

Remembering to Remember Shéh Niyohgwaihó'dę (Our Original Instructions):

A Self-Study on Indigenous Languages Programming in Six Nations

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May 6, 2020

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Education

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### **Abstract**

This research portfolio investigates one aspect of the Indigenous language revitalization/reclamation movement, which is Indigenous communities' and peoples' reclamation over their formal education systems with hopes of preventing further loss and decline in the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous languages. More specifically, this research portfolio is a self-study that documents the longitudinal impacts of my own educational experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language education programs, specific to the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory community. This research portfolio is compartmentalized into three tasks: 1) a literature review on Indigenous language reclamation; 2) a collection of first-hand educational experiences interwoven with Tadoda:ho's story of self-transformation, which aligns with Indigenous storywork and storytelling; and, 3) reflexive recommendations that elementary, secondary schools, and/or communities could consider implementing for program improvement, modification or development. The main purpose for this project is to uncover the preservation of Indigenous languages aids with healing from the long-term impacts of colonial education, fosters Indigenous resurgence and Indigenous self-determination, and promotes spaces that supports building Indigenous cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous language reclamation, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Residential Schools, Indigenous Identity, Self-determination, Success.

### **Acknowledgments**

There are multiple individuals and organizations who helped with this research project that I want to acknowledge—both for large and small contributions. First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge Dr. Lisa Korteweg for her ongoing and incredible support and guidance throughout this research process. Her devotion and deep interest in my research topic were exceptional and very moving – nya:węhgó:wah (thank you very much) Lisa!

Second, I would like to thank both my elementary school and high school in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and my fellow community members from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. My fellow community members, your support in our education was exceptional and I will forever cherish everything I learned as I progress in life.

Thirdly, I thank and honour my committee member, Dr. Paul Berger. Thank you for offering feedback and reviewing my research portfolio throughout the research process!

**Nya:węh swagwe:goh (thank you all)!**

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## Chapter 1: Situating the Self-Study

### Introduction

There are growing concerns that Indigenous languages—languages spoken by Indigenous peoples—face an unpleasant future. As Gomashie (2019) writes, “...of the 90% of the world’s languages that will likely eventually disappear, the bulk will be Indigenous languages, since they comprise approximately 60% of the world’s languages” (p. 152). This is alarming since languages contain Indigenous peoples’ “history, traditions, memory, traditional knowledge, unique modes of thinking, meaning and expression” (United Nations, 2018, p. 1). Consequently, Indigenous communities across the globe have had to mobilize and push for a resurgence and reclamation of their languages and language education in an attempt to prevent language extinction. However, the Indigenous language reclamation movement exceeds just a focus on Western approaches to linguistic preservation. Quite the contrary, as I argue that Indigenous language reclamation education is a resurgence movement that also reclaims Indigenous Knowledge (IK) systems, representations of oral historical accounts, self-determination, cultural identity, and sovereignty or nation-to-nation governance. This resurgence movement is evident in my own self-study of my educational programming in Hodinohsyó:ni<sup>1</sup> language reclamation programming of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

This master’s self-study re-visits, reviews, and explores the longitudinal impacts of my own K-12 educational experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programming of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. I reference the term reclamation since it posits that

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<sup>1</sup>“Hodinohsyó:ni” is spelt phonetically according to the Henry Orthographic writing system developed by the late Reginald (Reg.) Henry from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. This is also a reclamation of Hodinohsyó:ni writing systems in academia. I, unfortunately, share no kinships connects with Reg Henry.

Indigenous community-based and community-controlled K-12 Indigenous language education programs are sites of reclaiming Indigenous languages, identity, self-determination, and nationhood (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Reclamation is used consistently in the esteemed research by McCarty and Nicholas (2014) who enlarge the term as, “[Indigenous] language reclamation includes *revival* of a language no longer spoken as a first language” (p. 106, emphasis in original added).

In my self-study into community-based Indigenous language education, there are three reoccurring major themes: 1) healing, 2) Indigenous resurgence and Indigenous self-determination, and 3) coming to know one’s cultural identity. In the first theme of healing, Indigenous peoples and communities are rebounding from the long-term impacts of colonization and this includes lessening language loss and language shift and challenging the causes and processes of internalized self-oppression (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Michel, 2012; Reyhner, 2010). In the second theme of resurgence and self-determination, Indigenous language reclamation programs are everyday acts of Indigenous self-determination in education and resurgence as a social justice movement (Corntassel, 2012). Lastly, the third theme of cultural identity posits that Indigenous language programs are spaces of coming to know oneself and community as “language itself is a reflection of how we [Indigenous peoples] organize and perceive the world; in every language, key words, phrases, and...the way we [Indigenous peoples] think about the world and ourselves” (Cajete, 2000, p. 271).

Self-determination for my self-study and community is also *remembering to remember the Original Instructions* or how the Hodinohsyó:ni have long practised a moral-cultural code or knowledge system. Self-determination aligns with Battiste’s (1998) conceptualization of self-determination, which is “a call for an acknowledgment of the illegitimacy of Eurocentric

thought in defining Aboriginal knowledge and people, and the recovery of Aboriginality in local ecologies and languages” (p. 24).

The Hodinohsyó:ni “Original Instructions” referenced in this self-study are underpinned by both academic scholarship and my community’s own Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge (HK) systems. Original Instructions, according to Cornelius (1999) are “instructions to the [Indigenous] people [that] direct them to be of a mind that includes thankfulness, peace of mind, an understanding of duty and responsibility, love for one another in kinship, and overall happiness” (p. 71). In addition, Hill (2017) states four epics—the Hodinohsyó:ni Creation Story, the Great Law of Peace, the Good Message (Gaihwí:yo), and the four sacred ceremonies—form the foundations of Hodinohsyó:ni Original Instructions. There are various interpretations of the Original Instructions, however, a core element that binds multiple understandings of HK systems is how the Original Instructions function as the guide for living a good life.

This HK/IK research holds significance for the field of Indigenous language reclamation because it demonstrates that Indigenous languages and IK systems are deeply interconnected and interdependent (Cajete, 2000). Moreover, the Indigenous language reclamation movement is much more than the preservation of technical or transactional linguistic methods of communication between any groups of people (United Nations, 2018). The global language shift to neo-colonial hegemonic English—as more cultural groups and linguistic communities are educating the young to speak only the dominant capitalist language of English and French—results not only in a profound loss of IK and cultural ways of knowing as intergenerational kinship and education, but it also results in a severe loss of Indigenous governance, laws and sovereignty over ancestral lands, the independent power of communities and territories (McCarty

& Nicholas, 2014; Simpson, 2011). This is evident in the United Nations (2018) action plan—*Action plan for organizing the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages*—that states:

The loss of an indigenous language can therefore mean the loss of vital knowledge which could be harnessed for human improvement and sustainable development. Consequently, the disappearance of a language implies a huge negative impact upon the indigenous culture concerned, as well as on global cultural diversity. Unique ways of knowing and experiencing the world may disappear forever. (p. 3)

### **Portfolio Description**

My portfolio project is a self-study that investigates the longitudinal impacts of my K-12 educational experiences in Gayogohó:no (Cayuga) language reclamation programs of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. This self-study uncovers how my educational experiences provided me with the necessary skills and tools to walk in two worlds or function in two-eyed seeing—a process of code-switching between two knowledge and education systems: Euro-western and Indigenous (Bartlett et al., 2012; Bell, 2013). In particular, I document how my educational experiences in my community have aided me in *finding* my cultural and kinship position as Hodinohsyó:ni, helped me to see the world through a Hodinohsyó:ni lens and to flourish and excel in my life endeavours. This self-study provides a first-person account to document how Indigenous language reclamation programs support the four dimensions of personal development that are at the core of Indigenous/ Hodinohsyó:ni identity—the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental spheres of being (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Sadly, these four dimensions of holistic learning or learning-as-healing are most often devalued, ignored or erased in many mainstream Western education models since academic success is valued first and foremost as students' academic or intellectual ways of knowing.



I have organized my self-study as an examination of Indigenous culture-based education and Indigenous language reclamation programs. I start the current study with a review of literature that compares and contrasts the successes and challenges of three case studies on Indigenous language education initiatives—1) Chief Atahm School's Secwepemc (Interior Salish) language immersion in Adam's Lake, British Columbia (Michel, 2012), 2) the Everlasting Tree School in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Ontario (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.), and 3) the Akwesasne Freedom School in the community of Akwesasne, New York (White, 2015). There is also reference to other studies on culture-based education programs and Indigenous communities' attempts to reinstate control over formal education such as Bell's (2013) case study on the Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin Cultural Healing and Learning Program with Anishinaabe youth near Burleigh Falls, Ontario and Aquash's (2013) ethnographic study. These two studies augment the educational research on Indigenous language reclamation programming for developing and operating community-controlled and community-based education programming as a complex and often extremely difficult endeavour.

### **Description of Tasks**

There are three major tasks interwoven in this self-study portfolio. Task #1 consists of the following: Situating the Self-Study, my positionality, and a Literature Review, (Chapters 1 and 2). The literature review evaluates educational research pertaining to Indigenous language reclamation programming both in Canada and the United States. And the literature review identifies pressing issues that Indigenous language reclamation programs encounter, along with the knowledge gaps that this study offers to contribute to filling. The literature review is organized into three main sections: 1) language programs as sites of healing; 2) our examples of Indigenous self-determination and resurgence in language education; and 3) identity-building via

Indigenous language programming. These three sections inform the analysis of the self-study accounts in Chapter 4, which corresponds with each section of the literature review mentioned above.

Task #2 is a two-fold task because it consists of my own educational experiences and analyses of these accounts through the story of Tadoda:hó as storywork of my own experience of self-transformation. The story that grounds the educational account analyses is the foundational HK story of Tadoda:hó. The methodology of this self-study analysis aligns with Archibald's (2008) concept of Indigenous storywork, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Finally, task #3 are the reflexive recommendations for Indigenous language education. These recommendations are informed by my critically reflexive observations, notes, and analyses, along with emergent ideas, issues, and concepts raised by the storywork of my educational accounts. This approach to reflexivity aligns with the thought of a critical hermeneutic approach where all interpretations are rooted in my background and lived experiences and are constructed through the “process of dialogic interpretation as one within which the different symbolic, cultural–social, and individual presuppositions can become reflexive” (Kogler, 2008, pp. 153-154). These reflexive recommendations are also reformatted as a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix B) that my community could use to proceed with program development or design modifications—if desired.

### **Researcher's Positionality**

Sgẹ: no! Sgẹ: nó gẹh né wá'ne:?' Agatşehnq:ní ne asadadrihonyéh né gahyadohsrödónyoh wá'né:' wehnihsrí:yo. Hanadawẹ'hé:s niwagohşehnóde. Awá:do ęhsí' “Bobby” wehdóh ęséhş hnyq'qnéha. Dewenęhe:gá niwagehsyaóde. Gayogęho:no niwagohwejó'de. Ohswe:gé

gaęhɔ:wéh dwagahdęgyoh. Dewahsé heyeí: niwagohsriyágoh. Lakehead University gaęhɔ:wéh agadewa:yé:s ne gwatóh gayá:sqh ne agadadohonyani'ta.

'Greetings! Are you at peace today? I am delighted you are reading these pages on this nice day. I am known by my clan name, "He goes over a town," which I was given during our naming ceremony. However, you are welcome/able to refer to me as "Bobby" whenever you speak English. I belong to the ball deer clan and I am from the People of the clay pipes/stink swamp who are more commonly known as People of the Cayuga Nation. Place of the Willows (Six Nations of the Grand River Territory) is where I originate from and I have seen 26 winters (26 years old). Lakehead University is the name of my school and the place where I am learning.'

Through following this protocol of introduction, other Hodinohsyó:ni community members and Indigenous peoples can immediately recognize my familial lineage, ancestors, and current community. As noted in my introduction, I am a community member from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. I have spent a significant time *in* community and formed strong relationships with community members. More importantly, I identify as a Cayuga language learner and speaker. I can read, write, and speak Cayuga language because I was a student of Cayuga language immersion programming for approximately 15 years. I also claim "Cayuga language learner" since Cayuga language is my second language, which I am continuously learning with the objective to achieve greater fluency.

