

PERSPECTIVES OF THE ANISHINAABE/OJIBWE ELDERS ON LIFE-LONG LEARNING

by

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SPECIALIZATION

Department of Educational Policy Studies

University of Alberta

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Abstract

The overall aim of this qualitative study was to explore the process of lifelong learning. The purpose was to understand how the perspectives might be used to effectively support Aboriginal adult learners in their self-directed learning. Care was taken to ensure that this research held the deepest respect for Indigenous ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological approaches. Protocols set by the University of Alberta, Research Ethics Board, and Anishinaabe knowledge seeking practices was carefully followed. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select four First Nations communities that is situated on the Northern half of Treaty 3 territory and 15 Anishinaabe Elders. The interview guide served as a helpful method for evoking stories related to the lifelong learning experiences of the research participants. Grounded theory methods of focused coding, word-by-word, and line-by-line analysis of the data brought forth the five emergent themes of observational learning, experiential learning, disrupted bicultural learning, transformational bicultural learning, and contemporary bicultural learning. Second visits with each of the research participants afforded the opportunity for them to verify the final interpretational analysis of their lifelong learning experiences.

Observational and experiential learning was an ongoing teaching and learning process. Children were privileged to observe what the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (language) was all about through their daily interactions with those around them. Part of those *observations* had to do with the way in which the spiritual foundations embedded in the seven grandfather teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth were carried out. As children matured, they learned how to carry out the land-based activities that

would ensure continued survival of their families and neighbors. It was about the process of *doing*.

The Anishinaabeg had experienced disrupted bicultural learning during colonization because of the challenges they faced of having to learn two different cultures: European-based and traditional Indigenous. With Aboriginal education being a long-standing historical issue of failed attempts, the government and church officials created Indian residential schools for the purpose of forcing First Nations people to abandon their Indigenous knowledge and languages. Children were housed in residences far from home during the school year. Anishinaabancesug (Ojibwe children) were not privileged to partake in the ongoing traditional Indigenous education phase of their development. Because of the abuse that they had gone through in European-based schools, their education was compromised there as well.

With everything that the Elders went through during their childhoods, they still experienced a transformational bicultural learning process in the later years. To understand what their experiences were, and problems encountered, the stories were sifted through Knowles (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions of (a) learner's need to know, (b) learner's self-concept, (c) prior experience of the learner, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation. The findings show that the research participants went on to post-secondary studies and secured long-term careers in a number of fields while keeping their cultural identities, values, traditions, practices and Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) alive despite the cultural genocide practices that they had faced.

Supporting the contemporary bicultural learning of Aboriginal adult learners is tantamount to increasing post-secondary graduation rates, and participation in the employment sector. The recommendation was to help create psychologically healthy and supportive

European-style learning environments that are kinder, gentler, accepting, and inclusive. Another suggestion was to draw on the wisdom of Anishinaabe Elders as resource persons, and then have them teach traditional knowledge in ceremonial teaching lodges in outdoor nature environments.

Crafting the final research paper followed the completion of data analysis and verified interpretations of the Elders. The four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability helped ensure trustworthiness or goodness of this qualitative research study. Delimitations narrowed the focus of the study to four First Nations communities and the stories of 15 Anishinaabe Elders. Limitations of the research design include, the tendency of scoffers to view qualitative research as subjective and biased, limited number of respondents, financial constraints, geographical distance, interpretational problems in data analysis processes, and possible inaccurate representational conceptualizations in the writing.

Keywords: Life-long learning, adult education, and self-directed learning.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Valerie Marie Fisher. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Board, Project Name “PERSPECTIVES OF THE ANISHINAABE/OJIBWE ELDERS ON LIFE-LONG LEARNING,” No. Pro00055378, APRIL 15, 2015.

Dedication

My husband, J. Alfred for his unconditional love and unfailing support

My children, Darold (Jaime), Mel (Lorraine), Chris

My grandchildren, Jayden, Quintin, Brady, Casey, Siarraah, Bryhson, Tayah

My siblings, Lester, Leslie, Patrick, Myrna Jane, Phyllis, Sharon (Rick)

My deepest gratitude to the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who welcomed me in their homes and

shared their lifelong learning experiences in support of my research

Chi Miigwech (big thank you) for your contributions and your faith in me

Rest in peace, Betty, Dakota, Owen

In memory of my parents, Jean and Norman (Ke Gwechi Gabow), my eldest sibling baby

sister, Norman Jr., Margaret Judith, Robert, my daughter Anna Marie

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following research committee members for their thought-provoking feedback.

Dr. Jose da Costa

Dr. Florence A. Glanfield

Dr. Heather Kanuka

Dr. Andre Grace

Dr. Sharla Peltier

Dr. Frank Deer

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Glossary of Terms

- Aboriginal people:** This means “the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America – where the Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people – Indian, Metis, and Inuit – each with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs” (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 2013, para. 2).
- Andragogy:** A term that was “first employed by a German school teacher, Alexander Knapp, in 1833 and” is “derived from the Greek word for man” (Jarvis, 2002, p. 11). In the later years, “Edward Lindeman was the first American theorist to use the term, in 1927” (p. 11). Debates followed thereafter “as to whether adults learn differently than children, and whether it differs from pedagogy” (p. 11). Jarvis (2002) said that Malcolm Knowles who worked extensively in the field of adult education in the United States “defined” the term “as the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 11). Jarvis (2002) added further that Knowles “originally maintained that it was a process different from pedagogy” (p. 11).
- Community-based learning:** Here altruistic endeavors push organizers to focus “on social action and change for the better of some part of the community” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 32). Examples might include “the worldwide human rights movement, community-based actions exposing hazardous waste dumps, and local attempts to end discriminatory practices based on race, class, gender, sexual orientations and so on” (p. 32). Improving the quality of life for community members is the aim of such activities.

Formal education: Before industrial societies began, ‘the rate of change was such that what a person needed to know to function as an adult could be learned in childhood’ (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 5). For example, “contrast the young male apprentice of colonial times learning to be a blacksmith with today’s middle-aged woman learning a new software program...” (p. 5) or the length of time it takes nowadays “to become a medical doctor” compared to “less than a high school diploma” (p. 5) back then. Nowadays, the expectation is that children engage in “structured, chronological ordered education provided in primary and secondary schools, in universities and specialized courses of full-time technical and higher education” (Titmus, 1989, p. 547). Youth must “keep filling up their sack” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 5) or strive to build marketable skills in a competitive labour market.

Informal education: Though “schools” play “a vital” role in “the learning process” (Cohen, 1975, p. 83) most individuals will participate in a “lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences, educative influences and resources in his/her environment” – from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the market place, the library and mass media” (Titmus, 1989, p. 547). For example, an individual who shows “a passion for model railroading” would spend a considerable amount of time learning everything there is learn about their “hobby” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 36). This would be classified as an “independent pursuit of learning in natural settings, with or

without the support of institutional resources” which is a process that is “very common in adult life” (p. 37). Adults for some reason fail to “recognize” their informal learning as “learning” (p. 35).

Lifelong education: This was considered a lifelong learning process which included all aspects of learning but that perspective has since changed as “education and learning are not synonymous” (Cohen, 1975, p. 83). Lifelong education “refers to educational influences on the person over the entire life span – during childhood and youth, as well as the adult years – and adult education refers only to the latter” (Selman, Selman, Cooke & Dampier, 1998, p. 21). It includes formal, informal, and nonformal education. However, “in practice no hard lines of demarcation exist between” the three, even though “many activities may be perceived as falling exclusively into one category alone, many share aspects of two or all of them” (Radcliff & Colletta, 1989, p. 60). In the final analysis, “there will always be overlaps among the three” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 29).

Lifelong learning: With the “scientific and technological” changes that were rapidly on the rise in the 1970s, there was the realization that “learning is a continuous, permanent lifelong pursuit” that should be extended and expanded in classrooms, places of employment, institutes, workshops, seminars, the media, early childhood or senior centers, community college programs and so on (Cohen, 1975, pp. 83-84). The recommendation at the time was to “break” free “of the traditional lines of learning and living” (p. 83). Human beings desire “variety” (p. 83) that includes “a vertical (lifelong)

process of individual learning and development across the entire lifespan, from cradle to grave, and a horizontal (life wide) perspective” (Kheng Ng, 2008, p. 247). Horizontal “refers to the need to foster education in a plethora of settings” (English, 2008, p. 374).

Non-formal education: Individuals may engage in organized “learning opportunities *outside* the formal educational system” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 30). Providers of such programs might be “museums, libraries, service clubs, religious and civic organizations” including the “mass media” (p. 30). Participation tends “to be short-term, voluntary, and have few if any prerequisites” (p. 30).

Self-directed learning: “The ability” of the individual “to be self-directed in one’s learning, that is, to be primarily responsible and in control of what, where and how one learns, is critical to survival and prosperity in the world of continuous personal, community, and societal changes” (Caffarella, 1993, p. 32).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The term “lifelong learning” is defined as “a continuous, permanent lifelong pursuit” (Cohen, 1975, pp. 83-84). As a woman of Anishinaabe¹ descent, I have often pondered what this means given what has been happening in the lives of Indigenous² people. According to Wilson and MacDonald’s (2010) in the income gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada report, “Aboriginal peoples are among the poorest in Canada” (p. 6). Furthermore, “they experience higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of educational attainment than the rest of Canada” (p. 6). Also reported are the “higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, imprisonment and other social ills” (p. 6). This is similar to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2015) in relation to the social problems First Nations people face and the “calls to action” (p. 135).

I am an Indian residential school survivor. I personally experienced the social problems that Wilson and MacDonald (2010) and the TRC (2015) report such as poverty, homelessness, family breakdown, addictions and violence, lack of education, lack of employment, and depression. It was important for me to understand the underlying reasons I went through what I did. I conducted research to understand what the process of lifelong learning means.

Valerie’s Story³

To begin this research study, I share parts of my personal life story as a lifelong learner. Shedding light on the more painful experiences helps in the healing process of Aboriginal people

¹ The term “Anishinaabe” is singular meaning one Ojibwe person. The term “Anishinaabeg” is plural meaning more than one Ojibwe person.

² The terms Indigenous, Aboriginal, Indian, First Nations and Native will be used interchangeably.

³ My story is very graphic, and will stir very strong emotional responses, particularly from others who have also experienced Indian Residential schools and impact of the Sixties Scoop era.

(TRC, 2015) though it should be noted here that stories such as these are not meant to push a victim role mentality. The purpose is to offer stories of truth, hope and inspiration to those who desire to make a difference in the lives of First Nations people.

I have vivid childhood memories. Having been born and raised in Northwestern Ontario, on Treaty 3 territorial land, the forest served as my home for the first six years of early childhood. My Anishinaabe father worked in the area of Forest Fire Prevention during the summer months. Come winter we moved to the trap line and lived off the land. My Anishinaabe mother was an Indian residential school survivor. Being orphaned as an infant, she had gone through terrible abuses as a child and those experiences had a lasting impact on her psychological, emotional, and spiritual development. Full recovery was not possible for both my parents. The pain was simply too deep.

My mother was a natural born teacher who had never worked formally in the teaching profession. My father was a fluent Anishinaabe/Ojibwe language speaker, who had never learned English nor gone to school. She taught him advanced literacy and numeracy skills during the early years of their marriage. Her amazement at how quickly he learned the new concepts filled her with admiration.

My mother provided a variety of learning challenges that caught my attention when I was a very young child. One day, she stated to no one in particular that to avoid the waste of food, a good cook should be able to peel potatoes so thin that you could see your mother right through the peel. The implications of her statement intrigued me.

During indoor times when it rained outdoors, my mother taught me how to recite the alphabet and how to count numbers. She said those skills would be needed when it came time for me to be schooled. To demonstrate the mastery of this new learning, I painstakingly penned as

many letters and numbers on writing paper, and then asked her to mail the correspondence to my paternal aunt. Of course, she thought the letters were very cute. Her speedy responses always amazed me. Mom had to read all my incoming correspondence out loud to me as I was not yet able to decipher written text. Letter writing was magical. The idea of communicating with loved one's miles away always amazed me.

Water craft safety was another area of learning that my younger brother and I had to learn. Before we boarded the small canoe, our mother stressed the importance of wearing floating devices at all times while boating on the lake and striving always for balance in the middle of a water craft to prevent tipping and possible misfortune. Out of nervousness, I kept repeating the same instructions to him. Sensing his irritation with me I stopped and laughed for sounding like an old record that was stuck in a groove playing the same line. As we sailed along haphazardly, she called out to us on how to maneuver our paddles in the water to maximize speed and direction. I felt like an adult as we sailed across the water. After paddling a short distance, we turned and headed toward the dock. She instructed us again on how to get out of the canoe safely without falling between it and dock. As young children, we were not to canoe without the supervision of an adult was the warning that we heard loud and clear. I came to respect the power of water.

My parents and relatives had long serious discussions about our formal Western-based⁴ schooling. Their undertones were filled with despair. This was a very serious matter. I even remember standing on the street in a town one day when I was five years old. I was holding my mother's hand as we stared at a public elementary school. Non-Aboriginal children were playing outdoors during recess. They were very loud. She said "I will never send you there." I came to

⁴ The terms Euro-centric-based, Western and Western-based will be used interchangeably.

understand her reasoning later in life, and why she took me to the Indian Residential School when I was six years old. This was my first school experience. She left me there during the school year over a period of three years.

Being admitted to the Indian residential school was very traumatic. I was pushed and shoved here and there as they carried out their admittance procedures. Until then, I had never been treated with such disrespect. They forcibly cut my hair despite my loud objections. My clothes and homemade sandals were tossed in a garbage can. It seemed just yesterday I had watched my dad carefully craft them out of an old pair of white leather sandals that someone had thrown out. I felt very special when I knew that he was making them for me. Now the nuns viewed my treasures as garbage and I cried very loudly. Begging and pleading to go home did nothing to soften their hearts. Their cold icy stares and callous demeanors frightened me. There was no one in the school to comfort me. My voice became hoarse with all the screaming. I fainted and collapsed on the floor. I woke up on a bed in the dormitory.

Going into survival mode of sorts after the initial shock wore off is the only way to describe what I had to go through. Contending with the spoken and unspoken rules of conduct seemed wise given the abuse that I had experienced. Bending my will to theirs was not an easy task. I could no longer sleep when I was tired nor eat when I was hungry. The natural ebb and flow of my life was disrupted to accommodate what they wanted. I never got used to the clanging of the nun's ring on my bed post early in the morning when she wanted me to get up and prepare for the day. I was sickened with their religious programming. They bombarded us with endless catechism lessons that at the time made no sense to me. Film nights were very scary. We were forced to watch people burn in a sea of fire for their sins. I came to the conclusion that the god they were speaking of was very angry and vengeful. He was out to

punish me for being Indian. Oftentimes when we were to attend early morning mass, I fainted in the stairwell from all the stress and exhaustion. There was no one to attend to my psychological, emotional or medical needs. I longed for my parents. Crawling back to the dorm while fainting a few times had to be punishment for being Indian I reasoned. Submerging my identity, language, and culture temporarily knowing full that they frowned on Anishinaabe/Ojibwe identities seemed to be the best course of action at the time just to stay alive there. Forgetting that meant severe punishment or worse.

Our care givers were bullies who carried out their duties in brutal ways. Terror does not begin to describe what I felt. Becoming puppet-like with no opinions of my own was the rule. Silence was better. I came to understand that the more compliant and invisible one was the better. I held my voice lest I be slapped again but I paid a terrible price for doing so. I became confused, fearful and angry. The nightmares began. I felt betrayed by my parents for leaving me there. I sensed that something was terribly wrong yet I had no information in my thinking from which to reference.

This was a particularly traumatic time for me especially seeing my new-found friends being beaten for speaking our Anishinaabe/Ojibwe language or for daring to run away from the institution. A friend of mine had tried to escape but was eventually caught and returned to our school. Icy threads of terror ran through us when our caretaker nun screamed at my classmates and me to gather around and watch. My heart broke. The nun stripped the clothes off my friend from the waist down in front of us. The nun bent her over the table. The nun then beat my friend with a strap until she was bruised. Raging anger spent the nun turned and stared at us. Her eyes were unnaturally shiny and evil looking. I shivered in her presence. After she left the

room, we all gathered around my friend and tried to comfort her. We were defenseless children living in a very brutal and scary environment.

When the time came for my brother to attend the Indian residential school, I was filled with dread because of what I had already experienced. He was a year younger than me. A speech impediment made it difficult for him to communicate with anyone. He looked tiny and fragile in the train seat. We had to ride the train to get to the school from our home. Once we arrived at our destination, the Indian residential school nuns and priests separated us. My brother was taken to the little boys' section in the school. I went to the little girls' side of the building. This is how the nuns and priests identified where everyone was placed. Putting on a brave front became a practice of mine even though I was just as terrified. I never saw him throughout the school year because it was forbidden based on Indian residential school policy that children have no contact with family in the school.

I grieved over the loss of my family. I only saw them during Easter and Christmas breaks and then summer months when we were allowed to visit home for short periods of time. I was heartbroken when it came time for us to board the train back to school again after our visits home. My brother never recovered from his Indian Residential School experience. He died tragically years later as did another brother who had experienced abusive treatment in a non-Aboriginal adoptive home.

I drew on pleasant memories to carry me through the dark times in Residential School. I longed for the tranquility of the forest I had been privileged to experience as a child running free without a care in the world. I missed the blueberry pies and tangy lemonade that my mom used to make. I remembered the sunshine, the misty fog on the lake, orange sunrises, the feel of cool water as I swam in the lake, the sound of pine branches swishing in the wind, the aroma of pine

needles, pink and purple and red flowers, buzzing bees, bird tweets, the taste of sweet juicy berries and fresh water fish, sitting on sun heated rocks, watching sparkles ripple across waves on the lake, and thunder, lightning, and rain, earthy fragrances and stillness. I longed for those times in the forest when we moved deeper in the woods to live off the land during the winter. I enjoyed tobogganing down a snow-covered hill at high speeds with my brother. I barely caught my breath the temperature was so frigid. I remembered my brother's irritation with me when we were canoeing on the lake. I laughed. I thought of the white sandals and who made them. I reflected on my father's gentle coaxing when he convinced me to bring three baby partridges back to their natural environment. I had mistakenly thought that they had been abandoned by their mother and I brought them home. I missed the comfort of a mother. Memories kept me from going insane. I would have preferred to have lived with my family in the forest forever.

Three years later after I was officially discharged from the Residential School, my father let go of the work he had been doing for the Ministry of Natural Resources' Forest Fire Prevention program and went into the logging industry. My father moved our family (my mother, myself, and three younger brothers) to a one room shack in his First Nations community while he worked for weeks on end across the border, in the United States. Things had changed. My parents were different somehow. They were not the way I had remembered them. He was angrier. She was more depressed. My brother's speech problem was worse than ever. The stress of having gone through trauma myself caused me further issues. I became claustrophobic. I had nightmares. I felt a deep sense of grief and depression. Coming home from the Indian residential school should have been reason enough for celebration but no one seemed happy.

They transferred us to a Roman Catholic public school, off-reserve that was no different really than what we had experienced in the Residential School except that we were allowed to go

home every day. A different school made no difference in the way I saw Aboriginal children in the school were treated. Apathetic school teachers looked the other way while the white kids called us derogatory names. Being oblivious to the Aboriginal children who had no warm winter clothing, the teachers still chased us outdoors during recess on cold winter days. Our family lived in extreme poverty.

I remember the vulnerability of being a family at risk when I was nine years old. I intuited somehow that something was wrong. There was the lack of support whatsoever from our First Nations community even though we were registered on the membership rolls with the same rights as any other member. I disliked the condemnation we were subject to from our political leadership, administration, community members, social workers, law enforcement and even relatives for being a dysfunctional family mired in alcoholism, violence and poverty. Even the local welfare administration refused our family food vouchers. Favoritism and nepotism went unchecked in our community. Only the relatives and friends of those who held power received full community support. Once we even complained to the mainstream social services administrator in the local government office who oversaw First Nations social support programs. He convinced our First Nations welfare administrator to issue a food voucher to our family but that was the last time she did so. Other times she simply chased us off her doorstep yelling as she did so. In desperation, my family sent me and my brother to the local mainstream grocery stores to beg for food. I remember looks of disgust on the faces of owners and store clerks as they grudgingly packed a few staples in a bag for us. My brother even fainted in the store once while we were making our request. They fed him a candy bar to restore his energy. After he recovered, we took the small bag of food and walked two miles to our house.

I was treated differently than the white kids in the Roman Catholic public school I attended when I was nine years old. One day the teacher walked up to my desk during one of our class discussions when I was in grade four. He patted me on the head and told me to “shush” or keep quiet after I voiced the correct answers to his questions. I always did well academically but I got the impression then that I was not to succeed. Purposely failing spelling-bee contests when I was the third last one standing became a regular practice of mine after seeing the looks of hate on the faces of my white classmates and teachers. I had grown sick and tired of being treated differently, though, for some reason, I remembered what my mother had said about the potato peels. With renewed determination, I decided to learn anyway despite the push not to. Memorizing the multiplication table within a short period of time helped tremendously with my comprehension of complex math problems that the teacher presented on our chalk board. Homework was a breeze. Winning the best calligrapher contest one semester when I was in grade five made me extremely happy and proud but my work was never acknowledged publicly. Only the white kids were recognized loudly for their achievements. I never liked it when I was forced to learn French in elementary school and not my Anishinaabemowin. Being ashamed of what was happening to me at school caused a hesitance on my part to discuss those problems with my parents. We had enough problems at home for them to worry over me. Because of the racism and the white teachers who looked the other way while I was being subject to verbal and physical violence in the school and on the playground, I had begun to avoid going to school. I felt alone and defenseless.

When I was ten years old, I began to think that when God created Aboriginal people it was all a big mistake and being “Indian” was the same as being a misfit and I should be ashamed. Those messages came through loud and clear in the Residential School and Roman

Catholic public school I had attended. I thought “hell” I’m just a stupid misfit anyway. My grades plummeted. I could no longer tolerate the abuse. I dropped out of school when I was twelve years old and before graduating grade eight. I felt that this was the only option at the time but I did so with great sadness. I felt a deep sense of failure. Yet when I thought about the concept of education I knew that I would return one day. There was something about the process that still intrigued me. I always did well academically when I, focused on my studies, ignored the racism in school, and denied the seriousness of our home situation. I was always a curious child. I loved to read. I was forever in a constant state of a need to know basis about people, places and things. I wanted to understand the what, when, where, who, how, and why of everything that I encountered. Perhaps this is what irritated the nuns, priests, and non-Aboriginal teachers I had known: my curiosity and my voice.

After I had dropped out of school at the age of twelve, I stayed home for two years. I looked after my brothers and sisters when my parents abandoned their roles. I met a non-Aboriginal man and we had planned on spending the rest of our lives together. I was fifteen years old, when my first son was born. My second and third sons were born not long after. I was a caring and responsible young mother. I loved my children dearly. They are my heart and soul. But there were problems. The biological father of my three sons was unable to hold down the jobs he managed to secure in the logging industry. He had an alcohol problem. He had been incarcerated a number of times. I terminated the relationship because I did not think that his behavior would be a good influence on our three children. Life went on. I became involved in a different relationship with someone else but things did not work out for us. I sensed that he was not willing to accept my children.

Sixties Scoop. One evening I went out with friends after leaving my children in the care of a seasoned baby sitter. I was not worried. I had done this before. While I was away, the boyfriend that I had recently broken up with had revenge in his heart over the breakup unbeknownst to me at the time. He paid a visit to the babysitter and said that I had sent for them. Not thinking anything of the statement, the baby sitter allowed this man to dress my children and take them outdoors. He brought them to the local police station. By the time, I arrived home later that evening they had already been apprehended by the children's aide social workers. They knew our family well. My siblings had gone into care numerous times before. I had also been placed in foster homes periodically when I was younger but I simply walked away and hitched a ride home. The social workers convinced me to leave my children in care for a period of time until I figured things out. As time passed, it became apparent that my children were in need of permanency according to what the social workers said. With no education or marketable employment skills, I could not provide for them financially. I had attended the local high school to finish grade nine and part of ten but it wasn't enough to secure employment that would provide adequate living expenses for me and my children. Applying for social assistance was the only means to survival for us at the time but I knew full well that we would be condemned to a dismal poverty-stricken lifestyle. My sons would never be able to join in sports leagues or adequately prepare for post-secondary studies. I had no idea where my parents were at the time. Our relatives could not be bothered with the severity of our problems. My children and I had no family support whatsoever. I had no money. After many heart wrenching discussions with the social workers, I voluntarily signed away my parental rights and released my three sons to their adoptive parents. Two of my children were raised in a good home on a farm in southern Ontario. I met with their adoptive parents, years later when they invited me to their home. This was well

after I graduated university with a Master of Social degree in the mid-2000s. My children's adoptive mother gifted me with photos of my two sons but I was achingly aware of the years that I had missed. I am still searching for my third son. Around the same time that my children went into care in the early 1970s, my siblings had also been placed under crown ward-ship and then they were adopted out as a family group. Two younger brothers managed to evade child welfare authorities. Sometime later they went to live with mom. My dad went back to logging in the United States. Not long after, our First Nations political leadership hired someone to bull-doze our home into the woods. Not having a house to go to anymore, I was forced to live on the street in a nearby town for a few years. I never went into prostitution or engaged in any of those sorts of activities or crime in any way but life was tough at times. Once in a while, I visited with my grandmother and aunt but I left before I over stayed my welcome. As I sat at their kitchen table, I remembered looking across the road where our house used to be. I saw that nothing was there anymore except for a few trees, shrubs and memories. It seemed as though our political leadership had tried to obliterate my family completely from the community like we were an embarrassment to them. I learned years later that other young Aboriginal mothers had experienced the same catastrophic loss of their children as well during the "Sixties Scoop" era (Niigaanwewidam & Sinclair, 2016; Origins Canada, 2016). My first cousin grew up in foster homes as did her three brothers. A friend of mine lost her siblings as well when the authorities came to their door one day and forced her mother to choose which children she wished to keep. Then her brothers and sisters were taken and placed in non-Aboriginal homes. Beginning in the 1960s, approximately "20,000 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children were removed from their families" and fanned out to non-Aboriginal people in North America and abroad (Niigaanwewidam & Sinclair, Number of Affected Children section, 2016, para. 3). The

catastrophic “separation from their birth families continues to affect adult adoptees and Indigenous communities to this day” (Niigaanwewidam & Sinclair, 2016, Sixties Scoop section, para. 2). With the recent win of a class action law suit, the settlement claims are currently being negotiated (Origins Canada, 2016). Many families are still searching for their children today.

In my late twenties, I managed to locate the siblings that I had lost but we are all grown strangers now with varied backgrounds. Biological ties make no difference as far as reconnecting again. Time has passed. Too much has happened. Words cannot communicate the loss I felt at the time. Something had gone terribly wrong in my family lineage, and in other Aboriginal families as well.

Spiritual experience. In my early twenties, I eventually married someone from a different First Nations community. I was automatically transferred off my original reserve, in keeping with the membership policies of the Indian Act at the time. I tried to normalize my life after everything that had happened but depression plagued me. Finding a reason to live became challenging at times. In my mid-twenties, I met a very unique and what I concluded, the strangest person that I had ever encountered. He was a very old and charismatic Roman Catholic priest who sensed somehow that I was suffering post-traumatic stress along with a terrible sense of grief and depression. After countless discussions and new insights, I imagined that God had taken this human form just to converse with me personally, odd as this statement sounds. This man saved my life. I was never the same after the long healing talks we had about my short but tragic life. I came to know what unconditional love was and the meaning of a true friend. He gave me the gift of hope.

For a while I was employed in the service industry a few summers working in a tourist camp while members of my new family guided American tourists to the best fishing spots on a

nearby lake. Competition for summer work was fierce. Seasonal employment was never a guarantee for work the following year. Being First Nations people, we lived off the land. Come autumn, we harvested wild rice and prepared for the winter months. At times, we joined others who worked in the logging industry off reserve but the distance to get to this employment made it virtually impossible for some due to the lack of transportation. The Ministry of Natural Resources started their reforestation programs. I took out several contracts to harvest pine cones for their tree nurseries. Being on the land eased the loneliness I felt. I missed my father, mother, siblings and children.

Our political leadership in my husband's First Nations community drew wisdom and guidance from the Old Ones or Anishinaabe Elders at the time. Preservation of land and natural resources was important to us and the Elders even cautioned against on reserve deforestation. They even forbade the possibility of mining on reserve land. Our political leaders heeded the guidance of our Elders who stressed the importance of respect for the land and all living beings. They said we had to think of incoming generations who would need the land to survive. I remember feeling deep respect for the Elders as they shared their teachings on land preservation for future generations. I had never heard those words before. When they spoke, it was as though I had been transported back to the beginning of time. I felt a deep longing in my soul to converse more with them on other topics as well.

I still thought of my own schooling. I remembered that I had done well academically in the residential school. I had been placed on the *A-side* of the classroom or on the advanced side. I even helped my classmates. I wished that that part of my life had gone better. Each time I saw the little orange school bus, particularly after Labor Day, I was reminded of a very important component to my lifelong learning that somehow bypassed me. I thought about the times during

my childhood when I simply could not move beyond the door of the house to get on the little school bus.

Although I had dropped out of the mainstream education system long before, I still had plans to return. I became a self-directed learner. Given the semi-isolation of my home community, I enrolled in correspondence courses through the Ministry of Education. I finished all but six high school credits. I enjoyed this type of schooling though I missed being around others who were learning the same material. I learned how to keyboard. I was grateful when the Department of Indian Affairs office lent me one of their typewriters until I completed all my course work. I enjoyed eating slices of homemade bannock with peanut butter and strawberry jam and sipping hot tea on cold wintery nights while studying the learning materials. I imagined myself to be a great scholar one day. I wondered where life would take me.

In the early 1980s, I drove a hundred and twenty miles a day Monday through Friday during the winter for six months just to keep full time employment in a government office until the funding cuts. I worked sporadically in short term employment doing clerical work until those positions were phased out. I managed to secure a business accounting position in our local First Nations administration building. During my employment in the band office, I enrolled in an Alternative School program to finish the six credits I needed to graduate high school. It was similar to correspondence courses but instead of mailing my lessons, the program manager who was employed in the Alternative School program collected my completed assignments and brought the graded ones back the following week. I worked during the day and did my school work in the evening. I was busy. As a self-directed learner, it was my ambition to learn everything there was to know about the functions of First Nations administrations. I read a lot. I became knowledgeable of funding mechanisms, programs and services, Aboriginal politics and

socio-economic issues. Three years later a new political leadership was voted in. With the newly elected officials came a new administration and accounting staff. I applied for employment in a professional accounting firm in a nearby town but when the interviewers saw me they became very uncomfortable. In fact, one of them heaved a very visible “oh” like he was in shock. Hiring a First Nations woman was not part of their plans even though I had done exceptionally well on all my accounting exams. I was an honor student. I was even a member of a professional accounting chapter but this made no difference to them. I had been fully prepared to spend the rest of my working years there being a loyal and committed employee. I realized at the time that there were issues of racism in places where non-Aboriginal people were employed.

As a lifelong learner, I became an observer of the various activities that were going on around me in my First Nations community. I had decided to expand my horizons and focus on the wellbeing of the people both off and on-reserve. I volunteered wherever possible just for the sake of learning and experiencing what it was like to be part of something that worked in the best interests of humanity. I participated in community activities such as traditional feasts, pow-wows, ceremonies, cultural teachings, celebrations of life, recreation and so on. I started self-help groups. I provided counselling services and crisis support to women experiencing domestic violence. I even travelled sixty miles one way to volunteer in a non-Aboriginal home for the aged in a nearby town. I came to love the grandmothers and grandfathers I served. Then I became an active member of a women’s group off-reserve that did fund-raising. The proceeds were donated to other global countries for their programs and services. Part of our donations went to one organization that helped young Indigenous women begin new lives after escaping human trafficking rings overseas. I believe that the work shifted the focus off my personal tragedies and made me realize the plight of others who needed the support of their global family.

As always, the little orange school bus reminded me again of missed opportunities for a sound education. Moving away from my First Nations community was not my first choice. Familiarity no matter how dismal provided a false sense of security. I could not help but wish that there was a post-secondary institution in our community, that way I could stay home and learn. After much anguish and fear there was no other alternative really but to move away from there to attend college across the border. Despite my trepidation, a whole new world opened up. I met other students who were just as excited about their education. I graduated junior college with the highest honors. Then I transferred to a University in Minnesota.

Returning to school as an adult learner. As an undergraduate student in the Bachelor of Applied Science in psychology program, I enrolled in courses such as fields of psychology, marriages and families, abnormal psychology, psychology of drug use, food abuse, personal adjustment and well-being, learning and behavior, sexuality, dream work, women's health, behavior modification, counselling, career awareness and development, and statistics and experimental design. I did my internship in the field of chemical dependency and learned how the resulting consequences of such addictions impacted individuals and families. The study of a wide array of psychological pathologies while taking into account the biopsychosocial perspective made me appreciate how the different schools of thought might address those disorders. In some instances, a dual diagnosis of alcohol and/or drug addiction and a psychological disorder provided a unique combination of treatment where both were treated simultaneously. I wondered whether such dilemmas had existed among the adults in my family for them to allow their lives to spiral out of control. Undiagnosed psychological disorders left untreated can wreak havoc in the lives of families. Those issues were quite evident when I studied psychology and even more so with further research. Part of the requirements to graduate

was that we select a minor degree or specialization as well. I studied feminism. I enrolled in courses such as the introduction to women's studies, feminist inquiry, women, religion and spirituality, women and film, woman identified culture, and the changing roles of women. I was intrigued with the patriarchal power structures in our society that they described and how feminists were challenging traditional white male epistemologies. Of interest was that Aboriginal people were in the process of decolonizing historical accounts of themselves as well. I took an interest thereafter in North American Indian history. As a graduate student in the Master of Social Work program, I enrolled in a number of courses such as counselling, working with individuals, families and groups, the structure and function of human service organizations, social welfare policies, American Indian policies, biology of violence, health in American Indian communities, and research practices. After completing the course work many of us were given opportunities to work in pairs to carry out a research study. I partnered with another graduate student. Our research focused on the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and impact on American Indian families.

