vehicle leaving the New Main Café in Port Arthur (now known as Thunder Bay), Ontario on August 27, 1966. She was with 18-year old Doreen Hardy, who also got in the vehicle. Doreen's body was found the following day on Sandy Beach (now Shuniah Township), and police found Jane's body several days later on August 31, 1966. Jane was found in a ditch in Sandy Beach approximately 260 yards from where Doreen had been found (Casey, 2015).

This double homicide remains unsolved crime. Initially, the Police offered a \$2000 reward to anyone who came forward with information that would lead to an arrest. No one did. In 2010, the Ontario Provincial Police reopened the case with a \$50,000 reward for new evidence

or information brought forward. The year 2016 marked the 50-year anniversary of my great-grandmother's murder, with no new leads or evidence to help solve this double homicide.

Yet, I believe that her life was much more than the event of her disappearance over 50 years ago. I learned some of the depth of her life through my Nokomis, who I introduce next.

Nokomis's Story – Knowledge Sharer.

Irene loves being an Aboriginal teacher, sharing stories and teachings. She shares her story below:

My name is Irene Marie Bernard and I was born in a log cabin delivered by an Elder in Gull Bay, Ontario. I am a survivor of the Canadian Residential School. I am a divorced mother of seven children; one passed away. I have twelve grandchildren and three great grandchildren. I had various jobs, from being a professional housekeeper, to a teacher, and being an Indigenous organization representative while my children were attending school.

Later in my life, I moved to the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario, to pursue work for a Native organization. After working for a while, I decided to go to school to upgrade my education, to take the Native Language summer program at Lakehead University, which continued for four summers to follow. I challenged myself to continue at Lakehead University by pursuing the Native Access program once I completed the language program, and afterwards I pursued my Bachelors of Arts and Bachelors of Education. I was so happy that I accomplished my goals to become a teacher. I knew in my heart that I always wanted to be a teacher; and although it wasn't easy at times, I encouraged anyone who wanted to further their education to do so with perseverance. I love my mother and miss her very much. I am happy to do this work and share the life my mother lived. She

was a great woman, very traditional, and everyone knew her in the communities. People would come to see her from all over to have a cup of tea or something to eat. I loved my mother very much and miss her every day. I pray for her every day (Personal writings, I.B., March 2017).

Marilyn Netemegesic – Elder.

Marilyn thoroughly enjoyed working and assisting families in need. Marilyn has worked for Dilico Anishnabek Family Services for over 25 years. She shares her story below:

I am originally from Rocky Bay First Nation, a small northern reserve. In 1998 my husband and I, Emil Netemegesic, moved our family five kilometers from Nipigon to the Red Rock Indian Band. The purpose of our move was to better serve our four children in attending high school, which was only 15-20 minutes away and easier for them to be transported by bus. My husband Emil and I will have been married for 47 years as of November 7. There has been a lot of trial and tribulations, but we have overcome each one of them and are now enjoying our senior lives together. We had four children – our oldest, a son, Jeremy Joseph Hardy travelled to the spirit world at the age of 37, leaving behind his two daughters. I also have three strong Anishnaabek daughters Vanessa, Amanda and Priscilla. I have 12 grandchildren and, recently, three great-grandchildren. Each member of my family holds a special place in my heart; they are my pride and joy. I am the second eldest girl of 12 siblings (four girls, eight brothers) whose names all begin with ‘M’. However, my eldest brother passed to the spirit world at only three months old. My parents were Mike and Agnes Hardy; both are now in the spirit world. My parents instilled the seven grandfather teachings because as children we were not

aware of the teachings. Honest, Humility, Truth, Love, Wisdom, Courage and Respect. Our life trials have shown us the importance of practicing these every day.

I started drumming with the Lake Helen Drum Group in the summer of 2015. My mother passed away March of 2013 and she passed on her drum. The first time I drummed and sang was at her funeral with the wonderful ladies of this group. This is one thing that has helped me with my language. I enjoy and love singing, sharing and teaching our culture by drumming. I have, on numerous occasions, opened and closed meetings for groups that requested me to do so. I have so much pride when drumming and hope to pass it on to my great-grandchildren.

I am a strong Anishnaabekwe who will assist in anything when I am needed, and even if I am not needed, those who know me know I will be there. My Anishnabek name was given to me in the summer of 2013. I was given the name Shaawanobineskiikwe (Southern Thunderbird Woman). I am in love with my name, and totally proud of it. To me it says who I am, and who I believe myself to be, which is a strong Anishinaabekwe, who is willing to assist in anything.

I had the privilege of meeting Tamara. She was reaching out for an Elder to build a relationship for her soon-to-be baby and herself. She also requested me to assist in her water birth, the transition from the spirit world to the physical world. We have built a strong relationship and I am so honored to be a part of this great experience. (Personal writings, M.N., July 2017)

Background to the Problem

As noted above, there is far more written on the deaths of missing and murdered Indigenous women than on their lives. In the following section, I review the reports and literature

to provide an overview of the literature on MMIWG. Early reports focus on inquiries into single cases, such as that of Helen Betty Osbourne. Reports raising concerns about missing and murdered Indigenous women began to multiply early in the 21st century (Amnesty, 2004, 2009; RCMP 2014 & 2015; NWAC 2010, 2011 & 2015). These reports use timeframes from 1980-2012. None of these reports address the case or life of my great-grandmother, Jane Bernard, because her case falls outside of these timeframes.

Beyond my great-grandmother's case, the literature is scarce on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls from northern Ontario. The best literature regarding northern Ontario is represented by Pearce's (2013) dissertation on MMIWG and the Ontario Native Women's Association's (ONWA) report (1989) on the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women. While Pearce's dissertation brings attention to statistical representations of murdered and missing Indigenous and non-Indigenous women across Canada, there is still a gap in literature on Ontario.

Regionally, the ONWA report (1989) focuses on Ontario, reporting that Indigenous women experience higher rates of violence than that of the national average. In some northern Indigenous communities in Ontario, it is estimated that 75-90% of Indigenous women experience some form of violence. Besides ONWA's statistical contributions, there is still a gap in both the academic and grey literature such as reports and government documents produced outside of the academy about the representation for MMIWG in Ontario. To write into this gap is important for families and communities in northern Ontario, especially for those whose loved ones fell prior to 1980. Moreover, sharing stories beyond the tragedy will create pathways of recognition, healing, and honour for women and their families (Anderson, 2016; Bear, 2014; M. C. Campbell, 2016; Johnston & Santos, 2013; NWAC, 2010, 2011 & 2015).

The most common misconception about MMIWG is that many Canadians believe these tragedies occur predominantly in British Columbia, specifically in Vancouver's downtown Eastside or in proximity to the Highway of Tears. Additionally, there is a misconception that the majority of the women and girls are involved in sex work, are affected by substance abuse and homelessness, and may have been the victims of serial killer Robert Pickton (Benoit, Carroll, & Chaudry, 2003; Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Shannon et al., 2008). The literature that highlights stories of MMIWG are those focused on Helen Betty Osbourne (Bateman, 2015; Ham, 2014; Robertson, 2015), Pamela George (Razack, 2000), and Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander (Walter, 2015). The literature that focuses on *life* stories of MMIWG, that is, beyond their deaths, is sparse and relatively non-existent.

The life stories of MMIWG's life have been shared in other ways, however, including aesthetic responses and community based commemorative art installations using various mediums, such as *Walking With Our Sisters* (Walking with our Sisters, 2012), Jaime Black's REDress installation (The REDress Project, 2014), Sisters in Spirit Faceless Dolls (NWAC, 2009), Sister in Spirit of Digital Life Stories of MMIWG (NWAC, 2014) and CTV's "See Me" installation (See Me, 2014). These responses from Indigenous communities and family members challenge Eurocentric perspectives, that is, colonial gendered representations of violence (Anderson, 2016; Campbell, 1973; M.C. Campbell, 2016; LaRocque, 2010) which can be seen as the "Master Narrative" (Episknew, 2009). These responses reclaim their voices and their stories, experiences, and the representation of women who are among those who are MMIWG. This reclamation process through sharing stories is presented in diverse forms due to the nature of stories being shared and released based on an individual's personal experiences, creativity, and understanding of how to honour their loved ones.

Honouring

Throughout this study, I re-conceptualize honouring as re-writing, re-claiming, and re-presenting as a form of Indigenous research through storytelling letter-writing. I encouraged spaces of remembering by nourishing my grandmother's writing processes. This nourishment honours Indigenous knowledge (including land, medicine, body, language, and Elders) and provides an opportunity for her to re-claim knowing her mother, Jane. This process of re-claiming her knowledge, of knowing and remembering her mother, is a way of honouring her mind, body, spirit, heart, remembrances, and stories. Therefore, I position this study as a space that encourages honouring at individual and collective levels. This honouring is expressed through my efforts as researcher and story writer, as well as those of my grandmother as a knowledge sharer and story writer.

Storytelling is an important means of transmitting traditional knowledge, culture, and language for future generations to learn, to create meaningful engagements, and to honour our ancestors (Absolon, 2011; S. Anderson, 2016; Baker, 1994; Bear, 2014; Episkenew, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Simpson, 2011; Ray, 2016). Indigenous storytelling influences our approaches to Indigenous education by co-creating accurate representations of history and by including Indigenous voices and perspectives into education and wider conversations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore Jane Bernard's life beyond being taken, of becoming one of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. I seek to know her life stories and to honour her life. I understand honouring as meaningful engagement through personal processes and experiences that are emotionally and spiritually guided. The Native Women's Association's (2010) report, *What Their Stories Tell Us*, inspired this study.

These short stories illustrate the potential of portraying Indigenous women beyond their deaths by incorporating families' testimonies. Expanding on NWACs (2010) report, my study allows my grandmother to honour her mother, Jane Bernard, by re-writing and re-presenting Jane's story *as more than murdered and missing*. Additionally, this study provides opportunities for my Nokomis to re-represent Jane's story in her own words, and activate a dualistic relationship of healing and learning at an intergenerational level, for herself and me.

Significance

This study contributes to the gap in the knowledge about MMIWG in Canada by exploring the life stories of Jane Bernard as they are told by my Nokomis, Irene Bernard. These stories contribute to understandings of MMIWG beyond their murders, for honouring and healing. This approach serves to "tell our own stories" (Smith, 1999, p. 29) as collective voices of resistance to redirect and re-create MMIWG presentations in literature. Honouring their life stories is our approach to subvert the discourse of MMIWG representations, as more than just statistics, by employing Indigenous storytelling traditions.

Research Question

To write into the existing literature on MMIWG from the perspective of honouring their life stories, and for intergenerational healing for families, I ask this research question:

What can be learned through storytelling letter-writing? How might learning through letter-writing for remembrance inform our understanding, and honouring of MMIWG and their lives?

Research Overview

I use an Indigenous approach of *re-writing* and *re-righting* (Smith, 1999) through storytelling letter-writing as a method to provide personal insight into Jane's life with the intention of illustrating Jane as more than her death and disappearance. This Indigenous

application of storytelling letter-writing is combined with traditional Anishinaabe knowledge to create a space for honouring Jane's life (and the life of her daughter Irene, in the aftermath of loss) and to build on Indigenous researchers' applications (Aboloso, 2011; Debassige, 2010; Kovach, 2010a, 2010b; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008) and Indigenous storytelling (Aboloso & Willett, 2005; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson 2011, 2008). The storytelling letter writing method used informal questions such:

1. On reflection, can you share what you remember about your mother, Jane?
2. Do you recall any traditional lifestyle practices that Jane implemented during your upbringing?
3. On reflection, what did Jane teach you about being an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe woman) in the Lake Nipigon region?
4. Have you tried to honour Jane's life? If so, how?
5. How do you keep her memory?

My approach to this research begins with prayer to pay respects to Anishinaabe culture, traditions, and Creator. Through prayer I set the intentions of my research by acknowledging all energies, people, and land. I offer tobacco and sage as my relations to the spiritual world, Creator, and land. I offer honorariums in the forms of bannock, tea, wild meat, and homemade meals as a token of my gratitude to the Creator and to the people involved with the research processes. Like Debassige (2010), I believe everything is interconnected with my spirit in the understanding of research. In order to continue learning how to guide my research and methods to create meaningful conversations in an honouring way, I applied Anishinaabe *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, as a research guide (Debassige, 2010; National Research Conference on Urban Aboriginal Peoples Report, 2011). *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* means to "live the good life" through the

activation of honouring the past, present, and future grounded in Anishinaabe social wellbeing teachings and spirituality (Bedard, 2008; Debassige, 2010; Rheault, 1999). I explore the concept of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* in depth later in Chapter Two with connections to honouring and learning.

Storytelling letter-writing began by honouring my grandmother through the presentation of an honorarium to create spaces of honouring, knowledge sharing, and collaboration between the researcher and participant. I then asked one of the questions, as listed above, to recall Jane Bernard's life stories to her daughter Irene Bernard. My grandmother notified me when it was time for me to come to her home to pick up her letters, and I provided an honorarium to acknowledge the gift of her time, knowledge, and energy. Additionally, at this time I asked if she had any questions or concerns, or if any discussion was needed.

I continued this process of bringing honorariums to my grandmother when exchanging letters, and asking for any new information, questions, or additional clarification in letters, until my grandmother was finished with writing. As a final step, I typed up the letters, considered its connection to the research, and engaged my grandmother in collaborative editing and discussions. This provided opportunities for my grandmother to edit her stories and knowledge that she shared about her mother Jane, and to ensure that the representations were correct and honouring.

I found that meaning through data collection and analysis became a circular relationship that occurred continuously and simultaneously throughout the research processes. I used a "flexible analytical tool" (Kovach, p. 42 2010) to hand code the data as an interactive process.

Summary

In this chapter I have the study and contextualized it in the existing literature on MMIWG. This contextualization includes highlighting the lack of background stories of the

women among the MMIWG, and the gap in literature for scholars and writers who write MMIWG stories. Most of the literature focuses on their deaths. In response, this study writes into these gaps by using life stories and maintaining an awareness of what can be learned from these stories. To begin, I introduced myself, my great-grandmother, my Nokomis, and Elder. As well, I described honouring, and the relationships of honouring and storytelling for families who have lost loved ones among MMIWG. I explain why I am seeking to learn Jane's life stories and to honour her life. These stories contribute to the understanding of MMIWG beyond their murders. As such, an exploration of honouring as storytelling, in relation to healing, will be explored thoroughly in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

We must and will have women leaders among us. Native women are going to raise the roof and decry the dirty house which patriarchy and racism have built on our backs.

(Lee Maracle, 1996, p. 22)

Introduction

Although much has been written on the trauma of Indigenous women, what is known about these women's lives? This literature review explores the writings on Indigenous women, Indigenous women's stories, and Indigenous grandmothers as storytellers. It also explores the concept of healing through stories, and honouring in relationship to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The literature thereby frames the purpose of my study: to use storytelling letter-writing as a means of learning one Indigenous woman's story. My goal is to expand on Indigenous scholarship in order to have Indigenous women's stories help us to understand and conceptualize the lives women that MMIWG lived. I do this in hopes to deconstruct the hegemony of western knowledge on these women (e.g., Eastside Downtown Vancouver, sex work, runways or homelessness) (Benoit, Carroll, & Chaudry, 2003; Beniuk, 2012; Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pearce, 2013; Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2016; Shannon et al., 2008), and to emphasize one woman's story as an essential part in the reclamation, re-writing, and re-presenting process. Ideally, this will encourage readers to view Indigenous women as empowered, gifted, intelligent, and resilient people. In chapter four, I discuss colonial education and impact on Indigenous peoples. In chapter five, I discuss Indigenous education within the contexts of Anishinaabe storytelling and land-based pedagogies.

In this chapter, I review scholarship, as well as grey literature (reports and government publications) in three sections. The first section reviews violence towards Indigenous women

from international (Amnesty, 2004, 2009; UN, 2012), national (BC Women, 2012; Brennan, 2011; Farley et. al, 2005; Lamontagne, 2011; NWAC, 2015; Oxman-Martinez et. al, 2005; Pearce, 2013; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; RCMP, 2014, 2015), and regional viewpoints (Batemen, 2015; BC Women, 2005; Ham, 2014; ONWA 2010, 2014, 2015; Razack, 2000; Robertson, 2015; Walter, 2015). I also consider the narratives of Indigenous women among MMIWG and how these narratives inform my study.

The second section discusses Indigenous women in Canada to offer broader background contexts for understanding Indigenous women's roles prior to the newcomers and violence. I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview as it is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I focus on stories by Indigenous women to prepare readers for future exploration of storywork, resistance, healing, and honouring.

The third section explores Indigenous grandmothers as storytellers (Anderson, 2010, 2011, 2016; Bateman, 2015), and also explores storywork (Archibald, 2008) as 'medicines' (Baker, 1994) to heal (Absolon, 2011; McCabe, 2008; Robbins & Dewar, 2011; Shawande, 2010; Starks et. al, 2010; Wilson, 2011), and how these stories work as resistance against the defined stereotypes and representations in existing literature (Absolon, 2011, Absolon & Willet, 2014; Allen-Gunn, 1990; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973; M. C. Campbell, 2016; LaRocque, 2010; Maracle, 1996; Simpson, 2010, 2014). To begin, I review the literature addressing MMIWG in international, national, and regional viewpoints.

Nimisenh "My Sisters": Missing and Murdered and Indigenous Women and Girls

International. It is important to give further context to the literature relating on MMIWG by exploring international interest in the issue. Concern for the safety of Indigenous women in Canada was brought to international attention as early as the mid 1990's (RCAP, 1996). In the

years since, reports by Amnesty International (2004), the British Columbia Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012a, 2012b) and the United Nations (2012 & 2015) were released, though it is important to note that this crisis in safety was not addressed by a public inquiry until 2015 (Government of Canada; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). Still, the crisis of MMIWG in Canada is a national tragedy, identified by the International Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations (2012). Amnesty International (2004) suggests: “These acts of violence may be motivated by racism or may be carried out in the expectation that societal indifference to the welfare and safety of Indigenous women will allow the perpetrators to escape justice” (p. 2).

