

**Cree Economic Relationships, Governance, and  
Critical Indigenous Political Economy in  
Resistance to Settler-Colonial Logics**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

Through Cree narratives that draw on the past, and move into the present, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand and theorize Cree economic relations, practices, and principles. I explore two principle questions: 1) How does neoliberal governance impact Cree relationships? 2) How can principles inherent in Cree economic relationships, drawn from historical sources and oral stories, help guide economic practices today? This research provides a contemporary Plains Cree analysis of “alterNative” (Ladner 2003) economic relations within the Treaty Six geographic space.

Colonial domination in settler societies has had and continues to have an insidious impact on the social, political, and economic lives of Indigenous peoples. Each of these spheres, combined, produces an interrelated system of colonial logics. Yet, focusing merely on state domination in settler societies (what I refer to as the first colonial logic) provides a myopic vision of settler-colonial relations and, importantly, ignores an essential part of the broader story: how attempts to resist state domination may further entrench what I call the second colonial logic—economic exploitation.

Using a critical Indigenous political economy approach, I examine economic exploitation of the Plains Cree, with a key focus on settler-colonial logics within neoliberal governmentality. I explore this undertheorized phenomenon—the correlation between economic exploitation and mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual conflict for Indigenous peoples—which can result in a settler-colonial—

induced dissonance. Specifically, my dissertation makes a case for the Cree to shift away from state recognition towards alternative modes of resistance.<sup>1</sup> Utilizing a Nehiyawak peoplehood method, I draw from oral histories, Cree storytelling, and knowledge holders to provide specific principles and practices found in Cree knowledge systems that speak to Cree economic relationships and resistance to settler-colonial neoliberalism. Principles such as *mâmawi-h-itêyihitamowin* (thinking about all), *manatisowin* (civility), and *kiskinowâpamewin* (learning through observation), as well as practices such as *emekinawet* (gift-giving) are a few examples. Although made complex through the overarching settler-colonial and specifically neoliberal logics, the contemporary practices of resistance explored are shown to re-engage Nehiyawak peoplehood<sup>2</sup> in both time-honoured and original ways.

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<sup>1</sup> In terms of alternative modes of resistance, I draw from Coulthard's analysis of Indigenous misrecognition and the need for "transformative praxis" (2007, 456) and "grounded normativity" (2014b, 172).

<sup>2</sup> I draw from the substantial work on Indigenous peoplehood (Cornstassel 2012; Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003; Stratton and Washburn 2008; Robert Thomas 1990).

## Dedication

To five generations of Wuttunee women, including:

Loretta (nikâwiy ᵹᵹᵹᵹᵹ), Elsie (nikawis ᵹᵹᵹᵹᵹ), Lillian Marie (nohkom ᵹᵹᵹᵹᵹ),  
Martha (nicâpân ᵹᵹᵹᵹᵹ), and Marie (Lillian's nohkom ᵹᵹᵹᵹᵹ)

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to my committee for joining me on this journey: Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez and Val Napoleon (Co-Supervisors), Dwayne Donald, Robert Nichols, and Kiera Ladner (External Examiner). I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Faculty and Staff at the Faculty of Native Studies and the Department of Political Science; a special thank you to my comprehensive exam mentors: Chris Andersen and Janine Brodie.

I am very grateful for the support, invigorating conversations, and good food shared with fellow graduate friends: Emily Snyder, Brent Epperson, Cliff Atleo, Naomi McIlwraith, Tracy Bear, Melanie Niemi-Bohun, Crystal Fraser, Leanna Parker, Emily Riddle, Kirsten Lindquist, and Jodi Stonehouse. kitatamihinitinâwâw to my Cree language teachers Dorothy Thunder and Reuben Quinn, and my heartfelt appreciation to all of the Cree knowledge holders.

I also want to acknowledge the role of my MA Supervisors: Jeff Comtassel, Taiaiake Alfred, and Shauna Seneca (Community Supervisor), as well as Ellen Bielawski for hiring me (and believing in me) back in 2007.

Thank you to SSHRC for the CGS Doctoral Scholarship. I am especially grateful to my parents, to Will, to my family, and to my friends.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	viii
List of Figures .....	ix
List of Syllabics .....	x
Glossary of Cree Terms .....	xi
Preface .....	xvi
<b>Chapter 1: Critical Indigenous Political Economy .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction .....	1
Theoretical Approach .....	7
Indigenous-Studies Approaches .....	9
Self-Determination .....	17
Settler-Colonialism .....	19
The Indian Act .....	21
Colonization as Gendered .....	23
Indigenous Visions of Self-Determination .....	26
Political Economy .....	33
Neoliberalism .....	35
Indigenous Political Economy .....	39
Critical Indigenous Political Economy .....	48
Chapter Outline .....	54
<b>Chapter 2: Methods and Indigenous Methodologies .....</b>	<b>58</b>
Introduction .....	58
Indigenous Methodologies .....	59
A ᐅ"Δ↳◁· (Nehiyawak) Peoplehood Method .....	63
Archival Research .....	73
Oral History .....	75
Interpretive Methods .....	78
Cree Stories .....	78
Grounded Theory .....	79
Interviews .....	84
Limitations .....	86
Research Ethics and Axiology .....	87
<b>Chapter 3: Juxtaposing Cree Citizenship and Market Citizenship .....</b>	<b>91</b>
Introduction .....	91
Indigeneity .....	93
Citizenship .....	95
Market Citizenship .....	99
Shifting Landscapes .....	106



## **List of Tables**

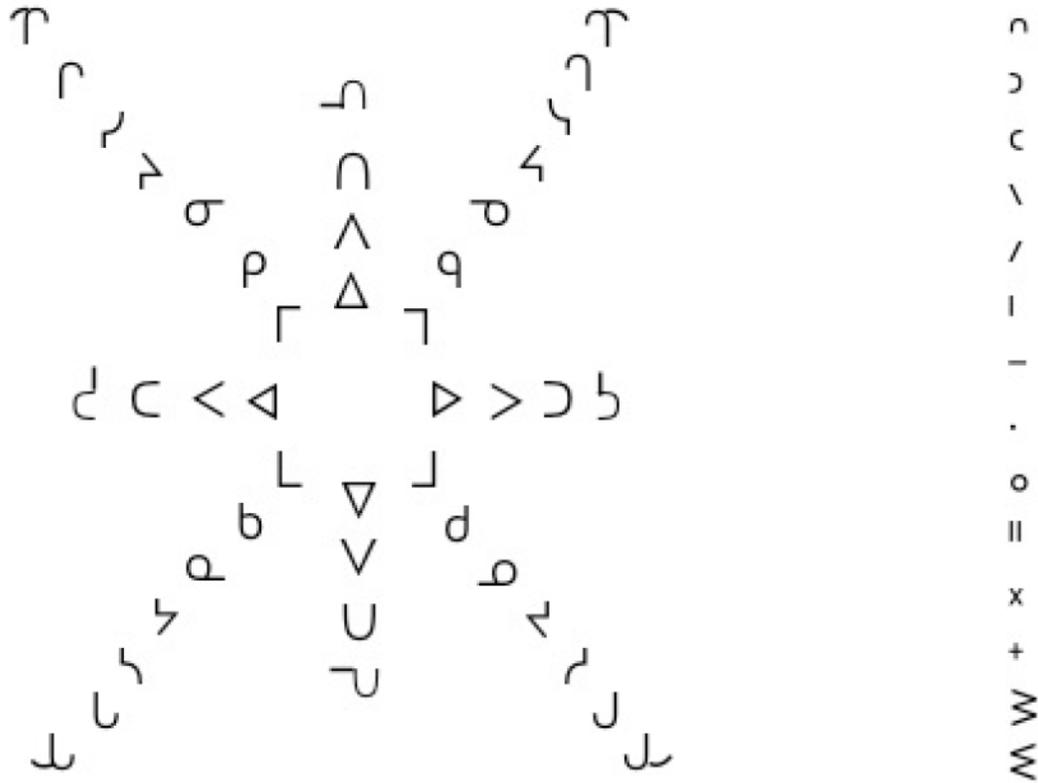
Table 1: Key Grounded Theory Characteristics .....	80
Table 2: Comments from Respondents .....	271

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Lillian Wuttunee cooking a fish (n.d). .....	xx
Figure 2: Peoplehood matrix. ....	16
Figure 3: Plains Cree camp, 1870.....	65
Figure 4: North Saskatchewan River.....	66
Figure 5: A ᑎᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ Nehiyawak Peoplehood Method.....	67
Figure 6: Planting a collective garden. ....	70
Figure 7: Being in a wetland, a mosquito net was often required. ....	71
Figure 8: Our collective garden in August. ....	72
Figure 9: Indian agent “Pass Book” for Red Pheasant First Nation, 1918; Business: “Going to Piapot for Horses.” .....	75
Figure 10: Selection of nodes. ....	82
Figure 11: Screenshot of one source related to generosity. ....	83
Figure 12: Selected Level 1 and Level 2 nodes.....	84
Figure 13: Revitalization model. ....	112
Figure 14: Letter from Alexander Morris, Lieutenant-Governor, to George McDougall, Methodist Minister (9 August 1875). ....	125
Figure 15: Cree flat boat.....	149
Figure 16: Plains sign language—“Exchange.” .....	152
Figure 17: Cree economic and governing relationships. ....	158
Figure 18: Gordon Tootoosis standing at the microphone, May 18, 1971.....	262
Figure 19: Meadow Lake district.....	268
Figure 20: Flying Dust Co-operative Garden. ....	285

## List of Syllabics

I was taught syllabics through the ᓄᓂᖅᓄᓂᓄᓂ Cahkipehikanak or Star Chart method, encompassing forty-four syllabic symbols and fourteen consonant syllabic symbols.













## Preface

### *Publication:*

A previous version of chapter four was published in Shalene Jobin, “Cree Peoplehood, International Trade, and Diplomacy,” *Revue Générale de Droit* Volume 43, no. 2 (2013): 599–636.

### *Research Ethics Approval:*

The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Ohtacihewew: Cree Economic Relations, Governance, and Political Economy”, No. Pro00032787, October 15, 2012.





different lived experience, one that is not seen as outside the norm within my grandmother's worldview. Lillian shared other hunting and trapping stories:

I was alone for five years before my sister Maria came along. I used to entertain myself by snaring rabbits. When I got a little older I would also set traps on the lakes for muskrats and then wade in the water to retrieve my catch. One time I was setting a trap and I forgot to set it off before slinging it over my back. It caught me right on my bum. I screamed and cried and jumped around until my grandmother heard the commotion. "What's the matter nosim?" she asked. "I'm caught, I'm trapped. It's got my bum," I howled. This caused quite a few laughs to the people on the reserve for years to come.

I was quite the little hunter. I also trapped a weasel. It was yellow-brown for it was during the summer. I couldn't have been too old for it looked ferocious to me, and I didn't dare go too close to it in case it scratched me, so instead I decided to get my father. "There's something in my trap," I said to him. "I don't know what it is but it's a wicked animal." My father tried to keep a stern face and agreed to go and see it with me. When he got to the trap he held the weasel with a stick while stepping on the trap with his foot to release it. The weasel's fur was useless to us in summer for to be paid anything the fur had to be white. I would hunt for everything, even gophers and I helped to clear my uncles' fields of them. (L. Wuttunee 1993)

My grandmother also addresses trade with non-Cree people, relationships, and resource management. Lillian's words bring to the forefront a different type of teaching and learning. These teachings stem from her Cree knowledge, her connection to the land, and her identity as a woman. Lillian's oral history speaks to her resistance against assimilation and the importance of passing down her knowledge to us, to reclaim Cree teachings. Her full account conveys the importance of harvesting and hunting and how this practice was cultivated in her from a young age.



**Figure 1: Lillian Wuttunee cooking a fish (n.d.).**

These words also speak to the importance of humour and humility. Her stories teach me about protocols around trapping and how hunting for food and trade was and is part of Indigenous economic relationships. I am thankful that Lillian lived with us while I was in high school and during my undergraduate degree. During the last year of my undergraduate degree I took two introductory Native Studies courses and started to ask her a few questions. She had answers, including significant knowledge around historic and

contemporary Indigenous politics and acts of resistance that her father, James Wuttunee, and other family members had joined. My grandmother Lillian passed away the following year, in 2002. It saddens me that I did not ask more questions and that I did not spend more time learning from her.

I did not know what I wanted to do after high school. My Aunt, Elsie Wuttunee, decided to be a mentor in my life; she was a high school teacher and school administrator. She was one of the early First Nations women to attend university on the prairies. She told me in a matter-of-fact, expectant voice that there was a need for Aboriginal women business leaders and that I should join the business faculty at a university. I did as I was told. After my degree, I started my own consulting company working for Aboriginal organizations; I learned to take the

lead in helping with conference organization, membership planning, and research assignments. Still considered a youth, I also became involved in Indigenous youth organizing through volunteer opportunities related to the environment and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Specifically, I helped create an Indigenous Youth to Youth project. This initiative partnered Indigenous youth in Canada with Indigenous youth in the South Pacific; we travelled and completed one- to three-day workshops in five First Nations communities in Canada gathering First Nations youth voices about sustainable development. We created a documentary that we showed in Johannesburg, South Africa as part of the United Nations' 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The next year, I began an MA in Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria. My aunt Elsie appeared pleased with my new idea to become a teacher, but she passed away during my first term and could not witness its fruition. Although my undergraduate degree is from a right-leaning business school, my master's is from a radical Indigenous program exploring Indigenous colonialism, decolonization, and postcolonial theory and practice. This academic unit focuses on praxis—turning theory into action; initiating practical acts of self-determination with Indigenous people individually, and in their nations. With the teachings from my MA program,<sup>3</sup> I have long wanted to critically analyse the argument that Indigenous peoples must be economically independent from the

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<sup>3</sup> My first MA term paper for Dr. Taiaiake Alfred was titled “Economics in the Mind, Spirit, Heart—An Indigenous Perspective” (December 12, 2003). The ideas and questions from this 2003 paper formed the initial thinking around the themes and questions for this dissertation.



resource extraction. Resource extraction has diminished everyone's ability to live at a subsistence level by decreasing wildlife populations and increasing the harmful toxins found within the food system. This has left some Cree communities without adequate subsistence options (see footnote 9 in chapter one for an example). A subsistence livelihood relates to the economy, but it is also intimately connected with social connections and culture practices (Kuokkanen 2011). To state it another way, to lose the ability to live with the land impacts not only the entire economy of a people (historically and today), but also the entire social system. I believe that having good relations with the land—through acts of resistance and resurgence—has intrinsic value, even if the land, because of human impact, is no longer able to provide for all the people's subsistence needs.

One aspect of decolonization for Indigenous peoples is the reclaiming of Indigenous stories, languages, and ways of thinking. As Cree society has a strong oral tradition, I am drawn to using stories for my own work. It is also a way to explore how these stories have complex teachings and understandings within them. I use Cree stories to see how they speak to rebuilding Cree economic relationships.

## Chapter 1: Critical Indigenous Political Economy

### Introduction

Colonial domination of Indigenous peoples in settler societies has an insidious impact on the social, political, and economic lives of Indigenous peoples. Each of these spheres—the social, political, and economic—is part of a separate but interrelated system of colonial logics.<sup>4</sup> If we only focus on state domination in settler societies, what I refer to as the first colonial logic, we miss an important part of the larger story. Namely, how attempts to resist state domination may further entrench what I call the second colonial logic—economic exploitation. For example, current self-government initiatives commingle with market forces to further exploit Indigenous lands. Similarly, the focus on capitalist exploitation of the land as a way for Indigenous peoples to gain increased financial independence from the state exemplifies the second type of colonial logic. This entrenchment, enacted over many years, slowly builds layers and layers of subjugation as Indigenous societies are, on the one hand, further brought into the logic guiding colonial policies and practices, while simultaneously resisting that very logic on the other hand.

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<sup>4</sup> I draw from Robert Nichols's idea of categorizing different modes of settler-colonialism. For example, he explains two modes of settler-colonial governmentality as "the strategies of 'ordering-taxonomizing particularity' and 'difference-blind universalizing'" using the example of enfranchisement of Indigenous peoples and nations as a "political technology of assimilation" (Nichols 2014, 105–107).

Canadian economic progress has cost Indigenous peoples,<sup>5</sup> undermining their collective rights to economic security and self-determination. From the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, the Canadian government's initiatives aimed at fostering Indigenous economic development have failed repeatedly. They failed both in basic economic terms and in relation to the broad social indicators of the quality of individual and community life. Beavon and Cooke (2003, 209) provide statistical evidence to show how Indigenous peoples<sup>6</sup> continue to have the lowest quality of life among Canadians, and among the worst in the developed world.

Capitalist exploitation has especially (negatively) affected Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states like Canada. A study applying the United Nations Human Development Index explores this paradox; although Canada ranked number one in 1999 and consistently at the top of this index in terms of social and economic indicators, statistics of First Nations living on reserves show a ranking of seventy-ninth, ranking below nations like the Philippines (seventy-seventh) and Saudi Arabia (seventy-eighth) (Beavon and Cooke 2003, 201–209). Canada's socio-economic "progress" has consistently been at the expense of Indigenous peoples, through a process of economic exploitation. I see capitalism on this land (Canada) predated and creating the environment for settler-colonialism to take hold over

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<sup>5</sup> I use the terms Indigenous to refer to Métis peoples, Inuit peoples, and First Nations peoples. I use the term Aboriginal to refer to the identities and relationships entrenched in Section 35 of the *1982 Constitution Act* defining *Aboriginal* as Métis, Inuit, and Indian. I use Metis or Métis depending on how the collective I am referring to spell it. For example, it is Metis Settlements of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

<sup>6</sup> This statistic is related to First Nations.

Cree and other Indigenous peoples.<sup>7</sup> This is evident through the fur trade era. If capitalism is the investment of money in anticipation of a profit (Fulcher 2004, 2), the birth of capitalism here started with the fur trade, where Innis's staples theory<sup>8</sup> explains how staples (furs, etc.) were taken from Indigenous territory with the profits being invested to gain wealth at the metropolis in Britain, with Indigenous lands being the hinterland. With settler-colonialism following, the metropole or core became the Canadian State and, I argue, the hinterland continues to be Indigenous lands where staples are exploited to increase the wealth of settler-Canada. Although I see external social indicators as important to demonstrate the uneven development path under capitalism, it is also important to critically analyse the impacts of external social indicators such as those related to quality of life. For example, Finley-Brook (2011) argues that "Economic parity is an externally defined benchmark that may often require mainstreaming and integration" (347). Indigenous peoples are interested in controlling their own economies in their own ways and in modes that also improve their societies—acts of self-determination.

A common public critique of Indigenous self-determination is that it is not feasible without economic independence from the settler state. This critique serves to push Indigenous communities to look outside their community for

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<sup>7</sup> Frank Tough (2005, 524) writes that economic exploitation preceded political oppression for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

<sup>8</sup> In the staples theory, the core (e.g. Britain) dominates the periphery or hinterland (Canada during the fur trade era): export of different staples shapes the regional economy's development and its increasing dependency on the core (R. B. Anderson 1998, 36; Innis 1999).

economic development initiatives that might promise a stronger capital portfolio. This has led to radical transformations for Indigenous peoples, who find themselves increasingly governed from the outside and by the logic of the global market. This story is being told. What has not been fully explored is Indigenous-nation-specific resistance to economic settler-colonial logics, namely Cree acts of resistance. The dual force entailed in revitalizing Cree economic relationships, in the context of Cree resistance, has a logic of its own. That logic is the subject of this dissertation. This intervention in the literature will ground a critique of neoliberal governmentality in a Plains Cree context while also providing accounts of Cree-centred resistance. Although this dissertation is focussed on one Indigenous people, other Indigenous peoples can utilize the method provided to revitalize Indigenous economic relationships by drawing from wisdom held within each society's oral traditions and by their knowledge-holders.

Settler-colonial logic, related to the economy, is a double-edged sword. The first part is about control—governing control. You can see this through the *Indian Act*, which legislates First Nations people and communities “from cradle to grave” (Crane, Mainville, and Mason 2008, 79). What is often missed is this second colonial logic: Colonialism has also centred on disrupting and destroying Indigenous economies. For example, stealing our resources for profits during the fur trade (for example, HBC's purchase of Indigenous land), through resource extraction (for example, oil and gas companies operating on Indigenous lands), and then the government creating and forcing economic-development programs linked to modernization (for example, policies arguing Indigenous cultures hinder

economic development, and that once we assimilate into white society we will be able to develop economically) (Erasmus and Dussault 1996a, vol. 2, chap. 5).

There is an ironic aspect to this settler-colonial logic. Getting more freedom from the Canadian government by negotiating self-government or by economic development through opening up lands to multinational corporations places Indigenous people under the governance of the global capitalist market (Castro-Rea and Altamirano-Jiménez 2008). It trades one master for another. For example, a multinational corporation starts an oil and gas project in an Indigenous community in Canada and in exchange the corporation will hire a few community members to operate some of the equipment. Then the corporation has to build a road, which increases external traffic. The oil and gas project and the new road disrupt and displace the moose, elk, muskrat, and so on. The fish now have tumours and are not fit for human consumption. The community can no longer drink the water from the river because of industrial toxic waste leaking from the tailing ponds. The community can no longer be self-sufficient and feed itself. In this example self-government for Indigenous societies encouraging economic and political independence from the Canadian government pushes Indigenous societies aggressively into the second colonial logic: economic exploitation from opening Canada's lands for faster resource development.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A real-life example is the Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN) in northeastern Alberta; they signed Treaty 8 in 1899 and a Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) was negotiated and settled with the federal government in 1986. The TLE included 12,280 acres of land, including land for reserve sites, and a cash settlement. In 2009, a TLE cash settlement was ratified by MCFN

The goal of this dissertation is to understand and theorize Cree economic relations, practices, and principles, drawing on the past, and moving into the present through narratives from the Cree. I explore the following questions: How does neoliberal governance impact Cree relationships? How can principles inherent in Cree economic relationships, drawn from historical sources and oral stories, help guide economic practices today?

This research is a contemporary Cree analysis of *alterNative*<sup>10</sup> Indigenous economic relations within the Treaty Six geographic space. The current neoliberal ideology impacts Indigenous peoples in very specific ways, often revealing the contradictions and inherent problems of capitalistic systems; by *alterNative*, I

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membership related to the unaccounted Bill C-31 membership that was initially left off the Band lists for the purpose of the first settlement (Mikisew Cree First Nation and Dalhousie University. Cities & Environment Unit 2011, 8). In *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada found that the Crown breached its duty to consult in regards to a proposed road on traditional MCFN territory (Mikisew Cree First Nation v Canada (Minister of Canadian Heritage)). Regarding governance, the TLE providing land to MCFN “facilitated government off-loading of control over band-related political and economic matters, proving once and for all that neoliberalism, government control, and resolved land claims are interconnected” (Slowey 2008, 10). As the TLE was required to ensure Alberta’s resource economy proceeded unencumbered (Slowey 2008, 34), these state negotiations have further entrenched the settler-colonial capitalist-exploitation logic, adding the additional burdens of a market citizenship logic on the Mikisew Cree. The relationship to the land continues to be important to the community. Mikisew Cree’s vision statement clearly establishes the connection between the land and identity (Mikisew Cree First Nation and Dalhousie University. Cities & Environment Unit 2011, 73). The MCFN explains that most members rely on wild game for a substantial portion of their diet with time on the land also being important (“Mikisew Cree First Nation” 2014). On May 12, 2009, the MCFN and other First Nations appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, asking for a moratorium on development projects until health-related studies could be completed. “In February, an Alberta Cancer Board report showed Fort Chipewyan residents had higher rates of certain types of cancer than they should have” (Brooymans 2009). The extreme distress over the impacts of oil sands development is apparent: “After the water is used to extract the oil from the bitumen, it is stored in end pit lakes or tailing lakes that seep toxic chemicals into the groundwater (Grant, 2009; Timmone, 2007). This seepage threatens the long-term quality of both ground and surface water of the region” (Mikisew Cree First Nation and Dalhousie University. Cities & Environment Unit 2011, 13). A Treaty Six Cree example is provided in chapter seven.

<sup>10</sup> I draw from Kiera Ladner’s use of “AlterNative,” understandings of Indigenous peoples based on their own sociopolitical systems (Ladner 2003a).

refer to Indigenous economic relations that stray from the guiding neoliberal framework while resisting the usual capital relations found in such settler-colonial countries as Canada. By reimagining and rearticulating alternatives, my goal is to link Indigenous economic resurgence and enhanced self-determination in ways that are useful for Cree society in twenty first century.

### Theoretical Approach

Settler-colonial governing systems and current neoliberal logics have attempted, and are currently attempting, to disassemble and reconstitute Indigeneity, thereby altering social connections, governing practices, and economic relationships. Settler-colonial logics in Canada have attempted to decimate the social, political, and economic systems of Indigenous societies. These logics change over time but one integral factor of the current settler-colonial mode is the neoliberal ideology. As in the social and political, colonialism can also be traced through an economic lens; through it, we can examine how state economic interests, policies, and practices have impacted Indigenous peoples.

In this dissertation, I show that historical and current settler-colonial governing systems—including neoliberal forces—have and are incorporating and reconstituting Indigeneity, altering social relations, governing practices, and economic patterns to serve the needs of capitalism. My grounded-theory approach generates new research avenues to understand Indigenous perspectives, explore oral traditions, and examine other research. My main purpose is to identify alternative Indigenous economic relations that occur and are not captured by

typical neoliberal understandings of Indigenous economies. Deepening our understanding of economic relations among Indigenous peoples will contribute to a unique perspective and offer new directions for policies and practices regarding economic resurgence for Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, alternative economic relations can provide a different understanding of Indigenous self-determination, one that is in marked contrast to state-defined self-government.

My theoretical and methodological approach to this research is located at the intersection of political science and Indigenous studies. I draw on theoretical approaches in Indigenous studies and a political-economy perspective on the relationship of economy and Indigeneity. In this chapter, I delve into the specific theoretical approach that I bring to this study, critical Indigenous political economy (CIPE). This is a new term for an approach that draws on theoretical work in Indigenous studies and political economy. To map out this theoretical approach, I examine the Indigenous-studies and political-economy literature with a special focus on three concepts: self-determination, peoplehood, and neoliberalism. I then explain and provide distinctions between the works in Indigenous political economy and CIPE. Each section builds on its predecessors.

Within the Indigenous-studies literature, I begin with the debate over discipline-specific versus interdisciplinary approaches. I then focus on self-determination as a key concept, specifically as a turn away from state recognition (Cornthassel 2012; Coulthard 2007) and a move toward the revitalization of Cree economic relationships. I then consider political economy with a focus on neoliberalism as

governmentality, another key concept that informs my critique of the governing logics being exerted on Indigenous peoples, specifically the Cree. Indigenous political economy explains the literature and trajectory of Indigenous economies on Turtle Island while the final part of my theoretical approach gathers the components in each of these sections to explain CIPE.

### *Indigenous-Studies Approaches*

The Indigenous-studies theoretical approaches and research programs are said to be a movement towards “intellectual self-determination” (Deloria 1998, 25–27; Forbes 1998). Since the 1960s, this movement has been premised on liberating the Indigenous “intelligentsia” from colonialism (Forbes 1998, 12). Cavender Wilson (2004) argues that scholars need to examine the truths from Indigenous forms of knowledge and attune them to the contemporary world, while simultaneously creating space for Indigenous ways of being. Cree scholar Verna St. Denis cautions Indigenous Studies scholars within our different decolonization strategies to leave room for dialogue. She writes: “Ironically, cultural revitalization can be seen to unwittingly encourage a form of cultural fundamentalism that leads to an informal but nonetheless daunting cultural hierarchy that can encourage notions of authenticity among Aboriginal people” (St. Denis 2007, 1069). In this section, I explore the literature on Indigenous-studies approaches, explaining how I use the discipline-specific peoplehood paradigm (or peoplehood matrix) within my theoretical approach while also drawing on interdisciplinary approaches, such as

political economy.<sup>11</sup> Self-determination is an important concept in the development of Indigenous studies; within this lens, I will examine settler-colonialism for Indigenous peoples in Canada, *The Indian Act*, colonization as gendered, Indigenous visions of self-determination, and the concepts of colonial dissonance and spirit-gifting.

For Jace Weaver (2007, 239), the discipline of Native American studies is interdisciplinary, comparative in nature, and strives to understand topics from a Native perspective and is committed to Native communities. For Clara Sue Kidwell (2009, 5), five concepts are foundational to the discipline of Indigenous studies: a relationship to the land, a more accurate understanding of the historical contact between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, Indigenous peoples' inherent right to sovereignty, the importance of Indigenous languages, and the contemporary significance of Indigenous music, dance, literature, and art. Comparatively, Canadian authors speak of Indigenous studies approaches as “the setting right of names” and the need to have the discipline “empower Indigenous people and be a forum for the articulation of Indigenous stories and languages, and a vehicle for Indigenous people to describe themselves on their own terms” (Kulchyski 2010, 13–24). According to Robert Innes, the three goals of Indigenous studies approaches are to “access, understand and convey Native cultural perspective(s),” carry out community beneficial research, and use research methods and theories that accomplish these objectives (Innes 2010, 2).

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<sup>11</sup> The breadth of these research questions lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach, which draws on insights from Indigenous Studies and Political Science.



predates settler-colonialism in what is now Canada, and the teachings within the language illuminate the ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (Nehiyawak) worldview. This is not a “freeze-dried” (Cruikshank 1994, 405) language; similar to any language still in use, the lexicon adapts, but it is based on a Cree worldview. Indigeneity’s connection to colonialism is not the sum-total of Indigeneity.

For this work, I draw from the teachings in ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (Nehiyawewin) and ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (Nehiyawak) worldview, utilizing the teachings and language in how I approach understanding the work, gathering the data, and representing it within the dissertation. Although my research approach is a critique of colonial society in relation to Indigenous societies, I also see the ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (Nehiyawak) worldview as centring the research questions as well as providing the intellectual resources to answer the research questions (and address the problems that colonialism has created). Specifically, positioning my research in this way may sometimes imply that my understanding of the ᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ (Nehiyawak) worldview is ahistorical. For example, I intentionally choose not to use adjectives such as ‘traditional’ before Cree normative practices or principles that have a historical basis. My purpose is to demonstrate a decolonial approach in my work that points to the resilience of Cree ontological relations that continue in spite of the effects of colonisation and the deconstructory forces of capital. There is a distinction between Western and Indigenous metaphysics: Most Western societies view time as central, seeing the world historically and developmentally, whereas most Indigenous societies hold places or lands as central (Deloria Jr. 2003, 62–63; Coulthard 2014a, 69–70).



studies curriculum is not currently developed for Indigenous peoples, and students are not trained in the appropriate methodologies, ethics, and research needs of Indigenous communities. Champagne (2007), M. A. Jaimes (1987), Stratton and Washburn (2008), and Akan (1999) believe that Indigenous studies should aspire to use Indigenous-specific methodologies and theories, and Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) believe this aspiration can be a form of resistance to colonialism. For example, M. A. Jaimes (1987, 10) suggests a Native American Conceptual Model (which uses the holistic nature of the circle or the wheel) is useful to the discipline to explain how knowledge is not compartmentalized.

Riding In suggests that if Indigenous studies is an academic discipline, then scholars “must adopt the AIS paradigm” (Riding In 2008, 71). The American Indian studies (AIS) paradigm<sup>15</sup> is based on service to Indigenous communities, advocacy research, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous faculty control over the discipline and curriculum (Riding In 2008, 70). Furthermore, he sees scholars who use “exogenous theoretical paradigms” (Riding In 2008, 71) as harming the Indigenous-studies discipline as “it weakens AIS through its reliance on models that consider Indians to be marginal peoples” (Riding In 2008, 71). Other Indigenous-studies scholars have equated postmodern and postcolonial theory to “a contemporary version of assimilation theories” (Champagne 2008, 79). I disagree with Riding In (2008); I believe Indigenous-studies scholars,

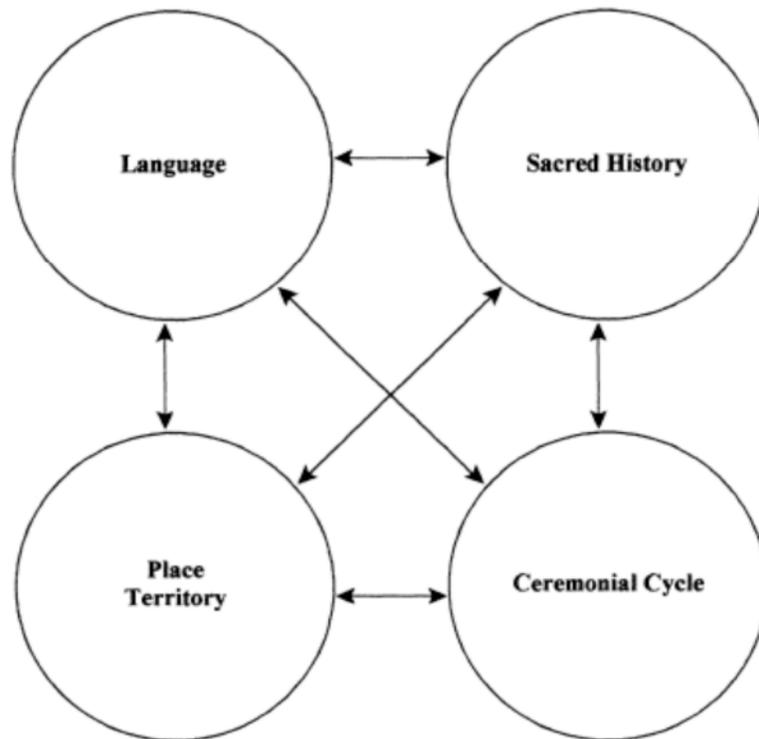
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<sup>15</sup> As described by Riding In (2008), AIS was envisioned by the “intellectual giants” who led the “American Indian Studies movement” beginning in the late 1960s. It is premised on challenging “the hegemony of academic imperialism by advocating a model that would span the social, political, and economic issues facing Indian nations and peoples” (69).

departments, and faculties should have the freedom to develop and apply the appropriate theories based on the specific teaching and research needs at hand. Similar to Mihesuah, I think we should support faculty to do interdisciplinary work as well as develop Indigenous-studies-specific theory in Indigenous studies (Devon A. Mihesuah 2006, 131–132). Stratton and Washburn (2008) takes up Holmes, Pearson, and Chavis’s “Peoplehood Matrix” (2003) as an Indigenous-studies-specific theoretical framework. The peoplehood concept moves beyond the construction of nation states as the only political form deserving authentic self-determination and is developed for Indigenous peoples specifically in settler-colonial contexts. I draw on the peoplehood concept through my theoretical approach and my research method.

The peoplehood concept has been theorized as encompassing four interlocking components: language, ceremonial cycles, sacred history, and ancestral homeland (Robert Thomas 1990). Figure 2 pictorially explores the interdependent nature of these elements. When I use the “Peoplehood Matrix,” I am conceiving of histories in a plural sense, as opposed to understanding history in the singular or linear sense. More specifically I want to acknowledge that histories are political and sites of helpful contestation, debate, and sometimes consensus. To account for this, I will use the broader term history, histories, or “sacred living histories” (Corntassel 2012, 89). Peoplehood extends beyond the limits of racialization or nationality (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003, 16). Historically, adoption was a common practice for Indigenous peoples where membership was not defined by blood quantum. Jeff Corntassel sees the components of peoplehood as a way to

protect against what societies hold most dear, “the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories...” (2012, 89). Chapter two explores how I draw from this approach for my Indigenous research method, a ᏁᎠᎩᎠᎩᎠᎩ (Nehiyawak) peoplehood method, and chapter four applies the peoplehood matrix to the Plains Cree people.



**Figure 2: Peoplehood matrix.**  
Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003, 13)

The diversity of Indigenous-studies perspectives can be seen as a microcosm of the diversity found within Indigenous societies. There is a growing camp within the discipline of Indigenous studies who advocate for a diversity of theories. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith state that Native Studies is turning towards theory (Simpson and Smith 2014, 1). It is important to acknowledge the role of education in normalizing settler-colonialism but also how “a heightened

awareness about the history of ideas, and the practice of ideas, will not only allow us to theorize and critique robustly but also help us to build a more just set of relationships between people” (Simpson and Smith 2014, 8). Andersen argues that the “density” of contemporary Indigeneity requires a range of theoretical and methodological tools and therefore advocates drawing on whatever approaches are necessary (Andersen 2009). Cheyfitz believes that Native Studies should begin to focus on (post) colonial theory, particularly related to Indian state law as an example of ongoing colonialism. Grande calls for a new Red pedagogy where AIS engages with critical theory and, reciprocally, critical theory grows in relevance to Indigenous studies (Grande 2004, 28). She challenges proponents of critical theory to examine its homogenizing tendency and foundation in Western thought. She also challenges Indigenous-studies scholars to “theorize the complexity of Indian-ness” and resist privileging “local knowledge and personal experience over the microframes of social and political theory” (Grande 2004, 3). Grande sees each approach strengthening the other. A Red pedagogy is said to be “historically grounded in local and tribal narratives, intellectually informed by ancestral ways of knowing, politically centred in issues of sovereignty, and morally inspired by the deep connections among the Earth, its beings, and the spirit world” (Grande 2004, 35).

### *Self-Determination*

In this section, I explore self-determination first by examining settler-colonialism, then settler-colonialism through the *Indian Act*, the gendered aspects of colonialism, Indigenous visions of self-determination, and ending with colonial

dissonance as a helpful diagnostic model and the concept of spirit-gifting as an place-based practice for resistance.

A foundational concept within Indigenous-studies approaches, self-determination has sometimes been used too abstractly, without situating itself within the literature of the discipline or real-world struggles, thereby losing its meaning and transformation potential (Deloria 1998, 25–27). I see Indigenous self-determination, in its most basic form, as meaning Indigenous peoples have the right to determine our own futures based on our own ontologies and from within our own diverse societies. Self-determination is an empowering concept; it is about moving forward with determination and drawing on a people’s collective knowledge and skills to create their own reality. Some scholars see Indigenous-studies approaches as centred on the concept of self-determination (Larson 2009, 25). The meaning and methods to achieve self-determination differ, from achieving a type of sovereignty<sup>16</sup> based on *Indigenusness* (Cook-Lynn 1997, 11) to an understanding of self-determination as being “able to follow one’s own path” both individually and collectively, while respecting others’ right to self-determination (Forbes 1998, 12). In this regard, Deloria raises concerns around individual self-determination, as it denies the responsibilities to and accountability from Native communities, and has the potential to subvert Indigeneity (Deloria 1998, 26–30). When Deloria first used the term self-determination in 1966 related to Indian policy, he saw self-determination as opening up a defined space between

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<sup>16</sup> Sovereignty is different from supremacy with consensual interdependence being part of self-determination, see Forbes (1998, 15).

Indigenous peoples and the federal state (Deloria 1998, 26). Self-determination is also defined as a way to reclaim identities and control over Indigenous peoples' own lives (Stevenson 1998, 49). Cavender Wilson believes self-determination is precisely about determining the unifying structures and traditions of Natives (Cavender Wilson 2004, 75). Examining how self-determination has been conceived is one way scholars can continue to develop a robust discipline and aid in Indigenous societies' self-determination aspirations.

### *Settler-Colonialism*

Settler-colonialism is a specific type of colonialism, like those of British established settler-states in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. The act of settler-colonization—originally traced back to thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC—is described as settlement patterns on newly possessed lands, occupied by others, where those settling (or their home country rulers) provide “mechanisms of spatial expansion and often powerful instruments ... for establishing and enforcing control over the newly settled territories” (Lloyd and Metzger 2012, 5). Patrick Wolfe states that settler-colonies are based on eliminating Native societies: When “the colonizers come to stay—invasion is a structure not an event” (Wolfe 1999, 2). Settler-colonialism can be seen as both—a structure that enacts events (or practices) to continually self-perpetuate its legitimacy and reach. Drawing from Seed (2001) as well as McCarthy and Prudham (2004), Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez sees British colonialism centred on separating Indigenous peoples from land, while also involving Indigenous labour related to dispossession and other elements, “including the separation of nature

from society, the denigration of ‘unimproved’ nature, and the construction of a moral economy based on the exclusive control of land and its unlimited accumulation by those who could transform it” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 32–33).

There is a commonly held view that colonialism is over, especially with the end of the United Nations’ Decade of Decolonization (1990–2000), where “externally colonized” territories were supposed to have accomplished self-determination (Stewart-Harawira 2005). Importantly, self-determination of Indigenous peoples and their territories was not accomplished during the decade of decolonization (Stewart-Harawira 2005, 123–4). Settler-colonial practices form a specific type of colonialism as the settlers remain in the colonized territory.

Related to North America specifically, scholars’ broad analyses explore impacts on Indigenous economies from settler-colonialism. Lloyd and Metzger (2012, xvii) explain that the characteristics of a settler economy partially include that settlers want to become permanent residents, settlers want to exploit natural resources, and settlers and their offspring want to dominate the society, the economy, and the culture of the area. It is argued that in North America, settler-colonization was driven by the settlers’ desire for land (Lloyd and Metzger 2012, 10). Lloyd and Metzger explain that one feature of British settler-colonialism in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and southern Africa “was that their land regime, initially one of an imperial or company ‘grab,’ became by the 19th century largely based

on the emerging concept of private property rights within a market economy” (Lloyd and Metzger 2012, 14).

The idea that Canada is still a colonial country is contested. The *Statute of Westminster, 1931* is seen as a defining moment as Canada received legislated independence from the United Kingdom. However, although formal British control of Canada may have ended, settler-colonialism has not ended for the Indigenous peoples in Canada. I use the term settler-colonial to refer to the ongoing subjugation that Indigenous peoples face. The *Indian Act* is one major example of ongoing legislated settler-colonial policy. There are many other practices of colonialism that Indigenous peoples have historically and currently face. Postcolonialism, under this light, is still an unachieved reality in Canada. The next sections will examine the *Indian Act*, the gendered aspect of settler-colonialism, visions of self-determination, and the concepts of colonial dissonance and spirit gifting.

### *The Indian Act*

The *Indian Act, 1869* had two main purposes: to assimilate First Nations until they qualified for enfranchisement, and to force an exclusively male, British style municipal type government onto First Nations (Milloy 2008, 7). Under Sir John A. Macdonald the notion of Indian nations in the Royal Proclamation and founded within treaties was changed to a view of domination and subordination where Indians became absorbed in the colonial project as wards of the state; stated in the House of Commons in 1867—“Indians were like children; they were like ‘persons

underage, incapable of the management of their own affairs' and, therefore, the government had to assume the 'onerous duty of ... guardianship'" (Milloy 2008, 7). This kind of paternalism can arguably still be seen today in specific ways. The *Indian Act* does not make reference to treaties, The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* writes that "it is almost as if Canada deliberately allowed itself to forget the principal constitutional mechanism by which the nation status of Indian communities is recognized in domestic law" (Erasmus and Dussault 1996b, vol. 1, pt. 2. ch. 9). Within the current *Indian Act*, 122 sections prescribe most aspects of a First Nation's private and public life. In the current system of the *Indian Act*, over ninety provisions give direct authority and powers to the Minister of Indian Affairs over Chief and Council (Canada 1996). There is a strong line of authority flowing to the federal government from Band Councils, but it is only unidirectional.