I met people from all walks of life who came to our university from across the globe to study. I felt deep reverence for the women especially who hoped to make a positive difference in the world. I noted the similarities of the social problems we shared in our communities such as the lack of education, family and community violence, family breakdown, addictions, poverty, health and mental health problems, environmental problems, oppression, discrimination, and so on. Our discussions often focused on evidence-based practices that would mitigate the problems. Our common goal was to help elevate all people to a better quality of life. Prevention education of sorts seemed the best answer to the complex social problems we faced in our First Nations communities.

Shortly after I graduated I landed employment in an Aboriginal organization in Canada where I helped develop a women's wellness program for First Nations communities. My research focused on, reviews of all pertinent literature, online searches for information, and discussions with health care specialists and the Elders. With the findings at hand, I invited our local community health care workers to the two-day training session that I had prepared. Participants spoke of their struggles to overcome the shame-based teachings that had been taught them when they attended Indian Residential Schools years earlier. Our discussion moved to other areas of concern that I was not able to address fully given the time limit of our learning session. They said we needed more than just a two-day training session every now and then. We needed to address a multitude of social issues in First Nations, more specifically, in Aboriginal adult learning.

Conclusion. In retrospect, I truly believe that my Anishinaabe mother prepared me for my lifelong learning journey based on memories I have of her natural teaching abilities. My Anishinaabe father learned to read and write English within a relatively short period of time because of her. It was my ambition to follow his example of how quickly he learned the concepts. I learned how to count numbers and write alphabets when I was a very young child even before I attended the Indian Residential School at the age of six. I scribbled as much as I could remember of the numbers and alphabets on a writing pad and asked my mother to send the letters to my aunt. I had been deeply intrigued at the time that I could actually communicate with my aunt who lived miles away. I had often pondered how that was even possible. Now we can today through technology.

There were also the land-based teachings of the Anishinaabeg I had been exposed to. I came to understand that the Earth was a powerful living being capable of sustaining life on our

planet. As a young Anishinaabe child, I had been taught to respect the living beings and to walk humbly on the land. In all of my water-based activities, it seemed appropriate to suspend myself in what I imagined the Creator's presence knowing full well that He had ultimate power over life and death as I canoed, swam or fished. I understood the holiness and the power of water. It was up to me to abide with the teachings I had been given by my mother and to always be aware of my surroundings. I learned how to read the environment. I looked to the sky for thunder clouds capable of producing torrential rain and high winds or for anything else that might jeopardize my wellbeing or that of others. I was very mindful of my younger brother's safety as I parroted the same instructions our mother uttered from the dock as she watched us paddled away. I reminded him to situate his body at the center of the canoe, and to stay in a seated position as we paddled. I silenced his mindless chatter lest he forget where he was and we tipped because of his tendency to act spontaneously, stand up and point to something on the shore like he had done previously when we were riding on the lake in my father's boat. The lessons I learned was not about fear producing moments because I was unafraid. I enjoyed being on the water in our canoe. I truly believe that the knowledge my mother passed on to me about water safety had been transferred in a spiritual sense to my being if you will, similar to the way one blows wind into the soul. Her knowledge became part of who I am today. Even now as an adult, I am always mindful of the power of water though not in a paranoid sort of way but with the same sense of healthy respect that my mother had passed on to me when I was a child. The teaching I share with you about the water is just one example of the many examples that I remember of my Anishinaabe parents who demonstrated what it is I needed to learn. I think that the lessons learned in my early childhood bordered on seriousness because I needed to pay attention and to heed the teachings that were being shared with me. Her tone of voice said so. At the same time, I learned how to have fun

and to laugh because of her sense of humor. My mother would always say, “God wants us to be happy” in our journey through life but “do it with equal consideration for the wellbeing of the Earth, ourselves and others.” I am reminded of the potato peel she once uttered to no one in particular. No matter what, we try always to do the very best in all of our endeavors. It is about observation, reflection, doing, determination, and persistence. At the same time, it is also about laughter and lightness. As an Anishinaabe lifelong learner, the memory of my mother’s potato peel musing pushes me to reach for my highest potential in whatever it is I am trying to learn.

The historical trauma I faced in my First Nations community while living with family, leads me to believe that the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabeg had changed somehow given everything that had happened in my life. Human instinct led me to believe also that there was something amiss in my Residential, and Roman Catholic public schooling based on the level of violence I had experienced. I had many unanswered questions. Who was I? Why was my life different compared with others? How could this have happened? Did this really happen? Why did this feel like death? Would our family have stayed together if there had been educational programs grounded in both Euro-centric and Indigenous knowledge in the way of prevention of sorts designed to strengthen families and communities? Was adult education the best method? Would it have been helpful if the school environments then when my parents were children fostered conditions for my mother and father to be more self-directing in their learning as adults once the gravity of our family problems was realized? Would it have helped if they had been secondary or post-secondary graduates? In sum, what are the lifelong learning experiences of the Anishinaabeg?

Identification of the Research Problem

The story I shared was deliberately situated at the beginning of this chapter to offer

readers an opportunity to know what it is like to have to carry traumatic life experiences while struggling to earn professional degrees in colleges and universities. Though my story may appear to shift focus away from the research in this paper, the purpose is to show how disruptive it was to what should have been the natural ebb and flow of lifelong learning for me. I never wanted the pain and suffering I went through nor the memories that would follow thereafter. These are the psychological, spiritual, physical, and emotional scars that I and other, Indigenous adult learners carry on a daily basis. I ask readers to bear trauma with me as I present my doctoral research here in this research paper.

Background

A more inclusive approach to the study of Indigenous lifelong learning provides for a well-rounded understanding of what that might entail. It means going back in time, historically speaking to understand how the process unfolded for Aboriginal people. The review has potential to show how the Anishinaabeg might be supported in their lifelong learning.

Given that First Nations have been on this continent before colonization or since “the beginning of time” according to what Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) learned in their Treaty discussions with the Dene, Cree, Sauteaux and Assiniboine Elders who locate “the history of their nations in North America in a time continuum stretching thousands of years...,” Indigenous people had “evolved their respective relationships to the lands given to them by the Creator” (p. 3). They “were endowed with a mind and intellect” and “other faculties” to know “the fullness and completeness of His (Creator’s) blessings (p. 3). Like other nations in the world, Aboriginal people “developed their political, social, educational, economic, and spiritual structures and institutions” (p. 3). First Nations societies were progressively ongoing on many levels.

In the normal course of human “maturation,” it is believed that individuals “move from dependency toward increasing self-directedness, but at different rates for different people and in different dimensions in life” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Adults experience “a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing” except in “temporary situations” (p. 43) where new learning is sought. In the context of education, teachers, for example, “have a responsibility to encourage and nurture” the “movement” toward independence (p. 43). It goes without saying that there were similarities in Indigenous societies as well even before colonization had begun.

As the process of colonization unfolded, there was the clash between a European-based, and traditional Indigenous-based education, particularly in the ways in which Indigenous people should be schooled. Burton and Point (2006) in their discussion on the histories of aboriginal adult education in Canada noted that as early as the 1500s “colonial explorers, traders and settlers learned from the Aboriginal peoples they met” (p. 37). The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal was founded on respect before that all changed with the introduction of European-based education. In fact, the “first adult educators of aboriginal adults were missionaries and Indian agents and the first lessons had to do with Christianity, agriculture, and land management” (p. 39). The “missionaries and governors” believed “that the best way to protect Aboriginal people was to set them apart from their traditional ways of life and carefully control their integration into the cultures of the colonizers” (p. 38). The practice continued even in the later years as Canada was being developed.

With firm grounding in “the papal bulls in the fifteenth century, edicts from the pope proclaimed that only Christians could own land” (LaDuke, 2006, p. 24). This belief “became the mandate for colonialism, the ‘Manifest Destiny’ argument for the righteousness of Christians above all other peoples” (p. 24). The full “historic impact” on First Nations people would be

fully realized in the later years when the concept of land had changed from “traditional” Indigenous “collective ownership” to “the imposition of alien concepts of land ownership” (p. 24) when the European settlers arrived during colonization. The struggle “for control of the rich interior of North America” that ensued in the later years (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French era, 1534-1763, Military Alliances and Conflict, para. 1) would have caused considerable conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people because of the Treaties that were about loss of huge tracts of Indigenous land to the settlers (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867- Present, The Numbered Treaties section, para. 1), British North America Act (Justice Canada, 2013), and Federal Indian Act (Justice Canada, 2013). The Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s (RCAP) (1996) report indicates that “government regulation” rendered tribal nations powerless on many levels including in education (Stage 3: Respect Gives Way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, para. 10). Canada “...administered all matters relating to” First Nations “education under the umbrella of the Indian Act” (Carr-Stewart, 2001, p. 133). Sections 114-122 (Justice Canada, 2013) provides the guidelines for, making agreements with the provinces, the maintenance of schools, enacting attendance policies, delegating the powers of truant officers, and recommended denomination of teachers. Description of schools includes day schools, technical schools, high schools and residential schools that was designed to improve Aboriginal education. There were no clauses in the Act that addressed post-secondary studies nor provisions for adult education that support Indigenous self-directed, lifelong learning.

INAC (2000) in their *brief history of post-secondary education funding* for Aboriginal students provide a timeline of their efforts. Beginning in the 1950s “No specific funding programs existed. The federal government provided support on a case-by-case basis” (para. 1)

though no specific reasons for doing so were stated. Very little in the way of funding was available for Aboriginal post-secondary studies at the time. Then in 1968-1969, “250 post-secondary students were assisted through an INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) program for Status Indians and Inuit who were experiencing difficulties in getting support under the 1976 *Adult Occupational Training Act*” (para.2). By 2000-2001 “this enabled more than 27,000 Status Indians and Inuit students to attend college and university” (para. 9). Other movements were on the rise.

Crum (2015) in his history of the First Nations college movement in Canada, 1969-2000 article, highlights the struggle Indigenous people in Saskatchewan faced in the “activist era of 1969” (The Year 1969 section, para. 3). In response to the assimilation practices that seemed to prevail in those days, their proposal was to create “a cultural college” (para. 3). Their request received tepid responses from the Department of Indian Affairs officials who rejected the application for funding (para. 3). Amidst the difficulties, in 1969, “Trent University in Ontario became the first mainstream Canadian university to introduce an Indian studies program” (para. 6). The benefit was that, “Students could now take various Indian-oriented courses leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree.” (para. 6). Supporters of such an important endeavor included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (para. 6). Then, “in 1971, the Canadian government adopted a new policy allowing Indians to develop cultural or adult education centers where” they “could teach cultural practices and oral traditions” (para. 7). With the new developments, the Department of Indian Affairs had decided to fund the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College (SICC) in 1972 (The Birth of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College section, para. 2) later known as Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) (para. 6), and then the First Nations University of Canada that has mushroomed over the years since (The Growth and Expansion of

SIFC section, para. 5). INAC (2000) describes the university college that is now “affiliated with the University of Regina...a center of excellence in First Nations education” (Aboriginal Studies Programs in Canadian universities section, para. 3). The Department of Indian Affairs even provided “funding for research and the development of post-secondary level programs designed for Aboriginal peoples” (para. 1) that includes preparation and transition programs for First Nations adult learners to get into university programs (para. 2).

Around the same time, other measures were being implemented in urban settings. Selman et al. (1998) highlight the “adult education program” that had been provided “since 1967” by the Native Education Centre in Vancouver which evolved to the Urban Native Indian Education Society in 1979 (p. 188). The Centre offered “basic education so as to promote the taking of further education or the securing of employment” in the city (p. 188). Then there were “life skills programs...to assist with the difficult transition between life on the reserve and life in the urban area” (p. 188). The building structure reflected a more traditional nature environment that is similar to the “northwest coast Native longhouse design” or ceremonial lodge (p. 189). Here “...a culturally identifiable space is provided through the Center where Native adults are able to learn together in a supportive environment” (p. 189). The support of Aboriginal adult learners in urban environments should be ongoing.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) (2013) has listed approximately nine Ontario Aboriginal educational institutes located on reserve that “partner with colleges and universities to offer students degree programs, apprenticeships, certificate programs and diploma programs” (Find an Aboriginal institute section, para. 1). Institutes “also provide secondary school programming, continuing education, literacy and basic skills training...and native language education programs” (para. 1). Ball (2004) notes the strengths of on reserve post-secondary

transformative education through university partnerships. Findings show that “the use of a community learners’ approach has also been known to create conditions for community development by reinforcing the value of Indigenous knowledge, rekindling the processes of intergenerational teaching and learning, and increasing social cohesion, and securing community commitment” to support families (p. 454).

Poonwassie (2001) points to the strengths of “community-based programs” that have shown to be “effective in training adults in several areas of need identified by First Nations communities, such as teaching training, social work, arts, business administration, counselling, computers, family studies, language development, the building trades, auto mechanics and general administration (p. 277) which is all good. However, the limitations “not conducive to local community-based approaches” include “health sciences, including Western medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy and nursing; engineering; most of the laboratory-based sciences; and pharmacology” (p. 277). The “financial cost of implementation” has been identified as the most pressing barrier (pp. 277-278). Students have no choice but “to leave their communities” to take any of the sciences, technologies, engineering or mathematics programs (p. 278).

Novitzky’ (2015) study explored the benefits of health and community learning and “across a range of policy areas” (p. 22). Once the funding had been secured, they carried out “96 community learner projects across England, running from September 2012 to July 2013 and engaging 15,000 learners including many from groups that are among the most excluded and least likely to participate in learning” (p. 22). Participants “reported feeling less stressed and more positive about life...” gained “a sense of achievement from learning new skills, and having their achievements recognized” (p. 23). Women felt “a sense of empowerment and control” over

their own lives (p. 23). The findings had shown “how relatively small amounts of investment in community learning can produce significant health outcomes” (p. 22).

Similar programs should be offered in First Nations communities but with Indigenous contexts in mind that include culturally appropriate methods of supporting the self-directed learning of adult learners. Concerted efforts must be made to leave behind the era of ineffective historical attempts to educate First Nations people. The “assimilate-segregate-integrate dilemma persists and is reflected in the government documents and practices of the colonizing societies” (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 38). Measures must be taken “to strengthen the learning transaction” between adult educators and adult learners (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 104) in particular. Burton and Point (2006) note that

Throughout the last 300 years of government policies and legislation, conflicting forces outside Aboriginal communities have tussled about which approach would be most effective to educate the Aboriginal adult, confounding the most commonly held belief about adult education – that it arises from within the learner and the learner’s community. (p. 47)

Countering the impact of colonization particularly in the area of Aboriginal lifelong learning tends to be a very perplexing issue, and must be carefully analyzed, so that action may be taken to remedy long-standing problems.

Research questions

The following were the overarching research questions guiding this study: (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evoke stories of the lifelong learning experiences of 15 Anishinaabe Elders who reside in 4 First Nations communities on the Northern half of Treaty 3 territory. Employing the method of conversational interviews helped to understand what the Elders perspectives were. The overall aim of this original research was to help support the self-directed, lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg.

Significance

The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people born in history has been fraught with conflict since contact. For the past “500 years” it “has swung from partnership to domination, from mutual respect and co-operation to paternalism and attempted assimilation” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996, Looking Forward, Looking Backward section, para. 1). Inherent sovereignty was usurped by incoming foreign governments. Treatment of Indigenous people became officious and condescending in many respects. The British North America Act in 1867 was “negotiated without reference to Aboriginal nations” (Stage 3: Respect Gives way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, para. 9). The most crushing blow was the creation and implementation of Indian residential schools (Stage 3: Respect Gives Way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, para. 14). Over the years since, this has brought a host of social problems that include lower life expectancy, health problems, family violence, addictions, lack of educational attainment and employment, imprisonment, and so on (The Life Chances of Aboriginal People section, para. 2). There were overwhelming concerns about the “shortages of trained Aboriginal people in such fields as economics, medicine, engineering, community planning, forestry, wildlife management, geology and agriculture – to name a few” (Stage 4: Renewal and

Renegotiation, Education and Training section, para. 1). A more proactive approach had to be taken with regard to First Nations concerns. There was consensus among “Aboriginal peoples, governments, and the courts” that this would be the next step according to the 1996, RCAP report.

With the series of troubling uprisings such as the Kanesatake (Oka) crisis and many other concerns of First Nations people, “four Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal commissioners were appointed (in 1991) to investigate the issues and advise the government on their findings” (A Word from Commissioners section, para. 2, 3). In 1996, the RCAP (1996) report described a number of recommendations that would help address the problems identified, along with the twenty-year commitment to renewal (Note to Readers section, para. 2). Yet with the calls to action that would help address the social problems, little has been done.

One of the areas of concern in 1996 was Aboriginal education. In 2010, Wilson and MacDonald (2010) reported that the “educational attainment among Aboriginal peoples still lags well beyond averages for the Canadian population as a whole” (p. 4). They are “ranked among the poorest of Canadians” (p. 3). Solutions must be found to close the gap.

Well after the 1996 RCAP report, part of the “Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history” was to establish a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (INAC, 2017, About the Truth and Reconciliation Commission section, para. 1). The overall vision was to share “truth” about the abuse that Indigenous children suffered in the schools, and to “put the events of the past behind” and “work towards a stronger and healthier future” (TRC, 2007, Introduction, para. 1). The proposed measures focused on “reconciliation” which “is an ongoing individual and collective process” (Principles section, para. 3). In response to the residential school agreement that had been made during the

lawsuit court battle, the Government of Canada “provided about \$72 million to support the TRC’s work” (INAC, 2017, About the Truth and Reconciliation Commission section, para. 3). The findings have identified 94 calls to action that address child welfare, language and culture, health, justice and so on (TRC, 2015, Calls to action section, p. 1-11) which were similar to the social problems reported in the 1996, RCAP report. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s extensive and comprehensive work has been housed at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba (INAC, About the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, para. 4).

The TRC (2015) calls “upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (pp. 1-2). This was another call to action in the area of education in 2015, which the RCAP reported on in 1996. The TRC (2015) noted that “it has been difficult to create the conditions for reconciliation to flourish” (p. 186). The process of “developing a national vision of reconciliation has proved to be challenging” (p. 186) especially in the area of Aboriginal education. Improving the quality of life for First Nations people in Canada has been of paramount importance to many in our society. Further investigation was needed to help address the ongoing concerns.

The significance of my research study is that it has the potential contribute to practice, theory and policy. The outcomes of the study are aimed at:

1. Canadian legislators to enact policies including financial resources that support Anishinaabe lifelong learning processes
2. Local and global communities to take an active interest in learning more about Canada’s Indigenous people and to help build egalitarian societies

3. First Nations political leaders and their administration to work collaboratively in a joint effort to begin decolonizing efforts immediately as the method for dealing with Indigenous generational trauma
4. Adult educators to support Anishinaabe adult learners and to design culturally relevant instructional material that helps address simultaneously, the far-reaching impact of First Nations historical trauma and the urgent need for a quality Western-based education

Being Honored with Tobacco and Nokwezigun

At the suggestion of my Research Supervisor, Dr. Jose da Costa, I offered tobacco to an Elder who agreed to open my Candidacy Oral Examination Committee meeting with prayers and blessings. Three hours later when we adjourned, Dr. Florence Glanfield, one of my Examining Committee members offered homegrown tobacco and nokwezigun⁵ on behalf of the University of Alberta that I humbly accepted to carry out the research. Being gifted with the sacred offerings, I fully accepted the responsibility that I had been entrusted with. I carried out this research carefully and respectfully.

Organization of the Thesis

Organization of this thesis comprises eight chapters. Chapter two provides a review of the literature in the areas of lifelong learning, adult education, and self-directed learning. A synthesis of the bodies of literature concluded these discussions. Chapter three describes the steps taken to carry out this qualitative research study while abiding with Indigenous ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological approaches that researchers must respect when they propose to conduct research in First Nations communities. The interview guide was employed to evoke the stories of 15 Anishinaabe Elders who participated in my study. Data

⁵ A traditional herbal plant that when dried is used for smudging.

analysis using grounded theory methods began during the first interview with all subsequent interviews thereafter meant to capture and refine emergent themes. The criteria of trustworthiness helped ensure credibility and goodness of this qualitative study. Delimitations narrowed the scope of this study. Limitations of the research design are discussed. Chapter four brings forth the perspectives of 15 Anishinaabe Elders who shared what their *observational* and *experiential learning* experiences were. This was based on childhood memories of what life was like for them when they lived in tents on the land, and how their parents and grandparents helped prepare them for their social roles. Chapter five describes how colonization had *disrupted the bicultural learning* of the Anishinaabe Elders when they were children. Out of respect for the stories shared of the time when they attended Indian residential, on-reserve, and off-reserve day schools, those experiences were included here to understand how that impacted them later as adult learners. Bicultural means that Indigenous people are confronted with having to learn two different knowledge bases: European-style education and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge. Chapter six provides insight in to the *transformational bicultural learning* experiences of the research participants. The stories were sifted through Knowles (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions to understand what their adult learning experiences were, the problems they encountered, and how things might be improved. Chapter seven presents the Elders' recommendations for strengthening the *contemporary bicultural learning* of First Nations adults. This entails additional supports and services to effectively support adults in their lifelong self-directed learning. I believe this would help Aboriginal people overcome the impact of colonization. Chapter eight includes the overview of the study, synthesis of findings, implications and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin my study with a review of the literature guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? In this review, I focused on key areas that offer insight into the process of lifelong learning, adult education and self-directed learning. This chapter draws attention to a variety of perspectives, and concludes with a summary of the bodies of literature.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning “is a broader term than lifelong education because it incorporates all forms of learning” (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 52). It “recognizes the prevalence and value of nonformal and informal learning along with the traditional “formal education system” (p. 52). It includes “self-directed learning” (p. 49) and adult education. Lifelong learning “is a pragmatic approach that mobilizes the learning resources and expertise of all five community sectors” that include civic or local government, economic enterprises, public (libraries, recreation commissions, social agencies, art councils, health bodies, museums), formal education institutions at all levels, and volunteer groups (English, 2008, p. 377). In essence, “a learning city (town or village) is a form of community development in which local people from every community sector act together to enhance the social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of their community” p. 377).

Jarvis (2006) differentiates between the concepts of life, lifelong, and lifelong learning. He said, for example, computers have “no life” as they are considered machines, whereas

“human beings exist in the world – in space...they have life, they are beings-in-the-world...” (p. 133). Furthermore, “we are intelligent beings and our life vibrates with the intention and the capacity to respond to the world...” (p. 133). *Lifelong* means that “we live in the flow of time and our physical body ages as we journey...” (p. 134). “Learning precedes schooling.” (Welton, 2013, p. 20). It “implies duration” (p. 133). It means that, “throughout our lives we have the capacity to learn” (Jarvis, 2013, p. 134). *Lifelong learning* is “the combination of processes throughout the lifetime whereby the whole person” body and mind experiences life, and then transforms and integrates that “into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person” (p. 134).

Human learning. Welton (2013) explains that, “the foundational idea that the human species is endowed with learning capacity and potentials not featured in any other creature with which we share the world” (p. 19). People have learned “how to do the work necessary to reproduce their collective existence; how they craft norms, values, and rules to live together (and resolve disputes), how individuals and the culture expresses itself...” (p. 20). This often produces “sources of conflict and tension” (p. 20) because our “societies are not static...they interact with each other” (p. 20). Most often, the “learning is grounded in the problems that our species has to solve” (p. 19).

Evolved learning. The underlying “premise” is that “all societies, from primeval times to the present, are evolved learning systems” (Welton, 2013, p. 20). Through the process of maturation, people generally fall naturally in to a number of social roles as they “gradually” take “on the management of, and responsibility for, his or her own life” (Illeris, 2009, p. 54). They “engage in learning to address the changes in life circumstances in such broad areas as jobs and careers, home and personal responsibilities” (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009, p. 508). The

“challenge is to invent new ways of understanding how adults learned before and during the age of formalized schooling” (Welton, 2013, p. 21).

Adult Education

Given that the “organized instruction for adults” has been around since the “history of humankind” (Kidd & Titmus, 1989, p. xxiii), adult educators have worked to accommodate “certain learning needs located within the life of the adult” learner (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009, p. 506). People can no longer assume that their social roles, for example as employees to be stable over a life time. Illeris (2009) reminds us that our “choice of life course” will be fraught with twists and turns because of “continual societal changes and the unpredictability of the future” (p. 54). Adult education is said to be “vocational, social, recreational and self-developmental” (Selman, Selman, Cooke, & Dampier, 1998, pp. 29-30). The “major task is that of linking adult education with people’s day-to-day-lives” (Cropley, 1989, p. 10). Life transitions are inevitable and for that reason, “the best security for the future” is to keep an “open, flexible, and constantly oriented to learning” frame of mind (Illeris, 2009, p. 54).

Merriam et al. (2007), said “...historically there has always been an interlocking of adult learning needs with the social context in which they occur” (p. 6). For example, “the skills needed in Colonial America reflected the agrarian context...” (p. 6) at first then later “...since early settlers were fleeing religious persecution in Europe there was a moral and religious imperative in learning to read so that one could study the Bible” (p. 6). Furthermore, “a corresponding lack of formal educational institutions necessitated that many people there learn on their own as well” (Hiemstra, 1999, p. 10).

With the steady influx of Europeans in North America, the learning needs became paramount to help them adapt to “a new land, a new agriculture, a new forestry, new unfamiliar

threats to physical health, and new people” (English, 2008, p. 87). The settlers brought “with them the knowledge of certain educational programs and institutions with which they had been familiar in their former homes” (Selman et al. 1998, p. 34). For example, in the 1920s, “the Antigonish Movement initiated by St. Francis Xavier University in the province of Nova Scotia demonstrated that poverty-stricken adults, by reading, discussion and action could transform their lives” (English, 2008, p. 88). Then the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) founded in 1935, was initially “intended to be a clearing house and information center for adult education in Canada” but then, under the first director, E. A. (Ned) Corbett, “it was modified into a direct programming agency, largely in the field of citizenship” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 57). In 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the CAAE established the “Farm Radio Forum” and “Citizens” Radio “Forum” (English, 2008, p. 88). The National Farm Radio Forum provided “rural listeners in all parts of Canada” the opportunity to read and discuss the information in the weekly pamphlets on “...agricultural policy, international trade, community and family life and other public affairs topics” (Selman et al. 1998, p. 49). Discussions concluded and “consensus” reached the “provincial secretary” reported the findings over the CBC radio to a listening audience (p. 49). The “essential” task at the time had “been to provide educational opportunities for many of these newcomers” who came to Canada (p. 43). In 1943, the Citizens Radio Forum (CRF) was directed toward the “urban population...to promote active citizenship and a discussion of national issues” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 60). The CRF later “became known as *Cross Country Checkup*, a phone-in radio show on public affairs” (p. 60).

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) was established in 1939 and created “film circuits” across the provinces and regions (Selman et al. 1998, p. 47). The Film Boards “mandate was in large measure to inform Canadians about their country” (p. 47). The intent at

the time was to involve the settlers in all aspects of a “nation-building strategy” in Canada (p. 47). Because of the NFB’s efforts, “Rural circuits alone were reaching a quarter of a million viewers a month” (p. 47).

In 1951, “the first adult education graduate course in Canada was offered at the Ontario College of Education in Toronto” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 61). The course was “taught by J. Roby Kidd” who “succeeded E. A. Corbett as the director of the CAAE in 1951” (p. 61). In 1958, “the first university program at graduate level appeared in the province of British Columbia” (English, 2008, p. 88). There were concerns after “the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (later named Statistics Canada) conducted its first national survey on adult education” in 1960 (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 63). The findings showed that, “4% of Canadians had taken part in some form of organized education program” but there was a “high rate of illiteracy in Canada” (p. 63). This “resulted in many government sponsored programs in remedial education” (p. 63).

In 1985, the “Canadian Association of Distance Education” (CADE) was formed to address distance learners needs (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 72). CADE published its “first issue of the *Journal of Distance Education*, a refereed journal” in “1986” (p. 72). Then the “Canadian Job Strategy Program began offering training at the job site by arrangement with public sector employees” (p. 72). The “Elderhostel of Canada was incorporated as a non-profit organization to serve the needs of an older adult audience” (p. 72).

Between 1945 and 1980, “the education of adults boomed and became a part of every major institution in Canada” (English, 2008, p. 88). Adult education “is a large amorphous field of practice, with no neat boundaries of age, as in the case of elementary and secondary education, or mission as in higher education” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 52). Furthermore, “with its’ myriad content areas, delivery systems, goals and learners, defies simple categorization” (p.

53). In historic times, it was about addressing, socioeconomic problems, citizenship, agricultural policy, international trade, community and family life, illiteracy, formal adult education learning, the needs of rural learners, distance learning, on-the-job training, and needs of older learners.

In the 1990s, “a financial crisis in Canada...devastated the education of adults” (English, 2008, p. 89). With the “public programs...severely curtailed...the attitude grew amongst public and private providers that achieving competence and knowledge was primarily the individual’s responsibility” including “the increased cost” to them (p. 89). Although the education of adults has fluctuated in terms of programming and financial support “it has always been based on Enlightenment optimism about human nature and its ability to change and grow” (p. 90).

Humanistic theory. Also known as “third force” theory (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 282) the humanistic orientation facilitates “development of the whole person” (p. 296). Humanists assert “that the individual is an integrated organized whole” (Maslow, 1954, p. 63). It means “the whole individual is motivated rather than just a part of” her or him (p. 63). Carl Rogers (1961) and Abraham Maslow (1954) who were humanistic psychologists, emphasized “choice, freedom, creativity and self-realization as essential aspects of meaningful learning” (Magro, 2001, p. 82) and “human potential for growth” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 281).

Magro (2001) references excerpts from Carl Rogers’ book (1961) *On Becoming a Person* (p. 83). Rogers’ “ideas behind ‘student-centered teaching’ developed through his work as a therapist” (p. 83) which should be explored further to understand how they might apply in educational settings. Rogers describes five *conditions* beginning with the client’s presenting problem and the importance of using therapeutic techniques of congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding and client belief that the therapist has successfully demonstrated all five conditions (p. 282).

Problem identification. Rogers (1961) said that, “the client is, first of all, up against a situation which he perceives as a serious and meaningful problem” (p. 282). She or he may be “overwhelmed by confusion and conflicts” relating to marriage problems or employment issues for examples (p. 282). Because the individual is unable “to cope” it creates the “desire to learn or to change” and move beyond “a perceived difficulty in meeting life” (p. 282) but with the assistance of a therapist.

Congruence. The therapist “...is freely, deeply and acceptantly himself” in a therapeutic setting (p. 283). Practitioners are well aware of what their “feelings and reactions” really are “as they occur and as they change” during the interchange (p. 283). Clients who know “exactly” where” the therapist “stands” places them more at ease in the relationship (p. 283). Conversely, incongruence means the client senses “that what” the therapist “is saying is almost certainly a front or a façade” (p. 283). Clients tend to build even more “defenses” and this makes “learning” that much more difficult (p. 283).

Unconditional positive regard. The therapist *accepts* where clients are with their expressions of negative or positive feelings but allows her or him “to find...meanings in them” (p. 283). Creating an “atmosphere” of unconditional acceptance for the client, lays the foundation for self-understanding and healing (p. 283). This enables the person seeking assistance to undergo “significant learning” (pp. 283-284).

Empathy. The therapist senses “the client’s” emotions of “anger, fear, or confusion as if it were” their “own, yet without” their own anger, fear, or confusion getting bound up in it” (p. 284). Showing empathetic *understanding* and even voicing “meanings in the client’s experience” (p. 284) demonstrates true concern. The client can then process the issue further when she or he feels that the therapist genuinely understands.

Clients' perceptions of the therapist. At this stage, the client should feel that the therapist has successfully demonstrated the five conditions. Rogers' said but "It is not enough that these conditions exist in the therapist. They must to some degree, have been successfully communicated to the client" (p. 284).

Applying the concepts to education. Rogers' (1961) description is more in line with clients in therapy but it can be applied in schools as well. He asked, "What do these conditions mean if applied to education?" (p. 286). He said, "the task of the teacher is to create a facilitating classroom climate in which significant learning can take place" (p. 287).

Referring back to the first condition or the *problem*, adult learners often face a variety of learning needs that motivates individuals to solve the dilemmas providing the motivation is there to do so (p. 282). This creates an eagerness "to learn" despite the feelings of trepidation of what the new learning may reveal (p. 282). The second condition comes into play beginning with the idea of *congruence* or *teacher's real-ness* which means that the educator is "...openly aware of the attitudes he holds" including "his own real feelings" and is not afraid to express enthusiasm or boredom with "topics" he dislikes but does not expect his students to believe or "feel the same way" (p. 287). Communicating otherwise leaves students feeling "cautious and wary" (p. 283). Students tend to feel more comfortable with teachers who are "congruent" (p. 287). An educator "who can provide an *unconditional positive regard* (acceptance) and who can *empathize* (understand) (third and fourth conditions) with" the students' "feelings of fear, anticipation, and discouragement which are involved in meeting new material, will have done a great deal toward setting the conditions for learning" (p. 288). A skilled teacher has tried to create a safe learning "climate" where "...significant learning is likely to take place" (pp. 283-284) of which the

student feels more at ease. This demonstrates to the learner (fifth condition) that the educator has met the five conditions.

Learning depends on the “basic reliance” of “the self-actualizing tendency” of the students (Rogers, 1961, p. 289). The humanistic approach “toward personality is one of ‘optimism’ where it is argued that individuals contain within themselves the potentialities for healthy and creative growth if they accept the responsibility for their own lives” (Roedelein, 2006, p. 529). For example, “in therapy” success might be measured based on the ability of the client to “use the resources of the therapeutic relationship and his experience in it to organize himself so that he can meet life’s tests more satisfying next time” (Rogers, 1961, p. 290). In education, “the requirements for many life situations would be a part of the resources the teacher provides” (p. 290). Learners would have the information necessary to understand what was required of them to earn “a college diploma” (p. 290) or pass “an examination on rules of the road” to “drive a car” legally (p. 291) for examples. If the process of education were similar to therapy, “it would leave the student as a self-respecting, self-motivated person, free to choose whatever he wished to put” energy in “to gain these tickets to entrance” (p. 291).