Amnesty International (2004) went on to conduct a study that examined this systemic racism as a form of “cultural prejudice and of implicit or systemic biases in the policies and actions of government officials and agencies, or of society as a whole” (p. 3). The study focused on violence towards Indigenous women in Canada because “the link between racial discrimination and violence against Indigenous women has not yet been adequately acknowledged or addressed” (p. 3) and often victims and survivors of such violence are forgotten. The study acknowledges the lack of data outside of western provinces (e.g., women from Inuit communities, rural communities, northern communities, or on reserve communities).

Amnesty International (2004) identified two central concerns: 1) the acts of violence and the response to such violence from officials (e.g., police); and 2) historic and continuing factors, such as the legacy of Residential Schools and child protection policies which increase the likelihood that Indigenous women will experience violence. They found that “Indigenous women in Canada face discrimination because of their gender and because of their Indigenous identity” (p. 7) and that the chances of experiencing violence are heightened by poverty, ill-health and/or

involvement in the sex trade (Amnesty, 2004). Furthermore, Amnesty states that the violence towards Indigenous women is “widespread [throughout Canada] but poorly understood,” and they highlight that “Indigenous women between the ages 25 and 44 with status under the federal Indian Act, are five times more likely than other women” to die as a result of violence (p. 14). The study provides strong data for Indigenous women from the province of British Columbia; however, more research is needed to extend findings for women living outside of British Columbia.

Amnesty’s (2004) report brought international attention on Canada for its inaction on this crisis of violence towards Indigenous women and girls across the nation. These are not new concerns, however, as they resonate with Indigenous women’s organizations (BC Women, 2012; ONWA, 1969; 2004, 2010; NWAC, 2010, 2015) and government commissioned (RCAP, 1996; UN, 2012) calls to address violence against Indigenous women in Canada. The next section reviews literature that addresses MMIWG as a Canadian national crisis.

National. The literature on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is diverse. It includes grey literature from the British Columbia Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012a,b), Native Women’s Association of Canada (2011; 2014; 2015), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2014, 2015), and individual scholarship (Archuleta, 2006; Beniuk, 2012; Clark, 2012; Culhane, 2003; Hargreaves, 2015; Harper, 2006; Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani, 2009; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Kubik, Bourassa, & Hampton, 2009; Kuokkanen, 2008; Palmater, 2016; Pearce, 2013). This literature does not respond to the international calls to action; but it sets the historical context for missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women reported to Parliament on the safety of Indigenous women and girls. The committee stated that Indigenous women and girls “are as

likely to be killed by a stranger or an acquaintance as they are by an intimate partner” (Standing Committee, 2011 p. 8). In contrast, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2015) report 62% of Indigenous homicides were committed by a spouse, family member, or intimate relation. The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) advocates for ending violence against Indigenous women and girls and brings attention to realities that these women face. They often challenge RCMP reports (2014, 2015), as a result of that advocacy. Further, NWAC (2010), aligning with Standing Committee on that Status of Women, wrote that Indigenous women are targeted with violence predominantly in non-Indigenous communities (NWAC, 2010), highlighting the prevalence of racism as one of the major catalysts for this violence.

In 2010, NWAC developed a database on MMIWG from British Columbia to the Atlantic Provinces. Their findings highlight the disproportionately high rate of homicide for Indigenous women, which represents 10% of all homicides in Canada. This statistic is all the more staggering when we consider that Indigenous women only represent 3% of the entire female population of Canada. They also found that “more than [a] quarter (28%) of all cases occurred in British Columbia” (p. 4). In addition, NWAC (2010) reported that they identified 582 cases of MMIWG across Canada. In contrast, in 2014, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) released a report that identified 1,181 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The authors stated that Indigenous women represent 4.3% of the Canadian population but account for 16% of female homicides and 11.3% of missing women (RCMP, 2014, p. 3). This discrepancy, between NWAC’s report of 582 and the RCMP’s report of 1,181 cases, points to an ongoing ambiguous (mis)understanding and (mis)representation of the numbers and statistics on MMIWG in Canada. NWAC (2010) moves beyond a statistical understanding, however, by adopting a biographical approach to the phenomenon of MMIWG

that encourages a meaningful and more humanistic portrayal of Indigenous women. Through this process, they challenge the discourse on MMIWG by attaining short commentaries provided by their family members and loved ones. In fact, NWAC's (2010) study is among the first to provide profiles of some MMIWG from across Canada.

In 2015, the Government of Canada launched a national inquiry to address the actions needed to prevent violence towards Indigenous women and girls (Government of Canada, 2015; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). Additionally, the inquiry aims to gather more in-depth knowledge on outstanding (cold) cases, undocumented or incorrectly documented cases, and survivors of violence, in order to better understand and create awareness of the importance of statistics on MMIWG in Canada. Although accurate numbers are still unknown for MMIWG, media focus is predominantly on their deaths. Knowledge about their deaths is acquired through statistical representation across Canada provided by official authorities such as local police and RCMP (NWAC, 2010, 2015; RCMP 2014, 2015), and even so, this information remains unclear. A deeper look into this information is beyond the scope of this study; however, highlighting the lack of certainty surrounding the data lends more importance to the idea that we must expand on the life stories of these women.

Pearce (2013) studied the over-representation of Indigenous women as both victims and perpetrators of violent crime in Canada. Pearce's study is the only scholarly literature to date that focuses beyond British Columbia (e.g., Hugil, 2010; Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006) or Manitoba (e.g., Ham, 2014; Robertson 2012) by exploring all provinces within Canada (excluding the three territories). However, Pearce's dissertation aligns with the problematic trend focusing mostly on Robert Pickton victims, in relation to sex workers and violence (Culhane, 2003; Beniuk, 2012; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2000; Shannon, Kerr, &

Allinott, 2008). Pearce's work, while insightful, has limitations because the scope of her work cannot (or does not) extend beyond the stereotypes associated with MMIWG.

There are several limitations when it comes to the research on MMIWG. These are: (1) the focus on the western provinces (Amnesty, 2004, 2014; NWAC, 2010, 2011, 2015; Pearce, 2013; UN, 2012); (2) the generalized notions of MMIWG as linked to violence and poverty, sex trade, substance abuse, and runaways (Culhane, 2003; Beniuk, 2012; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2016; Shannon, Kerr, & Allinott, 2008); (3) ongoing colonial experiences (e.g., Residential School and child welfare) that perpetuate systematic violence and place Indigenous women in vulnerable spaces (e.g., homelessness) (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2016;); (4) Inadequate response protocols by authorities for missing and murdered Indigenous women (Amnesty 2004, 2014; NWAC, 2010, 2011, 2015; UN, 2012); and, (5) the need for stories of Indigenous peoples' lived experiences, since there are significant gaps in the comprehension of the violence against Indigenous women (NWAC, 2010, 2015; RCMP, 2014, 2015). Next, I explore literature that has a regional focus to situate my study on the trends, scope, and stories about MMIWG that are presented in the literature.

Regional. In this section I will review literature that best represents regional stories of MMIWG. The literature on MMIWG is predominantly regionally focused on British Columbia (Benoit, Carroll, & Chaudry, 2003; Beniuk, 2012; Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Pearce, 2013; Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2016; Shannon et al., 2008). I seek to review the literature outside of British Columbia to move beyond the common focuses on the victims of Robert Pickton and those of the Highway of Tears to situate the reality of MMIWG in a regional context. Outside of B.C., there are three cases of MMIWG that were given attention by scholars. First, researchers tend to write on the Helen Betty Osbourne case (Bateman, 2015; Ham, 2014;

Robertson, 2015) which brings the geographical focus to Manitoba. The second is the Pamela George case in Saskatchewan (Razack, 2000); and the third is a case from Quebec involves Maisey Odjick and Shannon Alexander (Walter, 2015). I share these life stories to highlight the importance of learning about Indigenous women and to draw attention to the crisis that is MMIWG as it exists beyond the Western provinces.

Bateman (2015), Ham (2014), and Robertson (2015) write about Helen Betty Osbourne. Bateman (2015) writes on Helen's story, a Cree woman, to better understand not only her life, but also the sixteen years of silence on her murder before criminal charges were finally placed on one out of the four male perpetrators which contextualizes colonial gender violence as ongoing, and historic. Helen did not fit the generalized stereotypes of MMIWG. She was not in British Columbia, not a runaway, sex worker, or substance abuser. Rather, hers is the story about a girl, who, at nineteen years old, dreamt of becoming a primary teacher. Helen pursued education to reach her goals by moving to The Pas. She resided in The Pas for as little as two months before being taken (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Pearce, 2013; Robertson, 2015).

Ham (2014) brings voices from Helen Betty Osbourne's temporary residence, The Pas, Manitoba, to illuminate the discomfort and conflict experienced by the individuals as a result of racial segregation. Ham does offer glimpses into Osbourne's life, but has a stronger focus on the perspectives and voice of individuals from The Pas. Robertson (2015), a Swampy Cree author, created a graphic novel depicting the life of Helen, beyond her death, as a girl who had a love for school and dreamed about becoming a teacher. Robertson creatively highlights the disparities within the justice system and the issue of ongoing violence towards Indigenous women while offering humility in his approach to Osbourne's story. His work identifies Indigenous women as

more than murdered and missing and his creativity inspires my approach to be fluid and organic with a creative storytelling process with my Nokomis.

Razack (2002) analyzes the murder of Pamela George, an Ojibwe woman, who was murdered in Saskatchewan. Razack argues that Pamela is dehumanized due to the belief that she was an Indigenous prostitute and her portrayal as “the gendered, racial, Other,” (p. 126). For Razack, her story confirms a lack of responsive justice, much like my great-grandmother’s case which itself has been a cold case for 50+ years. Moreover, Pamela George’s dreams, goals, and story are overshadowed by the MMIWG discourse, and presented in such a way that contrasts the story of Betty Osbourne’s life. In this way, Razack highlights the dehumanizing discourse of MMIWG as stories that focus predominantly on their death and the negative stereotypes that shadow their lives. More recently, Emmanuelle Walter (2015) writes about piecing together the disappearances of two young Indigenous women, Maisey Odjick and Shannon Alexander, from western Quebec, by revealing the voices of family members. Walter writes about the ways that the justice system failed them by immediately labeling these girls as runaways, based on witnesses from the girls’ school, and the reports of local authorities.

Walter’s (2015) findings indicate that family members of the MMIWG often voiced their lack of trust of the media, journalists, and researchers due to their “efforts to [report] on the scars” and subsequently create unfavourable spaces for storytelling (p. 111). Furthermore, local authorities often falsely identified the girls as runaways during their investigation. This information was loosely attained from school peers and school authorities sharing their perspective of the girls as substance abusers, degenerates, rebels, and promiscuous, without interrogating the stereotypes behind such notions. In these ways, aspects of the disparities within our justice system are illustrated clearly. Walter quotes Maisey Odjick’s mother as she notes that

authorities tried “to treat my daughter’s disappearance as a ‘runaway’ teen” or labelled her “as a promiscuous” female and tried “to treat me as the faulty party” which “is abominably unacceptable” (p. 189). Walter also expresses that justice is not given, nor accessible for Maisey, Shannon, or their families (p. 190) and offers an opinion that is shared within the works of Bateman (2014), Ham (2015) and Robertson (2015).

The literature on regional representations of MMIWG shares two limitations and reaches four conclusions. The limitations include: (1) three out of six writers focus on the Helen Betty Osborne case (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Robertson, 2014), and, (2) none of these life stories are written by family members or loved ones (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Robertson, 2014; Walter 2015). Outside of these limitations, the four conclusions reached by this literature are: (1) the assumption that violence is a direct result of poverty, substance abuse, and due to the lifestyle of a ‘runaway’ (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Walter, 2015); (2) the ongoing colonial discourse reinforces the [false] idea that violence against Indigenous women is acceptable (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Walter, 2015); (3) the lack of response protocol to missing and murdered Indigenous women from authorities and lack of respect given to families of MMIWG from authorities is a deplorable concern (Bateman, 2014; Ham, 2015; Walter, 2015); and, (4) that the problematic discourses of victim blaming are embedded in the justice, social, and media systems (Walter, 2015).

In the next section, I briefly highlight Indigenous women’s traditional roles in the pre-contact era and the effects of colonialism in changing their roles and status. I seek to situate this historical context in order to reestablish the power of Indigenous women as storytellers and individuals. Furthermore, it is imperative to identify how colonialism has damaged the agency and power of Indigenous women as it continues in contemporary society.

Indigenous Women, Patriarchy and Colonialism. While Indigenous women's traditional roles in their communities varied, this study considers traditional roles of Indigenous women in pre-colonial nations, prior to the construction of the master narrative (Episkenew, 2009; Lorde, 1983; Smith, 1999) which centralizes European-based, patriarchal discourse. While there are important differences between First Nations, Indigenous women were commonly known as the mothers of the nations (Anderson, 2009; Allen-Gunn, 1991; Simpson, 2014) and worked to ensure the survival of their communities (Anderson & Lawrence, 2005) in the era prior to contact.

The role of Indigenous motherhood was not only a practice, but also a principle of autonomy and a source of Indigenous female authority in the family and in the governance of our pre-colonial nations (Anderson, 2009; Allen-Gunn, 1990). Anderson (2009) explains that "motherhood accorded Native women tremendous status in the family, community and nation" (p. 83). Therefore, Indigenous women who can carry life within their sacred water are the source of strength and power (Cook-Lynn, 1996; Episkenew, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2003). Indigenous women are thus respectfully known for making political, social, and economic decisions in their communities (Anderson, 2009; Allen-Gunn, 1990; Maracle, 1996; Smith, 1999). Indigenous motherhood, though, was a complex position that included multifaceted roles filled by mothers, grandmothers, female Elders, sisters, and aunties to care for upbringing of the children of the Nation (Lavell-Harvard & Lavell, 2006). In sum, Indigenous women were the foundation of the communities with highly respected status based on motherhood and their roles as life givers, educators, and authority figures.

Indigenous women in Canada experience challenges and disruption rooted in colonialism that are not experienced by Indigenous men (Anderson & Lawrence, 2005; Allen-Gunn, 1990, Episkenew, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Maracle, 1996; Smith, 1999). The settlers disregarded

Indigenous women's status and roles (Lawrence, 1999) as part of their desire to colonize and interrupt the established social and political structure Indigenous communities. As such, disenfranchising Indigenous women would only seek to support their imperial agenda. Smith (1999) states that colonialism is rooted in racist and sexist notions which targets Indigenous women's roles and status. She explains that colonization "is recognized as having had a destructive effect on Indigenous gender relations which reached out across all spheres of Indigenous society" (pp. 151-152) and created disruption within our Indigenous motherhood nations (Anderson, 2009). In response to the erasure of Indigenous women's identities as a result of colonialism, Indigenous women *are* resisting their colonial relations by reclaiming their identity and representation through a storywork approach (Anderson, 2009; Archibald, 2008). By utilizing traditional storytelling (Archibald, 2008), the women in this current study challenge patriarchal and hegemonic ideologies to reestablish the identity, power, status, and autonomy that existed in the pre-contact era.

Blaney (2005) explains that "patriarchy is so ingrained in our communities that it is now seen as a 'traditional trait'" (as cited in Anderson & Lawrence, 2005, p. 158). To challenge patriarchy, Smith (1999) expresses the importance of learning alternative histories to transform the westernized perspective and understandings of Indigenous peoples (p. 29). Smith explains that re-learning our past through stories and knowledge by Indigenous peoples is a process of resistance and a means by which we may recover from colonialism (p. 34). She references Lorde (1983), who asserts that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 29). Following from these ideas, the current study utilizes the storywork method as a means of dismantling the 'master narrative' (Episkenew, 2009) through writing on selfhood and by reclaiming traditional storytelling. In this case, the master narrative is the story of Indigenous

peoples articulated by the white-settlers in Canada that misrepresents and strives to erase the truths of Indigenous identity, culture, and traditional knowledge. While this narrative clearly still exists today, Indigenous women *do* use the master's tools by writing in 'English' to dismantle the 'master's narrative' on Indigenous women in existing literature, contrary to Lorde's classic aphorism. They write their own stories and assert their own voice in the process, and this resistance informs this study as my method consists of writing an honouring representation of one among many MMIWG.

In this work, I disrupt the master narrative of the white settlers by adding factual knowledge and representation of Indigenous women into that narrative (Episkenew, 2009; Smith, 1999). The wide acceptance of the "master narrative" is the reason why Indigenous women, individually and collectively, began writing their life experiences. This study continues this work as my Nokomis' remembrances resist, and recover from, colonial violence through her storytelling and letter-writing. Using shared narratives, we are dismantling the master narrative by re-writing, and re-presenting Jane's story.

Indigenous women began writing their life experiences to gain an understanding of the impact of colonialism on their lives. Acoose (1992) describes how negative emotions and perceptions of Indigenous women in mainstream media and literature affected her sense of self-worth and representation, as she carried internalizations of "the easy squaw, Indian whore, dirty Indian, and drunken Indian stereotypes" (p. 29). These notions created internal and external barriers to connect to cultural roots, identity, and community. This is "colonial gendered violence" (Simpson, 2014). Many Indigenous women writers describe their experiences of colonial gendered violence (Absolon, 2011; Absolon & Willet, 2014; Allen-Gun, 1990; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973; LaRocque, 2010; Maracle, 1996; Simpson, 2010, 2014). Similarly, that I

only knew about my great grandmother's death, and before sharing letters with my Nokomis, I did not know who she was as a person has affected my sense of self within my identity, cultural roots, spirituality, and community. Ultimately, colonial gendered violence creates and reinforces dislocation and disruption within Indigenous women, both spiritually and physically.

The reviewed literature on the status and roles of Indigenous women pre-contact, and the impact of colonialism on these Indigenous women, has five common themes: (1) Indigenous women were known mothers of the nation who encompassed multifaceted roles and status within communities (Anderson, 2009; Allen-Gunn, 1990; Cook-Lynn, 1996; Episkenew, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Simpson, 2014); (2) Colonialism is best understood as gendered and racialized violence (Smith, 1999; Razack, 2000); (3) Colonial gendered violence has created disruption within gender roles and the status of Indigenous women (Smith, 1999); (4) Disruptions lead to misrepresentations of Indigenous women and their roles in literature (Acoose, 1992; Baker, 1996; Campbell, 1973; LaRocque, 2010; Maracle, 1990), although, contemporary Indigenous women continue to strengthen and renew their roles and status from pre-contact (Anderson, 2016; Iseke-Barnes, 2007; Lawrence & Anderson, 2005); and finally, (5) Indigenous women began writing their truths to reclaim their identity and roles to deconstruct the Euro-Canadian hegemonic constructs of Indigenous women (Acoose, 1992; Allen-Gunn, 1991; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973, M. C. Campbell, 2016; LaRocque, 2010; Maracle, 1996) that influenced educational contexts.