Growing up, English was the mother tongue in my household since my parents' first language was English. What makes my parents' situation noteworthy is they lived in households where their parent(s) spoke one of the Hodinohsyó:ni languages as their first language but they learned to speak English as a result of the Residential School system and coercive assimilation

through colonial education. Due to my parents' upbringing, my siblings and I were enrolled in Cayuga language immersion programs until grade 8, however, I selected to continue my education in Cayuga language immersion programming until grade 12. These programs were available through both the federal school and private school systems in my community.

Typically, my school day from kindergarten to grade three was full Cayuga language immersion. In grade four, I transitioned to a 50/50 Cayuga-English language immersion program that continued until grade eight. In grade nine, I enrolled in a Cayuga-Mohawk language immersion secondary school. My secondary school, Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Private School, was unique and distinct compared to the federal school system in my community. Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Private School is a community-based and community-controlled private school located in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. The school's origins are linked to our community's parental movement to preserve and reclaim both the Cayuga and Mohawk languages. Unlike my earlier education, the amount of Cayuga language learning in high school was 25% of the day's instruction as students were also mandated to complete certain courses in English to satisfy the requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Since Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation played a fundamental role throughout my life, my research portfolio emerged from my positionality and educational experiences.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Healing from Impacts of Colonial Education

After reviewing a breadth of educational research on Indigenous language immersion programming, it became increasingly clear that healing from the long-term impacts of aggressive colonial assimilation is sometimes explicit but is mostly an implicit objective for many Indigenous language reclamation or Indigenous culture-based education programming (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.; Michel, 2012; Reyhner, 2010; White, 2015). This goal of healing from great colonial harms stems from a realization by Indigenous peoples that if Indigenous language loss persists without intervention, then they might lose not only the ability to communicate in their own Indigenous language but also the ability to recover and unlock lessons, teachings, and worldviews embedded IK systems, along with their unique ways of life and deep relationships with Creation (Battiste, 1998, 2013; Porter, 2008; United Nations, 2018).

This irretrievable loss of cultural knowledge through Indigenous language extinction is a key reason why community-based and community-controlled Indigenous language immersion schools have emerged across Canada such as the Kanien'kéha (Mohawk language) Everlasting Tree School in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. The Everlasting Tree School currently operates as a full-immersion Kanien'kéha private school in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. It serves community members from Six Nations and functions as a home-structured learning environment for children and their parents who are keen on strengthening Kanien'kéha in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory (Everlasting Tree School, n.d.). Although the term *healing* does not appear in a case study on the Everlasting Tree School, the values that underpin the learning environment correlate with healing (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.). One value at the

Everlasting Tree School, for example, involves Hodinohsyó:ni students learning to re-discover the path that their ancestors walked on, which also helps with re-discovering their own *shéh niyohgwaihó'dĕ* (Original Instructions) or learning to *niyohahá:'a*, which can be translated as meaning to “follow the path of the Creator” (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d., p. 20).

Healing, however, is complex and must begin with initiating an awareness regarding the long-term implications of colonial education (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2010; Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2012; Frideres, 2016). Initiating reflexive awareness is a fundamental step in liberating self from the cage of colonial oppression since many Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to carry and suffer from trauma due to Canada's colonial history and policies of assimilation (Battiste, 2013; Bell, 2013). In reference to the Akwesasne Freedom School—a Kanien'kéha immersion program in Akwesasne—White (2015) states: “asserting educational sovereignty requires addressing a long history of oppressive practices” (p. 8). In other words, the process of asserting Indigenous sovereignty over education cannot commence without remembering how colonial governments attempted to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures via education through the Indian Residential School (IRS) system (Battiste, 2013; Reyhner, 2010; Simpson, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; White, 2015).

It is critically important to contend with these educational policies because other nation-states have implemented similar colonial policies of aggressive assimilation, such as the United States' and Australia's creation and operation of boarding schools, both similar to Canada's IRS system (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; White, 2015). This agenda for aggressive assimilation of Indigenous peoples emerged during an era of great change for these nation-states when there was a mass immigration of settlers to Indigenous lands. Frideres (2016), for instance, has chronicled

six phases of the Indigenous-non-Indigenous colonial relationship from when colonizers first arrived in North America to modern times where nation-states such as Canada are pushing an agenda of renewal and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Phases four and five speak highly to when nation-state governments initiated a goal of assimilating Indigenous peoples in what is now called Canada.

One major shift as noted by Tobias (1976) was the ideological beliefs of non-Indigenous settlers towards Indigenous peoples. Rather than honouring their relationships stipulated through treaties, Britain saw Indigenous peoples as being a problem, ‘uncivilized’ or savage, and barriers to progress. Due to these outlooks on Indigenous peoples, Britain made changes to their Indian policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After 1815, Britain implemented a policy of *civilization* of Indigenous peoples living in North America. This reform—that gradually evolved into policies of assimilation—attracted religious organizations who would embark on a journey to Christianise Indigenous peoples of North America. By implementing racist policies of civilization and assimilation, non-Indigenous settlers in positions of power and authority proceeded with more aggressive and genocidal tactics of assimilation against Indigenous peoples to subjugate them into the European-White settler society with the mindset that this would help Indigenous peoples in unlocking their full potential in order to assimilate to a colonial order or *properly* function in the increasingly dominant settler society (Morcom, 2014; Tobias, 1976).

### ***History of Colonial Education***

Due to the vast amount of literature on the IRS system, this portfolio refers mostly to the IRS’s policy and eradication of Indigenous languages in its schools, specifically focusing on its impact upon language shift or the replacement of Indigenous language with the dominant settler

language (i.e., English or other European languages such as French in Quebec) (McCarty et al., 2006). Referencing Meek (2010), language shift is defined by McCarty et al., (2006), as a

linguistic change...from community-wide language shift, which occurs when the social structures supporting intergenerational transmission disintegrate as a result of dominant-subordinate linguistic encounters and the “often violent replacement of one linguistic code by another.” (p. 107)

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its final report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. This report reviewed the history of the state-funded and religious-operated education system that carried out Canada’s objective to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the dominant society (Neeaganagwedgin, 2014). The TRC (2015) reviews the historical roots of the IRS system and includes testimonials from approximately 6,000 IRS survivors from across Canada.

The TRC (2015) report found that Indigenous children were: separated from their parents and placed in far-distant locations in order to decrease parental/family influences, forced to learn English and Western thinking through school subjects while sitting at desks, required to practice Christian religion, and separated and segregated from their siblings and community members. The report also revealed that Canada created and implemented laws that made attendance mandatory in the IRS system for all Indigenous children 6 - 16 years of age. One of the most common and persistent themes that connects multiple personal testimonials of survivors is how children were prohibited from speaking their own Indigenous languages and were regularly physically punished by staff for any attempts in speaking their Indigenous language (TRC,



2015). For this reason, there continues to be major long-term impacts that decreases the intergenerational transmission of language (McIvor, 2009).

### *Long-Term Impacts on Indigenous Languages*

One of the long-term implications from the IRS system is that survivors grew reluctant and refused to teach their traditional language to their offspring, leading to an ongoing decline in the transmission of Indigenous languages (McIvor, 2009). As a result, intergenerational trauma (trauma that is in/unintentionally passed down through generations) has manifested into a form of self-oppression whereby individuals have become similar to the colonizers by continuing to further colonize themselves (Frideres, 2016; Smith, 2003; Weaver, 2001). Examples of self-oppression are evident in case studies on both the Akwesasne Freedom School and the Chief Atahm School. White (2015) explains that many students encountered lateral abuse from other community members when choosing the Akwesasne Freedom School over conventional Western education. The phrase, “free to Be Dumb School” (White, 2015, p. 5) is often projected against students at the Akwesasne Freedom School.

The same self-oppression from a deep cycle of internalized oppression was also documented in doctoral research on the Chief Atahm School in Adam’s Lake, British Columbia. Prior to the formation of the Chief Atahm School in 1991, three First Nation communities observed a decrease of Secwepemc language speakers due to colonization in British Columbia (i.e. the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush). Located approximately 50 kilometers from Kamloops, British Colombia, three Indigenous communities collaborated and started the Chief Atahm School as a response to curb language loss. This school offers full-immersion programming and centres Secwepemc language, ways of knowing, values, and history in the school’s curriculum and learning environments. However, Michel (2012) noted that during the initial stages of

starting the Chief Atahm School, there existed “a prevailing atmosphere of apathy, hegemony, and even, open hostility towards a culturally-preferred educational model based on Secwepemc language, knowledge, and pedagogy” (p. 23).

Though these case studies on Indigenous language immersion programs are from different geographical locations, they both demonstrate the magnitude of colonization and the long-term impacts of colonization. Rather than associating culture- and language-based education as something *positive*, community members attach their trauma and feelings of shame to view these educational opportunities as negative. Without realization, they have unintentionally become self-oppressors through being skeptical of Indigenous language reclamation programming. This self-oppression also stems from being programmed into believing that learning Indigenous languages in school provides little incentives in becoming successful in life or be able to effectively contribute to nation-state economies (Michel, 2012; White, 2015). While intergenerational trauma is deep and complex, I only address its impacts and role in accelerating the language shift which is a community-wide replacement of Indigenous language with the dominant colonizer’s language (McCarty et al., 2006).

**Internalized self-oppression.** Due to the devastation of aggressive assimilation, some Indigenous peoples have developed and continue to carry a sense of shame or low self-esteem prompting them to view themselves as second-class citizens (Michel, 2012). According to Simpson (2011), Indigenous peoples carry shame in their minds, heart, and bodies. Simpson (2011) argues that colonizers have instilled shame into the minds of Indigenous peoples in an effort to weaken their resilience and convince them to feel defeated and thus unable to resist or to resurge as a strong nation.

Drawing from educational research on Navajo People's language preservation projects in the United States, feelings of shame directed towards their own Indigenous language are also present like in my own community, despite the Navajo communities being located thousands of kilometers away from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. In a five-year Native Language Retention Project, McCarty et al. (2006) found that Navajo youth experienced mixed feelings towards Navajo language, even as they were learning the language in school and at home. Despite some positivity being attached to Navajo language or culture, some youth revealed ongoing negativity from their peers and their peers' parents. When the researchers probed to better understand the negative views of the Navajo language, one youth participant replied that they wished to avoid becoming like their parents and that speaking Navajo language is a relic of the past (McCarty et al., 2006).

Another participant explained that when Navajo youth are aware that a peer's mother tongue is Navajo or that their peer is rooted in their IK systems, there is a tendency for lateral abuse to occur by making negative/derogatory remarks (McCarty et al., 2006). One such derogatory remark, 'Johnned out', is meant to accuse youth of being uneducated and having no potential to ever leave the community and be successful in mainstream society. Through researching this phrase's historical roots, the researchers found that these negative remarks are manifestations of intergenerational trauma as a result of the Long Walk in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Long Walk was a policy of removal of Indigenous peoples from their traditional territory to another state by the American Government from 1864-1868. This policy of forced relocation has thus resulted in long-term associations of shame with Navajo culture and language.

### **Sites of Indigenous Self-Determination and Resurgence**

When reflecting on different Indigenous language reclamation programming, the literature suggests that these education models are sites of everyday acts of Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous resurgence since Indigenous peoples are speaking their languages, which nation-states targeted and sought to liquidate (Battiste, 2013; Corntassel, 2012). They are sites for Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous resurgence because Indigenous language reclamation programming are self-empowering for both Indigenous communities and individuals (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Rather than education continuing to function as a form of oppression, Indigenous people and communities have restructured education models to challenge instilled logics of colonization through designing, implementing, and supporting culturally responsive schooling (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Donald, 2012).

Evidence of these everyday acts of Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous resurgence are noted in the historical roots of reforms to Indigenous education, which stretches back to Indigenous political and social activism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, until the tabling of the *Red Paper* in 1970 and the *Indian Control of Indian Education* (ICIE) policy paper in 1972 by the National Indian Brotherhood, formal Indigenous education in Canada operated much differently. In short, Indigenous peoples were powerless over their own education systems (Hermes et al., 2012). As time progressed, the ICIE had profound impacts for Indigenous communities, such as those in Aquash's (2013) ethnographic study, who utilized the ICIE policy paper to reclaim control over their community's school.