Under Section 81 of the *Act*, Band Councils may create by-laws on a limited range of activities (traffic, observance of law and order, regulation of water, etc). However, Section 82 (1 and 2) clarify that once enacted, the bylaw must be forwarded to the Minister of Indian Affairs within forty days, the Minister then has forty days to choose whether it is allowed. The Minister does not need to give an explanation or reason on why she or he is denying a bylaw. In the past the disallowance rate was very high (Imai 2007, 4). The court system is the only avenue of redress for First Nations. Previous to the 1951 *Indian Act*, Section 141 of that Act made it an offence for First Nations to have legal counsel. Currently litigation is a costly endeavour, in both time and resources, making it an unviable

option for many Indigenous peoples—it also forces Indigenous peoples to operate under a court system built for the interests of Canadians, not for Indigenous peoples. Significantly, during litigation the Crown ceases to have a fiduciary responsibility to act in a First Nation’s interests (Kleer, Townshend, and Imai 2008, 15). Coupling this with the percentage of decisions rendered against the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights (s. 35 *Canadian Constitution, 1982*) makes this an unproductive course of action for many communities.

There have been numerous amendments to the Act since its inception, adaptations such as those made within the *Jobs and Growth Act, 2012*. I argue that the *Indian Act* is proof of the continued colonial project in Canada. For example, in 2012 a number of bills were advanced in the House of Commons to change the *Indian Act*, this was without First Nations’ leadership and without even adequate consultation with First Nations. These exemplify the ongoing paternalism of the settler-colonial logic, but, as I explain next, they do so in a manner that specifically impacts the lives of Indigenous women.

### *Colonization as Gendered*

Given the extent to which settler-colonialism was and remains a deeply gendered project, any future visions of self-determination must be cognizant of how to incorporate emancipation of gendered oppression in its varied forms. Indigenous women were singled out for discriminatory treatment under *Indian Act* legislation that, following the legal patriarchy of the day, made their status as Indian people increasingly dependent on the status of their husbands. They were subject to rules

that applied only to them as women.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, gender has been an important conceptual lens applied to Indigenous-studies approaches; it is also essential to decolonization and gender equitable self-determination. Joyce Green suggests that Aboriginal feminist literature<sup>18</sup> and politics are a “critique of colonialism, decolonization and gendered and raced power relations in both settler and Indigenous communities” (J. Green 2007a, 21). Here the intersection of feminism and anticolonialism illuminates the particular ways that Aboriginal women are impacted by patriarchy and colonialism. She goes on to say that feminist spaces need to arise in patriarchal societies to contest them (J. Green 2007a).

Significantly, J. Green argues, Indigenous feminist analysis goes beyond other Indigenous-studies liberation critiques in that it explores how some precolonial Indigenous societies were not innocent of sex oppression (J. Green 2007a, 23). There is a debate within Indigenous studies and within political activism: Is Indigenous feminism a colonial ideology used only “among the most assimilated of Indian women activists” (M. A. Jaimes and Halsey 1992, 331).<sup>19</sup> These sorts of comments against Indigenous feminism have the effect of silencing political

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<sup>17</sup> This has been summarized as, “Section 12(1)(b) [Indian Act, S.C. 1951] provided that a women who married a non-Indian was not entitled to be registered. In contrast, section 11(1)(f) stated that the wife or widow of any registered Indian man was entitled to status. Pursuant to section 109(1), if a male status Indian was enfranchised, his wife and children would also be enfranchised. Section 12(1)(a)(iv), known as the ‘double mother’ clause, provided that a person whose parents married on or after 4 September 1951 and whose mother and paternal grandmother had not been recognized as Indians before their marriages, could be registered at birth, but would lose status and band membership on his or her 21st birthday” (Furi and Wherrett 2003, 2).

<sup>18</sup> *Halfbreed*, an autobiographical novel by Marie Campbell, is said to have started the trend of writing from the perspective of an Indigenous woman (Monture 2009, 117).

<sup>19</sup> Also, see more of this debate in Smith’s “Native Feminist Theology” (2010).

debate; such efforts to repress critical conversation have been seen as inherently problematic (J. Green 2007a, 25–27). In contrast, Grant (2009) examines the complexities in the relationship between mainstream feminist movements and Indigenous sovereignty, giving the example of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women’s (NAC) cavalier statements made against the Charlottetown Accord; stating that First Nations would be able to achieve self-government through other channels. “Making light” of these self-government aspirations alienated the two movements (Grant 2009, 106). Grant sees many issues within the mainstream feminist movement as irreconcilable with the majority of key issues of importance for Aboriginal women (Grant 2009, 107–110). Altamirano-Jiménez notes the apparent complexities of Indigenous women’s actions to feminists, not simply with the intersection of race and gender identities, but through political positions, which can seemingly “point in contradictory directions” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009a, 145).

Andrea Smith’s *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* explores the way colonial relationships are inherently gendered and sexualized, where the state perpetuates race-based and gender-based violence against Indigenous women (A. Smith 2005a, 3). Significantly, she explores how certain groups, like Indigenous women, are marked as “rapable” (A. Smith 2005a, 3). Indigenous women are also not recognized as victims of human trafficking. A 2009 policy brief examines how historic representations linking Aboriginal women to sexual availability and criminal behaviour have created a society where Aboriginal women are not seen as victims or as facing exploitation but as

confronting “a natural consequence of the life that they has chosen to occupy” (Sikka 2009, 3–4). This premise negates and completely ignores the history of racism, cultural genocide, and colonization.<sup>20</sup> Visions of self-determination have the potential to incorporate Indigenous feminist principles to overcome gender-based violence embedded in settler-colonialism.

### *Indigenous Visions of Self-Determination*

There is the potential for a positive correlation between self-determination and Indigenous women’s rights. LaRocque writes “Aboriginal women have the most to gain from self-determination, both as part of a people struggling to decolonize and as individuals struggling to enjoy basic human rights” (J. Green 2007a, 61–2). Similarly, Vera Martin, in an interview with K. Anderson, equates self-determination with respect, “allowing people to make their own decisions, being able to make choices and accepting the consequences” (K. Anderson 2001, 245). The connection between Indigenous women’s rights and safety is highlighted by Amnesty International’s recognition that Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination, among other key provisions, would provide greater protection for Indigenous women against violence (Amnesty International 2004, 41–2). A. Smith equates attacks on Native women’s status as attacks on Indigenous sovereignty (A. Smith 2005b, 123).

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<sup>20</sup> A 2006 Canadian statistical analysis finds that Aboriginal people are three times more likely to be victims of violent crimes, with Aboriginal women having the highest rates of victimization, 3.5 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal women (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, and Johnson 2006, 5). Amnesty International’s *Stolen Sisters* report condemns Canada for its inaction related to the high rates of violence against Indigenous women (Amnesty International 2004). The report substantiates Indigenous women’s accounts of specific incidents and systemic issues in the police force, justice system, and societal views.

An exciting development in Indigenous feminism is the theorizing around conceptions of nation and nation-state. Andrea Smith sees an important distinction between these two terms where nation-states are governed based on domination and coercion, whereas Indigenous feminist definitions of nation should be based on interrelatedness and responsibility (A. Smith 2005b, 118–9). Indigenous nations striving for self-determination tend to reconstruct tradition based on the rigid conceptions of the settler nation-state where gender roles are impacted differently (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009a, 143). Altamirano-Jiménez shows how Indigenous nationalistic movements can problematically construct Indigenous women’s rights as “unauthentic and untraditional,” and in these cases, self-determination does not emancipate Indigenous women (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009a, 144–5). Therefore, from an Indigenous feminist analysis, the social reproduction of Indigenous women’s “collective identities and communities are crucial and connected to their struggles for self-determination” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009a, 146). In a 2005 article exploring individual and collective self-determination, Napoleon suggests the addition of relation-based individual self-determination as including Indigenous women. Napoleon sees colonial Indigenous communities equating collective rights as those usually held by men, and individual rights as those rights claimed by women (Napoleon 2005). This tendency of colonial Indigenous communities to ignore how gender discrimination is a communal issue has been detrimental to Indigenous women collectively, and therefore detrimental to Indigenous self-determination.

One of the popular concepts theorized to operationalize self-determination for First Nations is treaty federalism. In *The Road: Indian Tribes and Political Liberty*, the authors argue that treaties create a relationship between “tribes to the federal system in a status parallel to, but not identical with, that of the states” (Barsh and Henderson 1980, 270). Bear Robe sees treaty federalism as a process to build on existing treaties to carve out legal and political space within the Canadian federation (Bear Robe 1992, 6). For Bear Robe (1992), treaty federalism would not challenge the division of powers under Sections 91, 92, and 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. He believes treaty federalism will not “seek to destroy the integrity of Canadian statehood” (1992, 6). Youngblood Henderson’s vision of treaty federalism (Youngblood Henderson 2002) is distinct from Bear Robe’s in what is constitutionally needed to achieve it.<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, political philosopher James Tully marks the genesis of “treaty constitutionalism” in the “mutual recognition and accommodation of the Aboriginal peoples of Americas and the British Crown as equal, self-governing nations” (Tully 1995, 117). He argues that despite efforts of the modern constitutionalists to extinguish treaty rights, “this ancient constitution is part of US constitutional law and Commonwealth common law, and remnants of it endure in practice down to this day” (Tully 1995, 119). Tully also provides

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<sup>21</sup> Significantly, where Bear Robe sees the original treaties as a basis to moving forward on *more negotiations* that would be similar to the First Ministers’ Conference Talks in the 1980s trying to fulfil Section 35.1, Henderson sees Section 35 and the original treaties providing enough constitutional space and leverage to move forward. For Henderson, treaty federalism is already a reality; however, all orders of governments need now to live up to the original spirit and intent of the treaties, see (Ladner 2003b, 180).

evidence of the use of the term *nation* to refer to Indigenous peoples during the time of treaty signing. He sees the legitimacy of non-Aboriginal governments today depending on the recognition and treatment of Aboriginal peoples as “equal, self-governing nations,” where all treaty arrangements continue rather than cease (Tully 1995, 124).

The 1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) did not specifically recommend treaty federalism, although it did suggest a return to nation-to-nation relations with the Canadian state.<sup>22</sup> RCAP recommends that both settler Canadians and Aboriginals should be considered equal participants in the treaty process. RCAP also defends the living nature of the treaties as evidenced by the on-going benefits to settler society (Erasmus and Dussault 1996a, 2:244). This assertion is similar to the one made within scholarly discourses around treaty federalism. A significant element is that RCAP includes nontreaty peoples, specifically Métis and Inuit, in its vision of a renewed relationship. Regarding the Métis, RCAP states that the nation-to-nation approach is just as appropriate for dealing with the Métis as it is for First Nations and Inuit peoples (Erasmus and Dussault 1996c, vol. 4, pt. 5.1.1).

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<sup>22</sup> “Recommendation 2.3.12—The Commission therefore recommends that all governments in Canada recognize that: (a) Section 35 of the Constitution Act provides the basis for an Aboriginal order of government that coexists within the framework of Canada along with the federal and provincial orders of government; and that (b) Each order of government operates within its own distinct sovereign sphere, as defined by the Canadian constitution, and exercises authority within spheres of jurisdiction having both overlapping and exclusive components.” (Erasmus and Dussault 1996a, 2:244)

Scholars also write that respectful relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state require the state's acknowledgement that Indigenous peoples are self-defining peoples who should not be continually forced to prove cultural distinction (Bell and Napoleon 2008, 415). Similarly, C. Jaimes sees the need to deconstruct essentialised ideas of authenticity and tradition when ensuring cultural survival and self-determination (C. Jaimes 2002, 316). C. Jaimes specifically points to obstructive binaries that define culture based on oppositions and differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (C. Jaimes 2002, 327). Napoleon and Overstall believe the development of Indigenous legal orders can assist Indigenous peoples with managing internal and external conflicts; these conflicts can include "good tradition as opposed to bad tradition, oppressive traditional practices, romanticism, and issues arising from 'sacred' law" (Napoleon and Overstall 2008, 2).

The recent literature around self-government and self-determination points to a sombre conclusion: Indigenous self-determination within the boundaries of settler states becomes subject to the "corruption" of being coerced into state-imposed structures (Stewart-Harawira 2005, 116; Napoleon and Overstall 2008, 6). Does this mean that true self-determination is an impossible goal for Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states like Canada? Returning to Glen Coulthard, perhaps the only productive sites of self-determination, at this moment in time, will occur with "transformative praxis," where every Indigenous society determines its own practices of freedom (2007), or "grounded normativity" (2014a). Jeff Corntassel sees sustainable Indigenous self-determination requiring

collective shifts from rights toward responsibilities, from reconciliation toward resurgence, and from resources toward relationships (2012). In chapter three, I critique settler-society and neoliberal governing logics, but then I draw from Coulthard's (2007), Cornassel's (2012), and A. Smith's (2005b, 118–9) views of self-determination. Specifically my dissertation makes a case for the Cree to shift away from state recognition towards alternatives; I explore Cree practices of freedom and sustainable self-determination, including an Indigenous feminist definition of Cree nationhood focussed on interrelatedness and responsibility.

To support this analysis, I draw from different concepts provided by Indigenous scholars as well as from the knowledge holders I interviewed. To be precise, I explore how colonial dissonance, resulting from colonialism, has impacted Cree people in chapter six. One of the Cree Elders I interviewed introduced me to cognitive dissonance as a concept, a psychology term to explain when a person's or group's actions are contrary to a certain belief system they hold. It can also include a condition when a person or group holds more than one set of beliefs that are contradictory (Festinger 1962; Festinger 1957). I add to this analysis to include how settler-colonialism has not only impacted cognition but also the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of Cree personhood and peoplehood. I call this colonial dissonance. I agree with Altamirano-Jiménez: Drawing on Zapotec scholar Jaime Martínez Luna's characterization of Indigenous peoples as uniquely from our cultures, we have contradictions daily with colonization; resistance and action means to address these colonial contradictions (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 42). I find cognitive dissonance helpful in my analysis, but it is a

specific type, a settler-colonial–induced cognitive dissonance, which is one aspect of colonial dissonance. Chapter six provides seven normative principles and practices that can be seen as practices to resist settler-colonial induced dissonance. Also related to settler-colonialism and neoliberalism, I introduce Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper’s concept of spirit gifting in chapter four, where a change from living *with* the land to living *off* the land for him and his community created an intense mental dissatisfaction resulting from an emotional and spiritual detachment from the land. This dissatisfaction was so intense that Ghostkeeper was motivated to revitalize his repressed worldview, which he represents in a revitalization model (Ghostkeeper 2007, 81). Ghostkeeper, through a continual self-reflective process, was able to revitalize the teaching of spiritual exchange or spirit gifting, and develop a new code which blends Indigenous teachings with Western scientific knowledge in a way that he could not accomplish before going through this process. I draw on his personal experience as well as the theoretical tools he has developed to diagnose one of the undertheorized phenomena that links settler-colonialism and neoliberalism to mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual conflict. Ghostkeeper also provides an approach drawing on continual individual and collective self-reflexivity to revitalize Indigenous practices and relations with the land in ways that are still possible in twenty-first-century North America.

Cree political scientist Kiera Ladner explains that an Indigenist approach “recognizes and affirms the existence of Indigenous political traditions and respects the autonomy and traditions of Indigenous peoples and their respective

knowledge systems, hence allowing for the sharing of knowledge in a respectful, non-coercive and non-intrusive manner” (2001, 34). Ladner further explains how this approach allows the researcher to create “conceptual bridges” to other theoretical perspectives (Ladner 2001, 35). My research employs a qualitative approach that privileges a grounded and inductive relationship between data collection and answering the research question. This Indigenous approach, from a Cree theoretical lens,<sup>23</sup> is amalgamated with a political-economy perspective.

### *Political Economy*

Political economy, at the most basic level, refers to the reciprocal relationship between the economy and the political, although it is often applied to that between states and markets (Gilpin 1996, 9). Michel Foucault, drawing on Rousseau, distinguishes between the economy of the family and a new “art of government” that emerges with the introduction of “a new subject”—population. The “birth of political economy” responds to this shift in governments’ primary focus (Foucault 2000, 217–218).<sup>24</sup> Political economy, an interdisciplinary approach, is often said to be based on two streams, one being a Marxist analysis and the other founded in

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<sup>23</sup> Within any society or analytical approach there are diversities in perspective. I do not want to convey that there is a singular or static Cree analytical lens.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault explains how: “it is the population itself on which government will act directly, through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on” (Foucault 2000, 217). Foucault’s “governmental rationality” analysis focussed narrowly and broadly, where government is “the conduct of conduct;” Colin Gordon explains Foucault’s notion of government could “concern the relation between self and self, relations within social institutions and communities and, finally, relations concerned with the exercise of political sovereignty” (Foucault et al. 1991, 2–3). Gordon expands that Foucault was chiefly concerned about government in the political realm (Foucault et al. 1991, 2–3).

classical liberal economic thought, like that of Adam Smith (Tremblay et al. 2004, 25–26). Marx’s writings on the common property of primitive societies are instructive. Similarly, the idea of primitive accumulation<sup>25</sup> described as “nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the prehistoric stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it” (Marx 1995, 1:501). In Canada, such scholars as Innis and Mackintosh have heavily influenced Canadian scholarly political-economy concepts, developing the staples theory related to the fur trade and the broader theory of rigidities (McBride 1996). Innis’s work highlights how Canadian political economy should be understood in connection to its own unique history (Brodie in Tremblay et al. 2004, 31).

The political-economy theoretical approach includes a range of streams and approaches that have developed under its umbrella. One approach under political economy is that of “moral economy.” Moral economy is the exploration of how economic activities, broadly conceived, are influenced by moral–political norms and sentiments and exploring how norms or principles are impacted by economic forces (Sayer 2000). In this framework, moral decisions are conceived not simply as principles to be followed, but usually complex situations that produce “intractable dilemmas” (Sayer 2000, 85). Within this view “markets are commonly seen as having undermined pre-capitalist moral economies with their traditional social relations and moral codes enforced by appeal to authority”

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<sup>25</sup> Coulthard (2014a) has written about primitive accumulation as applied to the Denendeh.

(Sayer 2000, 85). This is not to idealize these societies but to explore the norms and principles that can be helpful in an Indigenous political-economy analysis. Applying a normative analysis facilitates the evaluation of contemporary principles and motives as well as outcomes and what mechanisms and governing frameworks produce them, opening space to evaluate them based on earlier economies (Sayer 2000, 90). Within a moral-economy framework, “markets and other economic institutions are socially embedded, [with] economic activities extend[ing] beyond formal institutions to families and civil society generally” (Sayer 2000, 90–91). One way to approach moral economy is through the question, “What are economies, or economic activities, for?” Sayer’s answer to this question is, to “enable people to live well. What else could it be for?” (Sayer 2000, 94). In contrast to Sayer, are the outcomes of neoliberalism. I explore neoliberalism, a key concept in political economy, next.

### *Neoliberalism*

The history of neoliberalism has been traced back to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, although this is contested. David Harvey (2005) explains a trajectory of neoliberal principles that began not with Reagan or Thatcher, but the US-assisted “experiments” in Chile in 1973. Although US imperial power might provide an explanation for the “rapid proliferation of neoliberal state forms throughout the world from the mid-1970s onwards” (Harvey 2005, 9), the neoliberal turn of China, Sweden, and others are not easily explained by this hypothesis. A defining moment in the history of neoliberalism is often attributed to the Washington Consensus principles being attached as policy conditions to the World Bank and

International Monetary Fund's loans to the developing world (Hurt 2007, 1016). The triumph of capitalism through a neoliberal ideology was "symbolically represented by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1990" (Yates 2008, 97).

As a policy, neoliberalism has been marked by the shift from a Keynesian model to a state favouring a comparatively "unfettered operation of markets" linked with the globalization of capital (Larner 2000, 6). Specifically these policies can be based on five values "the individual, freedom of choice, market security, laissez faire, and minimal government" (Larner 2000, 7). The state's role is to create an environment or institutional framework to enable "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills" to flourish, guarantee the quality of money, secure private property rights, and create new markets if they do not already exist—areas such as health care, water, education, and social security (Harvey 2005, 2). Three basic tenets of neoliberalism are free trade, the free mobility of capital, and a reduction "in the ambit role of the state" (Bargh 2007, 1). In terms of policy, the "changing public expectations about citizenship entitlements, the collective provision of social needs, and the efficacy of the welfare state has been a critical victory for neo-liberalism" (Brodie 1996, 131).

As an ideology, neoliberalism is the belief that sustained economic growth is "the means to achieve human progress" (N. Smith 2007, 597) and that "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills" (Harvey 2005, 2). Neoliberalism examined in this way goes beyond the state and explores other institutions, organizations, and processes (Larner 2000,

9). Specifically, think tanks, corporate directors, and international frameworks like the IMF and the World Bank play key roles in popularizing this ideology (Larner 2000, 7). Arguably, this has moved the market into all areas of social life (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2006, 28), changing the notion of freedom to market freedom and the “commodification of everything” through privatization (Harvey 2005, 80). Regarding labour, “the figure of the ‘disposable worker’ emerges as prototypical upon the world stage” (Harvey 2005, 169), where “neoliberalization has transformed the positionality of labour, of women, and of indigenous groups in the social order by emphasizing that labour is a commodity like any other” (Harvey 2005, 171).

In a Foucauldian approach, neoliberalism as governmentality can be viewed as a “system of meaning that constitutes institutions, practices and identities in contradictory and disjunctive ways” (Larner 2000, 12). Foucault contrasted neoliberalism in the United States, based on the Chicago School, with other countries at the time. He explains: “American neoliberalism seeks rather to extend the rationality of the market, the schemes of analysis it proposes, and the decision-making criteria it suggests to areas that are not exclusively or not primarily economic. For example, the family and birth policy, or delinquency and penal policy” (Foucault 1997, 79). Neoliberalism as governmentality extends the logic of the market into other areas of society.

Through a neoliberal lens, an ideal citizen would be self-sufficient and able to compete in the marketplace (Slowey 2008, xiv). Rather than being an impediment

to development, this ideal citizen would be self-motivated to work longer hours and become increasingly self-reliant (Brodie 1995, 57). Larner expounds: “Not only are firms to be entrepreneurial, enterprising and innovative, but so too are political subjects. Neoliberal strategies of rule ... encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well being” (Larner 2000, 13). A consequence of neoliberalization is increasing social inequality (Harvey 2005, 16), where the political and social are incorporated into the logic of the market. Within this framework, poverty is conceived as a problem related to a lack of individual income or human capital solely, with no examination of structural inequalities within a society (Hurt 2007, 734). Furthermore, welfare agencies are governed through technologies such as “budget disciplines, accountancy, and audit. In association with this ‘degovernmentalization’ of the welfare state, competition and consumer demand have supplanted the norms of ‘public service’” (Larner 2000, 13). Although there might be less government, Larner argues there is more market governance (Larner 2000, 12). Similarly, neoliberalism has been defined as “those practices and policies which seek to extend the market mechanism into areas of the community previously organized in other ways” (Bargh 2007, 1).

For the purpose of this study, I draw on the concept of governmentality, specifically related to how Plains Cree people have been negatively impacted by the state’s practices favouring the interests of the settler population. As the Cree were not initially considered part of the “population” (and arguably still are not in terms of most settler-state government policy), they were not afforded the benefits

of “the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on” (Foucault 2000, 217). In chapter three, I explore neoliberalism through the lens of governmentality by analysing the rationality that promotes characteristics of free markets, individuality, the reduction of the state, increased market governance, and the reach of the market into all areas of economic, social, and political organization. Foucault’s broad interpretation of governmental rationality focussing on relations and interpersonal relations is also instructive to my analysis of Cree economic relationships.

### *Indigenous Political Economy*

Connecting interdisciplinary theoretical approaches (in Indigenous studies and political science) is a new and undeveloped area of Indigenous political economy (IPE). Belanger (the first Canadian author I have seen use this approach) sees it as beneficial for studying precontact North American Indigenous societies: it can “(1) help us discern how the forces of politics and economics influence community development, and (2) inform us how community-based ideologies related to consumption and leadership are structured to help maintain political and ecological balance while ensuring the prosperity of community members” (Belanger 2010, 26). Belanger goes on to define Indigenous political economy as “The study of the environment’s influence on Indigenous political institutions and economic ideologies as these respond to prevailing ecological forces and the dynamics associated with Creation. Never forgetting the centrality of the interrelational network, it is imperative that we consider how the actions of individuals in a community influence its overall dynamic and how that one

community in turn can affect its neighbours” (Belanger 2010, 26). Belanger provides an important foundation to explore IPE, although his focus on precontact Indigenous societies may appear limiting there are other scholars who also study Indigenous societies and the economy in the present. An IPE approach can enable a multi-scale and broad analysis of Indigenous politics, society, and economy. Although authors do not necessarily define their approach as IPE, there is fair bit of writing in this area. The following section on IPE explores the literature related to Indigenous economies, with a focus on Canada.

There are different ways to conceptualize the history of Indigenous economies in Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP 1996) outlines four periods: the precontact period, the fur trade period, the settler period, and the dependency period. Within their analysis, the precontact period is based on living in balance with nature, as opposed to accumulating wealth, and being tied to local means of subsistence that could fluctuate seasonally (Canada 1996, chap. 5). This period is also defined by extensive Indigenous nation-to-nation trade facilitated by extensive existing Indigenous trade routes (Canada 1996, chap. 5). The writers of RCAP argue that during the fur trade, Indigenous peoples were initially able to continue preexisting economies and that patterns of trade and contact were region and resource dependent (Canada 1996, chap. 5). This era includes the impacts of external markets with the volatile boom-and-bust cycle of staple production.

The settler period is marked by Indigenous peoples being “pushed to the margins” by settlers: newcomers “often simply assumed they had title to these lands and

resources” (Canada 1996, chap. 5). This is also the period of numbered treaty making, although it is noted that in many cases there was no treaty offered. This era includes state enforcement of laws, imposition of Western government and governance structures, restrictions on mobility, underresourcing of treaty obligations, and the beginning of Indigenous peoples participating in the market wage-labour economy, mostly in manual occupations (Canada 1996, chap. 5). The last era, the dependence period, began sometime between 1930 and 1960 and is said to continue in some form to the present day. This period is defined by dislocation and dispossession for the benefit of the settler economy. Resource companies are encouraged by settler governments to establish resource industries (oil and gas, mining, forestry, etc.), devastating territories where Indigenous peoples live and have historic jurisdiction, and where they are trying to continue subsistence-based practices (Canada 1996). RCAP also documents federal and provincial regulations that harm Indigenous economies during this period.

The First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) explores the history of Indigenous economies in North America related to asset eras, where assets are described as holistic in nature (2004) including financial, physical, natural, institutional assets, human-capital, cultural, social-capital, and political assets. Within this analysis, the six historical asset periods are stewardship, exchange, theft, extraction, mismanagement, and restriction, with the current era moving towards one of asset control (First Nations Development Institute 2009, 52). Asset stewardship, FNDI explains, was a time period of Indigenous societies’ control over their assets, with economies based on Indigenous epistemologies where

stewardship “allowed for highly sophisticated and complex economies of asset use and accumulation to occur” (ibid.). Treaty making and negative impacts to Indigenous lands mark the exchange era where these lands were previously under exclusive Indigenous control. The asset theft era focussed on the settler-state’s failure to fulfil the obligations made under the treaty era, including broad occurrences of theft of land and resources, and facilitated by state policies. Within the era of asset extraction, natural resources on Indigenous lands are increasingly extracted without significant benefit to Indigenous communities and left “immeasurable expenses related to environmental pollution, loss of land use and destroyed ecosystems” (First Nations Development Institute 2009). Asset mismanagement overlaps with the previous era and is described as paternalistic policies that give settler-states control and the corresponding mismanaging of trust funds, leases, and financial assets of Indigenous communities. FNDI argues that the last three eras have left Indigenous societies impoverished and in a state of dependency on the state. Asset restriction is described as the usurping of control by the settler-state over Indigenous assets. FNDI (2009) argues that Indigenous societies need to create asset strategies to move towards asset control and that this is needed for self-determination.

In terms of economic relationships, when did settler-colonialism take hold for the Plains Cree? One argument is that this occurred during the fur trade. Interestingly, Frank Tough writes that the commercialization that began during the fur trade provides a lens to understand Indigenous economic history, where “aspects of daily life increasingly fall under the influence of exchange value. More and more

needs or wants become satisfied by market related activities” (2005, 32). Furthermore, the privileging of market tendencies is an old colonial logic with “longstanding unequal integration with mercantilism” (Tough 2005, 31). Tough sees the commercial capitalist market as being the first and most enduring institution impacting Indigenous peoples in Canada (Tough 2005, 31). Arthur Ray believes the fur trade facilitated Native welfare through the Hudson Bay Company providing assistance in the form of unpaid advances, gratuities, and “destitute accounts” (Ray 1984, 16).

In contrast, and substantiated by academic Rotstein, Hildebrandt argues that Native societies changed less during the fur trade than the European traders who had to adapt to Native trade practices (Hildebrandt 2008, 6). For Moore, the main change for Natives was based on an economic conflict<sup>26</sup> that occurred between capitalism and “communal modes of production” (Moore 1993, 15). Frank Tough states that on a macroeconomic scale, Indigenous trappers and middlemen did not have real equity and were not partners within the fur-trade system; where real decision-making power was under European control (2005, 54). Furthermore, he critiques other scholars’ denial that economic exploitation preceded political oppression (2005, 54). This economic exploitation continued with the reserve system. Boldt argues that the “reserve system was created to clear Indians out of the way of Canadian economic development” (1993, 231); removing Indigenous peoples from their full territories to enable capitalist pursuits.

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<sup>26</sup> Moore’s analysis focuses solely on the economic factor, arguing that neither religion, culture, nor ethnicity formed the conflict (Moore 1993: 15).

Currently, many scholars advocate for neoliberal<sup>27</sup> conceptions of capital accumulation and corresponding institutions of governance for Indigenous peoples (Slowey 2008; Jorgensen 2007; T. Anderson, Benson, and Flanagan 2006). The main difference is how these authors conceive of the “problem” related to “undeveloped” Aboriginal economies. Tom Flanagan argues that Native peoples’ “problem” rests in a lack of private property and “as quickly as possible, Indian bands should receive full ownership of their reserves, with the right to subdivide, mortgage, sell, and otherwise dispose of their assets, including buildings, lands, and all natural resources” (Flanagan 2006, 50). Similarly, Hernando De Soto articulates the need for private property systems where private property rights are enforced. From this perspective, land can be used as collateral for economic enterprise (De Soto 2000; Woodruff 2001). Opening up land<sup>28</sup> for marketization is in the interests of both the Canadian state and the private sector, often to the detriment of Indigenous peoples (Castro-Rea and Altamirano-Jiménez 2008, 246).

The Canadian government recently initiated the \$200 million *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development*. This plan conceives of the “problem” as

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<sup>27</sup> In the past few years, the literature has explored the differences between neoliberalism and a social-investment state, debating if there is a shift towards the latter. Similar to neoliberalism, free markets are still privileged within the social-investment state as the “primary and most effective organizing principle in society” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009: 137). In this analysis, I focus on neoliberalism.

<sup>28</sup> There are distinct categories of Indigenous lands as defined by the Canadian state. Val Napoleon notes how “there are reserve lands—as set out in the Indian Act as per the Constitution Act, 1867. There are treaty lands—those lands surrendered as part of the treaty negotiation—Indigenous peoples maintain an interest in these lands. And there are Aboriginal title lands where there is no treaty and Aboriginal title may or may not be established” (personal correspondence, February 2, 2014).

Indigenous communities not providing the right business environment for investment. The *Framework* report highlights resource development as a major “win” for Aboriginal peoples, “Over \$315 billion in major resource developments have been identified in or near Aboriginal communities. In the North, the mining and oil and gas sectors have proposed developments in the range of \$24 billion that will impact Aboriginal communities in the next decade” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2009, 9). The report goes on to suggest that the government will work with those “opportunity-ready Aboriginal communities that have stable, efficient and predictable investment climates attractive to business and investors” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2009, 20). This “opportunity-ready” caveat refers to those communities that have adopted Western liberal forms of institutions and are federally determined as a good “fit” for neoliberal economic development.

Within neoliberalism, citizens are compelled to be self-sufficient and not a burden on the state (Slowey 2008, xv). Calvin Helin, an author from the Tsimshain Nation, argues that dependency is the issue for Indigenous peoples, which a focus on how Aboriginal economic development is the solution. To create fear amongst Indigenous leaders and Canadian policymakers, the author argues that financial state dependency combined with an Aboriginal “fiscal demographic tsunami” regarding the Aboriginal “situation” could completely overwhelm Canada’s financial capabilities (Helin 2006, 59). To counteract this perceived threat, Helin proposes a development model focussed on resource extraction that leverages Aboriginal land, cash, and labour (Helin 2006, 177–190). He suggests Indigenous

communities impose “development leverage over traditional territories” by creating procurement agreements (Helin 2006, 188–190). Similarly, the RCAP recommends (2.5.10) that resource-development corporations operating on Indigenous territories should provide training, employment, and economic “rents” (Canada 1996, vols. 2, 857), with a strong correlation between self-government, control over lands, and improved Aboriginal economic development.

Self-government and improved self-governance have been strongly correlated to Aboriginal economic development. Bureaucratic control has also been seen as the main issue facing Indigenous peoples. Slowey believes that capitalism is a tool for First Nations to achieve self-determination through the mimicking of neoliberal principles constituting the “ideal citizen” (2008, xiv–xv). She elucidates that self-determination is the neoliberal ideal as “self-determination re-establishes the proper balance between First Nations and the marketplace that was perverted by the welfare state, giving rise to an unhealthy dependency on the state” (2008, 17). Robert Anderson sees a positive relationship between control of resources, business development, economic development, self-reliance, self-determination, and self-government. Within his “First Nations Development Circle” model, improvement in one area is believed to positively impact all other areas (R. B. Anderson 1998, 14). Ineffective and undeveloped governing infrastructures have been correlated to undeveloped Aboriginal economies.

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development has largely succeeded in promoting its model of development to Indigenous peoples in

Canada and the United States, as well as impacting policymakers at the state/provincial and national levels. Through a national American study, researchers Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt, positioned successful economic development as having everything to do with “good governance,” specifically: sovereignty, institutions, and culture.<sup>29</sup> Some authors critique the Harvard Project for not accounting for the complexity of issues within their approach. Specifically, Dowling writes that the Harvard Project’s “myopic view of the world that a society must take in order that these conditions take hold (acceptance of the use of natural resources for economic gain, the resulting environmental degradation and stratification of society, to name a few) is not congruent with their [Indigenous] cultures” (2005, 125). A critical analysis shows that, although very well packaged and very friendly to neoliberal policy, the Harvard Project has failed to thoroughly examine or reveal the negative implications and limitations of their approach (Dowling 2005).

One strain of the Aboriginal economic development literature critiques specific aspects of neoliberal ideologies that suggest changes to make the neoliberal paradigm better fit Aboriginal communities. David Newhouse challenges the tendency to denigrate and displace Indigenous knowledge within Aboriginal economic development discourse (2004, 38). His answer is to create “people-centred” development theories that enable “an economy that affirms Aboriginal cultural identities and the autonomy of Aboriginal cultures and that sanctions and

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<sup>29</sup> Leadership and strategic thinking are also listed as secondary in importance.

supports Aboriginal social structures and values” (2004, 40). W. A. Wuttunee similarly sees a need for a shift in approaches towards economic development for Indigenous peoples that acknowledge the spiritual and material relationship to the land (W. A. Wuttunee 2004, 12–14). Within this approach, neoliberal ideologies are not completely rejected, but they are altered, where the idea of “maximum” short-term profit is replaced with the notion of a reasonable profit that seeks to honour the limits of the planet’s resources (W. A. Wuttunee 2004, 7).

### *Critical Indigenous Political Economy*

Discourses promoting Indigenous peoples’ success at capital markets have not exhaustively examined the consequences of the hegemonic individualizing powers of capitalism, but scholars have particularly critiqued the application of neoliberal instruments of capitalism and governance to Indigenous communities (Alfred 2005; Altamirano-Jiménez 2004; Bargh 2007; Corntassel 2008). This section explores the literature that is developing within a theoretical approach I term critical Indigenous political economy (CIPE).<sup>30</sup>

Glen Coulthard’s recent scholarship draws from political theorists and frames a critical Indigenous political economy approach. Most recognizably from the work of Karl Marx, the process of primitive-accumulation expropriates the means of production from noncapitalist societies signalling a defining moment in capitalist extension, the preparation of the sociopolitical and material conditions for the

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<sup>30</sup> Although I connect this literature to CIPE, the scholars referenced might or might not define their work similarly.

“birth of capitalism” (Coulthard 2014a, 58) in a territory. Glen Coulthard sees primitive accumulation as not only a moment, but also providing an understanding of the ongoing dynamics shaping relations between Indigenous peoples and Canada (2014a, 56). For Coulthard, Marx’s analysis can be better applicable to Indigenous peoples in settler-colonialism by: (1) framing the analysis with a prioritization of colonial domination (2014a, 59–60); (2) understanding how Indigenous labour in a settler-colonial context becomes increasingly superfluous (2014a, 61); and (3) “how colonial relations are not primarily exerted through “brute force” or “servitude,” but through the asymmetrical exchange of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation” (2014a, 62). In this process, Indigenous peoples are increasingly disconnected from land, disconnected from their own forms of governance, drawn into capitalist market conditions, and the modes of social organization are reorganized (Coulthard 2014c; Coulthard 2014b).

Indigenous scholars Maria Bargh (2007, 2) and Rauna Kuokkanen (2006; 2008) have positioned neoliberalism as the new form of colonization affecting Indigenous peoples. Using New Zealand as a case, Larner states that the Maori struggle to self-administer their social services in culturally appropriate ways has neoliberals and some Maori finding “themselves in unexpected agreement on a key theme: namely, the dangers of continued dependency on the state” (Larner 2000, 18). Therefore, the claims of this social movement can be seen as “part of the discursive construction and reconstruction associated with welfare state restructuring” (Larner 2000, 18). This is the exact predicament many Indigenous

peoples in Canada face. The Indigenous goal of self-government has constructed the movement along a neoliberal trajectory, directly impacting collective ideologies and Indigenous relationships with human and nonhuman beings. Along this economic-development path, Indigenous peoples can achieve self-government to lessen state control and simply exchange it for hegemonic forms of market control. Zapotec political scientist, Altamirano-Jiménez, sees the dispossession of Indigenous peoples to lands occurring under the “liberalization of nature” and then a “double dispossession” occurring with neoliberalism; where there is “the recognition of a reified version of indigeneity [based on entrepreneurialism, the self, and the economy] and through a bundle of rights based on the alienation of Indigenous peoples’ relations and responsibilities to place” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 75). Neoliberalism as colonization (affecting Indigenous peoples) charts a connection between colonial and neoliberal practices (Bargh 2007, 1).

Indigenous peoples striving for meaningful self-determination are being pushed into an inferior version of citizenship based on the values of the market. Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez argues that neoliberal government practices regarding Indigenous demands serve to disconnect self-government from Indigenous territory (2004, 349). The marketization of Indigenous citizenship is tantamount to “the fulfilment of Indigenous demands through market integration and the rhetoric of cultural recognition” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2004, 350). In a neoliberal framework, then, Indigenous rights and citizenship are commodified in a way that is profitable for the Canadian state. I draw from Altamirano-Jiménez’s

connections between place-based understandings of Indigenous peoples and specific impacts of neoliberalism. She explains,

First, Indigenous understandings of place are grounded in specific locations that are heterogeneous. Second, the articulation of indigeneity is a contingent product of global articulation and local agency; different articulations of indigeneity have different effects on different places. Third, the neoliberal spatial and economic reorganization of Indigenous peoples' places rests not only on the liberalization of the natural environment per se but also on schemes aimed at commodifying "saved" or "untouched" nature for the global market. Fourth, although neoliberalism is a hegemonic project, it has materialized differently in diverse places." (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 3)

Political economy can facilitate a multiscale analysis where a research question can be explored in a broad context—settler-colonialism, impacts of neoliberalism through a nation-state and an international lens, etc.—while also situating analysis in Plains Cree specificity. CIPE provides an approach to examine how Indigenous peoples have been affected by all of these settler-colonial processes (including neoliberal governmentality) but also Indigenous peoples' responses to challenge these forces that try to reconstitute them (or attempt to make them disappear legally, socially, or politically). Being Indigenous is a form of resistance in and of itself, but putting in practice a certain set of normative practices, grounded in an Indigenous-specific peoplehood, adds another layer of this resistance. For my work, I focus on the specific ways Plains Cree people are in relationship with the land;<sup>31</sup> the specific ways neoliberalism impacts Cree relationships with each other, the land, other human and nonhuman beings; and Cree practices of resistance

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<sup>31</sup> When I speak of relationships with the land, this is not simply an attachment to land but "a space of ontological relationships among people and between people and their environments" (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 43).

against neoliberalism. It is encouraging that the hegemony of neoliberalism is not total (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 5). Neoliberalism affects Indigenous women in specific ways, impacting Indigenous rights and framing discrimination based on the intersection of sex, race, and class (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009b; Kuokkanen 2008; J. Green 2001). As principal participants in the subsistence economy, Indigenous women are particularly subjected to the harmful effects of corporate globalization (Kuokkanen 2008, 217). The Indigenous woman's body is connected to the political, colonialism, and neoliberalism; "The body is the first place where women experience exploitation as well as sexual and domestic violence" (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 65). Neoliberalism reinforces colonial and gender inequalities affecting Indigenous peoples (Altamirano-Jiménez 2013, 74).

New literary works are beginning to theorize alternatives to neoliberalism for Indigenous peoples. In contrast to neoliberal approaches and outside the confines of capitalism, Kuokkanen explores the gift paradigm in Indigenous societies (2007). Within this view, the gift displays more than just an economic function; it is applicable to "all my relations" (Kuokkanen 2007, 23). Within many worldviews of Indigenous peoples "giving entails an active relationship between the human and natural worlds, one characterized by reciprocity, a sense of collective responsibility, and reverence toward the gifts of the land" (Kuokkanen 2007, 23). She also writes about the need to reorient Indigenous self-governance around the notion of social economy, where "the social economy recognizes the ways in which in indigenous economic systems, economy is embedded in social relations" (Kuokkanen 2011, 232). Although this new discourse is quite dynamic,



nature are given legitimacy and value outside the capitalist system.<sup>32</sup> In conclusion, CIPE, for this work, examines neoliberalism as governmentality related to Cree people. I then shift away from the state and centre on sustainable Cree self-determination focussed on interrelatedness and responsibility and using peoplehood to conceptualize Cree nationhood. Colonial dissonance and spirit-gifting are important concepts in diagnostic and insurgent<sup>33</sup> responses. I focus on alternative economic relationships, particularly Cree relationships with human and nonhuman beings.