Importantly, these women are writing on the representation of their lives, which ultimately, influence the pride and perceptions of all Indigenous lives. In this study I must ask, who will write about the Indigenous women who are not in the physical world any longer, due to violence? Who is honouring the lives that they lived, looking beyond the violent incident that

took them? My study will fill a portion of that gap by honouring the life of an Ojibwe woman who was taken from the physical world due to gendered colonial violence, and her story will be re-presented to influence pride and positive perceptions of the life she lived. I now turn to the next section that focuses on how *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* influences and informs Indigenous women's writings as honouring their life stories and presentation of life stories.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin “Good Life”: The Way Our Ancestors Planned for Us. Indigenous women writers challenge the colonial gendered violence by writing on the good life aspects of their lives. Thorpe (1996) shares the story that highlights how the authentic way of life still exists beneath the surface of many Indigenous communities, especially for women:

Each nation has a unique language, set of teachings and ceremonies, and a way of life given to them by the Creator through the combined efforts of hundreds of thousands of their ancestors...Each race, nation, community, family and individual possesses unique characteristics which will help to create a healthy environment through which their gifts can be revealed....the native ways of life are spiritually guided. (p. 2)

In short, Thorpe is speaking to the activation of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, the good life, to reveal these beautiful unique qualities with the encouragement, guidance, and support of traditional knowledge. Thorpe's notion is that ultimately *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* exists beneath our surfaces, and thus, within us.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin can be defined as the ‘Good Life’, ‘Way of a Good Life’ (Bedard, 2009), or as “the continuous rebirth of life” (DaSilva et. al, 2009), the spiritual essence as “the way of being” and as a way of recognizing that “I am a spirit having a human experience” (Rheault, 1999, p. 69). The spirit is traced back to the Anishinaabek ancestry to the “First Good Being, created from nothing and lowered down to the Turtle Island” (Rheault, 1999, p. 69) and

lives a path through “Nwenamdanwin (choice making) and N’dendowin (personal responsibility-taking)” (p. 69) to live, believe, and follow traditional cultural teachings and stories. These teachings and stories guide our human being and spirit to follow Anishinaabek pathways in the physical and spiritual worlds.

McGuire (2013) explains that the concept of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* and Anishinaabe values work together to transform, renew, and reciprocate to maintain a life – a good life. McNally (2009) describes it as the “traditional goal of Ojibwe religion: to live well and to lifelong learning in this world” (p. 49). LaDuke (1992) writes:

We honor one another, we honor women as the givers of lives, we honor our Chi-Anishinabeg, our old people and ancestors who hold the knowledge. We honour our children as the continuity from generations, and we honor ourselves as part of creation. (pp. 70-71)

In sum, Anishinaabe *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is holistic and does not just exist in an individual’s mind and spirit, but is the product of the individual’s will, and the life they live or lived.

The importance of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is highlighted in the way Anishinaabe peoples share their experiences and stories (Bedard, 2008; Big Canoe & Richmond, 2014; Day et al., 2014; Debassige, 2010, 2013; Madill, 2008). In this way, *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is a trauma informed approach (Gallagher, 2016; Rodrigues, 2015) that provides the freedom of sharing stories on their terms, using each individual’s method of expression, such as: regalia, beadwork, sharing experiences, painting, or writing (Hupfield, 2015; Rodriguiz, 2015). However, *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* cannot simply be achieved overnight or put into Eurocentric worldviews (Battiste, 2011; Debassige, 2010; Rheault, 1999). We must ensure that “the healing process and [restoration of] health and well-being are engaged to return to *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*” (Day, 2014,

p. 37) where the individual engages in cultural protocols until balance is returned within their four directions – heart, body, mind, and spirit. Once the individual is returned to *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, they may feel readied to speak their truths – their experiences and stories (Day, 2014; Rodriguez, 2015). This becomes a unifying concept of the Ojibwe way of life (Gross, 2002). *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* can be the spiritual foundation of activating ‘a good way’ of Indigenous storytelling for individuals who are reclaiming their representation.

In sum, the Ancestors encourage Anishinaabe people to live the good life of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* and participate in renewing and transforming their life through healing. Healing occurs when we share our truths – our stories and experiences. *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is emphasized as a central element of storytelling for individuals to speak their stories and truth in a positive way. This study focuses on Jane’s story within the four directions – heart, body, mind, and spirit. In this space, *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* adds a cultural layer to this research, and honours the spirit during storytelling.

In this study, I pose the following questions: What is honouring? How do I honour the life stories shared by family members of MMIWG? Does *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* connect to honouring? These questions inspire the next section. I explore honouring to understand how to honour great-grandmother, Jane, as well as the storytelling writing processes and the sharing of letters between my Nokomis and me. Honouring is employed to honour the life among MMIWG and their family members and as a method of research.

Honouring. Bishop (1995) writes about honouring in the context of his Maori culture, as *Whakawhanaungatanga*. He explains honouring as a deeply spiritual principle and approach that is crucial for collaborative storytelling (p.ii). Bishop’s *Whakawhanaungatanga* is a culturally responsive approach to research with three major tenants, it: (1) establishes and maintains

relationships as an ongoing process: pre, during, and post research; (2) allows researchers to be immersed in full participation in the research process; and (3) establishes relationships, to engage ‘participant driven research,’ where the participants are given freedom to “select, recollect and reflect; on their stories, rather than stories being chosen by the researcher” (p. ii).

Bishop explains “how each of these [three] principles [are] addressed in particular circumstances that vary from tribe to tribe” (p. 253), acknowledging that principles from one tribe cannot be applied and/or generalized for all other tribes. This means that one cannot apply the exact principles of “honouring” within research approaches and processes for Ojibwe people, in the same way that one would Haida peoples, since these are two separate nations that have separate languages and cultures. Bishop encourages researchers to learn and honour through remembering the language and their significances because these significances are the stories and the stories are tied to the land because that is the “way of doing” (Bishop, 1995, p. 118).

Thus, Bishop describes the active process of researchers who participate and learn from their participants. Through engaging with stories that involve their Indigenous language and cultural significance, the research aligns with Anishinaabe respect for ‘all my relations’ (Absolon, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Acoose (2008) briefly mentions the concept of honouring as acknowledging ‘all her relations,’ as a Sakimay (Saulteaux) Indigenous woman, where her spirit guides her journey within her work and life. Acoose shares that her spirit is nourished through honouring cultural rituals and a practice that “evokes the spirit-presence of ancestors as well as the living presence of ‘all my relations’” (p. 220). Wheeler (2005) defines honouring as the way we conduct ourselves and understand our relationships with the Spirit world, such as the Creator, in relation to “the past, the present, the future, life around us, each other, and within ourselves” (Wheeler, 2005, p. 150) as we walk on the land to learn.

Ray (2016) illuminates Bishop's ideas of honouring. An Ojibwe woman, Ray honours storytelling processes for Indigenous women through the movement and relations of beading. She uses an Anshinaabe centric approach to research that is rooted in relational accountability by honouring the processes of aesthetic beading and individualistic means of storytelling. Ray provides a brief concept of honouring, metaphorically, as a transmission where Indigenous women exercise the "power of beading to resist colonization and assimilation, by renewing and maintaining Indigenous knowledge systems" (Ray, 2016, p. 367) such as stories and storytelling. Ray uses the power of beading circles to collect data on storytelling between Indigenous women. Beading circles refer to a gathering of Indigenous women who bead, converse, create jewelry, moccasin vamps, and regalia. These circles naturally generate storytelling spaces among the Indigenous women, thus creating spaces of exchanging traditional knowledge deeply rooted in cultural significance.

Ray (2016) provides a strong example of creating storytelling spaces that are culturally significant by following the participants' lead, thus creating participant driven research (Bishop, 1995). Bishop (1995) and Ray (2016) inform my study by reinforcing that relationships are essential, extensive, and meaningful for the participant, and for the researcher to learn cultural significance from their participant that ultimately shapes the researcher's approach for Indigenous narrative inquiry.

The three commonalities that emerge within the limited literature on storytelling and honouring are: (1) the acknowledgement of 'all my relations', or the emphasis of meaningful relationships which are deeply rooted in honouring. This is a common practice within Indigenous worldview (Absolon, 2011; Acoose, 1998; Bishop, 1995; Ray, 2016; Wheeler, 2005); (2) an important aspect of 'all my relations' is to honour the physical and spiritual worlds of

relationship and, as a researcher, to learn the cultural significance of these relationships and how to conduct oneself (Acoose, 1998; Bishop, 1995; Wheeler, 2005), similar to the activation of *Mino-Bimadiziwn* (Bedard, 2008; Debassige, 2011; Rheault, 1999); and (3) the common notion that the overall concept of honouring is diverse from nation to nation because honouring is rooted in each nation's cultural significance and language (Bishop, 1995; Ray, 2016).

This literature informs my approach to honouring my Nokomis's storytelling processes. My Nokomis expressed concern about being audio-recorded or having face to face interviews due to the pressure to answer when questioned. I respected her request to reflect while remembering her mother Jane. I honoured this process for my Nokomis, as this is an emotional topic to write about. I wanted her to feel safe, in control, honored, and empowered during the storytelling letter exchange. I now turn to the next section, *Nanda -gikendan anishinaabekwewi dadibaajimo*, "Seek to Learn Indigenous Women Stories" which focuses on the importance of storytelling, learning from stories and storytelling, and Indigenous women storytellers.

***Nanda-gikendan anishinaabekwewi dadibaajimo* "Seek to Learn Indigenous Women Stories"**

In this section I review literature by Indigenous women storytellers to gain a broader perspective about storytelling and to respect stories as learning interactions. I draw on diverse literature to review the importance of storytelling, storytelling as pedagogy, Indigenous women as knowledge keepers and grandmothers as storytellers. I also consider the potentiality of stories to act as medicines and healing through storytelling resistance.

The importance of Storytelling. Linda Smith (1999) explains "the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance" (Smith, 1999, pp. 34-35). Personal experiences, teachings, histories, languages, and culture are all aspects of

storytelling and acts of resistance (Anderson, 2009; S. Anderson, 2016; Simpson, 2016; Smith, 1999). Stories are fertile ground for expressions of cultural revitalization and self-determination that “provide the intergenerational communication of essential ideas” (Lanigan, as cited in Stiffarm, 1998, p. 103) and allow listeners to expand their thinking processes. Blaeser and Vizenor (1999) explain that stories are linked interrelations:

Spatial, temporal and spiritual realities of native people reflect a fluidity that disallows complete segregation between experiences of life and death, physical and spiritual, past and present, and human and nonhuman. Thus, they are reflected in cycles that involved return, reconnection and relationship. (as cited in Murray & Rice, 1999, p. 557)

To expand on the stories of MMIWG by focusing on the lives they lived expresses pride and confidence. Lanigan highlights the importance of sharing life stories because:

these people are members of families. It is their stories that need to be told to children so that they can be look to their past with pride and face the future with courage making new stories for the next generation. (as cited in Stiffarm, 1998, p. 111)

Lanigan (in Stiffarm, 1998) emphasizes the power of stories and how these stories impact the perceptions and understandings of the storytellers’ family members and Indigenous peoples. Similarly, Keeshig-Tobias explains that “stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships, and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks” (as cited in Archibald, 1997, p. 8). Freeing our minds from the conventional ways that Indigenous women are portrayed in literature creates pathways to learning about Indigenous women from their stories, truths, and identity representation.

Sharing stories is a traditional practice that enables Indigenous peoples to share experiences, teachings, and wisdom passed down from generation to generation. In relation to

this study, sharing the life stories about MMIWG encourages the perspective of these women as *more than* murdered and missing by focusing on the positive lives these women lived. In short, storytelling is a way of learning. Next, I explore storytelling as pedagogy, Indigenous women as knowledge keepers, and grandmothers as medicine lines and essentially, learning how stories influence Indigenous women and how this influences my study.

Storytelling as pedagogy. Storytelling creates spaces of learning that can disrupt conventional forms of learning and decolonize existing scholarship (Sameshima, 2008, p. 53). Storytelling is the foundation of Indigenous pedagogy (Anderson, 2009; Desmoulins, 2009; Lanigan, 1998; Battiste, 2002; Bishop, 1996; Kovach, 2009; Kovach & Willet, 2014; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Iseke & Desmoulins, 2013; Wilson, 2009). It “honour[s] the ways of my people in the manner they were meant to be learned” (Schneider, as cited in Moore, 2017, p. 34) and allows multiple voices and truths to exist. The practice of storytelling encourages freeing the mind from conventional ways of thinking (colonial linear education) encouraging indigenous education (circular learning) and considers authentic ways to incorporate people’s truths into the educational system that is currently dominated by Eurocentric thought and worldview.

Stories allow spaces where many voices can participate, creating an enticing learning opportunity, because everyone is story/ies. Gosse (2008) explains storytelling as a “very powerful way that we can learn from each other and exchange and build knowledge” (p. 67). Indeed, using storytelling as research creates “truth seeking” knowledge (Coryn, 2006, p. 124) and enhances our ability to relate to one another (Kovach, 2009). Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain stories as a reflective process: “as we engaged in reflective research process, our stories are often restored and changed as we, as teachers and/or researchers, ‘give

back' to each other ways of seeing our stories" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). In telling stories in a reciprocal manner, we restore both ourselves and the story and we heal together.

In sum, stories weave the past into the present, bringing us into metaphorical classrooms. Storytelling literature analyzes colonialism and enacts resistance. Holistically viewing and learning about the women among MMIWG as more than their deaths gives glimpses of pride for the future generation to build upon the knowledge. Next, I review literature on Indigenous women as knowledge keepers and the relationship between women and traditional knowledge.

Indigenous women are knowledge keepers. The expressions of storytelling are diverse within Indigenous women's scholarship and writing. Storytelling can be expressed through poetry, narratives, and subjective writing since it is based on their experiences, ways of being, living, doing, and knowing (Absolon & Willett, 2004). According to Smith (1999), it is common for Indigenous narratives to be diversely expressed, through individual experiences and understandings of the colonial past that are rooted in our humour, poetry, music, storytelling, and other means of expression for transmitting oral history.

Campbell (1973) wrote an autobiographical account of her life-long journey of being a 'half-breed', due to her Metis status, that speaks out to cultural impositions and ideological constructs reinforced by colonialism. Campbell describes medicine as 'truths' in the sharing relationships between grandmothers and children claiming that children are important aspects of reclaiming our nationhood. Nationhood refers to our stories, teachings, language, medicines, and culture (Campbell, 1973). Children receive stories, and the stories are the medicines to reclaim our nationhood. These medicines are shared from our grandmothers. Campbell referred to her Cheechum (grandmother) as the authority figure and that no decision was made without her

consideration, especially when overcoming challenges of horrible realities, because grandmother's wisdom is the medicine.

Similarly, Anishinabe author Baker (1994) explains the medicine line of grandmothers is knowledge that needs to be written into story. The story is transmitted into "medicine lines" for future generations to read and learn (p. 111). Baker identifies these medicine lines as written stories and as an 'attempt to fossilize the stories' (p. 115). So, in this way, writing our truths in story creates medicine lines for future generations. In the current study, my Nokomis wrote medicine lines about Jane for future generations to learn and honour. Writing the medicine lines becomes not only an act of resistance, but also the activation of healing and education for future generations in the stories of their ancestors and fore-grandmothers.

Many Indigenous women writers (Acoose, 1992; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973; Allen-Gunn, 1990; Maracle, 1990) turn to their grandmothers for guidance and knowledge to build their perseverance, and to write their stories – their truths embedded within the wisdom of our grandmothers. Next, I review literature on grandmothers as medicine lines to inform my study and to learn if my grandmother's stories are the medicine lines to detach, heal, and empower from the discourse of MMIWG within my family.

Grandmothers are medicine lines. The limited literature on Indigenous grandmothers as knowledge keepers is a common theme, as is the scarcity of Indigenous female scholars who write stories on Indigenous women (Acoose, 1992; Allen-Gunn, 1990; Armstrong, 1996; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Maracle, 1990; Simpson, 2011). Judy Iseke-Barnes (2009), a Metis scholar, shares that Métis women have been taught the importance of honouring and respecting their Metis Maternal Elders and ancestors as the "keepers" of culture, knowledge, teachings, and history (p. 25). Maternal Elders and grandmothers are the "foundation of

communities” (Barnes, 2009, p. 26). The importance of our foremothers and grandmothers as knowledge keepers is also shared by Leanne Simpson (2011), where she expresses that it is our responsibility as Indigenous women to understand “how gendered and intergenerational relations worked in the societies of our ancestors; how our foremothers and grandmothers defined and then lived their identities, roles, and authorities, and how much of this was lost” (p. 4). One common theme within the literature written by Indigenous women is the importance of learning from their grandmothers as the core of learning their identity and role women (Acoose, 1992; Armstrong, 1992; Iseke Barnes, 2009; Campbell, 1973; Thomas, 2008). I suggest that it is the responsibility of Indigenous women to learn from their grandmothers to understand their history, culture, and identity. Moreover, I employ this learning process within this project.

Drawing on our grandmother’s knowledge is the key foundation for Indigenous women to begin their journey of learning and writing. Robina Thomas (2008) states, “for guidance and direction, I draw upon the voices of my Grandmothers. They lived, they acquired wisdom, and they were all survivors of their experiences – they had much to share” (p. 239). She adds that they are the “essential core of my being” (p. 240), as well. It all begins with the foundation of knowledge, which comes from our Elders, our grandmothers and grandfathers, and the voice of stories.