### ***Individual Acts of Indigenous Self-Determination***

Although Aquash (2013) did not elaborate on the school's operation, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, or curriculum design, the findings in his ethnographic study suggest that parents, guardians, and community members from the Indigenous community all played

individual roles in building and maintaining Indigenous self-determination. In reference to the Everlasting Tree School and Chief Atahm School, both innovative community-based and community-controlled schools embody elements of the ICIE policy paper, which include local control of, and parental involvement in, education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). For example, Michel (2012) expresses that language revitalization is a community responsibility and that “in order to assert our Indigenous right to remaining linguistically and culturally distinct, we will need to increase our energies asserting local authority over education” (p. 255). In other words, being culturally and linguistically distinct as Secwepemc People is associated with Indigenous self-determination. More importantly, the Chief Atahm School promotes Indigenous self-determination as all people in the community play individual but crucial roles in supporting Indigenous self-determination (Michel, 2012). Interestingly, these worldviews are present with other Indigenous language reclamation programs.

In the case study on the Everlasting Tree School, Martin-Hill and Skye (n.d.) touched on concepts of Indigenous self-determination being enacted by individuals. Since the ICIE policy paper outlined that parental involvement and local control were necessary tenants for Indigenous education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), the Everlasting Tree School is the *ICIE policy paper in-action* (Bell, 2013). The connection to the ICIE policy paper is that parents played crucial roles in envisioning, developing and implementing the Everlasting Tree School. When starting the school, parents collaborated and claimed local control and explored possible education models that best suited *their* goals of preserving Kanien'kéha in their community (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.).

Any community-based Indigenous language immersion school or program—such as the Everlasting Tree School—is, in itself, a strong act of Indigenous self-determination. Instead of

waiting for reforms to policy on Indigenous education, parents and community members pushed for the program despite the lack of community support and the funding barriers that most Indigenous language reclamation programs contend with on an annual basis (General, 2019; Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.). Unlike the band or federally operated schools in most First Nation communities, parental involvement and local control over education is a key characteristic of the Everlasting Tree School. Parents continue to serve on the all-Indigenous school board that oversees the school's operation (Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.). This structure of a community-based school board with community control over their children's education is what has been continuously envisioned as self-determination and sovereignty by many Indigenous groups, including those who were drafting the ICIE policy paper (Pidgeon et al., 2013).

### ***Individual Acts of Indigenous Resurgence***

Since Indigenous language reclamation programs are deeply political, personal, and premised on the notions of self-empowerment (Hermes, et al., 2012; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014), these models foster and promote small scale grassroots mobilization of Indigenous resurgence in the minds of adults, parents, and/or students. In reference to the Chief Atahm School, Michel (2012) believes that the reclamation of the Secwepemc language lies in the acts of individuals because “language survival requires a personal commitment from each member of the community” (p. 256). This is a powerful testament, which highlights that small-scale mobilization of Indigenous resurgence lies in individuals and that individuals are the solution to preventing Indigenous language loss and aiding language reclamation (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Michel, 2012). However, there are some barriers and challenges Indigenous peoples and communities encounter whenever implementing Indigenous language or culture-based education programming.

In a review of Indigenous language immersion programs in Canada and the United States, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) provide a critical examination of educational research on Indigenous language reclamation programs. In this review, they aim to peel back the layers of complexity pertaining to Indigenous language reclamation programs by synthesizing research on Indigenous language reclamation programs in Canada and the United States. Interestingly, McCarty and Nicholas posit that Indigenous peoples are overcoming stereotypes of Indigenous language reclamation programs.

From my experiences as a student in Gayogohó:no language reclamation programs, my mind was conditioned to believe in statements such as, “you cannot excel or succeed in life if you choose to learn your language”. Unfortunately, this colonial assumption is prevalent in many Indigenous communities across Turtle Island (North America), especially when hearing or experiencing derogatory declarations or terms such as those projected against the Akwesasne Freedom School. For example, the phrase, “Free to Be Dumb School” (White, 2015, p. 5), reflects the instilled colonial logics by some community members who may hold that any definition of ‘success’ must be rooted in Western values or a Eurocentric worldview (Donald, 2012). In closing, Indigenous people who choose an education in Indigenous language reclamation programs are performing individual acts of Indigenous resurgence. They are challenging self-oppression and are utilizing education to break free from the cage of oppression (Bell, 2013).

### **Identity-Building via Indigenous Language Reclamation**

Indigenous identity varies according to nation/groups of Indigenous people, individuals, families, and even gender and sexual identity. For example, White (2015) argues that a determinate in being *fully* Kanien’kéha means either one’s mother tongue is Kanien’kéha or one

is a strong speaker in Kanien'kéha. White knowingly implicates herself as she recognizes that Indigenous identity encompasses more than having the ability to speak and understand an Indigenous language. White's own dual or divided identity is informed by her observations of community members in Akwesasne where some community members' mother tongue is Kanien'keha and yet, some of these community members still feel *disconnected* to their culture and community.

These feelings stem from a lack of understanding the words spoken/recited in Kanien'kéha as certain words may appear strange without context within Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems. Take for example the term "Hodinohsyó:ni". Normally this term is translated as "People of the Longhouse" and is frequently used by Hodinohsyó:ni to characterise our nationhood identity. However, my cultural understanding—informed by the Hodinohsyó:ni Great Law of Peace—positions this phrase much differently. To me, this phrase represents my livelihood. It is cultural reminder of integrity because "Hodinohsyó:ni" reminds me that all our members of the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy treat one another as extended family and with the utmost respect.

Clearly, these contradictions showcase that Indigenous identity is intricate and complex for there are counterarguments with every position on identity (Weaver, 2001). Indigenous language reclamation programs, however, contribute to this conversation on Indigenous identity because they are offer spaces of coming to know.<sup>2</sup> Space of coming to know in the context of this literature review means physical or abstract spaces whereby Indigenous peoples come to

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<sup>2</sup>The term *space(s) of coming to know* referenced throughout this paper emerges from Gebhard's (2009) term, "Identity-making spaces" (p. iii) in her doctoral research through Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Spaces of coming to know, in short, are spaces whereabouts Indigenous peoples (re)learn their identity regardless of the circumstance, location, and intent.



understand their identity through being surrounded and immersed in IK systems and ways of knowing or “cultural mirrors” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 72).

According to the definition mentioned above, both Indigenous culture-based education and Indigenous language reclamation programs are spaces of coming to know. For instance, the Indigenous culture-based education program, Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin Cultural Healing and Learning Program that operated in Burleigh Falls, Ontario, meets the criteria of spaces of coming to know. ‘Operated’ meaning that the Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin Cultural Healing and Learning Program ceases operations due to lack of financial resources/access to permanent funding (Bell, 2013). However, there is valuable evidence documented through a case study and program evaluation that Bell (2013) conducted on the program.

Referencing Bell (2013), Anishinaabe youth received a *true* Indigenous education as students were immersed in learning environments that are in line with educational research on culturally responsive schooling. As Castagno and Brayboy (2008) state, the objective for culturally responsive schooling “is to produce students who are bicultural and thus knowledgeable about and competent in both mainstream and tribal societies” (p. 953). This was the case for Anishinaabe youth; students were constantly exposed to and immersed in Anishinaabe teachings on a daily basis, which supported them in developing a strong sense of cultural identity and skills that prepared youth to live in two worlds (Bell, 2013). *Living in two worlds* references a metaphor describing how Indigenous peoples’ lives are comprised of living between two worlds. In one world, Indigenous people live a life according to traditional knowledge systems, values, and principles; however, they are also living in a Eurocentric world that means following laws and living life according to Eurocentric knowledge systems, values, and principles.

This cultural immersion and integration were also a defining quality for both the Everlasting Tree School and the Akwesasne Freedom School. According to Martin-Hill and Skye (n.d.), children are immersed in learning environments where teachings of the good mind help students in developing deeper connections with Creation. Students at the Akwesasne Freedom School “are learning to be Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk Nation) and discovering their unique identities” (White, 2015, p. 17).

These examples of Indigenous language reclamation programs are remarkable since they eliminate the dichotomy Indigenous youth experience when having to choose between being Indigenous or being a Western academic (Hermes, 2007). More interestingly, these examples are also prevalent in educational research on adult education in the field of Indigenous language reclamation programming. According to Gomashie (2019), students in adult immersion programs in Kanien’keha—such as those programs in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory—disclose their decisions for choosing this education as the means to strengthen their sense of identity as Hodinohsyó:ni. For some adult students, their motivation in learning Kanien’keha as adults is centred on their desire to actively participate in ceremonies and instill pride in future generations by creating Kanien’keha-speaking and Kanien’keha-focused communities.

In summary, the scope and variety of literature reviewed on Indigenous identity suggest that Indigenous language reclamation programs are spaces of coming to know for Indigenous youth. While there is no universal framework for all Indigenous peoples across Canada to claim a homogeneous Indigenous identity, Indigenous language reclamation programming is an area of education whereby Indigenous peoples are remembering to remember their identity, community membership and ancestral kinship as Indigenous peoples (Cajete, 2000; Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.). In essence, they are helpful in answering two important questions: “what does it mean to be

an Indigenous person” and “how do Indigenous language reclamation programs provide spaces that support students in coming to know their Indigenous identity?”

### **Gaps in Educational Research & Research Question**

Through review of scholarship in this literature review, it is evident that Indigenous language reclamation programs promise positive results for Indigenous peoples and communities (Battiste, 2013; Hermes, 2007; Hermes, et al., 2012; Martin-Hill & Skye, n.d.; McCarty, et al., 2006; Michel, 2012; Morcom, 2014; White, 2015). Indeed, Indigenous peoples are healing from the long-term impacts of colonization and are embodying everyday acts of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination through these types of language programs that are spaces of coming to know via remembering to remember their Original Instructions (Cajete, 2000; Cornthassel, 2012; Michel, 2012; Reyhner, 2010). However, a shortcoming noted in the scholarship is detailed evidence regarding the longitudinal impacts of Indigenous language reclamation programming. For example, the term *success* appeared in educational research by McCarty and Nicholas (2014); however, this notion of success was not based in IK systems, worldviews, and philosophies.

For instance, in a critical examination of Indigenous reclamation programs, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) reveal that students in Hawaiian immersion programs perform extraordinarily well on standardized testing in comparison to other minority students and those Indigenous youth not enrolled in Hawaiian language reclamation programs. Though this critical examination showcases how Indigenous language reclamation programs can produce students who can excel at Western forms of assessment, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) only drew from standardized testing measures. This is concerning since standardize testing often neglects the learning spirit or the gifts “that unfold in a learning environment that sustain and challenge us [Indigenous

peoples] as learners” (Battiste, 2013, p. 18). More importantly, standardized testing fails to demonstrate how an Indigenous community or school determines what success is when it comes to their locally developed Indigenous language programs.

With this in mind, my self-study provides detailed evidence—through my first-person account—that my K-12 educational experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programs have had profound impacts on my personal success, identity and life. This self-study holds important significance in the field of Indigenous language reclamation programs since they are frequently contested by external pressures (i.e. oppression through validation). External pressures as discussed in this literature review include state-administered testing, such as those administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (E.Q.A.O.) in the province of Ontario, that primarily measure student learning through only mental or intellectual modes of understanding and knowing (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; White, 2015). This self-study, thus, provides evidence that Indigenous language reclamation programming not only produces students who excel in Western definitions of ‘success’ (McCarty & Nicholas, 2014), but also students who are culturally grounded in the four dimensions of personal Indigenous identity—the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental spheres of knowing and being (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

This self-study examination provides information about language education programs that implicitly foster Indigenous resurgence. The question it answers, is: by examining the longitudinal impacts of my K-12 educational experiences in community-based Gayogohó:no (Cayuga) language reclamation programs in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, that centred Hodinohsyó:ni knowledge systems, what can I learn and explicitly recommend about

community-based language education programs that promote Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty and resurgence?

### Chapter 3: Methodologies and Methods

The overarching conceptual framework for this self-study is an anti-colonial/decolonial conceptual framework that is informed by decolonizing and Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009, 2015; Smith, 2013; Wilson, 2008). Grounding this self-study in an anti-colonial/decolonial conceptual framework is a reclamation of my voice as a Hodinohsyó:ni researcher. As Kovach (2009) describes, the use of story “gives voices to the misinterpreted and marginalized” (p. 98). This is the case for many Indigenous peoples who, historically, have been subjects of research by European settlers and explorers (Smith, 2013). The consequences of these interactions are that European researchers of Indigenous peoples gained reputations in academic communities for their research while Indigenous people’s lives and IK systems were exploited and re-told to other Europeans through biased and false accounts (Smith, 2013).