### Chapter Outline

Chapter two presents the methodology for this study, a ᐅᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅ (Nehiyawak) peoplehood method. It explores the approaches of oral history and storytelling, drawing on a Cree-centred methodology. I use a grounded theory approach with the Cree stories, coding the stories using QSR-NVivo software, allowing the Cree economic relationship principles to emerge directly from the stories. I then transcribe the in-depth interviews representing a cross section of Cree knowledge holders, selected through snowball sampling, to collaborate and expand on the principles drawn from the stories. This chapter ends with a discussion on research axiology.

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<sup>32</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez argues that “One of the serious consequences of linking rights with economic development is that nature and natural resources are almost exclusively depicted as economic potential, a depiction that does not always match Indigenous peoples’ understandings of their place-based relationships with nature” (2013, 6).

<sup>33</sup> See Robert Nichols use of insurgent (Nichols 2014, 117).

Indigenous notions of identity, through citizenship, and the extent to which these understandings are conditioned by neoliberalism constitute the focus of chapter three. Within Indigenous views of citizenship, a reciprocal relationship between economic interactions (relations *to* land) and modes of subjectivity (relations *with* land) is often demonstrated. How we relate to the land impacts who we are and the types of rights and responsibilities we claim. In contrast, a neoliberal model can falsely accept that fundamentally altering our relationship to the land will not significantly alter who we are. I argue that current self-government initiatives often free or open up Indigenous lands to be exploited by market interests, thereby missing the second logic of settler-colonialism—economic exploitation. Similarly, the focus on capitalist exploitation of the land as a way for Indigenous peoples to increase their financial independence from the state further embeds the second type of colonial logic. This entrenchment impacts identity formation—creating a type of market citizenship (Altamirano-Jiménez 2004, 350) and a further subjection to this type of colonial logic. The focus is on Cree notions of identity demonstrating how this collective identity is connected to relations with the land.

In chapter four, I lay the basis for understanding that the Cree were a self-determining people, conceiving of themselves in terms similar to, although distinct from, European notions of nationhood, partaking in international trade and embarking in foreign affairs. This articulation of Indigenous peoplehood positions Indigenous rights as *sui generis* (*unique or of their own kind*), flowing from Cree peoplehood as opposed to being granted by the Canadian state or gaining authority only from within (or underneath) the Canadian state.

Articulating Cree peoplehood in this manner questions the legitimacy of the “Canadian state’s unilateral claim of sovereignty over Aboriginal lands and peoples” (Turner 2006, 7). Furthermore, a historical understanding of Cree inter-nation trade practices provides future insights into creating Indigenous economic resurgence and aiding in more governance options for Indigenous peoples.

The “Peoplehood Matrix” (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003) is a theoretical paradigm developed for and within the discipline of Indigenous studies. It moves beyond the hegemonic construction of nation-states as the only political form deserving authentic self-determination. Peoplehood might be a more appropriate way to understand Indigenous self-determination. The peoplehood concept includes four interlocking components: language, ceremonial cycles, sacred living history, and ancestral homeland. The Cree people’s language, history, territory, and ceremonial cycle provide one way to understand the inherent self-determination of an Indigenous people.

Chapter five explores and analyses Cree stories and oral histories related to Cree economic relations. This chapter explores, articulates, and theorizes Cree economic relationships, principles, and traditions emerging from the stories, augmented with interviews from Cree knowledge holders. My intent is to show Cree economic relationships on their own terms, and how these relationships are a guiding framework for Cree neoliberal resistance.



## Chapter 2: Methods and Indigenous Methodologies

### Introduction

At every step of the way in this research, the methodologies I write about have brought a different lens to my project. The Indigenous methodology, the archival research, the oral histories, the interviews, for example, each presented a different interlocking view on my subject. As if looking into a river from different vantage points, when I envision Cree economic thought from the oral histories, I see an intricate pattern of practices guiding these relationships. Stand in another place with the archival research and the complexities of twentieth and twenty-first century lives come into play. Moving to a third vantage point, the interviews, I see the landscape of resurgence. From these vantage points, I begin to see the ways in which individual life stories, and community participation, grounded in history and consciousness, evolve from a series of choices—individual and collective choices made on the landscape and waterscape of Indigenous territory. Like a river, our picture of Cree economic relationships, and their connection to the land, shimmers into new focus every time we change the line of sight. Each angle yields an image that seems sharp, detailed, and complete, but there are many such sites in a river, none of which fully registers all the elements of its beauty.

My goal is to weave my methods and data together to understand Cree participants' points of view, exploring oral traditions and examining secondary research with the purpose of identifying alternative Indigenous economic relations that are not captured within typical neoliberal understandings of Indigenous

economies. To do this, I created a new methodology drawing on Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous and non-Indigenous methods. Understanding economic relations of Indigenous peoples will bring a unique perspective to the literature and offer new directions for Indigenous practices regarding a resurgence of interest in economic self-determination for Indigenous nations. Furthermore, my research could provide a framework for understanding Indigenous self-determination, distinct from current state-defined self-government.

In the first section of this chapter, I map the Indigenous methodologies guiding this research and how I situate this research and myself within my methods. Specifically, I demonstrate how I apply the peoplehood concept as a method. My second section is on archival research and I show how the historical source material parallels perspectives on peoplehood drawn from my oral histories with the Plains Cree people. Oral histories are the third element discussed, followed by an analysis using Cree stories, grounded theory, and interviews with Cree participants. The chapter ends with a discussion of research axiology.

### Indigenous Methodologies

For some scholars and activists within Indigenous studies, the centre of an Indigenous research paradigm is self-determination (L. T. Smith 2012, 120–121). Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) is generally accepted as the seminal text on decolonizing methodologies for Indigenous research. From this perspective, self-determination is the goal of the research agenda; more than simply political, it strives to achieve social justice in social, cultural, economic,

and psychological milieus (L. T. Smith 2012, 120–121). Other scholars see Indigenous research as not simply a critical social science, but a form of emancipation through resistance (Grande 2004, 7; L. A. Brown and Strega 2005, 9). For example, Grande argues “as long as the political project of critical education fails to theorize the interrelationship between human consumption, capitalist exploitation, and the struggle for ‘democracy,’ it will fail to provide emancipatory pedagogies that are sustainable and pertinent for the global age” (2004, 7).

When exploring Indigenous-studies research, two foundational questions present themselves. First, do Indigenous peoples hold different<sup>34</sup> ontologies that necessitate different research methodologies? Second, if there are different ontologies, is Indigenous studies the appropriate place to situate these knowledges? It is my position that Indigenous research, which includes Indigenous ontologies, should be situated within Indigenous studies and that this is an act of intellectual self-determination.<sup>35</sup> However, I do recognize that there are complexities that can make an Indigenous research approach difficult to fit within the current modes of institutionalized knowledge production.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Different from settler-colonial societies’ ontologies, for example.

<sup>35</sup> I am not saying that Indigenous knowledges should only be situated within Indigenous studies.

<sup>36</sup> In part, Native studies developed as a reaction to past unethical practices that occurred in other disciplines (Cook-Lynn 2005, 17; Corrigan 1981, 162). Such authors as Cavender Wilson (2004) argue that much of tribal knowledge is “inappropriate for the microscope, manuscript, or classroom. For example, Native human remains, grave goods, and other sacred objects are inappropriate for scholarly study” (73).

During the summer of 2013, one of my interviews was with a Cree Elder, his wife, and his daughter. He asked me to meet him at an annual Indigenous gathering where his family was camping. Having been at this event numerous times before, I knew that there would be thousands of people in attendance from Indigenous communities across Canada. I was concerned about the sound quality of the interview recording so the night before the interview I went out and bought an expensive audio recorder device and spent a few hours learning how to use it. Once we sat down, I offered protocol and introduced myself, and after a bit of discussion I asked if I could use the recorder. He told me no, not to record the interview or write notes during the interview; gently scolding me, he reminded me that all I have is my mind. He continued by saying that I cannot take the recorder when I go up to the sky (while pointing upwards) and I have to use my mind and my heart. This was an important reminder for me to keep in the forefront of my mind throughout this project. He was asking me to listen and really see the world in a different way, not as I have been disciplined to do as an academic. The stories he and his family shared were about relationships between humans, nonhuman beings, shape-shifters, and the spirit world.

What is an Indigenous ontology? There are multiplicities of Indigenous ontologies; I do not want to ignore the diversity found within each Indigenous society, nor do I want to diminish the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples' understanding of the nature of reality. Although colonialism has fundamentally impacted Indigenous societies, they still have their unique Indigenous ways of knowing; like all ontologies, these are not static or

unchanging. Some scholars advocate that Indigenous knowledge systems are premised on relationships that bridge Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In other words, an Indigenous ontology is similar to an Indigenous epistemology in that reality is not an external object but a process of relationships (Wilson 2008, 73). Kovach views every methodology as including a knowledge or belief system that encompasses ontology, epistemology, and methods (Kovach 2009, 25). She believes epistemology encompasses ontology and captures the *self-in-relation* quality of Indigenous knowledge systems (Kovach 2009, 56).

With the development of Indigenous studies, a substantial volume has been written and debated regarding the types of methodologies that fit within its boundaries. Over the past decade, there has been a growing body of literature that focuses on Indigenous-specific research methodologies. Kovach identifies four key elements of an Indigenous epistemology: (1) experience as a legitimate way of gaining knowledge; (2) various methods, like storytelling, are legitimate pedagogical forms; (3) there are reciprocal relationships between researcher and participants; and (4) accountability and the collective are important in these relations (2005: 28). Indigenous methodologies also include subconscious ways of knowing and a focus on Indigenous languages. These methodologies emphasize relationships, including with the land, and are reciprocal (Kovach 2005, 27–28). According to Kovach, Indigenous research includes such conflicts as ethical questions concerning what is shared outside the collective and what is sacred (Kovach 2005, 31). In *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kovach maintains that these Indigenous methodologies should not be pan-Indigenous, but rather should be

tribally centred, because knowledges are bound to place (2005, 37). Principles of an Indigenous methodology include a tribal epistemology, decolonization goals, cultural protocols to prepare researchers, making meaning on the knowledge gathered, and giving back to the peoples involved (Kovach 2009). Specifically, her “Nehiyaw Kiskeyihtamowin” (Cree epistemology) includes “researcher preparation, decolonizing and ethics, gathering knowledge, making meaning, giving back” in “an in and out, back and forth, and up and down pathway” (Kovach 2009, 45).

Many of Kovach’s perspectives on “Nehiyaw Kiskeyihtamowin” resonate with me in terms of the methodology and process for this research. Although I draw from Indigenous authors that talk about Indigenous methodologies, I want to acknowledge the diversity of ways to complete Indigenous research or more specifically, Cree methodologies. There is no one right way to complete a Cree methodology. I applied a Cree peoplehood model as I went about my research methodology and method.

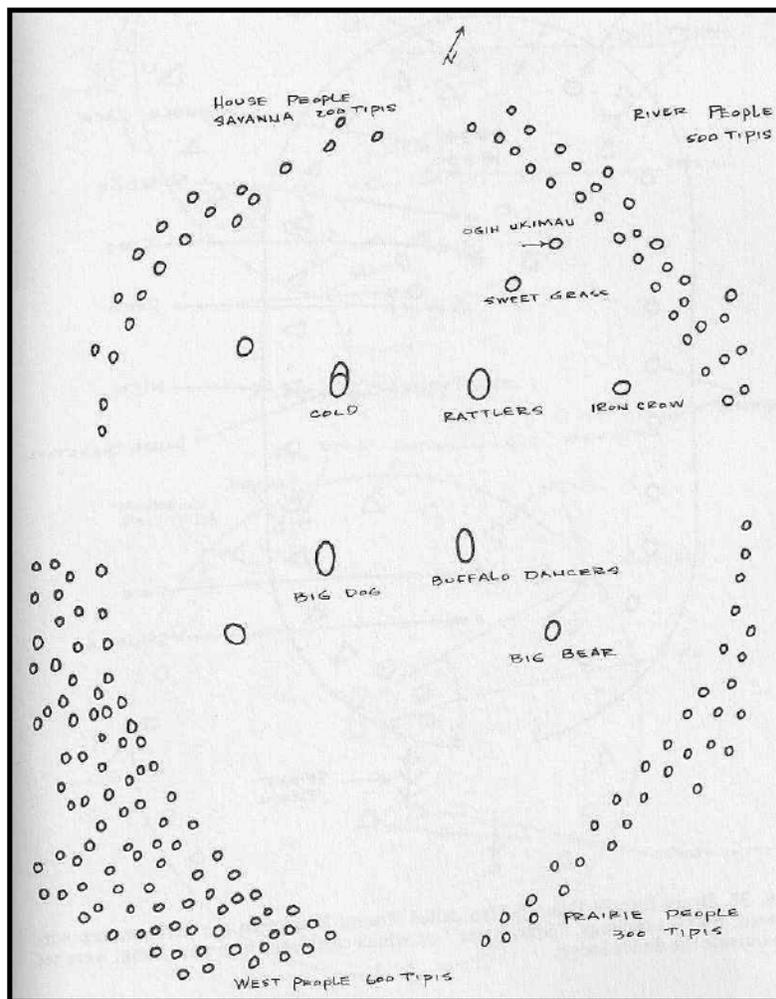
#### A ᐃᓄᓐᓄᓐ (Nehiyawak) Peoplehood Method

A peoplehood model provides a useful way of thinking about the nature of everyday resurgence practices both personally and collectively. If one thinks of peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories, a disruption to any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life. (Corntassel 2012, 89)

With settler-colonialism, all four aspects—language, territory, ceremonial cycles, and living histories—of the ᐃᓄᓐᓄᓐ (Nehiyawak; Cree people) have been negatively impacted. Throughout the process of research for this project, I



diagram drawn by Fine Day (Mandelbaum 2001) of a Plains Cree gathering in 1870. At this specific gathering, there are seventeen hundred tipis of the Upstream Plains Cree, including the River People, the Beaver Hills People (West People), the House People, and the Parkland People (Prairie People). There are other accounts of gatherings where tipis stretched as far as the eye could see, for over five to six miles (Fine Day 1973a, 43).



**Figure 3: Plains Cree camp, 1870.**

Mandelbaum (2001, 371)

Historian, John Milloy writes, “The Upstream People included the bands of the River People (they are between the North Saskatchewan and Battle rivers), the









belonging for the Cree and Métis peoples. I spent three years living on this land and was able to develop a more intimate relationship with the land. Part of this developed by spending time on the land, whether paddling through streams, cross-country skiing on frozen rivers, walking on trails, watching deer and moose from my window, or being more fully aware of how the land changes in every season. Through this process, I relate with the land in a deeper way. With pressures from a new job this past year we moved back into the city of Edmonton, I can still interact with the land and I am still in the traditional territory of Treaty Six, but the pace of life makes me choose to go into nature by walking the river valley paths and acknowledging the nonhuman beings surrounding me as opposed to being more directly confronted by the land (and the nonhuman beings living on it) on a daily basis.



**Figure 6: Planting a collective garden.**

In terms of decolonization, a few foundational elements to this project are the land—connecting to it in meaningful ways—and food security and food sovereignty—ways that as Indigenous people we can reclaim our connection to natural foods. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Cornassel expand on this in their article, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism” where they

write “land is life” and explain how we need to “reconnect with the terrain and geography of [our] their Indigenous heritage if [we] they are to comprehend the teachings and values of the ancestors, and if [we] they are to draw strength and sustenance that is independent of colonial power” (Alfred and Cornassel 2005, 613). In the same article, they explain another pathway of a resurgent Indigenous movement is decolonizing our diet:

Our people must regain the self-sufficient capacity to provide our own food, clothing, shelter and medicines. Ultimately important to the struggle for freedom is the reconstitution of our own sick and weakened physical bodies and community relationships accomplished through a return to the natural sources of food and the active, hard-working, physical lives lived by our ancestors. (Alfred and Cornassel 2005, 613)



**Figure 7: Being in a wetland, a mosquito net was often required.**

Connected to decolonizing our diet and the idea that land is life, I wanted to develop a new and different relationship with the land. This past summer (2013), my sister-in-law and I started a collective garden with our family members using heritage seeds and no pesticides. We also had another family plant an extra organic garden beside ours. As this was my first attempt at gardening, it was definitely a rewarding learning process. It was extremely gratifying to see these





classical period, where history was recorded through archives provided mainly by the state, the church, and “the great families,” to today, where individuals feel bound to document their own stories for the future (1989, 13–14). Asking “Who is history for?” reminds us that history has often been used as a tool by the state, church, or “great families” to privilege a certain selective type of knowledge, not objective facts, but ontologically rooted knowledge that made sense for their “houses of history” situated in a particular culture, in a particular point in time, and for a particular purpose. Despite this, or in spite of this, Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world are using archives to advance political claims, to reclaim cultural information, and as a process of nation rebuilding. Evelyn Wareham states that archives can bring “knowledge of their forebears and key events in tribal history,” with many Indigenous peoples calling for control and ownership rights of their materials (Wareham 2001, 28–29). The active use of this information can be an instrument for decolonization.

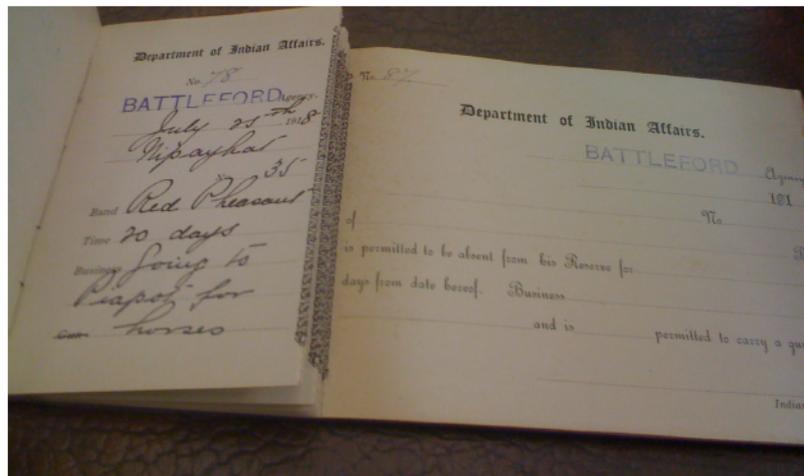
In my chapter, Plains Cree Diplomacy, Peoplehood, and International Trade, I rely significantly on archival sources to explore how the Cree were, and are also seen as, a self-determining people. Archival evidence shows that the Cree conceived of themselves as a distinct people, partaking in international<sup>38</sup> trade and engaging in foreign affairs. I locate this research within the geographic region of the Canadian plains, specifically exploring the Plains Cree. This research took place through numerous visits to the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Glenbow

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<sup>38</sup> I use the terms *inter-nation*, *international*, and *inter-society* to refer to trade practices between Cree people and other Indigenous peoples, for example the Blackfoot people.

Archives, and the National Archives online catalogue. The Glenbow Archives was especially productive for this study, as well as for finding archival records from my own First Nation, Red Pheasant. For example, I was able to go through some of the original Red Pheasant passbooks, seeing some of my late relatives and how they had to apply for a pass from an Indian agent to be allowed to leave the reserve. Unsurprisingly, this policy negatively affected Indigenous economies.

Seeing and touching these passbooks (and letters penned by my relatives) connected me to my ancestors in a new way. These passbooks also incite an anger at the historic and contemporary injustices against Indigenous peoples, an anger that can be channelled in creative and productive ways.



**Figure 9: Indian agent “Pass Book” for Red Pheasant First Nation, 1918; Business: “Going to Piapot for Horses.”**

### *Oral History*

Oral history is usually referred to as a methodology, not a theory. But during the past decade oral historians have developed a number of interpretive theories about memory and subjectivity, and the narrative structures, which provide the framework for oral stories about the past. (A. Green and Troup 1999, 230)

The concepts of “oral history,” “oral tradition” and “storytelling” remain confusing as they are often given different definitions. Whereas oral tradition usually applies to a knowledge relating to ontology and epistemology, oral history can apply to a “research method where a sound recording is made of an interview about firsthand experience occurring during the lifetime of an eyewitness” (Cruikshank 1994, 403). Julie Cruikshank sees that in contemporary practice meaning is not fixed; it must be examined in practice (1994, 408).

The question of academic legitimacy is often invoked when discussing oral traditions, where written literature is usually seen as inherently more sophisticated than oral literature (King 2003). According to Handler and Cruikshank, relativism is more often used for particular histories—for example, Indigenous histories—where “one emerging formulation portrays minority histories as ‘stories’ and mainstream histories as ‘just the facts.’ When the oppositions are formulated in this way, relativism actually reinforces the legitimacy of mainstream history by making it appear the more real or more truthful of the narratives” (Cruikshank 1994, 418). Klopfer states that the “history” in oral histories is often questioned (2001, 118), although there is a push by Indigenous peoples for the authenticity of their oral histories (Cruikshank 1994, 403). One response to this critique is to show that written texts are “no less subjective and open to interpretation” (Cruikshank 1994, 403). Another critique is that oral histories are sometimes not chronologically coherent, but the fluidity and seeming disorder often hold important “Indigenous historiographies” (Wickwire 2005, 456). Michael Harkin believes that “living Aboriginal oral histories often operate at the ‘highest and

most meaningful level” (Harkin in Wickwire 2005, 471) of “real” history—the point where “historical narrative and a bounded social group merge to create a collective historical consciousness” (Harkin in Wickwire 2005, 471). Within the last century, authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Walter Benjamin, and Harold Innis have all explored the power of oral stories to “destabilize commonsense categories, to promote non-confrontational ways of evaluating hegemonic concepts, [and] to encourage dialogue rather than monologue” (Cruikshank 1998, 154). The writing of oral histories in Indigenous research underscores its living nature. These histories can no longer simply be relegated to a “freeze-dried” past (Cruikshank 1994, 405).

Storytelling as a methodology fits under the oral-history rubric. As Indigenous peoples often come from oral societies, storytelling is thought to honour an Aboriginal ontology and can be a useful decolonization technique that presents a counterhistory to Canada’s well-documented story (Robina Thomas 2005, 242).

Storytelling also taught us about resistance to colonialism—our people have resisted even when legislation attempted to assimilate our children. All stories have something to teach us. What is most important is to learn to listen, not simply hear, the words that storytellers have to share. Many stories from First Nations tell a counter-story to that of the documented history of First Nations in Canada. (Robina Thomas 2005, 241)

Beyond providing a counterhistory, storytelling can be used as a medium to communicate rights and jurisdictional boundaries that have political impacts (Robina Thomas 2005, 240). The literature on oral history research discusses the power embedded within stories that enable communities “to give testimonio to their collective ‘herstories’ and struggles” (L. T. Smith 2005, 89); inherent in

stories are the ontological teachings and empowering motivators towards “transformative praxis” (L. T. Smith 2005, 89). Chamberlin and Vale (2010) equate the work of scholars to storytelling: “We [scholars] tell old stories. And we make up new ones. We call the first teaching, and the second research; but whatever we call them, it puts us in an ancient tradition of elders, experts and eccentrics, telling tales and singing songs” (para. 8).

There are different types of stories within Indigenous perspectives. Elder Jerry Saddleback categorizes three different types of stories: sacred stories, Indigenous legends, and personal stories (Wilson 2008, 97). Cree narrative memory is a concept developed by Neal MacLeod, based on storytelling and sustained through “relationships, respect, and responsibility” (2007, 18); it enables us to rethink the world around us and the limitations imposed by colonialism (McLeod 2007, 95). Oral tradition should be seen as a social activity (Cruikshank 1998, 41) giving us tools to live well today. Beyond providing a counterhistory, storytelling can be used as a medium to decolonize our societies and rebuild them through a “self-conscious traditionalism” (Alfred 2008).

### *Interpretive Methods*

#### *Cree Stories*

Part of my method for exploring Indigenous stories was inspired by the work of Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland and their engagement with stories related to Indigenous legal traditions (Napoleon and Friedland 2014). I draw from the understanding that these stories can be useful today, informing such different

Indigenous governance practices as Indigenous legal orders and Indigenous economic relations. To understand Indigenous legal orders, Napoleon and Friedland (2014) apply an adapted version of a common-law instrument, case-brief analysis and synthesis, to Indigenous stories. The results have been tremendous in terms of understanding and articulating Indigenous legal orders. Indigenous communities have responded very favourably to engaging with their own legal orders through the knowledge held within their own stories. One way my method differs from Napoleon and Friedland's (2014) is that, instead of using an adapted case-brief analysis, I draw from the principles of grounded theory so my analytical categories emerge from within the stories.

### *Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory is a systematic yet flexible methodology, designed to assist with the development of substantive, explanatory models grounded in relevant empirical data. (Hutchison, Johnston, and Breckon 2010, 283)

Using a grounded-theory approach, my research generates new research avenues. This approach does not require researchers to have a set hypothesis; my purpose is to understand Cree participants' points of view, explore oral traditions, and examine secondary research to identify Cree economic relationships. My research employs a qualitative approach that privileges a grounded and inductive relationship between data collection and answering the research question. **Table 1** outlines the many widely accepted characteristics of a grounded theory approach.

**Table 1: Key Grounded Theory Characteristics.**

Characteristics	Details
An iterative process	A process whereby early data collections and analyses inform subsequent sampling and analytical procedures (theoretical sampling) and the analysis always remains open to new emergent possibilities. This process necessitates concurrent involvement in data collection and analysis phases of the research.
Sampling aimed at theory generation	All sampling decisions made are a function of the research question and the ongoing theoretical development. As a result, grounded theory research involves both purposive and theoretical sampling.
Creating analytical codes and categories from the data itself	The analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data. These should be representative of the data itself and cover a wide range of observations.
Advancing theoretical development throughout	A range of techniques can be used to advance theory development during each step of data collection and analysis. The choice of techniques depends on the epistemological and theoretical stance of the researcher.
Making systematic comparisons	Making comparisons at every stage of the analysis (e.g., within and between cases or over time) helps to establish analytical distinctions by identifying variations in the patterns to be found in the data.
Theoretical density	It is commonly accepted that there must be evidence of theoretical density or depth to the observations presented, resulting in the presentation of a theory from which hypotheses can be generated. This should also include evidence of theoretical saturation (when new data reveals no new theoretical insights).

Source: (Hutchison, Johnston, and Breckon 2010, 283)

In grounded theory, an exhaustive literature review is often postponed until the data have emerged from the sources (Hutchison, Johnston, and Breckon 2010). Although I did complete an introductory literature review for the proposal stage in 2011, I did not engage with further literature until after the first and second coding and verifying processes were completed. Rather, over a six-month period in 2012, I read over 160 Cree stories that could be characterized as sacred stories, legends, creation stories, historical accounts, and personal stories. Of these 160 initial stories, I found thirty-five related to Cree economic relationships, which I have analysed in iterations over a twelve-month period.

I scanned these thirty-five sources related to economic principles into PDF format and imported them into the qualitative software called QSR-NVivo, which is commonly used to compile data in a grounded-theory approach. I coded the stories using terms from the text (*in vivo*) relating to Cree economic relationships, broadly conceived. I initially coded these stories in the fall of 2012; then, in the spring and summer of 2013, I repeated this process, recoding the stories in an iterative process. The stories are referred to as the initial sources or source documents. I assigned different categories to the various elements, called *nodes* in the software. The strength of this grounded-theory method lies in how the themes emerge from within the text. I have coded approximately 105 different nodes, which were then assembled into approximately ten broader categories. Figure 10 shows some of the 105 different nodes. In the figure, beside each node name is a column titled: *Sources*, this accounts for how many different sources (stories or interviews) are included in that node.

## Nodes

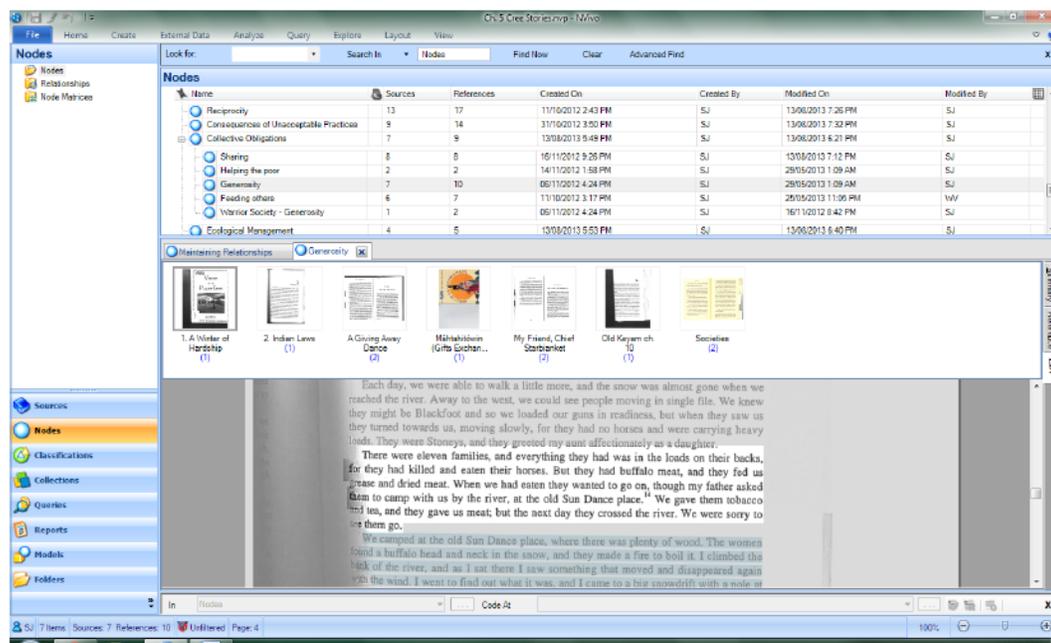
Name	Sources	References	Created On
Gatherings	3	5	06/11/2012 4:29 PM
Trading	4	5	16/11/2012 9:12 PM
Trade Items	8	20	31/10/2012 1:36 PM
Trade	10	24	31/10/2012 1:34 PM
Trade Communication	3	5	31/10/2012 1:37 PM
Trade with non-humans	1	1	16/11/2012 9:14 PM
trading with non-Natives	6	10	11/10/2012 2:53 PM
Protocols in Trade	3	6	25/05/2013 10:28 PM
Trade with non-Cree	4	18	25/05/2013 10:04 PM
Paying with credit	2	8	11/10/2012 2:56 PM
Harvesting	1	1	16/11/2012 9:32 PM
RELATIONSHIPS	0	0	25/05/2013 12:52 PM
Restoring Relationships	5	7	25/05/2013 12:48 PM
Maintaining Relationships	8	15	25/05/2013 11:56 AM
Establishing Relationships	4	4	25/05/2013 12:54 PM
Opposing Relationships	6	12	25/05/2013 10:20 PM
With Other Peoples	9	19	25/05/2013 12:55 PM
Within Cree Society	3	4	25/05/2013 11:57 AM
Transportation Systems	5	5	25/05/2013 9:47 PM
Attributes	0	0	27/05/2013 12:12 PM
PROTOCOLS	5	7	27/05/2013 12:18 PM
Ceremonies	2	4	16/11/2012 9:28 PM
Food Scarcity Protocols	2	5	25/05/2013 12:14 PM
Peacemaking	5	6	06/11/2012 4:19 PM
Misconduct	3	5	16/11/2012 9:36 PM
Jurisdiction	3	6	27/05/2013 10:24 PM
Other	0	0	28/05/2013 12:17 AM
Governance	2	2	28/05/2013 10:48 PM
Hunting	7	15	29/05/2013 2:13 PM
PRINCIPLES	0	0	13/08/2013 5:45 PM
Gift-Giving	11	13	16/11/2012 9:30 PM
Reciprocity	13	17	11/10/2012 2:43 PM
Consequences of Unacceptable Practices	9	14	31/10/2012 3:50 PM
Collective Obligations	7	9	13/08/2013 5:49 PM
Sharing	8	8	16/11/2012 9:26 PM
Helping the poor	2	2	14/11/2012 1:58 PM
Generosity	7	10	06/11/2012 4:24 PM
Feeding others	6	7	11/10/2012 3:17 PM
Warrior Society - Generosity	1	2	06/11/2012 4:24 PM

**Figure 10: Selection of nodes.**

For example, the principle of reciprocity was included in thirteen different sources (at the time of the screenshot) and it was referenced seventeen different times cumulatively within the thirteen stories or interviews. I did not use a scanning

function to find these words but read over the stories iteratively, therefore examples that refer to the concept or idea of reciprocity, for example, but do not use the specific word *reciprocity* are also included.

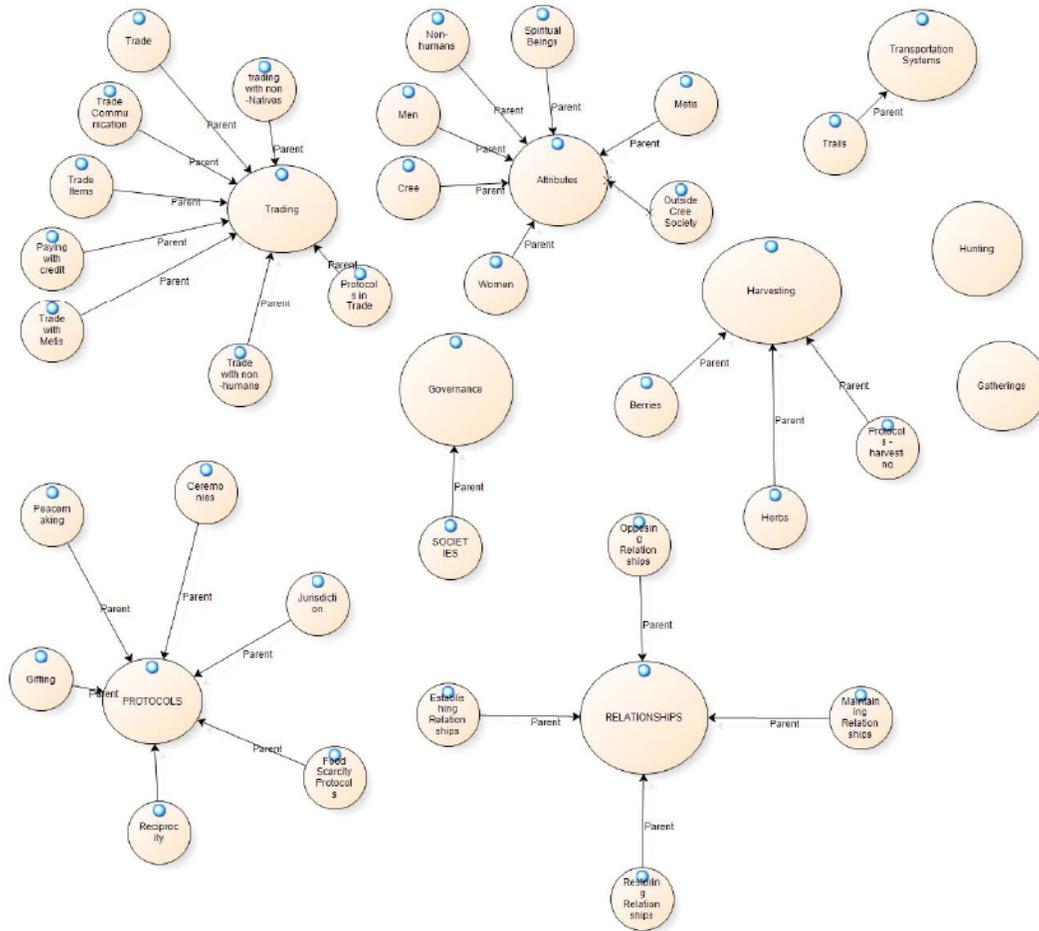
Figure 11 displays a screenshot of one of the source documents related to the node of generosity within economic relationships in Cree societies. When this screenshot was taken, there were seven source documents related to this node and ten references to generosity within the node.



**Figure 11: Screenshot of one source related to generosity.**

Another aspect of this process is developing the relationships between the nodes. Figure 12 displays a selection of the relationships within Level 1 (or parent) nodes and a selection of Level 2 (or child) nodes. This figure is based on the initial iteration of coding and shows only a small selection of the 105 nodes; in some cases I have up to four levels of nested nodes underneath one parent node.

Themes (called models in grounded theory) emerged during this process through the series of iterations working with the data. Chapters five and six explain the results of this analysis.



**Figure 12: Selected Level 1 and Level 2 nodes.**

## Interviews

After the steps outlined above, my next step was to take the initial theoretical development to Cree knowledge holders for their feedback, guidance, and examples of how (and if) these principles guide Cree economic relationships. In the grounded-theory process, this is called a member check. I also asked for guidance regarding what cultural or ceremonial knowledge should be shared

within this work. A snowball<sup>39</sup> technique was used to gather participants. The responses and feedback were extremely valuable. Pseudonyms are used to identify those interviewed. This was on the recommendation of two of the Elders interviewed, and with the agreement of all those interviewed. The interviewers also chose their own pseudonym.

Sunney, one of the knowledge keepers interviewed, told me that he had been misrepresented by academics at the University of Alberta before and so he is very cautious about interviews. Besides using a pseudonym, he also read through his interview transcripts and the corresponding chapters to provide feedback. It was important to develop a trusting relationship with him and all the participants. The exception to this anonymity is the interviews I completed for the case study in chapter seven. The interview participants for this case wanted to use their own names. Since the case study is about a specific initiative in a specific community, it would be very difficult to maintain confidentiality. Most importantly, the interviewees in chapter seven wanted to share their experience publically. Beyond the general ethics and protocols followed with each participant, I let each individual guide me on extra steps of information validation and reciprocity. The transcripts and notes from these interviews were then imported into QSR-NVivo for further coding iterations. Following this synthesis and refinement, I completed

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<sup>39</sup> A snowball technique is one method to find research subjects where one participant gives the name of other potential participants, who in turn provide more names (Miller and Brewer 2003, 275).

literature reviews, and information gained from them was added to the analysis presented in chapters five and six.

### Limitations

One big caveat with this analysis is to say that Cree society is dynamic. As author Liam Haggerty writes: “Nêhiyawak [Cree] culture is not easily analysed or summarised. As a fluid, ever-changing and evolving set of interconnected relationships and meanings, it cannot be succinctly described or condensed. Even if this were possible, the result would not represent the experiences of all Nêhiyawak peoples at any given time, much less through time. That is to say, cultures are complex and multifaceted across both time and space” (Haggarty 2014). A common concept within the grounded-theory approach is saturation, where the researcher determines that no new nodes would emerge from additional sampling. At this point, I cannot be definitive on this concept. Furthermore, within this type of research, which includes such an expansive time period, I do not know if this is an appropriate step. To say definitively that there are no new nodes would be like saying that the Cree people are “freeze-dried” (Cruikshank 1994, 405). I can say that specifically within the sources analysed, there is saturation, but I cannot say that there are not other accounts external to this project that would not add new categories or perspectives. What I am sharing here should not be taken as comprehensive.

Another limitation has to do with the method of working with published stories. An argument can be made that within an Indigenous oral-history approach,

something is lost in contextualized and situated knowledge when a story is recorded. Significantly, settler men wrote some of the stories and although they interviewed Cree informants, the researchers often ignored Cree women and would not understand or write about their complex economic relationships. Another issue with the published stories is that most of them are written entirely in English; the richness of the worldview found within ᓂᐱᓂᐅᐱᓂᐅ (Nehiyawewin; Cree language) is lost. I am not a fluent Plains Cree speaker although I am learning and practising. Interviewing Cree knowledge holders provided one way to overcome some of these challenges. I also tried to use oral stories that were written and published by Cree people themselves.

### Research Ethics and Axiology

Within every research project, the question of ethics is paramount. In a procedural sense, there is the university ethics approval process, which I completed; I followed the guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* regarding research with human beings. I followed the *Tri-Council's* “good practices” for research involving Aboriginal peoples.<sup>40</sup> I took a three-hour ethics course offered by the Department of Political Science. Beyond the procedural steps needed to gain the university’s ethics approval are the broader ethical questions surrounding my research. Axiology is the term given to the “ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for” (Wilson 2008, 34).

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<sup>40</sup> <http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/section6.cfm>

In Indigenous research, questions of ethics are given paramount importance. Two of the common principles within Indigenous-research ethics are relevancy and reciprocity (Kovach 2009). I feel strongly about the need for a more thorough understanding of Indigenous economic relationships and that this is an important step in achieving self-determination. I hope this research can be of tangible benefit to Indigenous communities.

Reciprocity is related to giving back to the peoples and communities researched. This can be achieved in various levels, from simply presenting the data collected at various points to ensure accuracy, to presenting the findings back to the communities, to providing a relevant report of my findings to interested Indigenous First Nations and organizations. Offering protocol, when appropriate, and giving gifts to all participants was an important part of my process. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations wrote a strong recommendation letter for this project, I have met with them to share initial findings, and I have happily agreed to present the final findings to their leadership. I also met with a representative from the office of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and have offered to present my research findings to their leadership.

Ethical questions arose during all stages of the research process and a self-reflective ethics is a continual process. How is the sacred honoured within Indigenous research? Ethical considerations regarding what is shared outside of the collective, as in a dissertation, is a common ethical question in Indigenous research (Kovach 2005, 31). This is a question I put to Cree knowledge holders.

Advice from one Cree woman I interviewed was to talk about the principles without talking about some of the specific elements within the ceremony itself. An older Cree woman and knowledge keeper said that with the changes facilitated by the Internet, the information is available anyway. In struggling through this question, I found the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations ethical considerations when publishing Cree oral stories informative:

The legends in this book explain only the significance of the ceremonies to our culture; they do not reveal the various stages and steps that are followed in a ceremony. This knowledge is reserved for men [and women] who have received this right either through a vision or from an elder wishing to pass his knowledge on. (Cuthand, Nations, and Deiter-McArthur 1987, xii)

Drawing from this understanding, in this dissertation I share what I have learned regarding the importance of ceremonies and I will show how this relates to economic relationships. I do not describe the sacred steps followed within the ceremonies. Where possible, I refer to accounts already published and already accessible to the wider public.