The ultimate hope is that the individual “becomes a more fluid, changing, learning person” (Rogers, 1961, p. 285). Rogers (1961) said for “significant learning” to occur whether in a therapeutic session or educational setting, the process must involve “more than an accumulation of facts” (p. 280). It should be “a pervasive learning which is not just an accretion of knowledge, but which interpenetrates with every portion of his existence” (p. 280). This type of learning is intended to make a “difference” whether “in the individual’s behavior” or “in the course of action” she or he “chooses in the future” (p. 280).

Roger' and Maslow' humanistic psychology that emerged "in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s" (Illeris, 2007, p. 7) is considered to be the underpinning philosophical orientation in self-directed learning and andragogy. Merriam (2001) said "that Knowles introduced andragogy to North American adult educators" around the same time that "self-directed learning appeared as another model that helped define adult learners as different from children" (p. 8). Furthermore, "both andragogy and self-directed learning have become so much a part of adult education's identity, and have had such an impact on practice, that relegating them to the status of historical artifact is inconceivable" (Merriam, 2001, p. 11).

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) "has existed even from classical antiquity" (Hiemstra, 1999, p. 10). SDL "seems self-explanatory, yet there is no single, accepted definition" (English, 2008, p. 565). It has been called "autonomous learning, independent learning, autodidaxy self-teaching, self-study and self-planned learning, self-regulated learning and learning projects" (p. 565). SDL "has been the primary focus of interest in adult education for more than four decades" or "since the 1960s" (p. 565). English (2008) said that Houle' (1988), *The Inquiring Mind, A Study of the Adult Who Continues to Learn* and Tough' (1971) research "revealed the extent to which adults take control of the learning projects they conduct outside of formal contexts" (p. 65). Houle (1988) and Tough (1971) "are usually credited with initiating the study of SDL" (p. 565). "Building on this work Knowles (1975) developed a set of assumptions and principles for adult learning (andragogy) that centered on SDL..." (p. 565). The "serious study of" self-directed learning "is relatively recent in comparison to other aspects of learning such as memory, cognition and intelligence" (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 105). The SDL concept "is central to discussions of, for example; adult learning, experiential learning, lifelong learning, popular

education, workplace learning, human resource development and methods of teaching in formal contexts” (p. 566). Merriam et al. (2007) said that “public schools and colleges and universities have used this concept to describe one of the primary goals of their institutions: to enable their students to be lifelong, self-directed learners” (p. 105).

Supporting the self-directed learner. Debates followed as to “whether SDL is learning alone and/or with others and, therefore, whether it can take place in formal contexts or is limited to the non-formal learning that occurs as part of the adults’ day-to-day-living” (English, 2008, p. 565). There were ongoing discussions about whether “learning and teaching in formal contexts can draw on what we know about the SDL adults conduct in their everyday lives” or the “goals and processes of SDL; models for SDL; ways of measure readiness for SDL” and whether it was appropriate “for some people when it is used in formal contexts to foster the development of lifelong, self-directed learning, particularly in an increasingly technological age” (p. 565).

Coming from the self-directed “perspective, the focus is on the individual and self-development, with learners expected to assume primary responsibility for their own learning” (Caffarella, 1993, p. 26). The self-directed learner takes “increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor” but this “does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others” (Hiemstra, 1999, p. 10). Self-directed study might involve a number of activities such as, “self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities” (p. 10). Educational institutions “are finding ways to support self-directed study through open-learning programs, individualized study options, non-traditional course offerings and other innovative programs” (p. 10).

Educator as resource person. Adult educators support self-directed learning through

“dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes and promoting critical thinking” (p. 10). Coming from the humanistic perspective, the educator’s role is to simply be a resource person (Rogers, 1961, pp. 288-289). Students are made aware that the teacher possesses “special experience and knowledge” that they can draw on as needed but not be forced to “use” in any way (p. 289). The teacher is there to provide “the usual resources” such as “books, maps, materials, recordings, work-space tools, and the like” (p. 288). Rogers (1961) said “there are many resources of knowledge, of techniques, of theory” that students are free to choose that will be “useful” to their learning (p. 288).

Andragogy

Merriam et al. (2007) said “...there is no single theory of adult learning” that “has emerged to unify the field” but there has been discussion of “a number of theories, models and frameworks each of which attempts to capture some aspect of adult learning” (p. 103). They said “The best-known theory or model of adult learning is Knowles’ andragogy” (p. 104). This “is less a theory and more a set of assumptions about adult learners and educators alike can use to strengthen the learning transaction” (p. 104).

Adult learning differs from childhood learning. Previously “there was only one model of assumptions about learning and the characteristics of learners on which educators could base their curricula and teaching practices” and “this was the model of *pedagogy*...” (Knowles, 1980, p. 40). Knowles (1980), the father of andragogy, differentiates between pedagogy or teacher focused education “the art and science of teaching children” (p. 40) and learner focused education “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 43). He summarized four assumptions of the maturation process of individuals in his earlier work (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44), and then

he added two more assumptions which include the *learners' need to know* (p. 57) and *motivation* (p. 63) in his later book (Knowles, 1990). The six assumptions are as follows:

1. learners need to know what they will be learning, the reason for and how that applies to them;
2. their self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed human being;
3. they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning;
4. their readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of their social roles;
5. their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly, their orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance centeredness;
6. their motivations for learning are externally and internally motivated.

Learner's need to know. According to Knowles' (1990), "...the first task of the facilitator of learning is to help the learners become aware of the *need to know*" (p. 58). Then, comes the understanding of *what* they will be learning and *how* that applies to their lives (p. 58). In essence "...the learners discover for themselves the gaps between where they are now and where they want to be" (p. 58). Children, on the other hand, "...only need to know that they must learn what..." teachers, parents and whomever tell them because the mental maturation is such that they would not really understand how or why that applies to their lives (p. 55).

Learner's self-concept. As children mature, they move beyond their roles as "full-time learners" to take on the responsibilities of being "producers and doers" (Knowles, 1980, p. 45).

The self-concept changes as children leave their developmental stage of dependency to becoming adults who “move in the direction of greater self-direction” (p. 45). People “have a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing, although they may be dependent in particular temporary situations” (p. 43) such as classroom learning, for example. Educators “have a responsibility to encourage and nurture” the move toward independence (p. 43).

Prior learning experiences of the adult learner. For children, “...experience is something that happens to them; it is an external event that affects them, not an integral part of them” (Knowles, 1980, p. 50). They often discuss “...themselves in terms of who their parents are, who their older brothers and sisters are, where they live and what schools they attend” (p. 50). Adults, on the other hand, “...accumulate an increasing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning – for themselves and for others” (p. 44). They “...identify themselves by describing what their occupations are, where they have worked, where they have travelled, what their training and experience have equipped them to do, and what their achievements have been” (p. 50). Knowles (1980) said “Adults *are* what they have *done*.” (p. 50).

Readiness to learn. Knowles (1980) explains that “the developmental tasks of youth tend to be the products primarily of physiological and mental maturation, and those of the adult years are the products primarily of the evolution of social roles” (p. 51). Learning how to crawl before walking is one example (p. 51). For adults, “...their phases of growth” (p. 51) often require new learning to help them fill their social roles as parents, grandparents and employees more effectively. The “developmental tasks produces a ‘readiness to learn’ which at its peak presents a ‘teachable moment’” (p. 51).

Orientation to learning. As people mature, they “enter into education with a different time perspective from children, which in turn produces a difference in the way they view learning” (Knowles, 1980, p. 53). Because adults are more concerned with the “life problems they face now,” to them, education is about *problem-centered or performance-centered* learning whereas children are more in to *subject-centered* learning (p. 53). To them “...education is essentially a process of the accumulation of a reservoir of subject matter – knowledge and skills – that might be useful later in life” (p. 53). Graduating “high school” before attending “college” would be the proper sequence of development that would help learners “prepare...for a happy and productive adult life” (p. 53).

Motivation. Adults are normally filled with an abundance of motivations. Adult learners “are responsive to some external *motivators* (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like)” (Knowles, 1990, p. 63). The most potent motivators are *internal pressures* (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life and the like)” (p. 63).

Maslow (1954) “developed a theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs” (Magro, 2001, p. 82) which means that “...the fulfillment of ‘lower level’ needs (for example, physiological needs (shelter and belonging) is necessary if ‘higher level’ needs, such as love, self-esteem and the need for self-actualization, are to be fulfilled” (p. 83). For example, an individual “who is lacking food, safety, love and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else” which is considered a lower level need (p. 82). Furthermore “...when these in turn are satisfied again new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on” (p. 83). Human beings desire wellness. Maslow said “homeostasis refers to the body’s automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state...” (p. 80).

Maslow’s (1954) “approach toward personality tends to be optimistic...” (Roeckelein,

2006, p. 377). It “derives from the study of creative, healthy, and ‘self-actualized’ persons” (p. 377). To provide examples of what this means, Maslow noted the characteristics of self-actualized individuals such as “Beethoven, Einstein, Roosevelt...” (p. 378). Self-actualization simply means that individuals possess a “realistic orientation of themselves within the world, complete acceptance of themselves and others, are problem-oriented rather than self-oriented, highly private and detached, high levels of spontaneity and independence and nonconformity to their culture” (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 378). Blood and Heavy Head (2007) in their presentation at the University of Montana “...tell the story of how psychologist Abraham Maslow’s strongest contribution to motivational theory...was crucially influenced by the Blackfoot way of life that Maslow observed at Siksika in 1938” (p. 1).

In sum, according to Knowles’ (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions, adults have the need to know what they will be learning, and how that applies to their lives. As children mature they leave their roles as full-time learners and become self-directed, producers and doers. Adults feel inner conflict when they are treated as if they are dependent personalities as there is a deep psychological need to be self-directing. Adult educators must support the process of maturation. They must realize that adult learners have acquired a rich foundation of experience compared to children. The adult’ reservoir of life experiences can be used to help the learning of others. The readiness to learn depending on the developmental stage of the adult learner, present many opportunities for teachable moments that help them improve their social role skills. Their orientation to learning focuses more on seeking practical solutions to daily life problems now. Because adults are internally and externally motivated in relation to their education or career, they become lifelong, self-directed learners.

Anishinaabe Lifelong Learning

In the Indigenous learning context, *adult learning* or andragogy is “not viewed as distinct from those of children, but rather learning is a lifelong self-directed process of experiencing, processing and reshaping existing knowledge...” (English, 2008, p. 305). It “refers to learning which occurs with or within Indigenous peoples, contexts, or worldviews” that in contemporary times, has been “affected by Aboriginal worldviews and Western colonial contexts” (English, 2008, p. 304). The “conscious use of Indigenous forms of learning, which are often steeped in oral traditional and art forms, can enhance non-formal and perhaps even formal educational programs” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 33).

Creation story. Johnson (1976) said “from the beginning the Anishinabeg (Saulteaux) posited the existence of Kitche Manitou, the Maker of Makers, the Master of life, the mystery of mysteries. Unseen Kitche Manitou could only be known through his creations...” (p. 149). Benton-Banai (1988) in his Ojibway creation story is one perspective that describes how “Original man” came to be after the Earth was created (p. 3). Anishinaabe “...man was the last form of life to be placed on the Earth” (p. 3). Benton-Banai explains how the Ojibway term “Anishinaabe” is defined (p. 3). He said the word “Ani” means “from whence,” “nishina” means “lowered,” “abe” means “the male of the species” (p. 3). Furthermore, “This man was created in the image of Gitchi Manitou (Creator). He was natural man. He was part of Mother Earth. He lived in brotherhood with all that was around him.” (p. 4).

Mother Earth. It is said that, “woman preceded man on” Mother Earth “because from her come all living things” (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 2). The people “were given animals for food and shelter, water to drink and to make things grow, trees for shelter, fuel, and ceremonies, plants for medicines, and rocks to help make fire and for arrowheads” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 10). The “... “sacred gifts ...whether those gifts are material in nature (land) or

metaphysical (as in the case of laws, values, principles, and mores that guide or regulate the peoples' conduct in all their many and varied relationships)" were considered "blessings" of the Creator (pp. 10-11). This was "all they needed for their survival and development in North America" (p. 11).

Indigenous nations. Benton-Banai (1988) in his story of creation said that "all tribes" came from "Original man" (p. 4). According to the INAC, (2014) informational pages "There are 617 First Nations communities in Canada" (How many First Nations communities are there? section, para. 1). In British Columbia, there are 198 First Nations communities, Ontario, 126, Saskatchewan, 70, Manitoba, 63, Alberta, 45, Quebec, 39, Northwest Territories, 26, Yukon, 16, New Brunswick, 15, Nova Scotia, 13, Newfoundland, 4 and Prince Edward Island, 2 (para. 1). In the overall analysis, "...historians have therefore tended to group First Nations in Canada according to the six main geographic areas of the country as it exists today" (INAC, 2017, Part 1 – Early First Nations: The six main geographical groups section, para. 1, 2). The Woodland First Nations were situated in eastern Canada, Iroquoian in the southern area, Plains on the prairies, Plateau in the mid-west, Pacific on the western coast and Mackenzie and Yukon River Basins in the north (para. 2). Prior to "the arrival of Europeans, First Nations in what is now Canada were able to satisfy all of their material needs and spiritual needs through the resources of the natural world around them" (para. 1).

Indigenous languages. Traditional education of the Anishinaabeg was passed down through "oral" traditions embedded in Indigenous languages (Legarde-Grover & Keenan, 2006, p. 393). Benton-Banai (1988) said that "all tribes" are "separated only by our tongue or language" or the way we speak (p. 4). Statistics Canada (2011) in their "2011 census of population recorded over sixty Aboriginal languages grouped into twelve distinct language

families...in Canada” (Over 60 Aboriginal languages reported in 2011 section, para. 1). Cook and Flynn (2009) described nine language family groups (while noting the difference in dialects in each of the groups) in “descending order of size” with the largest being Algonquian followed with Inuktitut (Eskimo), Athabaskan, Siouan-Catawban, Salish, Tsimshianic, Iroquoian, Wakashan, and Isolates (pp. 320-325). Furthermore, “Canada’s most widely spoken Aboriginal languages, Cree and Ojibwe, belong to the Algonquian family...” (p. 321). Moreover, “...several of Canada’s Aboriginal languages – notably Cree, Ojibwe, Inuktitut and Dene Suline...– remain relatively healthy” (p. 327).

Migration story. Communication lines “among all groups of people” had been ongoing and constant through the language (Benton-Banai, 1998, p. 94). Part of the dialogue had to do with the changes they knew was about to happen and that life would never be the same. In his story of the migration of the Anishinaabe, he explained that, “...the Ojibways and other Algonquin Indians were settled up and down the eastern shores of North America.” (p. 94). They had lived and worked there for many years. Through dreams and visions of their spiritual leaders, the Anishinaabe “did not want to move their families on the journey to the West” (p. 94) before colonization but they did.

Impact of Colonization on Indigenous Lifelong Learning

As early as the 1500s and 1600s “...a network of competing colonies was established throughout the America’s” (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, European Colonial Settlements and the Fur Trade section, para. 1). Canada, Privy Council Office (1991) said that, “The most significant aspect of the arrival of the Europeans was the need for land for the settlers who eventually followed the fur traders and missionaries” (p. 4). To accommodate them, “the Crown and Aboriginal peoples had also concluded several peace and

friendship treaties and land cessions in the eastern part of the country” (Canada, Privy Council Office, 1991, p. 4). As more settlers arrived, “the British and the French colonies quickly became the dominant and competing powers” (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, European Colonial Settlements and the Fur Trade section, para. 1). Notable was that “...their main interest in the ‘New World’ was commercial” and they each pushed for dominion (para. 2). There was “...a series of violent clashes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries as British and French colonies” fought for control of the natural resources (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, Military Alliances and Conflict section, para. 1). To help in the war effort, the British “...created the Indian Department in 1755” to secure military “...alliances with the powerful Iroquois Confederacy as well as attempt to alleviate concerns of colonial fraud and abuses against First Nations people and their lands along the colonial frontier” (para. 1). When “the seven-year war” was over, Britain subsequently became “the primary European power throughout much of North America and controlled the valuable commercial fur trade” (INAC, 2011, British Era – 1764-1860, The Royal Proclamation 1763 section, para. 1).

Treaties. At the time, “Colonial policy with respect to Indian land was established by the *Royal Proclamation* of 1763” (Canada, Privy Council Office, 1991, p. 4). It became “government policy that, while title to the land mass of Canada was vested in the Crown, aboriginal peoples could continue to use and occupy the land” (p. 4). This was in line with the Treaties that included the provision of “...certain annuity payments, farming, hunting and fishing equipment” to First Nations people (p. 4). The Treaties also established Indian reserves, schools and teachers on reserves, and supplies such as twine, medals, flags and clothing for First Nations political leadership (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867-Present, The Numbered Treaties section,

para. 1). According to Hogg (2007) the written documents would have differed significantly than “the Indians’ oral understanding of the arrangement” (p. 631). Conflict between the settlers and Aboriginal people in relation to “the sharing of land and natural resources have been major challenges” since (Canada, Privy Council Office, 1991, p. 1).

Canadian legislation. The British North American Act, 1867 “is the law that created Canadian Confederation” (Canadian Human Rights Commission, (CHRC) 2016, para.1) and “A federation usually consists of at least two main levels of government – local states or provinces and a federal government” (para. 2). Around “the 1870s” First Nations people had tried to organize various political groups to address the issues of domination but those attempts pushed the government to tighten their control even further (Sadik, Dyck & Albers, 2016, Early Campaigns for Government Recognition, para. 1). In the later years, “300 native leaders travelled to London, England” (National Aboriginal Organizations, 2005, para. 1) to ensure that First Nations people would be legally recognized in the Canadian Constitution, 1982 that was “repatriated – brought home to Canada from Britain” (CHRC, 2016, para. 7). Section 91 defines federal responsibilities and section 92 the provincial (para. 4). Section 91, subsection 24, “gives the Government of Canada, the exclusive right to make laws for ‘Indians and lands reserved for the Indians’” (Bezeau, 1984, p. 38).

Federal Indian Act. Since then, “Parliament has exercised this legislative authority through various Indian Acts, the first having been enacted in 1876” (Canada, Privy Council Office, 1991, p. 9). The RCAP (1996) report states that the “new laws and others were codified in the Indian Acts of 1876, 1880, 1884 and later” (para.11). The Federal Indian Act, 1876 (Justice Canada, 2013) “...remains the principle vehicle for the exercise of federal jurisdiction over ‘status Indians’ and governs most aspects of their lives” (Hurley, 2009, p. 1) including

Indian status membership, Indian reserve lands and financial resources, political leadership elections, and so on (Justice Canada, 2013). Section 114-121 regulates First Nations education (Justice Canada, 2013).

Department of Indian Affairs. To ensure that Aboriginal people were abiding with the new legislation, “The Department of Interior (later, Indian Affairs) sent Indian agents to every region to see that the laws were obeyed.” (RCAP, 1996, Stage 3: Respect Gives Way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, para. 11). The Department of Indian Affairs was given legislative authority through the Indian Act “...to intervene in a wide variety of issues and to make sweeping policy decisions across the board such as determining who was an Indian, managing Indian lands, resources and moneys, controlling the access to intoxicants and promoting ‘civilization’” (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867-Present, The Indian Act section, para. 1). The RCAP (1996) report indicated that the government passed new regulations “...to replace traditional Aboriginal governments with band councils with insignificant powers, taking control of valuable resources located on reserves, taking charge of reserve finances, imposing an unfamiliar system of land tenure, and applying non-Aboriginal concepts of marriage and parenting” (Stage 3: Respect Gives Way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, para. 10). Furthermore, Aboriginal ceremonies were banned (para. 12), residents “could not leave the reserve without permission from the Indian Agent” (para. 13), the implementation of Indian residential schools was ongoing (para. 14), people were relocated at will (para. 16), veterans who enlisted in the “Canadian Armed Forces” received no “benefits awarded to other vets” and so on (para. 17, 18). Aboriginal people were rendered powerless to manage their own lives and to make decisions in relation to what was

happening to their land, and the natural resources. First Nations people became wards of the government.

Aboriginal activism. According to the National Aboriginal Organizations (2005), First Nations people were not allowed to defend their rights previous to the 1940s because of the ruling in the Federal Indian Act, that gave sole authority to the Department of Indian Affairs in all matters relating to First Nations people (para. 2, 3). Aboriginal leadership who tried to “organize any form of political” group” were subsequently arrested by the RCMP and then jailed (para. 3). Further attempts to organize for the purpose of gaining control over their lives met with failure and this played out over a period of time. Nevertheless, First Nations people continued to organize despite the consequences.

White paper. The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) that was established in 1967 (Sadik & Dyck, 2016, White Paper Policy section, para.1) “became the Assembly of First Nations (AFN)” in 1982” (National Organization section, para. 1). The AFN “is a national advocacy organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada” (Assembly of First Nations, para. 1). One of the issues that they dealt with was the 1969 White Paper. In the INAC (2011) informational pages, “In 1969, the Trudeau government began to examine a radically new approach to Indian Affairs based upon a concept that all Canadians held the same rights regardless of ethnicity, language, or history.” (Canadian Era – 1867-Present, The White Paper section, para. 1). They proposed to “...repeal the Indian act ending the federal responsibility for First Nations people and terminating their special status, as well as the decentralization of Indian Affairs to provincial governments who would then administer for First Nations communities and individuals” (para. 1). They also wanted to end the Treaties (para. 1). It was noted that the White Paper was similar to the one in the United States where the political leadership “sought to

terminate the federal government's trust responsibilities" (Crum, 2015, The Year 1969 section, para. 1). In Canada, the "White Paper" proposal "...was overwhelmingly rejected by First Nations people largely because of the complete lack of consultation with the people directly impacted by the policy" ... that threatened "the loss of their special status and...Aboriginal and treaty rights within Confederation" (INAC, 2011, The White Paper section, para. 2). Those rights were protected under Section 35(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Justice Canada, 2014). It reads that "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed." (Justice Canada, 2014, Part II, Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada). Carr-Stewart (2006) said that "the White Paper served as a catalyst for First Nations action across the country..." (p. 10).

Indian control of Indian education. Then, "In 1972, the largest Canadian intertribal organization, the National Indian Brotherhood, drafted a position paper entitled 'Indian Control of Indian Education,' which would further contribute to the eventual development of First Nations colleges." (Crum, 2015, The Year 1969 section, para. 7). Carr-Stewart (2006) elaborates further that this was "a statement of educational philosophy, values and future direction for educational jurisdiction" (p. 10). Thereafter, "The Department of Indian Affairs embarked upon a devolution plan to transfer educational administrative responsibility to First Nations" (p. 10). It was about self-determination for Indigenous people in Canada.

Aboriginal Adult Education

An odd if you will perspective seemed to pervade in historic times with regard to the way Indigenous people should be schooled. For example, the "missionaries" provided reading lessons "in English or French as a mode of transmitting religious education" (Burton & Point,

2006, p. 38). The missionaries felt it necessary that “Aboriginal leaders” should learn “to read and write” as the skills were needed for their “survival and adaptation” (p. 38).

Burton and Point (2006) said that “the earliest evidence of explicitly adult education occurred in 1620” (p. 38) when “the Recollets sent Pastedechouan, a Montagnais boy, to France, where he studied for five years” (Ray, 1996, p. 62). When the young man returned “he could no longer speak his mother tongue” (p. 62). His family bonds and ties to Aboriginal community had been broken as well (p. 62). It was then that “the Jesuits” took Pastedechouan in and employed “him as a language teacher in Quebec City” but he “could not find comfort in either culture” (p. 62). He subsequently “became an alcoholic and starved to death in the forests north of the city” (p. 62). His “misfortune was a harbinger of things to come for many other Native people who became trapped between two cultural worlds...” (p. 62). Another strategy was to send “a few Native girls overseas for training to prepare them either for marriage to French settlers or for a religious vocation” (p. 62). No one knows with certainty what the young ladies had decided when they returned to North America. In 1634 (Burton and Point, 2006, p. 38), Indigenous communities were moved closer to the settlers but they separated them when “the worst aspect of the others’ culture” were viewed as unacceptable to the progressive development of either society (Ray, 1996, p. 63). The concern at the time was to “assimilate” Aboriginal people “into the emerging societies of traders, soldiers and settlers” for the purpose of setting “them apart from their traditional ways of life” (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 38). The missionaries and Indian agents at the time saw the need for Aboriginal people to learn more about “...Christianity, agriculture and land management” (p. 39).

Given that adult education “was not formally practiced in Canada until the 1830s that started the process of learning for Canadians, it was believed “Aboriginal adults were often

precluded from the activities to which such education enterprises were attached” (p. 39). Welton (1998) said that, Draper and Carere’s (1998), *Selected Chronology of Adult Education in Canada*, indicates that “we don’t learn much...about the learning of aboriginal peoples and the multitudes of ethnic groups that make up our country” (p. 32). He added, “For example, the entry for 1850 tells us that private night schools for adults began to appear” (p. 32). However, there was no mention of context or information provided in response to questions, of “What was happening in the economic and social life of urban Canada that precipitated these schools? Who attended them? What was their social class background? Did any women attend classes? What did they actually learn?” (p. 32). How was that integrated “into their everyday lives?” (p. 32).

In, 1960, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) established “the Indian-Eskimo Association” that was “later changed to the Canadian Association for the Support of Native Peoples” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 57). The CAAE “incorporated a forum in which representatives of native peoples met together to examine many of the issues and to identify solutions for native people in Canada” (p. 64). Very little came of the forum. In 1982, the findings of “a survey of adult education in Canada...identified several groups in Canadian society who were not being served by adult education, including women, native people, older adults, challenged people, immigrants, adults with low educational attainment, and francophones living outside of Quebec” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 71).

Given the oral traditions of Indigenous people, the chronological information of such pursuits would not have been recorded. Burton and Point (2006) note that “This past without documents reoccurs in the beginning in 1971, because much of the grassroots, community-level adult education programming has not been archived” (p. 47). I argue that, a concerted effort must be made to understand and support the lifelong learning processes of First Nations people.

Barriers to learning. The Canada Council of Ministers of Education (2010) in their discussion on gaps in knowledge expressed their concerns over Aboriginal education in general. They said that “The biggest gap so far related to Aboriginal people’s access to post-secondary education is the lack of information about which approaches and supports are most effective in increasing enrolment in the completion of post-secondary education” (p. 51). A few of the barriers that were identified include, “poor academic preparation” (p. 40), “caring for family members,” the issues of “cultural safety and racism,” and the lack of “Aboriginal learning styles and languages” in instructional design (p. 41). Findings show that “a limited number of studies have examined which of the barriers are most important” (p. 51) to understand how the problematic areas may be addressed.

Cross and McCartan (1984) identified three “perceived barriers” that may impede adult learning (p. 38). *Situational barriers* “are those arising from one’s situation in life at a given time” (p. 37). It relates to “cost, including tuition, books, child care, not enough time, home responsibilities, job responsibilities, no child care, no transportation, no place to study or practice and friends or family don’t like the idea” (p. 38). *Dispositional barriers* “relate to people’s attitudes and perceptions of themselves as learners” (p. 37) such as “I’m too old to begin, low grades in the past, no confidence in my ability, not enough energy and stamina...tired of school... don’t know what to learn or what it would lead to, and hesitate to seem too ambitious” (p. 38). *Institutional barriers* “consists of those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational opportunities...” (p. 38). It refers to “time required to complete program...strict attendance requirements...too much red tape in getting enrolled” or “don’t meet requirements to begin program” (p. 38).

There are other factors that impact adult learners. With the passage of time, “demographics, globalization and technology” have affected “all of society’s endeavors, including adult learning” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 25). This has led to “more cultural and ethnic diversity among the population than ever before” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 25) and the call for adult educators to create and implement adult education programs. The need for technological advances “is integral to the global economy and has contributed to, if not caused, the shift to an information society, which is creating dramatic changes in the workforce” (p. 26). Adult learners can now take massive open online courses (MOOC) for example to upgrade their skills (Belawati, 2014, p. 9). People are generally faced with a “current rapidly-changing and technologically-complex global society” (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009, p. 501) that has created a variety of learning needs for adults. For example, Statistics Canada (2008) in their analysis of changes in participation in adult education and training, 2002 and 2008 found that “Between July 2007 and June 2008, an estimated ten million Canadians aged 18 to 64 (47% of that population) had participated in some type of education or training, whether it be for personal interest or for their career or job.” (“Almost Half of Canadians” section, para. 1). Furthermore, “In 2002, 31% of Canadian born adults between the ages of 25 and 64 reported participating in job-related education or training, compared to 26% of the foreign-born; by 2008, these rates were 37% and 30%, respectively.” (“Changes in Rates of Participation” section, Chart 3, para. 1). Then there is “the gap” in “...participation rates among the Canadian born compared to those born outside Canada” that is “larger in 2008 compared to 2002” (para. 1). Of interest is that “employers continued to be a key source of support for job-related education and training, investing in skills development not only for employees with a postsecondary education, but also for those with a high school education or less” (Conclusion, para. 2). Their observation is that “further analysis”

is needed “to fully explore the motivations of Canadian adults for engaging in education and training activities, barriers to participation and the reasons why certain groups are under-represented in such learning activities” (Conclusion, para. 3).

Indigenous learning styles. Acquiring a better understanding of Aboriginal learning styles would make for more effective teaching strategies. Burton and Point (2006) have noted a few similarities as being

the absence of institutional approaches; the powerful imperative to avoid imposing one’s will on another individual; behavior shaping by positive example in the home and communal dwellings; provision of guidance towards desired forms of behavior through games and amusement; and stories to draw out the lessons in daytime activities and to transfer other forms of knowledge – ethical, theological, historical, ecological, and political. (p. 37)

The implications for practice suggest a number of different methods adult educators may employ to effectively support Aboriginal adult learners in their lifelong, self-directed learning.

Morgan (2010) provided interesting perspectives about children’s learning. The following description sheds light on the ways in which Aboriginal adults as teachers influence the behavior of their children through cultural learning in the home. Morgan observed that, “Native American students are likely to behave and react to teachers and teaching strategies in ways that are often different from mainstream students” (p. 45). He provides examples of what this means. In keeping with the family values of “humility and harmony” or “unity, oneness, and cooperation” students tend to “underachieve to avoid appearing superior” (p. 46). They would sooner keep their values rather than push against their “traditional norms” (p. 46). Social acceptance tends to be more important. Furthermore, the learning process in traditional Aboriginal education is

ongoing. It involves “teaching by observation” or listening and then doing (p. 46). He said that “a father modelling a skill to a child” would be an example of observation (p. 46). Over time, it was hoped that the child would endeavor to become a nurturing and responsible parent. Daily tasks of life were carried out in mutually respectful interactions with others. Native American students “prefer to work together rather than in isolation” contrary to those who are “detached, goal-oriented, competitive, analytical and logical” (p. 46). Learning is carried out through meaningful discussions and affirmative action. The process of “responding to questions” in class is also different (p. 46). Students “reflect more than mainstream students” as they tend “to gather more evidence before offering an answer” (p. 46). Getting things right the first time is preferred (p. 47).

Working toward cultural competency in the teaching profession. Morgan (2010) added that educators should take an interest in schooling themselves on Native American diversity especially in light of the “dropout rate” among youth that he attributes to, the “school district’s neglect for the learning styles or culture of this group” (p. 44). More could be done that “affirms the backgrounds of the students, considers their cultures as strengths, and reflects and utilizes students’ learning styles” (p. 47). Aboriginal students must be afforded the same benefits of a regular mainstream education as any other student, yet at the same time, educators must “understand cultural values different from their own” (p. 47). Part of the blame rests on the lack of information about Indigenous cultures in the Western curriculum. He said that, “Many Americans know little about Native Americans” (pp. 44-45). For example, students may not know the location of Indian reservations or “that sovereign tribal governments exist in their state” (p. 45). Much of what has been written in textbooks comes from a Eurocentric lens and very little of “Native American view of American history” (p. 45). What they do learn, for

example, in “children’s books on Native Americans” is not reflective of the diversity of Indigenous cultures and knowledge (p. 45). Showing “a totem pole made by the Northwest Indians next to a tipi used by the Plains Indians” does “not accurately reflect the differences among Native American people and may even” promote erroneous and stereotypical ideas in children” (p. 45). To help counter the images, educators should include “the Native American view of American history” to help fill the gap “in school textbooks” (p. 45). Building diverse Indigenous canons in the literature has potential to promote a better understanding all around and hopefully a sense of appreciation for other cultures. Individuals would not be so afraid to forge lasting friendships with Aboriginal people. Because First Nations communities are “more isolated than other groups” most people have not benefited “from direct experience” (p. 45).

Lifting Aboriginal people out of poverty through adult education. The 1996 RCAP report, and TRC findings in 2015 have identified numerous calls to action that address the social problems in First Nations communities such as in education. Wilson and MacDonald (2010) in their analysis show that the “...educational attainment among Aboriginal peoples still lags well behind averages for the Canadian population as a whole” (p. 4). Furthermore “income inequality persists no matter where Aboriginal peoples live in Canada” (p. 3). The belief is that, “the market alone, will not resolve the income differences” nor will the “higher educational attainment” of Aboriginal people (p. 4). They said “it starts by acknowledging the legacy of colonialism lies at the heart of income disparities” (p. 5). Speaking “from a strictly economic perspective, there are direct costs to maintaining large populations in poverty” and the loss of “opportunity costs from lower productivity” (p. 5). Sharpe, Arsenault, Lapointe and Cowan (2009) note that “should the aboriginal population’s levels of educational attainment and labor market outcomes reach non-Aboriginal 2006 levels, federal and provincial governments would

benefit from a total of \$3.5 billion” (2006 dollars) in additional tax revenue in the year 2026” (p. vii). Solving the more complex problems in Aboriginal adult learning caused by “the legacy of colonialism” as Wilson and MacDonald said could potentially save the government billions of dollars.