For example, Hill (2009) emphasises that Hodinohsyó:ni continue to hold negative relationships with Western approaches to research as researchers have made false assumptions. According to Hill (2009), Floyd Lounsbury, a linguist who was known for being fluent in the Oneida language, was credited by the academic community for his *discovery*. As Hill states, Lounsbury was the *first to prove* that Skywoman brought oyę'gwáoweh (tobacco) to Earth according to an Oneida version of the Hodinohsyó:ni Creation Story. Meanwhile, this was common knowledge held by many Hodinohsyó:ni and yet these people were discredited by the non-Indigenous academic community for they were supposedly viewed as uncivilized or incapable of constructing knowledge (Hill, 2009; Smith, 2013).

In this example, Western approaches to research have had a negative history with Indigenous peoples. As Smith (2013) writes, even speaking the word *research* to Indigenous

peoples conjures negative undertones' she argues that *research* is one of the dirtiest words in the realm of Indigenous peoples. That being said, grounding this self-study in an anti-colonial/decolonial conceptual framework, which will be further explained in the Methodologies description (see below), is fundamental.

Since the conceptual framework is decolonial/anti-colonial, the selected methodologies for this study are congruent with an anti-colonial/decolonial conceptual framework, which is transformative and centres Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty through culture and language (Smith, 2013). My self-study employs Indigenous storytelling as articulated by Kovach (2009) and supported by ideas of Indigenous story-work as articulated by Archibald (2008) when writing and analyzing my key educational experiences (see also Archibald, et al., 2019).

Indigenous storytelling, unlike narrative inquiry typically used by qualitative researchers, differs substantially by employing a circular method of story-making and drawing upon Indigenous Knowledge systems to connect to and revitalize ancestral IK that has been passed down through the generations since time immemorial. Non-Indigenous or Western researchers often use narrative inquiry as an approach to use stories or narratives as a method for making sense of human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Stories in this knowledge system are structured as having an ascending or linear line of start, middle, and conclusion. They can appear as lifeless, while dependent on human experiences or an individual's existence.

### **Indigenous Storytelling and Storywork**

Western narrative inquiry is contradictory or at odds with Indigenous storytelling because Indigenous storytelling serves a different purpose in an Indigenous paradigm. According to Kovach (2009), there are two forms of storytelling in Indigenous epistemologies: 1) teaching stories that contains a spiritual element such as Creation Stories and 2) personal narratives,

which contain people's lived experiences. Archibald's (2008) term, story-work, also coincides with and builds on Kovach's (2009) conceptualization of Indigenous storytelling as a research methodology. According to Archibald (2008), she coined the term story-work to represent that storytelling in Sto:lō tradition is taken very seriously. Later on, Archibald et al. (2019) add that approaching stories through the theoretical basis that informs story-work is intended to help researchers engage in meaningful research. That being said, my self-study is underpinned by Indigenous storytelling and story-work (Archibald, 2008; Archibald et al., 2019; Kovach, 2009).



## Chapter 4: Educational Accounts and Analyses

### Looking to Tadoda:hó (Entangled)

In alignment with *doing* decolonial/anti-colonial research and working with Indigenous story-work, the story of Tadoda:hó (Entangled) is centered and functions as an analytical tool for this research portfolio (Archibald 2008; Archibald, et al., 2019; Kovach, 2009, 2015; Smith, 2013; Wilson 2008). I selected the story of Tadoda:hó because his journey of self-transformation is reflective of my self-study on Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation, which is my story of self-transformation (Thomas, 2013). The version of the story I selected places greater emphasis on the human element of Tadoda:hó, which is often overlooked in discourse. Often times Tadoda:hó appears as hideous and is feared by many (Hill, 2017).

Within this research portfolio, I often revisit Tadoda:hó's story (discussed below) and find "significant moments" to prompt critical analysis of my educational accounts as discussed later on. This is a crucial element of Archibald's (2008) concept of Indigenous storywork for working with stories is very serious work (Archibald, et al., 2019). In addition, Archibald et al. (2019) stress that relationship-building with Indigenous peoples and Elders is a fundamental component of storywork, which is something significant to stress in this self-study.

In application, I spent an enormous amount of time and energy hearing and applying this story throughout my lifetime. These stories are to be utilized with the utmost respect, love, and care for Tadoda:hó's story of self-transformation (Thomas, 2013) is a sacred story. The being, as presented in this study, was an actual person whose pain and journey of self-transformation was *real*. More importantly, there even exists a hoyá:neh (hereditary chief) within the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy who also carries the same name and responsibilities of the original Tadoda:hó. I

wanted to disclose that using this story outside of this study requires my permission for this knowledge contains ancestral knowledge of Hodinohsyó:ni and my lived experiences. With that being said, o:néḥ ęgahsáwe (*'now I will start'*)!

Over the course of my lifetime, I often heard and read stories of Tadoda:hó, which changed in every recital/retelling. Early on in my life, the stories retold about Tadoda:hó were in simplistic form. Meaning, large amounts of the context was removed from the story to simplify and home in on important teaching moments throughout the story. In my earliest memories, I recall playing a computer game in elementary school that was designed to educate Hodinohsyó:ni youth about the Great Law of Peace. I cannot remember the name of the computer game, but I maintained a clear memory of Tadoda:hó's appearance and depiction.

Tadoda:hó's appearance in the computer game coincided with earlier retellings for Tadoda:hó was depicted as a monstrous being. While playing the computer game, the screen zoomed in on Tadoda:hó's face. I will admit, this was terrifying and petrifying because the green-skin monstrous being was now speaking to directly to me through the computer monitor. In reminiscing this moment, I recall that Tadoda:hó had glowing yellow eyes and there were snakes protruding from his head that were *slithering* and *alive*. In becoming an adolescent, the portrayal of Tadoda:hó transformed through a Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge Carrier reciting the story of Tadoda:hó in secondary school. Unlike previous accounts, I recognized early on that the presentation of Tadoda:hó differed. Meaning, this retelling of Tadoda:hó—informed by healing—depicted Tadoda:hó as humanistic as opposed to an evil or monstrous being. Instead, I could *feel* pain and noticed Tadoda:hó behavior and “acts of crime” were long-term impacts of pain via neglect, unresolved grief, physical pain, and living a life with a crooked mind.

This story of Tadoda:hó, according to my understanding, occurred prior to the formation of the Gayenḡsra'gó:wah (Hodinohsyó:ni Great Law of Peace). The exact date is unknown; however, this story takes place during a time period of great darkness. Warfare and bloodshed were a common occurrence. Generations of people studied warfare and trained their entire lives in hopes of becoming the greatest warrior rather than thanking Creation. Terror covered the landscape. People lived their lives with fear and uncertainty. Becoming a warrior was their livelihood for it was either attack or be attacked. Vendettas were deep and people would often harm one another with or without reason.

In relation to Tadoda:hó, as my Elders and teachers have often explained, before the person *became* Tadoda:hó, his life started off typical. A long time ago, he [Tadoda:hó] lived in a village with his extended family and his loving mother. As described earlier, these were dark times and anything that threatened or compromised a community was deemed *dangerous*. Tadoda:hó, however, was different and was unlike other children in his community. Different in that he had unusual abilities or 'gifts.' These 'gifts' provided unbelievable powers. Powers in that whenever Tadoda:hó wanted something such as toy or item of clothing beyond his reach, he would call for it and the item would come to him. The same would occur for food; when Tadoda:hó would send out a request, the animals fulfilled his wishes.

However, as Tadoda:hó grew and became a toddler and young boy, his abilities and 'gifts' grew stronger. Meaning, Tadoda:hó eventually developed the ability to predict events. Again, though this may sound wonderful, historical context in this moment of Hodinohsyó:ni history reminds us that being different was dangerous. For example, Tadoda:hó would often forewarn his mother, 'someone is coming to see you today and the things they will tell you are

gossip and untrue. So, don't listen to them.' As predicted, the person visited and said exactly as Tadoda:hó had forewarned. Over time, people gradually stopped visiting him and his family.

As time progressed, villagers became increasingly hostile and threatened to inflict bodily harm against Tadoda:hó. In fear, Tadoda:hó's mother made the conscious and difficult choice to physically remove Tadoda:hó from the village. Tadoda:hó was taken through the woods and lived adjacent to the village across the lake. His mother explained that this change was temporary and that she would return daily to make sure he had adequate food, water, and the necessary nourishment that children require. In addition, Tadoda:hó was given clear warnings that returning to the village was prohibited, for villagers would inflict bodily harm against him and that he should remain hidden until the leaders brainstormed a solution. As you can imagine, the 'solution' never came.

Eventually, Tadoda:hó was abandoned. Living in isolation, he suffered from and endured emotional and mental trauma because his mother had broken her promise in assuring Tadoda:hó' had access to the necessary nourishment to live a good life. Living in separation, Tadoda:hó suffered physical trauma from breaking bones as living in the wilderness was difficult at this time. Without anyone to treat his physical injuries, his bones and physical body never healed properly—hence the contorted body as described in retellings (Hill, 2017; Porter, 2008; Thomas, 2013). Spiritually, Tadoda:hó was separated from ceremonies and he was restricted from community gatherings. Through living a life unbalanced, the trauma Tadoda:hó experienced internalized and eventually transformed his 'gifts'. Rather than benefiting his community, he used his 'gifts' to cause harm or unleash his pain.

As an adult, Tadoda:hó increasingly grew to dislike and hate people. His hatred for people resulted in many deaths to those deemed his enemies. As a result, people all across the

land grew fearful of Tadoda:hó and avoided him by any means necessary. However, this era of fear and turmoil ended with the arrival of Honohsyoní:do (the Peacemaker) who promised to Tadoda:hó that he will return for a second time. Fast-forwarding...

By now, Honohsyoní:do had *planted the sapling* and the conclusion of warfare was spreading across the land. As promised, Honohsyoní:do returned to Tadoda:hó for a second time but was accompanied by multiple individuals whose objective was to condole Tadoda:hó and straighten his mind. As Honohsyoní:do and people who accepted the Great Law of Peace started travelling across the lake with their canoes, Tadoda:hó called upon the winds to instill fear and topple their canoes. Tadoda:hó's intentions were to cause harm, take lives, distract their focus, and prohibit the establishment of the Great Law of Peace for Tadoda:hó felt accepting the Great Law of Peace would extinguish his incredible power and 'gifts'. However, Honohsyoní:do used his abilities to calm the winds and water through raising his arm. Eventually Honohsyoní:do and those who accepted the Great Law of Peace landed on the shores.

After arriving, Honohsyoní:do instructed the hodiyanéhsq (hereditary chiefs) to encircle Tadoda:hó and gradually enclose him. Honohsyoní:do gave clear instructions: 'no matter what happens, you must focus your minds on healing Tadoda:hó and continue singing until we are in close proximity'. Tadoda:hó, using his abilities again, called upon the eagles to drop their beautiful feathers in an attempt to distract the hodiyanéhsq and Honohsyoní:do. However, nobody budged; they kept pushing through their strong desires and temptations to collect the fallen eagle feathers awaiting collecting. As Honohsyoní:do and the hodiyanéhsq neared Tadoda:hó, foul odour filled the air. Upon nearing even closer, the hodiyanéhsq suddenly noticed a transformation had occurred. Tadoda:hó unexpectedly discontinued his attempts to distract the hodiyanéhsq. Moreover, instead of *seeing* a monster, the hodiyanéhsq saw someone burdened

with grief, pain, and suffering from years of neglect and a twisted mind. As everyone neared Tadoda:hó, the singing stopped and Tadoda:hó began listening. Honohsyoní:do then spoke and said to Tadoda:hó, ‘it is true that you have suffered great pain throughout your life. We are here today to condole your fallen mind so that you will become the final hoyá:neh.’ Afterwards, Honohsyoní:do instructed Jigohsaséh (fat face) to come forward.