While I write this (November 2013) I have the gift of watching the beauty of nature in front of me. About 100 yards away is a fairly fast-flowing river. Yesterday, I watched a bald eagle perched on a branch of a tree beside this river. At one point she swooped down and I think she found food as I could see her head grabbing at something. I am reminded of Vandana Shiva's (2005) living economies and the important role of nature's economy within this. Whether we acknowledge it or not, economic relationships are occurring right beyond our window. Just where the eagle was yesterday, a small deer has crossed the river



### Chapter 3: Juxtaposing Cree Citizenship and Market Citizenship

#### Introduction

Indigenous peoples rank first in marginalization, unemployment, and lack of education, so government responses focus on economic development as if it were the ultimate solution to these problems. Nonetheless, this type of economic development is mainly intended to open Indigenous lands to the market rather than to provide Indigenous peoples with the means for their social reproduction. (Castro-Rea and Altamirano-Jiménez 2008, 246)

This chapter examines Indigenous notions of identity through citizenship and the extent to which these understandings are conditioned by neoliberalism. I ask, Is the approach Indigenous peoples are taking, pursuing economic autonomy (to lessen state controls), leading them to be increasingly subjected to constitutive, hegemonic, and individualizing forms of being, therefore challenging notions of communal Indigenous identity and relations to the land? Inherent in this question is the query: What are the implications for the Cree in trying to be economically independent from the state through movement toward neoliberal economics? The other question I ask is, How do the values of being in reciprocal relationships with physical and metaphysical beings shape notions of Cree citizenship and challenge the values surrounding market citizenship?

With the federal recognition of the inherent right to self-government for Aboriginal peoples *within*<sup>41</sup> the *Constitution Act, 1982* many Indigenous peoples are pursuing state-defined arrangements of self-government and economic self-

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<sup>41</sup> The “The Government of Canada’s Approach to Implementation of the Inherent Right and the Negotiation of Aboriginal Self-Government” states that “The Government of Canada recognizes the inherent right of self-government as an existing Aboriginal right under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982” (Canada 2014).

sufficiency. However, more energy needs to be focussed on what the constitutive effects are of seeking economic self-sufficiency through neoliberal practices. A common argument is that Indigenous peoples need to be economically autonomous from the state to have “true” self-determination. Settler-colonial governing systems, and currently, neoliberal forces, are making an effort to reconstitute Indigeneity, altering social relations, governing practices, and economic patterns.

How are Indigenous notions of identity and citizenship challenged within the context of market governance?<sup>42</sup> Indigenous identities are continually struggling against colonial and neoliberal forces that seek to reconstitute them into peoples of their own imaginings and for their own benefit. Colonial domination of Indigenous peoples in settler-societies has taken a two-pronged approach: state domination (e.g., bureaucratic control) and economic exploitation (e.g., resource extraction, “development” programs, etc.). If we focus on just the state-domination aspect of settler-society, we miss how Indigenous attempts to resist this first logic may further entrench the second colonial logic.

In this chapter, I examine ideas of citizenship and identity through analysis of Cree peoples’ conceptions of citizenship, and I compare this with market notions of citizenship. I begin with a discussion of Indigeneity and Indigenous nations’

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<sup>42</sup> Wendy Larner provides a useful explanation of market governance: “While neoliberalism may mean less government, it does not follow that there is less governance. While on one hand neoliberalism problematizes the state and is concerned to specify its limits through the invocation of individual choice, on the other hand it involves forms of governance that encourage both institutions and individuals to conform to the norms of the market” (Larner 2000, 12).

own naming practices and how this relates to Indigenous perspectives of citizenship. After that, I analyse market citizenship and how it affects Indigenous perspectives of the land. Finally, I explore collective reflexivity through Elmer Ghostkeeper's revitalization model.

### Indigeneity

Indigeneity is a contested concept steeped in colonial history with very real political implications. At one level, it is fundamentally about inclusion and exclusion. At another level, it is intimately linked to who is doing the naming. The concept of Indigeneity will be explored through the work of academics and Indigenous communities. Indigeneity is based on (1) the definition of who is Indigenous and (2) the politics surrounding that identity (Bennett 2005, 72). Depending on who is doing the naming and when the naming was done, Indigeneity in Canada can be inclusive or exclusive of the following identities: Aboriginal, First Nation, Métis, Native, Indian, Status Indian, Non-Status Indian, Treaty Indian, Non-Treaty Status Indian, Inuit, and Indigenous. Each of these terms takes on a specific political meaning, which can be framed by the corresponding legal rights it avails from the state. These "identities" do not include the naming of the forty to sixty Indigenous nations (Abele 2001, 141) that are distinct, "meaning peoples in the usually accepted international sense of a group with a common cultural and historical antecedence" (Chartrand 1999, 104).

The term *Indigeneity*—derived, although different, from the term *Indigenous*—relates to the contestation of how the dominant state chooses to accommodate the

cultural, social, and political distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples (Bennett 2005, 73). Indigeneity is not conceived outside of the “politicized context of contemporary colonialism” (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 597). For Bennett, the “principle of ‘self-determination’ is the best liberal justification for the significance of Indigeneity, and best fits how Indigenous peoples view their claims and rights” (2005, 73). Furthermore, he states that his appeal to self-determination is based on the “historical fact of Indigenous self-determination—the fact that Indigenous peoples lived by their own laws, traditions and customs before they encountered colonizing powers—[and that this can be used] as a crucial basis for a return to that historic status in the present” (2005, 74). Turner and Simpson argue that, although Indigeneity characterises distinctiveness that occurs in part from the “unique political and historical experiences with European settlers,” Indigenous relationships to their homelands “constitute the main moral and political force of their legal and political distinctiveness” (Simpson and Turner 2008, 18).

Another way to understand Indigeneity is through Indigenous conceptions. As mentioned in the preface, ᏁᏍᏉ (Nehiyaw) means a Cree person and is derived from the word ᏁᏍᏉ (newo), which means four. The number four has special significance for obligations and relationships with the environment. It can also relate to the four-direction teachings of physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional well-being. In Kanien’keha (Mohawk), the word Onkwehonwenaha, translates as the “way of the original people” (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 615).

For Alfred, this also is a call to a movement of Indigenous peoples, “altering the balance of political and economic power to recreate some social and physical space for freedom to re-emerge ... [it] is an ethical and political vision, the real demonstration of our resolve to survive as Onkwehonwe and to do what we must to force the Settlers to acknowledge our existence and the integrity of our connection to the land” (Alfred 2005, 19).

### Citizenship

In one of the dominant versions of the Western liberal framework, citizenship can take a procedural focus through rationales for voting, paying taxes, joining organizations, or standing for office.

Citizenship refers to the status of being a citizen, usually enshrined in law. Citizenship may entail rights and responsibilities or result as a consequence of being part of a polity or a community. Participation entails a legal membership of a polity premised upon universal suffrage. Citizenship is a relationship between the state and the individual that comprises a series of rights and responsibilities. It may be defined objectively, as a legal status, or subjectively, as comprising a sense of belonging and identity. (Savigny 2007, 82)

Citizenship is said to establish a regime of inclusion and exclusion, defining both national and internal (to the nation) boundaries, where there is a separation within, to those citizens with complete rights, and those with limited rights, conceptually “second class citizens” (Jenson and Phillips 1996, 114). Indigenous peoples have historically been excluded from many rights associated with Canadian

citizenship.<sup>43</sup> Institutional instruments like constitutions can shape notions of citizenship in ways different from Indigenous obligations regarding reciprocal roles and responsibilities. Western liberal democracy and Indigenous normative commitments to reciprocity point to different roles for “citizens.”

Different governance eras have had different ideas of the ideal citizen—the imperial subject, social citizen, entrepreneurial citizen, and the world citizen (Brodie 2002; Brodie 2003)—with differing immigration and multiculturalism policies (Stasiulis and Abu Laban 2003). Articles and texts on identity and citizenship tend to provide typologies of difference. Differentiated citizenship has been grouped based on self-government rights, accommodation rights, and special representation rights (Kymlicka 2009, 26). A large debate relates to the division between group rights and individual rights; group rights are further divided between internal restrictions and external protections, where some authors argue that the former is inconsistent with liberal-democratic values (Kymlicka 2009, 36; Trudeau 2002, 40–44). These scholars are concerned that internal restrictions can lead to intragroup oppression and that differentiated citizenship amounts to disunity and potentially the dissolution of the country (Kymlicka 2009, 37–39).

These scholars ignore the fact that the settler-state has always had a differentiated “citizenship”<sup>44</sup> for First Nations. The former perspective is also concerned with

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<sup>43</sup> For example, Status Indians did not have the right to vote until 1960 (An Act to amend the *Canada Elections Act*, S.C. 1960, c. 7, s. 1.).

<sup>44</sup> I have “citizenship” in quotes as First Nations were not considered citizens; they were seen as wards of the state.

societies' perceived devaluation of the unifying force of national citizenship (Kaplan 1992). What are the identity and citizenship conceptions for different Indigenous peoples, such as the Cree or Métis? These separate ontological understandings of the world provide distinct reciprocal responsibilities and roles that could provide a fuller understanding of citizenship. What are the negative implications for Indigenous peoples' self-determination of having federal citizenship?<sup>45</sup> Reviewing early throne speeches, Brodie (2003) writes about a shift: "Indians" were originally seen as autonomous and competent. After the *Indian Act* (1876), First Nations moved from subjects to objects "needing to be civilized" (Brodie 2003, 22). First Nations have not moved towards the "promise of social rights to social inclusion" (Brodie 2002, 53). Canada's liberal individual rights have also been challenged based on Indigenous nationalism (Jenson 1999, 42).

Through Cree ways of viewing the world, citizenship has not historically related to rights and responsibilities to a nation state, but more a way of being in the world, being a human being. I conceptualize Indigenous citizenship in a very broad and nonstate fashion. Citizenship might not be the accurate term to use in Indigenous languages. For example, ᐃᓂᓂᓂᓂ (îyiniwîwin) means being human in Cree and can be related to certain responsibilities like that of developing good

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<sup>45</sup> James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson critiques federal citizenship to Aboriginals as ignoring *sui generis* rights (2002, 425–440). He argues that the offer of citizenship to Aboriginal peoples is another attempt to assuage the colonial conscience and "subverts the constitutional rights of Aboriginal peoples for the interests of the dominant immigrant groups" (2002, 416). Different from Canada's hollow offer of citizenship, Indigenous peoples are developing an "alternative pluralism"; treaty citizenship is said to preserve Indigenous heritage while enabling "authentic options and life choices" (Youngblood Henderson 2002, 422). According to Youngblood Henderson (2002, 433), treaty citizenship requires constitutional space for public discourse.

relations. This view of citizenship, or  $\Lambda\text{L}\text{N}\text{A}^{\text{p}}$  (pimâtisiwin; the act of living), is related not only to roles and responsibilities to other humans, but also to other living things. Similarly, in the preface, I explain Winston Wuttunee's description of relationships and responsibilities to nonhuman beings on the land. In one of my interviews I was also told about responsibilities and reciprocal relationships with the earth, air, fire, and water for the Cree (Walter 2014b). Similarly, Harold Cardinal and Walter Hildebrandt describe Elders' views of Cree citizenship:

In each of their languages, the Elders described the collectivity of their citizenry in the following terms: Elder Jacob Bill describes the Cree as “Nehiyawak,” a Cree term meaning “people of the four directions.” Elder Peter Waskahat uses another term: “lyiniwak” a Cree term meaning “people made healthy by the land.” (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 39)

Elder Peter Waskahat links Cree citizenry with the reciprocity found in good relations with the land. Through these readings of Cree ontology, citizenship entails specific roles and responsibilities to all other living beings through relations with the land. Margaret Kovach explains the importance of reciprocity and a relational way of being through the concept of  $\Gamma\text{A}^{\text{p}}\text{A}^{\text{p}}$  (miyo-wîcihitowin; good relations) referred to as the “heartbeat of Plains Cree culture,” including “sharing and generosity, respecting the earth and all inhabitants, working hard, and caring for other people” (Kovach 2009, 63). Chapter four will further explore Cree citizenry through the concept of peoplehood. Chapters five and six will further group the Cree knowledge found in the oral accounts and interviews.

In these Cree views of citizenship, there is a reciprocal relationship between economic interactions (relations to land) and modes of subjectivity (relations with

land). How we relate to the land impacts who we are and the types of rights and responsibilities we claim. In contrast to this Cree perspective, a liberal economic model can falsely claim that fundamentally altering a relationship to the land will not significantly alter who we are. The state actually pushes citizens to make land productive based on market interests. Indigenous citizenship, in Cree ontology, is not simply a negative right; it includes responsibilities to the earth itself.

### Market Citizenship

Indigenous peoples striving for meaningful self-determination are being pushed into a liberal version of citizenship based on market values. Indigenous peoples' goal of self-government has constructed the movement along a neoliberal trajectory, directly impacting communal ideologies and relationships with the land. Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez states that government practices regarding Indigenous demands are based on neoliberalism which disconnects self-government from Indigenous territory (2009b, 349). Indigenous scholars identify neoliberalism as the new form of colonization affecting Indigenous peoples (Kuokkanen 2006; Kuokkanen 2008; Bargh 2007). The marketization of Indigenous citizenship is "the fulfillment of Indigenous demands through market integration and the rhetoric of cultural recognition" (Bargh 2007, 350).

As introduced in chapter one, neoliberalism can be examined as a policy paradigm and a practice (N. Smith 2007, 597) and examined more extensively as a set of policies, as an ideology, and through the notion of governmentality (Larner 2000, 6). As a policy, neoliberalism has been marked by the shift from a Keynesian

model to a state favouring a comparatively “unfettered operation of markets” linked with the globalization of capital (Larner 2000, 6). The three basic tenants of neoliberalism are free trade, the free mobility of capital, and a reduction “in the ambit role of the state” (Bargh 2007, 1). As an ideology, neoliberalism is the belief that sustained economic growth is “the means to achieve human progress” (N. Smith 2007, 597) and that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” (Harvey 2005, 2).

Examining neoliberalism in this way goes beyond the state and explores other institutions, organizations, and processes (Larner 2000, 9). Arguably, this has moved the market into all areas of social life (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2006, 28), changing the notion of freedom to market freedom and the “commodification of everything” via privatization (Harvey 2005, 80). Brodie sees twenty-first century globality challenging national identity, creating overlapping communities of fate where Canadian identity has shifted from collective responsibility to symbols marketed as commodities (Brodie 2003, 29). Similarly, neoliberalism is argued to have reconfigured the triangular relationship of states, markets, and communities to privilege the market through the withdrawal of the state (Jenson 1997, 642). In this shift, the ideal neoliberal subject is individualistic, rational, self-sufficient, and entrepreneurial. A gendered analysis shows neoliberalism to undermine the infrastructure of women’s equality in Canada; meanwhile, governing authorities claim equality is achieved. In actuality, social inequalities increase (Brodie 2008) as the minimalist rationality guiding citizenship rights and

state policy advocate for the economically self-reliant, often to the detriment of women and other historically oppressed peoples (Trimble 2003, 143).<sup>46</sup>

Citizenship through this lens is connected with “Indigenous communities entering the market through a resource development extraction model of development, and with a commitment to human rights” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009b, 132). This type of citizenship model is challenging Indigenous identity and connections to the land, creating an environment where Indigenous rights are settled through state negotiations and land is therefore free to be exploited by market interests. The \$200 million *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* (2009) is an example of this triangulation. The *Framework* report highlights resource development as a major “win” for Aboriginal peoples, identifying “Over \$315 billion in major resource developments” in or near Aboriginal communities. Additionally, in the North, the mining and oil and gas sectors have “proposed developments in the range of \$24 billion that will impact Aboriginal communities in the next decade” (Canada 2009, 9). While these developments may sound impressive, there is no specific analysis of how much of this money will actually go to communities. Furthermore, there is a significant gap regarding the corresponding negative impacts to communities, to subsistence practices, to relations with the land, and to the nonhuman beings on these territories. The

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<sup>46</sup> Another significant debate among women’s activists is whether the welfare state could be reshaped to enable women’s full citizenship or whether welfare liberalism is fundamentally an obstacle to women’s equality (Trimble 2003, 142). Feminist scholars have differentiated numeric women’s representation in institutions of governance from substantively different policies based on women’s interests (Burt 2003, 367); it is argued that increased political representation through the diversity of women’s interests and ensuring feminist perspectives within the process are both imperative (Trimble 2003, 148).

report goes on to suggest that the government will work with those “opportunity-ready Aboriginal communities that have stable, efficient and predictable investment climates attractive to business and investors” (2009, 20). This “opportunity-ready” caveat refers to those communities that have adopted Western liberal institutional forms and are federally determined as a good “fit” for market citizenship. The *Framework* focuses on four strategies:

1. Strengthening Aboriginal Entrepreneurship
2. Developing Aboriginal Human Capital
3. Enhancing the Value of Aboriginal Assets
4. Forging New and Effective Partnerships. (2009, 22)

These strategies are about making Indigenous communities “ready” for economic development and corporate partnerships, especially resource development on their lands. Through policies such as these, the government changes the idea of citizens receiving public goods to one where individualized subjects are held responsible for their choices, thereby conceived and constituted as market citizens (Schild 2000, 305).

In 2012, the federal government initiated a host of new legislation<sup>47</sup> directly impacting First Nations. These bills regulate and discipline First Nations to fit within a market citizenship ideology. Under the *Jobs and Growth Act, 2012* (Bill

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<sup>47</sup> *First Nations Financial Transparency Act, 2012* (Bill C-27), *Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act* (Bill C-428), *First Nations Elections Act* (Bill S-6), *Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act* (Bill S-2), and *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* (Bill S-8).

C-45), amendments to the *Indian Act* make it easier to delegate or surrender lands. Specifically, changes make regulations on surrendering reserve lands simpler: If a majority of electors of a band did not vote on said action the first time, a notice of another vote is given, and “proposed absolute surrender is assented to at the meeting or referendum by a majority of the electors voting, the surrender is deemed, for the purposes of this section, to have been assented to by a majority of the electors of the band” (House of Commons of Canada 2012, 227). Within this change, as long as a majority of people voting at the second meeting vote in favour of surrender, it is passed, no matter the actual percentage of eligible voters in attendance. This makes it significantly easier for a potential minority of a First Nation’s citizens to free interests from under the common benefits of reserve lands to the interests of the market.

Significantly, on September 4, 2012, John Duncan the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs announced a “results based approach” to the negotiation of Section 35 Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. In a news release, Minister Duncan states: “The current process allows negotiations to carry on for years, with no foreseeable end, creating financial liabilities for Aboriginal communities and impeding economic investment opportunities” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2012). On September 28, 2012 Canada released a

corresponding paper titled “Without Prejudice: Results Based Approach to Negotiation of S. 35 Rights, Table Engagement<sup>48</sup> Process,” which states,

Final Agreements must provide finality and certainty with respect to an Aboriginal group’s claimed Aboriginal and treaty rights (including title), as well as clarity with respect to Aboriginal, federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions and responsibilities. An agreement can be considered to have achieved certainty when it provides a legally effective full and final settlement of past obligations and a clear and predictable legal framework for the future exercise of s. 35 rights and fulfillment of related roles and responsibilities, while minimizing the risks of unintended judicial interpretations. (Canada 2012, 2)

Within this position, legal certainty around Aboriginal rights would be defined with the intention of ending First Nations’ ability to have further rights claims. The paper goes on to explain the government’s position on lands: “The Final Agreement must clearly identify the lands that will be owned by the Aboriginal group as well as its rights and responsibilities over these lands. The Final Agreement will provide that the Aboriginal group will hold their lands in fee simple (i.e., will not be reserve lands)” (Canada 2012, 3). Fee simple ownership would enable First Nations to sell their ownership to non-First Nations and corporations, opening up lands for further development and continuing to separate Indigenous rights from territory (Altamirano-Jiménez 2009b). The lands would then be subject to provincial laws instead of under federal jurisdiction. This is in alignment with the proposed future federal legislation titled the *First Nation Property Ownership Act* (FNPOA). Mi’kmaq scholar Pam Palmater refers to

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<sup>48</sup> This “Without Prejudice” paper is part of an engagement process Minister Duncan has developed, the paper states that the “objective of the table engagement is to help ascertain whether there is common ground among the parties to move towards the conclusion of a Final Agreement” (Canada 2012, 1).

FNPOA as the “Flanagan National Petroleum Ownership Act.” She bases this name on two reasons:

- (1) The name of the Act (FNPOA) comes from the book Tom Flanagan co-wrote (with Andre LeDressay and Chris Alcantara): “Beyond the Indian Act: Restoring Aboriginal Property Rights” and
- (2) The Act will do more to open up reserve lands to oil, gas and mining companies than it will bring prosperity to First Nations. (Beaton 2012)

Although the FNPOA has not yet been tabled in the House of Commons at the time of writing, this policy is already being pushed on numerous First Nations at Treaty Land Entitlement and Self-Government negotiation tables across Canada as well as through their newly proposed “results based approach.”

Within the “Without Prejudice: Results Based Approach to Negotiation of S. 35 Rights, Table Engagement Process,” there is an increasing market citizenship push by having First Nations further generate their own source revenues to decrease state financial obligations. The paper states: “Canada’s funding of self-government arrangements will be offset by a portion of the capacity of the Aboriginal group to generate its own source revenues. This offset will be phased in over time leading to a gradual reduction of reliance on federal funding and greater self-sufficiency” (2012, 6). This disciplines First Nations to be self-reliant and able to compete in the marketplace (Slowey 2008). This Canadian government market-citizenship model is increasingly forcing Indigenous nations into neoliberal citizenry, where Indigenous rights are primarily mediated through

the economic sphere of Canada's interests. This can be in direct contradiction to Indigenous understandings of their relations with the land.

### Shifting Landscapes

Cree epistemology is embedded in relationships with the land. Treaty Six Elders interviewed by H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt describe this connection to land as including at least the spiritual, physical, and economic elements, "This connection is rooted in the Cree concept and doctrines related to pimâtisiwin (life). It is a concept that contains many theoretical subsets including among other things, a concept called "pimâcihowin" (the ability to make a good living). Land (askiy) is an important source of life for it provides those things required for the physical, material, and economic survival of the people. When treaty Elders use the word "pimâcihowin" they are describing a holistic concept that includes a spiritual as well as a physical dimension" (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 43). Within this perspective Cree economy is intimately tied to relations with the land, encompassing laws, principles, values, teachings and responsibilities regarding these relationships, including responsibilities to the land and other living beings.

In the book *Spirit Gifting: the Concept of Spiritual Exchange* (2007), Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper explores the importance of living in relationship with the land to the Indigenous worldview: "The eastern sky at sunrise is usually a brilliant yellow in my region. When I arise in the morning I face the east and say a prayer asking for a strong mind and giving thanks for my source of fire, heat, light and energy" (2007, 1). Ghostkeeper positions himself within his writing by stating that his

father's teachings regarding their Indigenous worldview and their living universe were all in the Cree language, Ghostkeeper says that this "might indicate that he had more of a Cree cultural perspective on life, than my mother, whose lessons were mostly in the English language" (2007, 6). Ghostkeeper describes himself as having a Metis<sup>49</sup> worldview. However, I see his perspective regarding the shift from Indigenous relations with land to relations with land based on market citizenship principles as also being instructive to Cree interactions with market citizenship.

How does the value of being in reciprocal relationships with physical and metaphysical beings shape notions of Cree citizenship and challenge market citizenship? I address this question in the rest of this chapter, and in chapters five, six, and seven. Ghostkeeper describes an Indigenous worldview regarding sustenance:

Food to sustain life is created by The Great Spirit. It comes in the form of a gift (*mekiwin*), or something that is freely exchanged and shared between a donor and recipient through the relations of giving and receiving ... It is the gathering and harvesting of plants and animals in order to make a living with the land. In this livelihood, a ritual is considered to be a decision made through the recital of a prayer by a gathering or harvester. The person requests permission from The Great Spirit, Mother Earth, and the aspects of the spirit, mind, and emotion of a plant or animal to sacrifice its body for human sustenance. The spirits of the donor and recipient are thought to be equal. This request is in exchange for an offering in the form of a gift of a pinch of tobacco or food, and it signals spiritual equality. (Ghostkeeper 2007, 11–12)

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<sup>49</sup> In Ghostkeeper's book, he uses the spelling Metis instead of Métis.

Ghostkeeper sees this type of subsistence-based philosophy as a sacred relationship: living *with* the land. According to Ghostkeeper, through changes in subsistence patterns a shift occurred to one described as a secular worldview: living *off* the land.

The shift to living *off* the land is described as a move to a secular worldview compared to an Indigenous spiritual worldview of living *with* the land. In his book, Ghostkeeper documents his own shift, from the patterns of subsistence-based living in his community to the wage economy, encompassing the construction of a natural gas field and the beginning of grain farming on their land. In analysing these changes, Ghostkeeper examines the technical and social relationships involved; where the “land, equipment, and labour, or forces of production, are more or less under the control of individuals from the community; the relationships, or means of production, are under the control of forces outside the community” (2007, 4–5).

Ghostkeeper explains that his community historically saw themselves as part of the land with all other living beings and that one process in these relationships includes the exchanging of *aspects* of the mind, body, and spirit thought to “provide life for the body through the activities of ceremony, ritual, and sacrifice” (2007, 4). He explains this as Spirit Gifting, “when one makes a living with the land, using the gifts of plants and animals for food and medicinal purposes” (ibid.). He says that this relationship with the land changed when he was awarded an oil-field contract from the company in Calgary that was completing the natural

gas development of land in their community. The move into mechanical grain farming also affected his people's spiritual worldview.

In the change to these two modes of production, land was viewed as a commodity and treated as an inanimate object as opposed to a gift that is part of a reciprocal relationship. This new view resulted in emotional and spiritual detachment (2007, 68–69). Through this new economic and social system, community contractors did not have time to “gather and harvest wild plants and animals for food and did not have the time to enter into a relationship with the land” (2007, 74). The result, for Ghostkeeper, was dissatisfaction so intense that it motivated him to revitalize his repressed worldview.

The “group revitalization” model developed by Anthony Wallace (1970, 188) explains this process. Wallace begins by noting that there is a “period of increased individual stress” where the sociocultural system is increasingly pushed out of balance through disease, conquest or internal decay resulting in a “period of cultural distortion,” where community members try to restore individual equilibrium through self-medicating strategies such as gambling and alcoholism to such an extent that these coping mechanisms get institutionalized in the “system” (Ghostkeeper 2007, 76). Wallace explains that at this point the population will die off, separate into “splinter” groups, or be assimilated into another more stable society; unless the culture is revitalized.

Ghostkeeper's community is in this transition right now where Indigenous people are hopeful that the expanded self-governing powers and partnership agreements

providing new economic resources will revitalize their people. However, an unknown number of people, like Ghostkeeper, have pinpointed their growing dissatisfaction with the negative impacts these new market “relationships” bring. Significantly, these self-government agreements may actually push his community further into sociocultural market rationalities. Although Ghostkeeper found a way to revitalize his Indigenous worldview and sustain it within the current global neoliberal economic system, it is important to understand how the community as a whole has responded.

### Collective Reflexivity

Increasingly, Indigenous scholars are critiquing the application of neoliberal instruments of capitalism and governance to First Nations communities (Alfred 2005; Bargh 2007; Altamirano-Jiménez 2009b; Kuokkanen 2006; Cornassel and Witmer 2008). Maori scholar Maria Bargh equates neoliberalism as the new form of colonisation on Indigenous peoples (2007, 2). In the article “North America First Peoples: Self-Determination or Economic Development?” Castro-Rea and Altamirano-Jimenez argue that government policies in Canada focus on (1) minimizing transfer payments to First Nations, (2) bounding self-government to self-administration of services, (3) prioritizing and encouraging neoliberal economic development, and (4) promoting relations between Aboriginal people and corporations to respond to global market pressures. The authors state that this is especially targeted to Indigenous peoples who have lands with oil and gas resources on them (Castro-Rea and Altamirano-Jiménez 2008, 241). Federal involvement, especially through negotiated self-government agreements and the

push for opening Indigenous lands up to marketization, impacts communities and challenges Indigenous worldviews and relationships to the land.

Within a market-citizenship regime there is a widening gap between rich and poor. Historically, Cree communities had norms preventing this sort of stratification. For example, in Cree society the Giveaway Ceremony, still occurring today, is a way to express thankfulness for the gifts of sustenance throughout the year and a process of wealth redistribution. During this ceremony people bring gifts to share with others. Part of the purpose of this ceremony is to provide the “necessities to live a prosperous life, with enough food to carry families through each winter” (Makokis 2001a, 107). I explore the giveaway ceremony more extensively in chapters five and six.

Elmer Ghostkeeper writes that when the Metis live in relationship with the land, the norm of sharing is principal: “The harvesters would distribute and share a large portion of moose meat with other Metis, beginning with the elders, the next of kin, the most in need, and finally others that had shared with them in the past” (2007, 44). Moving to living *off* the land, Ghostkeeper shares that he “viewed the land as a commodity instead of a gift.” The shift from seeing the land as a gift changes Indigenous perceptions regarding sharing these gifts with others.

Ghostkeeper describes his disconnect with the land translating to an unbearable dissatisfaction with life, motivating him to reflect on the Indigenous knowledge he had been repressing, and to develop a revitalization model (see Figure 13) to explain his own individual revitalization process (2007, 81).

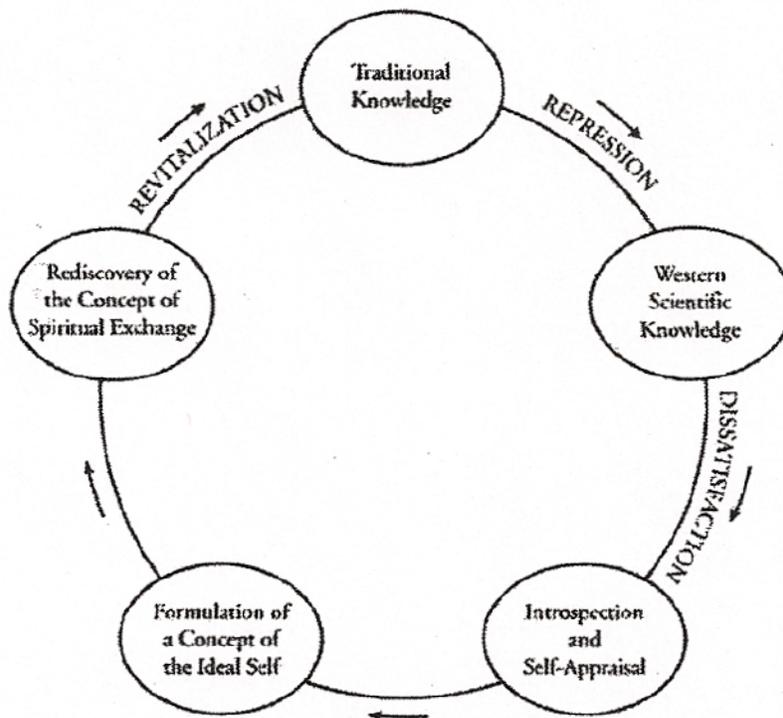


Figure 1: A Model of the Process of Individual Revitalization

**Figure 13: Revitalization model.**

Ghostkeeper (2007, 81)

This model is informed by Anthony Wallace’s (1970, 188) group revitalization theory and adapted to fit an Indigenous context. Within this rediscovery, Ghostkeeper reflected on the normative and behavioural ideals in an Indigenous worldview, acknowledging the diversity within. For Ghostkeeper,

During the process of self-appraisal, using the concept of the ideal self (what I really wanted to be), I rediscovered a repressed code from my traditional knowledge, the concept of spiritual exchange, which I now refer to as “Spirit Gifting.” I revitalized this concept as a part of my way of knowing to form a new code which blends both traditional and Western scientific knowledge in a way that had been impossible for me before. (2007, 80)

Elmer Ghostkeeper decided to once again live *with* the land. However, for him this did not mean a complete rejection of Western scientific knowledge or



themselves as a distinct people, partaking in international trade and embarking in foreign affairs. Without continual individual and collective reflexivity, perpetual discontent might settle in, making capital accumulation and self-determination a hollow achievement.

## Chapter 4: Plains Cree Diplomacy, Peoplehood, and International Trade<sup>51</sup>

### Introduction

While many have written about peoplehood related to Indigenous peoples (Corntassel 2012; Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003; Robert Thomas 1990), my purpose in this chapter is to elucidate Cree peoplehood through the “Peoplehood Matrix” and explore how the Cree historically engaged with other people groups through international<sup>52</sup> trade and diplomatic relations. These historic practices and relationships are a crucial backdrop to understanding Indigenous peoples’ self-determination today. Peoplehood is an alternative to notions of nation-states as the only option of authentic self-determination. As noted in chapter one, the concept of peoplehood provides a distinction between a nation and a nation-state. One of the most common critiques by politicians, bureaucrats, and political scientists, related to Indigenous self-determination, is the idea that Indigenous peoples are not able to financially support themselves. A better understanding of pre-existing Cree economic and governing relationships can lead to different approaches to self-determination and economic resurgence for the Cree people.

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<sup>51</sup> A version of this chapter has been published in Shalene Jobin, “Cree Peoplehood, International Trade, and Diplomacy,” *Revue Générale de Droit* Volume 43, no. 2 (2013): 599–636.

<sup>52</sup> I use the terms inter-nation, international, and inter-society to refer to trade practices between Cree people and other Indigenous peoples, for example the Blackfoot people.



Alliances and treaties are important strategies that nations engage in to ensure that the security and livelihood of their people are protected. The Cree have a history of engaging in different types of treaty making.  $\Delta\cdot C^{\wedge}9\Delta\cdot^{\circ}$  (Witaskewin) provides one example of a peace Treaty that was enacted between the Cree and Blackfoot. Treaty Six was negotiated between the British Crown and the Cree nation and is an example of a different type of treaty.  $\triangleright\rho L^{\circ} \Gamma\prec \dot{\Delta}\cdot r^{\wedge}\Delta\triangleright\Delta\cdot\text{4}r^{\wedge}9\Delta\cdot^{\circ}$  (Okimaw miyowicihitowiyecikewin) is a Cree phrase used to describe this category of treaty negotiated with the Crown, explaining it as an agreement to organize good relations between sovereigns (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 53). During negotiations both parties discussed jurisdiction where it is clear that the Cree were guaranteed authority within their own sphere of influence and shared governance in communal lands. It is also apparent that the Cree saw themselves as having sole jurisdiction over their territory of Treaty Six and were not interested in selling it. For example, Chief Sweetgrass stated in 1871: “We heard our lands were sold and we did not like it; we don’t want to sell our lands; it is our property, and no one has a right to sell them” (Chief Sweetgrass et al. 1871). Published primary sources and archival sources provide important information regarding jurisdiction and unceded resources located in Treaty Six territory. Further research and public communication of this is required. The potential economic and political impacts for the Cree cannot be underestimated.

Additionally, archival, archaeological, and oral history research provides key insights into Cree international trade practices. The scope of the research completed for this chapter found an abundant assortment of goods traded from

across Turtle Island and beyond. Trade required a complex transportation infrastructure with numerous trail systems from Canada to Mexico. These trail systems provide further evidence of the importance and frequency of international trade. With increasing evidence of this trade system, I am interested in further exploring the impacts of this for today. If, as the research evidence proves, international trade occurred, then it stands to reason that Indigenous rights in Canada should include the redeployment of international alliances including Indigenous international trade agreements.<sup>54</sup>

The following section investigates the diplomatic relations of the Plains Cree. The second section looks at the Peoplehood Matrix and applies the interlocking components of language, history, ceremonial cycle, and territory to the Plains Cree. After exploring the aspects of Cree peoplehood, I then examine the external economic relations of the Cree: focussing on inter-nation trade, trade networks, transportation, and trade language. This chapter adds to the Peoplehood Matrix literature by not only applying this concept to domestic relations but also examining foreign relations. Nations engage in trade and diplomacy as one method to exercise their authority and jurisdiction. This chapter also adds to the writing on Cree self-determination by looking to historic relationships and practices to inform current emancipatory aspirations.

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<sup>54</sup> In *Mitchell v. M.N.R.*, [2001] 1 S.C.R. 911, 2001 SCC 33, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against Mitchell's claim to bring goods from the United States to Canada. The ruling stated that there was insufficient evidence that importing was integral to Akwesasne culture. This case demonstrates the need for more research to provide evidence on this issue.

## Diplomacy

Diplomatic relations with other governments and citizens are important to ensure that the objectives of a people are met. As a self-determining people, the Cree embark in formal alliances and treaties. In the eighteenth century the Cree were regarded as a strong “nation of the plains” (Milloy 1990, 2). The Cree and their Ojibwa relatives were considered the most powerful group in western Canada: “by the 1860’s, the Cree-Ojibwa-Assiniboine group was by far the largest alliance in Canada. Their domain, generally speaking, spread from Quebec to the Rocky Mountains and from the northern tree line to the Missouri River” (Light 1987, 25). Despite linguistic barriers, the Cree and Assiniboine were considered the closest allies. Many Assiniboine spoke Cree and vice versa, and by the mid-seventeenth century there was a firm alliance between the Cree and Assiniboine and with other Algonquin-speaking confederates (Mandelbaum 2001). The Cree also established a trading alliance with the Arapaho and the Mandan to the South during the period of the Horse Wars (Hildebrandt 2008). Besides alliances, the Cree also participated in formal treaties.

There is significant debate around the meaning of “nation” related to Indigenous peoples. I think it is important to differentiate the term nation from current understandings of nation-states. I use the term nation although I do not want to equate or limit this aspiration to colonial understandings of nation-states.<sup>55</sup> This

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<sup>55</sup> I defer to Andrea Smith’s understanding of Indigenous nations: “Does self-determination for indigenous peoples equal aspirations for a nation-state, or are there other forms of governance we can create that are not based on domination and





experience of twenty-five years, passed in the midst of the Indians of that Country, I am troubled to tell the Government, thus your interception, that unless they have a law enacted to protect the Buffalo, before ten years those great herds will have disappeared” (Father Albert Lacombe 1876). In 1871 a letter from Cree Chiefs was sent to Governor Archibald, Colony’s representative at Fort Garry, Red River Settlement:

1. The Chief Sweet Grass, The Chief of the country.

GREAT FATHER, —I shake hands with you, and bid you welcome. We heard our lands were sold and we did not like it; we don’t want to sell our lands; it is our property, and no one has a right to sell them.

Our country is getting ruined of fur-bearing animals, hitherto our sole support, and now we are poor and want help—we want you to pity us. We want cattle, tools, agricultural implements, and assistance in everything when we come to settle—our country is no longer able to support us.

Make provision for us against years of starvation. We have had great starvation the past winter, and the small-pox took away many of our people, the old, young, and children.

We want you to stop the Americans from coming to trade on our lands, and giving firewater, ammunition and arms to our enemies the Blackfeet.

We made a peace this winter with the Blackfeet. Our young men are foolish, it may not last long.

We invite you to come and see us and to speak with us. If you can’t come yourself, send some one in your place.

We send these words by our Master, Mr. Christie, in whom we have every confidence. —That is all.

2. Ki-he-win, The Eagle.

GREAT FATHER, —Let us be friendly. We never shed any white man's blood, and have always been friendly with the whites, and want workmen, carpenters and farmers to assist us when we settle. I want all my brother, Sweet Grass, asks. That is all.

### 3. The Little Hunter.

You, my brother, the Great Chief in Red River, treat me as a brother, that is, as a Great Chief.

### 4. Kis-ki-on, or Short Tail.

My brother, that is coming close, I look upon you, as if I saw you; I want you to pity me, and I want help to cultivate the ground for myself and descendants. Come and see us. (Chief Sweetgrass et al. 1871)

This letter is significant for several reasons. Chief Sweet Grass calls himself and is recognized as the Chief of the Country and nested layers of governance are being displayed. Secondly, the Cree declare possession over their land and that they are not interested in selling it.<sup>56</sup> Alexander Morris stated that the Cree “desired a treaty of alliance with the Government” (Morris 1880, chap. 9). Finally, it is clear that the Cree understood that the land was changing (i.e., disappearance of the buffalo) and that they wanted to prepare for a new livelihood. It is very important to understand that the Cree saw themselves as a nation and that they were also externally recognized as such. Alexander Morris, Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, states, “The great region covered by them [the Cree], abutting on the areas included in Treaties numbers

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<sup>56</sup> Big Bear was selected as a Chief in 1865. Sharon Venne writes that initially his following was small, but near the end of his life his camp was one of the largest. Significantly Big Bear was not invited to the original Treaty Six negotiations. Venne explains numerous reasons for this including the government representatives' fear of Big Bear's influence as well as his not subscribing to the Christian faith and therefore not being influenced by the priests who are said to have been “active in trying to persuade the Indigenous peoples to accept less in negotiations” (Venne 1998, 198).

Three and Four, embracing an area of approximately 120,000 square miles, contains a vast extent of fertile territory and is the home of the *Cree nation*”<sup>57</sup> (Morris 1880, chap. 9).

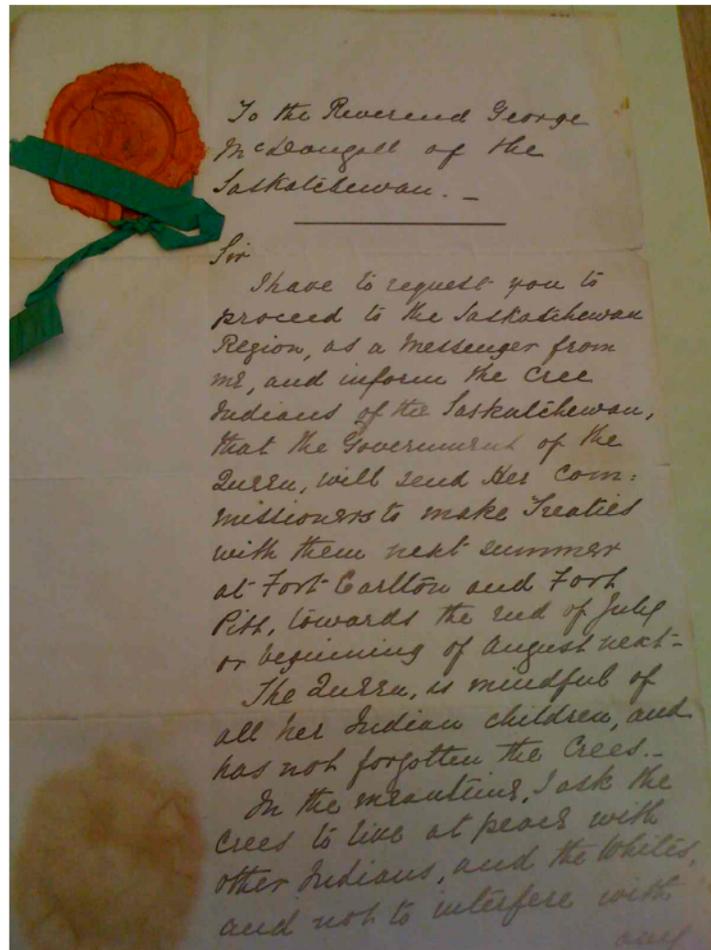
Although the Cree requested treaty negotiations in 1871 it took a while to gather the attention of the colonial government authorities in Upper Canada. W. J. Christie, retired Hudson Bay Employee and Treaty Commissioner, emphatically writes to Richard Hardisty in July, 1875, Chief Factor Upper Saskatchewan District:

I have done all I could the past winter to press the Government to send up and make a Treaty with the Saskatchewan Crees and Indians, but they are in no hurry, and say what you like you can't get them to see the thing in the same light as we do, there are people at Ottawa who seem to think that they know a great deal more about Indians and the Country, than we do. I have told the Government that the longer they delay the Treaty, the harder it will be to make, and the more exacting will be the Indians, and their advisers. The Government may delay too long. I have said and written enough about Saskatchewan and the Indians that I am tired of the subjects. Nothing can be done this year as we are too late in beginning. (Christie 1875)

W. J. Christie had an in depth understanding of the Cree from his years working for the Hudson Bay Company. His frustration pointed at the inactivity of the government in Ottawa. Finally, under the hand and seal of Alexander Morris, Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories (see Figure 14), dated August 1875, were instructions to the Reverend George McDougall to inform the Cree of upcoming Treaty negotiations:

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<sup>57</sup> Italics are my own.