Connecting the Bodies of Literature in this Chapter Overview

The literature review was guided by the overarching research questions as follows; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? In this review, I focused on lifelong learning, adult education and self-directed learning. There were a variety of perspectives

Human beings have the “learning capacity and potentials” unlike any living being in the world (Welton, 2013, p. 19). Through the process of living, individuals have learned to live and work in the societies in which they are born. They have crafted “norms, values, and rules” to help them function effectively in their daily lives, yet deal with the “sources of conflict and tension” which “our species has to solve” (p. 20). It’s about “lifelong learning” where “the whole person” body and mind experiences life, and then transforms and integrates that “into the individual person’s biography” in order to become a changed person (Jarvis, 2013, p. 134).

Learning “beyond the traditional school years” (Cropley, 1989, p. 10) is about supporting the lifelong learning process of adult learners. In historic times, the adult education movement “in Colonial America” reflected the “agrarian context” and then “a moral and religious imperative in learning to read so that one could study the Bible” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 6). As more European settlers arrived in North America, there was the need for them to adapt to “a new land, a new agriculture, a new forestry, new unfamiliar threats to physical health, and new

people” (English, 2008, p. 87). They came with “the knowledge of certain educational programs and institutions with which they had been familiar in their former homes” (Selman et al. 1998, p. 34). For example, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) established “Radio” forums which were programs designed to provide educational information to the settlers in Canada. The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) created “film circuits” across Canada to reach as many people as possible (Selman et al. 1998, p. 47). Other adult education opportunities included the provision of reading, composition, mathematics, agricultural education, and apprenticeship training type of learning before “public educational authorities took up the task” (p. 35). The “education of adults” received a lot of support between 1945 and 1980 but then, in the 1990s, the programs were severely curtailed because of “a financial crisis” (English, 2008, p. 89). It became the “individual’s responsibility” to absorb the “cost” of their adult learning endeavors (p. 89). Despite the lack of programs and financial support, adult education never lost its’ appeal because humans desire “change” and growth (p. 90).

A humanistic approach facilitates “development of the whole person” which is about personal choice, freedom and responsibility (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 296). Rogers’ (1961) “student centered teaching” that he developed “through his work as a therapist” (p. 83) can be applied to education as well. Carrying out the five conditions of, the therapist’ understanding of the presenting problem, congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy and client experience has potential to evoke “the self-actualizing tendency of the students (p. 289). Self-actualization that Maslow (1954) described in his hierarchy of needs is the desired state of being for most people. For example, the lower level needs for food, water, and personal safety must be filled before the higher needs for love, self-esteem or quality of life are sought (p. 83).

Humanistic theory is considered to be the underpinning philosophical orientation in andragogy and self-directed learning.

Merriam et al. (2007) found that “there is no single theory” that explains how adults learn, “rather there a number of theories, models and frameworks” that may be considered (p. 103). The closest explanation is Knowles (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions that include a) the learner’s need to know the purpose for new learning, what that entails and how it applies to their lives b) learner’ self-concept, c) prior experiences of the learner, d) readiness to learn, e) orientation to learning, and f) motivation. Knowles (1980) defines andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults” (p. 43). Learners participate in a wide range of self-directed learning opportunities in a variety of learning settings whether formal, or informal.

Self-directed learning is viewed from the ‘collaborative constructivist perspective’ (Garrison, 1997, para. 4) that happens over the course of a lifetime. The adult learner is motivated to engage in self-directed studies such as “self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities” (Hiemstra, 1999, p. 10). Adult educators support self-directed learners through “dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes and promoting critical thinking” (p. 10). It’s about being a resource person to adult learners (Rogers, 1961, pp. 288-289).

Adult learning or *andragogy* is similar to that of children because it is about “experiencing, processing and reshaping existing knowledge...” (English, 2008, p. 305). Anishinaabe lifelong learning “occurs with or within Indigenous peoples, contexts, or worldviews” (English, 2008, p. 304). It has been impacted “by Aboriginal worldviews and Western colonial contexts” (p. 304).

Creation stories of the “Dene, Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux” all seem to indicate that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants in North America (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. vi). Their understanding of the Creator was that they were placed here at “the beginning of time” (p. 3). Along with the sacred gifts of human abilities, the land and natural resources, and spiritual principles that “regulate the peoples’ conduct in their many and varied relationships” (pp.10-11), they were instructed to respect all that they had been given. It is said that “all tribes” are “separated” through language (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 4) which was the main form of communication and the building of knowledge. Aboriginal people were heavily involved in “their political, social, educational, economic, and spiritual structures and institutions” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3). First Nations people had lived and worked in North America until they were instructed to move westward inland (Benton-Banai, 1998, p. 94).

Colonization brought significant change to Indigenous lifelong learning. First Nations people had to contend with the Canadian Constitution, 1982, the Treaties, Federal Indian Act, and Section 114 – 122 of the Indian Act that regulates the education of Aboriginal people (Justice Canada, 2014). A significant number of social problems (TRC, 2015) followed in the later years.

There were issues related to the Aboriginal adult education that began in historic times. The missionaries, in the early 1600s, provided “adult education” to tribal people (Ray, 1996, p. 62). Aboriginal leaders learned “to read and write” as the means to their future “survival and adaptation” (Burton and Point, 2006, p. 38). Indigenous “girls” were sent “overseas for training to prepare them either for marriage to French settlers or for a religious vocation” (p. 62). At the time, Aboriginal adult education had been mostly about “...Christianity, agriculture and land management” (p. 39). Indigenous communities were then moved closer to the settler’ villages

but when it was realized that each group was negative influenced by the “worst aspect of the other’s culture” they were separated (pp. 62-63). In the later years, after the adult education movement had been brought to Canada with the European settlers, “Aboriginal adults were often precluded from the activities to which such education enterprises were attached” (Burton and Point, 2006, p. 39). In contemporary times, Aboriginal adult learning is still not well understood but there have been a few highlights. Burton and Point (2006) in their research found “similarities” among Aboriginal learners in relation to their preferred learning environments which include the absence of institutional approaches, behavior shaping, and story-telling practices as methods for the transference of knowledge (p. 37). Other perspectives were found to be helpful as well. In keeping with the cultural norms, values, and practices that Indigenous parents have passed down to their children, it was found that “Native American students” react differently “from mainstream students” (Morgan, 2010, p. 45). For example, “to avoid appearing superior” they purposely “underachieve” (p. 46). Being accepted among ones’ peers is more important (p. 46). The process of working “together” is another trait as the learning is often enhanced through meaningful discussions and affirmative action taken (p. 46). Also, during the question and answer period, Aboriginal students tend to “reflect more” before providing responses (p. 46). Educators should take an interest in learning more about Indigenous history, values, traditions, regalia and so on (p. 45).

Over the years since, “demographics, globalization and technology” have changed the learning needs of adults to new complexities (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 25). Employers continue to be the “key source of support for job-related education and training” (Statistics Canada, 2008, Conclusion, para.2). The fact that Aboriginal people “are ranked among the poorest of

Canadians” (Wilson & MacDonald, 2010, p. 3) leaves room for further research on the issues related to Aboriginal lifelong, self-directed learning.

In response to the social issues that were identified in the 1996, RCAP report, and Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) findings in 2015, there were a number of calls to action that included in education. Without better approaches and methods that address Aboriginal adult learners needs, there would no possibility of lifting people out of poverty. According to Wilson and MacDonald (2010), “the legacy of colonialism lies at the heart of income disparities for Aboriginal people” (p. 5). Keeping “large populations in poverty” is economically draining (p. 5). Sharpe, Arsenault, Lapointe and Cowan (2009) said that the educational attainment of Aboriginal people and long-term career security has the potential to save the government billions of dollars.

In the overall assessment, the findings of the review indicate what has been said in relation to lifelong learning, adult education and self-directed learning. The review extended to Anishinaabe lifelong learning, the impact of colonization on Indigenous lifelong learning, and Aboriginal adult education. The review provided the rationale of the need to gather the perspectives of Anishinaabe Elders to help fill the gap in the literature. Building on earlier realities is the “essence” of “Indigenous education” (Cajete, 1994, p. 29). The research would benefit Aboriginal adult learners, adult educators, policy makers, funders, First Nations leaders, and interested groups. It should be noted here that Knowles andragogy and Mezirow’s transformational learning theory (to be discussed in a later chapter) were all white masculinist theories that they were trying to universalize. It would be helpful to understand how Anishinaabe perspectives might extend Western-based theories.

CHAPTER 3

Indigenous Research Methodology

The following were the overarching research questions guiding this study: What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? The interview guide (Appendix A) served as a technique for inviting “detailed discussion of” the “topic” (Charmaz, 2012, p. 26) which is a qualitative method for constructing knowledge. A “constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and known create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 13-14). I explain how I crafted the interview guide prompts, selected the First Nations communities and respondent group, followed the ethical practices that protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants, and carried out the procedures for collecting information. Data were sifted through drawing on “grounded theory methods” of analysis to capture emergent themes (Charmaz, 2012, p. xii). I then address the issues of trustworthiness, delimitations and limitations of the research methodology and design. I conclude the discussion with an overview of the chapter.

Indigenous Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Axiology

Anishinaabe ontologies are said to originate directly from the people’ humble and respectful understanding of God’ ultimate power over all life on Earth. Anishinaabe writer, Johnston (1976) describes how the Creator brought into existence all that we know and see as human beings. He said,

Kitchi Manitou (The Great Spirit) beheld a vision. In this dream, he saw a vast sky filled

with stars, sun, moon, and earth. He saw an earth made of mountains and valleys, islands and lakes, plains and forests. He saw trees and flowers, grasses and vegetables. He saw walking, flying, swimming and crawling beings. He witnessed the birth, growth, and end of things. At the same time, he saw other things live on. Amidst the change there was constancy. Kitche Manitou heard songs, wailing, and stories. He touched wind and rain. He felt love and hate, fear and courage, and joy and sadness. Kitche Manitou meditated to understand his vision. In his wisdom, Kitche Manitou understood that his vision had to be fulfilled. Kitche Manitou was to bring into being and existence what he had seen, heard, and felt. (p. 12)

Kitche Manitou then made the Great Laws of Nature for the wellbeing and harmony of all things and all creatures. The Great Laws governed the place and movement of sun, moon, earth and stars; governed the powers of wind, water, fire and rock; governed the rhythm and continuity of life, birth, growth, and decay. (p. 13)

Little Bear (2000) describes “Aboriginal philosophy as being holistic and cyclical or repetitive, generalist, process-oriented, and firmly grounded in a particular place” (p. 78). Cardinal (2001) found “commonalities among the 200 million or 300 million Indigenous peoples left in this world” (p. 180). He explains that “in Latin” the word “Indigenous” means “born of the land” or “springs from the land which is a context” (p. 180). The process of creating “something from an Indigenous perspective, originates “from that environment, from that land in which it sits” (p. 180). Wilson (2001) explains that, Indigenous “systems of knowledge are built on the relationships that we have, not just with people or objects, but relationships that we have with the cosmos, with ideas, concepts, and everything around us” (p. 177). Nurturing respectful relationships means that our “axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the

methodology...” (p. 177) that we propose to carry out. It is “about relational accountability or being accountable to *all my relations*” (p.177). The researcher’s ultimate goals are to respect Aboriginal knowledge and humanize First Nations people through the “methodology” (p. 177).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is described “as a set of interpretive activities” that “privileges no single methodological practice over another” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6). Furthermore, it “is difficult to define clearly” and “it has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own” (p. 6). Rather, qualitative research “implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (p. 8). Qualitative research belongs “to a family of approaches concerned with collecting in-depth data about human social contexts” (Robinson & Reed, 1998, p. 83). For example, the process “...has separate distinguished histories in education, social work, communications, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical science, anthropology, and sociology” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 15). Indigenous research fits well alongside those disciplines as well. Like everyone else in the world, First Nations people “have been trying to make sense of their world; they have been thinking about themselves, their place in the cosmos, their relationships to the newcomers to this land, and the changes occurring around them and to them” (Kulchyski, McCaskill & Newhouse, 1999, p. xi). Moreover the “people desire to examine and develop the systems of thought that Elders represent and to use this knowledge as the basis for the reconstruction of Aboriginal societal institutions” (p. xii). Cajete (1994) said, “A constant building upon earlier realities is a basic characteristic of Indigenous process.” (p. 28). I believe that because Aboriginal people are evolving in an ever-

changing universe, their lifelong learning experiences should be researched, studied, and disseminated.

Qualitative Researcher

Merriam (1998) explains that the qualitative researcher possesses "...certain personality characteristics and skills necessary..." to carry out the research (p. 20). The investigator "...must have an enormous *tolerance for ambiguity*...from designing the study, to data collection, to data analysis" because "there are no set procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step" (p. 20). Unfolding the research is left to the creativity of the researcher who must show *sensitivity* "to the context and all the variables in it including the physical setting, the people, the overt and covert agendas, and the nonverbal behavior" (p. 21). Of equal importance is that she or he is *a good communicator* who "empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently" (p. 23). Having the skills necessary to "conduct this type of research" are the desired traits (p. 24).

I developed a measure of tolerance for ambiguity as it related to the development of my study. There were no set procedures. I relied on the recommended guidelines for designing qualitative research studies and my own sense of creativity. I possess a certain degree of sensitivity to the context as well, and the skills necessary to establish rapport with the research participants. I can relate to the life experiences of the Anishinaabeg because I had been forced to live through the cultural genocide practices as well, and the resulting impact thereafter. As a professional, I carry contextual knowledge and a deep sense of commitment to understand the perspectives of the Anishinaabe Elders on lifelong learning and the ways in which the perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe adult learners in their self-directed learning.

Qualitative Research Design

The structure of my qualitative study includes, the introduction (my personal story, research problem, purpose of the research, significance), the literature review, data collection, data analysis, discussion, need for further research, and implications for policy, theory and practice. The research design is “a flexible set of guidelines...” that “involves a clear focus on the research question” and “the purposes of the study...” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 14). It is “a series of stages used in the research process to enable the researcher to build up a precise and systematic plan or blueprint of work to be done” (Robinson & Reed, 1998, p. 96). I drew heavily from qualitative research methods.

Qualitative Methods of Collecting and Analyzing the Data

In this section, I present the methods I used to gather the data, analyze the findings, and decide on interpretations made. The “issues of identifying” respondents, “selecting and preparing” data collection tools, and “formulating procedures” fall within the responsibilities of said researchers (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 105). There should be a clear understanding of “what you did and how you thought about it in order to appreciate the links among the research problem, the method, and the results” (p. 105).

Storytelling. Gathering and constructing knowledge has been with Indigenous people since the dawn of civilization and it was carried out through storytelling traditions. Stories are “such a universal part of human communication and learning that it may be that story is one of the most basic ways the human brain structures and relates experience” (Cajete, 1994, p. 138). The Cree believe that, “a three-way symbiotic relationship unfolds between storyteller, story, and listener” (p. 140). A well nurtured story “tells them useful things about life” (p. 140). Indigenous people have always valued the preservation of “their stories, languages, customs,

songs, dances, and ways of thinking and learning because they sustain the life of the individual, family, and community” (Cajete, 2005, p. 76).

Interview guide. I constructed an open-ended interview questionnaire guide with the intent of having the research participants share as many of their stories as they wished. The interview questions were crafted around the overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? It was important to understand what their lifelong learning processes were, how that was impacted during colonization, and what could be done to help the Anishinaabeg overcome the impact. Having some “well-planned open-ended questions and ready probes can increase your confidence and permit you to concentrate on what the person is saying” (Charmaz, 2012, p. 29). Well-crafted “open-ended, non-judgmental questions” helps foster the willingness of respondents to share their “stories” (Charmaz, 2012, p. 26). Rubin and Babbie (2014) offer guidelines for creating open-ended questions. The researcher should make items as “clear and unambiguous” as possible (p. 241), “avoid double-barreled questions” (p. 241), ask “relevant” questions (p. 243), “short” questions “are best” (p. 243), no negative terms such as *no* or *not* (p. 243), and stay away from “biased items and terms” (p. 244). Of equal importance is to ensure beforehand that the participant would “be willing to answer” the questions (p. 241). Asking for further clarification during the “interview” is another helpful method for understanding the perspectives of the research participants (Charmaz, 2012, p. 26).

Community selection and respondent group. I invited the Anishinaabe Elders for conversational interviews. The Indigenous Elder is considered “a very highly respected older person who has knowledge of the ancient spiritual and cultural ways of her or his people”

(Kulchyski et al. 1999, p. xix). They are considered specialists “in ceremonies, traditional teachings, language and heritage as it applies to mind, body and spirit” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 42). Our research should include Indigenous Elders for “the traditional knowledge” that we, as researchers are asking them to “impart” (Lavallée, 2009, p. 27). The standard practice of bestowing the title of Elder as such is based on the decision of community members to recognize them as so. I do not provide additional information about the Elders at this point but will describe more about them later in the findings.

I used purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Rubin and Babbie (2014) offer descriptions of the methods (p. 385). For purposive sampling, they said, “... you may appropriately select your sample on the basis of your own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research aims – in short, based on your judgment and the purpose of the study” (p. 385). Their description of an element might include “people” or “families” or “social clubs” and so on (p. 389). With the information Rubin and Babbie (2014) provided in relation to purposive sampling, I conducted my field research in the Northern half of Treaty 3 territory. I selected four First Nations communities based on closest proximity to my place of residence. The reason I chose the communities was owing to financial constraints I had experienced at the time. I had limited research dollars to cover the cost of my travel expenses (gas and meals) and then provide for the Elders honoraria as well. I then used the snowball sampling technique to gather the names of the research participants for interviews. The method simply “refers to the process of accumulation as each located” participant “suggests” other participants (p. 387).

Ethics and protection of participants. Barber, Fitzgerald, Howell and Pontisso (2006) define *ethics* in the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary* as “moral principles or rules of conduct” (p.

320). Ethical behavior in any “given profession or group...is typically associated with morality” that “deal with matters of right and wrong” (Rubin & Babbie, 2001, p. 74). The concerns “date back many decades to an era in which studies on humans could be conducted with little scrutiny of their ethics, an era in which some research became notorious for its inhumane violations of basic ethical standards” (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 95). One of the “examples were the Nazi atrocities in medical experimentation that were conducted during the Holocaust” (p. 95). Researchers must abide with the strictest moral conduct to ensure the ethical treatment of all those involved in the research.

Rubin and Babbie (2014) caution that our “research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study...” (p. 98). We should never reveal “information that would embarrass them or endanger their home lives, friendships, jobs and so forth” (p. 98). Christians’ (2011) description of conducting ethical or moral research are very helpful in terms of applicability to a variety of settings. He identifies four guidelines that include informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy (65). *Informed consent* means that the participation of respondents in any research study must be voluntary or free of “physical or psychological coercion” and “their agreement must be based on full and open information” (p. 65). *Deception* in any research “is not ethical” (p. 65). Even the “possible deception of criminals, children in elementary schools, or the mentally incapacitated are no longer credible” (p. 65). Researchers must ensure the *privacy and confidentiality* of the research participants as well. Personal information must be kept “secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity” (p. 66). The use of “pseudonyms and disguised locations” are the recommendations (p. 66). The findings should present in a strengths-based way particularly as it relates to Indigenous research. *Accuracy* means that the “data are accurate” as

“a cardinal principle in social science codes...” (p. 66). The practice of “fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances are...unethical” (p. 66). Christians’ description of ethical guidelines supports the Anishinaabe protocol or the right rules of behavior.

I followed the University of Alberta, Research Ethics Board (REB) guidelines for conducting qualitative research. This included the formal ethics application, interview guide (Appendix A), letter to the Chiefs seeking permission to carry out research in their First Nations communities (Appendix B), letter of invitation to the respondents that included description of the study (Appendix C), consent form (Appendix D), and confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). As an Indigenous person working within Indigenous communities, I also needed to follow the protocols relating to Indigenous worldviews. Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) stress the importance of understanding “...formal and long-established ways, procedures and processes that First Nations persons are required to follow when seeking particular kinds of knowledge that are rooted in spiritual traditions and laws” (p. 2). A person who is seeking that kind of knowledge must “approach those things in a clean way” (p. 2). We select “...a clean place away from human habitation where sweat lodges, ceremonies, fasts, and quiet meditation could be carried out” (p. 2). Though the focus of Cardinal and Hildebrandt’ (2000) research was on Treaties in consult with the Elders, the recommendation for right rules of behavior during the “quest for knowledge journey” (p. 2) applies well to Aboriginal research in any given context.

In keeping with the Anishinaabe protocol for gathering knowledge, I offered my personal tobacco and gifts to a traditional Elder who carries a ceremonial lodge and asked for a traditional spiritual ceremony. After I explained the purpose of my study along with the long-term benefit of understanding the perspectives of the Elders on lifelong learning and how the perspective might be used to effectively support Aboriginal adult learners in their self-directed learning, I

was granted permission to go ahead with the research. I have since participated in sweat lodge ceremonies for quiet meditation, guidance and wisdom to carry out the research in a respectful and empowering way.

Castellano (2004) cautions researchers to refrain from taking a know it all stance of “Aboriginal life” (p. 105). An “outsider vantage point” of view is not appreciated as it may present “distortions” (p. 105). Conducting research in First Nations communities begins with the “right rules of behavior that are intimately related to who you are, the deep values you subscribe to, and your understanding of your place in the spiritual order of reality” (p.103). Permission must be granted by the political leadership (p. 108) before interviewing the Elders. Ethics is about “the interaction and relationship between the researcher” and the respondents “as well as the effect inquiry research has on populations” (Schwandt, 2007 as cited in Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 109).

Procedures for collecting the data. I travelled to the nearest First Nations community to meet with the political leader. I offered tobacco to the Chief along with the written letter seeking permission to conduct research in their community (Appendix B), copy of the invitation letter (Appendix C), and consent form (Appendix D) that would be given to the respondents. After I was granted permission to interview the Elders in the community, I was provided with the name of the first research participant I should interview. My decision to interview the Elder was based on my initial meeting with her and the level of enthusiasm she displayed with regard to my research. She wanted to be part of the process. Before I began the interview, I reviewed the content of the invitation letter (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) that I had previously left with the first Elder during our initial meeting. The respondent gave signed consent to be interviewed, to be audiotaped, to have the audiotapes transcribed on to paper, to be

quoted, to use a pseudonym in place of real identities, to have the interview audio recordings and transcripts in Valerie Fisher' possession for safekeeping over a period of five years, and to receive a copy of the executive summary. Upon completion of the first interview, the respondent was offered a small monetary gift of \$100.00. I expressed my deep-felt gratitude to her. At the close of our meeting, and in keeping with the snowball sampling technique, I was provided with the name of the second research participant that I gratefully listed in my journal. At the conclusion of the interviews, I travelled to the second community. I followed the same process of securing political leadership consent and research participant consent before I interviewed the respondent who then provided the name of the next participant and so on. A total of 15 interviews were gathered over a period of six months (April 16, 2015 to mid-October, 2015).

I scheduled a second meeting with each of the 15 Anishinaabe Elders to verify my thematic findings. At the conclusion of those second visits, I offered the remaining allotted honoraria of \$25.00 to each of them. Again, I expressed my sincere gratitude to them for their participation in my research study. I remained within the guidelines that Rudestam and Newton (2007) recommended when they said, researchers should provide "...a detailed description of the exact steps taken to contact your research participants, obtain their cooperation, administer your instruments" (p. 102), and begin the analysis of data drawing on techniques described by Charmaz (2012) in her descriptions of grounded theory methods.

Data analysis and grounded theory. Grounded theory "became popular as a research methodology through a successful 1967 book by Glaser and Strauss" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 43). Quantitative researchers accepted their methods of analyzing research findings because their approach fell closely in line with their positivistic traditions. Reducing "qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables" was the standard practice of the times (Charmaz,

2012, p. 5). A qualitative approach to data analysis was considered “impressionistic, anecdotal, unsystematic, and biased” in the 1960s (p. 5). In the later years, “a growing number of scholars have moved grounded theory away from” the positivistic methods of data analysis (p. 5).

Charmaz is considered “a leading exponent of the constructivist approach to grounded theory” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 248). The methods are “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2012, p. 2). With the “mountain of impressions, documents, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of what has been learned” (Denzin, 1998, p. 313). This is called “*the art of interpretation*” as, “Nothing speaks for itself” (p. 313). The qualitative researcher “is the primary instrument” for carrying out the process (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). It’s about gathering “up-close information by talking directly to people” in their “natural setting” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 43). Because people are human, “...mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, and personal biases interfere” (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). No matter the interpretations, qualitative researchers “have always defined their work in terms of hopes and values” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 6). Qualitative research has been described as naturalistic, grounded, constructivist, richly descriptive, flexible, emergent, inductive, and “comprehensive” (Merriam, 1998, p. 9).

Grounded theory is an appropriate analysis tool for working with Indigenous people because of the similarities between Western-based and Anishinaabe-based methods. For example, in the Anishinaabe culture, the standard practice of approaching Indigenous Elders begins with the offering of tobacco before a conversation takes place. The stories that the Elder shares are richly descriptive, inductive and comprehensive. Through the process of analysis, the main construct or Anishinaabe teaching emerge out of the stories that were shared. The

individual who approached the Elder walks away a more informed person. It's about the construction of knowledge.

The process of Western-based data analysis begins by “organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through...coding and organizing themes, representing data, and forming an interpretation” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 181). It was about building “patterns, categories, and themes from the ‘bottom-up’ by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information” (p. 43). Charmaz (2012) provided an example of interview responses she collected to show how the process of coding worked in relation to the way “a conceptual analysis of the materials” was carried out (p. 2). Charmaz’ research study focused on young people and how they respond to rapid onset of a serious illness and disability (p. 3). She said “several initial codes stood out to me” after the interview and that was ‘being changed,’ ‘concentrating on what’s important’ and ‘learning limits’” (p. 3). As more information is gathered, we “compare...our codes with the next person we talk with, and the next person, and the next” until “our analytic grasp of the data begins to take form” (p. 3). Equally helpful is the use of “word-by-word” (p. 50) “line-by-line” (p. 50), and “focused coding” (meaning the process of reviewing earlier codes) (p. 57). Flexibility allows researchers to “return to the data and make a fresh coding” as many times as possible (p. 71). Creswell (2003) called this “...a cycling back and forth from data collection and analysis to problem formulation and back” (p. 183). As the research progresses, there is little need to continue collecting the data “when your categories are ‘saturated’” meaning there is “nothing new happening” or you keep “finding the same patterns” (Charmaz, 2012, p. 113).

The next stage “extends through the process of writing...” (p. 151). Researchers must “explicitly claim why” their “grounded theory makes a significant contribution” (p. 156). At the

same time, the research should present in empowering ways because "...the writer produces the public text that comes to the reader" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 15).

I followed the recommendations relating to data analysis. I transcribed the interviews or data verbatim on paper then I conducted a preliminary read through while keeping in mind the different patterns, categories and themes. I used a highlighter to identify words, lines and then did focused coding or reviewed earlier codes. I cycled back and forth from data collection and analysis to problem formulation and back until the same categories or themes were saturated or finding nothing new before forming an interpretation. There were five emerging themes that include observational learning, experiential learning, disrupted bicultural learning, transformational bicultural learning and contemporary bicultural learning. I then wrote a two-page synopsis of the main themes which included as evidence what the Elder had said. This is when I visited with the Elder a second time. I offered the research participant a copy of the first interview and a two-page synopsis of what she or he had shared that supported my interpretational analysis and then we discussed what my findings were. I followed the same process with each of the research participants. I did not share what the other respondents had said with other participants either through conversation or on paper. All had agreed with my final analysis. There was the understanding at the conclusion of our second visit that the research participant should contact me later if there were any changes she or he wished to make. I heard from no one. The process was about taking the bottom up approach or allowing themes to emerge out of the stories and then having my final analysis validated by the Elders. It was about verifying the truthfulness of my interpretations.

Trustworthiness

A number of scholars reference the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability,

dependability and confirmability as the means to validating the goodness of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In 2018, the methods are viewed as “still popular today in qualitative reports” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 256). Although, the criteria have “been well received, their parallelism to positivistic” traditions “makes them suspect” but nevertheless, they help fill the “quality criteria in constructivism” despite the need for further “critique” of the methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114).

It is standard practice for qualitative researchers to employ “validation strategies” to document the accuracy of their studies based on the participant’s, researcher’s, and reader’s or reviewer’s lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 259). Participants play important roles through the methods of “prolonged engagement and persistent observation” and “member checking” or “seeking participant feedback” (pp. 261-262). The process enables the participant to feel comfortable with the presence of a researcher in the research environment and then offers the opportunity for the respondent to validate the interpretational analysis of the findings as well. Researchers also play key roles in the validation process. She or he has opportunities to clarify her or his own “researcher bias,” or engages in “reflexivity” which is a method that helps readers understand how and why the lens of the investigator has shaped the interpretations made (p. 261). The researcher also generates “external audits,” as well for readers or reviewers to review the research (pp. 262-263). Another method is for the researcher to generate “a rich, thick description” for readers as well to determine whether the “information” is transferable to, “other settings” (pp. 262-263). The validation strategies will be discussed further in the following sections to document how I carried out my study while keeping in mind the criteria of trustworthiness.

Credibility. I used the methods of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checking or seeking participant feedback to validate the *truth value* of what my interpretations were based on what the 15 research participants had said. The research “inquiry can be affected by factor patternings which produce effects of non-interpretability” (Guba, 1981, p. 83). The methods of *prolonged engagement and persistent observation* are methods that are participant based. It means that “we spend as much time in the field as is feasible during the study and prior to beginning data collection” for the purpose of familiarizing “ourselves with the site and participants” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 262). My visits with each of the Elders in four First Nations communities presented no real issues among community members as the people are familiar with my visibility and participation in their traditional social gatherings. The understanding in First Nations communities is that the Elders often receive visitors who reside out of province or elsewhere. No one in the community views the visits with suspicion. The time I spent in each of the communities during the interviews lasted for approximately three to four hours or slightly longer depending on the nature of the stories that the Elders shared in both English and Anishinaabemowin. I was careful not to close the interview prematurely especially when they were in the middle of sharing their lifelong experiences. I ensured that enough time was spent with the research participants. I carefully *observed* (Guba, 1981, p. 85) their psychological and emotional states to see if they were becoming fatigued or disinterested. Closing the overall interview was mutual. I remain in long-term respectful relationships with the Anishinaabe Elders. After I typed the interview transcripts and prepared a two-page synopsis of my interpretations, I scheduled second visits with the Elders. I provided English transcripts and an English summary for member checks. To establish the *truth value* (Guba, 1981, p. 79), I verified my understanding and interpretations of the thematic discoveries of observational

learning, experiential learning, disrupted bicultural learning, transformational bicultural learning, and contemporary bicultural learning with each of the 15 research participants. All of the Elders validated the final themes. Our meeting lasted for approximately one hour. The purpose was to carry out the method of member checking or seeking participant feedback. The *member checks* process “goes to the heart” (Guba, 1981, p. 85) of the criterion because here, researchers must test “the *credibility* of their findings and interpretations with the various sources (audiences or groups) from which data were drawn” (p. 80) in order to construct multiple realities and create knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 13-14). The hope is that the methods of prolonged engagement, persistent observation and member checks that are all participant based will lead to “credibility” and produce findings that are “plausible” (p. 83).

Transferability. I employed the methods of theoretical/purposive and snowball sampling techniques as it helps readers or reviewers to determine whether the findings *might apply* to other contexts as well. The research “inquiry can be affected by situational uniqueness which produce effects of noncomparability” (Guba, 1981, p. 83). *Theoretical/purposive and snowball sampling* helps “to maximize the range of information uncovered” (Guba, 1981, p. 86) through the process of selecting research sites (First Nations communities) and *gathering multiple perspectives or the stories* of 15 Anishinaabe Elders. The researcher then goes through the process of “interconnecting the details, using strong action verbs, and quotes” in rich thick descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263). Over time, however, further research is required as the old becomes obsolete. The problem of *transferability* is “...tied to the times and the contexts in which they are found” (Guba, 1981, p. 80) and for this reason the “degree of similarity fittingness between two contexts” (p. 81) “decay” over a period of time (Cronbach, 1975) (as cited in Guba, 1981, p. 80), then new studies must be conducted to update the research.

The hope is that the methods of theoretical/purposive sampling and generating rich thick description will lead to “transferability” and produce findings that are “context-relevant” (p. 83) in a given space and time.

Dependability. I helped to ensure the readers or reviewers, role of validation was facilitated through the audit trail and confirmability audit methods which are processes used to determine *consistency*. The “inquiry can be affected by instrumental changes which produce effects of instability” (Guba, 1981, p. 83). I created for my committee, a research proposal or “a tracking document at the beginning of a study on which we detail our key decisions including rational...” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 262). The *audit trail* “takes the form of documentation (the actual interview notes taken, for example) and a running account of the process” using a journal (Guba, 1981, p. 87). Once the study or dissertation for example, is completed, it is standard practice for the supervisory committee to conduct a *dependability audit* to ensure that the “...procedures used fall within generally accepted practice” (p. 87). This “deals primarily with the *processes* of the inquiry” (p. 87). The committee then examines “whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 262-263). The hope is that the methods of audit trail and confirmability audit lead to “dependability” and produce findings that are “stable” (p. 83).

Confirmability. I provided personal background information with the intent of highlighting issues surrounding researcher bias and reflexivity. The “inquiry can be affected by investigator predilections which produce effects of bias” (Guba, 1981, p. 83). Here the researcher describes her or his past experiences of what is being studied whether that is “through work, schooling, family dynamics, and so forth” followed with explications of how that has “shaped the findings, the conclusions, and the interpretations drawn in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018,

p. 229). Qualitative researchers are “especially aware of” researcher bias “because they understand the multiple realities that one encounters (including multiple value systems) and the role that their own predispositions can play when they use themselves as instruments” (Guba, 1981, p. 81). While I understand the subjectivities with which each of us holds, the validation method is about keeping a perspective of researcher *neutrality* while allowing grounded theory to emerge out of the data or stories of the research participants as accurately as possible.