Following the instructions of Honohsyoní:do, Jigohsaséh positioned herself behind Tadoda:hó. She placed her hands in Tadoda:hó’s hair gently and began a combing motion of running her fingers through his hair. In the process, the *snakes* once living in Tadoda:hó’s hair were *combed from his hair* and the serpents dropped to the ground. As the snakes hit the ground, they slithered away and the grieving mind started straightening. Suddenly, the seven crooks across Tadoda:hó’s body—results of physical stress and improper healing of broken bones—no longer ached and had *straightened*. Afterwards Honohsyoní:do then said, ‘it is true, you were removed from a loving space that could have nourished your gifts for the benefit of your people. Instead of being nourished, you were separated and abandoned by those who loved you. Jigohsaséh also carries pain for she could not bear children. And so, you two will help one another. She will heal your pain from your mother’s abandonment and you will now become her son. In the process, this will fill the void in both your lives.’ As the story goes, Tadoda:hó accepted the Great Law of Peace and became the final hoyá:neh of the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy with the responsibility of protecting the tree of great long leaves (white pine).

## **Educational Accounts**

### ***1. Speaking Ganohonyóhk***

The morning has come! “Wake up; it’s 7 o’clock!” my mother said while flicking the switch that illuminated the lamp in my bedroom. “Time for school! Your bus will be here in 50

minutes.” As I laid in bed slowly waking up, I thought to myself, “I hope my older brother doesn’t come wake me up. His way of waking up people is unpleasant. I mean, who thinks removing one’s warm blankets is ideal in waking up someone? Ugh, I better get up, get dressed, and pack my lunch for school!”

I thought to myself while waiting for the bus, “today is special.” You see, yesterday, I told the older students at school that I wanted to recite the Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhqoh Ganq̄honyóhk before school started. To my surprise the older students seemed puzzled. They were puzzled because a student in *grade four* had requested to recite Ganq̄honyóhk in front of 300+ students at our school. They also were shocked because I asked to recite the Ganq̄honyóhk without reading the printed copy. I felt the older students were amazed because they always read the Ganq̄honyóhk from a printed version produced by the late Reg Henry. Wahoo! The bus has arrived and there are many seats to choose from – maybe I will take the back seat today.

After all the buses arrived and while everyone was waiting in their classrooms, an announcement instructed everyone can proceed to the gymnasium, “teachers, please take your class down to the gym.” While walking to the gym, fear popped in my mind. I thought “what if I mess up when saying Ganq̄honyóhk? Will people laugh at me?” Upon entry into our school’s gymnasium, I followed my friend and sat facing their back as instructed by our teacher earlier this year. The older students from yesterday eventually found me. They asked “Bobby, are you ready?” Me being brave and following through on my commitment said, “yes.” I then stood up and walked to the front of the gymnasium with the older students. I was extremely terrified. Everyone in the gymnasium was watching me! It also was different because three students were surrounding the microphone as opposed to just two. I tapped the microphone and the gymnasium went quiet.

I then started verbally reciting the Ganq̄hnyóhk with the printed copy and the execution was flawless. I remembered all the words and the passages and I felt super proud of myself afterwards. When returning to my class' line on the floor, the vice principal gave kind words and said, “nya:wéh Bobby for doing that for us this morning.” The vice principal then proceeded with the school's announcements. After sitting down, my fears dissipated and I conquered my fear of public speaking in front of 300 people! Once the vice principal finished, all students stood up and began returning to their classrooms.

Rather than returning to classroom, our school's physical education and intermediate teachers took me aside while my classmates left the gymnasium. The teachers congratulated me for reciting the Ganq̄hnyóhk without using the book and relying on memory. The intermediate teacher said, “you did something magnificent because my students—those in charge of doing the Ganq̄hnyóhk—would never take that risk.” As a thank you, the physical education teacher asked if he could purchase me lunch to show his appreciation and gratitude for my courage. Me being a big fan of Subway said, “Thank you teacher! I love Subway.” He then asked, “what would you like specifically?” I said, “I will take an assorted sub on white bread with mozzarella cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, and mayonnaise.” Afterwards, I felt extremely happy while returning to my classroom. I feel super proud because the adults in my school were conscious of my risk taking especially when reciting something as culturally important as the Ganq̄hnyóhk. Fortunately, this was only the start of something that continued well into both high school and university.

## **2. Guest Visitors**

The morning was good and the learning in class was fun! Our weekly routine was pacing as usual. Our *computer time* was fast-approaching and our classroom of grade 8 students were



just about starting the transition to research mode for our task in the computer lab today was to research our group projects on the Internet. However, something different happened. Today, these strange people entered our classroom and were speaking to our teacher. Before our teacher told everyone to “stop what you all are doing and get ready for computer time,” our teacher instead said, “people are here from Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School today and are offering to speak with anyone interested in attending Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School. Those who are interested in learning more are welcome to stay back for the presentation.”

Being curious and having an older sibling currently at Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School, I said “I’ll stay back teacher.” Afterwards the non-interested students exited the classroom with our teacher and proceeded to the computer lab to do research. In total, there were five students who listened to the presentation. I found the presentation exciting! “Going to high school and learn your culture and language? How much better can things get?” I asked myself. This opportunity was amazing because I can continue learning my culture and language!

Although this opportunity sounded amazing, I felt awkward inside. After the presentation concluded and the guest presenters left, I thought to myself, “that was exciting, but I already applied and submitted my application to Hagersville [Secondary School]. I cannot change my mind because I made my decision that going to Hagersville [Secondary School] is a better choice.” Eventually, the day ended and I caught the bus home where this conversation would continue with my mother.

After dinner, my mother and I had a conversation regarding how school went today. “Mom, there were people from Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó [Secondary School] talking about their school.” “How was it?” She asked. I replied, “it was cool and everything, but I think going to Hagersville [Secondary School] is better and will help me in becoming a teacher.” A pause

happened and my mother went silent for a minute. She then said, “Bobby, you should reconsider Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó [Secondary School].” I asked, “why? Hagersville [Secondary School] has Mohawk language class, so I will still be able to learn our language.” “If you go to Hagersville [Secondary School], you won’t have the same opportunities as your brother” she said. “What do you mean?” I asked. “Think of it, your brother went to Wisconsin this year for Gaihwí:yo and he is going on the Peacemaker’s Journey this spring. By not choosing Gawęni:yó [Secondary School], you will be missing out.” “Okay, I will give it some thought because I never considered those points.” I said. As the story goes, I withdrew my application to Hagersville Secondary School and applied and enrolled in Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School.

### ***3. Trip to Ohí:yo (Alleghany)***

It was during Native Studies class in grade 10 that an interesting conversation had occurred. Our teacher—an alumnus from our very secondary school and new to teaching this year—wheeled a cart with a television and VCR player into the classroom. When seeing the cart roll into our classroom, I thought, “how exciting; we are watching a movie or a film today in class!” However, the film/video shown in class covered a very serious topic regarding another Hodinohsyó:ni community in Upstate New York.

Before starting the video, our teacher said, “we [our class] will be watching a documentary today on Ohí:yo [the Alleghany Reservation] community. Also, we [teachers and school administrator] are organizing a school trip to Ohí:yo in the future and we will have more information on this trip later.” After this announcement, our teacher plugged in the television and VCR player and tested everything because the cart (both the TV and VCR player) was shared by all teachers in our high school. Once everything was properly working, the VHS tape was inserted and we began watching the documentary.

The documentary was about life before and after the construction of the Kinzua Dam in the 1960's. The filmmakers documented the life of the Onondowá'ga: (Seneca) community living alongside the shores of the Alleghany River. During the early segments of the documentary, the filmmakers captured powerful imagery. It was easy for Onondowá'ga: community members to cross the *shallow* Alleghany River. The slowly moving waters meant that community members only needed sticks pushing on the riverbed to propel the raft. The documentary turned negative because massive changes occurred when the American Government began construction on the Kinzua Dam. Since the Kinzua Dam was built downstream, flooding was inevitable. Thus, Onondowá'ga: community members living on the flood plain were forced to abandon their homes and settlements. This was very triggering as innocent people were forced from their homes and because non-Indigenous people ignited and destroyed their homes. Also, the waterway forever changed. The river flowed fast, which made using rafts obsolete.

As time progressed, we continued learning about Onondowá'ga: of Ohí:yo in Native Studies. Eventually, my Native Studies teacher sent home permission forms for an upcoming school trip to the Alleghany Reservation in New York State. My teacher instructed us that our parents or guardians must sign and complete the permission forms in order to participate during the upcoming trip since we would leave Canada for an entire day. When I brought my permission form to my parents, I explained that I really wanted to participate as I had been learning about the Onondowá'ga: of Ohí:yo and I had invested time and effort. My parents, always supporting my education, agreed that I could attend this trip.

On the day of our trip, a handful of students submitted their permission forms to participate on this trip. However, our small group was accompanied by people who worked at

No. 12 School, which is a resource centre where Hodinohsyó:ni in Six Nations are welcomed to study ceremonies and work with leaders in our community. Before our journey started, our group formed a circle surrounding a fire located just outside our school. One person, on behalf of the group, conducted a tobacco-burning ceremony and asked for protection. Afterwards, our trip officially started and members from No. 12 School piled into one van whereas the students piled into the other van with our Native Studies teacher. The commute to Ohí:yo was approximately two hours, which included crossing the Canadian/American border at Fort Erie, Ontario.

Upon arrival at Ohí:yo, community members there welcomed us to their community with handshaking and exchanging of words between groups. In their welcoming, they offered to be our hosts when visiting different locations. During this trip, our group visited and learned from respected Onondowá'ga: Elders and Knowledge carriers. Our group stopped at the Faith Keepers' school, the city of Salamanca and most importantly, the Kinzua Dam. At each destination, different community members from the Alleghany Reservation shared bits of their history. For instance, I learned the city of Salamanca was built on a swamp and that non-Indigenous tenants were enraged when the Onondowá'ga: increased the lease on the city's property when the 99-year agreement lapsed. Each destination was emotional.

In particular, the Kinzua Dam was heartbreaking. The Onondowá'ga: Elders and community members described the Kinzua Dam as very upsetting. To them, the hydroelectric project reminds the Onondowá'ga: of the time when the American government openly lied to the Onondowá'ga:.. Onondowá'ga: community members said the American government promised the Kinzua Dam would be moved upstream and that the Onondowá'ga: settlements would be secure if they supported the presidential campaign. However, the opposite happened. Despite

their huge support for the newly elected American president, the construction of the Kinzua Dam resumed.

### **Educational Account of *Speaking Ganq̄honyóhk*: Analysis of Strong Identity**

Reflecting on my K-12 educational experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni reclamation programming, I, unlike Tadoda:hó, was privileged because I was immersed into a space of coming to know as Hodinohsyó:ni, accepted and cherished by my community, and allowed or permitted to be in learning environments where *being Hodinohsyó:ni* was an everyday occurrence and unquestioned. *Being Hodinohsyó:ni* in this context essentially means having the ability to practice, reflect and apply *shĕh niyohgwaihó'dĕ*—our Original Instructions. Moreover, *being Hodinohsyó:ni* meant that the learning in our community school centred Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems throughout the school day and in all the learning environment as opposed to “the ‘add and stir’ model of education” (Battiste, 1998, p. 21). Being immersed in a school setting that privileged Hodinohsyó:ni thought, ways of knowing, philosophy, and language throughout all aspects of education also bridged and extended my learning taking place within my household. Moreover, the presence of “cultural mirrors” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 72) in my secondary school strengthened my conceptualization of my Hodinohsyó:ni identity, which had longitudinal impacts during my educational transition to university.

One space of coming to know that I can clearly recollect experiencing at the beginning of every school day was the Thanksgiving Address or the Ohe:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk—the matters that come before all else—to bring our minds together as one and to offer our gratitude towards Creation. My teachers and Elders repeatedly explained that the recital of the Ohĕ:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk is necessary when gatherings exceed three or more people. As Mohawk (2008) describes, the Ohĕ:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk functions as a

means to approach difficult matters from a common place. In other words, we start all gatherings from consensus whereby everyone acknowledges and agrees that life cannot exist without the support from Creation before addressing issues that could potentially be divisive. Though reciting the Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk may appear as checking the box of Hodinoḥsyó:ni protocol, the significance of reciting powerful words each and every day is charged with the ability to transform people.