**Figure 14: Letter from Alexander Morris, Lieutenant-Governor, to George McDougall, Methodist Minister (9 August 1875).**

Source: Calgary, George and John McDougall Family fonds, Glenbow Archives (Series 1-a, M-729-2a).

"I have to request you to proceed to the Saskatchewan Region, and inform the Cree Indians of the Saskatchewan, that the government of the Queen will send Her commissioners to make Treaties with them next summer at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt, towards the end of July or beginning of August next. The Queen is mindful of all her Indian children, and has not forgotten the Crees. In the meantime, I ask the Cree to live at peace with other Indians and the Whites and not to interfere .... The Queen has always dealt justly with her Indian children and has their good at heart. This letter will be your authority for delivering the

message I send by you, and you may show it to any Chief you meet” (Morris 1875).

On August 18, 1876, the official proceedings for Negotiating Treaty Six began. Following the protocol of the Plains people, a sacred pipe ceremony ensured that this treaty would be blessed by the Great Spirit and bound on earth and in the spiritual realm. Strike-Him-On-The-Back used the sacred Medicine Pipe Stem praying in the four directions (Light 1987, 30). Lieutenant Governor Morris recounts the opening ceremony:

On my arrival I found that the ground had been most judiciously chosen, being elevated, with abundance of trees, hay marshes and small lakes .... The view was very beautiful: the hills and the trees in the distance, and in the foreground, the meadow land being dotted with clumps of wood, with the Indian tents clustered here and there to the number of two hundred .... In about half an hour they were ready to advance and meet me. This they did in a semicircle, having men on horseback galloping in circles, shouting, singing and discharging fire-arms .... They then performed the dance of the “pipe stem,” the stem was elevated to the north, south, west and east, a ceremonial dance was then performed by the Chiefs and head men, the Indian men and women shouting the while.

They then slowly advanced, the horsemen again preceding them on their approach to my tent. I advanced to meet them, accompanied by Messrs. Christie and McKay, when the pipe was presented to us and stroked by our hands. After the stroking had been completed, the Indians sat down in front of the council tent, satisfied that in accordance with their custom we had accepted the friendship of the *Cree nation*.<sup>58</sup> (Morris 1880, chap. 9)

Lieutenant Governor Morris and his contemporaries saw the Cree as a nation with agency, the active participation of the negotiators in the pipe ceremony conveys acceptance of Cree peoplehood as distinct yet legitimate. Seeing and writing

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<sup>58</sup> Italics are my own.

about the Cree as a nation displays their regard for the Cree as a self-determining people. For the Cree, Treaty Six, with the spiritual ceremonies participated by both parties “expanded the First Nations sovereign circle, bringing in and embracing the British Crown within their sovereign circle” (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 41). It is an arrangement between nations, acknowledging the “sovereign character of each of the treaty parties, within the context of rights conferred by the Creator to the Indian nations” (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 41).

The archival documents show this Treaty negotiation as being the most expansive of the numbered Treaties, offering the most provisions to date (Talbot 2009, 94). The initial terms of the Treaty presented were basically the same as those offered in Treaty 4 (Talbot 2009, 97). Once the initial terms were presented, Mistawasis, as one of the Head Chiefs, responded by shaking Morris’s hand and stating, “We have heard all he had told us, but I want to tell him how it is with us as well; when a thing is thought of quietly, probably that is the best way. I ask this much from him this day and that we go and think of his words” (Morris 1880, chap. 9). The Cree went into council and they returned to negotiations on August 22. Interestingly, it is written that the negotiations were both oral and written. In Morris’s published text recounting the proceedings from the different government participants, it states:

Eventually the Commissioners made them an offer. They [the Indigenous leaders] asked this to be reduced to writing, which was done, and they asked time to consider it, which was of course granted. When the conference resumed, they presented a written counter-proposal. This the

Commissioners considered, and gave full and definite answers of acceptance or refusal to each demand, which replies were carefully interpreted, two of the Commissioners, Messrs. Christie and McKay, being familiar with the Cree tongue, watching how the answers were rendered, and correcting when necessary. (Morris 1880, chap. 9)

The Cree had enough forethought to anticipate the “double-forked tongue” of the government and tried to mitigate this by requesting written terms of the negotiations.<sup>59</sup> This might have been done to minimize the misunderstandings that could occur from language translation. On August 23, the Indigenous peoples’ counter offer was read out to the negotiators,

One ox and cow for each family. Four hoes, two spades, two scythes and a whetstone for each family. Two axes, two hay forks, two reaping hooks, one plough and one harrow for every three families. To each Chief one chest of tools as proposed. Seed of every kind in full to every one actually cultivating the soil. To make some provision for the poor, unfortunate, blind and lame. To supply us with a minister and school teacher of whatever denomination we belong to. To prevent fire-water being sold in the whole Saskatchewan. As the tribe advances in civilization, all agricultural implements to be supplied in proportion.

When timber becomes scarcer on the reserves we select for ourselves, we want to be free to take it anywhere on the common. If our choice of a reserve does not please us before it is surveyed we want to be allowed to select another. We want to be at liberty to hunt on any place as usual. If it should happen that a Government bridge or scow is built on the Saskatchewan at any place, we want passage free. One boar, two sows, one horse, harness and wagon for each Chief. One cooking stove for each Chief. That we be supplied with medicines free of cost. That a hand-mill be given to each band. Lastly in case of war occurring in the country, we do not want to be liable to serve in it.

When we look back to the past we do not see where the Cree nation has ever watered the ground with the white man’s blood, he has always been our friend and we his; trusting to the Giver of all good, to the generosity of

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<sup>59</sup> Sharon Venne writes that Elders have shared how the original treaty was written on the back of a buffalo hide (1998, 193).



This is a significant difference in meaning. Morris also discussed jurisdiction during negotiations explaining a type of divided authority and control. He stated that that Crown “would not interfere with Indians’ daily life except to assist them in farming” (Ladner 2003b, 177; Morris 1880, chap. 9). The Chiefs at Treaty Six understood that they had “agreed to share the land in return for annuities, education, medical and famine assistance, as well as a commitment to establish ranching and farm economies” (Hildebrandt 2008, 17). The Cree people understood from the negotiators that they would still be able to freely hunt and fish without being restricted to the boundaries of the reserve. Morris stated, “Understand me, I do not want to interfere with your hunting and fishing. I want you to pursue it through the country, as you have heretofore done; but I would like your children to be able to find food for themselves and their children that come after them” (Morris 1880, chap. 9). It is apparent from the first hand accounts of Morris and others that the sovereignty of the Cree people over their society, their sustenance, their land, and shared jurisdiction over communal lands were mutually understood and agreed upon.

There is consensus among Cree Elders, substantiated by numerous oral accounts, and published sources that the terms of Treaty Six did not included subsurface land rights.

At the time of treaty signing, it was understood through verbal agreement that the land which was opened to the white settlers was only to the extent of the depth a plough would furrow. This was indicated by a gesture of a closed fist with thumb extended. “The rest” was to be retained by the Indian people. Thus, the birds of the air, fish in the sea, the trees, the

rivers, the minerals were not given up. (Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College 1976, 27)

A separate published account records Elder Gordon Oakes stating: “As I was saying about the depth of the plough, the Treaty Commissioner [Alexander Morris] also advised that some day he will be mining valuable minerals and at the time I will come back and negotiate with you again on it” (H. Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 42). An edited volume gives an oral account from Lazurus Roan born in the Smallboy Camp in 1904, his father and two uncles were at the Fort Carlton negotiations and signing. The account always relayed to him is that the Chief negotiator:

Would indicate with his hands approximately one foot in depth: [stating] “That is the depth requested from you, that is what the deal is, nothing below the surface, that will always belong to you. Only land where agriculture can be viable; other areas where nothing can grow, that will always belong to you. You will always be the owner of that land.” (Price 1987, 155)

It is significant that there is consensus in accounts across provinces and over different time periods that the negotiations were restricted to settlers being able to till the land. From an Indigenous perspective, subsurface rights and animals, trees, etc. are still within the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples, at least theoretically. When trying to assert Cree self-determination now, Canadian opponents often state Indigenous peoples’ lack of financial resources as a justification to deny self-determination. If Indigenous peoples can prove their claim over subsurface and other nonagricultural resources, and the Canadian state accepts this, it would be a monumental gain and provide all the means necessary to be economically and politically autonomous within their own jurisdictional space. It is beyond the

scope of this chapter to prove or disprove this point; it is also important to note that, from a Canadian law perspective, this may be a moot point. There is still the potential for the Canadian state to once again acknowledge Indigenous jurisdiction or comanagement over shared lands, even lands within the historic numbered treaties, those outside the modern-day treaty process.

Even after Treaty Six was signed and reserve life began, the Cree still understood themselves as a nation. For instance, my ancestor,<sup>60</sup> Red Pheasant, signatory to Treaty Six wrote a letter to Canadian authorities where he raised the hopes for a powerful Cree nation. In 1881, Chief Red Pheasant dictated the following as part of his letter to Edgar Dewdney, Indian Commissioner and Lieutenant-Governor for the Northwest Territories;

I wish that nothing may bother me, that the law may rest in peace; in the first treaty [Treaty 6] the hand of the good fellowship was lifted up to put law and order in this land; this I still hold onto, oh that that the Cree nation may be raised up, as they now see the powerful. (Chief Red Pheasant 1881)

Chief Red Pheasant describes Treaty Six in terms of fellowship—a good relationship between nations. This section explored the external relations the Cree nation engaged in, the next section will examine the internal aspects of Cree peoplehood.

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<sup>60</sup> My Great-great-grandfather, Old Wuttunee, was our last hereditary Chief. When reserve life was on the horizon, he asked his brother Red Pheasant to become Chief of our people.





tribes as the classic form of their speech. It was largely a language of open syllabics linked together in words of great length and equivalent to our phrase or even to our sentence” (The Board of Home Missions 1940). The Cree language is one distinguishing characteristic of the Cree people. The act of speaking and transferring knowledge through the language can be thought of as one act of self-determination, enacting a key component of peoplehood.

Cree language is often referred to as an oral language as opposed to being a written language. One controversy is around the origin of the written language, where many say that missionaries that came to Cree societies developed the Cree syllabics writing system. Fine Day was over eighty years old when he relayed this account in the mid-1930s, disputing the origin of Cree syllabics:

“Mestanuskwe-u,” or Badger Call, once died and then became alive again. While he was dead he was given the characters of the syllabic and was told that out of them he would write Cree. He was of the “Sakawiyiniwok,” or Bush Cree. Strike-Him-On-the-Back learned how to write syllabic from Badger Call. He made a feast and announced that he would teach it to anybody who wanted to learn it without pay. That is how I learned it. The missionaries got the writing from Badger Call, who taught it to them. When Badger Call was given the characters he was told, “They will change the writing and will believe that the writing belongs to them, but only those who know Cree will be able to read it.” So it is that no one can read the syllabic writing unless he knows Cree, and so the writing does not belong to the whites. (Fine Day 1973a, 58)

Collaborating this, Cree professor Clifford Cardinal presents important information on a letter in his possession from Calling Badger to Evans, in the letter Calling Badger strongly criticizes the minister for misinforming the public about the origin of Cree syllabics, accusing Evans of gathering the information and then plagiarizing it (C. Cardinal 2014). Cree Syllabics pictorially shows



Growing up I sometimes heard  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) stories in the wintertime, I was excited to find these same stories in numerous published accounts. The stories of  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) explain the Cree creation account and numerous adventures, which provide important lessons and knowledge and are an important part of the sacred history of the Cree.  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) stories are accounts of the Cree trickster and detail important norms and valuable information of the cosmic order, medicinal plants, and the roles of animals. Amelia Paget, one of the few women authors of Indigenous histories in the early twentieth century (and with Indigenous ancestry), wrote in 1909: “He [  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk)] has been treated as a creator, a defender, a teacher and at the same time a conqueror, a robber, a deceiver” (Paget 2004, 57). Historically  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) stories are usually only told in winter, it was believed that if these stories were told in summer lizards would bother the narrator. Amelia Paget explains that  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) has a most wonderful personage, “claiming to have created the earth after the flood and to have been the means of saving all the birds of the air and beasts of the field by his wisdom. He is also claimed to have understood and conversed with all the animals, birds, fishes and insects, and also with all manner of plants” (Paget 2004, 57).  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) was last seen on earth on the southern side of the Sweetgrass First Nation, Saskatchewan. There is a hill with a slope there called “We-sa-ka-chak’s Slide” where sick people may be healed by sliding down it (B. Ahenakew, Hardlotte, and Jensen 1973a, 1:9). Chapter five will expand on this introduction of  $\Delta\cdot\text{y}^{\text{q}}\text{l}^{\text{x}}$  (Wîsahkecâhk) by providing a

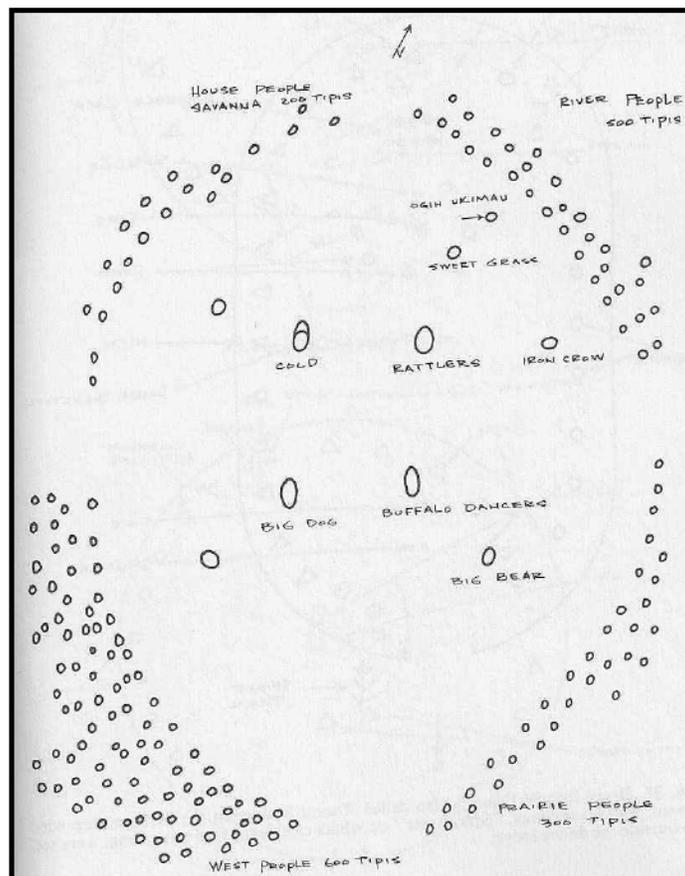
substantive analysis of economic relationships found within Cree stories. While  $\Delta\text{-}\text{v}^{\text{q}}\text{i}^{\text{x}}$  (Wisahkecâhk) provides teachings around responsibilities to all other living beings, another aspect of sacred living histories is providing teachings around the meaning of ceremonies.

Indigenous spirituality is often based on the interconnection of ceremonies to land, language, and living histories. Cree people have a complex ceremonial cycle; many of these ceremonies are still in practice today whereas others like the Buffalo Dance, are said to have left with the buffalo (Dion n.d.). These ceremonies also form part of Cree governance, in part, through the societies that often hold the ceremonies. A few of these ceremonies include the Medicine Lodge, the Cannibal dance, the Calumet dance, the Giveaway dance, the Shaking Tent ceremony, the Elks Society, the Skunk Dance, the Bear Dance, the Bee Dance, the Horse Dance, the Great Dogs, the Rattlers Society, and the Kit Foxes (Dion n.d.). The Sun Dance or Thirst Dance is often considered the most important ceremony for the Cree.

$\sigma\text{-}\text{q}\text{-}\text{r}\text{L}^{\text{p}}$  (Nee-pah-quah-see-mun; the Sun Dance) is described as “dancing through a day and night without quenching one’s thirst” (Paget 2004, 5). Although planning starts the previous year, the ceremony itself usually lasts three to four days, usually in June. This ceremony is described as a thanks offering to the Great Spirit, a time for making braves, making specific petitions, and mourning loved ones passed on (Dion n.d.). In terms of making braves, Ernest Brown wrote between 1927–1929 about the Sun Dance:

The Medicine-man now fixes bone skewers through his muscles of the victims' breasts ... the would-be brave commences to run around the pole like a child going round the May-pole, until at last exhausted, he falls to the ground tearing the flesh in so-doing .... He is put to sleep, and from the first object he sees when he awakes, he takes his new name; hence the peculiar name of Lone Star, Sitting Bull, Bad Dried Meat, Great Road, Wandering Spirit, Crowfoot, Big Bear and others which readily occur to the students of Indian lore. (E. Brown 1927a)

The Sun Dance provides an important example of ceremony at the heart of Cree peoplehood. The organization of a Sun Dance, I would argue, provides essential information about Cree governance. Many different tribes would meet together during big events like this.



**Figure 3: Plains Cree camp, 1870.**

Mandelbaum (2001, 371)

As previously introduced, Figure 3 shows a Cree camp as drawn by Fine Day in the spring of 1870. Of the Upstream Cree people there were the bands of the River people, the Beaver Hills People (West People), the House people, and Parkland people (Prairie people) (Milloy 1990, 73). At this encampment there were 600 Tipis within the River people, 300 for the Prairies, 600 for the West People, and 200 for the House People. During these large encampments there were specific locations for each tipi based on the band, the society a person belonged to and rank. As there were thousands of people at these gatherings every society within Cree peoplehood provided a different function. For example, the Rattlers Society of the River people band was composed of warriors and during large encampments the Warriors lodge was erected in one part of the centre of the camp circle (Mandelbaum 2001, 113–5). Cree informants explain “When several bands were camped together, each Warrior lodge was pitched near the center of the camp circle, opposite that segment of the circle occupied by its band. The tipi of the band chief stood between the Warrior lodge and the arc of the camp circle. The tipi of the Warrior Chief was placed directly behind that of the Band Chief” (Mandelbaum 2001, 117). Joseph Dion explains that during a Sun Dance the Prairie Chicken Dance Society took over and part of their many duties was to ensure order was kept in camp (Dion 1996, 17). Ceremonies are an integral part of Cree peoplehood, connecting living histories with the language and the significance of the land encompassing Cree territory.

Indigenous scholars (Ghostkeeper 2007; Kuokkanen 2011; Altamirano-Jiménez 2013) often characterise Indigenous people through their connection to the land

and environment. As explored throughout this dissertation, self-determination for the Cree is intimately connected to the land (W. Wuttunee 2003), the relations and reciprocal responsibilities to the earth, air, water, and other living creatures. The territory of the Cree before the disappearance of the buffalo is described as extending across the present provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta from the region “where the Qu’Appelle River crosses the Manitoba line to the vicinity of Edmonton. The various bands of Plains Cree centred in the river basins included in this area and the tribal range may be defined in terms of the valleys of the Qu’Appelle, the lower North Saskatchewan, the lower South Saskatchewan, and the lower Battle rivers” (Mandelbaum 2001, 7).

Indigenous people describe territory within their histories, “quite often creation and migration stories specify certain landmarks as being especially holy. Ancestors are buried in particular places. Shrines are erected and certain parts of the immediate environment—plants, water, earth, animal parts—are often utilized in religious ceremonies” (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003, 14). There are over one million tipi rings still visible in Alberta. Numerous medicine wheels are also found throughout the Plains region. Effigies are located across the Plains; for example, a buffalo effigy is known to be located in Big Beaver, Saskatchewan (Bryan 2005, 66–82). ᑭᑭᑭᑭ (Mistaseni; Big Rock) was a large rock in the Qu’Appelle Valley in the shape of a buffalo. The Cree explain it as a sacred site, where a Cree boy was turned into a buffalo and then into this huge boulder (B. Ahenakew, Hardlotte, and Jensen 1973b, 2:61). The rock measured 79 feet (24 m) around the base and 46 feet (14 m) from one side to the other (Soagie 2012). Cree

people considered this sacred. Explosives detonated the sacred site before two dams were built in the 1960s, which flooded the location. A memorial with a small part of the boulder is located in Elbow. It is said that Cree men also took remnants of the boulder and placed it on Chief Poundmaker's grave (Soagie 2012).

The components of the Peoplehood Matrix are considered inseparable and land cannot be understood outside of ceremony, language, or history. The Cree have a strong connection to all these aspects of peoplehood. They saw (and see) themselves, and were seen by others as a distinct people. Their jurisdiction was not a right granted by a nation state but many see it as a responsibility and gift given by the Great Spirit. John Milloy wrote that although early trade systems and geography created the regional divisions among the Cree they should still be considered one nation (Milloy 1990, 70). I agree. As a self-determining people, the Cree undertook diplomatic relations with foreigners; next, inter-nation trade will be examined within the Plains region as one important aspect of a Cree political economy.

#### Inter-nation Trade on the Plains

One key function of a self-determining people is to engage in international trade to diversify a local and regional economy. For the Cree, food, ornamental goods, livestock, raw goods, processed goods, medicines, and ceremonies were key commodities for import and export. In this section, examples of trade practices are explored, with a focus on goods traded, trading networks, and ceremonial

practices regarding trade. In this chapter I explore how archival sources (and some secondary sources) provide a general introduction to inter-nation trade involving the Cree on the plains region, chapters five and six build on this further by presenting principles and a framework around Cree economic relationships.

Trading often revolves around exchanging goods of abundance for those desired. Before European settlement, buffalo, other game, fish, fowl, vegetal foods, and berries were found in abundance on the plains. It is also recorded that the Cree made an annual journey to the Southwest to obtain corn. Trade with those living by salt water provided mussel shells used for utensils and earrings (Mandelbaum 2001, 24, 91, 84). A trade relationship also occurred where “agricultural producers living in what is now southern Ontario and the St. Lawrence valley supplied corn and other products to those without an agricultural base, exchanging them for fish or furs” (Canada 1996, Vol. 2, Ch. 5). The Kootenay Indians used red ochre pigment for trade after they processed it into red oxide; this was taken from the area called “Usna Waki-Cagubi” (Lakusta 2007, 85).

The Cree traded<sup>62</sup> ceremonies with other Indigenous peoples. For example, the Buffalo Dance was traded from the Dakota in exchange for clothing and horses and was preceded by a transfer ceremony. Similarly, the Stoney bought the right

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<sup>62</sup> I use the term trade but this is not to confuse with buying in a monetary system. These examples are outside capitalist monetary instruments like money.

to perform the Rattlers Dance from the Cree (Mandelbaum 2001, 111–2).<sup>63</sup> Archaeological discoveries provide an account of items that were traded. Bones and shells from the west coast have been found by the South Saskatchewan River. Native Copper mined outside of Thunder Bay, over eight thousand years ago, was manufactured into different items and found across the Plains. Significantly, shell gorget was recovered on the Plains from a clamshell only available from the Gulf of Mexico (Bryan 2005). In Edmonton, a thousand-year-old piece of pottery from the South Saskatchewan basin was uncovered (Goyette 2004, 11). Oral accounts, written records, and archeological evidence point to a diverse market of goods, which were part of an extensive international trade network throughout Turtle Island.

There is an extensive Indigenous trail system predating European contact throughout North America. As previously stated, these trails provided migration routes, trade networks, travelling to hunting grounds, locations of warfare, and were used for travel purposes. These trading routes extended across numerous Indigenous nations' territories and provide the infrastructure that the fur trade and settler road systems were built on. The Old North Trail is one of the most extensive and well known. It is also referred to as Wolf Tracks and Blackfoot Tracks. Wolf Tracks is not a single trail but a network of north-south trails running from Edmonton to Mexico. From within the Rosedale Flats area of

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<sup>63</sup> In an interview on August 9, 1934 on Sweetgrass First Nation, Fine Day told Mandelbaum: "One group of ogihtcitau couldn't give the dance of another bunch unless they bought it. A long time ago the Stonies bought the Rattler's tipi from the Cree" (Fine Day 1934).

Edmonton, a ᐱᐅᐱᐅ (pêhonân; gathering place) (Goyette 2004, 20) was located; “situated on the old Indian trail called Wolf’s Track, was long ago an ancient meeting place of Plains people—a place of trade, celebration and ceremony” (Coutu 2004, 105). Evidence shows this was a place for many activities including intertribal trade between the Cree, Chipewyan, Beaver, Nakoda, and Blackfoot (Goyette 2004, 22). This trail went south from the Rosedale Flats area, basically following where Highway 2 (Queen Elizabeth II) lies today (Petty 1962, 2). At present day Wetaskiwin the trail forked (Petty 1962, 7) with the western branch following the foothills region parallel to the Rocky Mountains. Brings-Down-The-Sun, one of the most respected Piikani spiritual leaders, shared this enlightening account with Walter McClintock in 1905:

There is a well known trail we call the Old North Trail. It runs north and south along the Rocky Mountains. No one knows how long it has been used by the Indians. My father told me it originated in the migration of a great tribe of Indians from the distant north to the south, and all the tribes have, ever since, continued to follow their tracks .... The main trail ran south along the eastern side of the Rockies, at a uniform distance from the mountains, keeping clear of the forest, and outside of the foothills. It ran close to where the City of Helena now stands, and extended south into the country, inhabited by a people with dark skins, and long hair falling over their faces <Mexico>. In former times, when the Indian tribes were at war, there was constant fighting along the North Trail. In those days, Indians who wanted to travel in peace avoided it and took to the forest. My father once told me of an expedition from the Blackfeet, that went south by the Old Trail, to visit the people with dark skins. Elk Tongue and his wife Natoya were of this expedition, also Arrow Top and Pemmican, who was a boy of twelve at the time. He died only a few years ago at the age of ninety-five. They were absent four years. It took them twelve moons of steady travelling to reach the country of the dark skinned people, and eighteen moons to come north again. They returned by a longer route through the “High Trees” or Bitter Root country, where they could travel without danger of being seen. They feared going along the North Trail because it was frequented by their enemies, the Crows, Sioux and

Cheyennes. Elk Tongue brought back the Dancing Pipe. (Reeves 1990, 4–5)

This informative account provides insights into the age of the Old North Trail, the uses of the trail, length of travel time, and ceremonial trade with Indigenous peoples in Mexico. It is also important to recognize that there was “less change in Aboriginal society during the fur trade than some would believe ... it was the European trader who was forced to adapt to the Indians’ trade practices and learn the protocol of their trade patterns” (A. Rotstein in Hildebrandt 2008, 6). It is well documented that fur traders often used Indigenous trail systems, and later, settlers used these same trails for their carts, and often our current highways and railways are using large portions of the same transportation networks.

There was also an extensive east–west trail system connecting the Hudson Bay to the Rocky Mountains. One part of this trail system has been referred to as the Carlton Trail which was “the main highway into the Saskatchewan country from the Red River Settlement” (Russell 1840, 1), further connecting to Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt, and Edmonton (Russell 1955, 2). This has been described as the only over-land route between Upper Fort Garry and Fort Edmonton (Hall 1969). Before the Carlton Trail was used in the Fur Trade it was used as an Indigenous trail, part of a migration path established six thousand years ago when Lake Agassiz retreated (Hall 1969). Southwest of the junction of the North and South branches of the Saskatchewan River is one standard location where the Cree-Blackfoot traded (Milloy 1990, 17). Along important locations of this ancient trail, by lakes and on high ground, many artifacts have been found from large

encampments, “at such places as Upper Fort Garry, Deer Lodge, Whitehorse Plain, Portage la Prairie, Neepawa, Minnedosa, Shoal Lake, and Fort Ellice—all on the Carlton Trail” (Milloy 1990, 17). The ᖅᓂᓂᓂ (pêhonân; gathering place) mentioned above was only one of many Indigenous gathering places on this route. These “aggregate centers were the centres of trade as well as the heart of the cultural and spiritual life of the First Peoples” (Coutu 2004, 64). With the spiritual, trading, and cultural significance of these repeated use seasonal encampments, David Meyer from the University of Saskatchewan has researched six of these sites of importance:

These campsites were often located approximately 80 kilometres apart along the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers ... from east to west the location of these gathering places, and their Cree meanings are as follows: Grand Rapids, “Mitipawitik, a large rapid”; Cedar Lake, “Cimawawin, a seining place”; The Pas, “Opaskweaw, the narrowing between woods”; “Paskwattinow” near the Pasqua Hills, the original location of Fort St. Louis; Nipawin, Nipowiwwinihk, “a standing place”; and finally Fort de la Corne, known as “pehonan, the waiting place.” (Coutu 2004, 64–5)

Research at the University of Saskatchewan has found a strong correlation between these ancient gathering places and later positioning of fur trade posts by the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company (Coutu 2004). Different sources also point to “commercial networks” existing in other areas including a trade network from the west coast to the interior (Canada 1996, Vol. 2 Ch. 5). Similarly, there are accounts of an Oolachen Trail that crossed the Rocky Mountains. Olive Dickason stated that the oolachen oil “was extensively traded from the Pacific coast into the interior along established routes” (Dickason 2002, 3rd:60); this trade goes back to at least four thousand BC. This Trail is named

after the oolachen oil that has ceremonial and medicinal functions. It is apparent that Indigenous trail systems were expansive and well developed predating European contact.

Travelling over extended distances required an infrastructure of trails, modes of transportation, diplomacy, and systems of governance that enabled an efficient process of moving camp. For land travel, before the introduction of the horse, the dog travois was used in the summer and a dog with cariole was used in the winter (E. Brown 1927b). The Saskatchewan River was another significant part of this east–west trail system. For water, travel boats were used. Figure 15 displays Cree men on a Cree Flat Boat on the Montreal River in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Archives Board 1890).



**Figure 15: Cree flat boat.**

Source: Cree Flat Boat on the Montreal River (1890) Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Archives Board (Database ID 26030), online: Our Legacy <http://scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/permalink/26030>.

Archaeological evidence has confirmed that boats have been used on the Prairies for over thirteen thousand years (Goyette 2004, 8). This extensive infrastructure of trails and transportation devices indicate a robust international trading system stretching throughout Turtle Island. To engage in successful inter-nation trade requires accepted norms and practices that become part of a diplomatic function.

There was an accepted protocol followed among the Plains' peoples before trade commenced. Based on the information gathered I would deduce that the type of protocol or ceremony around trade depended on the material being traded. For example, when the Buffalo Dance was bought from the Dakota, the Pipestream

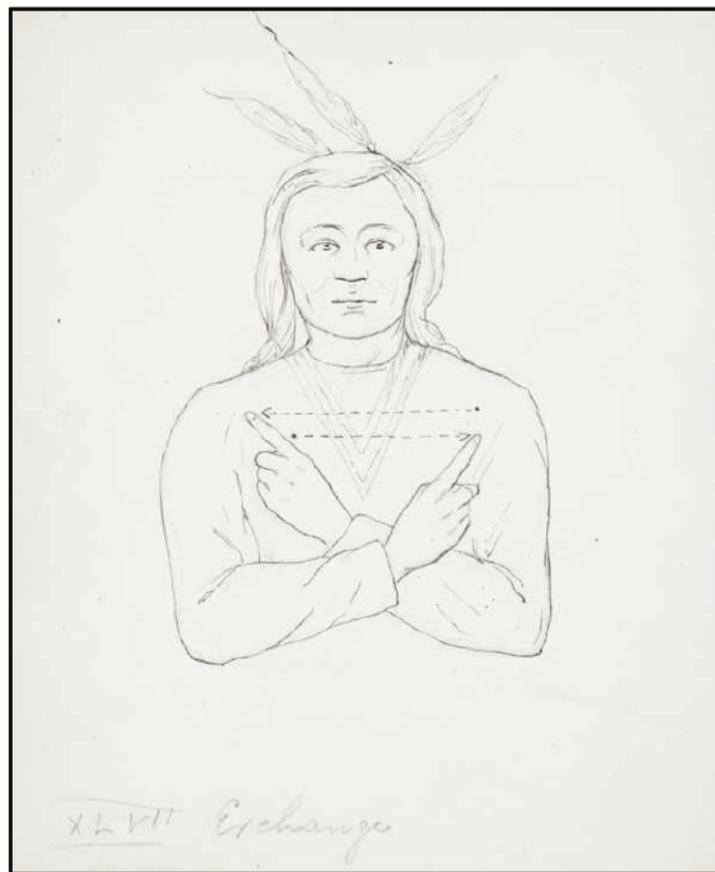
carrier led the Cree to the Warrior's lodge of the Dakota. The Cree piled in front of the lodge and tied the horses they were giving onto the tipi stakes. The Dakota came out gifting the Cree with clothes so to "buy back" their ability to still perform the Buffalo Dance. After the transfer was completed, the Dakota invited the Cree into their lodge to teach them the songs and dance (Mandelbaum 2001, 111–2). In 1736, there was a "ceremony of adoption and an exchange of property between the Assiniboine and the Cree and the Mandan" (Mandelbaum 2001, 38). Mandelbaum's informants stated that most Cree medicines originally came from the Saulteaux (Plains Ojibway). Muskwa<sup>64</sup> (Bear) explains of a Plains Cree who travelled to the east to receive medicines. He presented two horses loaded with well-made clothes. In exchange the Saulteaux took him into their mitewin lodge, they taught him about many plants to be used for medicinal purposes (2001, 165). A Chief had to give freely of his possessions and "usually set the pace for ceremonial giving;" gift-giving was considered one dispute resolution mechanism (Mandelbaum 2001, 106–7). The Giveaway Dance was one institutional mechanism that any person could start if they "happened to have something he wished to give some friend of his," with the recipient reciprocating, not necessarily to the same person (Paget 2004, 14). I discuss giveaways and gift-giving more extensively in chapters five and six. Fur traders also adopted Indigenous trading protocols. Norbert Welsh describes how before trading he would invite the Chief, for example Chief Starblanket, and give a pound a tea, a few pounds of sugar, and tobacco. He told Starblanket "to divide these among his

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<sup>64</sup> Spelled Maskwa in Mandelbaum's text.



American Department of the Interior held a conference in Browning, Montana where thirteen different First Nations from across the Plains met to communicate and document the sign language, this was filmed and can be viewed online (M. G. H. Scott 1930). Flashing mirrors in the sun was another method to communicate over a distance (Mandelbaum 2001, 361). Diplomatic functions, such as trade, were facilitated by the use of trade languages like the Plains Indigenous sign language.



**Figure 16: Plains sign language—“Exchange.”**

Source: Garrick Mallery, Hand Talk: American Indian Sign Language, online: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/pisl/illustrations.html>.

The international trade practices of the Plains Cree, including the plethora of goods traded, complex trading infrastructure, and established protocols

demonstrates the extensive function of international trade within Cree society and the making of Cree peoplehood. This system of international trade was one key aspect of a larger diplomatic relations function of the Cree. Another function of diplomatic relations is the negotiation of alliances and treaties with other nations.

In the previous chapter (three) I examined Indigenous notions of identity, through citizenship, and the extent to which these understandings are conditioned by market liberalism. I ask, is the approach Indigenous peoples are taking, pursuing self-government through economic autonomy (to lessen state controls), leading them to be increasingly subjected to constitutive, hegemonic, and individualizing forms of being, therefore challenging notions of communal Indigenous identity and relations to the land. This chapter provided a deeper understanding of Plains Cree peoplehood. Following are two connected chapters (five and six) that draw from Cree oral histories, stories, and interviews with Cree knowledge holders to communicate a framework for understanding Cree political economy based on economic relationships.

Political scientists, other academics, and politicians often provide constraints, such as lack of sustainable funding and economic dependency on the colonial state as justifications for denying legitimate forms of Indigenous self-determination. Indigenous trade alliances and a review of the contractual terms, spirit, and original intent of Treaty Six might expose a plethora of new economic avenues based on Cree peoples' own understandings of the land, allowing the Cree to honour the sacrifices made and realize the aspirations of their forefathers,

as one of my ancestors wrote: “this I still hold onto, oh that that the Cree nation may be raised up” (Chief Red Pheasant 1881).



ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (wahkohtowin; “the laws governing relationships”) goes beyond the relationships within Cree political economy, although it includes it. Cree relationships, including economic relationships, include everything the sun touches with its rays. Although I am exploring economic relationships within these narratives, they cannot be understood apart from the social relations in which they are embedded. My research in this dissertation explores Cree economic relationships that include nature’s economy, the sustenance economy, and the complex challenges of contemporary economic relationships.<sup>66</sup>

The scope of this research project is ambitious. My goal is to look back in time at historic and continuing Cree economic relations and governance. From that conceptual base, I ask how this knowledge already is and can be enhanced to cultivate contemporary Cree social practices—practices that enable self-determination and economic resurgence for the Cree people. I attempt to explore the resilience within Cree ontological relations that continue in spite of the effects of colonisation and economic exploitation. Using a wide selection of Cree narratives, such as written accounts, interviews and oral histories with Cree knowledge holders, patterns surrounding economic relations emerge from within the stories.<sup>67</sup> The first section of this chapter provides a discussion of Cree

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<sup>66</sup> See (Shiva 2005) for a discussion of nature’s economy, the sustenance economy, and the capitalist economy.

<sup>67</sup> For the purpose of this corner of my broader research project I am using grounded theory with the intent to have the principles and practices emerge from the stories. I therefore I do not engage with other scholars’ writings on Indigenous economies in this chapter. Chapter one engages with the secondary literature on Indigenous economies and the important work scholars have already completed there.







Haudenosaunee people, specifically to meet with a Mohawk Elder who was part of the Oka crisis in 1990. Sunney explains:

ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [Wahkohtowin] is not just a human dynamic; it is not just a human occurrence .... He [the Mohawk Elder] told us a story about what happened there [during the Oka Crisis in 1990], their side, their reality. I told him, yes, a lot of the pipes went up in Alberta and passed the country .... I wanted this pipe to complete this journey after all this trouble. I brought a pipe down there [to Kahnawake] and I told him I would like to do a ceremony, give thanks to the Creator. He told us all about the military and the Sûreté du Québec, and the actions that the police they took against them. Then he went on to the spiritual side of things.

He said, I have a Grandfather; he comes in through a door. There is a great waterway on the East side of Turtle Island and it comes up through that door every day. On the West side of Turtle Island there is another door that our Grandfather goes through when it is done with this day. And my Grandfather says, everything I touch I am related to. That's about symbiosis, of course in a very practical way, talking about symbiosis and that's our worldview. That is how we are related to the trees; we are related to the rocks. We are not just related to each other how we have identified each other as mother, father, child, grandchild, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother. We are not just related that way; we are all related according to that ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [wahkohtowin], it is all about that. Now, ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [sihci-wahkohtowin] is about your own immediate clan, your own bloodline.

There is also an understanding that we are all related in here, we are also not only related to that; we are also related to the air, the water, the sun, the earth, and all that it brings. So we are related to all these things, we are related to what is under the ground, ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [asiskîy]—all the roots under there. We are related to the stars over there, as farfetched as it may seem, that is what we are related to .... So everything that the sun touches it is related to but we are also related to the celestial bodies, and they have with our own spirit, they have that name ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [iyokewekemak],<sup>69</sup> that means that our spirit on this earth, we will call it ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [ahcâhk], and what we call the stars, the Celestial bodies, the morning star, for instance, what I call it ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ [wâpanacahkos]. So that's that spirit again. And then

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<sup>69</sup> I could not find this term in the Cree dictionary; therefore I might have spelt it wrong. It also might be a “high Cree” term that is not in the dictionary.







River people) is seventy-four years old. Walter lived in his First Nation as a child and as an adult, in rural settings, and in various prairie cities. He has travelled to most of the Indigenous communities in Canada over the last fifty years, is an important public figure, and has been vital to the revitalization of Cree ways of being. We twice had the opportunity to chat about this research project. Walter shared a personal account that really illuminated the importance of gift-giving. He remembered one time when a young man brought a well-known older Crow Elder from the United States to visit him at his house. Walter explains, “As soon as he came in, the old man didn’t say anything. He didn’t speak. I don’t think he looked at us. But because that young man brought him over, he probably shook our hands, and I shook his hand” (Walter 2014a). Walter goes on to explain:

As soon as he sat down, my wife made him tea and brought him some food. A sandwich probably, soup or something like that and put it in front of him. At the same time, I went and I got a hat, like a polar bear hat, and I put it down beside him. I put tobacco there. I gave him a few other things, I don’t remember what. But when he got that he took his cane and he banged it on the floor and he said: “Oh-ta,” which meant we will stay here. He stayed for a couple days visiting.

He didn’t [initially know if he] want[ed] to stay because he didn’t know if we knew anything. He didn’t want to be with anybody that didn’t know anything. And he gave me a gift, so that was good, that was protocol because when you read in our history, that’s one thing that we must always do is gift things. (Walter 2014a)

Within this account, gift-giving was an important aspect of establishing that relationship. Gifting can also be practiced to maintain good relations with nonhuman beings, such as animals. Walter calls animals, like coyotes, “our little brothers.” He explains to me how in bad winters it can be hard for them if they cannot find food, so sometimes he brings them food, he says: “I knew that it

would be so nice for them to find a plate of bones and maybe chunks of meat and fat on the plate somewhere there where they could eat it ..... I'd say a little prayer for them." In this way, Walter sees the importance of giving a physical gift of food and a spiritual gift of prayer. I witnessed Walter live out this practice, and I was astonished to see the coyote's response. When the coyote saw us he bowed down, as if acknowledging our presence. It seemed to me that this coyote remembered Walter.

Within the narratives of the written stories and interviews, I learned about economic principles that were important to restoring equilibrium. Walter shared a situation that happened to a friend in British Columbia when he was a child:

Yeah, so mankind realized that relationship with everybody, and so today we hear about old people that talk to the animals. Like in British Columbia, this guy was telling me that they were coming home, they were kids having to pick berries all day with their grandmother and they met a white grizzly bear on the trail, so the grandmother told the grizzly bear: "We have been picking berries all day, we left you some, and we are not here to harm you or do anything, let us pass. We are tired. We want to go home." So, the bear let them pass. (Walter 2014a)

This Grandmother had the ability to communicate with a grizzly bear and knew the protocol of gift-giving. The grizzly bear could have inflicted great harm on this family. However, because they intentionally left the bear some of the berries they picked, the bear reciprocated by allowing them to pass on the trail.