I bring psychological and emotional baggage to this research. I mentioned earlier in the paper that I was privileged to have known what it was like to experience the first six years of my childhood life, living with my Anishinaabe/Ojibwe parents before I was sent to a Canadian Indian Residential School. During my stay in the residence, I personally experienced cultural genocide practices, and child abuse at the hands of my caregivers. At home, I lived a poverty-stricken lifestyle, saw family violence, experienced the loss of family, and became homeless. Because of my background, I lacked the education to secure full-time employment in the later years which compounded the other problems associated with the impact of colonization. I understand the context and role I now play after having lived through my own tumultuous life journey.

In the later years, I had the opportunity to observe in my First Nations community, the kinds of social problems that other families were experiencing as well, and I came to the conclusion that prevention might be the answer. In search of more effective approaches in the helping process, I became a self-directed, lifelong learner. I studied in the fields of business, accounting, psychology, social work, women’s studies and Indigenous Peoples Education. A well-rounded education, and career development experiences, offered a wider perspective and sense of appreciation for the value of learning, and the construction of knowledge. I would like

for others to experience similar accomplishments and feel a sense of unity I felt meeting people from all walks of life. I am very committed to helping Aboriginal people in their lifelong learning.

It was my hope that with the consult of the research respondents we may come to some form of consensus of the need for on-reserve education to help in the area of prevention. For example, I believe in the idea of constructing educational institutions directly in First Nations communities that would include full federal and provincial support. Adult learners would attend the schools if they could stay right in their own communities. Adult educators could develop culturally relevant instructional design and then work to create safe and supportive learning environments. Prevention education could be one area of lifelong learning that should be developed further to help families at risk particularly now that First Nations people are recovering from the impact of colonization. The Elders would probably agree with those ideas but they may say that the building of educational institutions on-reserve is not the solution, really, but everything to do with some other approach that we have yet to learn. I will make every effort to present the findings based on their perspectives on lifelong learning.

In sum, to validate the trustworthiness of qualitative research, the recommendation is for researchers to carry out the methods embedded in the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is the responsibility of qualitative researchers to ensure that the participants, researchers and readers or reviewers participate in the “validation strategies” that document the accuracy of their studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 259). At best, the researcher can only hope to “persuade the other of its relative trustworthiness” (Guba, 1981, p. 88).

Delimitations

The recommendation is for researchers to delimit or “narrow the scope of” their study (Creswell, 2003, p. 148). This might entail more of a “focus on specific variables or a central phenomenon delimited to specific participants or sites or narrowed to one type of research design...” (p. 148). This is within the control of the qualitative researcher.

A qualitative research methodology seemed appropriate given the studies “typically permit the use of subjectivity to generate deeper understandings of the meanings of human experience – often with a much smaller sample of research participants than is typically the case in quantitative studies” (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 79). Despite the seemingly lack of information that may be garnered through the process, it is still beneficial to include the Anishinaabe perspective in the Indigenous canon on lifelong learning. As mentioned earlier, the “constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and known create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 13-14). Before proceeding to the interview stage, there were crucial steps taken to ensure that the study would be carried out as safely as possible for all those involved in the research. I secured permission from the University of Alberta, Research Ethics Board (REB) to conduct field research in First Nations communities near central Canada. Equally important was that, I followed the Anishinaabe protocols for gathering knowledge. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the communities and research participants. I secured permission from four Chiefs to interview 15 Anishinaabe Elders both male and female in the communities. The purpose was to garner responses to the research questions that was designed to help understand the perspectives of the Anishinaabe Elders on lifelong learning, and how the perspectives might

be used to effectively support Anishinaabe adults in their self-directed learning. I paid close attention to the stories that they shared in response to the interview guide that was organized around the research questions. Data analysis was employed to help capture initial themes that emerged during the first interview transcription which were refined further following fourteen additional interviews. The process fits well with the methods for developing grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2012). The intent was to make original and significant contributions to the field of Indigenous lifelong learning.

Limitations

Another recommendation is for researchers to discuss the “limitations” that “identify potential weaknesses of the study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 148) that are not within the control of the researcher. The cost to carry out the research allowed for a total of 15 research participants to be included in the study. Geographical distance to First Nations communities placed limits on the number of research respondents who were asked to participate.

Quantitative researchers tend to view qualitative investigators as “journalists, or soft scientists” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). Qualitative research is considered “entirely personal and full of bias” (p. 4), unreliable, impressionistic and not objective.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 9). The positivistic belief is that the “truth” can only be found through “measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4) or numbers not qualitative processes or words.

Conducting field research in First Nations communities might be problematic in some cases because of trust issues. Years ago, during my Master’s program research, I was refused permission to carry out a study in one of three Aboriginal communities in the United States. I was devastated and embarrassed over the verbal assault we were subject to from the political

leadership while in the middle of our presentation in front of a room full of people. At the suggestion of one of the Elders, we packed our papers and exited the building. I was mystified given we were Aboriginal researchers that is, until I came across the issues related to previous field research in Aboriginal communities. Smith (1999) in her writings on decolonizing methodologies said that Indigenous cultures across the globe have been subject to unwanted observations, and literary scrutiny. Often the representations have not been very respectful of Indigenous people. When descriptions are written from a Eurocentric lens, readers are often left with a deficit-based view of Aboriginal ways of life. Trust has always been a problem and that proved true again for the present research when one of five First Nations Chiefs I approached declined my offer to interview the Elders in their community. A man she brought to the second meeting took offense to my request while angrily stating that they were tired of researchers coming to their communities and asking the leadership to sign this and sign that just to take advantage of them, and then steal their traditional Indigenous knowledge like the researchers at one university had previously done. I withdrew my request and left the community. Dr. Jose da Costa, my Research Supervisor offered sincere empathy and helpful suggestions for approaching the other Chiefs. Securing permission to conduct research in four First Nations communities went without further issue.

Another problem the qualitative researcher faces, is having little control over selection of respondents. Given that purposive and snowballing sampling methods I employed seemed the best method for approaching four First Nations communities and then securing 15 research participants for interviews, there may have been issues of nepotism and favoritism. This may have played a factor in the respondents' choices and opposing or thought-provoking interview responses of those they disliked missed.

Weber (1986) in her discussion on the nature of interviewing cautions that the participant may conceal important information, exhibit their “best behavior” (p. 68) or offer responses they think are acceptable (p. 67). The information that they provide may not have been as truthful as one would have hoped. Nevertheless, as researchers, we do our best to place the participant at ease to help foster conditions that evoke genuine sharing. The interview guide prompts and asking for further clarification, and explanations without being too probing or inquisitive helped during the visits.

The qualitative researcher may miss important opportunities for more in-depth understanding of the topic (Weber, 1986). For example, the interview transcriptions may weaken “someone’s oral language” because the power of voice loses “its power, clarity and depth, even its meaning” (Weber, 1986, p. 71). Furthermore, the descriptions in our writing may be unintentionally “incomplete, reductive, and insufficient, and at worst, misleading, perverse, fraudulent, and deceptive” (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 49-50). *Interpretation* according to Schwandt (2007) “is the act of clarifying, explicating, or explaining the meaning of some phenomenon” (pp. 159-160). A process of “...listening to the tapes helps recapture the tone of voice, the twinkling to the eyes, the pained expression, the cluttered desk, the laughter, the leaning forward, and all the things that are lost in a written transcript” (Weber, 1986, p. 71) has potential to harness a more in-depth understanding. The *crisis of representation* is such that “no interpretive account can ever directly or completely capture *lived experience*” (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 49-50). While I consider myself to hold insider status within the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe nation that does not guarantee a perfect understanding of First Nations worldviews. I may not have interpreted the stories in a way that reflect their true meaning as intended by their tellers.

The Elders' responses to the interviews I carried out resonated with my own Indian residential and public day school experiences. Having them voluntarily share those memories with me offered a sense of mutual closeness and togetherness that we were not alone in those sad and painful times in our lives. Keeping a focus on what followed thereafter as lifelong learners was far better than we could have imagined when we were children living through the abuse. The conversations we shared had been communicated in both English and Anishinaabemowin.

Chapter Overview

The study was designed to address the following research questions: What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning and how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? The sanctity of human life demands the highest expectations of researchers to respect Indigenous ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological orientations when they propose to carry out research in First Nations communities. It's about respecting the Anishinaabeg and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge.

A qualitative research methodology seemed the best fit (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to carry out this study. I used purposive and snowballing sampling techniques (Rubin & Babbie, 2014) to select four First Nations Chiefs and then secure permission from them to interview six female and nine male Anishinaabe Elders. Community selection was based on financial constraints that forced me to search for research participants closest to my place of residence. First Nations communities are located across a wide geographically dispersed area with the furthest being a two-hour drive and the closest thirty-minutes. I followed the University of Alberta ethical guidelines and Anishinaabe protocols for conducting the research. I informed all

those in my research of what my responsibilities were in relation to their privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and strengths-based writing.

The interview guide was designed using open-ended, informal questions (Weber, 1986) that invited detailed discussion (Charmaz, 2012) of the stories (Cajete, 1994) the Anishinaabe Elders shared. Closing of the interviews was mutually agreed upon. I immediately transcribed the first interview and did the analysis of data using the grounded theory methods of coding, “word-by-word,” “line-by-line” and “focused coding” to capture emergent themes (Charmaz, 2012, pp. 50-57). I followed the same sequence of analysis with the remaining 14 interviews until the data was “saturated” or no new themes were emerging (p. 113). Creswell (2003) refers to the process as “a cycling back and forth from data collection and analysis to problem formulation and back” (p. 183). All of the 15 research participants validated my interpretational analysis during our separate, second visits. With the grounded theory that emerged out of the findings, I began writing my final research paper while being mindfully respectful of presenting a strengths-based approach of First Nations people.

I kept in mind the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used a journal to document all that I had done to fill the criteria. I then discussed the delimitations and limitations of my study.

In the following four chapters, I present the findings in response to the interview questions that was developed around the overarching research questions in my study. Then I provided a synthesis of the perspectives of the research participants which was organized under emergent themes. I incorporated the findings with the previously literature to show parallels, contradictions and gaps. I provide an overview in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF HELPING THE ANISHINAABEG IN THEIR LIFELONG LEARNING

Based on “what is known of traditional methods of education in Aboriginal communities, lifelong learning is a familiar, ancient construct” (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 36). Burton and Point (2006) said that, before colonization the people were planters, designers and creators of hunting equipment and watercrafts, and food preservationists. For example, “the Tsimshian, Haida, and Nootka” built “seagoing dugout canoes with carved prows, custom-built totems and door poles, and ceremonial masks, trading tokens, and tribal insignias arose from the guild model of master, journeyman, and apprentice” (p. 37). First Nations people were actively involved “in complex education processes, many of which would have been adult education” (pp. 36-37). The knowledge was passed down “from one generation to the next” through stories, ceremonies, and active social role development using “games, copying expert behavior and mentoring” (p. 37). Moreover, there was “the heterogeneous nature” of the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada such as the “Inuit fishers and sealers of the Arctic North, sedentary agriculturalists such as Huron and Iroquois, woodlands hunter-gatherers such as the Cree and Dene, and west-coast fishing and trading peoples such as the Kwagiulth and Stolo” (p. 37). Much has been said in relation to the lifelong learning process of Aboriginal people in general based on what Burton and Point (2006) described but, what about the Anishinaabeg who reside on the Northern half of Treaty 3 territory? It was important to invite the Elders for interviews to understand what their life experiences have been. The interview questions were organized around the following overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these

perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? Gathering the Elders perspectives helps fill the gap in the literature and sheds light to the interview question: *What was the process of helping the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning?* A discussion will follow the synthesis of findings and the literature to show the parallels, and contradictions.

Findings

The 15 Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders in this study shared their perspectives. The data were organized to reflect what they meant about the process of Anishinaabe lifelong learning.

Observational and experiential learning were two themes that emerged out of the stories. I highlight the main ideas of what the research participants said. Brief excerpts are included below.

Observational Learning

Anishinaabe worldview. In the old days (before colonization) everyone was privileged to know the *Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin* (Ojibwe language) (Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf said, in my “family” line, “our Elders” used the language “to teach us” everything we needed to know to live a good life (Interview 15). Lifelong learning is “an ongoing never-ending process” (Wolf, Interview 15). “Every day, when you wake up, that’s when it starts” and “it’s not just learning from books, there’s other ways of learning” (Interview 15). Because the Anishinaabeg “are always connected to the land, to the trees, to the water...” I truly believe, this is “what helped me to overcome some of the obstacles and resistance in the classrooms” I went to in the past (Interview 15). My concern today is that “some students” have lost their connections to the Earth which is probably attributed to the way that the school “curriculum is set up” (Interview 15).

Spirituality. Colton explained that “there’s different learning, especially with the Anishinaabe” (Interview 4). He said “one of the greatest things there is, is spirituality that they (young males) learn before they turn into men, like the vision quest” (Interview 4). The process helped Anishinaabe kweg (women) who also practiced similar sacred spiritual traditions that included going to “a sweat lodge” for “healing” (Veronica, Interview 12). Jacob even had a “painting” made of the “vision” he experienced so he could pass down the meaning of the gift to his family (Interview 5).

Seeing or Looking or Smelling

Learning takes places through “all the senses” (Ann, Interview 3). For example, our sense of smell helps us to understand “if someone is cooking, you know what they’re cooking...” (Interview 3) when you go over there and look. It’s about “seeing” or “looking” and then “doing” (Interview 3).

Childhood learning. The process begins when the infant is “born” (Colton, Interview 4). If you observe the child, “the first word that a baby learns is *mama*” and that’s so universal” (Interview 4). As children mature, they go through “the different stages of life” (Interview 4). John said, but it “doesn’t matter” who you are, “learning is done the same way” (Interview 11).

As a child “you tend to remember what your mother, your grandfather and your grandmother said to you when you were small, even though you’re running” and playing... “in your subconscious” mind “you pick up all these things” (Dakota, Interview 8). Children absorb all kinds of information. They’re “just like a sponge” (Interview 8).

Respect. Jennifer said, as children they were “taught to respect” all living beings (Interview 1). Her mother often said, “treat people as we would like to be treated” (Interview 1). Respect all life including our Mother Earth (Interview 1).

Self-reflection. The key to wellness is for people “to understand themselves” and the reasons they engage in “behavior” that no longer works (Lee, Interview 14). For example, those who are prone to pain and problems should evaluate themselves honestly (Interview 14). He was referring to people who are more or less mired in addictions or those who stay in abusive “relationships” (Interview 14). The origin of those behaviors must be healed.

Self-care. John said we have to look after our own “health” (Interview 11). In the old days, it wasn’t unusual for First Nations people to live to be “one hundred” years old because our diets were a lot better back then (Interview 11). People learned how to harvest off the land and even the season in which to search for traditional foods and medicines. It was about health and wellness. Nowadays they’re coming down with incurable diseases such as “diabetes and cancer” (Interview 11). “I don’t think we had diabetes in the 1600s or 1700s” (Interview 11). Now they’re trying to find cures (Interview 11).

Experiential Learning

The process of doing. Jennifer remembered that her family had “travelled a lot and lived in tents” (Interview 1). They “lived right off the land hunting and fishing” (Interview 1). They harvested “wild rice” in the fall (Interview 1). She said, we lived “a good life and a happy life for a while” (Interview 1). As a family, we “did everything together” (Interview 1). Parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles were actively involved in their daily living activities. All children helped with the everyday chores of hauling water on laundry day, cleaning fish and ducks, packing wild rice in bags, hauling fire wood and doing other vital daily living activities (Interview 1). Her family had lived and worked together as a fully functioning unit (Interview 1).

Food preparation. My grandmother knew “how to dry berries, blueberries and make what they call pemmican” (Carson, Interview 2). Pemmican was simply smoked or dried meat that was pounded to separate the fibers into small pieces and used for snacks or in soups. Carson said “I helped her do that and I think I could do it myself if I had some support you know and the time to do it because it is a big job” (Interview 2). Furthermore, “if kids could be there to watch and participate” because “that’s how you learn, you learn by doing” (Interview 2). “Experiential learning” is important because that way of life is “good for our people” (Interview 2).

Living on the land. Ann remembered that she and her family had lived on the land (Interview 3). Every spring they “use to go on the trap line” (Interview 3) to hunt and fish. The Anishinaabeg respected “the land” and they were “happy to be out there” but “when the Europeans came, why, did they call this wilderness, that wasn’t wilderness, that was home to us, and that’s what I always tell the young children” I teach (Interview 3). I want them to know our true history. On our home land, we learned “to share and care for the people, I said, we helped them” (meaning the settlers) (Interview 3). “I still get lonesome when I see the open lakes and islands” (Interview 3) because I liked living there.

Passing down knowledge. Colton spoke fondly of the “grandmother” who spent quality time with him when he was a young boy. She had been instrumental in providing the Anishinaabe teachings to him when he was a young man (Interview 4). His grandmother had known the importance of passing down knowledge to her grandchild. One example that Colton shared was when she took him out on the land and taught him how to organize his land-based survival activities. Colton said “...we’d go as far as we could, judging how long it took us to get there and then, getting off our canoe, making fire, making some tea and heating up our lunch over the fire” while allowing enough time to return home before the sun went down (Interview

4). Organizing my land-based activities within the allotted time frame would mean nothing to me “if it wasn’t for her” (Interview 4).

Teaching and Learning

The understanding is that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants in North America. Derek said “Native people were here” before colonization (Interview 10). Anishinaabe learners were “taught” what they needed to know in whatever area of knowledge they were studying (Interview 10). They knew the language or “words of that society...” and then the knowledge was “passed on to the next generations” (Interview 10). He said “you learn all these things as a native person” (Interview 10).

Story-telling. Jennifer shared the memories of the time when she lived with her Anishinaabe family (Interview 1). Jennifer’s mother would sit and hold her while she told stories of the history of their community and “how beautiful” the place was (Interview 1). I do not recall all the stories she said because “I was only a little girl but those were happy memories for me, I loved her very much” (Interview 1). It was about traditional parenting.

Feeling a “part of.” The practice of passing down traditional knowledge was part of the Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 6). She said “for me it was already done before I was born, like you know it was passed from my great grandmother, to my grandparents, to my parents and to extended family” (Interview 6). Her grandparents were traditional “healers” (Interview 6). She said “when you’re about eight years old” they’d say “come, we’re going for a walk” and “you just go and you don’t ask questions (ha ha)” (Interview 6). They would say, “you carry this” and “you carry that” (Interview 6). Betty never minded carrying the items for them because she knew they would be travelling to the “different communities” to help others (Interview 6). Once the ceremonies began, she said, I would “sit there and listen to them and you are part of”

(Interview 6) a family that still practiced their Anishinaabe teachings of caring for the well-being of others. When the visits were over, we returned home to the “island over here just down the river” and “the only people I knew was my mom and dad, grandparents and extended family like aunts and uncles and that’s the only ones we all lived with” (Interview 6). Furthermore, “I never knew there was a world out there” (Interview 6).

Talking to our children. As a parent and grandparent, “I did a graph of things that happened to me as a child growing up and the different life events and my daughter did it and my grandson did it” (Therese, Interview 9). Therese said “it means looking at things that happen and trying to find meaning in them so that you can move on, so that you understand sort of thing and gain wisdom” (Interview 9). The process enables our children to “appreciate” their own lives when they know the hardships their parents and grandparents have gone through (Interview 9).

Learning about our culture. The Anishinaabeg should take an active interest in knowing everything there is to know about their own “cultural” backgrounds (Owen, Interview 13). They must strive to understand their own “history” and the “7 teachings” that was passed down to them from parents, grandparents, and “people in the community” (Interview 13). They also have to learn about taking “responsibility” and showing “compassion” in all of their endeavors (Interview 13).

Synthesis: Support the Observational and Experiential Learning

Processes of the Anishinaabeg

Perspectives of the Elders

The *Anishinaabe teachings* and *Anishinaabemowin* (language) provided the foundational guidelines for living a good life (Wolf, Interview 15). Learning was said to be “an ongoing never-ending process” (Interview 15). Spirituality was vital to the learning process because that

laid the foundation for respectful relationships with all living beings on Mother Earth. Colton said, “one of the greatest things that there is, is spirituality” (Interview 4). People went on “vision quest” journeys (Colton, Interview 4; Jacob, Interview 5) to understand the “7 teachings” (Owen, Interview 13), embark on their healing journeys through the “sweat lodge” (Veronica, Interview), understand what their social roles would be, and how that should be carried out over the course of a lifetime.

Anishinaabe children underwent a period of *observational learning*. Childhood learning was vital to the development of the Anishinaabe child. This began as soon as the baby was “born” (Colton, Interview 4). It was believed that the child was greatly influenced by everything that was in their immediate environment as they were going through “the different stages of life” (Interview 4). Whatever was observed was stored in the “subconscious” mind (Dakota, Interview 8). Opportunities for learning filtered in through their natural human “senses” (Ann, Interview 3). Ann said it’s about “seeing” or “looking” and then “doing” (Interview 3). Children learned how those observations should be carried out. For example, Jennifer’s mother taught her to “treat” others as she would like “to be treated” (Interview 1). Relationship building was demonstrated in the respectful daily interactions between family members, their neighbors, and incoming visitors. Children also observed the basics of self-care for them to understand how that would lead to “health” and well-being (John, Interview 11). If practiced, people would not come down with diseases such as “diabetes” or “cancer” (Interview 11). Prevention was a must. Taking care of psychological health was just as important. Learning how to change ineffective “behavior” that no longer worked was carried out through the process of self-reflection (Lee, Interview 14). People need “to understand themselves” better to change what does not work for

what does (Interview 14). This refers to addictions and unhealthy “relationships” that people tend to find themselves in (Interview 14).

The process of “doing” or *experiential learning* had been a way of life for the Anishinaabeg as well (Carson, Interview 2). Common survival depended on the skills that the people acquired over a life time as this enabled them to live successfully and independently on the land. They were actively involved in all aspects of daily life. This included, living in tents, fishing, hunting, berry-picking, wild rice harvesting, gathering of traditional herbal medicines, home building, preparing and preserving food, cleaning house and so on (Jennifer, Interview 1; Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3; Colton, Interview 4).

Passing down traditional knowledge was another important practice of the Anishinaabeg. Jennifer shared the “happy memories” of being held by her mother (Interview 1). Jennifer experienced what traditional parenting was all about when she was a child. She said, “I loved her very much” (Interview 1). Betty remembered the selfless work that her grandparents were involved in when they travelled to other communities to help others (Interview 6). She said, I felt a “part of” during those times (Interview 6). Furthermore, “the only people I knew “at the time was my parents, “grandparents and extended family” and others (Interview 6). As a child, “I never knew there was a world out there” (Interview 6). Analytic tools such as graphs in modern day was instrumental to helping Therese’ family find meaning in the stories and gaining the “wisdom” necessary to function effectively and successfully in their own lives as adults (Interview 9). People need to take an active interest in learning their “cultural” backgrounds (Owen, Interview 13).

The Literature – Discussion

The idea that “native people were” already “here” (Derek, Interview 10) before

colonization prompted further research as to what the implications might be in terms of understanding the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg. Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) in their discussions with the “Dene, Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux” (p. vi) Elders learned that the Creator had placed First Nations people in North America at the “beginning of time” (p. 3). The Anishinaabeg knew the *Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin* and this helped them to lead a good life (Interview 15). There was the understanding and knowledge of the Great Power in our universe.

Creation story. In the Ojibwe creation stories, “Kitchi Manitou” (Johnson, 1976, p. 149) fashioned “Mother Earth” (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 2) to house and nourish all life on our planet. The “Great Laws of Nature” (Johnson, 1976, pp. 12-13) as he eloquently described bring order to the way all of creation functions. Man was the last to be lowered, and he was instructed to live peacefully and respectfully with all living beings (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 3). It is said that “all tribes” originated out of this “Original Man” (p. 4). As tribal people, we are all related but “separated only by our tongue or language” (p. 4). It was through “Aboriginal languages” (Statistics Canada, 2011, para. 1) that Indigenous nations, “evolved their respective relationships to the lands given to them by the Creator” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3). Colton shared the time he spent with his grandmother who took him out on the lake in a “canoe” so he could learn how to manage safely on the land (Interview 4). First Nations people were able to provide for all of their needs “though the resources of the natural world around them” (INAC, 2017, Part 1 – Early First Nations: The six main geographical groups section, para. 1). The understanding was that, the Ojibwe lived on “the eastern shores of North America” before they were instructed by their spiritual leaders to move inland westward (Benton-Banai, 1998, p. 94).

Grandfather teachings. Gratitude for Mother Earth and all living beings was an attitude of deep “respect” among the Anishinaabeg (Jennifer, Interview 1). This was part of the sacred knowledge embedded in the “7 teachings” (Owen, Interview 13). Benton-Banai (1988) describes what that was from his perspective (p. 64). He said:

1. To cherish KNOWLEDGE is to know wisdom
2. To know LOVE is to know peace
3. To honor all of the Creation is to have RESPECT
4. BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity
5. HONESTY in facing a situation is to be brave
6. HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation and
7. TRUTH is to know all of these things (p. 64)

Of equal importance was that, the Creator was “thanked for life, light and gifts” (Johnson, 1976, p. 149). Thanksgiving ceremonies were recurring celebratory events that happened daily and even two to four times per year (p. 144).

Observational Learning

In the old days, the children were “considered gifts from the Creator” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81). Traditional learning began when the infant was “born” (Colton, Interview 4), and “a baby’s first learning experience” would have been “watching” (Broker, 1983, p. 16). Ojibwe babies were “laced” in cradleboards and situated at various locations in the community where they could *observe* their families “at work and at play” (Broker, 1983, p. 16) while being “watched over” (p. 17) by family members. It was about “seeing” or “looking” or “smelling” (Ann, Interview 3). Knowledge was gained through the “look, listen” and “learn” approach

(Burton and Point, 2006, p. 37). Children “tend to remember” what they experience in their environments because they’re like sponges (Dakota, Interview 8).

Children are naturally “passive” learners (Knowles, 1980, p. 45) because of the lack of maturity. They are completely dependent upon adults for “their needs” aside from the “purely biological functions” (p. 45). Because of this natural “condition of complete dependency...they expect the will of adults to be imposed on them” in all of their daily activities whether at home, playground, church, community and school (p. 45). Children are not concerned with the *need to know what* they will be learning and *how* it applies to their lives (Knowles, 1990, p. 57).

Children are not mature enough to be “self-directing” as they still require guidance (p. 45).

Experiential Learning

Colton had said “there’s different learning, especially with the Anishinaabe” (Interview 4). He said, “one of the greatest things there is, is spirituality that they (young males) learn before they turn into men, like the vision quest” (Interview 4). This was a lifelong learning process. At the age of twelve or thereabouts, “boys were deemed ready to begin their quest for vision” (Johnson, 1976, p. 125). This was a carefully thought out practice that was supervised by knowledgeable Elders who ensured the safety of individuals as they were going through the process. Following the “purification ceremonies, a boy was conducted by his father to a place of visions, a remote solitary place” (p. 125). There he “was left alone in a specially constructed lodge, to contemplate life, his being and existence” (p. 125). Discovering “one’s meaning through peace and silence, was not easy” (p. 125) but it was necessary. The purpose was to strive for “self-understanding, enlightenment of self, while at the same time, suggesting destiny and even career” (p. 126). Anishinaabe kweg (girls and women) were privileged to the same vision quest practices as well (p. 142). Going to ceremonial lodges such as the “sweat lodge”

(Veronica, Interview 12) was part of the process for *self-understanding, healing* (Lee, Interview 14), and even passing “vision” down to family (Jacob, Interview 5). *Respect* for all life (Jennifer, Interview 1) including their own meant that the people were expected to actively engage in their own *self-care* first and foremost because then they were able to nurture stronger familial relationships, and build more sustainable communities (John, Interview 11).

With the foundational structures of spirituality in place, the next phase of development began. The Anishinaabeg were expected to engage in experiential learning though “perfection” was not the ultimate goal (Legarde-Grover, 2006, p. 394). The process of *doing* begins “when you wake up” (Wolf, Interview 15). Colton had shared fond memories of his “grandmother” who provided the land-based survival knowledge he would need when it came time for him to live off the land (Interview 4). The practice was about “future learning” (Parker, Interview 7). With the lessons learned, Colton was able to support his family, and contribute to the wellbeing of his neighbors (Interview 4). Anishinaabe families had been actively involved in all sorts of daily living activities on the “land” such as “hunting and fishing” (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). Carson’s grandmother had been a very wise and knowledgeable Elder who provided plenty of opportunities for him to watch and learn as she prepared and preserved food (Interview 2). He said “that’s how you learn, you learn” by watching and “doing” (Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3). This was an important stage of learning for “kids” (Carson, Interview 2). Wolf shared:

No one was baptized here. We were all Anishinaabe. They kept the teachings. Hardly anyone was ever sick. The men trapped. We picked wild rice. We picked blueberries. We used the medicines from the ground. We built our own houses. We travelled around as well, supporting ourselves. We were independent within ourselves and in our

communities. When I was a child we still practiced our old ways of life, being Anishinaabeg. (Interview 15).

It was about fitting themselves to function at optimum levels in a changing world. As Wolf said, lifelong learning is “an ongoing never-ending process” (Interview 15). Adults become “producers or doers” as they take on more responsibilities in their social roles (Knowles, 1980, p. 45). Aboriginal people were agriculturists, tool makers, water craft builders, food preservationists, preparers of hides and pelts and so on (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 36). The “processes” embedded in “adult education” would have been an ongoing “complex” pursuit (p. 36).

The Way Human Beings Learn is Universal

John’s perspective that “learning is done the same way” and it “doesn’t matter” who you are (Interview 11) holds important considerations. His thoughts resonate with the Western-based research that has been carried out in relation to human learning over the years. The only difference lies in the cultures that people find themselves.

Jarvis (2007) said “it is important to note that we are born in relationship and that we live the whole of our lives within a social context” (p. 2). He explained that, “learning is a process of transforming the experiences that we have” as we interact with the world around us (p. 2). The “experience itself begins with body sensations, e.g. sound, sight, smell and so on” (p. 2). Learning begins through “all the senses” (Ann, Interview 3), and then “we transform these sensations and learn to make them meaningful to ourselves” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 2). Individuals will experience “the different stages of life” as they mature (Colton, Interview 4). Jarvis (2007) considered this as “the first stage of human learning” (p. 2). Children make meaning out of their experiences that they then use “as the basis for either” their “future learning,” or “taken-for-

grantedness in” their “daily” lives (p. 2). Adults tend to filter out that which has been experienced previously such as “a word (a sound)” (p. 2). Jarvis holds “that the processes of learning from novel situations is the same throughout the whole of life, but children have more new experiences than do adults and hence there appears to be some difference” (p. 3).

Legarde-Grover and Keenan (2006) have identified Ojibwe education as ongoing observation, reflection, and action or experiential learning (p. 394). Observational and “experiential learning” had been a way of life for the Anishinaabeg (Carson, Interview 2). It was about *grasping life experience* and then *transforming* those in a meaningful and balanced way to construct “knowledge” (Kolb, 2015, p. 51). Individuals who employ the “balancing style” possess “the ability to adapt” because they weigh “the pros and cons of acting versus reflecting and experiencing versus thinking” (Kolb, 2015, p. 145). Kolb’ (2015) “experiential learning theory is described as a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction” (pp. 50-51). Kolb’s theory “portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience – Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) – and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience – Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE)” (p. 51). It involves “immediate or concrete experiences” that “are the basis for observations and reflections” (p. 51). The “reflections are” then “assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn” (p. 51).

People tend to “use and prefer different learning strategies or styles that correspond to how effective and comfortable they are when learning” (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 354). Kolb’s learning style inventory “contains four primary learning styles (doing, thinking, watching, and feeling)” (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 354). As well, individuals tend to fall into the “four learning

style types” of accommodator, assimilator, diverger, and converger” (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 354) that Kolb expanded further “into a nine-style typology that better defines the unique patterns of individual learning styles and reduces the confusions introduced by borderline cases” (Kolb, 2015, p. 143). With “balance” at the center, the eight styles of initiating, experiencing, imagining, reflecting, analyzing, thinking, deciding, and acting, flow out from there that is similar to spokes on a bicycle (p. 147). This plays out in a number of different ways. For example, the individual who employs the “initiating style” has “the ability to initiate action in order to deal with experiences and situations” (p. 145). “It involves active experimentation (AE) and concrete experience (CE)” (p. 145). The “experiencing style” tends to draw “on concrete experience (CE) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO)” (p. 145). The individual who employs the “imagining style” has “the ability to imagine possibilities by observing and reflecting on experiences” (p. 145). “It combines the learning steps of concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO)” (p. 145). The “reflecting style” uses “reflective observation (RO) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC)” (p. 145). The “analyzing style” integrates and systemizes “ideas through reflection” (p. 145). “It combines reflective observation (RO) and abstract conceptualization (AC)” (p. 145). The person who uses the “thinking style” employs “abstract conceptualization (AC) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO)” (p. 145). The “deciding style” uses “theories and models to decide on problem solutions and courses of action” (p. 145). “It combines abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE)” (p. 145). Finally, the individual who employs the “acting style” tends toward “active experimentation (AE) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC)” (p. 145).

Kolb references “Piaget’s (1952) definition of *intelligence* as the balance of adapting concepts to fit the external world (accommodation) and the process of fitting observations of the external world into existing concepts (assimilation)” (p. 146). For example, “the imagining style” tends to open “alternatives and perspectives on experience (diverging), while the deciding style” seeks to close “on the best option for action (converging)” (p. 146). The latter concepts “originated in Guilford’s (1988) structure of intellectual model as the central dialectic of the creative process” (Kolb, 2015, p. 146). Kolb’s theory demonstrates how various kinds of life experiences might apply to his experiential learning model. While keeping in mind “the reality of biological maturation and developmental achievements” of “cognitive structures that organize thought and action” his “experiential theory of development focuses on the transaction between internal characteristics and external circumstances” or “between person and environment” (p. 198). His model “has been widely used and adapted in the design and conduct of countless educational programs” (p. 52).

John’s comment that “learning is done the same way” opens the door to wider perspectives (Interview 11). The implication suggests that Western theories may actually benefit Aboriginal adult learning as well. Programs and services can be developed and implemented while keeping traditional Indigenous learning styles in mind.