Iseke-Barnes (2009) begins her journey of learning from her Metis grandmother, Dorothy, through family narratives that unfold to expose the interconnected history of her family and community. These narratives involve the fur trade, women’s roles in the fur trade and community, as well as relationships to the land, and the challenging transitions from the fur trade era into contemporary society. Like this study, Iseke- Barnes implemented Indigenous storytelling methodology and framework at her grandmother’s home, where she recorded audio

and videotaped, until her grandmother could no longer share stories. Once the storytelling process was completed, Iseke-Barnes transcribed conversations and provided copies to her grandmother to review prior to publishing. To close, Iseke-Barnes expresses her gratitude in learning from her grandmother. She then highlights, like in this study, how stories from our grandmothers are important aspects of knowledge that need to be acknowledged and shared in our educational texts.

I draw three important lessons from these scholars, who: (1) draw on their grandmother's and ancestral knowledge as the foundation to learn about their identity, roles, and presentation (Acoose, 2006; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1963; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Simpson, 2011; Thomas, 2008); (2) emphasize the importance of their grandmothers as knowledge sharers and influencers of their approaches to writing (Acoose, 2006; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1973; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Thomas, 2008); and (3) posit their grandmother's stories as pedagogical medicines (Acoose, 2006; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1963; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Thomas, 2008).

Conclusion

Studies on MMIWG, internationally, nationally, and regionally are usually quantitative with a focus on the deaths of these women. The literature representing the stories of these women beyond their deaths is sparse, and most often, written by non-family members. Indigenous women are both historically and currently misrepresented within literature. The families of MMIWG need to have opportunities to reclaim representation of their loved ones through *re-righting* and *re-writing* (Smith, 1999) about their loved ones' lives. In addition, to truly dismantle the 'master narrative' (Episkenew, 2009) of MIMWG, the stories *need* to be written by their family members and loved ones. Stories that are focused on the life that these women lived can provide alternative understandings and perceptions, beyond the deaths of these

women. These stories that weave the past into the present may be available to incorporate into classrooms and work to enhance the understandings of Indigenous women and loved ones among MMIWG, as *more than murdered and missing*. In the next chapter, I will discuss my approach to MMIWG with a family member.

Chapter Three: Indigenous Research Methodologies

Overview of Methods

My study is influenced by Smith's (2012) explanation that Indigenous methodologies "are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices" (p. 143). Further, Kovach (2009) explains that Indigenous methodologies have two parts: a theoretical or conceptual frame and methods (p. 42). She describes Indigenous methodologies as "paradigmatic" to research because of the flexibility in "the choice of methods, how those methods are employed, and how the data will be analyzed and interpreted" (p. 42). Kovach (2009) utilizes the conversational methods, originating from storytelling, to collect data. In the following sections, I describe the conceptual frame of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* and relatedly, how relational accountability grounds my study. I add storytelling to my framework as part of the conceptual frame and as a method. The conceptual frame and methods are described below.

Relational Accountability

This thesis is grounded in Wilson's concept of Indigenous research methodology as 'relational accountability'. Wilson (2001) shares:

As a researcher, you are answering to all your relations while researching. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you...you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that...I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

In my research, relational accountability begins with my membership within Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation) and focuses on my relations to my family, community, Chief and Council, and most importantly, to myself within my four directions of being. For my research, I met with Jane's children (my great aunts) to seek their support and blessing to honour their mother's life through research. My Nokomis had to confirm support from her sisters to write on her mother's (Jane) life. I learned that they too wanted to discover more about their mother and I appreciated their blessing to write with their sister. As a community member, I sought support and permission from family members and from Chief King and Council as a prelude to the research. As well, I gained guidance and support for my study from Elder Shaawanobineski ikwe, and honoured her with traditional medicines and gifts. Lastly, and importantly, I honoured my supervisor Dr. Desmoulins: I illustrated my gratitude for her guidance, support, and patience, by gifting her wild meats and other harvest goods.

My commitment to 'fulfilling my obligations' to 'all my relations' felt natural to me as the researcher because it was a significant concept in the ways I was taught. I actively 'fulfilled my role in relationships' by meeting with family and community members before, during, and after data gathering. For research ethics board (REB), I ensured my Nokomis understood and signed consent forms to voluntarily participate in this study, waiver confidentiality, gave consent to publish her name with her stories, and understood she did not have to answer any questions she did not feel comfortable writing about, and at any time could withdraw from my study. I ensured Elder Marilyn understood her role of supporting my research by acting as cultural protocol for any trauma to arise, facilitate ceremony, and share guidance for interpretation's and learning about Jane stories. Elder Marilyn waived confidentiality and supported her name being published in this stud and understood she could withdraw support at any point in the study. My

intent was to engage in research that is meaningful, improves the wellbeing of my participants, and encourages collaborative research approaches. I immersed myself in ‘research relationships’ holistically, pre – and post – research (Wilson, 2001).

I learned from Wilson (2001) to utilize letter writing as a medium “to develop a deeper relationship” because “relationality requires that you know a lot more about me before you can begin to understand my work” (p. 12). This is the approach I took for this study by engaging storytelling letter exchange with my Nokomis to write about her mother, Jane Bernard, among the MMIWG. I saw this approach as a traditional way of sharing, generating, and gathering knowledge, that can be collective and honouring to all relations, while activating *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* by focusing on the life these women lived.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin

Acknowledging and remembering ‘all my relations’ (Wilson, 2001) connects to the concept *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* (the good life). Anishinaabe scholar Debassige (2010) explains *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* as a “unifying and transcendent concept that, when activated, contains the past, present, and future of Good and respectful approaches to all aspects of life” (p. 16). *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, like all teachings, is highly personal. Like Debassige (2010), I acknowledge that my personal journey towards *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is a personal life-long choice and is not pursued as an academic choice. However, I believe that *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* connects to honouring all aspects of life, including the spiritual world and physical worlds – and the four directions of my being: heart, mind, body, and spirit – that are fundamentally important as a way to conduct research on honouring Indigenous women, their families, and life stories.

The interconnections of ‘relations to the past-present-future’ in *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* (Debassige, 2010), connect to *relational accountability* (Wilson, 2001), as a way of “fulfilling

my role of relationships with the world around me” (Wilson, 2001, p. 12). This is expressed as a ‘Good Way’. Further, I understand that the way I must conduct myself to best honour my relations in the physical and spiritual worlds, is through ‘respectful approaches to all aspects of life’ by participating in ceremony and practicing and embodying *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*. Through this approach we honour ourselves and all our relations, as well as the research and the stories (knowledge). Like Wilson’s study (2001), this research is ceremony and ceremony is research.

Storytelling Letter-Writing

Remembering Jane Bernard was activated through a process of inter-generational letter writing between my Nokomis and me. In her letters, my Nokomis remembers her mother’s life stories. Storytelling letter-writing exchange as a method honours oral and written knowledge from my Nokomis. I could not rely heavily on literature that focuses on the relationship of families among MMIWG and writing their stories about their loved ones. I learned that the significance of remembrances is blueprinted in relationships, familial knowledge, family culture, traditions, and conversations, all of which are cultural components of methodology (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Berryman, et al. 2013; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2001). Absolon and Willet (2004) explain that individual experiences and identity are integral aspects of interpreting Indigenous research, especially since Indigenous storytelling offers knowledge and interpretation of one’s life in relational ways. Similarly, Kovach (2010) states that to make “relational meaning requires a reflexive narrative by the researcher” (p. 102), which is achieved by articulating their social location and cultural significance. Thus, to create meaning with stories shared by my grandmother, as the researcher I share my stories of my cultural processes of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, to create meaning and to help the research storytelling become a circular and holistic sharing process.

Storytelling is an Indigenous research method that Indigenous scholars utilize to provide a deeper understanding and create meaning. Through this, we remember experiences and creating relationality, while preserving our life knowledge, ideas, and relevance (Archibald, 2008; Archuleta, 2006; Iseke-Barnes, 2005; Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2001, 2008). The storytelling process of sharing through writing encourages Indigenous women to use language to “heal, to regenerate, and to recreate, correcting misinformation and stereotypes long advocated by outsiders” (Archuleta, 2006, p. 91). While my grandmother and I worked, reflected, and discussed together, we came into a relationship with each other. In turn, the reader develops a relationship with storytellers (my grandmother and the researcher) via the text.

Storytelling Letter-Writing Resource. The literature on storytelling letter writing as an Indigenous research method is scarce, and in my searching, I found just one example. Anthropologist Sally Cole found 119 misfiled letters written by Maggie Wilson (1879 – 1940), addressed to anthropologist Ruth Landes, using a storytelling letter-writing method. These letters provide glimpses into the lives of an Ojibwe family in the 1930’s from Manitou Rapids, near Fort Frances, Ontario. The letters became a book, *Rainy Rivers Lives: Stories Told by Maggie Wilson* (2009). These stories honour the life of Maggie.

Maggie wrote her letters with care, attention, and detail about her life experiences: “her imagination was rooted in experience. Her own life was the foundation of her practice as storyteller” (Wilson, 2009, p. xxxiv). In her recollections, Maggie discusses the Hudson Bay Trade, Indigenous women’s roles, relationships to land, human beings and spirituality. Maggie also wrote about spiritual dreams during the storytelling letter writing sessions. Wilson (2009) describes dreams as revealing “spiritual aspects of the interrelationships among human, between humans and the natural world, and between human and spirit beings” (p. xi). The storytelling

writing process between Ruth and Maggie was not well-documented. Significantly, Maggie was telling these stories in Ojibwe to her daughter, Janet, to scribe the stories into English for the letter writing addressed to Ruth. These letters capture cultural knowledge passed from mother to daughter and highlights, like this study, the intergenerational storytelling as letter writing.

The narratives from the letters provide insight into the lives of Ojibwe during the turn of the twentieth century and draws attention to the influences of the progression of imperialism and capitalism through an Ojibwe woman's perspective and voice. These letters contribute to the existing literature on the roles of Ojibwe women in northern Ontario, the Hudson Bay Company, fur trade, culture, and language. They also inform about the Residential School system and Ojibwe teachings. In sum, storytelling letter-writing provides a process of speaking truths with the freedom of creativity, while allowing the space for one's spirit to speak. Next, I explore how storytelling is a pedagogy, which encourages alternative ways of learning, and how stories are a collaborative learning process that fosters knowledge building and informs my approach to this study.

Employing Storytelling Letter-writing

I used multiple methods to collect data (Desmoulins, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001). My data collection instruments included: letter writing, verbal testimonies/statements, and physical objects for honorariums. I began the research by honouring my participant, my Nokomis, by bringing bannock, tea, homemade meals, and soups to create a space for sharing knowledge between us. We began the letter writing in mid-February of 2017. I asked one of the five informal questions, as listed in Chapter One, regarding Jane Bernard's legacy to her daughter Irene Bernard, the participant. My grandmother notified me when it was time for me to come to her home to pick up her letters.

Every time I picked up a letter I provided my grandmother with an honorarium. Additionally, I asked if my grandmother had any questions or concerns, or if any discussion was needed. We had many discussions when I arrived to pick up and drop off the letters. Our discussions were often directly related to research questions and sometimes beyond the research questions, which encouraged reflective writing for myself, as I learned my family history. As my Nokomis spoke, I listened respectfully while taking notes and expressed how grateful and valuable these stories are for our family, and community. After the letters were exchanged, I transcribed the letters and any discussion notes and added the written letter in chronological order in a notebook, for reference during reflection (Archibald, 2008). I shared the transcribed letters and notes with my Nokomis who then reviewed the documents and stories for her approval.

This practice provided opportunities for my Nokomis to edit the stories and knowledge that she shared about her mother. I reflected upon the stories that my Nokomis shared. I reflected on knowledge that I learned. The storytelling letter-writing approach allowed my Nokomis to respond when she was ready. This varied from two to ten days. The nature of storytelling letter-writing is such that it allows a participant time and space to reflect prior to responding. I believe this is an appropriately trauma informed approach (Covington, 2008) for writing on such an emotional topic. In fact, due to the nature of the research topic, trauma informed approaches are woven into this research. In that weaving, I recognized and lived with the signs and symptoms of trauma in myself, family, and community members. I know that it can be traumatic for families when reflecting on their loved ones and as such, my responses as a researcher must fully integrate Anishinaabe knowledge about trauma to resist re-traumatization. In a counselling context, trauma informed approaches do the following:

Take the trauma into account; Avoid triggering trauma reactions or retraumatizing the woman; Adjust the behavior of counselors and staff members to support the woman's coping capacity; Allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, retain, and benefits from the services. (Covington, 2008, p. 381)

In my experience as a researcher, using recording devices or documenting responses in front of a participant can potentially hinder the quality of response because the participant feels they need to answer on cue. Additionally, I had the support of an Elder who was able to act as a culturally responsive aid to manage trauma symptoms and provide care and support throughout the study. We did not need to access the Elder throughout this letter writing process, however.

I received five letters from my Nokomis (roughly a one-sided half to a full-page hand-written each) over six-weeks from mid-February to March 2017 and I completed six letters in response to my Nokomis (roughly half to a full page each, hand-written). As well, I wrote four pages of discussion notes (roughly a one-sided half to a full page hand-written each) from our discussions when I arrived to pick up my Nokomis' letters. In all, 11 letters and discussion notes comprise the data collection.

Research Question

Two research questions guide this study:

1. *What can be learned through storytelling letter-writing?*
2. *How might learning through letter-writing for remembrance inform our understanding, and honouring of MMIWG and their lives?*

Protocol

My approach was to always set my intentions through prayer, where I pay my respects to the Creator and culture that I was raised with and which guides my research approach. I offered

an honorarium to all people involved to show gratitude to the Creator and to the people for sharing, supporting, and honouring my work.

Like Debassige (2010), I believe in smudging. To me, smudging is a spiritual cleansing and blessing that is achieved by burning sage, tobacco and sweet grass to restore balance within our four directions (heart, body, mind, and spirit) of our being. I smudge my documents, notes, workspace, literature, computer, and other materials. This allows for the research, as well as myself, to strengthen and restore balance in my spirit, my understanding of the research, and to help guide my research and methods to create meaningful conversations in an honouring way. This process itself honours the “personal processes,” which Simpson (2011) identifies as collective. This process is collective and personal for me, since I am giving my gratitude, acknowledgements, and energy to all people, materials and energies involved in this research study process.

Data Analysis

To begin data coding and analysis, I first transcribed the letters and regularly reviewed them, by re-reading as an analytic process. I numbered hand-written letters and kept them in chronological order for reference purposes. Using Microsoft Word software, I created a chart for letters, and notes from discussions. I used a chart to organize my data. Table 1 provides a smaller version of what my chart looked like (e.g., *resp* for responses from Nokomis, and *dis* for discussion notes):

Data Source	Letter 1	Letter 2	Letter 3	Letter 4	Letter 5
Letters (resp)					
Dis. Notes					

Table 1 Organizational Data Chart

Data source	THEME ONE	THEME TWO	THEME THREE	THEME FOUR
Letter One (Date)				
Letter Two (Date)				
Letter Three (Date)				

Table 2 Themed Data Chart

I used open coding (Kovach, 2009) to highlight concepts and analyze the data. I collapsed these concepts/dimensions into themes (see Table 2 Themed Data Chart).

I copied raw data into a theme chart. Truthfully, I struggled with the process of extracting quotations from the letters and discussions because I did not want to fracture the stories and knowledge that my Nokomis shared about her mother, Jane. I felt it would damage the appreciation of the stories. The National Association of Friendship Centres (2011) affirms that the “understanding [of] Aboriginal communities isn’t based on statistics but relationships to people around us, the spirit world and each other” (p. 14); it was important to not fracture stories from Indigenous peoples. To show relationships, I use longer quotations which help to illuminate stories as well.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Limitations. There are three limitations to this study. First, the research considers the Indigenous worldview of an Anishinaabekwe, and as such, does not extend to all Indigenous methodologies, knowledge and worldviews. Second, this study cannot be considered

representative of all Indigenous women within Gull Bay First Nation or beyond. Third, time constraints and the scope of a Master's of Education thesis contributes to the limitations of this study. This study provides a narrow lens on a broad topic that includes many perspectives and knowledge on MMIWG.

Assumptions. This research makes three assumptions. First, I operate on the assumption that my grandmother's stories provide a more holistic approach and perspective on Jane's life and death than the news reports that focus solely on her unsolved homicide. Second, theorizing an Indigenous application of Anishinaabe *Mino-Bimadiziwin* creates a deeper basis for honouring, as well as a meaningful engagement with my research questions. Three, theorizing the distinct activation of the *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* concept, approach and application as a research methodology is critically important for researchers.

Scope. This study explores a story that expands on existing literature regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. This study occurs alongside the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada but is not part of the inquiry. This study does not explore the *death* of Jane Bernard.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the methods of the study grounded in relational accountability, storytelling letter-writing, protocol embedded with *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, and data analysis presented with two organizational charts. The findings from storytelling letter-writing are presented and explored thoroughly in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: We Are Re-claiming: Wiin Dibaajimowinan Anishinaabekwe Jane Bernard – Remembrances and Teachings on Jane Bernard

All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time.

(Richard Wagamese, 1937-2016)

Introduction

This chapter shares my experiences as a researcher, and as a family member, involved with storytelling letter-writing methods and what can be learned from them. I begin by sharing my experiences of trying to learn about Jane as a family member prior to this study and by detailing what prepared me for this study twelve years later. To contextualize the setting of these stories, in which Jane and my Nokomis lived, I provide background literature that supports the events or changes that took place for the lives of two Ojibwe women from Gull Bay First Nation. In the next few paragraphs, I share the structure of this chapter to help the reader navigate the stories presented in this study.

The first section is titled “**Niin Gaaskibag-wajiw – Inspiration**” and presents the larger context of where the inspiration to do this study came from in conversations with my Nokomis twelve years ago. The second section is titled “**Oshki Nishnaabekwe – New Woman/She is Rebirth**” where I share stories of my Nokomis’s views of honouring her mother. She also

expresses how this view informed her journey to work through her anger in order to live a good life that honours her mother's life and her own.

The third section is “**Introducing Jane Bernard**” where I present the remembrances of Jane, as shared by my Nokomis, in letters and discussions. To contextualize the setting of these stories, and enhance the stories, I provide background literature, map visuals, and photos. There are subtitles that emerged in the stories for the reader to navigate the story.