Edward Ahenakew, a grandnephew of Cree Chief Poundmaker, was born in 1885. He was a family friend and relative to my grandparents, Lillian and Gilbert Wuttunee. My mother Loretta remembers him visiting their house when she was a



lead, Dr. Val Napoleon, the Accessing Justice and Reconciliation Project developed a legal case brief analysis synthesis, which draws out the following Cree principles related to E-pay-as' historical account:

- A Wrong doer, or their family, can remedy harms by paying compensation or restitution directly to the person harmed, or to their family;
- Seeking guidance from those with relevant understanding and expertise;
- Avoidance can be employed to avoid the escalation of conflicts, where the conflict might cause more harm than the original concern. (Accessing Justice and Reconciliation Project 2013)

Gifted horses was an accepted restitution practice and when E-pay-as did not follow through, there were further unintended consequences. Finally, after numerous deaths and injuries, restitution was made through the gifting of the best horses from Mis-ta-wa-sis to E-pay-as, and to reciprocate E-pay-as agreed to give two of his common horses to the grieving father.

One of the most important relationships to Cree people is the one that relates to the spiritual realm or to spiritual beings. When I was talking to Walter, he began to sing a Cree song that he has been gifted with; explaining in this Cree song there is an invitation to the spiritual. Alternating between singing with a strong melodic voice and talking, he explained:

The first part of our song: oh, ho, ho, ho, ha, ha [Walter is singing]. That first part it goes up to hereafter and then any spirits that want to come, then there is a trail made all the way down to earth, and on the last part of that songs is: hey, hey, ha, ha, ha, oh [Walter is singing again], and what that part does? It blesses all of nature. The first part calls anybody that wants to come because they love us so much; they always want to be with



Dora: We need people aware that these [ceremonies] are still alive, a lot of people, some ... say “they don’t have those anymore,” while I just had one [of those ceremonies], you know. It is not like the ceremonies are going to come to you; you have to go out to the ceremonies. They are not going to come banging on your door. They are very much alive. Like the giveaway, the ghost dance, the horse dance, round dance, powwow; there are so many out there. People are not going to them, only the ones who make sure they want to keep the teachings and pass them on, right? People are like, “what you still have those?” “You bet we do.”

Connie: I didn’t realize how many different ceremonies there are, I used to go to sweats, and you always knew about the sun dance, it was always there, but the ghost dance, the tea dance, the horse dance—the connectedness to each of those: [for example] the night lodges, each one has a role in the whole.

Dora: there is so much out there that you have to know, you just have to take yourself there. I always take my kids there, so they know the differences in them, the meaning—what they are meant for, so if they need the help they know where to go get it.

Dora sees living out the ceremonial cycle of the Plains Cree as a way for her to maintain ᑭᓴ ᐃᓄᑦᑎᓄᓂᑦ (miyo-wîcihitowin) with the Plains Cree community as well as with the spiritual realm. Over the last many years Connie has been more fully immersed into the expanse of Cree ceremonies and she is recognizing their individual purposes as well as how they all fit into a larger governing system.

<ᐃᓄᑦᑎᓄᓂᑦ (pawâmiw; dreams) are another way that Cree people talk about connecting to the spiritual, as well as a way to get guidance. Walter explains how meanings in Cree teachings can come to you in your dreams if you are struggling with understanding them directly:

Nowadays everybody wants to have the teachings .... And so whenever you get a teaching, no matter how small it is, how big it is, take time to think about it. Take time to think about more than the obvious to actually

think about what it really means and it'll come to you. As a matter of fact, what will happen is when you go to sleep, you don't really remember what it is, then they'll come and they'll tell you in your dream. They will have pity on you. They'll tell you in your dream what the obvious is. Some people don't have to dream because they can understand when they're told intuitively. Some people have to dream because that's the only way they can understand—when they're told in black and white. (Walter 2014a)

Within his words there is the understanding that the one receiving the teaching has a responsibility to try to understand the meaning as well as the acknowledgement that within dreams the teachings can also appear. To provide an example of the type of guidance dreams can provide, I draw on an account from Chief Thunderchild; he was born in 1849 and shared stories of his life with Edward Ahenakew in 1923 (McCullough 2013). Below, Chief Thunderchild recounts a hard winter, one that included a lot of starvation:

One night I dreamed that someone came to me and said, "You can save yourself. Look to the south!" And looking south, I saw that the country was green, but to the north there was only darkness. I tried to flee to the south. The dream was vivid, and when I awoke it was almost morning. I lay thinking about the dream, and then I told it to my father. "Maybe it is only hunger that made me dream," I said. But my father told me, "Dreams count, my son. Try to go south, all of you; and if I cannot follow, leave me. I will do my best."

... We camped at the old Sun Dance place, where there was plenty of wood. The women found a buffalo head and neck in the snow, and they made a fire to boil it. I climbed the bank of the river, and as I sat there I saw something that moved and disappeared again the wind. I went to find out what it was, and I came to a big snowdrift with the pole at the top, from which a bit of cloth blew in the wind. It marked a cache.

I took off my coat and began to dig through the hard crust of snow. Down inside the drift I found hides that covered the meat of two buffalo, cut in pieces. I had to sit down then, for I remembered my dream and was overcome with feeling and with thankfulness to the spirits who had guided us. (E. Ahenakew 1995a, 14–16)

With this recollection Chief Thunderchild acknowledges the spiritual assistance he received through his dream. Thunderchild's father reminded him of the importance of dreams. Within Cree thought, spirit beings are connected to waking and sleeping hours; the veil between the two realities is often quite thin.<sup>71</sup>

This section on wahkohtowin and Cree relationships has offered examples of the myriad relationships between Cree people, non-Cree people, spirit beings, and nonhuman beings. The practices recounted to me during the interviews show examples of both diversity and commonalities of protocol, whether establishing or maintaining a relationship, or attempting to restore a broken relationship. Similar to Chief Thunderchild's story of a winter of hardship, the giveaway ceremony began with a harsh winter where spiritual help was given. The next section will explore the giveaway, the relationships it includes, and how this can facilitate understanding Cree economic relations.

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<sup>71</sup> Walter shared an experience with me where his deceased father came to him in his sleep: "A couple of times when I was driving home from Prince Albert to Saskatoon, which is about 85 miles, it was about 30 below. I was so tired and feeling sick. It was late at night. I was falling asleep as I was driving. I fell asleep two or three times. I turned the heat up in the car and then I'd fall asleep. Dad would come wake me up and he said: 'Son, you can't sleep here. You got to get home.' 'I'm sorry dad,' I said. I'd try to stay awake. Five minutes later I'd be falling asleep. I'd have to pull over again. On the third time I did that, he drove the car for the last 50 miles, and when I woke up we were just pulling into my house in Saskatoon. I said 'You know dad, I'm really sorry that you had to take all that time to drive me all the way home.' But he drove me all the way home, which took about an hour, or maybe 45 minutes out of his time. Maybe an hour out of his time" (Walter 2014a).





person).<sup>74</sup> The giveaway ceremony is partially to restore or establish a favourable relationship with the Skinny Man.

There are many aspects of this ceremony that can be discussed in relation to Cree economic relations. One element is the redistribution of wealth within the community. Another is related to the connection between this redistribution and success in a forthcoming hunting trip or to give life to the person. The giveaway ceremony is also a practice that maintains relationships within Cree society. It is said that the “the giver would dance towards the person for whom the gift was intended. No gift could be refused. The receiver was then to give a gift of equal value to someone else” (Cuthand, Nations, and Deiter-McArthur 1987). The principle of reciprocity and equality in gift value is a way to redistribute goods within Cree society; this is about maintaining relationships within Cree societies, including gifting nonhuman beings, such as horses. It is said that this is an example of “giving in order that the poor and the destitute may have” (Cuthand, Nations, and Deiter-McArthur 1987). It is interesting how items that might not be traded before the ceremony would be gifted during the ceremony. For example, in another account written by Welsh, after the receiver danced, the giver put shaganappi (long strips of rawhide) through the door attached to a horse that the

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<sup>74</sup> Edward Ahenakew writes: “I remembered that in old days an encampment sometimes found itself suffering misfortune and bad luck. The best of the hunters could kill nothing, and the people starved. It was all due to Pah-ka-kôs, they believed. Perhaps someone in the camp had offended him directly, or had angered a person in another camp who was under his protection; for Pah-ka-kôs does not bring bad luck indiscriminately upon people, though he may turn even upon his favoured one should that person fail to carry out a promise made to him. There is always that element of human vindictiveness in him; and since he has control over game, it could be fool-hardy to anger him or to give offence to one he favoured” (E. Ahenakew 1995a).

receiver had tried many times before to buy but was denied as it was the giver's favourite horse (Welsh 1994a). This seems to illustrate the importance of generosity within the giveaway practice even to the point of self-sacrificial giving.<sup>75</sup>

In my conversation with Dora and Connie, Dora explained how she made a commitment to host the ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (mâhtâhitowin) or ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦ (mâhtâhito), every year for four years. She made this commitment when her husband was in a coma; the final ceremony was completed this year. Dora remembers: “when John [Dora's husband] was in the hospital, as an example, and we didn't know if he was going to make it I asked <ᑦ Pah-ka: give him his life back and I will pledge to do the four years in the community, and I'm asking for everyone's help to do this. The thing is I didn't really go around to everyone, it just fell into place” (Connie 2013). Dora's husband lived; this ceremony is said to be life giving.

During the first three years the ceremony is two evenings long and for the last year the ceremony is four nights. Below is a conversation Dora (2013), Connie (2013), and I had about the ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦ (mâhtâhito). Our questions to Dora illuminate the significance of the ceremony.

Dora: My final one is this coming year. If you want to come, see what it's all about—ᐃᑦᑦᑦᑦ [pihtikwe]. Think just seeing, being a part of it, being

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<sup>75</sup> “This ceremony was banished by the Indian agents as they felt the Indians were too poor to lose their valuables. They failed to understand that the bearer of gifts always received another gift of the same value. It was a re-distribution of goods” (Cuthand, Nations, and Deiter-McArthur 1987, 23).

able to see it means more than just reading about it. Seeing exactly what happens at the beginning, even putting it together is a whole big process. With the elders, the singers.

Shalene: Does it only ever happen one time a year?

Dora: Yes, in the winter. There has to be snow.<sup>76</sup> So that's a good way to restore, gift-giving, to share, you giving life by giving gifts. But it is also not about just giving to somebody else it's remembering who gave you that gift. They gave you life, so you find something, and give them back life as well. So you have to remember who gave you something, and you're going to go back and give something back to them.

Shalene: During the same ceremony?

Dora: Yes.

Connie: So what happens if you don't?

Dora: It's fine, but just try to.

Connie: But what if you don't continuously?

Dora: Well, you have to. Try to remember.

Connie: What if you don't, what if you break the protocol? Do you get kicked out?

Dora: No, no, you keep going until you are broke, if you have nothing left then you leave.

Shalene: Even if you are the one hosting it?

Dora: No, well, you can't be broke, you make sure you are prepared to do the whole thing, right. Even if it is giving your jacket away. Giving your shoes away. Your moccasins, here you go.

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<sup>76</sup> In the ceremonial cycle of the Cree, specific ceremonies happen during each season with certain distinctions occurring even within a season, for example with the ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ māhtāhito happening in the winter season while there is still snow on the ground.

Shalene: So you had to bring lots of stuff?

Connie: Thousands of dollars in preparation, food.

Dora: The feast, the elders, the ᐅᐱᐅᐱᐅᐱ [oskâpêwis], inviting singers, a lot of preparation in doing that, and not forgetting what you have to do to get it together. You can't miss anything for four years consecutively.

Connie: I did not know that <ᐱ [Pah-ka] meant the hard luck spirit?

Dora: Yes. Shalene, you should come and see <ᐱ [Pah-ka].

Shalene: Yes.

Connie: Does the tree have significance?

Dora: That's life, right.

Connie: For the economy? So, for how reciprocity is distributed, is that governed by the tree, is that central?

Dora: You give that tree life as well, so you will see people giving gifts to the tree as well.

Shalene: So in that diagram [Figure 3 above] that's the nonhuman relations, the tree is in a relationship with the humans?

Connie: But I would say it is more powerful than the human to human.

Shalene: Oh, okay. So, like a hierarchy of importance of relationships.

Connie: What do you call this spot, the tree spot?

Dora: You just call it that Me-tos.

Dora talks about restoration through gift-giving. The ceremony is also deeply connected to living, where a person who is seriously ill may have their health restored; significantly, the giving of gifts is a metaphor for giving and receiving

life. I had the opportunity to attend a ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (mâhtâhito) with Dora's family this year. This ceremony was in a First Nation in the Beaver Hills territory. When I arrived, I noticed the ceremonial fire outside tended to by helpers. The actual event was in the basement of a church in this Cree community. The host had made a commitment when her child was in a coma for many months and they did not think the child would live—the child was alive and participated in the ceremony. Dora had given me advice on the protocol and what sort of gifts I should bring to the giveaway. The first gift I gave was to a woman sitting by me, she seemed genuinely happy and excited to receive it and I was also filled with a joy, I could not wait to give another gift. I was told that night that when you present a gift in this way you are giving life, and when you accept a gift you are receiving life. I found people to be very thoughtful with the gifts given, giving me, for example, a shirt that fit well and matched my clothing tastes.

These events build community—establishing, maintaining, and restoring relationships between the people attending, with the nonhuman beings (e.g. tree represented), and with the beings in the spiritual realm. It is also an intergenerational event, with a wide distribution of all age groups represented. There were young children, four or five years old, dancing and exchanging gifts with each other and with other ages. A few different times in the night, someone would make a proclamation that someone else was so generous that they were now broke, at that point almost all the people would gather around and dance and give a gift to that person. There were also little jokes played. For example, a tiny pair of newborn baby jeans was gifted to a big man. Laughter was shared at these



brigade arrived they camped by Chief Shash-apew's dancing tent, and the three principal men—Welsh, Dumont, and Trottier—were invited into the tent. Welsh states: “My uncle, Shash-apew, thanked me for the tea, sugar, and tobacco that I had sent. He thanked me also for my message. He said we could go and shoot as many buffalo as we liked, that there would be no trouble” (Welsh 1994a, 52). This process shows the importance of the giveaway and how people follow these protocols and procedures to deal with opposing relationships and to restore relationships, even between different Indigenous peoples. The bond was changed to such an extent that Shash-apew and Welsh became family, an uncle to a nephew.

For a different perspective, the memorial giveaway or as some call it, the feast for the dead, is a different type of giveaway meant to honour a loved one who has passed. Walter explained to me that the feast for the dead should happen a year after the loved one's passing. He said that one year is only a day for them and its good to let them know you were thinking about them. Reciprocally, in Walter's own words, it also “makes you feel good as a human being on Earth, that you can take enough time to make a feast for them, have a pipe for them, have songs for them, prayers, and then give gifts away on their behalf” (Walter 2014a). Many of the memorial feasts I have attended include a commitment to host them once a year for four years. In the practice of gifting, as seen in the examples above, relationships can be restored through the redistribution of wealth. Walter organized the first memorial feast in his immediate family in their generation. Walter became upset with his sisters because they were not helping him by

contributing giveaway items, food, or helping to cook. He went to get advice from the pipe carrier leading the ceremony, who then went to ask the old man for counsel. The old man advised Walter to bring all his giveaway items and put them on the blanket and, when the time came, to ask his sisters to give away all the items to everyone attending the ceremony. Walter was very pleased:

Well I told my sisters that and you should have seen how happy they were. They were all so happy and then they all said to me: “Walter, that was a very nice ceremony that you made.” They were happy about everything. Before that they were just hoping I would do everything wrong. But once they had a chance to participate they were so happy. So what I understood was sometimes people don’t know how to participate. Right? When I told them to take all my stuff, give everything away, because I had some beautiful stuff in there, expensive stuff, they took it and they gave it all away ... I found that so interesting that the Old Man gave me that lesson. So I was happy, and I was happy that my sisters were happy. My sisters were happy that I gave them a chance to participate. Isn’t that interesting? (Walter 2014a)

By “gifting” his sisters with the items and the opportunity to participate in the gifting, Walter mended their relationship. Gifting and exchange are tangible examples of the social-economic practices in ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (wahkohtowin). Within this practice, they were able to honour their mutual loved for one who had passed as well as restore their own relationships.

The giveaway ceremony, a historic practice still occurring, illustrates how the Cree engage in different types of economic relationships (establishing relationships, maintaining relationships, opposing relationships, and restoring relationships). This one ceremony also exemplifies the diversity of actors involved in these economic relations, from Cree people to other peoples, to

nonhuman beings, to spirit beings. These are nonlinear relationships, not one-to-one, but interconnected in complex ways. Before moving on to the next section discussing the practice of trade or exchange in Cree economic relations, I will end with the words of Sunney on the faith component of the giveaway:

There is so much behind it [the giveaway]. It is not to make slaves out of someone or beggars. That is definitely not it. It is much more intricate than that. What do they say: by gifts we make slaves, by whips we make dogs ... it is not like that though. In a giveaway (what they are doing) if I give a gift I want my child to be prayed for because I believe so much in that energy—energy of prayer. What I am doing, in my own pitiful way, I am asking for my loved ones to have prayers because I know that it works; it has been my experience that miracles happen. God, you take care of it. I will give away whatever you have given me because I know you will provide. It is that pure faith that you will be taken care of and that your needs will be taken care of. Well then, having said that you don't go giving away things that will leave yourself or your loves ones in need. You also consider your needs. (Sunney 2014a)

There is an interesting dynamic at play in gifting material items and asking friends and family to pray for a loved one. Although there is the practice of self-sacrificial giving, there is also a limit to giving where the giver should have enough left to provide for his or her own personal needs and of his or her dependents.

### Trade or Exchange

The practice of trading is another element discussed in the written narratives and oral accounts. When exploring trade or exchange, it is important to note that this includes the exchange of items (such as food or ornamental goods), exchange of knowledge, exchange of ceremonies, and exchange of numerous other things. These exchange relationships were and continue to be among many different

actors: Cree and non-Cree people, nonhumans, and spirit beings. These exchange relationships can also involve numerous different actors at one time.

There was an accepted normative protocol followed among the Plains peoples before trade commenced. The type of protocol or ceremony around trade depended on the material being traded as well as the type of relationship; for example, whether you were establishing a new economic relationship, restoring an economic relationship, or perhaps maintaining an existing economic relationship. When the Buffalo Dance was bought from the Dakota, the Pipestream carrier led the Cree to the Warrior's lodge of the Dakota. The Cree went in front of the lodge and tied the horses they were giving onto the tipi stakes. The Dakota came out gifting the Cree with clothes so to "buy back" their ability to still perform the Buffalo Dance. After the transfer was completed, the Dakota invited the Cree into their lodge to teach them the songs and dance. Some Cree people state that many Plains Cree medicines originally came from the Saulteaux (Plains Ojibway). As introduced in the previous chapter, Muskwa (Bear) describes a Plains Cree who travelled to the east to receive medicines. He presented two horses loaded with well-made clothes. In exchange, the Plains Ojibway /Saulteaux/ Anishinaabe took him into their *mite-wiwin*<sup>77</sup> lodge, they taught him about many plants to be used for medicinal purposes. It is said that a chief had to give freely of his possessions and usually set the pace for ceremonial giving. These trading accounts demonstrate the importance of certain economic

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<sup>77</sup> This is Mandelbaum's spelling.



be paid. Welsh agreed as long as Starblanket would be responsible for all the debts of his community. On August 7, 1878 at five O'clock Chief Starblanket invited Welsh into a tent full of approximately thirty men and thirty women. After drinking tea, Chief Starblanket paid his bill then every other person paid his or her bill. The next day, Welsh exchanged the buffalo runner horse that the Chief had always wanted for a common horse worth only twenty dollars, Welsh said that Chief Starblanket “fell on his knees he was so proud” (Welsh 1994b, 99–104). This trade example displays how good trade relationships were maintained. It also speaks to the importance of building relationships, trust and integrity; Welsh said of Starblanket that when he said a thing he meant it and “always kept his word” (Welsh 1994b, 104).

Welsh was recollecting a time of transition on the prairies where the buffalo were being pushed further and further south, until they became almost extinct. In an interview, Sunney explained to me how his grandmother lived through this change. He explains this transition and then goes on to make clear the freedom and expanse of travel that the Plains people lived out:

I remember hearing the story about my grandmother, her name was ᖃᐱᖅ [Nehiyaw] and an ᐱᖅᐱᖅ [natopayiw], a scout, came back to Saddle Lake and told the community they saw buffalo south of here, so everyone said okay. The decision was made to go to these buffalo. So they went down, they went to the middle of Montana; that was my grandmother who was on the last buffalo hunt. But that is to illustrate my point that there were no borders back then—ᐱᖅᐱᖅ [picikwâs; apple] we had, where did those come from? The interior of BC somewhere, and yet we have a name for them, the ᖃᐱᖅ [Nehiyaw]. Incredible, eh? ᐱᖅᐱᖅ [wâpayôminak] didn't grow here, more in Manitoba, the rice, so we had that trade network up and





account also represents a trading relationship between a human and a snake. Layers of meaning can be read into a story like this. For example, numerous other archival stories refer to non-Native traders bringing and trading alcohol with the Natives of this land (Welsh 1994c; Welsh 1994d), Vandall's account can metaphorically link the manipulation, control, and force exerted on the frog (stepping on his head) to the ways that non-Natives unethically used alcohol in trade with Indigenous peoples.

Value in trade can be described as the relationship between the worth an owner puts on something and the reciprocal worth deemed by the receiver. In Cree thought, there can also be the agency in value for the item itself. With living beings (for example bundles) being traded, there are all the intertwined relationships involved: owner, receiver, and elements being traded. Sunney shared an experience where people from Edmonton started coming to his lodge expecting to trade a ceremonial item, a braid of sweetgrass for a cigarette. To explain through experiential teaching, Sunney took them out onto the land a few years in a row. He said to them while in the country:

That cigarette you are going to give me for that braid of sweetgrass, take that sweetgrass and now you are going to ask the Creator [Sunney demonstrates making two circles in the air], "Creator, I come and get your medicine," and make two more circles, and then you talk to that plant: "Sweetgrass, I come to you and here is a gift for you, I want to take you and I want your medicine, your power ... in the upcoming future." Whatever it is, what kind of blessing for that power to communicate with the ethereal. (Sunney 2014a)

Sunney explains to me that these people would then be taught to pick and clean the sweetgrass, each individual strand, and then start braiding it. For braiding one



This past summer (2013), I had an opportunity to witness trading relationships at a large Indigenous gathering that happens every summer. I have attended this event in past years and often see people going around asking to trade different items. There are always thousands of people in attendance, on this day a Cree Elder, Paul, his wife Gail and their daughter Sharlene brought me to where they were camping and offered me a beverage. Gail shared with me that while they were at this event someone asked her if she was selling her dry meat. She said no, but that she would trade it for tobacco. While we were sitting outside their trailer, a teenager came up to us and said that people camping at the gathering (but from another community) just finished making a big feast (wihkohtowin) and had extra so they were giving meals away. He gave us a few large containers full of meat, potatoes, and other food. Sharlene gave the teenager a pair of earrings she made to give to the cooks and the Elder gave the teenager ten dollars to give to the cooks. The similarity of the Cree word for feast—wihkohtowin—to the concept of wahkohtowin is striking, as is how sharing food is connected to the living out of wahkohtowin; the normative principles guiding relationships). Sunney shared experiences where people have made different things for him and they say whatever you think it is worth, he says to them: “I think it is worth 4, 6, 10 times as much as what you are quoting me but I can’t afford that.” He explains to me that there is a balance in the trading relationship where value is negotiated through the receiver’s means:

I give what I can without putting myself at the risk of needing, being in need of food, or being in need of gas for my vehicle, or being in need of





she should have given them a little ball to play with you, and she responded “I was like they would probably have thrown it at me” (Connie 2013).<sup>80</sup> Within this illustration, we can see that the historical legends of the little people were lived realities for Cree people in the present day. These relationships are maintained through different practices including gifting. I have been told that people leave jellybeans as special gifts that the ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (mêmêkwêsiwak) especially enjoy. The legend “Medicine Boy” is the story of a young Cree girl named Pimosais (Little Flyer) who would secretly meet another young man in the forest. The legend says that they were both small in stature for their age and one day she was curious about where he was from, so she secretly followed him and discovered he was one of the ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (mêmêkwêsiwak), Little Flyer says:

I watched closely until finally I saw some tiny men and women come out to meet him. He resembled them only that he was a little bigger in stature. They were dressed in buckskin clothes and the women had the most beautiful designs on their dresses. I had never seen such work before. They used porcupine quills for embroidering and the colours glowed. I looked hard at the designs, thinking perhaps I could remember and use them on my own dresses. (Brass and Nanooch 1978b)

In this story Medicine Boy knows Little Flyer was following him and they agree that they can never be together. Then he gently rebukes her saying that she cannot copy their designs, but then gifts her with, “You’ll always be a fine design worker and your dresses and tepees will always have fascinating figures” (Brass and Nanooch 1978b). He explains that because he is an extra big ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ

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<sup>80</sup> Connie also explained an experience she had with the little people; they came to her during the death of a loved one.

(mêmwêkwêsiwak) he was appointed to go out and gather herbs for his people. There are many other instances of exchange or trade occurring between Cree people and non-Cree or nonhuman beings. As seen in the story “Ayekis the Frog,” there are also oral accounts of trade occurring between animals and spirit beings (Brass and Nanooch 1978a). The Cree thought it was important to pass down oral histories of trade that did not even involve human beings. This reinforces Cree ontology and the ways to relate to all things in creation.

The Cree were a matrilineal society (Makokis 2009, 76). Unfortunately, most of the archival sources are from the perspective of men and ignore the important role Cree women had in the economy. In August 2013, I interviewed Rob, a Plains Cree younger man who works in a larger Plains Indigenous representative organization. In our meeting, he elaborated on this gap in historical data: “The other thing, too, is that a lot of the historians were probably male at the time so they wanted to emphasize the male and the trading relationship ... they wouldn’t have understood too much” (Rob 2013). A few historical sources give explicit mention of women; for example, War Chief Fine Day states that women owned the house (tipi) and were in charge of putting it up (Fine Day 1973b):

It is not everyone who knows how to cut a tipi—usually some old woman. I only saw one old man who could do it. When a person wants a tipi made he takes all the hides he has and gives them to the old woman. She measures them out into the desired shape, using the hindquarters for the top. She cuts the hides and then the women sew them together. A lot of food is prepared for the women to eat. (Fine Day 1973b)

In a similar way, Fine Day explains that historically Cree women had ownership of dogs, which were a means of transportation for the society, and that a man



Cree cope with unrelenting challenges, I introduce the concept of colonial dissonance.







Cree people, nonhuman beings, and spirit beings. I will begin by exploring the mental aspect of personhood and then connect this dissonance to the other areas of Cree being. Sunney, one of the Elders I interviewed, introduced me to the concept cognitive dissonance, a psychology concept describing the intense mental conflict that occurs when a person has more than one contradictory set of beliefs or values (Festinger 1957; “Cognitive Dissonance (psychology)” 2014). Cognitive dissonance also describes a condition wherein a person or a group holds certain beliefs, but their actions are contrary to those ideals (Festinger 1962). In Festinger’s theory, individuals will try to reduce their dissonance and perhaps avoid situations that would increase it (1957). With the continued presence of settler-colonialism, alongside practices and policies inherent in neoliberalism, my research addresses this dissonance.

In this section, I explore the implications and tensions to Cree worldview resulting from colonialism. Related to cognitive dissonance is the concept cognitive imperialism; Mi’kmaq scholar Marie Battiste coined this term in 1984 (Battiste 1984): “Cognitive imperialism, also known as cultural racism, is the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to the alternative worldview” (Battiste 2000, 192–193). She goes on to describe how cognitive imperialism is a type of “cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values” (2000, 198). Chickasaw and Cheyenne scholar James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson states that the imposition of universality creates cognitive imperialism

by normalizing the colonizer's belief system and constructing the other's (i.e., Indigenous peoples') as inferior (Henderson 2000, 63–64).

I read cognitive imperialism as useful to diagnose the impact of settler-colonial policy and practice on Indigenous consciousness. However, I see settler-induced colonial dissonance as more expansive (including the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional) as well as useful to examine the result of cognitive imperialism—colonial dissonance. I argue that although cognitive imperialism can be read only through its victimization impact, colonial dissonance can be a place of agency. Within the cognitive, spiritual, emotional, and physical tensions lie productive spaces that Indigenous peoples may harness to provide alternatives or antidotes. This chapter explores colonial dissonance and how the resulting tensions can be a productive space where, I argue, we can draw from our own intellectual resources to respond—providing alternatives. This is a place of agency.

Cognitive imperialism and settler-induced colonial dissonance both occur when Indigenous territory is exploited. Youngblood Henderson explains the connection between cognitive imperialism and Indigenous lands:

Thus arises the consciousness of the immigrant-colonizer and the Aboriginal-colonized, which the colonized have to accept if they are to survive. This binary consciousness justifies the separation of Indigenous peoples from their ancient rights to the land and its resources and the transfer of wealth and productivity to the colonialists and the mother country (Henderson 2000, 63–64).

In this explanation, settler-colonialism affects cognition, but it also negatively impacts geographic or physical space—land. I see settler-induced colonial











For example, good relationships with ᐱᐱᐱ askîy (the land). A Cree Elder explains the connection between colonialism and the disruption in Cree relations with the land and how that impacts ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (wahkohtowin):

Ever since the Europeans have come to live with us—things have changed. No longer can we go to the creek to drink water—everything has been poisoned. The animals have been infected and they pass it on to us. The future doesn't look very good. It's a reality of where we are with pollution and everything else. When we talk about wahkohtowin and witaskewin—it is a lot. In the beginning it was supposed to be that harmony—but how can you have harmony when one party is more dominant—and this dominance is creating conflict for us. (LaBoucane-Benson 2009, 109)

The impacts of settler society have fundamentally altered the land, the animals, the world, and this directly impacts Cree people's ability to interact with these nonhuman beings. Colonial dissonance does not end here. Even more insidious (and causing more internal struggle) is how Cree people are now directly involved in altering the relationship with the land. Sunney explains this conundrum, which centrally disconnects Cree economic relations with the land and how this affects the cognitive realm of colonial dissonance:

We have to make a living somehow but then there are traditional people that go out and work on the land, in oil extraction—mostly that is what it is—resource extraction here in Alberta. Traditional people are doing that and it is hard on them, they have to feed themselves, they have to make a living. That causes them to do things to the earth that creates cognitive dissonance for some of them. There are a lot of Natives out there running businesses now that service the oil and gas industry and of course we have the bleeding heart liberals back home, maybe some of them don't have nothing, who are criticizing their efforts and yet we have to all make a living.

Then there are the traditional people who are doing these things, and that creates cognitive dissonance. You know, I'm hurting the environment, and

here I am a traditional Indian and environmentalist—an environmental Indian, and here I am creating all this pollution. And that is what I was talking about. And there are a lot of things that go on with that idea. There are effects everywhere, like you and I, for instance, we are sitting here eating from porcelain cups, eating from steel utensils. We are driving cars that are polluting things, wearing clothes that come from garment factories that create pollution and taint the waters. We have no place to say: “Oh, those conservatives, they are destroying the land,” because we are complicit in the destruction and the polluting of our Mother. What are we doing to be less complicit, to ease our conscience? (Sunney 2014a)

Sunney offers a nuanced explanation of the challenge facing Cree people. On one hand are these norms around good relations. On the other, is the reality of living in a society dependent on extractive industry. His warning of our complicity with the system is important; we cannot point fingers solely outward. As we are all implicated, it would be easy to feel paralyzed in inaction of critical thought or creative practice; however, this is not a productive space.

In cognitive dissonance theory, the human desire is to create a state of consonance either by avoiding knowledge or avoiding the practice causing the dissonance (Festinger 1957). Applying this to Cree people within the perpetual state of hegemonic settler-colonialism, one that appears all encompassing, the choices can at first appear fatalistic. For example, one option is to assimilate into the majority population’s (mainly western European Canadian) view on relationships with the natural world—to fundamentally alter a relationship with the land will not alter who we are and the specific rights and obligations we lay claim to. This option is in direct opposition to decolonial resistance thought, writing, and actions. In line with creating decolonial spaces, I am encouraged by the words I heard recently during a television interview with musical artist, Paul David Hewson (2013). He





traditions, laws, and customs are the practical application of the philosophy and values of the group” (2000, 79). The normative principles below add to the resistance-and-resurgence literature and will, hopefully, enable individual and collective action.

With decolonizing and revitalizing work, many stages are required; one step in the process is to recover Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. Another step, which is beyond of the scope of this dissertation, is to continually deliberate, implement, reflect, and revise these principles (and others).<sup>85</sup> One way deliberative processes can be utilized for this project is by seeing them as the governance<sup>86</sup> of economic relationships. Deliberation is a cyclical process, where economic relationships are extrapolated (in decolonial work) and then these norms are reasoned through, debated, and lived out in Indigenous societies and in negotiation with other societies.

I draw and make connections between my intervention in this work and the description of the processes occurring to revitalize Indigenous legal orders; where scholars Hadley Friedland and Val Napoleon describe how “with law ... there is never a completely finished product. In all living legal traditions, statements of

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<sup>85</sup> Part of this process will also examine how Cree economic relationships have been and can be more fully reengaged, even within the confines and pressures exerted from nation-states like Canada. Today, Cree economic relationships are often embedded in a landscape where Canadian state governance and policy reigns. In chapter seven, I present a case study of a Cree First Nation to explore one example of how Cree economic relationships are being reengaged within the broader sociopolitical landscape.

<sup>86</sup> Governance can be described as “a process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process and how they render account” (Graham and Wilson 2004, 2).







people] want to get wealthy fast they are losing their ways and this is going to happen in their future. (Dora and Connie 2013)

The repercussions of not following natural laws include the negative impacts to the land, water, and animals. Related to animals, Borrows explains that ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ (pâstâhowin) and ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ (ohcinewin) are found in Cree–animal relationships where animals are considered persons with ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ; (itatisiwin), their own natures governed by the same types of principles (Borrows 2010, 93).

One of the most important Cree–animal relationships has historically been between the Plains Cree and the ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ (paskwâw mostoswak; buffalo). For Plains Indigenous peoples, life revolved around the buffalo: the hunt, the spiritual ceremony around a kill, and social and political structures—with daily needs being met from the buffalo: food, shelter, clothes, and many other necessities of life. The buffalo also shaped the land; in the book, *All Our Relations*, Winona LaDuke, conceptualizes the ways that “buffalo determine landscapes. By their sheer numbers, weight, and behaviour, they cultivated the prairie, which is the single largest ecosystem in North America” (LaDuke 1999, 143). For the Plains people, the buffalo were a significant part of their livelihood, but this could not be separated from the environment or from their social/kinship structure. They lived in careful balance—praying for the buffalo at a kill and giving respect to the Creator by ingeniously using all elements of the animal. The connections in Cree–animal relationships also include other nonhuman beings. For example, the Manitou Stone is considered of spiritual and material significance to the Cree, with its removal being foretold to have serious consequences on the buffalo

population. It is currently being held at the Royal Alberta Museum of Alberta. Sunney explains the fallout of not living by the natural laws around right relationships and the effect on the ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ (paskwâw mostoswak; buffalo):

I remember a story, speaking of borders, after the Riel Rebellion; see they had an incident where this sacred item was taken away by Reverend McDougall, and that sacred item had three [parts]—if people moved it, there were three prophecies that came with it: one was that there would be famine; the other was that there would be war; the other was that there would be disease. In rapid succession these happened—famine—our source of food was gone. I remember hearing the story about my Grandmother, her name was ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ Nehiyaw and an ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ natopayiw, a scout, came back to Saddle Lake and told the community they seen buffalo south of here, so everyone said okay. The decision was made to go to these buffalo. So they went down, they went to the middle of Montana; that was my Grandmother who was on the last buffalo hunt. (Sunney 2014a)

Prophecy was made to explain what would happen if the Manitou Stone was disturbed and natural law transgressed. The impacts affected the Cree people in fundamental ways.

There were specific rules around ensuring proper ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ (wahkohtowin) with the ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ ᑭᐱᑦᑲᐱᑦ (paskwâw mostoswak; buffalo). Norbert Welsh, Métis buffalo hunter and trader in the later half of the nineteenth century, recounts,

The Yankees shot more buffalo for their hides than all the Indian and half-breed hunters put together. The Indians knew better. They did not want to see the buffalo gone forever. Parties of Yankees used to come up to the North West to shoot for sport. They would sit on a hill and shoot. Once Buffalo Bill came on a shooting trip, and shot five hundred buffalo—just for fun. (1994e)



along their birchbark baskets and were picking at the berry patch when suddenly they heard a loud crash of breaking brush, indicating that something was approaching them. “Musqua! Musqua! A bear! A bear!” cried the man. They became so frightened that they dropped their containers, berries and all. The bear was close on their heels by this time, growling and snorting fiercely. They were so terrified that they ran as fast as they could, finally reaching the camp. The noise had aroused everyone and the people just stood outside their tepees and looked at them. The couple were so humiliated and ashamed that they disappeared into their tepee and didn’t show themselves for several days. After this, every time anyone tried to get ahead of the others in picking berries they were sure they could hear the growls and grunts of the bears, reminding them that they must think of others. (Brass and Nanooch 1978a)

In this account there were consequences, not based on human legal systems but based on the physical world. In “The Accessing Justice and Reconciliation Project: Cree Legal Traditions Report,” the authors write that one of the general restatements of Cree law is the principle of natural or spiritual consequences where “In some cases, the legitimate response to someone causing harm is to step back and allow the person who caused the harm to experience the natural or spiritual consequence of his or her action” (Friedland 2013). In this example, through natural law Musqua, a bear, provided repercussions to the couple and therefore facilitated the community learning about the couple’s transgression, which provided a warning for others about the importance of considering others within the collective. Natural and spiritual ᐃᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄ (ohcinewin) was discussed in this section; the next section will explore the enforced consequences that occur when not following rules around Cree economic relationships.

In “The Accessing Justice and Reconciliation Project: Cree Legal Traditions Report,” the authors provide resources within Cree legal traditions to address

conflicts and harms among people.<sup>87</sup> In their research, they found that in Cree society the authoritative decision makers include Medicine people, Elders, family members, and the group (Friedland 2013, 9). They also explain the procedural steps that often guide legitimate resolutions in Cree society:

1. Recognizing warning signals that harm may be developing or has occurred.
2. Warning others of the potential harm and taking appropriate safety precautions to keep people within the group as safe as possible.
3. Seeking guidance from those with relevant understanding and expertise.
4. Observation, and corroborating evidence.
5. Public confrontation and deliberation by appropriate decision-makers.
6. The appropriate decision-makers are identified and implement a response. This may be a pre-emptive response in some cases. (Friedland 2013, 15)

Hadley and her assistants uncover principles that govern appropriate responses to legal/human issues (legal responses and resolutions). These include the principles of healing, avoidance or separation, acknowledging responsibility as remedy (this can include the family or individual paying compensation or restitution to the harmed person or family), reintegration, natural or spiritual consequences, and incapacitation (rare and in extreme cases) (Friedland 2013, 24–5). There are also legal-obligation principles to govern individual and collective responsibility, including the responsibility to help, the responsibility to give back, the

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<sup>87</sup> Within this paragraph, I try to use much of the same phrasing as the report in terms of the specific legal principles they name, as their word choice is quite deliberate.

responsibility to prevent future harms, and the responsibility to warn (Friedland 2013, 36). The first two responsibilities have economic implications embedded in them. There are also substantive and procedural legal rights that Cree people should be able to expect from others. These include, substantively, the right to protection/safety and the right to be helped when incapable/vulnerable and, procedurally, the right to have warning signals corroborated by observation or evidence before action is taken, the right to be heard, and the right for decisions to be made through open collective deliberation guided by appropriate consultation (Friedland 2013, 42–47). They also uncovered general underlying principles including how responses are situationally contextualized and fluid, the inherent importance of acknowledging and valuing relationships, and the principle of reciprocity and interdependence (Friedland 2013, 48–49). The guide Friedland and Napoleon produced speaks to Cree legal principles and practices that are enacted when accepted economic relationships are not followed. Significantly, the responsibilities in response to conflict or harm often involve economic sanctions (e.g. restitution) as well as general governing principles, such as ways to be in appropriate economic relationships with others (e.g. helping others).

Fine Day, a Cree warrior writing about life in the late nineteenth century, recounts the legal obligations and procedures within the Warrior Society:

The Warrior Societies had a dance in their tipis that was called “Sitting Up Until Morning” .... The women do not dance [in this specific dance]; they only sing the Society’s songs. They keep it up all night. When the morning comes, the criers take the women and sit one down in front of each dancer. If one of the Worthy Men should happen to have a relative among the women, he asks his partner to tell the crier not to give that woman to him.





Cree author Edward Ahenakew shared a personal account from Chief Thunderchild titled “Indian Laws.” This account provides a clear example of this obligation to the collective.

The men who had horses chased the buffalo for the others and everyone got some of the meat, which would be hauled into the camp by the dogs. There was no selfishness. It is an Indian custom to share with others. That has always been so; the strong take care of the poor; there is usually enough for all. (E. Ahenakew 1995a)

We see the collective perspective in Thunderchild’s words that everyone received food as well as the principle of the vulnerable being taken care of. Fine Day also wrote about the requirements of looking after the collective in terms of being inducted into the Warrior Society:

Then an old man said to those of us who had just been taken as Warriors, “From now on your homes and your possessions are not your own. From today, these two old men, the servers, are the owners of your goods. If a poor Person<sup>89</sup> comes for help and you are not at home, these men may give away your things. You must look after all the People. If their moccasins are torn you must supply new ones. Any clothing you may have must be given to those who come for help and who need it. If you see an old Person stranded while camp is moved, you must get off your Horse and put him on. Then the Horse is his.” And I did give away a lot of clothing as a Warrior should. (Fine Day 1973a)

This principle of being collectively focussed includes both the practices and commitments of sharing, generosity,<sup>90</sup> and helping those in need.

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<sup>89</sup> Person and People are capitalized in the original text.

<sup>90</sup> For example, a book collection of Cree legends says, “Generosity has always been a traditional value in our culture; it is interpreted as a gesture of love and respect” (Cuthand, Deiter-McArthur, and Nations 1987).