Constructing and Disseminating Traditional Anishinaabe-Based Knowledge

The transmission of knowledge has been practiced since early humankind. A skilled individual who acted in the capacity of adult educator would engage with individuals of all ages in a never-ending teaching and learning cycle. This was carefully planned and then carried out by older more experienced Elders who were in charge of this important endeavor. It was a common and collective effort born out of Indigenous oral traditions. It means that “there are

deeper levels of meaning to be found in every teaching/learning process” (Cajete, 1994, p. 29). There was “something for everyone to learn, at every stage of life” (p. 29). It was about lifelong learning, adult education and self-directed learning.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) in their discussion have said that qualitative research “is an interactive process shaped by one’s personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting” (p. 5). Furthermore, the process “has separate and distinguished histories in education, social work, communications, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical science, anthropology, and sociology” (p. 15). Although this refers to qualitative research from a Western perspective, the assumption that Indigenous people share similar methods can be safely assumed. The understanding was that the Elders “carry the traditional teachings, the ceremonies, and the stories of all our relations” (Lavallee, 2009, p. 27). The *Anishinaabe teachings* and *Anishinaabemowin* (Wolf, Interview 15) had been “passed on to the next generations” (Derek, Interview 10) by parents, grandparents, and “people in the community” (Owen, Interview 13). Storytelling was one the methods used to share information, and the practice still happens in modern day. Jennifer remembered being held by her mother during storytelling times (Interview 1). Although Jennifer didn’t remember what the stories were, it was the memory of what traditional parenting was about that she shared because this was one of the Anishinaabe teachings. She said “those were happy memories for me” (Interview 1). The importance of calling on the Elders to expand their social roles as teachers and mentors is tantamount to retaining that knowledge. Therese had used “a graph” to help her family understand what she had been through (Interview 9). The process enabled them to share stories and develop a sense of “appreciation” for their own lives in a meaningful way (Interview 9).

Caring for the wellbeing of others was still being practiced when Betty was a child. She shared the story of the times when her family travelled to the other communities to help others (Interview 6). Carrying the different items for her grandparents was more of a privilege than a chore because she knew they were travelling there to help others. Once the healing ceremonies had begun, she said, I remembered I would “sit there and listen to them and you are part of” a caring family (Interview 6). The *sense of belongingness* that Betty felt resonates with what Maslow (1954) said when he described his hierarchy of needs (p. 80). For Betty’s family, after the lower level needs of food, water, shelter and belonging had been met, they moved on to the higher levels needs of love, self-esteem and self-actualization (pp. 89- 92). Self-actualized persons tend to hold a realistic and acceptant view of themselves and others, think of the well-being of their families and neighbors, and value “spontaneity and independence” (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 378).

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I presented the perspectives of the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who were invited for interviews. The interview question; *What was the process of helping the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning?* was organized around the following overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? I presented the findings at the beginning of the chapter, then I provided a synthesis of the research participants perspectives that was organized under the two main themes of *observational learning and experiential learning*. The research participants’ perspectives resonate with the literature, offer contradictions, and helps fill the gap relating to the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg as the following sections indicate.

In the old days (before colonization) the Anishinaabeg knew the *Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin* (Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf said that, the Elders in my “family” taught us everything we needed to know to live a good life (Interview 15). Learning was viewed as “an ongoing never-ending process” (Wolf, Interview 15).

Creation stories of the Anishinaabeg provide further insight into Anishinaabe worldview. It was said that the Creator lowered “Original Man” here to live in “brotherhood” among all living beings following the creation of “Mother Earth” (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 4). The Anishinaabeg originated from this “Man” but woman preceded him because all life comes from her (Mother Earth) (p. 2). Indigenous people were gifted with a multitude of “Aboriginal languages” and dialects (Statistics Canada, 2011, para.1) specific to each geographical locality, and they “evolved their respective relationships to the lands given to them by the Creator” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3). The beliefs of the Anishinaabeg is that the “people are always connected to the land, to the trees, to the water...” (Wolf, Interview 15). They were able to provide for all of their needs through the land and natural resources “around them” (INAC, 2017, Part 1 – Early First Nations: The six main geographical groups section, para. 1). This had been an ongoing process even as they were instructed to move inland westward from the east coast (Benton-Banai, 1998, p. 94). Derek said that “native people were” already “here” before colonization (Interview 10).

Jennifer had been taught to “respect” all living beings (Interview 1). The values that are embedded in the seven grandfather teachings of knowledge, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth were foundational ideals that the people were instructed to live by (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64). Because of the “7 teachings” (Owen, Interview 13), and the land that had

been given to the people for survival purposes, thanksgiving ceremonies were held in honor of the Creator's "life, light and gifts (Johnson, 1976, p. 149).

Observational learning was a teaching process that provided the basic rudiments of what the Anishinaabeg needed to know before actually engaging in experiential learning. Ojibwe babies were propped in cradleboards at various locations in the community, and from that vantage point, a young child would have observed their families and neighbors at work and play (Broker, 1983, p. 16). It was about "seeing" (Ann, Interview 3) or "watching" (Broker, 1983, p. 16), and absorbing "like a sponge" (Dakota, Interview 8). Knowles (1980) identifies children as "passive" learners (p. 45).

Experiential learning was a way of life for the Anishinaabeg (Carson, Interview 2). It began with the spiritual. The "vision quest" process (Johnson, 1976, p. 125) was carefully planned and implemented to ensure the safety of children and adults as they were seeking "self-understanding" and life calling direction (p. 126). It was about a hands-on, teaching and learning process though "perfection" was not expected (Legarde-Grover, 2006, p. 394). Wolf said it begins "when you wake up" (Interview 15). Harvesting food and gathering traditional medicines was part of the teaching processes related to their regular seasonal chores (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3; Wolf, Interview 15). They were actively engaged in "complex...adult education" processes (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 36). "Aboriginal people" were agriculturalists, makers of hunting equipment and watercrafts, food preservationists and so on (p. 36).

John's perspective that it "doesn't matter" who you are, "learning is done the same way" (Interview 11) raise a host of questions in terms of what the implications may suggest. The way that people make sense of their lives depends on the "social context" in which they find themselves (Jarvis, 2007, p. 2). Because "we are born in relationship" with those around us that

more or less defines our beliefs, values, practices, and traditions (p. 3). As people experience “sound, sight, smell and so on,” they transform “these sensations” to “make them meaningful” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 3). The beginning stages of learning happens through “all the senses” (Ann, Interview 3). Lifelong learning happens as people journey through “the different stages of life” as Colton said (Interview 4). Jarvis (2007) maintains that “the processes of learning from novel situations is the same throughout the whole of life” for both children and adults (p. 3). The only difference is that children tend to “have more new experiences than do adults” (p. 3).

Legarde-Grover and Keenan (2006) said that, the teaching processes within Ojibwe education is about ongoing observation, reflection, and action or experiential learning. Kolb (2015) defines his four-stage experiential learning cycle as concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation and active experimentation. This resonates with what the research participants said. The process was about *grasping life experiences* and then *transforming* those in a meaningful way (Kolb, 2015, p. 51).

Traditional Anishinaabe knowledge was passed down by the Elders in the family and “people in the community” (Owen, Interview 13). Derek had said that the Anishinaabeg were “taught” the language or “words of that society...” and then the knowledge was “passed on to the next generations” (Interview 10). Derek said “you learn all these things as a native person” (Interview 10). Legarde-Grover and Keenan (2006) explained that “the oral tradition is the bedrock of traditional Ojibwe teaching and learning” (p. 393). It was about understanding the “deeper levels of meaning to be found in every teaching/learning process” (Cajete, 1994, p. 29). There was “something for everyone to learn, at every stage of life” (Cajete, 1994, p. 29).

CHAPTER 5

HOW COLONIZATION IMPACTED THE PROCESS OF HELPING ANISHINAABE CHILDREN IN THEIR LIFELONG LEARNING

Before the “arrival of the Europeans, the First Nations people were autonomous, self-sufficient and free to decide their destiny” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 272). With the process of colonization beginning to unfold in historic times, Aboriginal ways of life would have changed. As early as the 1500s and 1600s, a number of “competing colonies were established throughout the America’s” (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, European Colonial Settlements and the Fur Trade, para. 1). Competition was fierce “for control of the rich interior of North America” (Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, Military Alliances and Conflict, para. 1). As matters grew worse, the British joined forces with the Iroquois Confederacy and then “the seven-year war” with the French began (para. 1). Because Britain subsequently became “the primary European power” they took control of “the valuable commercial fur trade” (British Era – 1764-1860, The Royal Proclamation of 1763, para. 1). According to INAC (2011) “their main interest in the ‘New World’ was commercial” (Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, European Colonial Settlements and the Fur Trade, para. 2). With the “land surrender treaties” (British Era – 1764-1860, Treaties and a Growing Colony, para. 2) and “colonial fraud and abuses against” Indigenous Nations “and their lands” (Colonial Conflict: British and French era – 1534-1763, Military Alliances and Conflict, para.1) that followed in the ensuing years, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 “established very strict protocols for all dealings with First Nations people” (British Era 1764-1860, The Royal Proclamation of 1763, para. 2). Because of the “inequality of bargaining power,” there was a sense of “honor” by “the Crown” to ensure that the powers filled their “fiduciary duty” in the

best interests of Aboriginal people to help mitigate unfair and unethical treatment (Hogg, 2007, p. 631). The document “became the first public recognition of First Nations rights to lands and title” (British Era 1764-1860, The Royal Proclamation of 1763, para. 2). Canada, Privy Council Office (1991) concluded that, “the relationship between Canada’s first peoples and non-aboriginal Canadians and the sharing of land and resources have been major challenges” (p. 1) since then.

The Treaties (INAC, 2011, British Era – 1764-1860: Treaties and a Growing Colony, para. 2), British North America Act, 1867 (Justice Canada, 2014), and Federal Indian Act, 1876 (Justice Canada, 2014) had been established in the best interests of First Nations people in Canada. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) report indicates that the onslaught of European legislation and “policies” were designed to disempower Aboriginal people (Looking Forward Looking Back: Canada as a Fair and Enlightened Society, para. 2). For example, Indigenous “participation” in Aboriginal spiritual ceremonies had been deemed “a criminal offence” (Policies of Domination and Assimilation, para 12). The creation and implementation of Indian “residential schools” had been decided without the consultation of First Nations people (para. 14). Then there was the forced relocation “at will” policy that caused further harm (para. 16). People were forced to live on “reserves” (Dakota, Interview 8). They couldn’t “leave the reserve without permission” (Interview 8). Poonwassie (2001) believed that the “Europeans created many stresses on the survival systems of First Nations people” (p. 272).

Given that the life experiences of Indigenous people are wide and varied owing to the diverse nature of First Nations in Canada, there was the need to understand, through the interview process, how the Anishinaabeg were impacted. The interview questions were organized around the following overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the

perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? Gathering the perspectives of the research participants helps fill the gap in the literature and sheds light to the interview question: *How did colonization impact the process of helping Anishinaabe children in their lifelong learning?* A discussion will follow the synthesis of findings and the literature to show the parallels and contradictions.

Findings

Although the interview questions were intended to focus on their experiences as adult learners, they provided significant background information about their childhood experiences that merits consideration. The reason for including those learning experiences here in this chapter, is to try to understand how that played an influential role in the decisions they made later as adult learners when it came time for them to decide their education and career paths. *Disrupted bicultural learning* was the emergent theme meaning there was disruption to their (Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe) education. Brief excerpts are included below to highlight what the Elders said.

Disruption to Western-Based Education

Jennifer. She was first enrolled in a public school at the age of nine (Interview 1). Her mother transported Jennifer there “by canoe” (Interview 1). At the age of twelve, she had been ripped away from her family and sent to a school that was a thousand miles away (Interview 1). Being away from them was very difficult. In high school, she had aspirations of becoming “a nurse” but they refused to consider her for those studies (Interview 1). Jennifer was sixteen years old when she dropped out and sought employment “in factories” far from home (Interview 1).

Carson. Before going to “public school,” his grandfather had taught him to speak English (Interview 2). Carson said, that his grandfather spoke “a mixture of Anishinaabemowin and English” (Interview 2). There was just no other way. He said “we had to have some kind of footing when we got there, so that’s why he (my grandfather) did that” but “even though we were going to school, we still learned” our Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin at home (Interview 2).

Ann. At the age of nine, Ann first enrolled in “public school” (Interview 3). She said “I stayed home with my parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles” during the time I was going there (Interview 3). I was treated well. Ann said “the friends I had there (in the school) they’re not Anishinaabe” and yet today “they still...call...” to invite me out for “lunch” (Interview 3). I like that we’re still “close” friends (smile) (Interview 3).

Jacob. The struggle to block the memories of “being tortured” at the Indian residential school when he was a young child became a way of life (Interview 5). He said “I wasn’t ready to go there at that point in time” (Interview 5). When Jacob transferred to a day school closer to his First Nations community, he said “it was still the same thing, you still got the old physical beating every day in the classroom” (Interview 5).

Betty. At the age of five, I was first enrolled in the Indian “residential school” because “it was a must” (Interview 6). The “RCMP that’s the ones that took us from our community” (Interview 6). My brother and I were sent there by “train” (Interview 6). But then “my dad would hitch hike, I mean get on the train and bring us back home” and “I think he did that three times” before they sent us further “away because it was too close for my dad to come and get us” (Interview 6). I found it strange because “when you woke up, you were in a different building

with a different bunch of kids” (Interview 6). Betty was seventeen years old when she finally left the Indian residential school (Interview 6).

Parker. I was not allowed to “grow long hair” or even practice my cultural art activities in the public school (Interview 7). Parker loved to carve. He said “I’d go in the woods and find a stick or a rock or something that you know resembles like a bird or anything like that” (Interview 7). Then “I’d carve it and I’d carry it in my lunch bag and all of a sudden, you know, I’d dig in there and I’d put it down and all the kids would look at it” (Interview 7). While his friends were enjoying the carvings, the teacher came along and took them away saying “you’re not getting that until after school is over, there’s no time for this” (Interview 7). Parker knew even in elementary school that the practice of his Anishinaabe culture and the “language” was frowned upon; this extended to include even the art (Interview 7).

Dakota. The “Anishinaabe” teachings and Anishinaabemowin was a way of life before they enrolled him in the Indian residential school when he was “12 years old” (Interview 8). During class times, Dakota found it odd that they never mentioned the “Anishinaabeg” in their history books but to voice his opinions in class would have invited more physical and verbal attacks from the teachers (Interview 8). Being struck “in the back of the head” was something he never liked even for minor behaviors such as “talking to a girl in class” (Interview 8). When Dakota graduated grade eight, they transferred him from the Indian Residential school to a non-Aboriginal “high school” about 300 miles from home where he finished “grade ten” (Interview 8). He really liked “public school” (Interview 8). They had “13 shops” he could go to such as “auto mechanics, sheet metal, drafting...welding...and carpentry” (Interview 8). He had passed all of the courses. Then there was no funding for him to go further. He had no other choice but

to drop out at the age of “sixteen” (Interview 8). Dakota returned to his home community and began working doing odd jobs (Interview 8).

Therese. After losing her mother, she ended up in “the child welfare system” for a number of years (Interview 9). Therese said “my first foster mother reminded me a lot of my own mother” (Interview 9). They both taught me the basic life skills of parenting and housekeeping (Interview 9). I developed a strong “work ethic” because “you know in order to get anything in life, you have to work hard for it” (Interview 9). Therese had done exceptionally well in school but she dropped out before completing “grade twelve” (Interview 9).

Derek. The Indian residential school that I had gone to had a “prison-like” feel to it (Interview 10). The caregivers were very rigid and quite abusive. I was often “punished for getting high marks and speaking my (Anishinaabemowin) language” (Interview 10). In the midst of the abuse, Derek said “my rebellion was to excel and get high marks” (Interview 10). Being transferred to a local public school close to home to finish “Grade 7 and 8” made no difference because even they expected all of us to shed their Anishinaabe spirituality and embrace European “religion” (Interview 10). Derek “played” in “hockey tournaments” and learned to speak “English” and “French” through television programs (Interview 10).

John. After graduating “Grade 8” John had no other choice but to drop out of school for a period of time (Interview 11). He said, “that fall I didn’t go back” because I wanted to stay home and look after my baby brother (Interview 11). At the age of “seventeen” John went back to school to earn a “grade 10” for future employment possibilities (Interview 11).

Veronica. When she had come down with an illness in the Indian residential school, “the nurse really beat” Veronica up and then “locked” her “in the infirmary” with strict instructions not to see anyone; but, she said, “my girlfriends” came to visit with me anyway (Interview 12).

One day “the nurse caught them coming up the stairs” (Interview 12). Veronica said “she really beat me up” again and “even knocked my tooth out” (Interview 12). “I even lost my nail” when the nurse “slammed the door on my” hand (Interview 12). She had reported the abuse to her “dad” but in those days, Aboriginal parents were powerless to defend their children against the violence that was carried out in the schools (Interview 12). All he could say at the time was “it’s ok my girl” (Interview 12).

Owen. At the age of five, he “was taken” to the Indian residential school (Interview 13). Owen experienced severe physical abuse and almost lost his life a few times. He remembered waking up to “ice pads all over” his “head” after a terrible beating (Interview 13). Another time, he “ducked away from” the heavy men’s boot he saw coming toward him (Interview 13). He said, the residential schools’ boy’s keeper “would have killed me that day” (Interview 13). Then his care givers put him in a boxing ring to spar with the older boys. The “people were just cheering because we were getting beaten up, of course” (Interview 13). When Owen was older that stopped because then, he said I could “hold my own” (Interview 13). They left him alone after that.

Lee. Lee said, “what I remember the most is that I didn’t speak English at all prior to going to school, it was all my Ojibwe language” (Interview 14). He said “I didn’t understand my teachers who were all nuns” because they spoke English (Interview 14). They had to bring an “interpreter” in to facilitate communication between everyone...it was really confusing” (Interview 14). As time went on, I began to understand the English speakers when “they kept saying to us, I don’t want you to speak that language anymore meaning our Ojibwe language” (Interview 14). Lee had often been punished for “accidentally” speaking the language in the school, while at home, his parents preferred that he converse with them in Anishinaabemowin

(Interview 14). He remembered going through “a lot of” psychological, physical, verbal and spiritual abuse because of the language (Interview 14). Transferring to a non-Aboriginal high school after graduating grade eight, presented extreme challenges because of distance, transportation and poverty (Interview 14). He dropped out after “four months” as did other Anishinaabe students and then sought employment at the age of “thirteen” (Interview 14). Lee found it odd that his parents never encouraged them to stay in school (Interview 14). He said they didn’t “put up a big fuss” (Interview 14). The understanding at the time was that, “ok, if you’re not going to school, then you’re going to work” (Interview 14).

Wolf. They “came looking for our Anishinaabe children” (Interview 15). In the old days, there was a joint agreement that had been made about education. At the time,

Our Elders said if they (settlers) want to teach our Anishinaabe children then we should in turn teach them but it didn’t happen that way, instead they were the ones that decided to teach us yet they didn’t want to be taught by us. (Interview 15).

They unilaterally “decided for us that our Anishinaabe children should go to Western schools” (Interview 15). The purpose was for us to “forget our Anishinaabemowin” and the “Anishinaabe teachings” of our people (Interview 15). The care givers at the Indian residential school had been very abusive toward the children (Interview 15). Wolf said “They (the nuns) verbally abused me. They hit me. They didn’t treat me right” (Interview 15). Despite the abuse, she and her friends “still spoke Anishinaabemowin” when they were alone (Interview 15). She shared,

My parents and grandparents had never scolded me for speaking Anishinaabemowin instead they taught me the Anishinaabe traditional teachings, teachings that would help me live a healthy and balanced life, to be a kind person, to learn how to work, how to offer prayers of thanksgiving for everything, to respect every living being outdoors, the

animals, every person, to never say hurtful words to anyone or say disrespectful words to any living being, to treat every living being with the utmost respect. (Interview 15)

Wolf had never allowed the abuse to shake her belief in the teachings and language despite the cultural genocide and child abuse practices that had been practiced in Indian residential schools (Interview 15).

Wolf said “I tried to finish my white schooling but I had a very hard time, things didn’t go well for me” and “learning became very difficult for me as a child” (Interview 15). I knew they (white people) “thought I was strange” (Interview 15). I appreciated that “some were kind but not all of them” (Interview 15). After going “through severe abuse...I went home” (Interview 15). I know that “my learning was disrupted” (Interview 15). She said “I avoided going to school” after experiencing “evil” (Interview 15). Wolf had subsequently dropped out of school for a period of “3 years” (Interview 15). She found comfort, strength and healing just being near her family who embraced their Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (Interview 15).

Impact of Indian Residential schools on parents and grandparents. The European-based schooling of Aboriginal children had an impact on the lives of the parents and grandparents of the research participants in this study as well. Jennifer’s mom had gone to a “residential school” and then experienced depressive episodes thereafter and at times even thought of killing “herself” (Interview 1). Jennifer looked after her mother during those difficult times. Jacob’s “father and grandfather” had passed away when they were only “30 or 40 years old” because of “alcoholism” (Interview 5). He was determined not to allow the same thing to happen to him (Interview 5). Owen’s mother had attended the “residential school” for nine years (Interview 13). His “grandma” had looked after him when he was a “small” child (Interview 13).

Wolf was a “3rd generation Indian residential school” survivor (Interview 15). With the ceremonial healing lodge that she carries today, Wolf has helped many in their healing journeys. Colton on the other hand expressed gratitude that his parents had met at the school (smile) (Interview 4). His parents did however, have problems with alcohol. Colton said “it created a lot of family dysfunction...although we never went hungry” because “my dad always worked” and we had a “garden” (Interview 4).

Disruption to Traditional Anishinaabe Education

Jennifer. The process of colonization “affected our natural ways” because “I don’t remember my mother running to the store for ozonol or polysporin or band aids” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Instead “my kokum” (grandmother) went to the forest and gathered the medicines and then she used them to heal different kinds of illnesses such as infections or “headaches” (Interview 1). Our people were very knowledgeable of traditional herbal medicines in those days (Interview 1). I believe “that’s all lost today” (Interview 1).

Jennifer had shared the story of the time when her community lost their fishing grounds after the local mill was installed in the water way (Interview 1). The people “suffered major back then” because they couldn’t fish for all the debris in “the water that was filthy dirty” (Interview 1). While “my dad was trying to get food,” I remember the time when there was only “one box of Pablum” (Interview 1). My mother “mixed it and gave us one spoonful each and then we had to feed the rest to the baby” (Interview 1). We had very little clothing and our “shoes were made from canvas” (Interview 1). I saw “hard times like that” (Interview 1). After a while people began to leave the community (Interview 1).

Carson. Role modeling or parenting was vital to the healthy development of the Anishinaabe child. Carson said “right from the time you were a small child, there were

teachings” that included parenting skills (Interview 2). He said “our parents had a role, our grandparents had a role, great grandparents and so on” (Interview 2). The teachings were “formal and structured compared to the colonizers for example” but “in our case, that’s what’s lacking right now” or “missing in our development” (Interview 2). In the old days, all family members “were totally engaged with the child, didn’t matter how old they were, whether they were small, they were school age or whatever” (Interview 2). It was important to learn traditional Anishinaabe “child rearing practices” early in childhood to be more effective parents (Interview 2). It was about “learning” for the “future” (Parker, Interview 7). What was learned could be applied “to everything else in your life later” (Carson, Interview 2). It’s been our concern “that those teachings don’t happen anymore” (Interview 2). Families are too “busy” and “preoccupied” (Interview 2) with modern life. As Elders, we “are beginning to discuss” (Interview 2) the strategies for passing down those teachings to the parents.

Child rearing practices was part of the healthy development of the Anishinaabe child (Carson, Interview 2). When children displayed unacceptable behavior for example, the adults immediately addressed the problem. At meal times, for example when the child threw “soup all over the place which kids will do” rather than send her or him to their room without an explanation, the parent should say “yeah, that’s not acceptable what you’re doing there and I’ll explain to you why it isn’t” (Interview 2). Furthermore “if you continue to do that on the path you know, that way of thinking, no respect and all that stuff, this is what’s going to happen in your life ahead” (Interview 2). A full explanation was given to the child about the reasons for the discipline. Parents and grandparents “took that extra step” (Interview 2). Children understood the long-term benefits of correcting “unacceptable behavior” (Interview 2).

Storytelling and legends were important teaching methods that the Anishinaabe employed, traditionally (Carson, Interview 2). Carson said “I remember people you know in those days...used to just drop in, like neighbors, relatives...would come in unannounced and then they’d sit and have a cup of tea or whatever and there was *conversation*” (Interview 2). Visitors “talked about the everyday situations in their lives” and those discussions were often focused on their “experiences” and problem-solving techniques (Interview 2). The information was “transferred to the kids” because they listened to the way that the “language” was used to “describe” the “activity” the visitors were talking about (Interview 2). Carson said “there was language learning, cultural, spiritual you know emotional, all those areas were fully discussed in each of those visits” (Interview 2). Children learned how to apply the teachings in their lives (Interview 2). He said “then there would be *legends* in the evening” and that was “another form of story-telling but much more spiritual in nature” (Interview 2). There had to be at least “one hundred different teachings” in just one legend that varied in the time it took to narrate (Interview 2). He said “now nobody does that you know, so where are they (Anishinaabeg) going to learn from” (Interview 2). Hardly anyone speaks Anishinaabemowin anymore (Interview 2).

Ann. “I remember growing up, sometimes we just go somewhere and pitch up a tent and live there, wherever” (Interview 3) to harvest food and herbal medicines. The water was clean in those days. When we were thirsty “we’d just dip our dipper in and” drink but “now we can’t even do that” (Interview 3) because of the pollution. Now, there is “private land” or “no trespassing” signs posted everywhere (Interview 3). Here we “helped the first comers” (the European settlers) when they first arrived in our territory (Interview 3). Now they own the land

and now “they’re running us” (Interview 3). This was the “impact of colonization” on the Anishinaabeg (Interview 3).

Colton. As a child, Colton had often observed the Elders (Interview 4). Colton remembered the “two old guys” who used to smoke their “old fancy bent pipes” (Interview 4). He said “they were enjoying life, laughing and visiting one another” (Interview 4). The men had never gone “to school ever in their lives” yet they were very happy leading “a very simple good lifestyle” living the old traditional Anishinaabe ways of life (Interview 4).

Colton said that “a lot of people were introduced to Christianity and other different forms of religion that came from the old world, they were from other countries and that influenced a lot of our people” (Interview 4). Those who had attended Indian residential schools tended to view Anishinaabe spirituality as “devil worship” (Interview 4). In fact, “they came back thinking it was evil” (Interview 4). People were afraid to keep sacred items “because it was banned by the government for any Anishinaabe to have a bundle or even a pipe or a drum” (Interview 4) Their sacred items were subsequently burned. He said “they couldn’t assemble” and “do their ceremonies anymore” (Interview 4) because of the threat of imprisonment or worse.

Jacob. I needed a lot of help to “fully understand” the “Ojibwe spiritual language” (Interview 5). The reason “I could not understand” was “because of” the Indian “residential school” (Interview 5). In our culture, “language is so important” and I was fortunate that I had friends who supported me while I was learning more of the Anishinaabemowin (Interview 5).

Betty. Colonization “disrupted” the traditional Anishinaabe learning process (Interview 6). Our “ceremonies” were banned for a few years (Interview 6). As time passed, I gradually took a leadership role in my community to teach others... “it’s just in me to do stuff” (Interview 6). It’s about “heart” and caring for others (Interview 6).

Parker. My concern is that “we’re losing a lot of our language and culture and it’s really getting out of hand” (Interview 7). I’m not sure whether things like “native learning sessions in school” would work (Interview 7). To me, it seems that the people are “not interested anymore” for whatever reason (Interview 7).

Dakota. He had worked in the legal profession as “interpreter” in his younger days (Interview 8). Dakota often had discussions with his non-Aboriginal colleagues on the number of social issues in First Nations communities. No matter what their topic of discussion they all agreed that “the people in Canada took the land from the Anishinaabeg” and for that reason, First Nations people should receive compensation or “royalties” (Interview 8) for the losses. The loss of land disrupted traditional Anishinaabe-based learning.

Therese. In “my own community for instance, some of the people don’t even understand that they’ve been colonized” (Interview 9). Furthermore “that’s been kind of handed down to us as common knowledge” and that “depth of oppression” affects our relationships with others (Interview 9). It plays out “through violence among the oppressed” (Interview 9).

Derek. As Anishinaabeg, we understood that “the Creator... loaned the Earth (kitukiiminong)” to humanity...and that we have “to take care of” the planet (Interview 10). The Anishinaabeg “didn’t have that concept of materialism” because that was not part of the lifelong learning process of the Anishinabeg concerning the land (Interview 10). But when “the explorers and missionaries came” to North America, their views of the land were very different than ours because for them it was about property ownership. Even today, “when you talk to a non-native person, they’ll have that idea that they own this land” (Interview 10).

Also, “they (missionaries and explorers) viewed us in their own way as savages” because the Anishinaabeg did not speak English, French or Spanish (Derek, Interview 10). We even

found “the explorers starving” and “native people nursed them back to life” (Interview 10). What they didn’t know was that, we “had our own values in society” and “a language” (Anishinaabemowin) that was considered part of the Anishinaabe teachings in our lifelong learning (Interview 10). Because we were not part of “the English society” that came here to North America, they viewed us as different somehow (Interview 10).

When I attended the Indian residential school as a young child, I watched Western movies. I remember when “I used to get mad at him, [John Wayne]” because “we always lost no matter how we outnumbered them” (Interview 10). He said “John Wayne would have five people there and we have two hundred natives circling the wagons and then they, [one of the five], fired one shot and five of us went down (laughter)” (Interview 10). There seemed to be a tendency for the movie industry to “portray native people” in “misleading” ways and this disrupted the lifelong learning process for both non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people because they were left with negative stereotypical images of the Anishinaabeg (Interview 10). Derek said, “but they’re getting better though, they got some native actors there such as Adam Beach and Steven Segal” (Interview 10).

John. Being constrained within the geographical boundaries of land set aside for the Anishinaabeg in Canada was difficult (Interview 11). The Department of “Indian Affairs” created a “reserve” system and decided to put Aboriginal people “inside a border marker” just like the “kangaroos” in “Australia” (Interview 11). The injustice of “being put on a reserve must have been hard for our great grandparents because they didn’t have that freedom to travel across Canada from east to west...doing what they liked” (Interview 11).

Veronica. What I remembered was that, “A long time ago we were our own people. We were happy people. People learned to fend for themselves. Everybody learned to work and feed

their families” (Interview 12). In those days, everyone had been “gardening” (Interview 12). But “when the fur traders came they started bringing in alcohol, I think that’s what destroyed our people” (Interview 12).

Owen. Owen remembered what the Anishinaabeg said “about their structure, where they lived” and “the seeds that they planted” (Interview 13) before the process of colonization had begun. According to the Elders “we had our leaders, the Chief, the helpers and we had peace keepers...that were always in the community” (Interview 13). Furthermore “the peace keepers would be on the ridge looking down at the community, down at the people and they made sure that everybody had food” (Interview 13). Then “they were always ready to protect the people” (Interview 13). Families looked after one another, “that’s how we lived” until the peace keepers “got into the fire water (alcohol) they call it...that’s what’s affecting our nations” now (Interview 13).

Lee. Colonization “really changed people in different ways” (Interview 14). A long time ago the Anishinaabeg had “many teachers” both “male and female” and they were the ones who provided all the teachings in Anishinaabemowin to both children and adults (Interview 14). When “alcohol” was introduced, there was a tendency for them to “discard” those teachings (Interview 14). Now there are a number of “social problems” in our communities today (Interview 14).

Wolf. I recall “the families that gathered and migrated together and lived in little villages” (Interview 15). She said, “that was still being done and practiced in my time” (Interview 15). We harvested “blueberries...wild rice...and the medicines” (Interview 15). As Anishinaabeg, “We were independent within ourselves and in our communities when I was a child. We still practiced our old ways of life” (Interview 15). My family built a “log house” with

no electricity (Interview 15). I believe “I could go back to that as easily as I can live with electricity...it would not be foreign to me, I can live in both” (Interview 15). The Anishinaabeg “valued their children” (Interview 15). But “when alcohol was introduced, that changed everything” and “now in our children’s time, now the drugs” (Interview 15). Furthermore, “now they’re even prescribing our children methadone treatment” which is “very harmful to our people” (Interview 15).

Synthesis: Eliminate Disrupted Bicultural Learning of the Anishinaabeg

Perspectives of the Elders

The 15 Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders in this study shared memories of what their *early childhood learning experiences* were. Being caught between the two different cultures (bi-cultures) of *European-based education* and *traditional Anishinaabe knowledge* posed a number of challenges relating to the lifelong experiences of the Anishinaabeg. *Disrupted bicultural learning* was the main theme that emerged.

A disrupted Western-based education. The European style of education should have gone a lot better for the research participants. About half of the respondents were forcibly taken from their families and placed in Indian residential schools (Jacob, Interview 5; Betty, Interview 6; Dakota, Interview 8; Derek, Interview 10; John, Interview 11; Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15). Survivors spoke of the psychological, physical, emotional, social and spiritual abuses that they had experienced as children. Jacob (Interview 5), Veronica (Interview 12), and Owen (Interview 13) came close to losing their lives because of the physical beatings and torture that they had been subject to. Aboriginal parents and grandparents were rendered powerless to protect their children or decide where they should be schooled. Betty said “it was a must” to attend (Interview 6).

Other Elders in this study had attended day schools on-reserve and public schools off-reserve (Jennifer, Interview 1; Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3; Colton, Interview 4; Parker, Interview 7; Therese, Interview 9; Lee, Interview 14). Ann kept in touch with her old high school friends (Interview 3). Carson had to learn English to be able to transition to the local school (Interview 2). Parker remembered that he could not practice his Anishinaabe culture in the school he attended (Interview 7). They would not allow him to “grow long hair” or bring carvings of birds to the playground (Interview 7). Lee had a difficult time transitioning to the school because he only spoke Anishinaabemowin (Interview 14). He went through a lot of abuse from the teachers because of that (Interview 14).