Niin Gaaskibag-wajiw – Inspiration

In the fall of 2005, my Nokomis expressed how tired she was of talking about the death of her mother. She was tired of reporters calling her, and tired of them asking questions about Jane, without any regard for the trauma being triggered for her and the family. My Nokomis was not ready, emotionally or spiritually, to speak about the death of her mother. As a family member, I wanted to learn about my Nokomis's mother. I often wondered: *Who is Jane Bernard? What were her hobbies? Was she a Red Rose tea drinker, like my Nokomis? Was she a teacher, like my Nokomis?* I remember contemplating how to bring up Jane to my Nokomis. We were sipping Red Rose Tea with sweet carnation milk and eating homemade chicken and bone dumpling soup and I finally mustered the courage to ask her about her mother.

When I asked my Nokomis about her mother, she explained that she does not like talking about her and that she misses her mother very much. At the time, I was saddened by her rejection to share stories about her mother, but knew I had to wait until she was ready to share her stories. We sat in silence and continued to sip on our tea. Instead of pushing the topic, I listened to my Nokomis's voice as she encouraged me to learn the life stories of Indigenous women among MMIWG, instead of focusing on their deaths. She encouraged me to look at our women of

MMIWG as more than their deaths and to encourage the conversations beyond murdered and missing. I wanted to help my family, and other families of MMIWG, share their story/ies.

I began expressing my vision of honouring the lives of MMIWG by participating in art shows, art walks, and installations. After many years of arts-based inspired discussions on MMIWG, I found myself in settings with Indigenous women, family members, and communities telling stories to honour MMIWG lives through ceremony. In ceremony, I began the learning processes of healing from trauma I carried from my life and trauma I carried from my foremothers and grandmothers. This healing work readied me to re-engage with my Nokomis to learn these truths for my own family. Twelve years later, in 2017, my Nokomis was ready too.

Oshki Nishnaabekwe – New Woman/She is Rebirth

This story begins with my Nokomis sharing her perspective and wisdom on the Annual February 14th Indigenous Women's March, where community and family members gather in remembrance of MMIWG. The first memorial march was held in 1992 on Valentine's Day in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, known as the Coast Salish Territories. The women's march honours the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women by front line workers, leaders, and family and community members voicing concerns, compassion, grief and love. Since 1992, the women's march phenomenon has become a national day of action to honour the lives of MMIWG across the country in solidarity.

On February 27, 2017, I arrived at my Nokomis's home with homemade soup, bannock, and berries to stock her fridge and pick up the letter she wrote. I began unpacking my bag of food, heating the soup, and preparing bannock for her. She began small talk, asking how my day was going, as she unbundled my two-month-old baby, and eagerly expressed how happy she was to hold him. I set her lunch on the table and she passed my baby to me to nurse while she ate her

soup and bannock. We continued talking about the weather between bites and slurps of soup, then she surprised me when she talked about the memorial march.

My Nokomis's asked, "Did you go to the march the other week?" I replied, "No, because it is too cold for the baby." She continued to share:

I see those women march the other week and they all look so sad. All they do is talk about their deaths, their murders, and all look so sad. Them marching and looking sad, thinking and feeling sad, and dwelling on it does not make a difference. Why do they do that to themselves? Why continue to hurt and remember their awful murder, [leading] to death, in public? It doesn't change what happened to these women, it doesn't change what happened to my mother. Why live like this? (Notes, February 27, 2017)

I asked my Nokomis, "Are you happy that we are not writing about your mother's death?" She nodded yes, while finishing her soup and replied:

It is hard to remember since it was so long ago. I am relieved that we are not talking about Residential Schools or my mother's death because it is too much emotionally to go there – to talk about it – to go back into that "garbage". Instead, I pray every day and meditate to think good things and not dwell on my past or my mother, otherwise you look so sad and be angry. I feel sorry for the man, or whoever, killed my mother. They have to live with that and God knows they did it. (Notes, February 27, 2017)

In my Nokomis's discussions, she uses the term 'garbage' to refer to the emotions of being angry and hurt due to the impacts of the Canadian Residential School and the violence against Indigenous women in the Thunder Bay District, which resulted in the murder of her mother. To understand the stories that my Nokomis shares through her remembrances of the lives she and Jane lived, one must understand the violent colonial history within the Thunder Bay District and how the lack of understanding and cultural awareness is rooted from first contact, and how this impacts contemporary society in relationship to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Animikii (Place of Thunder) – Thunder Bay, Ontario.



Figure 2 Map of Thunder Bay and Gull Bay, copyright GAAP (C) 2017

Thunder Bay District, Ontario is located in Northwestern Ontario, sitting on Lake Superior, with a metropolitan population of 121,621 as of the Canada 2017 Census. Thunder Bay District consists of the City of Thunder Bay, the townships of Shuniah, Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies, and Fort William First Nation, as well as the municipalities of Neebing and Oliver Paipoonge. European settlements were established in the late 17th Century with fur trade outposts distributed through the district and within Anishinaabe traditional lands and river bends of the McIntyre, Nipigon, Kaministiquia, and Pigeon rivers. These rivers were the land-based mechanics of travelling, established by Anishinaabe ancestors, that became a central hub for transporting trade goods through the Great Lakes (Scott, 2015). By the turn of the century, the fur trade began to decline and dissipate as a source of economic sustainability for the Europeans and Anishinaabe peoples. Once the fur trade had become a source of sustainability, the Anishinaabe peoples found themselves not fitting into the European lifestyle without interactions derived from the fur trade, and thus, were forced to find a means to sustain their livelihood within the new Eurocentric world (Eigenbrod, 2005; Innis, 1999; McGuire, 2010; Morrison, 2007).

Since Anishinaabe peoples were not educated within the westernized Eurocentric culture or knowledge base, they did not participate in any other economic contributions besides the fur trade at the time. The fur trade was not sufficient for the greed of the Europeans' needs. The Anishinaabe peoples land was/is the constant prize in their eyes. Assimilation policies were designed to push Indigenous peoples off their lands and away from their resources. One of these policies presented in the form of education—that is, the Canadian Residential School system which acted as a place to “civilizing” Indigenous children through institutionalized boarding education and industrialization (Eigenbrod, 2005; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999). In 1870, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened a Catholic orphanage on the Fort William city side of Thunder Bay, with these goals in mind. The Sisters of St. Joseph eventually changed to St. Joseph's Indian Residential School, also known as Fort William Indian Residential School (Eigenbrod, 2005; McGuire, 2010). As Milloy (1999) states:

The thought even before the deed – that is, before the residential school system took full physical shape across the country – was a violent in its intention to “kill the Indian” in the child for the sake of Christian civilization. In that way, the system was, even as a concept, abusive (p.xv).

St. Joseph's Indian Residential School (Fort William Indian Residential School). The idea presented was that if Indian children were to learn English and gain a European education, they could adapt to the changing colonial society (Milloy, 2017). Education was the mechanism of forced assimilation (McGuire, 2010) and Anishinaabe children were rounded up and taken from their families. They were gathered up by the red coated Royal Canadian Mounted Police and delivered to the Residential School (Milloy, 2017), although families tried to hide their children when the men in ‘red coats’ arrived in the communities because they had heard about

the abuse being inflicted on their children (McGuire, 2010; Milloy, 2017; Morrison, 2007). In 1966, St. Joseph's Indian Residential School closed and was demolished. Many children were physically, mentally, and sexually abused in the Residential School. Justice Murray Sinclair, head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, states that "the government stopped recording deaths of children in residential schools, we think, probably because the rates were so high" (National Post, p.1 2015).



Figure 3 St. Joseph's Indian Residential School (Copyright Algoma University, 2008)

Forty-one years later, on June 19, 2017, a mural and plaque were displayed commemorating the Indigenous children who attended St. Joseph's Indian Residential School, at the now Catholic elementary school, Pope John Paul II.

I present the colonial background history of the Thunder Bay District and the Residential School to illustrate the connection to the title of this section: *Oshiki Nishinaabekwe*. *Oshki Nishnaabekwe* – *New Woman/She is Rebirth*. This carries a wide meaning and has resonance for our women. *Oshi Nishnaabekwe* is the grounding of a resurgence and reclaiming, of Anishinaabekwe stories. To me, *Oshiki Nishinaabekwe* acts as a continuation of individual and collective evaluations of colonialism; it is where Anishinaabekwe envision their journey and

acknowledge the realities they faced, and yet flourished in spite of. As shared, the impacts felt by the dissipation of the fur trade, continued extractions of natural resources from Anishinaabe lands, the Residential School, forced removal of Anishinaabe bodies from Anishinaabe lands, and general violence are all realities that my Nokomis faced and overcame before flourishing into a liberated Anishinaabekwe. My Nokomis is a new woman in this way, and by honouring her life, she has re-birthed her story. Now she is presenting the re-birthed story of her mother by honouring her mother's life through stories. To me, both Anishinaabekwe become 'new women' through the rebirth of re-writing, re-claiming, and re-presenting their life stories.

As our first discussion session was closing, my Nokomis's brown eyes twinkled as she happily held my baby boy in her arms and I cleaned up her bowl from lunch and began cleaning dishes. I observed her singing to my baby "my nosh, my nosh, my handsome nosh," her eyes locked onto his. Quietly, I captured this moment to cherish as remembrance of the beginning of learning about Jane in a beautiful intergenerational way that was filled with love.



Figure 4 Great Nokomis and Trey (personal photo taken by T.B)

Later, I drove with my baby boy bundled in his car seat sleeping peacefully on our way to Nipigon. The silence gave me opportunity to reflect on witnessing my Nokomis's testimonies, as well as our discussions on her letter. This became a regular occurrence throughout the storytelling letter-writing exchange. For now, I will share my letter I wrote to her, and the response that followed:

Dear Nokomis, Grandma

Sounds like Jane, your mother, is full of traditional knowledge based off land she is surrounded by.

Have you tried to honour your mother's life? If so, how? How do you keep her memory?

Love Tamara (Letter, March 14, 2017)

My Nokomis wrote:

The time I lost my mother, it was very difficult. There was no one to turn to for help. I kept all the anger that I had. I made many wrong choices and mistakes. Despite all that was going on with me I have always believed in God but I wasn't practicing the way I was taught. I felt beaten within myself.

So, I returned to God and asked to help me but it didn't work now. I was angry with Him (God). Then I realized one day that I was still doing what I wasn't supposed to do. I had a choice to make now. I had to give up everything that was wrong. So, I started really praying and asking for forgiveness.

I went to see a priest that I confessed to about all the garbage I was carrying with me. That day was a complete turnaround. I felt good and light. I kept going back to church for a lot of healing.

Today I honour my mother by doing good and praying for her daily. Today I pray for whoever murdered my mother. (Letter, March 17, 2017)

My Nokomis discussed her journey of healing within the context of sharing her confessions to God and attending Church in order to ready herself to share more of her stories and remembrances of her mother in the future. My Nokomis provided in-depth discussions of her personal healing journey that extends beyond the scope of this research and she asked for

confidentiality (as shared in ethical processes in Chapter Three) on those discussions to be kept between her Nosh (grandchild) and Nokomis, to maintain the integrity of learning and sharing Jane's story. However, these suggestions and examples are presented in a later section, and they detail how honouring can be a healing journey, in relationship to storytelling. In the meantime, the focus is telling the women's story, as shared by my Nokomis, about her mother Jane.

Introducing Jane Bernard

Jane is the central focus of this study and much of the study rests on learning her story—the story of being a woman and being Anishinaabe from Lake Nipigon. Jane's story is represented here in letters and discussions between my Nokomis and I to illustrate that we are speaking with the highest regard, through activation of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, with respect, love, light, and honour of Jane Bernard.

Jane nii Anishinaabekwe. Jane is an Ojibwe Woman.

On February 14, 2017, I wrote my first letter to my Nokomis:

Dear Nokomis,

Thank you so much, Chii Miigwetch, for wanting to write together to honour your mother's life. I look forward to learning from you about Jane's life.

To begin writing, I want to ask you: On reflection, can you share what you remember about your mother, Jane?

Remember you can share whatever your heart desires. You choose what to share and what not to share. I look forward to reading your response.

*Much love and Hugs,
Tamara (Letter, February 14, 2017)*

On February 15, 2017, my Nokomis called me to share that she replied to my letter and request that I come to her home to pick up her letter. Along with her letter, I present visual regional context of Lake Nipigon and its surroundings to give the reader a geographical location for the

stories. These maps provide a visual aid on the Indigenous communities surrounding Lake Nipigon, the magnitude of Lake Nipigon, and the central location of Thunder Bay, as well as its distance from Gull Bay First Nation. Below is the letter from My Nokomis, and the appended maps (figure 5 below).

My Nokomis wrote:

My mother was born January 6, 1923 in Gull Bay, Ontario. I was only 18 years old when she was murdered. My mother was a very good, kind, and very nurturing woman. My mother was a hard worker, she kept the house going while my father was away trapping or hunting. (Letter, February 15, 2017)

Kiashke Zaagning Anishinaabek (Gull Bay). Kiashke Zaagning Anishinaabek is one of the few Indigenous communities located on the north shores of Lake Nipigon, located in Thunder Bay District in northwestern Ontario, Canada. Gull Bay was the only reserve created for the “Band of Indians for Lake Nipigon”. Gull Bay has an approximately 985 First Nation membership population, including 247 living on reserve (Statistics Canada, 2016). Gull Bay’s geographical location, on the north shore of Lake Nipigon, made economic convenience participating in the fur trade post and commercial fishing. Prior to the late 1960’s, Gull Bay was a fly-in community creating challenges to travel to attain necessities such as: medical services, food staples, and government services. It was common for the Anishinaabe women (like Jane), especially while the men were gone for long term hunts, to portage by canoe in Lake Nipigon and hitch hike on the Highway 11/17 from Beardmore, Dorion, Nipigon, or Hurkett to Thunder Bay for necessities.

Animbiigoo Zaagi’igan (Lake Nipigon). This Ojibwe name translates as “the lake that never ends” (personal communication, B.B., 2017). Situated in Northwestern Ontario, Lake Nipigon is about 100 kilometers long and 70 kilometers wide and is the largest inland lake in Ontario (Scott, 2014).

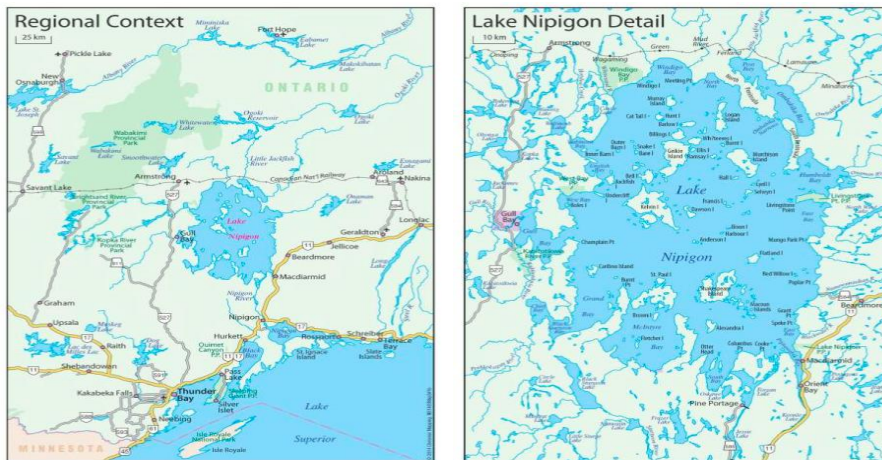


Figure 5. Geographical Region and Detail of Lake Nipigon in relationship to Gull Bay First Nation. © Chrismar Mapping Services Inc.

Continuing the letter from February 14, 2017, I asked:

On reflection, can you share what you remember about your mother, Jane? My Nokomis wrote:

My mother had many hobbies like quilt making, darning socks, embroidery and making rugs by braiding materials and sewing them in an oval shape. She made preserves like blueberries and fresh bread and buns. Once in a while there would be square dancing with fiddle and guitar music. She had skills with skinning and stretching skins with a wooden stick that my father had made for her. Their skins and furs would be sold to the Hudson Bay Company (HBC).

My mother never wasted any wild meat. She would roast the meat with potatoes, turnip, carrots, and onions...was it ever good! She would build a camp fire along the shore making tea and fried bannock. Some days we would go to the bush to partridge hunt.

My mother use to set nets in the summer time and sometimes I would go with her. Sometimes she would smoke the fish, or fry, or make fish cakes. My mother was a wonderful cook.

I watched my parents make nets and dye them to a dark colour. I watched my mother skin the bear and smoke the bear meat to make bear jerkies and at the same time she would make bear grease. My mother had a large garden with potatoes, carrots, etc. All the vegetables would be stored in the root cellar.

During the summer, we would all travel by boat to Beardmore and Nipigon and pick blueberries and sell them. As times changed we'd live on an island and my parents would commercial fish for a living.

All these things I shared with you about my mom happened in the 1950s. (Letter, February 14, 2017)

The Hudson Bay Company. The Hudson Bay Company, also known as the Nipigon House, was moved near Gull Bay First Nation shorelines as an operation for the company store until the late twentieth century (Scott, 2015). A “total of twenty-eight fur trading posts operated in Nipigon Country” since the 1800s (Scott, 2015 p. 128). It was common for Anishinaabe women to trade furs at HBC posts and stores (Carter & McCormack, 2011; Landes, 1938). In addition to living the traditional lifestyle, with the pressure of economic subsistence due to the capitalism of the fur trade, Jane illustrates the weaving of both – Anishinaabe and non-Anishinaabe – worldviews as her identity and role.