There are also accounts that include helping non Cree-people. These examples include Cree people sharing or helping non-Cree people as well as reciprocally non-Cree people helping the Cree. Thunderchild recounts a winter of hardship where there was starvation and at one point that winter he came upon a Stoney man named Chō-ka-se; after he told him of his peoples' state of ill health, Chō-ka-se (a non-Cree Native) said "Come with me and I will lend you horses and carts;" Thunderchild explains that "this is the Indian way" (E. Ahenakew 1995a). In this way the obligation to help others in need was shared among different Plains Indigenous peoples. Cree Chief Kah-payuk-wah-skoonum (One Arrow)—who had fifty-sixty lodges in his camp, at the time—invited Métis hunter Norbert Welsh and his men to participate in their buffalo pound. Once the buffalo were run into the pound, the buffalo were shared among the people, including the men of Welsh's team. He states, "The buffalo were shared. My men got twelve" (Welsh 1994). This example is evidence of the Cree incorporating the principle of sharing with other peoples as well.<sup>91</sup>

In terms of the norm of helping, there are accounts that substantiate how this goes beyond humans and includes Cree–animal relationships as well. For example, kâ-kîsikâw-pîhtokêw (Coming Day), a Plains Cree from the ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ Sîpîwiyniwak (River Cree people), recounts the Bear-Woman story, he characterises this as a sacred story. In this account, a lonely man goes out hunting

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<sup>91</sup> It is important to note that Chief Kah-payuk-wah-skoonum invited Welsh's team to participate and share in the resource and that it was not expected or taken without consent. Also, often Métis and Cree people share kinship relations.

and whenever he saw a buffalo he would kill it and bring home the tongue and thigh bone (assumably leaving the rest and not following the principle of civility towards all relations). One day he found a handsome woman in his dwelling and she asked him why he only brought home a little bit of the meat, he replied that he did not know anyone was there and as he lived alone he only brought home a little. She said she came from a long way off and her father and his people were in need of food, asking for his help. He agreed and would bring home more buffalo that she would then prepare. In time they brought the food to her father's people and the hunter was amazed at his wife's strength and the ingenious way she was able to transport the food. In the Spring time he realized that his wife and her family were actually bears and he was sad that he would not always be able to be with them (Kâ-kisikâw-pîhtokêw (Coming Day) 1930). This story illustrates many things including how the obligation to help those in need is extended beyond Cree to Cree relationships, and beyond Cree to Non-Cree human relations, as it also includes Cree to animal relationships.

There are also specific norms around sharing that inform the collective perspective. For example, in a legend, it is said "When the fruit was plentiful, Indians picked them without any set rules. On the other hand when lean years caused a scarcity, scouts were sent out to search for berry patches. When they located some, the camp was informed, whereupon rules were enforced, including the provision that no one was to go out until the whole camp was prepared to go on a berry picking expedition" (Brass and Nanooch 1978a). The rules around harvesting were contextualized to the specific availability of the resource, year to







Historically, Cree people were very civil towards the ᑭᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦ ᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦ (paskwâw mostoswak). In 1935, Plains Cree War Chief Fine Day explained one way to show respect for the animal was to try to use the different parts, therefore not wasting:

When buffalo were killed we first took the tongue, then the teat fat from the cows, then the shoulder meat which comes down the ribs. These were the choice parts, but we would eat all others too. A great medicine for T.B. was raw liver dipped into gall. Yes there was T.B. before the treaty, but not very much. Usually it was men who previously had been badly hurt.

If we killed a buffalo when we were very hungry, we would eat the liver raw right away. Also the soft part inside the muzzle. Men would drink the warm blood so that when they were wounded they could stand their own blood. Most was cut fine and boiled in blood to make soup. Also fat was melted and mixed with blood and the whole sliced and eaten when cold. Blood was mixed with a kind of sweet wild carrot for soup. (Fine Day 1935a, 5)

Cree leader Fine Day explains many of the different uses for the ᑭᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦ ᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦᑭᐱᑦ (paskwâwi-mostosowiyâs; buffalo meat). Similarly, *The People of the Plains*, originally published in 1909 provides a firsthand account of the Plains Cree (and Saulteaux) peoples in the late nineteenth century. Amelia Paget's (nee McLean) book is unique in many ways including how it explicitly includes Cree women. Paget's grandmother (Anne Campbell Murray) received Métis scrip in 1876; having Aboriginal heritage also distinguishes her from many other writers of the period (Paget 2004, viii).

What the Indians did not owe to the buffalo one can hardly imagine. This noble beast provided them with almost everything they required in the olden times. Every part of its flesh was converted into food, dried and preserved so that it could be kept for years, ... the hides of the animals were worn instead of blankets, ... The buffalo skins were ... used in making their wigwams or tepees, and for their bedding .... Clothing and footwear ... saddles and bridles ... lassoes and thongs. The horns were

shaped into spoons and drinking cups. The brains were used in the tanning of the skins. The bones were used for the different implements required in the tanning and dressing of the skins, for saddle horns, and for war clubs .... The sinews were dried and used for making thread for sewing their garments, as well as for strings for their bows. The feet and hoofs were boiled for the glue they contained, which the Indians used for fastening their arrow points .... The long hair from the head and shoulders was twisted and plaited into halters, and the hair was used for a brush with which to kill flies and mosquitoes. (Paget 2009, 68–69)

This description explains the specific ways that the Plains peoples, including the Plains Cree, showed  $\text{L}\alpha\text{N}'\Delta\text{P}$  (manatisowin; civility) towards the life of the  $\text{<}^{\circ}\text{b}^{\circ}$   $\text{J}^{\circ}\text{D}^{\circ}\text{A}^{\circ}$  (paskwâw mostoswak; buffalo) by using many different parts of the animal for food, shelter, clothing and tools (SICC 2011, 75).

Another example of  $\text{L}\alpha\text{N}'\Delta\text{P}$  (manatisowin; civility) is shown in how the Cree and other Plains peoples showed respect to  $\text{L}\sigma\text{D}^{\circ}$   $\text{ÿb}^{\circ}\Delta\text{b}^{\circ}$  (Manitou Sakahigan; Creator's Lake or Lake of the Spirit), a place of healing. Although they wanted to gather there, they showed their respect for  $\text{L}\sigma\text{D}^{\circ}$   $\text{ÿb}^{\circ}\Delta\text{b}^{\circ}$  (Manitou Sakahigan; Creator's Lake) by camping at another lake eighteen kilometres east instead, along the historic trails, probably using the trail system around what is now known as Edmonton. The geographical region in and around the Edmonton area was historically known as  $\text{A}\Gamma^{\circ}\text{b}^{\circ}\text{f}^{\circ}\text{A}^{\circ}\text{b}^{\circ}\Delta\text{b}^{\circ}$  (Amiskwâciwaskahikan), meaning Beaver Hills (or mountain) House in the Cree language. Historical evidence shows many Indigenous peoples have inhabited the wider Edmonton area for over twelve thousand years (Goyette 2004, 11) whether in intervals, in a village, for a seasonal camp, or for ceremonies.  $\text{A}\Gamma^{\circ}\text{b}^{\circ}\text{f}^{\circ}\text{A}^{\circ}\text{b}^{\circ}\Delta\text{b}^{\circ}$  (Amiskwâciwaskahikan) has

been known to Indigenous peoples for thousands of years as a meeting place for hunting, trading, medicine lodges, feasts, sundance ceremonies and other events.

An extensive Indigenous trail system predates European contact throughout North America. As stated previously, these trails provided migration routes, trade networks, access to hunting grounds, and locations of warfare. These trading routes extended across numerous Indigenous nations' territories and provide the infrastructure on which the fur trade and settler road systems were built. The Old North Trail is one of the most extensive and well known. It is also referred to as Wolf's Tracks or Blackfoot Tracks. Wolf's Tracks is not a single trail but a network of trails, with the north-south trails running from Edmonton to Mexico. Métis author Coutu explains how the Rosedale Flats' ᖃᐅᐱᐅ (pêhonân; gathering place) "situated on the old Indian trail called Wolf's Track, was long ago an ancient meeting place of Plains people—a place of trade, celebration and ceremony" (Coutu 2004, 105). Evidence shows this was a place for many activities including intertribal trade between the Cree, Chipewyan, Beaver, Nakoda, and Blackfoot (Goyette 2004, 22).

Research has documented that a branch of the Wolf's Tracks (Old North Trail) also passed by Wabamun Lake and that Lac Ste. Anne was a significant gathering place for those travelling on these historic trail systems (Coutu 2004, 71). Before European arrival, Lac Ste. Anne (Manitou Sakahigan in Cree: "Lake of the Spirit") was a historical gathering place where "ceremonies that celebrated life, including the sun dance and marriages took place. People traded roots and herbs









is to learn by watching something (Wolvengrey 2011).<sup>94</sup> Sunney, Walter, and Paul all shared with me how Cree people learn things from watching animals (Sunney 2014b; Walter 2014b). In Walter's words,

That's what the old Indian people were able to do because of the time they had on their hands and the things they saw in nature .... They were able to learn so much. And for the medicines that came, just like some of us are good at music, some of us are good in scholastics, some of us are good in intuition. So they would learn.

They would have dreams about a certain medicine, or they would watch a moose eating  $L^{\alpha}b\Gamma_{\alpha}$ , which are the red rosehip berries. Why do they eat that when there's not much food in the middle of winter? Because there is good vitamin C in there. Why did they eat the bark of trees? Because there is good vitamins in there. So instinctively, the animals who are outside all the time, they know that much more than we do.

So the Indians would watch the animals and they would learn that stuff. They would see the moose sticking his head down and getting the roots of the cattails. And when they would try that, here they would find that big bulb, that pulpy bulb that was in the roots of the cattails. They found out that was a good thing to put in the soup. It would thicken the soup and it was also good to eat. So by watching each other, especially the animals, we learned an awful lot.

Whereas now, we learn mostly from books. But if any person that would go out in nature and live in nature all the time, every day, they would soon begin to learn a lot from nature. So it is good to watch everything. (Walter 2014b)

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<sup>94</sup> Other Indigenous peoples have similar principles and practices. For example, related to Indigenous knowledge on berry harvesting, the authors write "knowledge building is part of an intuitive or spiritual process that connects individuals with their families and the land around them (Ridington, 1990; Smith, 1978). At a basic level, knowledge building can be described as a process of empirical observation and individual and collective interpretation (Levi-Strauss, 1962; Roots, 1998). This process of knowledge building is not a linear or one-dimensional process; it is dependent upon constant feedbacks between what is observed and what is interpreted in different places, by different people and over time (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003). As such, the knowledge generation process is strongly interrelated with a particular social, cultural, and ecological context" (Parlee, Berkes, and Teetl'it Gwich'in Renewable Resources Council 2006, 516).



as presentable as possible. Coming over the crest of a hill he looked down upon what seemed to be a great encampment, with a lodge of some kind in the centre.

“He approached with caution and stopped at a respectful distance to await as a stranger the offer of hospitality from one of the people; no one paid him the least attention, everyone moving eagerly about.

“We-sa-kā-cha’k was always curious, and he went on through the crowd, though he had to elbow his way at times. Finally he came to the lodge, and looked into it. On either side, he could see small booths, each one just large enough to hold one dancer, and from these booths, men and women advanced as soon as the singing began. They were dressed in their best garments, with beadwork and feathers, their faces painted with gay colours; they looked very fine to We-sa-kā-cha’k. He watched them as they danced solemnly to the singing and the drums, without leaping or any exaggerated steps, blowing little whistles as they moved. There was no evidence of mirth or frivolity. They were deeply serious.

“Between the two lines of booths, at the far end, there was a beautiful robe, and on it a painted buffalo skull. The singers were seated before this, a great drum in their midst. One who was evidently acting in a special capacity would pray at times, or would ask one of the Old Men to pray. They expressed in eloquent words their prayers to Ma-ni-to for health and peace and for love towards their fellow men. They prayed above all for rain to refresh the land, to bring to life again what had lain dormant all winter, that there might be plenty for man and beast. And all these needs, they presented earnestly and humbly in general intercessory prayer.

“We-sa-kā-cha’k was most interested. He pushed his head farther into the entrance so that he could see better, and he became so absorbed that gradually the chanting lulled him and he fell asleep in that position.

“Under the spell of the dancing and the drums it had all seemed sublime to him; when he wakened, it was only absurd. He found that it was not a dance-lodge into which he had thrust his head, but an old buffalo skull, and that those who had appeared as human dancers were in reality ants that had made their home in and around the old skull.

“Added to his humiliation there was pain, for the ants had bitten his face and it was too swollen to withdraw from the buffalo skull. He had to leave with the skull over his own head, and his appearance was so alarming that man and beast fled at his approach, and no one would stay to help him. All the while the ants continued their feast, and his state became more and more pitiful. Then a great thunderstorm broke, a flash of lightning struck a

tree beside him, and We-sa-kã-cha'k was thrown violently to the ground. It was a mishap that proved fortunate, for he fell against a stone that smashed the buffalo skull into fragments. He was free.

“In relief and satisfaction, We-sa-kã-cha'k stayed where he had fallen, pondering the misfortune, until a moment of insight brought him to his feet in awe. ‘I know,’ he declared, ‘that the Ma-ni-to does not perform such deeds without meaning. He hears the smallest bird cry; he hears the prayers of man when he goes on the chase. This vision requires some form of worship.

““What I believed I witnessed was a dance in honour of Ma-ni-to, and for the purpose of asking blessing to meet the needs of man and beast. I saw the leaves, and they were young and green; I saw the dancers in their booths, the painted skull, the singers, and the leaders of the dance; and as I saw it, let the ceremony be.

““The Thunderbird with his flash of lightning released me from my predicament. It is by his agency as the ruler of the air, that Ma-ni-to waters the earth, in response to man's appeal. Only rain then can slacken the thirst of those who dance, as a sign of faith that the Ma-ni-to will send rain in response to prayer.

““I suffered distress, though it was not from a dangerous source. So must man sustain trials to open himself to the store of mercy that is in Ma-ni-to. In days to come, when the earth is well-peopled, at the time of year when the leaves are first out, let mankind as a whole perform this great act of prayer, the dance that shall be known as Nē-pa-kwā-se-mo-win.’ (All-night-thirst-dance).’ (E. Ahenakew 1995b)

In this teaching, E. Ahenakew explains the origin of one of the most important seasonal practices for the Plains Cree, one still happening in the present, a ceremonial practice where very important governing principles and practices are displayed. As Sunney explained to me, “the ones where we get our lessons are the lodges and pipes, and then we learn things from animals” (Sunney 2014b).



The lengthy book excerpt following, from Plains Cree scholar and knowledge holder Leona Makokis, introduces the last three principles outlined in this chapter: following protocols, gift-giving, and reciprocity. These principles emerged from the Cree stories analysed and the knowledge holders I interviewed and were substantiated by secondary sources like the one below, which were written from Cree people or grounded in their knowledge. In the book passage that follows, Dr. Makokis shares her wisdom as well as the words of various Elders from her community of Saddle Lake.

Florence stated, 'I value my relationship with the Creator first of all, the most important of all, love, love in myself and others, the earth, the plants, the trees, and the sharing and helping. I think I try to be strong to be an Indian person.' In this statement, Florence captures the whole essence of this section. A mother to all living beings is created by the Creator. Each of the participants agreed on these aspects of the meaning of the land. Hence, the land sustains all life forms including plants, animals, and humans. Thus, humanity is equal to all other life forms, not above or below, but equal to. As Skywoman so aptly framed this relationship, 'The challenge to keep the lands and people intact for the expressed purpose of sustaining life is our goal. Honor and respect our land because you were given to the land, to provide us life, and for us to give life to the land.' Therefore, the land is recognized as a living being, and considered to be the giver of life. The Cree words, '*Kikawinaw Askiy*' are translated to mean our Mother Earth, and are inclusive of all life. Then, the concept of shared kinship is the implication. The sacredness of this land connection was discussed earlier in this chapter. Skywoman stated, 'We are from the healing land (*iyiniwaskamkaw*), that is our relationship to the land and our connection here.' The holistic thinking that is required to understand this perspective is suggested in the following statement by Bernie: 'As First Nations people, the first thing we believe in is the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit maintained everything. There was a connection between us, the animals, the land, the water, the sun; everything was in a circle.'

This sentiment was echoed in the words of Charles, 'In destroying Mother Earth, you destroy all humanity.' This statement reflects the interdependency between human beings and the land. Vincent suggested, 'We really do not profit from the earth itself because we live in harmony with it.'

The relationship with the land is represented by gift-giving, or offerings made to the spiritual forces of Nature. The earth gave all types of gifts to the people in bountiful, unconditional ways. Skywoman affirms this in the statement, ‘You have all the gifts that will help you each day to provide for life. These gifts are food, medicine, clothing, shelter, water, air, and fire. All of these are life giving.’ In thanking the earth for these life-giving gifts, Florence said, ‘We give back to the earth what we take, we make offerings.’ ‘For every thing you take from the land you must give tobacco,’ stated Skywoman. Mike makes the physical connection of man to Earth as follows: ‘The earth is a living entity. The trees are the lungs of Mother Earth, their job is to provide us with oxygen.’

... He [Mike] noted, ‘Our relatives the animals and plants are the spiritual beings. They are here because every day they remind us. They are our teachers.’ Skywoman emphasizes the importance of our obligation to the land. ‘Futhermore, we assume the responsibility and authority entrusted to mothers, grandmothers, and daughters as provided in our Natural Laws, for we are keepers of the land.’ (Makokis 2001a, 67–68)

This excerpt begins with the primary relationship with the Creator and how this relationship is connected to the earth and everything that is a part of it. The importance of sustaining the earth to nourish all other life-forms is at the core of most collective Cree identity, and can be aptly shown by Skywoman relating the Cree to the territory, where she says, “We are from the healing land (iyiniwaskamkaw)” (Makokis 2001a). When discussing Cree protocols, the wisdom-keepers’ words show the primary relationship with the Creator and how certain protocols flow from that relationship in the way people interact with the earth, with each other, and with all other beings. One way to honour the relationship with the land is to gift ᐃᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ okâwîmâwaskiy (Mother Earth) with offerings of tobacco and prints; this will be explored in the section on gift-giving. The connection with and between all life-beings within ᐃᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲᑲ okâwîmâwaskiy is explored in the section on symbiotic relationships. Mike



2009). In one of my interviews, Sunney shared how he taught some young Indigenous people about protocol:

There were students, back in the twentieth century, these students were complaining, they said the Elders wanted an honorarium. They asked me, what do you think? Some of them were outright angry for being asked to give an honorarium. They thought, “how dare they, they are supposed to be Elders, they are not Elders if they are asking for money.” They asked me my opinion. I said, “okay, you guys sound like really traditional people, this is what you do: get a little cardboard box and you find out who is all living with them at their place. Find a little what goes on at their place, then you put enough food in there—meat, potatoes, a little bit of flour, sugar—in this box. Put a little bit of tobacco in there too, so they can have a smoke, not too much tobacco, so they can roll one smoke. Then go get a buffalo robe from Helford hides, because you guys sound traditional.” They stopped, they said, “how much does a buffalo robe cost?” I said, “well, you can get a real ugly one for about \$450 or \$500, but that’s a ...”; “you guys are really traditional so you want to get a nicer one; they are about \$1,600–\$5,000.” So, they decided to go with the honorarium. (Sunney 2014b)

Sunney’s teachings to the students display the importance of following protocol as well as the colonial dissonance that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people grapple with when trying to incorporate Indigenous teachings in the current context. Sunney’s teaching method is also instructive; instead of simply telling the students to provide an honorarium, he provided an analogy of comparable costs enabling the students to deconstruct their assumptions.

When explaining protocol, there are also certain procedures. For example, when meeting someone you can start with a Cree handshake, Sunney introduced this previously and will elaborate further (Sunney 2014a):

Shalene: You said the other day that offering tobacco is a way to establish relationships.

Sunney: Yes.

Shalene: So, that's kind of the first thing you do to establish a relationship?

Sunney: No, shake hands. You want to learn how, traditionally?

Shalene: Okay.

Sunney: Stick your hand out this way [he demonstrates]. [It means,] I come without anything. Isn't that cool? ...

Shalene: So you offer tobacco, and the handshake.

Sunney: Tobacco is the understanding that there is going to be some kind of negotiation taking place. That is the offering of tobacco, the opening.

Shalene: After, let's say you trade something, if I wanted to keep that relationships, what would I do? Like if I wanted to keep trading with that person.

Sunney: Yup, you would probably need to re-establish each time.

Shalene: So, offer the tobacco again?

Sunney: Yes. That's what I do anyway; I still do that if I want something. I have been getting something from someone for a long time, but each time I go get that something I always offer tobacco.

Tobacco is considered one of the sacred gifts that the Creator gave Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island as it is believed to establish a direct link between the person and the spiritual realm (McAdam 2009, 16). Tobacco has been used as a trade item even before European settlement, often being traded by southern and eastern Indigenous peoples (McAdam 2009). Before tobacco was introduced there was also kinikinik or ᑭᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ ᑎ ᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ (mihkwâpemakwa ka pihtwâtamihk). The Bearberry plant is referred to as kinikinik and was often used in pipes and for

offerings (McAdam 2009, 17). On August 5, 1935, Dr. David Mandelbaum interviewed Cree leader Fine Day. He explained: “The leaves used in kinnikinnik are called akagicipagwa ‘anigaci’ leaves. They are tied in bunches and put on a rack to dry over a fire. When they want to do them in a hurry they are roasted in a pan. They are used to make the tobacco milder” (Fine Day 1935b). Historically, Fine Day explained that in the spring tobacco was sent to the different bands as part of a governance function, to explain when and where to gather; “When the People come together, the ‘ogihcitau’ (or warrior society) tipi is put up. If there was a very big crowd there might be three ogihcitau tipis belonging to different Bands—River, Prairie, and West People” (Fine Day 1973a).

Tobacco is offered to establish, maintain, and restore human-to-human relationships, but it is also offered to establish, maintain, and restore human-to-nonhuman relationships. This is explained beautifully in *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies*:

Tobacco is also offered when a First Nations’ person takes medicines, plants, stones or other such items from the earth. Every time you pull a plant from Mother Earth, she feels that pull, and you must always make the proper offerings of tobacco and prayers. By offering tobacco in gratitude and thankfulness, you are ensuring that this pulling of Mother Earth’s hair will not hurt her too much. She must understand that you comprehend your relationship to her and that you know what she is giving you is one of the parts of her body. Through honouring and understanding that relationship to Mother Earth, you also honour and understand your reciprocal relationship to all of life and creation. (2009, 17)

This teaching explains proper procedures for maintaining good relationships with all of our relations, including relations with the land. Giving tobacco

acknowledges this relationship by giving a gift, which is reciprocal as one is also taking items from the earth. The next section will explore gift-giving.

*Δ 7Pα∇· (Emekinawet): Gift-Giving*

Gift-giving is a continuous process in relationships, a process that occurs in Cree society, not only with other people (Cree and non-Cree) but with all living beings. In chapter five, I write specifically of the different giveaway ceremonies as examples of Cree institutions that have spiritual, social, and economic functions. In this chapter, I discuss gift-giving that occurs outside of these institutionalized processes. When I asked Sunney to talk about gift-giving, he immediately linked this to the gift of tobacco from the Creator:

Sunney: Probably one of the oldest of our traditions is to honour that gift-giving and here is how for us: ... tobacco was given to us, that was the first gift Creator gave to us. I told you quite a few times already if you're going to get berries, you go talk to the Creator, talk to the earth and then talk to the that tree, that plant, the one who you're going to pick from first.

The first thing you do is that gift[ing]; you honour that gift—that gift, that life that plant is going to give you, that tobacco. Creator saw us, that we didn't have anything. We hadn't understood those laws yet. One of the things that was so important was honouring all of creation, if I go and get a rock for the sweat, the first thing you do, the first four rocks is tobacco—enough tobacco to fill a pipe, you put that tobacco down.

So that was our first gift and the law of tobacco is this, we're commanded by our Elders to smoke and we are forbidden by that law of tobacco to inhale it in to our own lungs.

Shalene: I don't understand.

Sunney: We just ate ... the metabolized things are going through your liver and kidneys, there's change of energy there. And it's going through your stomach and it will go to your big intestine and small intestine, all the

while creating energy. Everything that we ate, that we drink. Your energy, what happens there again is practical, right? We're living—to live another day as a result of that exchange, now tobacco when you blow it out, that goes to the ethereal—the energy around it, that's their food. That's their sustenance. So when we go like this [demonstrates inhaling while smoking], we are withholding that.

Shalene: Oh, okay, thanks.

Sunney: So we're commanded by the elders to smoke and why? To keep that relationship going. Not all the time but—and then we're forbidden by the law of tobacco to inhale into our own lungs, it would be like withholding food from a child. So that was the first gift we were given. Now we give that tobacco to everything; when we make a kill the first thing we did, tobacco. Even before they go out on a hunt, smoke a pipe, or smoke a cigarette for that animal spirit to pity us. Once you get that, and then you are free to hunt. (Sunney 2014b)

In this teaching, Sunney explains that tobacco was the first gift given by the Creator to Indigenous peoples and we honour our relationships with creation and the Creator by gifting tobacco. He also explains specific protocol around smoking tobacco. Tobacco is seen as a ᑭᑭᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎᑎ (mekinawewin); in English this word is defined as a “gift from a higher power” (Wolvengrey 2011).

In my interviews, I found that one of the standards around gift-giving is the importance of giving the best of something, something that the giver values.

Walter, the seventy-four-year-old Elder explains the different types of gifts:

Giving a gift, like if they [the giver] had lots of horses, that might be good. But what would be better than 10 horses would be one really good buffalo horse. That would be worth 10 or 20 horses. So if you're willing to give something away, then give the very best. Don't give anything that's second nature ....

So now, if I was to give a gift away, I don't give away anything that's cheap or anything. I always give away something that's nice. That way,

you just feel better for yourself. You feel happier knowing that you've given somebody something that they can use and maybe that they want and can appreciate, whereas a cheap gift, then you don't really feel that good. All you know is you gave away a cheap gift, or it wasn't your very best gift or something like that.

Maybe it's a matter of feeling, how it makes you feel. And when you look at yourself in the mirror you can look at a guy that's real cheap that gives away cheap stuff, or you can look at somebody that gives away good stuff. If you give away good stuff you will have that feeling when you look at yourself. If you give away good stuff you will know that it's not you so much as a good spirit that's come with you, and you give away good stuff. Then you recognize and value that good spirit more than ever before. Does that make sense? (Walter 2014b, 2)

In this teaching, Walter shares how gifters need to give the best, something that they hold as valuable. When you gift "the best," he believes you will feel better. Interestingly, he also acknowledges a generous spirit that enables the gifting to occur. Walter also shares a story where an important teaching around gifting came to him in a dream:

So whenever you have something, give away the best. Now one time dad came to me after he had passed away and he asked me for a shirt. Now somebody had just given me a beautiful ribbon shirt. It was not very fancy, but it had a beautiful turquoise ribbon through it. Two. One had turquoise green and the other one a beautiful reddish colour. It was so nice. The background was so artistically beautiful. I loved it.

So I put it into my clothes closet and I didn't wear it in front of anybody. I didn't want anybody to see how nice that was, right? So I put it away. And then one night dad came to me and said, "son, do you have a shirt I could borrow?" And I offered every shirt I had in the closet and he kept saying "No, not that one. Is that all you have?"

And I thought of that shirt I had which I knew all the time but I wasn't giving it to him because I didn't want to give it to him. So I went and I got it and he said, "That's perfect. That's the one I want." I said, "Where you going dad?" He said, "I'm going to a wedding." So then I knew that weddings were on the other side, or what we call a wedding down here on earth.

So then about three weeks later, ... [my sister and her husband] came to the house. ...They came to the house and he asked me for a shirt. So I didn't hesitate. I just went and got the very best I had, because dad had already taught me about two or three weeks previous to that, give the best you have. Don't fool around. Just give the best you have. So [my brother-in-law] got the best I had right away, and I didn't worry about it because dad had already showed me that. (Walter 2014b)

This account from Walter speaks to generosity in what you give. It seems to be a sacrificial giving, where Walter was taught through a dream that he needed to let go of the material possession he was holding. In Cree ways of knowing, knowledge through dreams is given much significance (Kovach 2009, 58), they can provide direction, information, and understanding.

In Cree customs, when a person compliments an item that you have, it is common to give that item to the person who complimented you. In Walter's account above, I wonder if that was the reason he did not want to wear his prized ribbon shirt in front of people. The act of him "squirreling away" the ribbon shirt was tested first in the dream world and then three weeks later in the nondream world. Walter tried to explain to me the philosophy behind this practice. He said, "If somebody really likes something you have, you might as well just give it to them right now, because if you don't somebody will steal it and it'll go away from you. As soon as somebody likes it, it is no longer yours, it is that person's" (Walter 2014b). Florence, a Plains Cree woman in her late sixties explained how this practice is not always followed today and one of the tensions that surrounds it:

I don't sort of enjoy that custom now. Because if someone says they like something that you just paid a couple hundred bucks for, you don't want to just give it to them but that is what they used to do. If you liked something you were obligated to give it to them. As a matter of fact when

my nephew was living at my house [a few years ago], my sister brought a relative in the winter time, and he had a real nice winter coat on and my nephew said, “Oh, I like your jacket,” and ten minutes later my nephew owned the jacket. (Florence 2014)

There are limits to the practice of giving an item(s) away to a person who admires it. Both Walter and Florence provided different ways to do deal with this. In Walter’s words:

Some people say it [complimenting something of yours], not trying to get anything off you, they just can’t help themselves, but there are other people that know that you are the kind of a person that will give it to them, so they will say that to you with hopes of getting that in the intention that you take it out and give it them. But what you can do is you can give them 25 cents. Sometimes they are insulted by that, but that’s all that their comment was worth. (Walter 2014a)

Within this Cree custom, Walter shows a way to respond to someone who is trying to take advantage of a person’s generosity. In a similar vein, Florence recalled a time when she was being taken advantage of and how she responded:

I can remember what I didn’t do. Everybody knew I used to give my stuff away. Anyway, my son one time is on a trip with his Aunt Sylvia and I had just given her all these clothes. All the way there, she said, he drove her nuts. He would say, “That’s my Mom’s blouse you have on.” “You have my Mom’s purse ....” “You have this and that.” She said, “I was so sick of him by the time we got there because that is all he kept saying.” Anyway, Sylvia has people at her house and she says, “Florence will give me anything I want, see those shoes she has on her feet, she got them in Europe and she really likes them. But if I ask for them, she will give them to me.” But I was hearing this, eh, and I think “oh, no I won’t.” So, she says, “honey, do I ever like your shoes” and I go “really?” She says “yeah could I have them?” and I said “No.” [Laughing] She was so shocked and all the people started laughing. (Florence 2014)

As you can see, there are limits to these acts of generosity. You do not have to always give the item away, especially if you feel that the intent behind is objectionable.

ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (miyohtwâwin; kindness) is a key value behind gift-giving. Walter told me that kindness supersedes everything, even yourself. He equated kindness to living. He went on say (in relation to gift-giving): “That when you do kindness there is the energy of kindness, and that’s a beautiful energy to have. Kindness in spirit, kindness in thought, kindness in action and deeds, and kindness in words” (Walter 2014b). When interviewing Florence, I asked about obligations around gift-giving but she related it back to kindness:

Shalene: Did you feel obligated to [give things away] or it was just what you knew?

Florence: Personally for me, I felt good to give things away. Like, I felt good so I was happy to do it.

Shalene: And was there ever the expectation, did you ever feel because maybe you [had more] ...?

Florence: [interrupting] Yes, that’s true.

Shalene: Was there the expectation that you should give?

Florence: No, there was never the expectation; it was my expectation that I knew I was better off so if they needed something it didn’t hurt me to give it to them.

Shalene: And how did you decide what to give?

Florence: I would know if they were short of blankets, or something, or I would know if they didn’t have much clothes, and I had lots, I would just



Shalene: Do you think sometimes when you give a gift, or when someone gives you a gift, is there ever a kind of expectation that you'll get a gift back or they'll give you something in return at a later date?

Walter: Yeah, that's right, because that's almost like a visit. When somebody comes to visit you they know that one day you're going to come and visit them. Or if somebody comes to visit you and you feed them, you know that one of these days they're going to feed you. Same thing with that, if somebody gives you something then you're going to give them something back. It's not that it's expected; it's just that that's the way it is. (Walter 2014b)

In response to my question about reciprocating a gift, Walter mentioned visiting someone. Florence was very clear with me that in her understanding there is no obligation to return a gift. However, she said that you could reciprocally expect to stay at people's houses (the idea that you can stay at Cree people's homes and they could stay at your home). Here is part of our conversation:

Shalene: Is the idea that you give something away but you know you will get something back at some point?

Florence: No, it is because lots of time they used to starve and so they would share everything that they had. First of all the kids would get it, and then the old people, and then them.

Shalene: So it's not like, okay I will give this something away but then when I need something then I can ask for something?

Florence: Well, I was not around then but I don't think it was like that, I think it was just natural; you just shared what you had. And that [sharing] was actually one of the qualities of a Chief, if they looked after the people good. That's why with orphans, someone would always look after them.

...

Shalene: What about reciprocity, how if I give you something, I know you will give me something. Or if I help you out then I know in the future you will help me out.

Florence: But, it's not like a law. It is just if you feel like it.

Shalene: So you wouldn't feel like, let's say one of your relatives if they lent you twenty dollars that sometime in the future you could ask them for money?

Florence: Well, my thinking is "what, you want to borrow twenty bucks off me because you happened to lend me twenty bucks?" you know, like that's why [incredulously]? Now, if it is just because you want to help them. A lot of old people were like that, they would just give and share their stuff. And their homes were always open. That is why we had everybody's kids in our house.

Shalene: The open house thing, if you had people at your house, and they could come over anytime, then was the idea that you could go to their house?

Florence: Well, we didn't expect it ... well yeah [actually] we did so [expect it]. Yeah, I guess. (Florence 2014)

It seems that the concept of Cree gift-gifting is different from some of the literature on gifting; in Cree gifting there is not always a notion that a gift will create a type of future obligation.<sup>97</sup> Reading and analysing my notes now, I wonder if having an open house for family and friends is a Cree custom and that is why it is expected as opposed to being a reciprocal response to letting someone stay at your house. I will explore this more in the last principle discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>97</sup> In his foundational text "The Gift," Marcel Mauss examines different societies' gifting practices. In terms of gifting, he writes, "In all these instances there is a series of rights and duties about consuming and repaying existing side by side with rights and duties about giving and receiving" (Mauss 1967, 11). When exploring differences, it is important to distinguish the giveaway ceremony (e.g. the *māhtāhito* ceremony) and gift-giving: There is a form of reciprocity or obligation to give back in the former, in contrast to gifting outside of the Cree institution of the giveaway ceremony.



something from Mother Earth, you give back something in return” (Makokis 2009, 126).

Although making offerings is a Cree custom, there is not the notion that the offering is equal in perceived value to what is given. This can also be seen in terms of offerings made before hunting an animal; this is not necessarily seen as an equal exchange. Cree scholar and writer, Neal McLeod sees the Cree word that describes reciprocity, ᑭᑦ ᐱᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (miyo-wîcihitowin), as “helping each other in a good way” (McLeod 2007, 35). This concept and definition resonates with the stories and what was told to me in the interviews. Cree scholar Leona Makokis translates sharing as ᐱᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (wîcihitowin). In her section explaining the natural laws, she states that, “The third teaching is about sharing; the Cree word is ‘wîcihitowin.’ This stems from the verb, wîcih, to help; and ‘towin’ makes the root word into a noun and refers to having everybody involved” (Makokis 2009, 59). This is similar to the Cree term ᐱᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (mâmawi-wîcihitowin) which is defined as “all helping together, general cooperation” (Wolvengrey 2011).

When sharing the Cree stories related to this norm, Sunney told me that he saw this as symbiosis or in Cree ᐱᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (pimâtisiwin) which means life. Sunney talked to me about symbiosis in both interviews, January 2014 and March 2014. In January, he began with a teaching from an Elder from the east, that is also instructive here:





This Cree adage is a strong warning about the profound ways we are connected to all living beings. What we do to others, not just human relations but also to nonhuman beings, will have implications through the process of symbiosis.

This chapter began with a discussion around colonial dissonance and how these mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional conflicts can be seen as consequences of settler-colonialism and, specifically within this work, a focus on economic exploitation. Within the tensions of colonialism that can cause a perpetual state of collective colonial dissonance, I argue that principles from ᑎᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (Nehiyawak) worldview can be a buffer against the oppressive aspects of settler economies and can provide alternatives that can shape renewed Cree economic relationships.

With decolonization, many people are learning and relearning their Indigenous language(s), ceremonial cycles, connections to territory, and history (see the descriptions of Peoplehood in chapters one and four). Without this knowledge, there can be a tendency to see only the negative impacts or social problems resulting from colonial dissonance and not the strengths within Cree society. This self-reflection and action reclaims individual and collective agency. The seven principles described in this chapter emerged from within Cree perspectives, through historical and contemporary knowledge holders, Cree stories, and interviews. In the concluding chapter, I will present a current case from the Plains Cree community of Flying Dust First Nation. They are part of the historic ᓂᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (Sakâwiyiniwak; Northern Plains Cree) division of the ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ (Natimîwiyiniwak; Upstream People). Their story illustrates both moments of

tension and the ways they construct a creative space to bring Cree principles and practices into their economic relationships.

## Chapter 7: Indigenous and Relationships with Land

### Introduction

The headline of a 1971 news article reads “Pulp Pollution: Big Concern to Native People.” The newspaper clipping explains how local First Nation and Métis peoples in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, met with government and corporate representatives to protest a proposed pulp and sawmill (see Figure 18). Gordon Tootoosis, Cree leader and executive member of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians stood in front of the microphone and said,

The Indian people of this area are very concerned about what’s going to happen to them if their livelihood of trapping or fishing is destroyed. Although it might not seem too much of a livelihood to other people, but this is all they have that they can still call their own. (Saskatchewan Indian Newspaper 1971)



**Figure 18: Gordon Tootoosis standing at the microphone, May 18, 1971.** Saskatchewan Indian Newspaper (1971).

The article then explains how heated the discussions became: At one point the Saskatchewan Minister of the Indian and Métis Department asked some Indigenous members to leave, and Dr. Howard Adams, past president of the Métis

Nation of Saskatchewan responded, “Don’t you ever tell our people you will have us expelled from this hall ... you have bossed us around too damn long” (Saskatchewan Indian Newspaper 1971).

In chapter one, I discussed the dual logics of settler-colonialism—state domination and economic exploitation. The article above is about economic exploitation and settler-colonial attempts to control. Indigenous peoples’ resistance against one colonial logic can further entrench them into the other, equating to a further extension of settler-colonialism. Indigenous peoples attempting to free themselves from state bureaucratic control can face further economic exploitation and can be pushed under the hegemonic and constitutive rationalities of neoliberal governmentality. Yet, there is also the Indigenous agency and responsibility which includes the continued acts of Indigenous intellectualism. I draw from Coulthard’s (2007) critique of the limited accommodation and recognition that Indigenous people receive through land claims, self-government negotiations and agreements, and economic development policies and programs. His critique shows how negotiating with the state can reconstitute Indigenous forms of being, and, as I argue, relations with human and nonhuman beings. Coulthard explains the structure of these negotiations and how they

can subtly shape the subjectivities and worldviews of the Indigenous claimants involved. The problem here, of course, is that these fields are by no means neutral: they are profoundly hierarchical and power-laden, and as such have the ability to asymmetrically mold and govern how Indigenous subjects think and act not only in relation to the topic at hand (the recognition claim), but also to themselves and to others. (2007, 452)

His analysis continues to explore how strategies that attempt to achieve self-determination through neoliberal economic development have created a class of Aboriginal capitalists who privilege profit over “ancestral obligations to the land and to others.” Finally, on the impacts of land entitlements:

And land claims processes, which are couched almost exclusively in the language of property (Nadasdy, 2005), are now threatening to produce a new breed of Aboriginal property owner, whose territories, and thus whose very identities, risk becoming subject to expropriation and alienation. Whatever the method, for Alfred, all of these approaches, even when carried out by sincere and well-intentioned individuals, threaten to erode the most traditionally egalitarian aspects of Indigenous ethical systems, ways of life, and forms of social organization. (Coulthard 2007, 452)

In this chapter, I return to my original questions. To what extent are Indigenous peoples’ negotiations with the state (for limited forms of bureaucratic control or to receive compensation for historic wrongs) pushing them further into the second logic of settler-colonialism—economic exploitation and hegemonic neoliberal governance? Can principles inherent in Cree economic relationships, drawn from historical sources and oral stories, help guide alternative economic practices today?

I explore these questions in the context and analysis of Flying Dust First Nation, a Plains Cree community in Treaty Six adjacent to Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. I turn first to the history of Flying Dust in terms of Canadian state relations and “mis-recognition” (Coulthard 2007). As party to Treaty Six, they did not receive the amount of reserve land agreed under the treaty. To rectify this, they were part of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians Treaty Land Agreement, originally

negotiated in the 1970s with the failed 1976 Saskatchewan Agreement, and then finally with the 1992 TLE Agreement between the federal government, the provincial government of Saskatchewan, and twenty-two of twenty-six First Nations in Saskatchewan (INAC, 13). Furthermore, Flying Dust is a member nation of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC); this Council signed a Comprehensive Agreement in Principle with the Canadian government in 2001 to provide the foundation for self-government. In 2013, Flying Dust became a voluntary member First Nation to have the *First Nations Land Management Act* apply to them. I begin with an analysis of MLTC, moving to Flying Dust's settler-colonial history and settler-colonial present, and ending with Flying Dust citizens' cooperative gardening initiative. My purpose is to show the dual colonial logics in practice as well as acts of resistance to market citizenship.

This chapter provides a single-site case study to explore the questions within this dissertation. My research began with a grounded-theory approach, drawing on Cree normative principles around economic relationships from Cree oral histories and then supplementing this with interviews with Cree knowledge holders. The results of this Cree theoretical development are conveyed in chapters five and six. By way of completing the cyclical approach, this chapter regrounds the dissertation's theoretical development in an empirical example. Continuing my inductive approach—leaning on grounded theory supplemented with the NVivo software technology—I initially sought to select a case study that would provide a current Treaty Six descriptive example of alterNative Plains Cree relationships with land. After an initial survey, Flying Dust First Nation (FDFN)'s gardening

initiative met the selection criteria. After interviews with Flying Dust members, I began to explore secondary research regarding FDFN's governance, participation in a modern-day self-government negotiation, and connections to neoliberal governmentality. The resulting case study encapsulates the different analyses in this dissertation, demonstrating the dual logics of settler colonialism—bureaucratic control and economic exploitation. It also explores the neoliberal pressures embedded in existing self-government negotiations. Within this chapter, there is also an exploration of Cree land-based practices through Cree cooperative gardening and harvesting practices. This case analysis is all couched in the complexities and tensions that result from ongoing settler-induced colonial dissonance.