Returning to my own high school experiences, each day began with a recital of the Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk as a school community, but given that the student body of the school was rather small—approximately 30 people—I was often called upon to recite the Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk, taking an average of 10-15 minutes from start to finish. The Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganq̄honyóhk was normally verbally recited by one individual, either through reading from a physical copy or relying on memory, and when it concluded with “dánetoh (done)”, the congregation of students and teachers dispersed to their assigned classes—whether grade 9 English, grade 12 English, or grade 11 Native Studies. This daily blessing in an educational context ceased upon graduation and my entry into conventional or mainstream post-secondary education, which lacked any space or recognition for Hodinoḥsyó:ni students.

Since graduation, I found myself to be somewhat reflecting feelings of separation that Tadoda:hó *may* have experienced when being forcibly removed from his community. Similar to physical removal, I had *progressed* from the K-12 education system by meeting expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education and I then received my Ontario Secondary School Diploma in June 2012. However, upon successful graduation, I was forced to make a life-altering decision—leave my community for higher education or attend the local post-secondary institution, but not

accomplish my educational aspirations in being a student at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario.

As Tadoda:hó had experienced, I had left my community (village) for higher education (the wilderness), which was extremely terrifying. I was terrified because the world of higher education (the wilderness) felt dangerous and getting lost (losing parts of my identity and the path back to my community) was possible because each day in higher education was another day being away from my community (village). However, a major difference between my experience and that of Tadoda:hó's experience is that I was unknowingly *equipped* to embark on my journey into higher education. This was the opposite of Tadoda:hó for he was ill-equipped to leave home and live alone in an unknown place (the wilderness).

Upon arrival in post-secondary education in September 2012, I felt I had ventured into a mysterious wilderness lacking "cultural mirrors" (Sinclair, 2007, p. 72). When classes started, I immediately felt overwhelmed and unwelcomed. My reasoning is because there lacked physical spaces and opportunities to support my everyday need of *being Hodinohsyó:ni*. Instead, I felt acculturation or being absorbed into the dominant society of higher education was my only choice in being successful in this unknown wilderness. As a result, I constantly felt self-withdrawal from higher education was the only solution because I was resisting acculturation. However, a monumental shift or an awakening occurred once finding mentors and exploring opportunities to *make spaces of coming to know*.

Through resisting the urge to acculturate, I recognized spaces of coming to know, as I experienced in high school, are bound not by physical characteristics. Rather, I recognized that spaces of coming to know are also abstract spaces, which ultimately had profound influences throughout higher education. In turn, rather than waiting for systemic reforms of higher

education to *make space*, I sought change and pushed for my own space of coming to know whether that be a non-physical space or a physical space. For instance, there was a common pattern across my post-secondary education to explore and embed Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge in my assignments. For example, I can speak highly to the belief statement assignment I submitted for my Native Studies course in my Bachelor of Education program (please see *Artefact 1* in Appendix A). When I review the diagram as part of my self-study, I can see clearly how I made a Hodinohsyó:ni space of coming to know. Moreover, this diagram of my belief statement of my teaching philosophy and practice as an educator in the K-12 public education system emerged from Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems.

Without any prior conscious realizations, I can now see how I was thinking in *Hodinohsyó:ni*, which I believe is a longitudinal impact of my K-12 experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programs. *Thinking in Hodinohsyó:ni* means my worldview and approach towards any subject or content is viewed conceptualized through a Hodinohsyó:ni lens. In reference to my belief statement, one prominent cultural symbolism I included was the *Deyohahá:ge Gaswéhta* (the Two-Row Wampum Belt). This is depicted as the two purple lines in my belief statement that surround the “dish” from the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt.

I adapted this teaching—normally associated with the relationship between the Hodinohsyó:ni and Europeans—to better reflect a Hodinohsyó:ni understanding of my teaching philosophy and praxis. In retrospect, I can see that I recognize and honour two types of knowledge systems—both a European and an Indigenous way of knowing. In education, my approach to teaching through the *Deyohahá:ge Gaswéhta* becomes a metaphor in representing my acknowledgement and privileging of both knowledge systems when approaching and delivering curricular content in mainstream education. Honouring both knowledge systems is



essential because both have strengths and weaknesses. Where one knowledge system is weak, the other compensates. In closing, when posed with the challenges of adjusting to higher education, my educational experiences had instilled feelings of motivation to excel and to make spaces of coming to know whenever those open opportunities emerged. Moreover, the *Ohé:doh Gaihwadéhgoh Ganqhonyóhk* was instrumental in my successes in higher education as giving thanks to Creation is not restricted by physical spaces. If anything, my high school provided a temporary physical space for these ongoing ancestral-cultural, linguistic and spiritual practices.

### **Educational Account of *Guest Visitors*: Analysis of Confronting Self-Oppression**

By applying a critical analysis to my own educational experiences in grade 8, I learned that I was unknowingly carrying out an act of self-oppression. I was *purposefully* choosing mainstream provincial education over the culture-based community programs offered at Kawenni:io/Gawēni:yó Private School. And in reference to Tadoda:hó's story, I experienced similar feelings that Tadoda:hó had held towards himself with regards to being separated and forcibly removed. Rather than seeing himself as part of a community with a unique capacity or role, Tadoda:hó was conditioned to believe his gifts and extraordinary capabilities made him *different* in the negative, or different in how he must forcibly suppress his gifts (acculturate) before having the ability to participate in his community (dominant society).

Tadoda:hó's story parallels my experiences in grade 8. I believed my Hodinošyó:ni culture was different in a negative or deficit sense because it clearly had little to no place within dominant Euro-Canadian schooling or society. I had internalized a deficit view of Hodinošyó:ni language reclamation programming in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory which resulted in a self-oppression connected with my worldview. For example, I failed to weigh or foresee the positive longitudinal impacts of a Hodinošyó:ni culture-based education. I automatically

assumed the *greatest* opportunity in becoming successful in society was to achieve my goal to enroll in university and this meant choosing mainstream education as the *best* possible route for secondary school over any consideration of Indigenous education that had sustained and best served my ancestors and community.

This deficit perception of my own Indigenous education was strongest in my thoughts when contemplating options for secondary school. For example, through analyzing my educational accounts, I can hear myself repeating over and over: “Bobby, you will never accomplish anything through learning your [Hodinohsyó:ni] language.” These negative thoughts stemmed from a constant revisit of the cultural clash or navigating a dilemma whereabouts I “interpreted the split in curriculum (i.e., culture based curriculum versus academically or disciplined based curriculum) as an identity choice or dichotomy” (Hermes, 2007, p. 57). In essence, I had to decide between being Hodinohsyó:ni with a community school or to acculturate into dominant society in order increase my chances to enter or be admitted into post-secondary education.

Through critical self-reflection of my Grade 8 schooling experiences, I can now understand how self-transformation had occurred. As opposed to succumbing to the pressures of assimilation, I confronted the negative stereotypes and deficit assumptions regarding Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programs by revoking my application to Hagersville Secondary School and after learning about my older brother’s great experiences at Kawenní:io/Gawēni:yó Secondary School from a conversation with my mother. I was determined and adamant that Hodinohsyó:ni culture-based education had extraordinary potential and should never fall under negative scrutiny in comparison to mainstream education systems.

**Educational Account of *Trip to Ohí:yo: Analysis of Indigenous Resurgence***

During the winter semester of 2020, I was employed as a seminar leader for the *Contemporary Challenges: Resilience, Resurgence and Re-imagination in Modern Indigenous Life* (INDG 1002H) course through the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies—Trent University. In preparation for a seminar on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, students were required to select an interview from Ryan McMahon's (2014) podcast series, *Red Man Laughing*. Upon opening the hyperlink, I immediately selected an interview with Anishinaabe writer, scholar, teacher, and parent, Dr. Leanne Simpson. In this interview, Simpson and McMahon's conversation focused on Simpson's (2011) book, *Dancing on our Turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. While listening, I was captivated by Simpson's understanding of how Indigenous peoples can build and maintain Indigenous resurgence.

As Simpson explained to McMahon (2014), colonialism had catastrophic impacts that shatter *the mirror* and it is everyone's responsibility to find the pieces and begin piecing things back together or start the process of re-building.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, current and upcoming generations of Indigenous peoples have inherited accumulative responsibilities for previous generations in *piecing the mirror back together*. More importantly, Simpson stresses that piecing the mirror back together requires Indigenous peoples and youth to recognize their own gifts and that they all serve fundamental responsibilities in building and maintaining Indigenous resurgence.

After hearing this metaphor of the mirror, I immediately re-visited the story of Tadoda:hó in hopes of finding potential connections. In the process, I identified parallels that link my educational experiences in a Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation program with Simpson's

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<sup>3</sup>Though not explicit, Simpson (2014) is referring to re-building Indigenous nationhood. Though re-building nationhood is vague, I believe re-building Indigenous nationhood consists of reclamation of Indigenous Knowledge systems, self-determination, treaty rights, education, reclaiming control over land, political structures, strengthening communities, families, and individuals, plus more.

notion of re-building nationhood and maintaining Indigenous resurgence. Going back to Tadoda:hó's story, Honohsyoní:do was adamant that success was only possible when all hodiyanęhsq were of ska'nigohá (one mind) or focusing on an objective in unison. Meaning, all hodiyanęhsq were to disregard any and all temptation or *distractions* and *think with one mind*. If ska'nigoha was lacking, then their mission to establish the Great Law of Peace would fail as Tadoda:hó would become an important hoyá:neh within the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy.

In relation to Simpson's (2014) metaphor, building Hodinohsyó:ni nationhood meant bringing together the meanest and cruelest people known to the people who became the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy. Approaching these notorious individuals was an uneasy task, especially when considering individuals like Tadoda:hó. Like re-building Indigenous nationhood, each hoyá:neh had to recognize they each held a shard of the mirror. Without unison and collaboration, any type of re-building or resurging is very difficult to accomplish. In reviewing this section of Tadoda:hó's story, collaboration was essential in healing Tadoda:hó in bringing him into the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy.

In response, collaboration was undoubtedly present throughout my educational experiences in K-12 Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programming. Collaboration, in this regard, was notable through the community involvement in the different education programs and to varying degrees. Community involvement meant many community members from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory played different roles and to varying degrees in my schooling and in the education system. Community involvement ranged from one-time or isolated crafts or traditional practices sessions such as making water drums or cornhusk dolls, while more significant community involvement and control occurred through employing community-recognized cultural teachers as staff at Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School. For example,

some teachers at our high school held leadership positions in our community's longhouses or cultural places where members assemble to conduct ceremonies. Other staff members worked with Traditional Medicines and healing within our community. This was an implicit blessing because our teachers' external lives had profound impacts on pedagogy, especially on how their practices centred and privileged Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems and epistemologies.

Given the opportunity to critically self-reflect, I now realize not only how important this schooling experience was for my language abilities but also how proud and fond I am of my formative experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programming. Without any obvious or conscious realizations during my schooling period, I now have the pleasure in acknowledging how deeply I and my peers learned from strong and rooted people in our community's culture and Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems, which contain ancestral teachings that extend to the beginning of time. In addition, I now realize that there were other community members, outside the classroom, who played less visible but crucial roles to re-build and maintain our community's resurgence and self-determination.

Another important component in our cultural education were the unusual field trips that we would regularly take. Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Secondary School was notorious in the community for school trips to visit *unconventional* locations while conventional non-Indigenous programs did not take these types of trips. For example, rather than arranging a field trip to Europe (provincial high school), our school would spontaneously visit *random* places such as Ohí:yo (the Alleghany Reservation) in New York State. Initially, I referred to these types of school trips as unusual, unconventional or random because these trips were not long pre-planned or explicitly connected to the mainstream curriculum with a set of formal objectives. Rather, these trips were informal and organized through kinship ties and would even cross international

borders to visit sacred or ceremonial places. For example, our school visited the Kinzua Dam in the United States, constructed in the 1960s on traditional Onondowá'ga: territory.