This notion is congruent with McGuire’s (2008) explanation of Anishinaabekwe as examples of “authority, power, and egalitarianism” who occupied central positions, and as a people who had “many responsibilities ranging from sacred duties to leadership to distribution of resources” (p. 217). Jane, meanwhile, maintained her traditional knowledge, identity, and connection to the land, while imperial capitalism grew upon her ancestral lands and river shorelines. These two systems activated the dual roles she carried as a woman within her family and community. *Jane was a leader.*

I brought partridge, salad, and potatoes to prepare for my Nokomis for lunch. While she marveled at my baby, I prepared our lunch and tidied her home. I prepared her plate, a cup of tea, and sat at the table with her while I nursed. She shared:

My mother used to make baby clothes out of old adult clothes. She would give them to whoever needed them in the community. We always had visitors at the house and my mom would feed them and socialize. I remember my mother always being social and happy, and visitors would come from all over around the Lake [Nipigon]. She liked having visitors and they would talk and talk and talk, I remember I would listen and watch. (Notes, February 15, 2017)

My Nokomis and I had discussions about her letter that helped me understand more in-depth, not only the significance of the stories, but how much is unknown about Jane. I asked my Nokomis: *Who are Jane's parents? Are they from Gull Bay?* She replied, "I do not know, I can't remember. My mother did not tell much about her mom or dad. I think she said something about Beardmore. I'm sorry, Nosh" (Notes, February 15, 2017). I was left wondering: who is Jane Bernard? What is her familial lineage? I felt I needed to build capacity in my Nokomis's stories to provide the opportunity for not only myself to learn about Jane, but also for my Nokomis.

To avoid generalizing about fur trade experiences of Anishinaabe women from Gull Bay, Lake Nipigon, I report sources from this geographical region. I use Northwestern Ontario Ojibwe references to women, when I see connections, to enhance the knowledge of the stories being shared. The historical documentation and representation of Anishinaabe women's roles within the Lake Nipigon region poses many challenges for researchers, like myself. Van Kirk (1980) and Iseke-Barnes (2009) explain that "one is forced to piece together snippets of information from extensive collections of traders' journals, letters, and wills which have survived" (Iseke-Barnes, 2009 p. 6) along with any existing scholarship. Throughout the endeavor to learn more about Jane and her history, I found myself in a similar position where information was scarce. McGuire (2010) explains knowledge creation in the context of the Anishinaabe worldview as the *Anishinaabe Nii Nandagikenim Daaboibaajimotaw*, meaning, "collective activity based on personal responsibility and is informed by relationships within the society" (p. 128). The scholarship on Ojibwes in Lake Nipigon is scarce, and what is published is dominated by male writers and scholars (Bishop, 1970; D. Campbell, 1905; Hedican, 1986; 2017; Johnston, 1995; Morriveau & Dewdney, 1965), while female-based scholarship is essentially non-existent, with only two scholars (McGuire, 2008, 2010; Scott, 2014).

Challenges. To overcome the challenges of limited sources of information on Anishinaabe women's roles in the Hudson Bay Trade, commercial fishing, the region of Lake Nipigon, and their influence in communities, I began to draw information from the Nipigon Museum, Nipigon Public Library, and local historians. These, I hoped, would share insights or introduce other historians to me. I began by tracing my genealogical lineage through Jane, and learned by chance, that the lineage is carried outside Gull Bay and into surrounding Indigenous communities. Following this revelation, I had to identify family members, clarify different geographical locations, with particular points in time, and relate their activities in a cultural, economic, and political context using primary and secondary sources.

I travelled to the Nipigon museum to enhance my understanding of the stories about Jane. Betty Brill, curator of the Nipigon Museum, enthusiastically offered support and guidance for my thesis. Betty and I sat in the museum discussing the lack of literature and documentation on the roles of Ojibwe women from Lake Nipigon, and we are both excited that Jane's stories will contribute to the literature on Ojibwe women from that area. On June 30, 2017, Betty introduced me, via email, to a researcher and historian (requested remain anonymous) who has researched Lake Nipigon and surrounding Indigenous communities.

After introductions, I explained my focus on Jane Bernard's life. The historian replied: "The Wawia (Wawaie) line are of the Barbotte Clan who were at Sand Point before 1850" (personal communication, A.S., 2017). She explained in further detail Jane's family lineage, and

emailed documents that she had gathered from public records. Upon further discussions and reviewing the attached document, I learned that Jane Bernard is from the Barbotte Clan (Payashekinneash) and the 1897 Census titled: Census Directorie des Missions Lac Nepigon, documented Pierre Wawiie, and wife Jane Bouchard. They had seven children: Martin, Isabeele, Moise, Ambroise, Marie-Anne, Louise, Joseph, and Therese. Martin is Jane Bernard's father.



Figure 6. Jane and Sam Bernard in Gull Bay First Nation, after a hunting trip. Source: family collection

Jane is the daughter of Martin Wawiie. I wanted to learn as much I could about Jane's family line, for myself, but also to share with my Nokomis. So, I sought to learn who Martin Wawiie was. Again, I found no literature existed on him, and the only records I found at the Nipigon Library stated that Martin Wawiie was registered with the Red Rock Indian Band in 1974. The Red Rock Indian Band is located on the lower East shoreline of Lake Nipigon, parallel to and opposite Gull Bay shores. I tried to find documentation on the Barbotte clan and did not find anything. Through family conversations about Jane's parents, I learned that Jane's mother is Emma, whose last name is unknown. What *is* known is that Jane's parents are Emma and Martin Wawiie, and her paternal grandparents are Pierre Wawiie and Jane Bouchard.

So far, I had learned that Jane was a woman who carried many gifts but I wanted to learn more about Jane and her traditional lifestyle. The more I was learning about Jane as a woman, and her gifts, the more I felt like I was learning more about my identity as a woman, who is Anishinaabe from Lake Nipigon. In my letter, dated February 17, 2017, I wrote:

Your mother sounds like a woman with many gifts. She carries so much knowledge and skills. I know you already shared some of the traditional knowledge and lifestyle your

mother followed. Are you able to recall anything your mother shared with you during trapping? Or if you can, share your insight why your mother Jane did an active traditional lifestyle? (Letter, February 17, 2017)

On February 27, 2017, she replied:

My mother did an active traditional lifestyle because it was the way to live and survive in the daily lives years ago. If one didn't choose to then you'd get hungry and have no money to buy other things one needed. There was no public assistance from Indian Northern Affairs in those days (Letter, February 27, 2017).

Colonial social and child welfare. Traditional systems of care were implemented prior to the external child welfare being introduced. The impact of colonialism (e.g., Residential School and the fur trade) created changes within Indigenous communities. These changes challenged Indigenous parents to meet basic needs, healthy parenting, education, and necessities (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005). There was little, relatively non-existing, Indigenous community-based support or resources for Indigenous families. Instead, assimilationist policies and agreements were in place (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; RCAP, 1996; Millroy, 1999). In 1951, an amendment to the *Indian Act* extended the application of social welfare to Indigenous people.

In 1956, the first permanent *Unemployment Assistance Act* made federal funding available for support of the unemployed employable person, but “eligible Indian people living on reserve were receiving benefits such as the old age pension, disability benefits, and family allowances, but not provincial or municipal social assistance” (RCAP, 1996, p. 935). In sum, the *Unemployment Assistance Act* was unfair because it provided 50% contributions to social relief for eligible registered Indian status individuals. Indigenous communities continued to operate their in-kind ration system (provided by Indian Affairs and local charities) for registered community Indians (RCAP, 1996, p. 935) to provide relief for their community members, specifically, in northern communities, like Gull Bay. In-kind rations were used as rewards and bribery to encourage northern Indigenous peoples to settle permanently in their communities

(RCAP, 1996, p. 935). In 1965, only Ontario had an agreement to cover 100% of on-reserve costs of social assistance and services. As a result, Social Assistance quickly became the primary source of Indigenous income (RCAP, 1999).

The *1965 Indian Welfare Agreement* made Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) responsible for the funding child welfare in Indigenous communities and as a result “many children were permanently removed from their homes, over 11,000 Aboriginal children, including up to one third of the child population in some First Nations communities, were adopted between 1960 and 1990” (RCAP, 1996, p. 345). The ‘scooping’ of Indigenous children from their homes occurred between the late 1950’s and 1980’s, and often referred as the “Sixties Scoop” (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; McGuire, 2008; Millroy, 1999; RCAP, 1996). The application of ‘relief’ programs for Indigenous social and child welfare has resulted in harm of a social, cultural, family-wellbeing, and traumatic nature to Indigenous peoples.

In our next meeting, I learned that my Nokomis is a pensive woman. She sat at her table and said nothing. She began to unpeel a banana and slowly broke the banana into bite size pieces. She began to eat a piece, with sips of tea in between each piece. I nursed Trey and waited for the right time to engage in conversation. The silence was naturally peaceful and comfortable. She finished her banana and she said, “You know, people are lazy.” I looked at her confused. She looked at me straight in the face with her brown twinkling eyes and repeated, “People are lazy.” She shared:

Everything my mother done was because she had to survive. Our women are not like that anymore. Our women are lazy. They go on welfare and wait for their cheque. If my mother did that, we would have starved, because we didn’t have government assistance. My mother always made food in the garden, hunted, smoked meat, went fishing, and picked berries, nuts, and fruit from the bush. I remember my mother would take me with her and I would watch her and sometimes help her. We don’t do that anymore. Kids these days do not know how it was back then. We were healthier. I don’t remember people having cancers or

other illness. We always were outside with our families, watching our parents or grandparents, learning to how to do the same as them. Our kids these days don't know anything like that. That welfare system made us lazy and our kids lazy. So lazy that we put garbage everywhere and it ruins our meat too. I would not eat bear now, all that garbage we put out, I saw diapers in the spring water stream. We used to use that water to drink from, but we can't with the garbage our lazy people put there instead of going to the dump. I wish welfare never came to my community. It ruined us and made us lazy. The good days are gone. (Notes, February 28, 2017)

As mentioned previously, social assistance has become a primary source of Indigenous income (RCAP, 1999, p. 936) creating an interference with the traditional relations of working with the land, and the water, as a substance of survival. Since social assistance became the mechanism to provide sustenance, not all Indigenous peoples made it a strong priority to hunt, gather, and harvest from the land to survive, as they once did. My Nokomis speaks to how this interference not only infringes on the health of Indigenous peoples, due to not consuming traditional foods, but also, she notes how Indigenous children are not participating in land-based relations and learning, like she did with her mother. Nokomis does not claim that Anishinaabe peoples, or Indigenous peoples, are lazy, or have the inability to provide for themselves, but she alludes to the effects of colonial violence and the interruption within her family, community, and beyond. Similarly, Shewell (2004) states that Indigenous people's

“extreme poverty and dependency is not a direct result of their inability to be wage labourers or to engage in the domination economy. Rather it is the inevitable result of both the history of Indian – European encounter in Canada and the ultimate domination of Western liberal capitalism and ideology” (Shewell, 2004, p. 5).

The assimilative policies on welfare contribute to displacing and disconnecting Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands by contributing “greatly to the form and extent of welfare dependency on reserves...thus poverty is as much as the outcome...to suppress Indians cultural and political sovereignty as it is a result of economic deprivation and high

employment... (Shewell, 2004, p.5). In sum, social assistance and child welfare are colonial practices and policies that (are) disrupt(ing)ed traditional ways of parenting, mothering, and relations with the land, health, and transmission of knowledge. I sat soaking everything in she said.

I realized how significant the land was to food security and to travel on. This knowledge and experience was vital to pass down to subsequent generations for survival. My Nokomis speaks about Anishinaabe knowledge as distinct knowledge systems with ways of knowing, diversities of being, understanding our responsibilities to the world, and with *relationships to the land*. Suddenly, my Nokomis burst out laughing, “You must think I am coo coo.” I replied, “No, I am learning how much we take for granted in this generation.” She smiled and asked me, “Are you sure you want to use me for your thesis? I am telling you crazy things and ideas.” I replied, “I like crazy,” and we both laughed.

Jane’s Trees. I had a dream about my Nokomis in the middle of the storytelling letter writing and did not anticipate the ceremony that would follow. On March 1, 2017, I wrote her a letter about my dream. This is what I shared:

Dear Grandma, My Nokomis

I absolutely love learning about your mother, my great grandmother, Jane.

I had a dream about you in Gull Bay. I do not exactly know what my dream means, maybe you can help me.

In my dream, we were in Gull Bay at Baba’s (great grandfather) house [the house that my grandma grew up in - Baba is her father]. We were sitting on the back wooden steps and you were helping me tie my shoes. I must be a child in this dream because I remember these were pink shoes and I did not have the capacity to tie my own laces. Anyways, you were pointing to the trees in the backyard and started to tell me that these two trees are important. You took my hand and we walked towards the trees. As we stood in front of the two trees - you told me that these trees are filled with love and to be careful around them. We water the trees together and suddenly the trees grew taller than you and me. You kindly reminded me to take care of the trees and to not forget about them. You

repeated: The trees are full of love, do not forget about them. The trees are full of love. The trees are full of love.

What do you think/feel about this dream? (Letter, March 1, 2017)

In her letter, she replied:

In 1958, my parents and I used to go on evening rides to the bush. My father would cut dry wood and my mom and I would gather the wood and place them in the trunk of the car.

On this particular day, we came across two spruce trees. So, it was decided that we'd bring them to our house to regrow them. They were about 1 foot tall and my father cut the earth around about 18 inches square and 12 inches deep.

We took the trees back to the house to plant together. I was expected to care and water for the trees. All living things should be taken care of. (Letter, March 3, 2017)

When I picked up the letter, my Nokomis expressed how significant those trees are to her. She shared: "My mother loved those trees. She told me that she will be sitting underneath those trees watching her grandchildren and great grandchildren grow and play" and that "those were her trees" (Notes, March 3, 2017). After learning about the significance of these trees, I sensed that there was something I was supposed to do, but I did not know what.

Honouring and learning through Ceremony. I asked for guidance from Elder Shaawanobineski ikwe because I knew we had to honour Jane in the spirit world and acknowledge her presence and spirit. I did not know exactly how to do this, and I did not want to disrespect or dishonor Jane or my Nokomis in any way. Elder Shaawanobineski ikwe shared that, "Jane will be letting you know in different ways that she is listening and knows you are honouring her" (personal communication, M.N., 2017). My Nokomis and I were in the middle of storytelling letter writing and we learned Jane was with us, listening while we honoured her life stories. I was guided to leave a *spirit plate* while my Nokomis and I ate together. Spirit plates are a traditional practice, where a ceremonial meal is laid out on a plate to honour the spirit by

providing nourishment and is recognized as a way of giving back to the spirit in ceremony (Baskin, 2016; Buhner, 1998; Neligan, 1867).

Honouring the land with Jane. Two months later and after discussions with my Nokomis and Elder, I decided to travel to Gull Bay to visit Jane's trees and honour the trees with tobacco. My Nokomis was not able to come due to her immobility. I laid the tobacco beneath the trees where Jane once shared she would sit to watch her grandchildren and great grandchildren grow and play. I brought my five-month-old son with me, and during this process of laying tobacco, I got overwhelmed with many emotions. I let Jane know I could truly feel her love radiating from these trees and that she knew her great-great grandson was here with me. I let her know that I love her and wish I had the opportunity to meet her. I shared stories of her husband Sam Bernard, my Baba (great-grandfather), who was known to be an enthusiastic storyteller, only spoke Ojibwe, and a great card player – go fish! I shared with Jane my intentions on writing about the life she lived for me to learn and honour, but also for our future generations to learn about her as more than murdered and missing. I told her that I am honoured that her spirit is guiding my research, and that I will continue this lifelong journey of honouring our women's stories. I asked her to *accept my tobacco, spirit plate, and love as gratitude giving back* to her. I shared with her that I learned that she is the moon. The moon that radiates in the dark sky, is you.

I know you are my grandmother moon that is watching over us. Miigwetch, miigwetch, miigwetch. Ahoo!



Figure 7: Jane's Trees in Gull Bay First Nation (May 21, 2017, T. Bernard)

I learned the powerful presence of Jane's spirit and how much love radiated from the trees. I realized that Jane's story is very much alive, like her spirit, and has been a powerful journey of learning from Jane and my Nokomis. Neither I, nor my Nokomis, anticipated this magnitude of emotions, connections, and energy through storytelling letter-writing. I have come to learn the *intergenerational connection to my ancestral Land* has a strong "spiritual ecology" lineage that started with my great grandmother, when she planted the trees with her daughter. Now her daughter, my Nokomis, holds those trees dear to her, and there are interconnections that her great-granddaughter and great-great-grandson established in this study, while honouring Jane's life through the trees. I have never felt more connected to my ancestral lands; it is unexplainable the amount of love and light I carry for those trees.

My heart was full of emotions and excitement to learn that Jane is with us on this storytelling letter-writing journey. On March 8, 2017, I wrote:

Dear Nokomis,

Very interesting and special to learn how these trees you planted with your dad and mother. I truly believe that Jane is here listening to us talk about her. She is guiding us.

Thank you so much for sharing.

On reflection, what did Jane teach you about being an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe woman) in Lake Nipigon region?

Love Tamara

On March 10, 2017, my Nokomis wrote:

The things my mother did I was being taught by watching her. That's the way it was taught many years ago. I was taught to pray, work, schooling, play, and sharing with community and responsibility with all respect. It is like she taught me in all four directions. I did not know that, at the time. (Letter, March 10, 2017)

On March 14, 2017, I went to my Nokomis's to bring stew and bannock. As soon as I came into the door, she was ready to discuss, not a moment wasted. I do not think I even got my baby undressed before she began sharing. She began speaking to her March 10th letter and shared:

I remember watching my mother trap, skin, stretch skins, dying fabrics, setting up camp, and cooking. We would travel together to check traps and she would show me how to set the traps up and when a rabbit or something is caught, she then would show me how to clean the animal. My mother was always busy, she would collect rain water and use it to wash our floors, and do laundry, or water the garden. If we didn't use rain water, we were carrying buckets of water from the river and lake. She taught me to care for the land, be efficient, have fun, and be kind.

It feels good to talk about my mom and the goodness that she did in our community, our family, and with my dad. I remember her being so strong, and traditional, and knew the land like the back of her hand. She knew Gull Bay, and Lake Nipigon, and the land all around, like the back of her hand. That's why she was good at hunting, trapping small game, and fishing, and setting up camps when we travelled for food and trade. She knew how to take care of herself, and her family. I miss those days with my mom. Those were the good days, when we were healthy, and not lazy, and worked with the land to live (Notes, March 14, 2017).

My Nokomis witnessed and experience the intimate relationships with the land and her mother. To me, my Nokomis was gifted invaluable experiences and traditional knowledge, through observation or assisting, by her mother. Jane was an active woman, teaching her daughter traditional ways, participating in the economic development of the fur trade and commercial fishing, while maintaining and preserving her cultural identity, language, and roles as a mother, educator, leader, and traditional knowledge keeper.