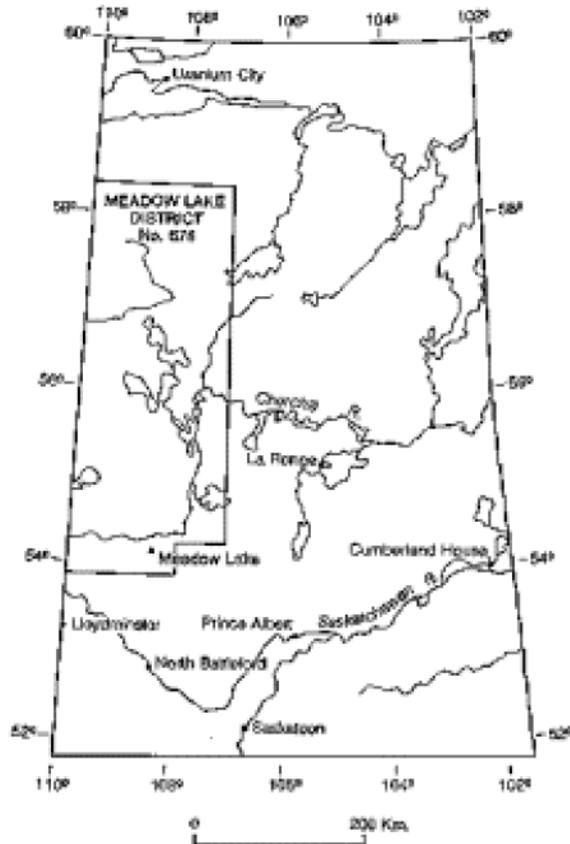
#### Meadow Lake Tribal Council

MLTC formed in 1981, originally as Meadow Lake District Chiefs Joint Venture, as an association of nine First Nations representing approximately eleven thousand citizens, five Cree nations (Flying Dust First Nation, Canoe Lake First Nation, Island Lake First Nation, Makwa Sahgaiehcan, and Waterhen Lake) and four Dene nations (Birch Narrows First Nation, Buffalo River First Nation, Clearwater River First Nation, and English River First Nation; see Figure 19). The vision statement of MLTC began

To support its member individuals, families and communities in achieving health and a state of well-being. The state of well-being means achieving health and a balance in the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional aspects of life. The MLFN's wish to achieve increased self-reliance in all aspect of life as part of this approach and philosophy. (MLTC Annual Report 1994 in R. B. Anderson 1999, 8)

Self-reliance and self-government have been part of the organization since its beginning. The MLTC head office is located in Flying Dust First Nation with over ninety employees in the areas of child and family services, economic development, education, Elder services, executive management, youth development, justice, information technology, health, and finance (“Meadow Lake Tribal Council” 2014).

MLTC has been formally negotiating a self-government agreement with the federal government since 1991, with discussions beginning in 1989. MLTC includes First Nations in Treaty Six, Treaty Eight, and Treaty Ten. In 1996, the province of Saskatchewan began their formal participation in this process. In 2001, a Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle was signed, which should lead to the negotiation of a governance agreement, a bilateral agreement to establish the Meadow Lake First Nation governments, and a trilateral agreement including Saskatchewan. The intention of these agreements is to enable increased jurisdiction over reserve lands, including education, land management and social welfare. In 2010, the province of Saskatchewan withdrew from negotiations. Waterhen Lake Cree First Nation has recently withdrawn their participation from MLTC’s self-government negotiations (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2014b).



**Figure 19: Meadow Lake district.**

(R. B. Anderson and Bone 1995, 126).

The pulp mill discussed at the beginning of this chapter was opened (originally by the American company Parsons & Whittemore). In 1986, it was bought by MLTC and a consortium of mill employees. The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* commissioners describe how to move forward on self-government:

In 1988, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (mltc) of northwestern Saskatchewan got help from the federal government to buy a 40 per cent share in a struggling pulp mill, NorSask Forest Products, and update the mill's equipment. Help from the provincial government produced a tree-farm licence. The mltc then launched new businesses to do reforestation, logging and road construction. Mltc businesses have since paid \$11 million in taxes and saved \$10 million in social assistance costs by employing 240 people who would otherwise have been jobless. (Dussault and Erasmus 1996)

There is no question that the commissioners' analyses of government-supported economic development models like this are precursors to achieving self-government. The pulp mill has been controversial with some citizens of MLTC First Nations. For example, the grassroots organization Protectors of Mother Earth was led by Elders from Canoe Lake Cree Nation in 1993 and then joined by Elders and community members from five surrounding Cree and Métis communities. At the time, they held the longest blockade and protest camp in Canadian history, at seventeen months: "When we started the blockade, we didn't think we'd be out more than a few days," said Leon Iron, sixty-nine, a wild rice grower and spokesman for the Protectors of Mother Earth (Caldwell 1993). Ruth Morin, the leader of Protectors, explained how "The Elders object to clear cutting and the use of mechanical harvesters" and describes how "A lot of the Elders still trap there. Blocks of trapping area have been passed on from generation to generation and are still being used" (Windspeaker Staff 1993). Furthermore, Elder Mary Fluerie explains the impact of clear cutting:

We want compensation for damage already done from the clear cutting. They've wrecked the trees, and the herbs and the medicines. Everything else [too]. Berries, the animals. There's no place for the animals to go, there's only sand. (Protectors of Mother Earth 1993)

Similar to the Protectors' concerns about using mechanical harvesters, Metis Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper laments how using mechanical equipment (in his community's case for grain farming) created an emotional, spiritual, and physical detachment as they no longer had the time to develop a relationship with the land. He also believes that going into this type of work changed his view of the land; he

saw it as inanimate and a commodity, and this kept him emotionally and spiritually detached from it (Ghostkeeper 2007, 68–69). In terms of the Meadow Lake blockade, a resolution was reached through a comanagement agreement providing First Nations’ citizens input into where the clear cut happens, how close it is to the water, and where roads would be (Windspeaker Staff 1993).

Robert Anderson and Robert Bone, in an article titled “First Nations Economic Development: the Meadow Lake Tribal Council,” explain three main economic development goals for First Nations: (1) “The improvement of socioeconomic circumstances,” (2) “the attainment of economic self-sufficiency in support of self-government,” and (3) “the preservation and strengthening of traditional culture, values and languages” (R. B. Anderson and Bone 1999, 14–15). Using MLTC as their research case, the authors see an inextricable link between economic development and self-government. The economic development they describe in their research is neoliberal in function and design (see R. B. Anderson and Bone 1999; R. B. Anderson 1999; R. B. Anderson 1998). Missing from their analysis is the constitutive relationship connecting their three goals (that is, how will certain economic-development practices shape and reshape Indigenous societies—their “traditional culture” and “values”?).

After the blockade, MLTC created a twenty-year plan: “From Vision to Reality” with extensive input from all member First Nations through various meetings, a three-day economic development symposium for members of MLTC, and

interviews with over 500 members (R. B. Anderson 1999, 214–215). One of the Elders interviewed stated,

In the future, hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering will not provide the self-sufficiency that is required. Young people will not live the same as the Elders live. The people cannot go back to the old days. We cannot turn back. We need to look ahead and know where to go next. (R. B. Anderson 1999, 215)

In the consultation process, one of the questions asked—“Can traditional lifestyles coexist with modern enterprises or businesses?”—resulted in twenty-five percent of respondents answering no and seventy-five percent of respondents answering yes. The comments are summarized in **Table 2** (R. B. Anderson 1999, 216).

**Table 2: Comments from Respondents**

Yes	No
- “The two lifestyles already do and its working”	- “Modern lifestyles overpower traditional ones”
- “We have to work with Native and non-Native lifestyles”	- “Our culture is being lost”
- “Strong family relationships are needed”	- “People can’t live both ways”
- “Mixing the two types of lifestyles requires honesty, cooperation and communication”	- “The two lifestyles conflict”
- “It is us up to us to make it work”	

There have been internal critiques that MLTC is too close to state agencies and “losing sight of First Nation concerns” (Finley-Brook 2011, 340). Significantly, during a 2003 interview, an MLTC official stated that only forty percent of MLTC members supported some of their joint ventures (Finley-Brook 2011, 340).

Other controversial developments have emerged in MLTC's business strategies. In 1996, Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC), a department of the federal government, approached MLTC and asked if they wanted to partner with the Miskito Indigenous people in Nicaragua on a commercial forestry initiative. A feasibility study was developed and although quite controversial among MLTC's Chiefs, the initiative went ahead with funding from ABC and the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) corporate division. Initially they developed a business partnership called Makwa International with MLTC owning fifty-one percent of the company and local Nicaraguan Indigenous communities owning forty-nine percent, with the option to acquire more ownership over time (MLTC 2006). The corporation in Nicaragua called Limi-Nawâh (meaning jaguar in local Miskitu and Mayangna languages) was incorporated in 2003 as Nicaragua's first Indigenous people's corporation (Finley-Brook 2011, 338). During a 2006 presentation, MLTC stated that due to external factors the project moved from an economic initiative, to being a social project, and finally to being a project about governance. In this vein, MLTC began a "Tribal Council Replication Phase" (MLTC 2006): "We then shifted to trying to replicate the organizational experience of MLTC in Nicaragua in a culturally appropriate way. We helped to set up the equivalent of a tribal council, and we helped the tribal council set up its own development corporation" (MLTC 2006). In this process, scholar Finley-Brook explains how MLTC restructured sixteen Miskitu and Mayangna villages, imposing First Nation-type tribal councils on the Indigenous peoples in Nicaragua. They also made other governance changes such as secret-

ballot elections and mandatory literacy for all elected officials, therefore making half the population ineligible and changing the historical custom of Elder leadership (Finley-Brook 2011, 334–353). Use of the natural resources changed from local subsistence practices to market production. Conflicts arose when Limi-Nawâh usurped the local communal leaders' jurisdiction over decisions around natural resources and land use (Finley-Brook 2011, 334). Eventually the project failed, even after three million dollars in Canadian aid money and countless infringements affecting local Nicaraguan Indigenous communities (Finley-Brook 2011, 348). The take-away for MLTC was, "It is almost impossible to do business in nations that are poorly governed" (MLTC 2006). Limi-Nawâh saw Aboriginal Canadians as dissimilar and privileged. One Miskitu leader called the MLTC delegates "rich, white men," and soon after the project was underway Nicaraguan project leaders wanted separation from the Canadians "so the local populations would be able to 'work alone, as indigenas [Indigenous Peoples]'" (Finley-Brook 2011, 346, 350). Finley-Brook argues that "First Nations in Canada have criticized the Indian Act [sic] and its amendments because noncustomary rules were imposed from the outside—yet the MLTC permitted a related process to occur in Nicaragua" (Finley-Brook 2011, 346).

In 1994, Ray Ahenakew, then Executive Director of MLTC, presented at the thirty-fourth annual conference of the Canadian Nuclear Association in a talk titled "Self-Determination and Economic Development—the Storage of Used Nuclear Fuel, Community Consultation and Participation":

An important recognition by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council that economic development is critical to achieving self-determination, that is self-government, and that traditional subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and arts and crafts must be supplemented by the formation of business enterprises which embrace technology and capitalize on the extraction and value-added processing of the natural resources associated with our traditional lands. (R. Ahenakew 1994, 1)

In MLTC's view, self-government as self-determination can only be achieved through capitalization of natural resource extraction and processing. A feasibility study and consultation to explore the permanent storage of used nuclear fuel in one (or more) of their MLTC communities ensued (R. Ahenakew 1994, 6). The Indigenous Women's Network (IWN) of Saskatchewan has taken a strong stand against MLTC's idea of nuclear waste storage (Muldrew 1996).

IWN explains nuclear waste in Indigenous communities as environmental racism and notes that women<sup>98</sup> have specifically suffered impacts from resource extraction in the north (Muldrew 1996). There has also been controversy over the use or "mis"-use of spirituality in this process:

Some MLTC leaders reportedly said that "elders have taught us you don't take something from the Earth without giving something back" in order to defend nuclear waste storage. Emily Gauthier, an IWN member from the Waterhen First Nation, is insulted that Aboriginal spirituality would be used to sell a waste dump to Aboriginal people. Gauthier says it's a distortion of Aboriginal respect for the Earth. "You can't give tobacco when you are going to commit murder against the Earth .... The circle of life cannot be maintained by greed," she says. (Muldrew 1996)

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<sup>98</sup> "In the spring of 2008, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) provided resources to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) to assist NWAC in developing ways and means of engaging Aboriginal women at the community in the discussion on the disposal of nuclear waste" (Jamieson 2009, 3).

In 1996, three of the First Nations in MLTC voted to keep their communities nuclear free (Waterhen Cree Nation, Canoe Lake Cree Nation, and Birch Narrows Dene Nation); this vote forced MLTC to put the initiative on “the back burner” (Muldrew 1996). Northern Saskatchewan’s grassroots’ Committee for Future Generations voted unanimously in June 2011 to ban nuclear waste in Saskatchewan; at their forum they warned of attempts to buy-off hand-picked Elders<sup>99</sup> to appear as adequate consultation and to attempt to prove legitimacy of the process. Questions were asked regarding the Elders’ accountability mechanisms back to the communities (Coalition for a Clean Green Saskatchewan 2011). NWMO’s publications and initiatives display a strategy to aggressively locate an Indigenous community in Canada to be the long-term holder of Canada’s used nuclear fuel (Barnaby 2009, 2). A study was completed by NWMO in October of 2013 to look at the feasibility of nuclear waste storage in English River Dene First Nation, a member of MLTC (NWMO 2013).

In MLTC’s quest for self-government, their leadership’s actions demonstrate a view of the land as beneficial through its market value, through capitalizing on resource extraction (R. Ahenakew 1994). These market rationalities are rupturing relationships within MLTC First Nations and directly impacting citizens who continue to live *with* the land (through, for example, hunting, trapping, fishing, and harvesting) and their ability to continue this relationship and livelihood into

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<sup>99</sup> In July 2012, NWMO created a Council of Elders with ten members from different provinces. In the lead up to developing this Council, NWMO held different Elder forums with other Aboriginal involvement. This process, the current listing of Elders, and the Council’s terms of reference can be found at <http://www.nwmo.ca/councilofelders>.





As of December 2013, Braveheart Oil and Gas Ltd. was attempting to sell its ninety percent working interest in these properties, acknowledging that the buyer must also make an equivalent ratio offer of the other ten percent to Flying Energy Limited Partnership (“Oil and Gas Divestitures of CB Securities Inc.” 2014).

In October 2013, Flying Dust First Nation’s land management and land code came into effect, under the 2012 amended<sup>102</sup> *First Nations Land Management Act* (FNLN); AANDC explains how this Act allows First Nations, like Flying Dust, to opt out of thirty-four sections of the *Indian Act* “related to land, resources and environmental management and removes Ministerial oversight and approval relating to the development and use of their land. FNLN unlocks two key elements (land management, and First Nation law making) that improve First Nation land management” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). Under the government’s titled “FNLN Regime,” the benefits are said to include First Nations directly collecting land revenues (therefore not under federal trust), the ability to create laws, lands continue to be “reserved for Indians” under section 91.24 of the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1867*, one-third of the *Indian Act* no longer applies to the First Nation, and the “recognition of the inherent right to govern reserve lands and resources” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). Economic development is the key component in consideration for entry into the FNLN Regime (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

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<sup>102</sup> From AANDC: “Amendments received Royal Assent on June 29, 2012, as part of the legislation to implement the Economic Action Plan 2012 and the Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity Act” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013).

Development Canada 2014a, 3). One of the initial steps (after a band council resolution) is for interested First Nations to complete an in-depth questionnaire.

An important section of this questionnaire relates to economic development:

## Part 2: Pursuing Economic Development Opportunities

The potential for short-term and long-term economic development opportunities arising out of the Framework Agreement and the First Nation's land code are well documented on the LAB's website. The FNLM Regime can unlock economic development in a way that is not possible (or only possible after delays) under the *Indian Act*. A First Nation's detailed plan to pursue economic development opportunities is a factor considered in the entry process to the FNLM Regime.

Your answers to the questions below will help AANDC to better understand your economic development plans, both short-term and long-term. You are encouraged to attach any documents which will assist AANDC in assessing your economic development opportunities.

1. Has your community previously completed a land use plan or resource plan?
  - If yes, please describe how your community has progressed in implementing your plan.
2. Is your community engaged with any industry partners?
  - If yes, please describe the project(s) and expected outcomes.
3. Please list and describe any current and future economic development activities (for example construction, natural resources, casino, tourism, etc) that are being pursued on reserve.
4. Does your community currently have an economic development officer?
5. Does your community currently have in place an economic development organization (for example an economic development corporation and/or a community cooperative)

- If yes, please describe your community's current development strategy. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2014a)

An assessment process then begins where First Nations are ranked into one of five tiers by officers at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regional offices, at which time departmental recommendations are then given to the Minister for review (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013). The applications are reviewed based on neoliberal criteria developed by the government:

Finally, measurable factors that have been identified and are used to determine the economic capacity of a First Nation include: A track record of successful economic development projects implemented; a track record of success in negotiations with industry partners leading to joint ventures; having skilled human resources available to support economic development activities; having an economic development organization in place (e.g., economic development corporation with a separate Board of Directors); and access to capital, for example land and resources or cash equity that can be developed or leveraged to create further economic benefits. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013)

The message is clear, only First Nations actively participating in and succeeding at neoliberal economic development can achieve “independence” from the thirty-four sections of the *Indian Act* (and I argue, trading it for being governed by the rationalities of the market). In this process, community and business plans are seen as valuable documents to assess good governance. In 2007, Flying Dust and the community planning department at Dalhousie University completed the Flying Dust First Nation Community Plan, also named “Kopahawakenum Mamawīcihitōwin.” ᐃᐃᐃᐃ ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ (mamawīcihitōwin) means to all help together. Their vision statement is “mamawīcihitōwin ekwa kēhtēyak okiskinohamakēwin

kakaskihtānanaw kasokīsihtamasōwak miyomacihowin ēkwa wīcīsowin iyinito ayisīniwiyak [Through teamwork and the teachings of our Elders, we will build a strong, healthy and self-sufficient Nation]” (Flying Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 51). In the community plan, they explain a root cause related to negative health and community wellness is loss of traditional hunting and gathering methods (Flying Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 44).

I outline three interesting elements to this plan. One of the notable community-building initiatives is the building of a community dining hall to enable the whole community to come together for meals and gatherings as well as “hands-on learning about food preparation, growing food, cooking and planning events for large groups”; “Rely on more local food sources (less need for imported foods)”; and “Sell local produce in exchange market” (Flying Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 67). Another initiative is to create an outdoor classroom for informal learning accessible to all, which could focus on hunting and trapping and “achieving balance” (Flying Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 70). One project that is already completed is an Environmental Research Pavilion to provide environmental monitoring, four seasons of activities, education, and monitoring of the impact of FDFN’s activities on the environment (Flying Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 74). Another objective in their plan is to develop an exchange market to “exchange goods, services and ideas, and barter and share with other members ... and showcase their [members] crafts, talents, services and ideas,” including a revitalized market garden (Flying

Dust First Nation and Dalhousie University 2007, 78). Flying Dust’s negotiations and TLE settlement have provided new monies and resources that enable them to be players in the neoliberal market economy. This has also opened the door for the community to meet the economic development guidelines underpinning the “FNLM Regime.”<sup>103</sup>

#### Renewed Relations with the Land: Co-operative Gardening

Citizens of Flying Dust have said that growing their own food is a historic practice. In 2009, a group decided to bring back some of their community’s gardening and harvesting history more formally. Their ideas originated from a need and desire to create readily available healthy foods for their fellow citizens; this is a move towards Indigenous food sovereignty. At the First Indigenous Peoples’ Global Consultation on the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty in Guatemala (2002), food sovereignty was defined as “the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own cultures ... and [this] is considered to be a precondition for Food Security” (Declaration of Atitlan in Honor the Earth, 19). Susan Merasty, community member and comanager of “Flying Dust Cree Worker Co-operative Ltd. (FDC8WC)” explains how “community Elders had maintained small gardens in the past, but the practice had dropped off and had even been discouraged by the federal government’s Indian Affairs agents” (Levy 2011). In her book *Lost Harvests*, Sarah Carter (1993)

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<sup>103</sup> This is how AANDC’s website writes it, with the word *regime* capitalized.

meticulously documents how during the time of numbered treaties, Plains Indigenous peoples had an early and sustained interest in agriculture; it was Canadian government policies that continually attempted to thwart this. Also significant is how, before European contact, seventy-five percent of Indigenous peoples' (including the Cree) food in North America came from agricultural production (Carter 1993, 37). Cree agriculture practices to assist in increased food sovereignty are acts of self-determination. Indigenous food sovereignty maintains and restores relationships between Cree people and the land as well as provides ways to positively connect to the different aspects of Cree personhood (spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally) and Cree peoplehood (territory, ceremonial cycle, language, and living histories). In a guidebook by the Indigenous organization, Honor the Earth, the authors write: "The recovery of the people is tied to the recovery of food, since food itself is medicine, not only for the body, but for the soul, and for the spiritual connection to history, ancestors and the land" (22).

Leading up to and during the negotiations of Treaty Six, agriculture was a main issue, for both the settler representatives and for the Plains Indigenous peoples. Elders from Treaty Six explain how "The Commissioner said that he came not to take land." Another Elder said, "The settlers would share the land and could use it to the depth of a plough—about one foot. The British wanted top soil for agriculture, grass for animal fodder and some trees to build houses and fences" (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 1997, 36). On August 18, 1876, the official proceedings for negotiating Treaty Six began. The initial terms of the

Treaty were similar to those offered in Treaty Four (Talbot 2009, 97). Once the initial terms were presented, Mistawasis, as one of the Head Chiefs, responded by shaking Morris' hand and explaining that their people would then go into council to discuss amongst themselves. On August 23, the Indigenous peoples' counter offer was presented. This included an ox and cow for each family, "Four hoes, two spades, two scythes and a whetstone for each family. Two axes, two hay forks, two reaping hooks, one plough and one harrow for every three families. To each Chief one chest of tools as proposed. Seed of every kind in full to every one actually cultivating the soil. To make some provision for the poor, unfortunate, blind and lame ... [and] all agricultural implements to be supplied in proportion" (Morris 1880, chap. 9). These negotiations document how important agriculture was to the Cree people. The final agreement contained new concessions over previous treaties including provisions for agriculture, a medicine chest, and assistance during famine (Hildebrandt 2008, 16). For the Cree, agriculture is an important part of Treaty Six, despite the fact that the settler government has not honoured its commitments.



**Figure 20: Flying Dust Co-operative Garden.**

Flying Dust began their community-gardening initiative in 2009 with two acres. In 2013, they cultivated twenty-eight acres. That summer (2013), I had the opportunity to spend time with and interview one of the garden's founders. These are Susan Merasty's words:

I grew up here on Flying Dust ... I left my reserve for, I think 15 years, but regardless of where I have lived or where I've gone I've always been gardening. Even in the cities, whether it is on my balcony in boxes or whatever, I've always managed to grow food for my family. The biggest thing for me, I guess, is teaching what my Elders taught to us. I'm a big gatherer; I gather berries, roots, herbs, and medicines; this was all taught to me by three grandmothers in my life. My grandfather took me on his trap line and taught me how to trap, how to skin, these are things that I want to pass on to my immediate family and anybody that will listen. A lot of times we are taught that this is how we pass on our knowledge to teach others. (Merasty, Cardinal, and Sawatsky 2013)

Susan then delves into the realization of the impacts of unhealthy food, which can be seen as part of the physical implication of colonial dissonance. She continues:

I came back to my reserve because I was diagnosed with chronic illnesses, I was in the first stages of diabetes, so I came home, and I started gardening with the garden group here. We had always had community gardens here before, they weren't really successful because people didn't really give it their all. So when Gladys and I and our group came on the scene we decided that our community really needed it, a better way of sustaining ourselves, another choice of food other than what you find in the stores because of all the GMO products. Prepared foods, that weren't available for us before, are not as healthy as we think they should be. It is causing a lot of illnesses in our families. So when I came home I changed my diet, I was a borderline diabetic, now I don't have diabetes. It is just a matter of changing my diet and my lifestyle. I exercise now on a regular basis, I used to be really obese and overweight, over 200 pounds. Now I sustain my weight at an even level so for me it has been a healing journey. I continue to go further into healing: spiritually, emotionally, health wise and then to pass this on to my community—to share all of that with them. (Merasty, Cardinal, and Sawatsky 2013)

She then links her response (an act of resistance against colonial dissonance) to a renewed relationship with the land and how this correlates to her physical health and the health of the land. She also discusses ceremonial practices around relationships with the land:

With our garden practices and beliefs we try to take care of Mother Earth first and foremost. We do a lot of our gardening in a traditional sense, where we are mounding things, planting in mounds or in raised rows or in beds. We're doing a lot of experimental things with our garden area, we've tried different seeds, planting at different times of the season, we are trying to figure out what works best for our area and then stick to those veggies that were successful. From our teachings we try to train our people. We do see consequences when we don't follow the teachings of our people, like offering tobacco when you are harvesting a medicine. A lot of times it comes back to bite you in the butt. I am really strict when I am teaching it and gathering, I make sure I say the right prayers for what was taught to me and given to me by my Elders. I make sure I'm doing it correctly out there when I'm gathering and passing on what I've gathered. I do not sell anything; I trade. I won't sell a braid of Sweet Grass to you







In chapters four and five, I explored Cree historic and contemporary trading practices, this can include trade in items, songs, ceremonies, and information.

Gladys talked to me about trading knowledge related to Indigenous gardening:

Also, I just recently went on a trip to Manitoba, with several people from the garden, the group; it was a very eye-opening experience for me. The way they live they are really down to earth, and being able to go there and trade knowledge, I guess in a way, in a sense. It was an Indigenous food gathering mission, me and seven other people travelled over there last week for four days. It was a two-day gathering but it took about twelve hours to travel there, it was quite the drive. We met other people that are going through the same struggles as us, promoting community gardens like this, having to promote healthy lifestyle because our First Nations people are so susceptible to diabetes and other things, like obesity, and other health problems like heart disease. It was a really nice experience to go over there and learn how they live and how similar they are in a lot of ways. It was a very good experience. There was one lady there, we usually started our day with a group discussion, we sat in a circle and the people from the different communities, First Nations talked, and they talked about what they are doing in their communities. There is this particular lady, her name is Audrey, she was very knowledgeable, and she grows her own herbs, vegetables. She is pretty much self-sufficient in her own way and she did some research on some seeds that were found and they were 6,000 years old. It goes to show that gardening happened years and years and years ago. (Merasty, Cardinal, and Sawatzky 2013)

In Flying Dust's community garden, they do not see their gardening produce (including harvesting berries) as brought in from the non-Native community, but as a productive way of bringing something that has a historical basis in their community back through thoughtful adaptation. The five founding directors of the project developed relationships with those in their community and also with others to make this initiative a reality—establishing relationships with both Cree and non-Cree people. For example, they brought Len Sawatzsky in to co-manage and to teach a Green certificate program in partnership with North West Regional College (Levy 2011). Len explained to me how they are using organic practices

and how this is Indigenous. He says: “I’ve said to some people organic may be a nice progressive left-leaning word but you know when they ask me how is this Indigenous? Well, for one thing it is organic. I tie that more to Indigenous ways of living and growing than I do to some trendy movement called organic. It is Indigenous” (Merasty, Cardinal, and Sawatsky 2013). Although their produce meets the outlined requirements, it does not officially have organic status through official organic certification due to the overly stringent process.<sup>104</sup> There are critiques regarding the organic food movement as embedded in neoliberalism (Ventura 2012, 137–140). Specifically, authors write about the shift from organic farming practices as part of a social movement originally focussed on taking away control from agro-food corporations to move it to “small-scale food production, community engagement, and ecological responsibility” (Johnston et al 2009, 510), to the “corporatization of organics”—with large factory farms supplying distant markets, while marketing the products based on the movement’s original ideals (Johnston et al 2009). Within this new corporate organics model, corporate power continues to marginalize communities, favour elite social classes that can afford the high-priced organic food market (Johnston et al 2009), and potentially still disposes peoples and lands. The corporate organic model is not Indigenous food sovereignty where Indigenous peoples have access and availability to nutritional goods which are “ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate”

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<sup>104</sup> Johnston et al. writes how “Organic certification institutionalized what was originally intended, for many participants, to be an anti-institutional movement” (2009, 513).

(FNDI 2013, 6). Flying Dust's community garden is not based on a neoliberal corporate governance model.

Flying Dust's cooperative gardening is primarily conceived around subsistence food practices, and secondarily around selling the excess. There are also many ways that the gardeners are using specific Cree teachings in their practice. Below is an excerpt from a conversation between Len, Susan, and me about Cree gardening practice.

Len: Well, we heard some stories a few years ago from an elder and he heard it from his grandfather. This guy is in his 70s. They [community members] actually planted in mounds [historically]. He told a funny story about it as well. These white people would come to these villages and already a mile away they would start holding their nose, [like] "what do these Indians think?" "This is awful." They come close to the village and they have to go there because of making treaties or trade or whatever. It was them [the settlers] trying to get their land from them in some way, form or another.

Upon further investigation, they found out that their fish, their leftovers, anything that they didn't use from the fish, they put in their pile, covered it with earth and then in the spring, they put seeds in there. They composted. And they put the seeds in there and that stuff of course would rot and eat up and even in the unfriendly winters and everything; they could grow vegetables here. And so they would find out what was compatible with each other through thousands of years, of course.

So what they did is they grew corn, of course the corn is Indigenous to here [Turtle Island]. And then they would take the vine type beans, the pole beans, and the beans would grow off the corn stalk, and they needed protection around these sites so they grew squash. And the squash provided shade and kept things moist and reduced the weeds. (Len)

Shalene: I heard that gardening in mounds helps to reduce weeds.

Len: There were all compatible kinds of stuff and now people write books about these vegetables as compatible. What is this knowledge again that was here before white people came? So we tried mounds this year and



Her kohkom also demonstrated a detailed method to keep track of her own observations.

In chapter six, one of the norms discussed is ᐃᑭᑎᐱᑦᑦ (emekinawet; gift-giving). This practice is intimately connected to establishing, maintaining, and restoring relationships. Different thoughtful examples of this practice are demonstrated in the community garden project. For example, Susan explained how important it is to follow protocol when harvesting and gift specific songs and tobacco to different nonhuman beings (for example, the plants). Len also told me how they have giveaways, for example to the Elders in the community (Merasty, Cardinal, and Sawatsky 2013). This practice of gifting, and providing for the Elders is also found in numerous historical accounts, and can be seen as an important aspect of revitalizing the norms related to ᐃᑭᑎᐱᑦᑦ ᐃᑭᑎᐱᑦᑦ (mâmawi-h-itêyiltamowin; thinking about all). Ways in which the collective needs to be considered can come in the form of obligations: “Now, not only does the garden provide free vegetables to people in the Flying Dust First Nation, but there is enough surplus to sell” (Levy 2011). Susan told me how, during their first year, “we just fed our people basically”:

We did make some money in sales but our goal was to feed our people back here. And that’s exactly what we did. And then we’ve continued to feed them every year since. So at the end of October or somewhere in October, we’ll have a great big harvest fall that we try to make it an annual thing now. (Susan)

Even though the gardening project is also part of the market economy, this aspect is not prioritized. The harvest giveaways are a practice that used to regularly

happen in Flying Dust and now are being renewed—the principle of  $\Delta\tau\rho\alpha\nu\prime$  (emekinawet). She says,

I remember going to gatherings like that with my elder son. They put all their garden stuff together and what they had extra they gave away to other families that didn't have a garden for the season. I don't know if you remember that [to Gladys]. They used to gather a chair and dance after at night. We used to have a lot of fun [laughter]. We need to bring that back to our communities, the sharing and the giving and the caring. We seemed to have lost it here. It's a lot of work to bring it back but we're getting there. (Susan)

Susan acknowledges the loss of community values and principles. This can be seen as a result of the dual logics of settler-colonialism—bureaucratic control and economic exploitation. Control can be seen in terms of forced systems of governance through the *Indian Act* and residential schools, for example, and economic exploitation through the numerous impacts to traditional and reserve lands. Insidiously through neoliberal governmentality, policies such as the FNLM Regime, TLEs, and self-government negotiations can at first appear to enable “freedom” from the first settler-colonial logic and as righting past injustices. However, upon further examination these practices uphold and increase settler-colonialism by further embedding Indigenous peoples into the second colonial logic, economic exploitation. The insidious part is that, through neoliberal governing policy and practices, Indigenous peoples begin to exploit their own lands, changing their relationships to living *off* the land. These ruptured relationships also create conflicts within communities, especially with those who are attempting to live *with* the land.

These exploitive practices also negatively affect relationships with nonhuman beings that live on the land and in the water. Together, these practices create colonial dissonance for Cree people. There are also examples, such as the community-gardening project, of people renewing relationships *with* the land and how this can also be constitutive and can challenge the impacts of market citizenship. These daily acts of resistance are not total, but neither is neoliberal governmentality. Glen Coulthard provides an analysis of political-economic alternatives and the three ways that these practices can disrupt capital accumulation on Indigenous lands:

First, through mentorship and education these economies reconnect Indigenous people to land-based practices and forms of knowledge that emphasize radical sustainability. This form of grounded normativity is antithetical to capitalist accumulation. Second, these economic practices offer a means of subsistence that over time can help break our dependence on the capitalist market by cultivating self-sufficiency through the localized and sustainable production of core foods and life materials that we distribute and consume within our own communities on a regular basis. Third, through the application of Indigenous governance principles to non-traditional economic activities we open up a way of engaging in contemporary economic ventures in an Indigenous way that is better suited to foster sustainable economic decision-making, an equitable distribution of resources within and between Indigenous communities, Native women's political and economic emancipation, and empowerment for Indigenous citizens and workers who may or must pursue livelihoods in sectors of the economy outside of the bush. (2014b, 172)

Coulthard's analysis of "resurgent Indigenous economies" (2014b, 172) can be readily applied to Flying Dust's community gardening and harvesting practices. The gardeners and harvesters demonstrated the importance of education and mentorship during the interviews I completed. The produce and harvest provides alternative food sources for community members involved, as well as other

community members who are gifted with the food. The co-operative model they work under also applies a sustainable and equitable decision-making process. Cree women have been leaders and instigators in this process. The example of Flying Dust's community garden draws on Cree normative principles and practices, but also reinterprets them in original ways. It is too early to tell the long-term impact of these practices of resistance and renewal.

In chapter six, I situate the seven normative principles around the importance of deliberative processes, explaining this as the governance of economic relations. I see deliberation as a cyclical process where Cree normative principles are reasoned through, debated, and lived out. In the case of Meadow Lake Tribal Council, there are the competing interests at play that I argue are in part a consequence of the seemingly insurmountable pressures from neoliberal governmentality. However, Cree intellectual resources can be of assistance. Drawing on the work of the Cree Legal Traditions' "Accessing Justice and Reconciliation Project" (Friedland 2013), there are Cree legal rights that people can expect from others: substantive rights, (1) "the right to protection/safety" and (2) "the right to be helped when incapable/vulnerable" (Friedland 2013, 43). and procedural rights, (1) "the right to have warning signals corroborated by observation or evidence before action is taken", (2) "the right to be heard", and (3) "the right for decisions to be made through open collective deliberation guided by appropriate consultation before action is taken" (Friedland 2013, 43). There are also underlying principles to reason through Cree legal processes, these are "fluid and contextualized responsiveness," "acknowledging and valuing relationships",

and “reciprocity and interdependence” (Friedland 2013, 48). Within the tensions resulting from colonial dissonance, it is vital for Cree peoples to find a way through the seemingly dichotomist positions. This requires continual dialogue and collective reflexivity of both the internal and external power dynamics at play.

From the beginning of chapter seven, Gordon Tootoosis’s 1971 concerns for the Indigenous peoples of the Meadow Lake area ring in my mind, “what’s going to happen to them if their livelihood of trapping or fishing is destroyed [?] Although it might not seem too much of a livelihood to other people, but this is all they have that they can still call their own” (Saskatchewan Indian Newspaper 1971). In 2014, unable to live a complete livelihood from trapping or fishing healthy and abundant animals, the situation is more complex than simply being able to provide a general critique of the MLTC and their decisions to engage in neoliberal economic development—embedding themselves in local, national, and global systems of neoliberal governance. The loss and changing relationship with the land and the nonhuman beings on the land is yet another example of the impacts of settler-colonialism and economic exploitation, a new face to an old system, with the intent to erase Indigenous peoples from the land. When the subsistence economy is destroyed, what options are left for Indigenous peoples? When Indigenous peoples are directly or indirectly pressured to change their relationship with the land and other nonhuman beings, this is another example of settler-induced colonial dissonance. Within the colonial dissonance are also practices of resistance. This chapter provides a contemporary example of a community

attempting to “decolonize their diet” (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 613) through practices that assist in the restoration of Indigenous food sovereignty.



σ^b\` (niskak; geese) in a collective, foraging for food near the shoreline. I watched as they swam in formation close to shore and waddled on land on the small sandy beach and into the grass. While they were in the water, I remembered how polluted this lake is. There has been a blue-green algae warning for the last many years and for the last three years there has been a prohibition against humans or pets going into the water.<sup>105</sup> Scientist Dr. David Schindler explains how blue-green algae results from an increase in phosphorous (Schindler et al. 2008). From human action, lakes “become polluted with nutrients from sewage and septic fields and runoff from agricultural fields, manicured lawns and livestock operations” (Weatherley 2014). Although these nonhuman beings (ex. σ^b\`) continue to live out their responsibilities, human actions are drastically infringing on their well-being.

It is important to understand this condition as yet another impact of settler-colonial economic exploitation impacting Indigenous territory. We also have agency and responsibilities. The tensions from colonial dissonance ignite creative resistance; in our oral stories we unearth the Cree principles and practices to live out <·"j"⊃Δ·> (wahkohtowin). We also continue to survive as τ"Δ><·\`

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<sup>105</sup> Advisory [capitalization in original]: “DO NOT DRINK WATER directly from, or allow your pets to drink water directly from, this lake. Boiling this contaminated lake water will not remove toxins. Provide an alternative source of drinking water for pets and livestock. DO NOT SWIM OR WADE or allow your pets to swim or wade in this lake. AVOID CONTACT with blue-green algae along the shoreline. DO NOT feed whole fish or fish trimmings from this lake to your pets. People may wish to limit their own consumption of whole fish and fish trimmings from this lake, as it is known that fish may store toxins in their liver... Blue-green algae can produce a toxin (poison) that can cause serious illness to animals or humans who drink or have skin contact with water containing this toxin” (Alberta Health Services 2014).



capitalism and neoliberalism from Indigenous perspectives. My work goes beyond critique and draws on Cree intellectual resources to provide a more situated understanding of both the critique and intellectual norms, as well as practical practices embedded within our epistemologies that shed new light on economic relationships (often in resistance to neoliberal economies). Non-Indigenous societies (or at least scholars) are increasingly recognizing the pitfalls and gaps of neoliberalism (Brodie 2002; Harvey 2005; Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2006). Indigenous societies who continue to draw on place-based knowledges situated within the historical and continuous relationships in their territories provide alternatives.

One of the exciting aspects of this scholarship is the introduction of a new decolonization methodology, a ᑭᐱᑭᐱᑭ Nehiyawak Peoplehood Method. Specifically, this research process is centered on Cree knowledge that encompasses the interlocking components in peoplehood: language, territory, ceremonial cycle, and living history. Also, peoplehood is discussed in the literature as an Indigenous theoretical paradigm (as utilized in chapter four); the uniqueness is applying the four components as a decolonizing methodology (as in chapter two). Importantly, this methodology can be reframed and centered on other Indigenous knowledges.

With settler-colonialism and economic exploitation, most scholars and the general populace tend to see only the tip of the iceberg, Indigenous economic relationships that fall within the neoliberal lens. Those Indigenous practices that

fall principally outside of capitalism are seen as noneconomic, such as ceremonial practices fitting only within the spiritual realm. Governance and economic relationships are embedded in the ceremonial cycle.<sup>107</sup> Settler-colonialism makes silos of these different practices; by removing the blinders to recognize Cree economic relationships in everyday practices and in the sublime practices, we witness acts of resistance as strong antidotes to colonial dissonance. For example, giveaways can be seen as a Cree institution with spiritual, social, and economic functions. This Cree institution provides key insights into the collective worldview and a foundation for understanding Cree economic principles and practices.

I look at governance of the Plains Cree based on historic systems that predate the intrusion of “freeze-dried” (Cruikshank 1994, 405) reserve-system governance. Exploring governance in this way creates a new narrative to think through self-determination, governing processes, and social organization. Colonialism not only affects the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional aspects of Cree people and Indigenous peoples. It ruptures all relationships on the territory—among non-Cree people, non-human beings, and spirit beings. I argue that these ruptured relationships create colonial dissonance that affects all the relationships displayed in Figure 17 (chapter five). The seven social, cultural, and political practices I

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<sup>107</sup> Connie told me “I didn’t realize how many different ceremonies there are, I used to go to sweats, and you always knew about the sun dance, it was always there, but the ghost dance, the tea dance, the horse dance—the connectedness to each of those: [for example] the night lodges, each one has a role in the whole” (Connie 2013).

introduce in chapter six considered together are historical and contemporary acts of resistance.

While Indigenous community-gardening projects described in chapter seven may or may not not provide complete alternatives to neoliberalism, this dissertation provides a variety of examples of Cree resistance. In chapter five I explained how Cree economic relationships based on the concept of *wahkohtowin* (ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ) surround distinct economic practices whether a person or people are (1) establishing, (2) maintaining, (3) restoring, or (4) interacting in a conflicting relationship. These practices are not just relations with Cree people, but a myriad of relations between Cree people, non-Cree people, spirit beings, and non-human beings. For example, the ceremonial cycle, discussed as an integral part of peoplehood in chapters five and six, can be seen as both instances of Cree practices and acts of resistance to neoliberal governance. The redistribution of goods that occurs in the *Mâhtâhito* (ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ) and giveaway ceremonies and the continuity of different ceremonies through each season are also ways to maintain relationships in families, in community, with external guests, and with nonhuman beings, including relations with land and territory. Each seasonal practice reasserts *Nehiyawak* (ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ) (Nehiyawak; Cree people) on their territory through practices of Cree governance that are apparent in the ceremonial cycles. These practices predate capitalism. Although material goods might be involved (which could have been purchased), the way they are (re)distributed and the logics behind them are primarily nonneoliberal and noncapitalist. These practices are not privileging the





include those with family and community and they also include relations with non-Cree people, nonhuman beings, and spirit beings. As a people—together—we have resilience. It is a journey, not simply a destination. ᐱᑕᑕᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ (Kitatamihin).  
ᑦᑦᑦᑦ (Ekosi).

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