When starting our trip, we first followed Hodinohsyó:ni protocols by having a tobacco-burning ceremony. One designated guide—the speaker—burns tobacco while speaking words to the Creators' helpers on behalf of the group, which is recited in Gayoghó:no or another Hodinohsyó:ni language. In essence, this ceremony is conducted 1) to follow Hodinohsyó:ni protocol whenever venturing to distant or unknown locations and 2) to ask for safe travel or protection from *geí: niyogweda:gé*—the four beings or Creators' helpers. After this ceremony concluded, everyone on this school trip boarded the rental vans and left for Ohí:yo.

Upon arrival, community members from the Alleghany Reservation greeted and welcomed us to their territory. In their greetings, they offered to be our tour guides. During this trip, our group visited their community, the city of Salamanca, the Faith Keeper's School (Seneca language nest), and the Kinzua Dam. While it may appear unusual or unrelated to Hodinohsyó:ni languages to visit a hydroelectric project like the Kinzua Dam during a school trip, it functioned as a springboard for retelling a counternarrative of the history and dark aftermath of a settler-driven extractive project on Hodinohsyó:ni territory.

As opposed to a conventional settler narrative extolling humans' domination over the Land, this trip became a retelling of oppression and forced removal. I learned that the Kinzua Dam had devastating impacts on Onondowá'ga: livelihood and ancestral homelands as the Onondowá'ga: were forcibly removed from their settlements alongside the Alleghany River due to flooding with the dam's construction. After the forced evacuation notices were declared, non-Indigenous settlers then ignited and destroyed Onondowá'ga: settlements. Moreover, I learned that the Onondowá'ga: challenged this hydroelectric dam project and suffered a terrible loss in

the United States Supreme Court when it was ruled against despite sufficient evidence that the Kinzua Dam was less effective than the current construction site.

Although this field trip experience may at first reading appear upsetting, oppressive or disheartening, I found many connections of my learning with the story of Tadoda:hó, especially how the doing or enactment of Indigenous resurgence requires unification of people who embody *ska'nigoha* or *one mind*. More importantly, when healing Tadoda:hó, coming together meant each *hoyá:neh* needed to acknowledge and recognize both their strengths and weaknesses. In the process, strengths of *one hoyá:neh* balanced the weaknesses of others and vice versa. This essential teaching of (re-)building or resurging was evident during my trip to Ohí:yo. We as youth from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory had a knowledge or strength deficit (weakness) regarding the history or story of Kinzua Dam's impact on the Onondowá'ga: and their ancestral homelands. However, the balance of this knowledge or strength deficit was accomplished through learning from strong and knowledgeable community members from Ohí:yo.

While there is little-to-no explicit connection of the Kinzua Dam directly impacting my community of Six Nations, the important lessons or underlying objective was to informally introduce and immerse us into learning Hodinohsyó:ni history experientially while demonstrating our interconnectedness of communities and nations within the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy. This experience made me realize that Hodinohsyó:ni communities are not isolated entities with boundaries and borders. Instead, Hodinohsyó:ni communities across all Hodinohsyó:ni territory are a house of one family as explained in the Hodinohsyó:ni Great Law of Peace (Hill, 2017). This important teaching means that our experiences with colonization and settler history is a collective experience. In other words, being *Hodinohsyó:ni* encompasses

embodied, in place or on the Land, in relation to knowing our full collective history rather than just compartmentalizing knowledge into an isolated, individualized history, or following settler-colonial historical narratives that focus on one disconnected community's history or one individual's experiences.

Returning to Simpson's (2014) concept of reassembling the mirror to foster and support Indigenous resurgence, I have questioned myself in this self-study as to what are my gifts, responsibility and roles in supporting Hodinohsyó:ni resurgence? And I have had to critically focus on how my community educational experiences in language reclamation have informed my actions to build and maintain Indigenous resurgence or piecing the mirror back together. I need to deeply ponder these questions because significant time has lapsed since my high school graduation in June 2012 and I now realize that decolonization for resurgence is a long process of acknowledging everyone's gifts and responsibilities to piece the mirror back towards holistic re-assembly.

For example, I now notice that a major shift occurred during my life's education: instead of feeling othered or different as a student, I gained significant knowledge of Hodinohsyó:ni language and history which means I have now implicitly inherited a set of teaching responsibilities to help future generations of Hodinohsyó:ni youth re-learn their collective history for pride and ancestral kinship and continuity. My, community-based Hodinohsyó:ni education, has become my responsibility to enact, build, and support ongoing Indigenous resurgence in our territory. In other words, in learning our Hodinohsyó:ni ways of speaking and knowing, I have now been taught to become the next mentor or role model of cultural resurgence and sovereignty.



### Chapter 5: Findings/Extending the Rafters

In this last chapter, I will discuss both the findings from my self-study as well as the theoretical framework that structures these findings. Honohsyoní:do (*the Peacemaker*) solidified a process within the Hodinohsyó:ni Great Law of Peace of expanding dwanóhso:t (our house), also known as a process of extending the rafters. As Honohsyoní:do explains, extending the rafters is when the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy welcomes and adopts incoming nations who seek refuge beneath the tree of great long needles of the white pine tree (Hill, 2017). My many community teachers had explained this Traditional Teaching to me by referring to the historical dwelling places where the Hodinohsyó:ni lived collectively. According to my teachers, extending the rafters transpires when new nations or *families* accept the terms of the Great Law of Peace. In accepting the Great Law of Peace, newer nations or people gift part of themselves to the collective and thus add to or extend the rafters of the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy or ganóhsa (the house). In honour of these extensions, Hodinohsyó:ni culture slightly evolves to reflect the contributions of newer people, nations and families—hence the Alligator Dance we, Hodinohsyó:ni, perform during our social dances. Although this Traditional Teaching pertains to politics of and the enlarging of Hodinohsyó:ni nationhood, it has been repurposed to serve as framework for the findings of my self-study while also holding the teaching's integrity and avoiding any misappropriation or misuse.

Three major findings emerged in this self-study that extend or strengthen the rafters of educational research on the growing longhouse of Indigenous language reclamation. These major findings include 1) confronting internal pressures, 2) building strength and empowerment, and 3) preparation for life endeavours. Each finding demonstrates that Indigenous language reclamation

education is a resurgence movement of reclaiming and strengthening collective efforts for IK, self-determination of protocols and methods, cultural identity, and community control of and sovereignty in education.

### **1. Confronting Internal Pressures**

The first finding focused on confronting colonialism as internal and external pressures. I define internal pressures as the challenges or barriers that one encounters within our minds. Internal pressures can include self-oppression, which is connected to Donald's (2012) concept of instilled colonial logics and Michel's (2012) concept of internalized programming. External pressures differ because they exist outside of one's mind control. One such example of external pressures is standardized testing many students are forced to complete in Ontario public schools in grades 3, 6, and 9. Standardized tests are reflective of neo-colonialism to Indigenous learners since they "are manifestations of Eurocentric measures of educational achievement that do not represent diverse Aboriginal learning paradigms, linguistic traditions, and holistic epistemologies" (Cherubini et al., 2010, p. 338).

From my self-study analysis, I can now understand how my thinking was conditioned or programmed into an ideology or worldview instilled by Eurocentric thinking and colonial mindsets (Michel, 2012). My own internalized self-oppression had manifested and emerged to the point that I automatically projected negative thoughts towards Hodinohsyó:ni culture-based education. Some examples that capture the essence of this self-oppression or internalized deficit thinking include the following thoughts when I was contemplating options for secondary school: "Bobby, you will never accomplish anything through learning your [Hodinohsyó:ni] language," and, "I automatically assumed the *greatest* opportunity in becoming successful in life and

achieving my goal to enroll in university meant choosing mainstream education was the *best* route for secondary school.”

I can now view these reflections as instilled colonial logics (Donald, 2012) where my mind was conditioned into believing Hodinohsyó:ni languages would provide little long-term advantage or opportunities (Michel, 2012). More importantly, this thinking was so entrenched in my psyche that behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes became automatic. I would not conceptualize or challenge mainstream education as problematic whereas Hodinohsyó:ni culture-based education was consistently subjected to some level of negative scrutiny. Interestingly, this finding extends the rafters of Michel’s (2012) doctoral work on the Chief Atahm School (Secwepemc language immersion) in the interior of British Columbia. Michel posited that a loss of Secwepemc language is associated with programming or “the belief that public education is necessary to survive in today’s economy” (p. 225). My own language education experience demonstrates the ongoing colonial structures and deployment of oppressive or deficit strategies inherent in Canadian education systems—such as the myth of economic viability—that then continue to disrupt, weaken and discredit the intergenerational transmission of IK and languages (Michel, 2012).

## **2. Building Strength and Empowerment**

### ***Empowering Self***

In my self-study examination, there is evidence of identity empowerment that commenced as I began to figure out my position within the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy along with my role as a language speaker and community member. Through this process, I identified two forms of historical narratives—collective history and isolated history—that then changed the dimensions of HK transmission and self-empowerment through cultural identity. *Collective*

history is story-making and remaking of HK that is Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy-wide and encompasses the history of all Hodinohsyó:ni (Hill, 2017). Isolated history, on the other hand, deals with one alone or segregated community that isolates the collective and ancestral connected story.

I recounted my high school trip to Ohí:yo when I was still only familiar with the isolated history of Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. This meant my understanding of Hodinohsyó:ni history was compartmentalized, fractured and incomplete; hence, I carried only one singular story of one community's history that became a knowledge deficit of not knowing more of my people's powerful experiences, strengths and struggles. The field trip moment that I describe on p. 55 demonstrates my recognition that isolated history is only one small segregated tip of the complex HK system and it does not acknowledge the power of connecting all members of the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy. In other words, isolated history is a fragment of the mirror that we—all Hodinohsyó:ni together—need to piece back into a whole (McMahon, 2014).

Although the Kinzua Dam never directly impacted my community of Six Nations, I can now recognize that our collective history as Hodinohsyó:ni is a fundamental component to being *Hodinohsyó:ni* or part of the family of one house (Hill, 2017). This realization has in turn fomented an understanding that with this knowledge I have now become a role model for younger generations of Hodinohsyó:ni youth who are exploring their own identities and membership within the Hodinohsyó:ni Confederacy. McCarty and Nicholas (2014) describe a similar phenomenon when articulating how Indigenous language reclamation programs can be empowering: “these efforts [language reclamation programs] are transforming hegemonic expectations about Indigenous languages and cultures, from loss and extinction to *resilience and self-empowerment* [emphasis added]” (p. 130).

### *Empowering Parents*

Another significant finding in this self-study was the empowerment of parents, which is a longitudinal outcome due to a community-based and community-controlled effort for schooling in Six Nations. Since Kawenní:io/Gawęni:yó Private School emerged as a parental movement, a collective effort of parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents, this education organizing resulted in a positive long-term outcome for families in my community (Kawenní:yo/Gawęni:yó Private School, 2016). For instance, my mother—empowered as a parent—was influential and critical in my education when she counselled me on my choices for secondary school (see pp. 40-41). Without my mother's guidance and empowerment to act, I would have passively chosen the colonial logic (Donald, 2012) that mainstream education was the best option for success in becoming a teacher.

### **3. Preparation of Life Endeavours**

The third finding of this self-study is that Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programming did provide me with the necessary tools and life skills when adjusting to other knowledge systems, such as Eurocentric models and navigating foreign education settings. According to Morcom (2014), if education (inclusive of all models and systems) is non-reflective of IK systems or languages, then Indigenous students are less likely to take interest or worse, may not pursue education. I can understand how relevance and irrelevance occurred throughout my educational journey, especially when transitioning to post-secondary or higher education that made me feel lost in a strange wilderness, rather than enjoying education as a place of great comfort or an inclusive space of coming to know (see p. 46).

Contrary to celebrating the milestone of academic achievement when entering the university, I experienced this higher education transition as negative and challenging. It was so

excluding that I felt unwelcomed or pushed out and that withdrawal or assimilation were my only options. Fortunately, my navigation of higher education gradually became easier through my objective of *making space* that suited my needs as a Gayogohó:ni language speaker and learner. “I was unknowingly *equipped* to embark on my journey into higher education” encapsulates my realizations that my experiences in Hodinohsyó:ni language reclamation programming had profound impacts while learning to navigate higher education. For example, my belief statement (please see *Artefact 1* in Appendix A) of my Bachelor of Education program symbolizes my attempts and successes in making intellectual space for HK and my cultural identity when the university permitted this self-determined representation. This artifact that demonstrates how my mind was influenced by my Hodinohsyó:ni language education to perceive the world through both a Hodinohsyó:ni lens and adapt to multiple knowledge systems for a type of two-eyed seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012). I have adopted a knowledge making skillset that can merge or balance to two or multiple worldviews for greater learning. Rather than waiting for systemic reforms of higher education to *make space* to suit my needs, I sought change and pushed for my own space of coming to know.