Storytelling letter-writing granted me the experience of learning Jane's life, and my Nokomis's life experiences with her mother. These stories written and discussed by my Nokomis are medicine lines. These medicine lines informed my Anishinaabe kwe identity, relations to the land, ceremony, and family history. In the next chapter, I will discuss my interpretations by presenting an Anishinaabe pedagogy, along with discussions on the medicine lines that my Nokomis shared on Jane Bernard.

Chapter Five: We are Re-presenting: Re-generating Resurgence

The letter-writing approach of this study provided data, presented in stories, that illustrate the wealth of knowledge my Nokomis and my great grandmother shared by living and learning together on the land of Gull Bay First Nation. Employing this idea of true learning through the four directions of being, I develop a model of Anishinaabe pedagogy to honour story holistically and illustrate how these themes build a powerful, balanced, and cohesive representation of *Mino-Bimadiziiwin* for remembrance and to honour lives. The model I developed uses the medicine wheel and illustrates my Nokomis' stories. Elder Shaawanobineski ikwe shared how the medicine wheel is a storytelling tool that is used to bring awareness and elucidate Indigenous knowledge and issues from the perspective of Indigenous organizations, agencies, and traditional educators (personal communication, M.N., 2017). I use the medicine wheel as an Anishinaabe pedagogical model to present and organize the themes for discussion. In the next few paragraphs, I share the structure of this chapter.

I begin by sharing the presentation of interpretations in the main section, titled "Manidoo Waabiwin: Seeing in a Spirit Way: Revealed Knowledge" and will discuss my unexpected experiences in storytelling letter writing, learning heart knowledge, and creating the Anishinaabe pedagogy. These interpretations bring forward the four themes that are introduced as subtitled sections.

In each subtitled section, I present my interpretations and discuss them at the end of an interpretation section. The first theme section is titled "Anishinaabe Knowledge Keepers" and will discuss how the written stories and discussions emphasize the importance of the traditional knowledge that Jane shared, and intergenerational knowledge as learning engagements. These stories also describe the intimate relationships Jane had with the land and water of Lake Nipigon.

Overall, the stories highlight the external and internal knowledge and relationships in the physical and spiritual worlds that both my Nokomis and Jane shared.

The second theme is “Anishinaabe kwe as First Educators” where I discuss how the written stories and discussions emphasize the importance of the transmission of traditional knowledge as intergenerational land-based learning. This models the ‘equal partnership’ between Anishinaabe and land as a form of well-being and survival security. These stories describe the importance of spending quality time with children to teach important lessons. The stories teach the importance of relations to the land, how to be kind, to not waste anything, and most importantly, the techniques needed to hunt and gather.

The third theme, “Anishinaabe kwe Leadership,” explores how stories and discussions emphasize how Anishinaabe woman undertook dual roles in their communities. Jane actively participated in the Hudson Bay Company fur trade and commercial fishing while preserving and maintaining her identity, culture, and traditional knowledge by passing down the knowledge to her daughter, my Nokomis. These stories describe the undertaking that Jane took as a mother, fur trader, hunter, and teacher for her family and community.

The fourth and final theme I present is “Anishinaabe Mothering,” which discusses how the written stories and discussions emphasize how Jane engaged in her role as a mother, and externally cared for community members (for example, making baby clothes and being a hunter). She mothered her children, community members, and the land. She took care of the land and taught her daughter the importance of taking care of land. Following my interpretations of the themes, I discuss the medicine wheel as an honouring storytelling pedagogy –honouring as learning—and the challenges of honouring life stories in education.

Interpretations

Manidoo Waabiwin: Seeing in a Spirit Way: Revealed Knowledge.

My Nokomis focused on her letters on stories of Jane's life. She did not write about her perseverance, she shared these testimonies with me orally in a space where she felt safe to share. The testimonies of her own life served to reclaim her story by speaking her truth through the power of storytelling. This was a surprise for me. I did not prepare for additional personal stories from my grandmother about her life and the challenges she overcame. Once she finished her testimonies, there was a sigh of relief, a weight lifted. She knew she had the power to share or not to share; she had the power to write or not to write; she had the power to re-present or not re-present – this is an example of creating spaces of empowerment that are trauma-informed which allow the speaker to reclaim and to heal herself (Gallagher, 2016; Rodrigues, 2015).

During the letter writing exchange, there were a few unexpected occurrences that enhanced the space of learning and knowledge shared between my Nokomis and I. When I brought her food, I did not anticipate that we would always eat this meal together and share what was going on in our lives, or, that we would talk about the letter she had written. My Nokomis wanted to give testimony to her letter prior to me reading it. I did not anticipate these testimonies to her letters; however, this allowed me to witness her oral storytelling and I took notes to enhance my understanding of her letters and stories about Jane.

Learning about Jane and my Nokomis within the aforementioned themes, I realized I was learning about my own identity, role, the land, and culture as an Anishinaabe kwe through the life stories of remembrances of Jane. I have been taught that, for Anishinaabe peoples, everything is interconnected. I learned that when Anishinaabe people share story it activates the resurgence of knowledge from the heart and, like our bodies, the heart is connected to

everything. Anishinaabe knowledge is like the heart, it is connected to everything. Simpson (2014) explains this process as a “deeper philosophical level, that heart knowledge represents our emotional intelligence, and intelligence that traditionally was balanced with physical, intellectual, and spiritual intelligence to create a fully embodied way of being in the world” (p. 108). The knowledge presented in this study is shared through stories that are connected to my Nokomis’s being. As Simpson (2014) explained, ‘heart knowledge’ represents a balanced intelligence within the four directions of our being – heart, body, mind, and spirit. The life stories and remembrances of Jane Bernard represent a balanced intelligence within the four directions of her being – heart, body, mind, and spirit. I am learning the four directions of Jane, while they influence my intelligence balance in my four directions.

Learning heart knowledge. I have been taught that this type of learning is the activation of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*. Traditionally *Mino-Bimaadiziwin* is deeply linked to the idea of the spirit and human being learning together in unison. This type of learning is key to teaching us how to live well in a world while resisting what is not good for us and urging us to fix what is not good (Rheault, 1999). We are fixing the representations of MMIWG through stories, shared and written by family members of MMIWG. Anishinaabe women’s writing is an act of cultural knowledge continuity, an act of resistance, and an act of reclamation. Like LaRocque (2010) notes, writing our stories is about “telling,” and we are “telling” the stories of our loved one among MMIWG and the lives they lived because they are more than murdered and missing.

In presenting this model, I begin by describing the four directions, with a woman as the core (representing Jane) of the model and with aspects of Jane's story being highlighted and identified as Anishinaabe *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*. In this model, subthemes overlap and represent more than one quadrant of the medicine wheel. Although the subthemes overlap, balance is maintained to encourage the circular storytelling elements and honouring Jane's story that illustrates the four directions of her being. This model honours a holistic approach that tells one Anishinaabe woman's story by focusing on the four directions of her being.

My intention for this model is to offer a contribution to the vision, creative processes, and

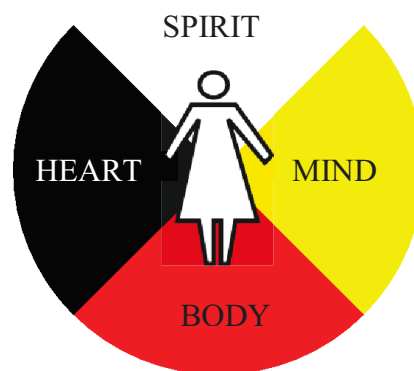


Figure 8 Woman with Four Directions of Being, © T. Bernard

learning to honour the life stories of one among many MMIWG through storytelling letter writing. At the core of this model is Jane, to ensure her story is balanced within the four directions of her being – spirit, mind, body, and heart, which in turn, represent Anishinaabe *Mino- Bimaadiziwin*. I present the four directions based on teachings I have received as Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin and combined common threads from the life stories on Jane, that my Nokomis and I interpreted. These align with the four directions to honour the story holistically

(see Figure 9 below) and the common threads from Jane's life stories build off of one another and generate the themes that are presented in coming subtitles.

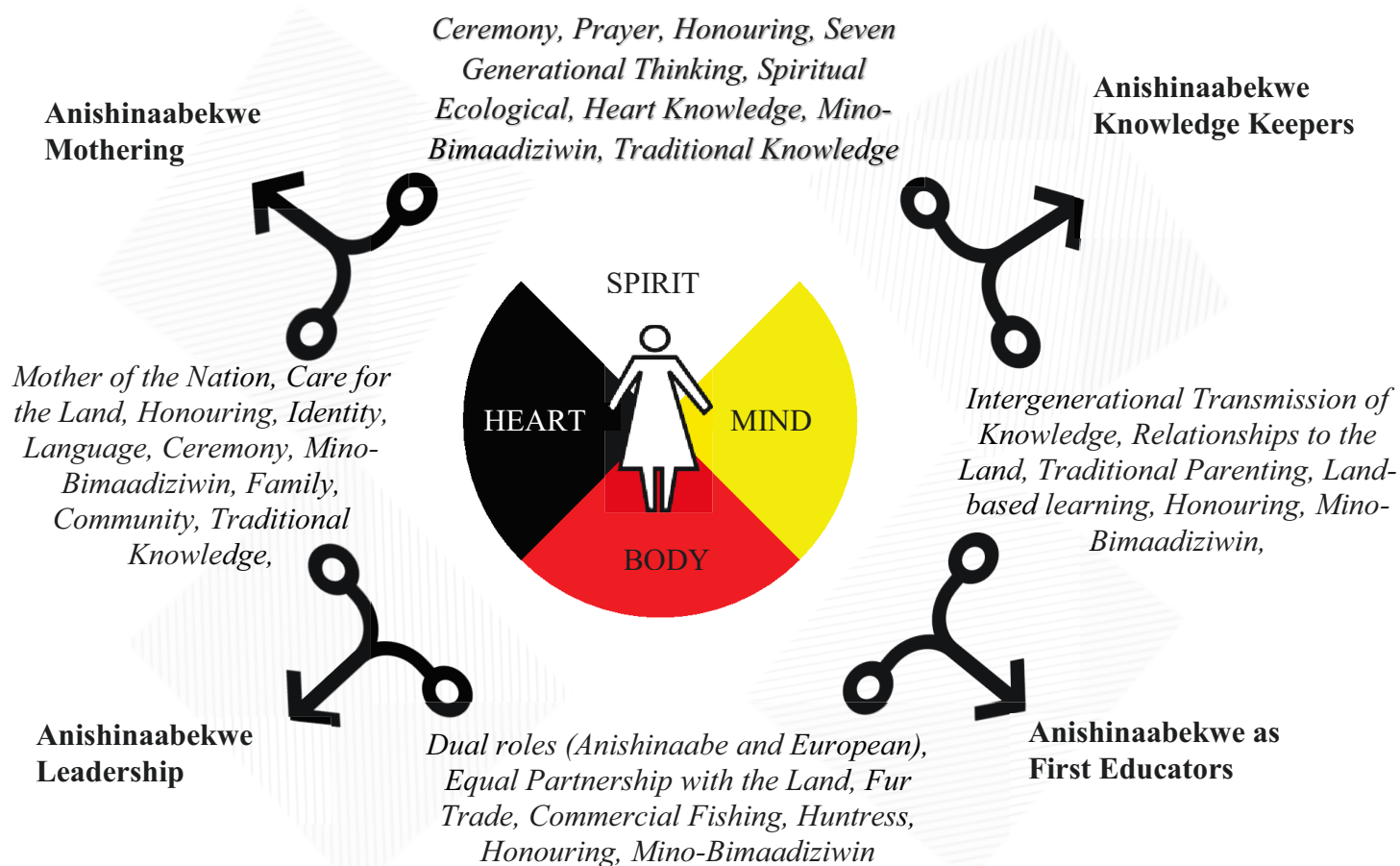


Figure 9 Woman with Four Directions of Being, common threads and themes © T. Bernard 2018

I added aspects for each direction, building on other scholarship (Calliou, 1995; Daprice, 2006; Peltier, 2016), to utilize the medicine wheel typology for the stories. The following aspects I have added and am presenting are: (1) Anishinaabekwe Leadership; (2) Anishinaabekwe Knowledge Keepers; (3) Anishinaabekwe First Educators; and (4) Anishinaabe Mothering.

Anishinaabekwe leadership. My Nokomis's stories capture the stresses of postcolonial Anishinaabe woman's dual identities of being Anishinaabe while trying to capitalize on the growing economy in Lake Nipigon, in Northern Ontario. Even though Jane was faced with new burdens and opportunities of commercial fishing, and HBC fur trade, Jane still worked on

sewing, crochet, and crafts. Anishinaabe women working on quilts, beading, clothes, or embroidery was not unusual: it influenced their roles and status within their community (Carter & McCormack, 2011; Landes, 1938). Landes (1938) notes that Ojibwe women of Rainy River in the 1930s had significant roles in the fur trade as hunters, warriors, and healers. Carter and McCormack (2011) emphasize the roles of Anishinaabe women as caregivers of the household, food, and clothing, and as those who created items for trade even “though they were rarely if ever paid directly for their labour” (p. 18). Although the significance of Indigenous women’s economic roles has been overlooked, it is evident that Anishinaabe women were and are leaders.

McGuire (2008) states: “It’s good to share how us women lived before and how strong they are” and stresses that literature on Anishinaabe kwe

[does] not capture the spirit and beauty of the stories from this area [Lake Nipigon] of

Ontario and [the literature] missed the tenacity and strength of women’s stories. Western traditions misread the social standing of women in the societies they studied. (p. 217)

The misrepresentation of Anishinaabe women is problematic. For example, D. Campbell (1905) wrote his observations about the Ojibwe gender relations from Lake Nipigon in 1804. Campbell highlights the heavy labour that Indigenous women did while preparing furs, food, fishing, fires and camp. He states that Indigenous women were “mere slaves to their husbands” and that the woman’s position was low within the ‘Indian society’ (p. 257). Similarly, Bishop (1976) explains that hare snaring, small game, and fishing were the women’s work (p. 47), and they cared for the families, and not contribute to the communities economically. The women in the Anishinaabe communities surrounding Lake Nipigon were misrepresented and misinterpreted in the historical record, which is a common theme within that literature (Bishop, 1970; D. Campbell, 1905; Hedican, 1986, 2012; Johnston, 1995; Morriveau & Dewdney, 1965; Rogers, 1963). These

misrepresentations are a detriment to Ojibwe women's identity and leadership within their families and communities. Sharing life stories of Indigenous women helps to recognize them as leaders who contribute to their communities.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, many Indigenous women scholars express concerns that the existing literature on Indigenous women in communities is biased (Anderson, 2009; Campbell, 1973; Iseke- Barnes, 2009; LaRocque, 2010; McGuire, 2008; Simpson, 2016). In sum, I identified common threads that build the theme, *Anishinaabekwe as leaders* within their parental role, and as mothers of the nation, including handling fur trade, fishing, hunting, maintaining relationships with the land, and their duties as knowledge keepers who educate the children. Next, I discuss Anishinaabe Knowledge Keepers in relationships with the land, water, physical and spirit worlds.

Anishinaabekwe Knowledge Keepers. I learned about how the land is an intimate relationship for my Nokomis and Jane because it grounded their identities, their survival, traditional knowledge, and the viewpoints of land as equal partners. The relationship between Indigenous peoples and land as intimate is expressed by Indigenous scholars (Cajete, 1999, 2000; Momaday, 1997; Simpson, 2008; 2014). Cajete (1999) refers to this experience as "spiritual ecology," a connection with the land that is sacred (p. 3). My Nokomis speaks to the need to bring back our traditional ways by creating the communities and leaders we want, creating the education that meets the needs of our people, and by not relying on the colonial welfare system. The history of systemic racism and discrimination (e.g., the Residential Schools, 60's Scoop, and the modern welfare system) and ongoing systemic racism (e.g., colonial English education and violence against Indigenous women) has not allowed Anishinaabe peoples to traditionally parent to meet the needs of their children. My Nokomis points to a need to evaluate

not only the disconnection from land, but also our parenting styles and education systems.

Within the past decade there has been growing scholarship on land as pedagogy (Cajete, 1999, 2000; Momaday, 1997; Simpson, 2008; 2014; Wildcat, 2014; Zinga, 2011), which recognizes the importance of traditional ways of learning with the land as Indigenous education.

My Nokomis also speaks of knowledge acquisition through seven generations thinking—extending beyond the past or present and well into the future (Stryes, 2017). La Duke (1999) explains this as “walking upon the faces of those yet to come” (p. 194). This approach instills deep thought and spiritual processes of teaching the importance of how we choose our relationships within the world and their implications for future generations. Traditional oral teachings provided grounding in seven generational knowledges explaining “our past is our present, our present is our tomorrow, and our tomorrow are the seven generations past and present” (Stryes, 2017, p. 148). Indigenous scholars assert that learning is a relational process of “coming to know” through cultural, social, sacred experiences, and language transmission with the land. (Battiste, 2009; Debassige, 2010; Kovach, 2012; Simpson, 2011; Wilson, 2011). To attain seven generational knowledge is to be connected spiritually and physically to the land. Monture and McGuire (2009) state that “our stories are woven into the land and shape the way we raise our daughters” (p. 1).

In sum, based on Jane’s stories, Anishinaabekwe are knowledge keepers within their relationships with the land (also known as Spiritual Ecology) to honour the land, participating in ceremonies and living *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, practicing the intergenerational transmission of Traditional Knowledge and activating the learning on Seven Generational thinking, and encouraging Traditional parenting through the transmission of Heart Knowledge. Next, I discuss

Anishnaabekwe as First Educators in relation to Anishinaabe traditional education, activated in the act of doing and in relation to the land.

Anishinaabekwe as First Educators. I learned that my Nokomis emphasizes learning as living, listening, observing, and doing as a traditional Anishinaabe pedagogy. Many Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2009; Cajete, 1999, 2000; Debassige, 2010; Friesen & Lyons, 2002; Kovach, 2012; Simpson, 2011; Stonechild, 2006) articulate learning through doing as participating in ceremony, language, teachings, storytelling, and land-based pedagogies. Jane was my Nokomis' first educator and the land was her pedagogy. As discussed previously, my Nokomis speaks of the land as a sacred place where her stories about her mother are woven as remembrances into the landscape. Kawagley (2006) explains that the "land urges us to come around to an understanding of ourselves" (p. 7). As I mentioned previously, relationships to the land for Anishnaabekwe knowledge keepers is rooted in spiritual ecology, ceremony, and honouring the land.