All of the Elders had dropped out of school. The reason for doing so varied. Jennifer sought employment after they refused to enroll her in the nursing studies program (Interview 1). Jacob never went back after his horrendous experiences at the Indian residential and public day schools (Interview 5). Dakota left at the age of “sixteen” because of funding problems related to further schooling (Interview 8). Lee wondered why his parents allowed him to drop out of high school without saying otherwise (Interview 14). Wolf sensed at the time that there was something wrong with the approaches that were used in the schools that she had gone to (Interview 15).

A disrupted traditional Anishinaabe education. The impact of colonization created stresses on the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabeg. There was the loss of land (Dakota, Interview 8; Derek, Interview 10), and Anishinaabemowin (language) (Carson, Interview 2; Jacob, Interview 5; Parker, Interview 7). Natural ecosystems began to suffer. Fresh water had become polluted (Ann, Interview 3) when they installed a mill in the river system near First Nations communities (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). Vital fishing grounds were

destroyed (Interview 1). The harvesting of food and natural herbal medicines became extremely difficult (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). With all the damage that had been done to the land and the restrictions placed on the geographical movement of Aboriginal people because of European property ownership laws that was brought here including the Indian reservation system, their land-based activities became significantly constrained (Ann, Interview 3; John, Interview 11).

Then there was the breakdown of vital relationships in the community because of “oppression” (Therese, Interview 9). The Anishinaabeg were viewed as “savages” because they were not English speakers (Derek, Interview 10). It did not help that they were portrayed negatively in Western movies as well (Interview 10).

Traditional parenting and role modeling was an important teaching and learning method that helped the children frame what healthy and respectful relationships was all about (Carson, Interview 2). Parents and grandparents “had a role” in the process (Interview 2). Unacceptable behavior was immediately addressed by all family members before things got out of hand (Interview 2). The intent was to offer a measure of guidance to children as to how to conduct oneself respectfully and responsibly and this in turn laid the foundation for developing meaningful and successful relationships with all living beings on Mother Earth. Children are not privileged nowadays to such parenting anymore because parents are just too busy (Interview 2).

Story-telling and legends were valuable teaching and learning methods that the Anishinaabeg had been privileged to, previous to colonization. Embedded in the stories were the psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural teachings that the children and even adults would have learned how to apply in their lives (Carson, Interview 2). Ongoing learning in

those areas fostered the health and wellness that was needed for them to function effectively in their adult roles.

Then there were the Indian residential school survivors who tended to view Anishinaabe spirituality as “devil worship” and “evil” (Colton, Interview 4). They seemed to prefer other religions over their own spiritual traditions (Interview 4). The government had banned traditional Anishinaabe “ceremonies” and possession of sacred items at the time (Colton, Interview 4; Betty, Interview 6). Many of the items had been burned in a fire (Interview 4). Devastation does not begin to describe what they were forced to go through.

Colonization “really changed people in different ways” (Lee, Interview 14). In the old days, the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin brought harmony and balance to First Nations communities. The Anishinaabeg began to discard all that when alcohol was introduced to the people and this is when the “social problems” began to escalate (Interview 14). Things fell apart (Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15). Families were severely impacted.

The Literature – Discussion

The schooling of Aboriginal people began in historic times. Whether Indigenous Elders were consulted as to how First Nations children should be schooled at the time is not really clear. Nevertheless, the methods that had been carried out show what the lifelong, bicultural (Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) learning journey has been for the research participants.

A Western-Based Education for Indigenous People

Mission schools. As early as “1600, the formal European-style education of Aboriginal children began in New France” (McCue, 2015, Development of European-Style Education, para. 1). Catholic missionaries created “mission schools” for the purpose of teaching a Christian

based education to Indigenous students in order to “civilize” them (para. 1). Their “traditional ways of life were seen as inferior or heathen” (para. 1). Derek said, “they viewed us in their own way as savages” but they didn’t know that we “had our own values” and “a language” as well in our First Nations societies (Interview 10). The fact that we were not part of “the English society” was reason enough for them to treat us differently and even “portray native people” in “misleading” ways especially in the later years when they televised “John Wayne” movies (Interview 10). The “schools established a pattern of church involvement in Aboriginal education” (McCue, 2015, Development of European-Style Education, para. 1). The practice continued well in to “the late 1700s and early 1800s” although it waned somewhat “from 1763 to 1830” (para. 2). In Canada, the church missionaries put “mission schools in pre-reserve Aboriginal settlements” but “instruction...was often a combination of Christian doctrine and basic literacy and numeracy” (para. 2). In the early 1800s, “the settler churches, mainly the Roman Catholic and Anglican denominations, in cooperation with the colonial governments and later the federal government began to establish residential schools” (para. 3). Section 114-122 “of the Indian Act,” 1876 provided the federal government with legal justification for regulating Aboriginal education (Carr-Stewart, 2001, p. 133).

Indian residential schools. It was decided that the “Indian Affairs policy on First Nations education would focus on the residential schools as the primary vehicle for civilization and assimilation” (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867-Present, Indian Education and Residential Schools, para. 1). The schools were designed to teach “First Nations children...the same subjects as non-Aboriginal children...such as reading, writing, arithmetic and languages while more coercive practices would be used to force them to abandon their traditional languages, dress, religion and lifestyle” (para. 1). There were at least “10,000 students” who were enrolled

in “78 schools” by “1948” (para. 1). A few of the parents and grandparents of the research participants in my study had attended the schools but there were ongoing and persistent problems afterward. Jennifer’s mother experienced depressive episodes and thought of killing “herself” at times (Interview 1). Jacob’s “father and grandfather” who had attended the “residential school” passed away at a very “young” age (Interview 5). Jacob blamed “alcoholism” for the problems they had that was related to the abuse they suffered in the schools (Interview 5). Owen’s mother was also “a residential school survivor” (Interview 13). His “grandma” looked after him when he was a “small” child (Interview 13). Wolf was a “3rd generation Indian residential school survivor” (Interview 15). Although Colton’s parents experienced problems, he said they “never went hungry” because his “dad always worked” and they had a “garden” (Interview 4).

The research respondents in my study had shared their own memories as well. Jacob’s experiences at the “residential school” were very traumatic (Interview 5). He said “I wasn’t ready to go there at that point in time” meaning he refused to talk about what had happened to him in the school about “being tortured” (Interview 5). It was only after he left the school and went on a “vision” quest that he was able to begin his healing journey (Interview 5). As much as Betty’s father wanted for his children to be home with the family that was not possible. She said “my dad would hitchhike...and bring us back home” but when they realized “it was too close for” him “to come and get us” they sent us further “away” (Interview 6). Punishment for minor misbehaviors in class went to the extreme. Dakota remembered being struck in the “back of the head” by a “nun” just for “talking to a girl in class” (Interview 6). Veronica shared the time when the nurse “really beat” her up for being ill (Interview 12). Veronica’s tooth had been “knocked” out and she even lost a finger “nail” when the health care provider “slammed the door on” her hand (Interview 14). Owen came close to losing his life at times (Interview 13). He

woke up with “ice pads all over” his “head” after a particularly brutal beating by one of the adult caregivers in the school (Interview 13). Wolf said, although “they verbally abused me” and “hit me” my friends and I “still spoke Anishinaabemowin” when we were alone (Interview 15). According to Derek, the school had “a prison-like” feel to it and the care givers were very abusive (Interview 10). He was often “punished for getting high marks and speaking” the “Anishinaabemowin (language)” (Interview 10). When he transferred to the local public school near his home, it was still more of the same (Interview 10). The teachers expected him to abandon his Anishinaabe spiritual practices and embrace “religion” (Interview 10). In “non-Aboriginal provincial schools” the heavy presence of “religious instruction” in the classrooms was still a major educational mission (McCue, 2015, *Different Status, Different Stream*, para. 1). Parents were powerless to stop the abuse of their children. The process of closing Canadian Indian residential schools began in “1970” and ended in “1996” (McCue, 2015, *Development of European-Style Education*, para. 5). The tragic legacy left a mark on Canadian history as horrendous stories of abuse began to emerge thereafter. Years later according to INAC (2008) information pages, Prime Minister Harper issued a formal apology to former First Nations students for the abuse they had suffered in Indian Residential Schools.

On-reserve federal schools. Black-Branch (1997) explained that “Canada does not have a national system of education” rather, there are “thirteen individual systems” comprised of “ten provinces” and “two territories” now three (p. 5). Then there is “one federal education system” that provides “for educational services for Native Canadians...” (p. 5). In historic times, there were “226 federally funded day schools on reserves” that was established “by 1900” (McCue, 2015, *Different Status, Different Stream*, para. 1). Derek had expressed his concerns with the lack of “funding for on-reserve schools” (Interview 10). He said, as First Nations educators,

we're reduced to fighting "like dogs for money" to get what we need for our children's education (Interview 10). I believe "this is how Western world impacts our reserves" (Interview 10). Lavoie (2011, p. A5) stated that "First Nations schools receive at least \$2,000 less for each student at a reserve school than non-aboriginal schools" (para. 6). The federal government had "established educational policies and procedures in the form of directives and circulars but failed to provide both educational services and educational resources – staff, schools, and material resources – equitable with those provided by provincial educational systems" (Carr-Stewart, 2001, p. 133). Despite the shortfall, the federal government has not increased funding for on-reserve schools.

Off-reserve public schools. Enrollment of First Nations children in "off-reserve provincial schools" had increased to "about 10,000" (McCue, 2015, *Different Status, Different Stream*, para. 2) following the Indian residential school era. Most "Canadian schools are governed under provincial jurisdiction" (Black-Branch, 1997, p. 5). It is standard practice that they abide with the provincial laws, school board policies, and "collective agreements between employees, notably teachers, and the employer, which may be the province itself or a local school board, acting under the authority of the province" (Black-Branch, 1997, p. 5).

Carr-Stewart (2006) said "two separate educational systems were established, one for First Nations people who lived on reserve and the provincial system for all other Canadians" (p. 6). The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) (2007) describes the funding mechanisms for Aboriginal students who attend schools on and off-reserves. It reads that "First Nations students who live in First Nation communities but attend provincially funded elementary or secondary schools" (p. 24) off-reserve, fall under "a tuition agreement between a First Nation or the federal government and a school board" (p. 24). First Nation students who live off-reserve "are treated

like all other students of the school board” and their funding falls under provincial jurisdiction (p. 24).

Even with the strengths of such a structure, there were issues for Aboriginal students. When Jennifer was in high school off-reserve, her lifelong dream had been to become “a nurse” but they discouraged her ambitions for reasons unknown (Interview 1). The disappointment was too devastating so she dropped out of school entirely to work “in factories” (Interview 1). Therese had also left the system before graduating “grade twelve” (Interview 9). Carson had been treated well in the “public school” he went to but there was no reference to his Anishinaabe cultural background in class (Interview 2). His grandfather taught him to speak English because First Nations children “had to have kind of footing” to adapt to a colonized education (Interview 2). His traditional Anishinaabe education was left to family members at home (Interview 1). Parker remembered that he was not allowed “to grow long hair” or even bring carvings of “a bird” for example, to his elementary school (Interview 7). As a young child, he knew that the teachers frowned upon the Anishinaabe culture and even the Anishinaabemowin “language” (Interview 7). Ann said that her experiences in the “public school” that she had gone to were mostly positive (Interview 3). In fact, she still keeps in touch with her old high school friends especially the ones she was “close to” (smile) (Interview 3). John was only seventeen years old when he returned to school to earn “grade 10” but this was only to get into on-the-job training to secure long-term employment (Interview 11). Lee had gone through “a lot of” of abuse in the public school because of the language differences (Interview 14). He was often punished for “accidentally” speaking the Anishinaabemowin (Interview 14). Lee dropped out of high school after only “four months” (Interview 14) as did Wolf who said that her “learning was disrupted” because of the racism (Interview 15). There was a notable difference in the way they were

treated in the schools compared to the “respect” that she was shown by her parents and grandparents who taught her and others the values of “work” kindness, and “thanksgiving” (Wolf, Interview 15).

Impact of Colonization on the Western-Based Education of Anishinaabe Children

Wolf said that, they “decided for us that our Anishinaabe children should go to Western schools” (Interview 15). They wanted us to “forget our Anishinaabemowin” and the “Anishinaabe teachings” of our people (Interview 15). This was “One of the most devastating blows struck by the Europeans was the imposition of their education on a culturally different people” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 272). The “most fatal was the creation of residential schools” (p. 272). The whole process “wreaked havoc with the minds of young students who were forced to attend” (p. 273). According to Knowles (1980), for “some adults the remembrance of the classroom as a place where one is treated with disrespect and may fail is so strong that it serves as a serious barrier to their becoming involved in adult-education activities at all” (p. 46). The Mental Health and Well-being of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada chapter, in the Human Face of Mental Health and Mental Illness in Canada report (Government of Canada, 2006) indicates that “the history of colonization and subsequent cultural oppression” adversely affected Indigenous people who were powerless to stop “the impact of sedentarization, forced acculturation, and residential schools” (p. 162).

Impact of Colonization on the Traditional Anishinaabe Education of Anishinaabe Children

The process of traditional Indigenous education really fell apart. It became difficult to continue with the old lifestyles after the Anishinaabeg lost their “land” (Dakota, Interview 8). The knowledge of herbal medicines had begun to erode to the point of being “lost” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Water pollution limited the hunting and fishing activities of families. Jennifer

shared the times her family experienced shortages of food, clothing and “shoes” (Interview 1). People “suffered major back then” because of “the water that was filthy dirty” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Ann said, I remember the times when “we’d just dip our dipper in and” drink but “now we can’t even do that” because of water pollution (Interview 3). We have “to take care of” “the Earth” that is on loan to us (Derek, Interview 10). The loss of traditional Indigenous lifestyles placed a strain on the Anishinaabeg who had taken pride in their independence (Veronica, Interview 12). Veronica said “A long time ago, we were our own people. Everybody learned to work and feed their families” (Interview 12). In the later years, they were forced to live “on a reserve” or “inside a border marker” (John, Interview 11). The people were no longer free “to travel across Canada from east to west...doing what they liked” (Interview 11).

Adults normally hold responsibility for ensuring that the subject material that their children were learning was acceptable to the healthy development of a growing and impressionable child. The intent of teaching and learning was to prepare them for the challenges they would face in their future roles as parents, teachers and so on. Knowles (1980) assumption that the natural learning process of children as they transition to *self-directed* adults is a relatively normal part of human development that all people experience (p. 45). The survivors of Indian residential school era never had the opportunity to enjoy the enriching processes of bicultural learning (Western-based and Indigenous knowledge). Separated from their families and communities, they were mercilessly and endlessly indoctrinated with the wrongness of their identities, values, practices, traditions, spirituality, teachings and language. Indigenous people had practiced their “oral traditions” through story-telling (Cajete, 1994, p. 138). Carson said “right from the time you were a small child, there were teachings” (Interview 2) that included *parenting skills and role modelling*. Then there was *story-telling and legends* that helped parents

and grandparents to pass down vital knowledge (Interview 2). He said “in our case (the Anishinaabeg), that’s what’s lacking right now” (Interview 2).

With the banning of traditional Aboriginal ceremonies (Canada. RCAP, 1996, Policies of Domination and Assimilation, para. 12) came the forced destruction of sacred items that left the people with a sense of devastation (Colton, Interview 4). They could no longer “assemble” or “do their ceremonies anymore” (Interview 4). The repercussions for keeping sacred items within their possession meant incarceration or worse (Interview 4). Colton said that the influence of other religions played a major role in changing the *spiritual* beliefs of the Anishinaabeg particularly among Indian residential school survivors who tended to view their own spirituality as “evil” (Interview 4). They embraced Christianity and other forms of “religion that came from the old world...or from other countries...” (Interview 4). Colonization “disrupted” the traditional Anishinaabe lifelong learning process (Betty, Interview 6).

Lee said that colonization “really changed people in different ways” (Interview 14). Anishinaabe ways of life were not the same after the people were introduced to “alcohol” (Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15). Interest in the old traditional Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin had begun to erode and that resulted in a number of complex “social problems” (Lee, Interview 14) especially among the youth who seem drawn to “drugs” and suicidal ideation (Wolf, Interview 15). Aboriginal children are schooled differently than they were in pre-colonial times. Many are not privileged to really know the cultural knowledge that brought harmony and balance to First Nations families and communities (Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf said that her “parents and grandparents” had taught them “the Anishinaabe traditional teachings...teachings that would help me live a healthy and balanced life...” (Interview 15) similar to what Jacob had done as part of his healing

journey. He said, I really needed help to “fully understand” the “Ojibwe spiritual language” especially after my Indian residential school experiences (Interview 5). Parker believed that “we’re losing a lot of our language and culture and it’s really getting out of hand” (Interview 7).

Passing down that knowledge to our younger generations is what the Elders are now talking about. Betty took a leadership role in her community to teach others (Interview 6). She said “its just in me to do stuff” because it’s about “heart” and caring for others (Interview 6). It’s about addressing the “colonized” and healing that “depth of oppression” among our own First Nations people (Therese, Interview 9). In the old days, “our leaders, the Chief, the helpers and” the “peace keepers” worked to ensure the wellbeing of our whole community (Owen, Interview 13). Colton remembered the “two old guys” he used to visit when he was a small child (Interview 4). He said “they were enjoying life, laughing and visiting one another” (Interview 4) but this was before the full impact of colonization when people lived the sober life.

The shift away from learning Anishinaabe cultural knowledge can be attributed to other societal developments as well. The understanding was that, there were the hunters and gatherers (Jennifer; Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3; Colton, Interview 4; Wolf, Interview 15), then the “agrarian” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 6) followed with the “transition from the old feudal society to modern industrialized and capitalist society through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ (Illeris, 2007, p. 165), and now, the “information” and knowledge explosion that came with the advent of computer “technology” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 26). People are faced with a “current rapidly-changing and technologically-complex global society” (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009, p. 501). Merriam et al. (2007) have said that “globalization is linking the world through economics and consumerism...” (p. 26). This has impacted “all of society’s endeavors, including adult learning” (p. 25) and “dramatic changes in the workforce” (p. 26). People had become mobile.

They had begun to establish their homes “in foreign nations” (Issitt & English, 2017, History section, para. 3). This “form of cultural integration that is usually defined in terms of economics but also encompasses cultural, biological, and political homogenization on a global scale” has been the source of debates and controversy ever since (Introduction, para. 1). The concern is that other “dominant cultures” may exert more coercive “influence” socially, politically, and economically “on other nations” (para. 1). Globalization has been an ongoing “debate” ever since “the first contact between societies” (para. 2).

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I presented the perspectives of the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who were invited for interviews. The interview question; *How did colonization impact the process of helping Anishinaabe children in their lifelong learning?* was organized around the following overarching research questions as follows; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? I presented the findings at the beginning of the chapter, then I provided a synthesis of the research participants perspectives which was organized under the main theme of *disrupted bicultural learning* meaning there was disruption to their (European-based and traditional Anishinaabe) education. I discussed how the findings resonate with the literature, what the contradictions were and how the data extends the discourse.

Before the process of colonization began, “First Nations people were autonomous, self-sufficient and free to decide their destiny” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 272) but that changed in the following years. The struggle for ownership of North American land was fraught with conflict ever since the European settlers landed here (INAC, 2011, Colonial Conflict: British and French

era – 1534-1763, Military Alliances and Conflict, para. 1). The Treaties (INAC, 2011, British Era 1764 – 1860, Treaties and a Growing Colony, para. 2), British North America Act, 1867 (Justice Canada, 2014), and Federal Indian Act, 1876 (Justice Canada, 2014), “created” a number of challenges for “First Nations people” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 272) and this included in Aboriginal education.

Wolf said, it was “decided for us that our Anishinaabe children should go to Western schools” because they wanted us to “forget our Anishinaabemowin” and the “Anishinaabe teachings” of our people (Interview 15). Imposing their European “education on a culturally different people” (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 272) without even consulting Indigenous Elders was one approach that did not work. Poonwassie (2001) said that “the creation of residential schools” was “one of the most devastating blows struck by the Europeans” (p. 272). Knowles (1980) analysis that adults’ control what children learn (p. 45) hold scary implications of just how lives can be influenced particularly as it relates to the residential school era. Adults who have had less than favorable memories of being treated with “disrespect” during their earlier educational experiences would in all likelihood avoid learning environments all together (p. 46) but the long-term consequences for not engaging in post-secondary education for example, means that the career choices for Aboriginal people would be very limited. *Disrupted learning* as Betty (Interview 6) and Wolf (Interview 15) mentioned was what they had experienced in relation to their Western-based education.

Anishinaabeg children experienced *disruption to their traditional Anishinaabe education* as well. There was the loss of “land” (Dakota, Interview 8). Knowledge of traditional herbal medicines eroded to the point of being “lost” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Mills were installed in river systems and the industry destroyed fishing grounds and fresh water supply that First

Nations communities depended on (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). They were no longer free “to travel” at will across the country John (Interview 11). Aboriginal people were forced to stay within the boundaries of Indian “reserves” (John, Interview 11). The practice of *story-telling and legends* had begun to wane (Carson, Interview 2). Cajete (1994) said that stories were part of the “oral tradition” of Indigenous people (p. 138). The loss of such practices was very worrisome for Carson (Interview 2). *Traditional parenting and role modelling* had also been impacted (Interview 2). In the old days, parents “took that extra step” to help their children “correct unacceptable behavior” (Interview 2). Spirituality was important as well but Indian residential school survivors tended to embrace other religions that “came from the old world...or from other countries...” (Colton, Interview 4). The government had banned Aboriginal ceremonies (Canada. RCAP, 1996, *Politics of Domination and Assimilation*, para. 12). There were some Indian residential school survivors who turned away from their Anishinaabe spirituality altogether (Colton, Interview 4).

Colonization had “changed people in different ways” (Lee, Interview 14). There was the untreated depression that the parents and grandparents of the research participants had experienced because of their previous Indian residential school experiences (Jennifer, Interview 1; Jacob, Interview 5; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15). The introduction of alcohol played another devastating factor (Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15) that impacted the Anishinaabeg. People had begun to lose interest in the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (Lee, Interview 14). As Broker (1983) said, Ojibwe life changed (p. 127). In response to the impact of colonization, Betty had decided to take her role as traditional Elder to help counter the effects. She said, “it’s just in me to do stuff” because the Anishinaabe way is about “heart” and caring for others (Interview 6).

There were other factors as well that impacted traditional Indigenous learning. Societal changes that shifted from the hunters and gatherers (Jennifer; Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3; Colton, Interview 4; Wolf, Interview 15), agrarian (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 6) feudal, modern industrialized and capitalist, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (Illeris, 2007, p. 165), and current knowledge explosion brought by technology (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 26) has linked "the world through economics and consumerism (p. 26). With the changing demographics across the globe, there have been major changes in the employment sector, and adult learning as well (p. 26). The diversity has brought cultural, biological, and political homogenization on a global scale" and this has been of concern to many since then (Introduction, para. 1).

CHAPTER 6

HOW COLONIZATION IMPACTED THE PROCESS OF HELPING ANISHINAABE/OJIBWE ADULTS IN THEIR LIFELONG LEARNING

Broker (1983) talked about the Anishinaabeg and what their lives were like before European contact (pp. 16-17). She explained that a series of geographical moves to more secluded places in the forest enabled them to continue with their older more traditional lifestyles (p. 9). Part of the long-term plan was to “set up a self-sufficient pattern of living that kept many of the old customs and beliefs despite the pressure from the strangers” (p. 88) that would come for them to leave their traditional ways behind. Gone were the days when they simply gathered and preserved food to last until the next season, now the Anishinaabeg “sold much of their harvest to commercial buyers who came to the blueberry camps” (p. 118). Many had taken employment in industries such as logging (p. 119), lumbering (p. 119), the harvesting of wild rice and berries (p. 118) and any other available work to earn “money” (p. 119). The value of currency in exchange for products became a way of life.

What followed thereafter in relation to the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg is not really clear. With connections “between the general history of Canada and that of adult education” (Selman et al. 1998, p. 59), the “undoubted expansion” of learning opportunities since then (early 1800s), has “yet to be documented” (p. 71) particularly as it pertains to the Anishinaabeg. It was important to invite the Anishinaabe Elders for interviews to learn more about the ways in which colonization impacted them. The interview questions were organized around the following overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed

learning? Gathering the Elders perspectives helps fill the gap in the literature and sheds light to the interview question: *How did colonization impact the process of helping Anishinaabe adults in their lifelong learning?* A discussion will follow the synthesis of the findings and the literature to show the consistencies and contradictions.

Findings

In the previous chapter, the research participants shared memories of what it was like for them as children who went through disrupted bicultural learning. The importance of providing this background information was to gain insight in to how those experiences impacted them later as adult learners. *Transformational bicultural learning* was the emergent theme. The following excerpts highlight what they said about their lifelong learning experiences.

Transformational Bicultural Learning

Jennifer. After they refused to allow her to study in the nursing profession, Jennifer had dropped out of high school at the age of “sixteen” and worked in “factories” until marriage (Interview 1). Her husband preferred that she stay home with the children and be a full-time mother and homemaker (Interview 1). Over the course of a friendship with a neighbor who “was a computer technician,” Jennifer had been invited to train in the same field but she declined the offer (Interview 1). She said “I found it difficult to speak to non-aboriginal teachers. I think it was from my young days when I was going to school, the fear builds up when things are happening in your little life” (Interview 1). I never appreciated the condescending attitudes of non-Aboriginal educators (Interview 1). Jennifer said “I had a lot of that in those different schools” and I always felt like I was “being disciplined” and I didn’t “like it” but with Aboriginal educators “we can make mistakes and laugh about them and even make a story out of them (smile)” (Interview 1). I feel “more at home and more relaxed” with them especially in learning

environments where “Anishinaabe” knowledge is being shared (Interview 1). Employment-wise “when I did go back to the work force, I used to talk back but I still had a fear of retaliation and physical abuse” (Interview 1). Jennifer had always worked hard to upgrade the “skills” to meet the requirements of any new employment because the “income” was important to her financial independence (Interview 1). “Career” development was more important than formal education (Interview 1). She said, I took the initiative and applied for different kinds of work even “brush cutting” with the “men” (laughter) (Interview 1). Then the First Nations leadership “asked me to apply for” different sorts of employment (Interview 1). I worked as “homemaker” for “the Elders...I enjoyed talking to them and listening to them, listening to our language, listening to the old stories. They knew a lot of people I knew when I was a child” before I was sent far from home at the age of twelve (Interview 1). After a while I worked in the area of addiction programs (Interview 1). I’ve “been to lots of workshops” on a number of different topics since (Interview 1). Jennifer’s lifelong learning experiences were valued in the community as evidenced in her roles as wise Elder and political leader.

Carson. After completing a wellness program, Carson said “I was approached by the supervisor or superintendent of that service and asked if I’d be interested in becoming involved and enrolling in a program” to qualify for employment in the same field (Interview 2). With their encouragement and support, he enrolled in post-secondary studies, and took courses in “psychology and sociology” to earn the professional credentials (Interview 2). The focus was on “social work” and “counselling” (Interview 2). Carson said “it had a direct impact on my life, for sure, a positive one” (Interview 2) career-wise. He even participated in “short term training programs” thereafter, as a lifelong learner (Interview 2). His personal life experiences were valued by coworkers and the people he served as political leader, Elder, father, husband, and

friend (Interview 2). Carson said “even today I can mention that I still look forward to any learning opportunity that I can if it’s within my grasp, I guess if it’s feasible for me to attend, then I’ll attend” because “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). Oftentimes, “I’ve always been the oldest person in the room but I’m still willing to learn” (Interview 2). When asked if he would likely seek the assistance of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal adult educators to help him perform better in his social roles or for dealing with tasks in his daily life, he said, there was no “preference between the two unless maybe in a certain situation, let’s say that person spoke my language (Anishinaabemowin) or had a sort of same understanding regarding our culture” then I would prefer an Aboriginal adult educator (Interview 2). For other types of learning, he trusted those (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) who “have taken the time to be licensed or credentialed because somehow that states that they’re qualified to do the work, that I respect because I know what it takes to get there” (Interview 2). He enjoyed the whole process of learning in general (Interview 2). The intent of asking the question about non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal adult educators was not meant to discriminate but to learn what the Elders really thought about the teachers or instructors that they had encountered. Had race been a deciding factor as to whether the Elders participated in non-Aboriginal adult education settings? If so, then, what can be done to remedy the issue of racism?

Ann. Ann had gone to university to become a teacher (Interview 3). She said “I enjoyed” the program (Interview 3). After graduation, she taught the “Ojibway language for about thirty to forty years” because her hope for Anishinaabe youth was that they learn their “first language” (Anishinaabemowin) (Interview 3). Ann had often accepted invitations as valued “Elder” to the same post-secondary institution that she had attended to become a teacher (Interview 3). She often goes there during the “summer” months (Interview 3). When “I stopped teaching here”

(her First Nations community), I went back to study “native counseling” because I wanted to learn how to counsel young people more effectively (Interview 3). Many of our students “don’t really want to go to school because of racism and discrimination” (Interview 3). I want them to succeed even though they are not accepted (Interview 3). When I was going to school, I never minded non-Aboriginal teachers because “I never felt inferior to them” (Interview 3). They were very accepting of me (Interview 3). Now that I am retired from teaching, “like for me, I don’t go out of the community too much...it’s got to be my own people” (Interview 3) that I go to for areas of learning I am interested in. Ann liked attending “meetings” in her First Nations community just to “learn” and stay informed on the latest community news and Aboriginal issues in general (Interview 3).

Colton. Colton had worked hard all his life as “logger, trapper, hunter and fisherman” to be able to provide for his family before the change came (Interview 4). The logging industry began to “shift to the bigger contractors rather than the little guys” and Colton knew that he had to “find something” else to do (Interview 4). He said, “I had to learn a different way of making a living so I know that in order to do that I’d have to” get educated in the area of mental health (Interview 4). So, “I went back to school for a couple years to be able to do the kind of work I’m doing now” (Interview 4). I knew “I had to keep up with the changing times” (Interview 4). Colton returned to his First Nations community after graduation and then secured employment there. He became a traditional Anishinaabe knowledge keeper “mentor” to one of the school teachers he met while he was studying as an adult learner (Interview 4). Even though, a European education was important to securing long-term, full-time employment, learning the Anishinaabe teachings and going to ceremonies was much more meaningful for him. He said “I have learned so much from Anishinaabe medicine people and I felt very comfortable with them

even more so than non-Aboriginal adult educators” (Interview 4). Colton preferred the assistance of Aboriginal educators if he wanted to learn how to plant a garden for example (Interview 4). He said “we have our own people that know how to do that” (Interview 4). His parents had been avid gardeners. The motivation for partaking in adult learning opportunities was to upgrade the skills necessary to support his family even though he had to leave his First Nations community behind temporarily to do so. He has helped many through his wise counsel as Elder and traditional healer.

Jacob. After his experiences of “being tortured” at the Indian residential school when Jacob was a child, he lost interest in taking “courses or anything like that” (Interview 5). He said “I just never went back” even to become “an accountant or policeman or electrician” (Interview 5). Instead, Jacob worked in the logging industry “because that was the only opportunity in his community” at the time (Interview 5). I would have liked to have learned how to be “a guide” and hunter but “I lost all” that “through the residential school” (Interview 5). He never liked having to depend on people to come in from off-reserve to help him plant a “hedge” in his yard (Interview 5). Jacob said this guy had “a big tractor” and he came in and “dug up the ground” (Interview 5). I had no other choice because they have the machinery and “tools I don’t” (Interview 5). Going on a “vision” quest helped with the healing and recovery phase (Interview 5). Participating in “self-awareness programs” was of benefit as well not only to himself but to others because he shared the information with community members (Interview 5). He said, I had to learn how to be a loving “husband to my wife, a father to my children, and a grandfather” (Interview 5). The underlying motivation for him to continue learning was to build his knowledge of the “Anishinaabe ways” and become better in his helping skills as a traditional healer and Elder (Interview 5). Of the utmost concern for him was the unresolved grief and

intergenerational trauma of First Nations people who “were hurt by the Indian residential school” (Interview 5). His story of recovery has been and continues to be a source of inspiration for many (Interview 5).

Betty. Betty’s Indian residential school experiences helped with the “basic learning stuff and how to raise your children in the home *but not really...*” (Betty, Interview 6). When I started a family, “my father-in-law” provided the guidance and support I needed while I was raising my children (Interview 6). As a single mother, “I volunteered at the school” in order to protect them from being abducted (Interview 6). She said “I always had this fear that anybody could take your children” for no reason (Interview 6). Because her volunteer work in the school was valued, she was offered full time “employment” as “teacher’s aide” (Interview 6). Betty never “bothered going back to school” after she became a mother that is, until her employer pushed her to enroll in college to become a fully credentialed teacher’s aide (Interview 6). She had accidentally completed the university portion of the questionnaire section that was in her “mature” student “test” booklet designed for both university and college entrance programs (Interview 6). When questioned later about the mistake of filling out the university section, she said “I didn’t think they were relevant” but I answered them anyway (Interview 6). She said that was “crazy...see how good I am (laughter) (Interview 6). Positive learning experiences led her to enroll in other courses as well. She said “they” (the teachers) pretty much decide what the students will learn because “there’s no other way of teaching” (Interview 6). They even teach you “how to act around children (laughter) that was stupid” (Interview 6). I was already a skilled traditional Anishinaabe parent. In education environments, Betty preferred “non-Aboriginal teachers and the reason is that they ask more” of their students (Interview 6). She said “I want a person that’s going to listen to me and teach me the right way” because they should do more than

give a passing “grade” (Interview 6). Her warmth and sense of humor made for a pleasant conversation as she shared stories of strength and wisdom. Betty’s teaching skills complemented her role as traditional Elder and healer.