### Conclusion

In summary, Indigenous language reclamation programs are extraordinary and empowering for Indigenous youth, families, communities and nations (McCarty & Nicholas, 2016). These programs play important roles in helping Indigenous peoples and communities reclaim and preserve Indigenous languages via education because Indigenous languages act as entry points in better understanding Indigenous Knowledge, culture, history and worldviews (United Nations, 2018). Evident in this self-study, these programs are important in moving forward because the goals of Indigenous language reclamation programs exceed the preservation of language or communication between people. Rather, I argue Indigenous language reclamation programs are sites of healing since they confront and overcome internalized self-oppression that continues to impact whole communities and individuals (Smith, 2003).

More importantly, Indigenous language programs can become a sign of hope for communities because they manifest embodiments of everyday acts of Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous resurgence on an individual level for students and youth (Corntassel, 2012). And finally, of greatest significance, Indigenous language reclamation programs contribute to a growing collective conversation of Indigenous identity as language reclamation programs are increasingly spaces of coming to know HK or IK. In closing, this self-study has not only looked to my own formative educational experiences but it also proposes ideas or recommendations for community education.

I propose three recommendations for Indigenous community language programming that stem directly from my self-study findings. 1) Applaud, celebrate and honour students enrolled in Indigenous language reclamation programming on an ongoing, integrated basis. From my own

experiences as a student, I dealt with ongoing internalized oppression, both consciously and unconsciously. By having regular events, reminders or community members acknowledging and celebrating student choice as part of the school curriculum or community, the internal pressures, poor self/cultural esteem and ongoing deficit perceptions can be relieved or diminished. 2) Continue or further strengthen community involvement and community control of education—both formally and informally or through large and small events. Community involvement throughout my education had profound impacts because it reminded me that resurgence and Indigenous self-determination is possible when community are of *ska'nigoha—one mind*. 3) Explore reforming pedagogy or HK curriculum to encourage students in finding ways to build from Hodinohsyó:ni Knowledge systems in any assignments or activities. I issue this reflexive recommendation because this skill was something I had to develop much later in life, apart from my community.

We (Indigenous peoples) need our Indigenous languages because Land on Turtle Island (North America and this portion of the world) does not know English. English is emerged from European territory and is thus foreign to these lands. Research predicts that multiple Indigenous languages are *en route* towards extinction at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gomashie, 2019; United Nations, 2018). However, the efforts of Indigenous communities and Indigenous language reclamation programs discussed in this self-study indicate otherwise. Indigenous communities are emerging with their own language programs for all ages while embedded and fomenting this great cultural resurgence as the resurgence of Indigenous languages and the Indigenous world.

In closing, my self-study on K-12 educational experiences discovered profound longitudinal impacts with my own form of healing from colonial education, coming to understand my role and responsibility in resurgence and being self-determined, and coming to



know my cultural identity as Hodinohsyó:ni. Most importantly, however, my educational experiences unintentionally strengthened my spiritual connection with Shogwaya'dihsóh (He who made our bodies). For instance, the Hodinohsyó:ni Creation Story—informed by Hill (2017)—states: after Shogwaya'dihsóh collected the mud/red clay and molded the body that became the first people, they say Shogwaya'dihsóh sacrificed parts of himself when bringing the body to life. They say Shogwaya'dihsóh took parts of his body and placed them within the lifeless body. Part of his body given was his throat and the sounds they make. Due to my educational experiences, I have come to understand that if language loss persists without intervention then Indigenous peoples and all of Turtle Island will experience grave ancestral, spiritual, and knowledge loss (Battiste 1998, 2013). Like the Creation story. If our language becomes extinct, we could risk losing that part of our Creator, which he sacrificed himself in order to bring humans alive. With that being said, I have been spiritually awoken. Dané:toh nagatgwé:ni Í:' gh gwaíh agayagéhda. 'Now, that is all the best I could do.'

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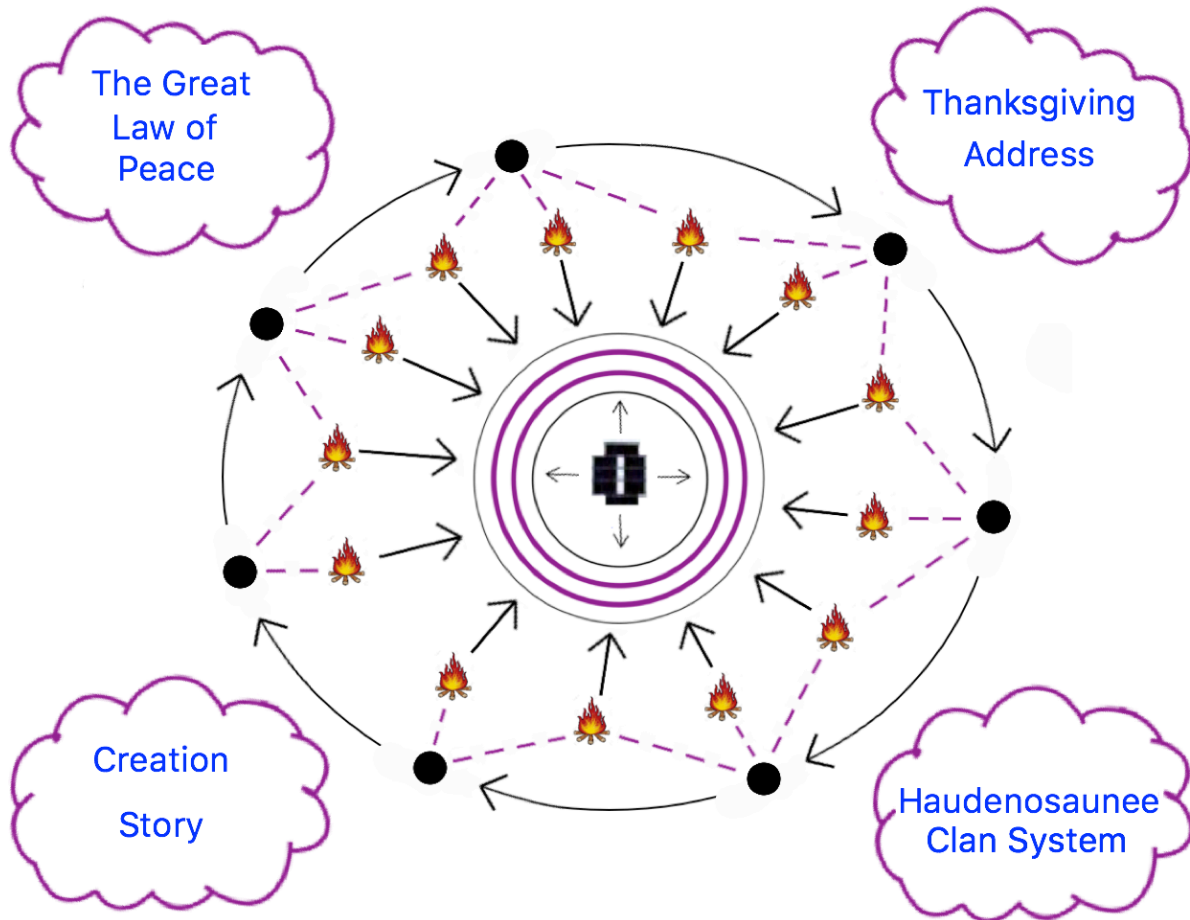
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## Appendix A: Artefacts

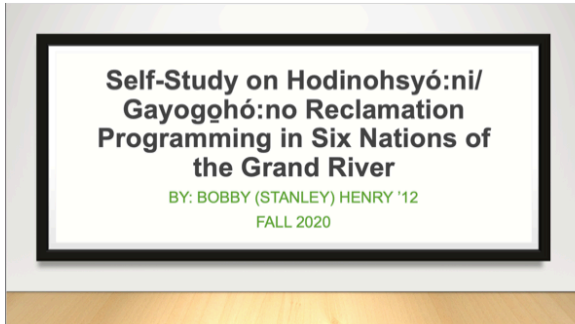


Created by Paint X

*Artefact 1.* A visual depiction of my belief statement of ideas, Traditional Teachings, and Indigenous Knowledge systems that underpin my teaching praxis as an educator in Ontario's public-school system. This diagram was created and submitted for my B. Ed. course, EDUC-4682Y: Native Studies Intermediate/Senior at Trent University (2016-2017).

**Appendix B: Community PowerPoint Presentation**

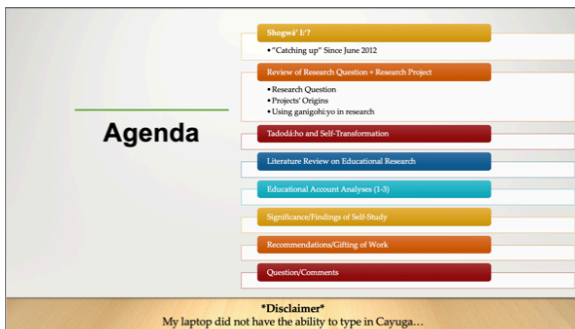
Below are the slides for this portfolio-informed presentation that I plan to deliver to my community at the earliest convenience.



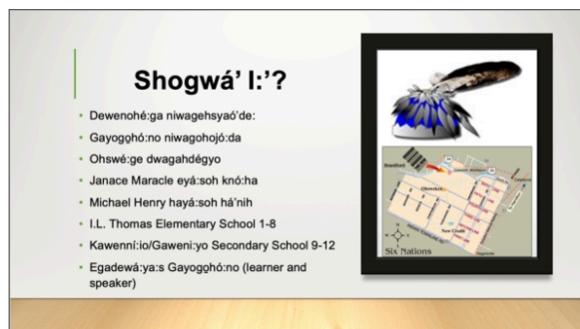
Slide 1



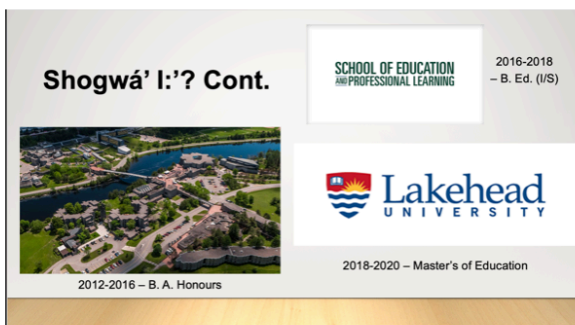
Slide 2



Slide 3



Slide 4



Slide 5




Slide 6

**Project's Origins Cont.**

Self-realization/Reflection

Posed questions to self



Slide 7

**Ganigohi:yo (Good Mind) in Research**

- My understanding?
- How does ganigohi:yo prevent further harm, appropriation, and disrespect of our Knowledge Systems?
- How does ganigohi:yo work in my research?

Slide 8

**Tadodá:ho and Self-Transformation**



Oneh Egahsawe (Now, I will start)!

Slide 9

**Literature Review on Educational Research**



Slide 10

**Educational Account Analyses 1-3**

Slide 11

**Findings**


Confronted Internal Pressures

Empowering of Self & Parents

Preparation for Life Endeavours

Slide 12

### Recommendations/ Gifting of Work



1. Applaud, reward, and honour all students choosing Hodinohsý:ni language programming

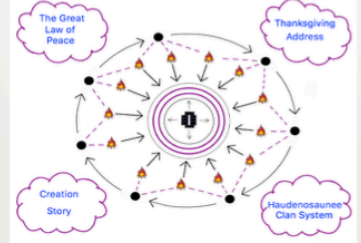
2. Continue or further strengthen parental involvement in education

3. Consider exploring or modifying teaching and/or curriculum to strengthen students' abilities to apply Hodinohsý:ni Knowledge Systems in assignments or life

**CURRICULUM**

Slide 13

### Teaching Belief Statement



Slide 14

# Questions? Comments?

Slide 15

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Slide 16

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Slide 17