My Nokomis' and Jane's identity are both grounded in the lived experiences of their relationships to the land. These identities are the foundation of learning between my Nokomis and her mother while hunting, trapping, fishing, harvesting, and working with the land. Jane was the first educator for my Nokomis. The Traditional Anishinaabe pedagogy, as illustrated by the remembrances between my Nokomis and her mother presented in this study, encourages considerations of what constitutes Indigenous education and Indigenous pedagogies in contemporary education contexts. In contemporary Indigenous education, we are not activating land-based pedagogies like those my Nokomis shares of learning from her mother on the land through fishing, hunting, and harvesting. Jane was naturally teaching her daughter through a land-based pedagogy that instilled teachings and seven generations articulation as she identified

the importance of maintaining mutually respectful and caring relationship with the land. Based on Jane's stories, Anishinaabekwe as first educators carry many roles, statuses, and influences within their communities, utilize land-based learning and interactions to teach, instill intergenerational learning and transmission of traditional knowledge, and naturally are the first educators in a natural traditional parenting method where much of the knowledge is grounded on livelihood security. Next, I discuss Anishinaabekwe Mothering.

Anishinaabekwe Mothering. I learned that Jane activated the motherhood role of her nation during her lifetime. For Jane, being a mother of the nation is demonstrated through the roles and practices that she engaged in: being a caregiver, nurturing and raising her family, practicing traditional culture and language, practicing land-based foods and skills, providing clothing for babies of the community, and participating in oral storytelling to her daughter as personal and sacred teaching interactions. Jane responded to family and community needs and actively participated in providing subsistence to her family and community. Jane exercised her mothering of her immediate family and in so doing, Jane participated as a mother for the nation.

Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere Lavell (2006) contrast Indigenous motherhood with patriarchal motherhood, writing that Indigenous people have “historically, and continually, mothered in a way that is ‘different’ from the dominant culture, [as it] is not only for our women, but is potentially empowering for all women” (p. 3). Indigenous women mother to care for all children, biological or not, and to do not follow the patriarchal motherhood ideas of caring for immediate family and being a good wife (Anderson, 2000). Naturally, Indigenous women practice caring for the greater good for their communities by mothering all. Like seven generation thinking (Styres, 2017), Anishinaabe women equip the next generation with knowledge through traditional mothering as first education and as parenting style to encourage

the transmission of teachings and traditional knowledge. Similarly, Jane shared her knowledge with her daughter, and in time my Nokomis shares her stories and knowledge with me to “prepare and equip the next generation to bring out an Indigenous resurgence based on Indigenous interpretations of our traditions” (Simpson, p. 26).

In her stories, my Nokomis expressed how traditional parenting styles, and social relations, were and are disrupted by colonial interactions such as Canadian Residential Schools, violence against Indigenous women, and dispossession of ancestral lands due to imperial capitalism presented in forms of commercial fishing, and the fur trade. While my Nokomis did not reflect on the industries surrounding Gull Bay, Lake Nipigon area, I am left to speculate how much they impacted the livelihood of Anishinaabe peoples in the region, beyond what was shared in this study. The historical record of logging, building dams along the Nipigon river, commercial fishing, and mining in northwestern Ontario, specifically Lake Nipigon, extends beyond the scope this research and my text space. Instead, I briefly share a glimpse of the fractures imposed on the land and Anishinaabe peoples due to the land extracting industries. In the 1900s the first log drive attempt down the Nipigon River occurred and with much success grew the interest to continue the logging pursuit, as well pursue the Nipigon River as energy production (Curry, Gehrels, Noakes, and Swainson, 1994; Wilson, Lavender, and Black, 2007). Unfortunately, forests have not been cleared prior to flooding and interbasin diversion channels caused erosion, degraded water quality, and impaired habitats for fish (Curry, et. Al., 1994; Wilson, Lavender, and Black, 2007). Infact, Curry et. al (1994) state “the brook trout population in the Nipigon River appears to be declining” (p. 123). Furthermore, there are ongoing conflicts between Anishinaabe communities and Ontario Hydro’s Hydroelectric project due to impacts of infringing on Anishinaabe lands, water, and livelihood. The logging industry in northwestern

Ontario received attention of “overexploited condition of reserve forests in Ontario manifested itself in declining log production...reserve forests declined from about 84 per cent to 28 per cent during the 1970s” (Notzke, 1994, p.93), when forest rehabilitation became a priority to ensure substance for the future. While forest rehabilitation was/is a priority due to the habitat destruction (Cumming and Beange, 1993) causing disruption in hunting and harvesting, however the decline of logging forced Anishinaabe people to relocate and seek employment elsewhere. It was not until 1980s, after Jane’s stories, where challenges between Anishinaabe people and logging industrialists climaxed due to unresolved claims that continue to this day (Notzke, 1994, p.106).

Lake Nipigon and the Nipigon River is internationally recognized having the world record Brook Trout caught by Dr. Cook in 1916 (Karas, 1997, p.23). The Nipigon lake and river was filled with plenty of fish – trout, walleye, northern pike, sturgeon, and whitefish. However, it was the brook trout (also known as speckle trout) that gained the most interest to fisheries pursuit (Karas, 1997, p. 31). The Anishinaabe peoples relied on the fish as a primary source of food security (Gallagher, 2002; Karas, 1997). However, the interest in brook trout created damage in the marine habitation of Lake Nipigon, and Nipigon river, by selectively depleting certain fish, inevitably created unbalanced ecosystem. Gallagher (2002) explains “when fish are caught in commercial fishing net, any live bi-catch (typically fish other than lake whitefish, lake trout and ciscoes) must be not be returned to the water” (Gallagher, 2002, p. 36). Essentially, if whitefish and lake trout are removed while other fish like herring and suckers are placed back into the lake alive, the populations alter and creating ripple effect of harvesting depletion for the Anishinaabe peoples.

Ontario is known to be a “historically ranked as the lead producer of minerals, in addition to oil and gas, in Canada” (Notzke, 1994, p.200), where 189 Indigenous reserves in Ontario are 44 per cent located within Greenstone Belt, where approximately \$7 billion or more of mineral production is located (Notzke, 1994, p.201). In the 1840’s the Ontario mining industry discovered copper, silver, and other minerals in the Lake Superior, Robinson Superior region, which grew conflicting interactions between the Anishinaabe people and mining industrialists. The treaty of 1850 Robinson Superior was created (also, important to note there are conflicts on the creation and land negotiations on such treaty), primarily motivated by mining pursuits, this treaty “explicitly provided that mineral or other valuable productions on reserve lands were to be disposed of only for the exclusive benefit of the Indians” (Notzke, 1994, p.201). As previously mentioned, with the growing awareness on the value of the minerals posited within Indigenous community lands created ongoing tension between Indigenous peoples and mining interests to take over and extract from Indigenous land for capita.

Despite Jane’s experiences with the industrialization infringing on her ancestral lands, and fractured social relations due to Residential School system, she maintained her Anishinaabekwe identity, language, traditional mothering, traditional knowledge, teachings, and relationship with the land, to pass down to her daughter. My Nokomis encourages conversations on reclaiming traditional parenting style, not relying on the colonial government, and creating leaders for our communities who will implement the articulation of seven generational thinking. I believe that to begin the conversations of seven generational learning we need to start with honouring stories and storytelling.

Discussion

The medicine wheel is used to teach stories. The medicine wheel illustrates the tensions and balances between the four aspects of being. Each aspect is connected and has a relationship with a direction of our being where “all [is] considered sacred and equal” (Daprice, 2006, p. 251). Daprice (2006) suggests “that if we focus on or become stuck in the mental, emotional, physical, or the spiritual, we lack wholeness in all aspects” and it is therefore important to work through each aspect for “positive change and growth” (p. 251), for balance and wholeness. Similar, Calliou (1995) explains a storied balance is “honest, open interactions” that emphasize the need to bring humility into learning as a “shared nature of our journey” (p. 55). I write Jane’s story in the four directions of her being to bring positive change, growth, and wholeness to the stories of MMIWG.

Stories shared from the medicine wheel encourage an ‘emotional realm’ of learning, “where ‘racism’ harm is felt intuitively or as a fully kinesthetic experience” (Calliou, 1995, p. 56) and facts are not denied. Instead, I hope to create a learning space for learners to understand Indigenous women as more than murdered and missing. Further, I want to create a space of learning within the cognitive realm that begins deconstructing racist and sexist ideologies (Chartrand, 2012; Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Hodson, 2006), to see Jane as Anishinaabe kwe and learn from her. Like Hodson (2006) and Calliou (1995), her stories invite learners to become enlightened in our hearts, classrooms, communities, and societies, encouraging healing in a space where compassion, courage, strength, and respect are given towards Indigenous women among MMIWG. Through this study, I have learned that honouring is a learning process at the individual level, for family members, and all learners in Indigenous education.

Honouring is learning. I did not anticipate that my Nokomis and I would learn from Jane, and our Elder, through ceremony. In the study ceremony occurred by honouring Jane with

a spirit plate, and honouring her trees and spirit with tobacco in Gull Bay. This view identifies ceremony as pedagogy in Indigenous education. Tradition teaches us and is congruent with Indigenous education (Battiste, 2002; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Graveline, 2002; Lambe, 2003). This pedagogy is also recognized as a restorative healing process (Goodson & Gill, 2014; Green, 1994; Van Manen, 2016). This pedagogy recognizes that to honour one's life is a learning process without a necessary end.

Challenges with honouring stories as education. Understanding the emotional and cultural significance of the stories shared about Jane provides an opportunity to present knowledge in a way that heals. This form of “teaching Aboriginal studies in education that is respectful and decolonizing while advancing Aboriginal perspectives”, however, is not without its challenges. It “is a relatively new experience in most Canadian schools” (Fitznor, 2005, p. 3) and in many cases, non-Indigenous teachers do not have the knowledge of Indigenous ways of teaching through stories using the medicine wheel (Chartrand, 2012). This lack of understanding, or how to use Indigenous teaching tools, coincides with misunderstandings of Indigenous women, and peoples (Battiste, 1995; Chartrand, 2012; Iseke-Barnes, 2002; Kirkness, 1992, 1999; LaRocque, 2010; RCAP, 1996). While this form of pedagogy is still in its infancy in mainstream schools, implementation of this approach can be shared with all educators.

Chartrand (2012) explains the importance of recognizing the variations of Indigenous nations. For example Ojibwe are one group among Indigenous populations, and educators should avoid generalizing teachings as applicable to all Indigenous peoples. This practice continues to misinform learners (Chartrand, 2012). To correct this, it is imperative that educators seek to discourage pan-Indigenous perspectives, especially for MMIWG.

In sum, the medicine wheel and stories about Jane that I present are Anishinaabe knowledge, teachings, and stories. I hope these stories contribute to knowledge on MMIWG *as more than murdered and missing* and bring significance to the knowledge on Anishinaabe kwe – Ojibwe women, from Lake Nipigon. Storytelling is multifaceted and can function as honouring, as education, as healing, and as empowerment.

Chapter 6: Concluding Words

The stories my Nokomis shared in this project depict the life of an Anishinaabek kwe from the 1950 – 1960s. These stories reflect how Anishinaabe kwe used to live off the land trapping, hunting, gathering, and preserving harvests to maintain food security year-round. They did this while being mindful of resources by using everything to ensure no waste, and showing endurance to ensure access to drinkable water by carrying buckets every day for cleaning, cooking, and drinking. It is difficult to realize the remnants of our Ojibwe culture and language that are left due to adapting to changes within our environments and capitalism and assimilation. Regardless, the knowledge and experiences I was given are priceless.

As A.C. Wilson (1998) shares,

the intimate hours I spend with my grandmother listening to her stories are reflections of more than a simple educational process. The stories handed down from grandmother to granddaughter are rooted in a deep sense of kinship responsibility, a responsibility that relays a culture, an identity, and a sense of belonging essential to my life. (p. 27)

I received traditional knowledge by my Nokomis' stories of Jane. My responsibility is to pass this knowledge to the next generation to honour, learn, and reclaim her identity.

Contributions to the Literature

The findings from this study contribute to the literature on MMIWG. The study expands on literature that honours MMIWG's life stories by inviting an Elder to join us and collaborating with a family member of a MMIWG from Northwestern Ontario, as opposed to focusing on British Columbia. This study adds to Indigenous storytelling pedagogies and methodologies (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 1995; Graveline, 1998; Kovah, 2009; Peltier, 2016). It creates a medicine wheel storytelling pedagogy with woman as core of stories and knowledge. The study

also expands on literature about the role of Anishinaabekwe in the Lake Nipigon region, especially in the fur trade and their contributions to their communities. This study introduces a storied approach of honouring through four directions – heart, body, mind, and spirit.

The first research question was: *What can be learned through storytelling letter-writing?* As I have shown, storytelling letter-writing has taught me the power of writing stories. Writing stories awakens the spirit to empower, heal, and testify their truths. For my Nokomis, storytelling letter-writing gave her the freedom of expression and reflection on a loved one. When I picked up her letters, my Nokomis provided testimonies to speak her truths. The storytelling letter-writing provided the opportunity for a family member to write life stories on one among MMIWG. More family members need to be provided Indigenous-informed (Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2010; Wilson 2011), desired-based research (Tuck, 1999) opportunities, and to be honoured with their one loved, like in this study.

To provide family members of MMIWG opportunities to write life stories begins with honouring. Honouring is not simply about implementing desired-based storytelling research (Tuck, 1999). Honouring is sacred and deeply connected to an individual's journey of *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*. One must honour one's own life, activating *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, by living the four directions of being (heart, body, mind, and spirit), to honour another's life. For me, honouring is a learning process as a family member, researcher, and as an educator who will honour life stories in the classroom. Honouring is the foundation of learning. The storytelling letter-writing process was a perfect vehicle to encourage this honouring of the life of Jane Bernard.

The second research question was: *How might learning through letter-writing for remembrance inform our understanding, and honouring of MMIWG and their lives?* In this

study, I learned honouring storytelling letter-writing evoked *re-writing*, *re-claiming*, and *re-presenting* Jane Bernard, my Nokomis, and myself. Thus, this study encouraged honouring at individual and collective levels. My Nokomis re-writes life stories about her mother in Gull Bay First Nation, and in Lake Nipigon. My Nokomis' writing, in turn, activates *re-claiming* Jane's story *as more than murdered and missing*. The life stories of Jane Bernard aids in understanding the lives that women among MMIWG lived, and *re-presenting* women, like Jane as empowering, intelligent, traditional knowledge keepers, leaders, and mothers of the nations.

Re-presenting Jane's story provided medicine. The shared stories on Jane Bernard activated medicines lines for me, as her great grand-daughter, to learn. I learned more about my identity as an Anishinaabekwe from Gull Bay First Nation and surrounding Lake Nipigon region. I developed an intimate relationship with the land through ceremony with Jane's trees. Most importantly, my relationship with my Nokomis grew stronger because of our learning journey to honour Jane's life. The life stories and remembrances of Jane Bernard reveal the four directions of her being – heart, body, mind, and spirit. In this study, Jane is *re-presented* as woman in her four directions, my Nokomis is *re-presented* by writing and discussing her remembrances as woman in her four directions, and I am *re-presented* as woman in my four directions as I learned about Jane and my Nokomis life stories. *Re-claiming*, *re-writing*, and *re-presenting* is *Oshki Nishnaabekwe – New Woman/She is Rebirth*, to me, my Nokomis, Jane, and myself are new women, as a result from this study.

At the end of research, I gained a new sense of self as an Anishinaabekwe. My experiences of storytelling letter-writing awarded me pride, empowerment, and influenced my personal perceptions of Ojibwe women by learning about my Nokomis and Jane's life stories. Like other Indigenous women scholars (Acoose, 2006; Baker, 1994; Campbell, 1963; Iseke-

Barnes, 2009; Thomas, 2008), I posit my Nokomis's stories as pedagogy medicines and these stories (medicine lines) can teach and influence young Indigenous women, as they have influenced me in this study.

Recommendations

In this section, I make four recommendations to address educators, the roles of Indigenous women around Lake Nipigon, land-based pedagogies, and further qualitative studies done in collaboration with family members, Indigenous community leaders, and organizations that write about the lives of MMIWG, rather than their deaths. First, I recommend that educators make use of Indigenous stories and resources (NWAC 2010), such as Elders and community leaders, to further their knowledge about MMIWG issues and to avoid over-generalized representations of MMIWG. These life stories of MMIWG should be written by family members and loved ones. Second, due to the limitations of a Master of Education thesis, I recommend further investigating the role of Anishinaabe women around Lake Nipigon as educators, leaders, and influencers. Much work needs to be done to tell the stories of local Ojibwe women from Lake Nipigon and Northwestern Ontario. My Nokomis explained that our contemporary children and youth are no longer prioritizing working with the land as equal partners. Her remarks lead to my third recommendation, to investigate young female relationships to their community and Lake Nipigon regarding cultural continuity and connections to land and water.

Fourth, in light of the Amnesty International's (2004) report on racialized violence of Indigenous women, I believe that this phenomenon should be further investigated by researchers, in collaboration with family members, Indigenous community leaders, and organizations. The importance of focusing beyond MMIWG deaths, through qualitative inquiry, should be further investigated, in collaboration with families of MMIWG, and Elders. These recommendations

emerge from my study where I learned deeply by moving beyond what is known of Jane Bernard's death to my Nokomis sharing stories about her life.

Final Thoughts

To begin the conversations of seven generational learning for the improvement of Indigenous communities and classrooms, we need to start with honouring stories and storytelling. I strongly encourage our Anishinaabe women to learn their grandmother's stories, as this study has taught me about my identity amidst the wider contexts of being an Anishinaabe woman from Lake Nipigon, and in Northwestern Ontario. The more Indigenous women engage in learning through storytelling, the more medicine is shared, encouraging empowerment and healing at all levels – individual and collective. Only then will we truly engage in dismantling the 'master narrative' and in decolonizing education.

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