Parker. Parker dealt with the everyday challenges of being a parent raising “kids” (Interview 7). Parker also worked for the local “town” (Interview 7). People thought it a bit strange because he was the only First Nations person working there (Interview 7). Being “a role model” as he worked side by side with non-Aboriginal workers who admired his strong work ethic was something his friends wanted (Interview 7). Parker said he regretted his earlier decision to leave school when he was “sixteen” to work in the logging industry (Interview 7). Dropping out of school had always made him feel “out of place” among coworkers thereafter (Interview 7). He said “you need schooling nowadays” (Interview 7). Taking “programs” and “life skills workshops” changed his life in a positive way. He found that “speaking up” in class helped everyone to learn (Interview 7). He said “you feel great about yourself” (Interview 7). You gain a little more confidence (Interview 7). Parker was often called upon by “trainers or trainees” to answer their questions if there was something “they didn’t know” (Interview 7). In sharing circles, he often spoke Anishinaabemowin to communicate to the participants (Interview 7). But if he had to engage in new learning, Parker preferred Aboriginal adult educators because of their teaching approaches (Interview 7). They’re more “flexible” (Interview 7). With non-Aboriginals “everything goes by the book” (Interview 7). Parker enjoyed attending “meetings” in his First Nations community, being a member on different “committees,” and “meeting new people” (Interview 7). He carries a wealth of life experiences that he uses to help those who seek his wise counsel as Elder.

Dakota. As a young man, Dakota had “helped” his “step father” who had a “commercial fishing” business but this was only seasonal work (Interview 8). When Dakota looked for work elsewhere, he had become aware of non-Aboriginal employers who were keeping “a segment of society out of the work force because they dominate the positions through different legislation or laws or unions” (Interview 8). Dakota shared the story of the time when he applied to the local telephone company for “an apprenticeship” (Interview 8). He looked forward to making a long-term career out of this opportunity. The supervisor that he reported to at the time turned him away because Dakota had no “tools” of his own (Interview 8). He told the friend who had been patiently transporting him to potential places of employment “that’s enough, let’s leave, so we left...that’s how it was” (Interview 8). In the later years, Dakota had enrolled in university and took “all kinds of courses” (Interview 8) as part of his career development. The standard teaching method in universities tends to be mostly “lectures” with very little interaction between professors and students (Interview 8). Career wise, he secured employment in various helping organizations close to his community before going into “management” (Interview 8). Dakota had been invited to pursue further studies in the legal profession because of “the basics” and “research” capabilities that he already knew to be able to succeed in “law school” but he declined the offer (Interview 8). Dakota liked Aboriginal adult educators because “with the Anishinaabe, there was more joking, it was fun, time went fast” (Interview 8). With non-Aboriginal educators “you’re looking at the clock all the time, time for recess, time for lunch, time for this” but “with the Anishinaabe you’re interacting” more (Interview 8). They’re more “fun” (Interview 8). His main concerns were Aboriginal rights and Anishinaabe “cultural re-emergence” (Interview 8). As Elder in his community, he provides guidance to many.

Therese. Therese had enrolled in “a transitional program” to gain entrance to post-secondary studies (Interview 9). The learning material had been quite “relevant” to her life then because there was a “life skills component to it” that she “really needed” at the time (Interview 9). She went on to earn an undergraduate degree and “minor” in “sociology” (Interview 9). Her “major was psychology” but wished that she had “switched” to sociology instead (Interview 9). Therese had been impressed with the openness and flexibility of university professors who had taken the “interactive approach” to learn more of what the students really thought about the learning material (Interview 9). Like her classmates, Therese had often challenged the misinformation on Aboriginal people by saying “I don’t exactly fit into the concept that you’re talking about” (Interview 9). I think they’re starting to think more about where we are “coming from as Anishinaabe people” (Interview 9). Therese shared the story of the time she met an Anishinaabe Elder at the university whose talks piqued her interest (Interview 9). She said “I really started learning about myself as an Aboriginal person, I guess finding my cultural identity and roots” (Interview 9). At the time “I was really trying to get more connected to people who were into the ceremonies, into the dance, into the teachings because I really wanted to understand who I was as a person, as Anishinaabe Kwe (woman)” and “I was really fortunate” to have met “some really good people” who were “spiritual” (Interview 9). I enrolled in “native studies courses” and began doing research on Aboriginal people and that’s when “I started to understand what happened to our people and what happened to me” (Interview 9). The learning was very relevant to my real life then because I started “putting things into perspective” (Interview 9). Just knowing her cultural identity and traditional knowledge really helped with the “pain” and grief when she lost several family members within a short period of time (Interview 9). Although Therese received the much-needed help in European-style counseling

sessions, she found Anishinaabe spirituality to be more helpful. Going to the “sweat lodge” was more beneficial to Therese. The “Elder” who provided the teachings for releasing difficult problems in life helped her to release the “pain” (Interview 9). Therese often read books on “different philosophies” and took long meditative “walks” in nature (Interviews 9). She just wanted to “make sense of the world” (Interview 9). As a loving and caring Anishinaabe mother, grandmother and respected Elder, Therese practices the old traditional story-telling practices vital to passing down knowledge to her family (Interview 9).

Derek. Derek said “I experienced damage at the Indian residential school but I still resumed my education” (Interview 10). After earning two baccalaureate degrees, his opinion of colonized “education” was that it was just “too Western” (Interview 10). Then there was the racism that he never cared for. One of his teachers falsely accused him of “plagiarism” (Interview 10). Derek had been forced “to write a 3,500, word essay in front” of her which he promptly did then she finally believed in his writing capabilities (Interview 10). Another disturbing trend he noted in universities was that their researchers were starting to bring “Elders” in to the schools to share traditional Indigenous knowledge (Interview 10). He said “never was like that before” but “now non-native people are running Native studies programs and languages” (Interview 10). Now they claim to be the experts. After graduation, Derek enjoyed an exemplary teaching career. In fact, he received “2 provincial awards and 4 regional awards” for his teaching excellence (Interview 10). Derek is considered an Elder who is “a teacher of traditional knowledge and language” as well (Interview 10). Of concern to him was that the “watch and learn” doesn’t work like it did before because of the “social” changes (Interview 10). He said “our classroom which is the outside environment is being cut down, you know destroyed” by the “bulldozer” (Interview 10). As traditional teachers, “we can’t teach that way”

anymore, so we have “to change as the world changes” including the “teaching methods” we employ (Interview 10). He said “My passion is the future generations. I like to see smiling faces on kids” (Interview 10). The Indian “residential school people wanted us to be silent but my classes today are noisy. I ask the silent students; Are you sick today?” (Interview 10). One of the Anishinaabe teachings that he taught has to do with “native community togetherness” where all students help one another (Interview 10). Even “as an Elder” you “never stop learning” (Interview 10). Derek said “we speak from the heart, that’s our way” (Interview 10). Part of Derek’s decolonizing effort is to pass down those teachings directly to the children (Interview 10).

John. At the age of “seventeen,” John went back to school (Interview 11). All you needed in those days was “grade ten” because “that was good enough at the time” to be able to work in forestry, house construction and any other employment that was available (Interview 11). John said “I worked here, worked there, it was good” (Interview 11). The reason that he went to school was to upgrade his skills to be able to secure long-term employment and fill his social role as provider to his family.

John didn’t like that it was “mandatory” to have to study to acquire a “boat license” just to go “up and down the river system” near their house (Interview 11). Because we have lived here for generations “we know where all the reefs are” so “we don’t pay attention to the buoys” they put on the water (Interview 11). Now the Anishinaabeg have to “learn all their (colonizers) navigating ways of going up and down the river” (Interview 11).

When asked who he would likely seek the assistance of if he had to participate in a learning setting, John said “doesn’t matter whether non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal, learning is done the same way, it’s no different” (Interview 11). Now that he is retired with challenging

health problems, John still learns through television news media (Interview 11). His concern these days is focused on environmental issues such as the pipeline controversy, “global warming,” diminishment and regeneration of forests, and the need for pinecone harvesting and “tree planting programs” for First Nations people (Interview 11). As Anishinaabe Elder, John carries a wealth of life experience that he uses to guide and support those who seek his counsel.

Veronica. Veronica went to university to become a teacher despite her previous experiences at the Indian residential school and then she “worked in education for thirty-five years...” (Interview 12). Native Studies had been her field of interest (Interview 12). She said “I liked it” (Interview 12). Her expertise was valued in the classroom and among coworkers. Although Veronica never minded non-Aboriginal educators she preferred “Aboriginal adult educators because of what” she “went through at the Indian residential school” and the memories of the “nurse” who beat her up (Interview 12). Veronica had been “comfortable with both” sort of, in the later years (Interview 12). For her, the process of learning was ongoing. Veronica often sat and “read...for hours” (Interview 12). She is a role model to the women in her community who are contemplating teaching careers. As respected Elder, she provides guidance to the people in her community.

Owen. Owen enjoyed the process of learning but had a difficult time letting go of the painful memories of his Indian residential school experiences (Interview 13). Owen still carries the “traumatic experiences even today” (Interview 13). He said I still “feel it but I try not to” and “I will not deny those things” (Interview 13). “I have to deal with those” memories (Interview 13). Trusting anyone was difficult but he said, “once I feel good about the people then I will work with” them (Interview 13). Despite everything that Owen had been through as a child, he continued with his education as a young adult. He worked all through high school. His main

employment interests had been auto mechanics, bartending, mining and forestry (Interview 13). He went on to post-secondary education and studied in “business” and “law” (Interview 13). Owen said, “they never talked to me about anything” (Interview 13). He did however, receive an honorable mention for the paper he wrote for his “economics” class (Interview 13). His teacher said he would be successful in all of his business ventures which proved to be true. Owen went into law enforcement later and then Aboriginal politics (Interview 13). As political leader now, he looks after the well-being of others in the community. His family members are all practicing professionals. As respected Elder and ceremonial lodge keeper, he has helped many (Interview 13).

Lee. Lee was in his mid-twenties when he enrolled in “alternative education” but he said, “even there I didn’t last very long because again I got back into that mind set...why am I doing this...I’m just going to go look for a job and that’s basically what I did” (Interview 14). When Lee thought about it, he already “had those basic skills, what a human being should have” such as “respect,” honesty and open-mindedness (Interview 14). He said “that’s all I needed in the beginning when I” started “working in stores” ... “just having common sense” (Interview 14). Lee followed the Anishinaabe teachings that his grandparents had passed on to him. Although Lee did not look forward to Western-based adult learning opportunities, he did enjoy participating in wellness workshops when he was employed in human service organizations (Interview 14). Lee said “they want you to keep expanding your mind” (Interview 14). Lee had studied in the area of “social work” and he liked that because the “work relates to your own personal life...who you are...your values” all come into play when you’re helping people (Interview 14). Cultivating an “open mind” about a lot of things was important to him

(Interview 14). As traditional healer and wise Elder, he carries a ceremonial lodge that many go to for healing and recovery (Interview 14).

Wolf. When she had dropped out of school altogether Wolf said “I had to take a few years to gain a better perspective” before “I went back to school when I was twenty years old” (Interview 15) for career purposes. By that time, her Anishinaabe identity had been fully restored and with “spirit intact” she said “no one could tell me not to speak my Anishinaabe language” or bully me into forgetting my Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 15). Armed with newfound knowledge and strength, Wolf enrolled in a “multi-cultural” school that employed Indigenous teachers who already knew the painful impact of “discrimination and racism” because they had experienced the same rejection themselves (Interview 15). She remembered the teachers as being “very intrigued” with native people (Interview 15). Wolf said by then “I found my voice” that the teachers in European schools had tried to silence (Interview 15). She said “they were good to us so I excelled in that school and I blossomed” (Interview 15).

In her studies, she learned that non-Aboriginal historians “only spoke about themselves, only themselves” and they were very negative about the Anishinaabe “in their “history books” (Wolf, Interview 15). In the writings “they called us ‘savages’ and ‘dirty Indians’” (Interview 15). The vertical and horizontal violence that the Anishinaabeg had been subject to in the literature was very disturbing to her. She “told the Elders” and they “were all deeply saddened” (Interview 15). Wolf said, over the years since, “they” (the Elders) “worked...to delete those messages from their history books. They were successful” (Interview 15). The “history books” were taken “off the shelf” (Interview 15). Wolf said “I realized at that point that these people were visitors to our territory, to our turtle island. They were the strangers. They were the immigrants. We are not. We are “Indigenous nations on our land” (Interview 15).

Wolf said that in European-based learning settings, “the non-Aboriginal adult educator may not agree or even accept me because I’m from a different culture” (Interview 15). Her preference was Indigenous adult educators. People who have been through difficult life experiences tend to be “very good teachers because they come from kindness and heart” and “I had teachers like that so I excelled” (Interview 15). On the other hand, “I would welcome having a non-native, one that had the *heart* because they really do care about how they teach and getting their students to excel, to help them” (Interview 15). Wolf preferred to learn from her Anishinaabe family members if she wanted to know more about planting flowers, for example (Interview 15). She said “I feel more comfortable” with them (Interview 15). She said “I don’t have a green thumb” but my father “has that ability to garden and he has planted potatoes, you know different things over the years” (Interview 15). She carries ceremonial lodges that many go to for healing and recovery as well (Interview 15). Wolf said that the Anishinaabeg are in very sacred relationships with our turtle island and all living beings and for those reasons “the Anishinaabe sits within the circle” (Interview 15).

**Synthesis: Support the Transformational Bicultural Learning
of Anishinaabe Adult Learners**

Perspectives of the Elders

The intent of gathering information from 15 Anishinaabe Elders was to understand what their perspectives were on lifelong learning, and how these perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning. Findings show that the Elders had transcended their lives through active participation in the areas of education, career, and community involvement. They underwent a *transformational bicultural learning* process which was the major emergent theme. Brief excerpts are provided below to highlight

what they said. The following sub-titles were decided based on what the Elders actually said and the number of times similar perspectives were shared about Western-based education, traditional Anishinaabe-based learning, the adult educators that they had encountered, career related development, and stations that the research participants now hold in their First Nations communities.

Interest in Western-based education. Seven of the fifteen research participants in this study pursued a variety of studies as the following excerpts show. The management of the wellness program that Carson had completed recruited him for a position in their helping organization (Interview 2). The understanding at the time was that he enroll in post-secondary studies to earn the credentials necessary to qualify for the employment (Interview 2). This had a very “positive” long-term effect in his life (Interview 2). Ann had enrolled in university to become a teacher. She then taught Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) for thirty to forty years (Interview 3) before retirement. It was her belief that the Anishinaabe youth should learn their “first language” (Anishinaabemowin) (Interview 3). Ann had gone back to university to study native counselling for the purpose of being a more effective counsellor especially to children (Interview 3). Parker had regretted his decision to drop out of school to go in to the work force at a young age (Interview 7). His decision did not sit well with him at the time (Interview 7). He always “felt out of place” among his coworkers because of the lack of education (Interview 7). When he took a life skills program as an adult learner, Parker came to realize the value of education (Interview 7). He said “you need schooling nowadays” (Interview 7). After being forced out of school at the age of “sixteen” because of the lack of funding for his education, Dakota went in to the work force doing temporary seasonal work (Interview 8). He then applied to the local telephone company for “an apprenticeship” but the racism quashed the

opportunity (Interview 8). Dakota said “that’s how it was” (Interview 8). In the later years, he had taken “all kinds of courses” at the university before going into “management” (Interview 8). He declined the offer to pursue studies in the legal profession (Interview 8). Therese really liked the “life skills component” of the transitional program that she had gone to before gaining entrance to post-secondary studies (Interview 9). She went on to study in the fields of psychology and sociology (Interview 9). Veronica had also gone to university to become a teacher (Interview 12). She said “I liked it” (Interview 12). After graduation, she taught Anishinaabemowin “for thirty-five years” (Interview 12). Wolf had dropped out because of the racism in Western schools (Interview 15). She had to leave for “a few years to gain a better perspective” (Interview 15). At the age of twenty, she enrolled in a “multicultural” school to finish her education (Interview 15). Then she landed full-time employment (Interview 15).

Moderate interest in Western-based education. Eight of the fifteen research participants were reluctant to pursue a Western-based education. Jennifer had upgraded her skills as needed to fill the requirements of any new employment that was available (Interview 1). Anxiety seemed to prevail in her life when she “did go back to the work force” because of historical trauma during childhood (Interview 1). Jennifer never allowed that to stop her because she valued the financial independence (Interview 1). Colton was not that interested in Western schooling but he left his First Nations community anyway (Interview 4). He even had to learn how to use “modern technology like computers” in his line of work (Interview 4). Colton became Anishinaabe knowledge keeper “mentor” to one his teachers (Interview 4). Although Jacob stayed on-reserve and worked in the logging industry, he had attended countless “self-awareness programs” throughout his life and then he shared the information with community members (Interview 5). He said “I believe in education today” at least for my children because

we need that to survive nowadays (Interview 5). Jacob not only provided for his family with hard-earned income but helped in the healing and recovery efforts of First Nations people (Interview 5). For Betty, her Indian residential school experiences had cast a long dark shadow. She purposely “volunteered” in the school to protect her children from being apprehended during the Sixties Scoop era (Interview 6). She said “I always had this fear that anybody (children’s aide society) could take your children” for little reason (Interview 6). As a result of her efforts, Betty had been offered full-time, paid “employment” along with an invitation to enroll in post-secondary studies to become “a teacher’s aide” (Interview 6). Betty never considered “going back to school” until her employer pushed her to do so to keep her employment (Interview 6). This led to ongoing learning for her. Derek had been honored with several “awards” for his teaching excellence (Interview 10). Part of his mission in life as an Elder is to pass on “traditional knowledge and language” (Interview 10). One of the most important lessons he has tried to teach his young students in class is “native community togetherness” where everyone helps one another (Interview 10). He said, we “speak from the heart, that’s our way” (Interview 10). As a young adult, Owen went to university to study “business and economics” that eventually led to a political leadership calling in his First Nations community (Interview 13). Owen had trust issues related to his previous Indian residential school experiences. He admitted that he still carried “traumatic experiences even today” as an adult and still has “to deal with those memories” (Interview 13). John just wanted bare minimum education to secure life-time work that he successfully accomplished (Interview 11). He earned a “grade ten” education to be able to secure employment because at the time, that was all that was needed (Interview 11). It was important for him to fill his social role as family provider (Interview 11). Lee saw no point in Western based education but he embraced the Anishinaabe teachings his grandparents had

passed on to him. He believed that traditional Anishinaabe knowledge helped him to succeed in his career and social roles (Interview 14). As an employee, he participated in training programs in the area of “social work” which helped him in his work at a residential treatment center (Interview 14). He said, the “work relates to your own personal life...who you are...your values” all come into play when you’re helping people (Interview 14).

Aboriginal adult educators. Six of the fifteen research participants felt more comfortable with Aboriginal adult educators as the following excerpts show. Jennifer never appreciated the way she had been treated in the classrooms by non-Aboriginal educators (Interview 1). She said “I had a lot of that in those different schools” and “I didn’t like it” (Interview 1). With Aboriginal adult educators “we can make mistakes and laugh about them and even make” stories “out of them” (Interview 1). It’s even better when we’re learning Anishinaabe knowledge because I feel like I’m at “home” and “relaxed” (Interview 1). Despite the long-term benefit of an education, Colton felt more “comfortable” learning from “Anishinaabe medicine people” because it was more important for him to learn traditional knowledge (Interview 4). Colton preferred the assistance of an Aboriginal adult educator if he needed help to deal with his daily tasks (Interview 4). Parker said he liked their teaching approaches (Interview 7). They tend to be more “flexible” (Interview 7). With non-Aboriginal adult educators, they’re a little rigid because “everything goes by the book” (Interview 7) but “with the Anishinaabe, there was more joking, it was fun, time went fast” (Dakota, Interview 8). He thought that non-Aboriginal educators were a little boring because as students, “you’re looking at the clock all the time, time for recess, time for lunch, time for this” but “with the Anishinaabe you’re interacting” more (Interview 8). There should be more focus on “cultural re-emergence” (Interview 8). Although Derek “experienced damage at the Indian residential

school” he “still resumed” his “education” (Interview 10). He earned two baccalaureate degrees (Interview 10). His experience in the education system especially with the teacher who falsely accused him of “plagiarism” was something other than positive (Interview 10). Then there was the racism (Interview 10). Derek criticized those who claim to be experts on Indigenous knowledge just because they managed to gather scant information on something that was Aboriginal related (Interview 10). He said “now non-native people are running Native Studies programs and languages” (Interview 10). The people to go to for authentic knowledge are the Elders and grassroots people who reside in First Nations communities across Canada. This is part of the de-homogenizing effort. Wolf had found significance differences in the way she had been treated in the schools compared to the approaches of the Anishinaabe Elders who taught traditional education, and the “multicultural” teachers who “were good to” the students (Interview 15). She had dropped out of the school system in her teens because of the racism and discrimination that was a bit difficult to tolerate (Interview 15). Then there were the “history books” that brought even more dislike for Indigenous people (Interview 15). Wolf believed that the “non-Aboriginal adult educator” may not be accepting of her because she is “from a different culture” (Interview 15).

Non-Aboriginal adult educators. One of the fifteen research participants preferred non-Aboriginal adult educators because of their teaching credentials (Interview 6). Betty said “they ask more” of their students (Interview 6). They challenge them to learn. Furthermore, “I want a person that’s going to listen to me and teach me the right way” (Interview 6). For other types of learning such as traditional Anishinaabe parenting, she depended on her “father-in-law” for guidance and support (Interview 6).

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adult educators. Eight of the fifteen research participants preferred both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adult educators. Carson had no “preference between the two (Interview 2). For learning traditional Indigenous knowledge, if the “person spoke” Anishinaabemowin and understood the Anishinaabe teachings then the Aboriginal adult educator would be more helpful to him (Interview 2). For a Western-based education, he tended to lean more toward those (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) “who have taken the time to be licensed or credentialed” because that shows “they’re qualified to do the work” (Interview 2). He said “I know what it takes to get there” (Interview 2). Ann (Interview 3) and Veronica (Interview 12) both had good experiences as adult learners. Jacob participated in “self-awareness programs” and it’s assumed that he never minded the non-Aboriginal facilitators because he went back numerous times (Interview 5). Jacob had embraced the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin or “language” during his healing journey (Interview 5). He learned how to be a loving “husband,” “father,” and “grandfather” (Interview 5). Jacob preferred the assistance of an Aboriginal adult educator for learning how to handle daily tasks and issues (Interview 5). Therese liked the “interactive approach” of university professors who were open-minded about Indigenous perspectives (Interview 9). She was intrigued with the Anishinaabe Elder who spoke at the university that she had attended (Interview 9). Therese said “I was really trying to get more connected to the people who were into the ceremonies” dance, and teachings (Interview 9). Enrolling in a native studies program helped her “to understand what had happened” to Indigenous people and more specifically “what had happened” to her (Interview 9). She said, I started “putting things into perspective” (Interview 9). Her “cultural identity and roots” were strengthened because of the Elder that she had met (Interview 9). John never minded either (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) as “learning is

done the same way” (Interview 11). Owen was okay with both but still had trust issues relating to his Indian residential school experiences that he had to work through or “deal with those” memories (Interview 13). Although “they never talked to” him “about anything” his work received an honorable mention in his “economics” class (Interview 13). Lee believed that the Anishinaabe should cultivate an “open mind” about learning (Interview 14).

Learning just for the sake of learning. All of the research participants were motivated to involve themselves in various sorts of activities to improve the quality of their lives like the five Elders who wanted to learn *just for the sake of learning*. Carson saw himself as a lifelong learner (Interview 2). He said “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). These enjoyed reading books on “different philosophies” and taking “daily walks” in nature settings to meditate (Interview 9). Veronica often sat “for hours” and “read” (Interview 12). Ann liked going to “meetings” in her community because “you learn a lot of things” (Interview 3). Parker enjoyed “going to meetings,” being on “committees” and “meeting new people” (Interview 7). Lee (Interview 14) and Wolf (Interview 15) as do all the Elders in this study help with the healing and recovery of Indigenous people.

The Literature – Discussion

The responses of the 15 research participants were sifted through Knowles six andragogical assumptions in the following sections as follows: (1) learner’s need to know, (2) learner’s self-concept, (3) prior learning experiences of the adult learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation. The intent was to gain a better understanding of what their lifelong learning experiences were as adult learners, the problems they may have encountered, and the methods that may help to strengthen the lifelong, self-directed, bicultural

learning (both European-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) of Anishinaabe adults (addressed in the next chapter) that enable a *transformational* process.

Learner's Need to Know

Knowles' (1990) first andragogical assumption holds that, individuals undergo the *need to know* why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it, *what that entails*, and *how it applies to their real lives* (pp. 57-58). All of the research participants had shared how that played out in their lives. A few examples will be discussed. Jennifer's lifelong learning journey was not so much the pursuit of a "career" per se through formal education but more on-the-job training endeavors in different sorts of employment (Interview 1). Maintaining her financial independence was important to her (Interview 1). After teaching Anishinaabemowin "(Ojibwe language) for thirty to forty years," Ann had returned to university and enrolled in a "native counselling" program (Interview 3). Her main concern at the time was that First Nations students continue their schooling despite the "racism and discrimination" (Interview 3). She wanted to be a more effective counsellor (Interview 3). For her, this was a second career. After the logging and trapping industry waned, Colon realized he had to find "a different way of making a living" (Interview 4). He left the community to upgrade his skills, and then returned home to work in the area of mental health (Interview 4). Colton said "I had to keep up with the changing times" (Interview 4). When his brother was a little older, John went back to school to finish "grade ten" (Interview 11). In those days, that was the minimum requirement to be able to work in forestry, house construction, and other types of employment to support his social role as family provider (Interview 11). He said "I worked here, worked there, it was good" (Interview 11). Owen worked all through high school in different sorts of employment such as auto mechanics, bartending, mining and forestry (Interview 13). In the later years, he studied in the

fields of “business” and “law” (Interview 13). This led to a political leadership calling in his community. The findings show that before the Elders underwent new learning as adult learners they understood as Knowles (1990) described, the need to know why they needed to learn before undertaking to learn it, what that entailed and how it applied to their lives. It was about survival. Foote (2015) in her reflections learned “how education can inspire transformational learning and open new vistas to lifelong learning” (p. 84).

Learner’s Self-Concept

Knowles (1980), in his second andragogical assumption said that people change their self-concepts when they leave their *dependent roles* as full-time learners and become mainly “producers and doers” or self-directed individuals as *independent* adults (p. 45). Knowles (1980) observation was that most people “probably do not have full-fledged self-concepts of self-directedness until” they “leave school or college, get a full-time job, marry, and start a family” (p. 57). With the realization of self-directed independence, comes a sense of freedom to decide one’s own choices of education and career similar to what Wolf had experienced. As a young adult, Wolf had come to realize all that she had been through at the Indian residential school because of her Anishinaabe identity (Interview 15). She said, with “spirit intact...no one could tell me not to speak my Anishinaabe language” or bully me into forgetting my Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 15). Wolf had decided to pursue further schooling so she enrolled in a “multi-cultural” school to finish her studies (Interview 15). She said “they were good to us so I excelled in that school and I blossomed” (Interview 15). Wolf then worked for the government until retirement (Interview 15). Veronica went to university to become a teacher and then “worked in education for thirty-five years” (Interview 12). Adults really do leave their *dependent roles* as full-time learners and become mainly *independent* “producers and doers”

(Knowles, 1980, p. 45). In the normal course of development, the process of moving beyond dependence to independence like most people who never attended Residential schools would have been a natural unfolding process that led to a healthy sense of self-directedness in every facet of their lives thereafter. However, unlike most people, Wolf and Veronica withdrew from school for the purpose of taking time out for their own healing and recovery through traditional Anishinaabe methods of spirituality before deciding to resume their education because there was no other way around the childhood trauma that had been inflicted on them. Although Wolf and Veronica had experienced disrupted learning early in their lives because of the subjugation of the Anishinaabeg at the time, they became independent lifelong, self-directed adult learners. Wolf and Veronica underwent a transformational bicultural learning process despite the challenges they had faced early in their lives.

Prior Learning Experiences of the Adult Learner

Adult learners tend to feel valued if their prior learning experiences are openly acknowledged by adult educators according to Knowles' third andragogical assumption (p. 49). Because adults have "lived longer, they have accumulated a greater *volume* of experience" (p. 50). They are "a rich resource for learning" (p. 50). The following examples highlight what the Elders said in relation to what they thought about the value that had been placed on them because of their prior learning experiences.

Feeling valued. The Elders in this study had spoken of the positive outcomes that came out of their lifelong learning despite the challenges of their early childhood schooling experiences. Ten research participants said that their prior learning experiences had been valued. Carson had been "approached by the" management of the wellness program that he completed (Interview 2). They asked if he'd "be interested in" pursuing a post-secondary education to fill

the requirements needed to work in the areas of “social work” and “counselling” (Interview 3). He accepted their offer. Carson said “it had a direct impact on my life, for sure, a positive one” (Interview 2) career-wise. Betty had been praised after she accidentally completed and passed the university level questionnaire section that was in her “mature” student “test” booklet designed for university and college entrance programs (Interview 6). She said that was “crazy...see how good I am (laughter) (Interview 6). When Parker decided to take a “life skills” program, he said “you feel great about yourself” (Interview 7). It’s even better when the “trainers and trainees” ask for your opinions (Interview 7). Dakota had secured business “management” positions in helping organizations (Interview 8). With a keen interest in his new line of work, he had enrolled in post-secondary studies and took “all kinds of courses” (Interview 8). Dakota had been approached to enroll in the legal profession to become a lawyer because of his “research” capabilities but he declined the offer (Interview 8). Ann had often been invited as “Elder” to the same university that she had attended to become a teacher (Interview 3). Her social role was considered a valuable asset to the teaching profession similar to Colton who became a traditional Anishinaabe knowledge keeper “mentor” to one of his former teachers (Interview 4). People often go to Colton because of the traditional Anishinaabe knowledge that he has learned “from Anishinaabe medicine people” (Interview 4). Jacob had similar experiences of learning the “Anishinaabe ways” and even the Western approaches to healing through “self-awareness programs” the information of which he shared with his community (Interview 5). Therese felt that the professors valued her participation in class discussions (Interview 9). She liked that they had taken the “interactive approach” (Interview 9). Therese had often challenged university professors when she said “I don’t exactly fit into the concept that you’re talking about” (Interview 9). It was about breaking out of the traditional lecture style

method “where few questions may be periodically asked” (Darbyshire, 1993, p. 330). These realized that they had begun to really think about where we are “coming from as Anishinaabe people” (Interview 9). This was similar to what Wolf experienced. She felt valued by the teachers who actually invited her to share opinions, thoughts and so on in class (Interview 15). Wolf said that the teachers were “very intrigued” with native people (Interview 15). Adults really are “a rich resource for learning” (Knowles, 1980, p. 50). They are themselves, teachers, mentors, healers, leaders, Elders and so on with much to share with other adult learners. The research participants had felt that their prior learning experiences had been valued as evidenced in what they had experienced in different learning settings. Their experiences support Knowles (1980) third andragogical principle.

Feeling devalued. Other research participants had felt that their prior learning experiences were not valued. Jennifer remembered that the teachers were abusive toward her when she was a child (Interview 1). She said “I had a lot of that in those different schools” (Interview 1). The feelings of being devalued in the non-Aboriginal schools that she had attended as a child was the main reason she never pursued a formal education as an adult learner (Interview 1). This was the main reason she declined the opportunity to become “a computer technician” (Interview 1). When Betty studied to become a teacher, she thought it was laughable when they were teaching parents “how to act around children” (Interview 6). Adult educators should place more value on adult learners who already possess the skills in parenting for example (Interview 6). As John mentioned earlier, he said that First Nations people who were quite knowledgeable of their lakes and rivers should not have been required to pay for expensive boat licenses just because a few of the visitors that came to the area had been reckless on the water and then new policies enacted thereafter (Interview 11). Now we have to learn new “ways

of going up and down the river” system that has been familiar to us for years (John, Interview 11). The educators in his schools “never talked” to Owen “about anything” (Interview 13). He did, however, receive an honorable mention for a class paper that he had written but the educator never pointed him out directly so no one really knew who the successful student was in his “economics” class (Interview 13). Derek criticized those who claim to be experts simply because they were in possession of scant information gathered through a few talks with people living in geographically dispersed areas (Interview 10). The fact that “now non-native people are running Native Studies programs and languages” (Interview 10) draws attention to the ethical issues surrounding Indigenous knowledge. Although the literature may have provided additional information to the researchers, the Anishinaabeg Elders are the people who truly know the old stories and practices specific to the land in which that knowledge originates. Claiming expertise outside our own cultures undermines what the Aboriginal person understands of their life experiences. The practice *devalues* Indigenous knowledge. Generalizing across diverse populations even globally only communicate limited information of what had been researched for a few moments in time. Learners in general are missing out on the beauty and richness of diverse cultures because of scant images they are given of what is real and true about Indigenous lives. The findings in my research bring light to the ways in which the prior learning experiences of Anishinaabe adults and the knowledge that the traditional Elders carry about Anishinaabe knowledge has been devalued. Given that “adults define themselves largely by their experiences, they have a deep investment in its value” (Knowles (1980, p. 50). When “adults find themselves in situations in which their experience is not being used, or its worth minimized, it is not just their experience that is being rejected – they feel rejected as persons” (p. 50).

Readiness to Learn

Adults experience a variety of learning needs to help them fill their *social roles* over the course of their lives according to Knowles (1980) fourth andragogical assumption. As people move through different phases of growth in their lives each developmental stage "...produces a 'readiness to learn' which at its peak presents a 'teachable moment'" (p. 51). The following section illustrates what the research participants said in relation to what they did to advance their social roles as adult learners, employees, or parents for examples and take on their self-directed independent learning pursuits in the areas of education, employment and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge seeking. There were other perspectives shared as well relating to the impact of colonization on the process of Anishinaabe teaching and learning.

Teachable moments in European schools and places of employment. Because Jennifer had decided to be in "the work force" at the age of "sixteen" she depended on, on-the-job training programs to learn the requirements needed to work in the field (Interview 1). She said, "I used to talk back (as an adult in places of employment) but I still have a fear of retaliation and physical abuse" (Interview 1) because of what I went through during my childhood in the schools. Those places were a little unfriendly. Dakota mentioned that universities tend to be very impersonal because it's mostly "lectures" with little interaction between educators and students (Interview 8). But "with the Anishinaabe you're interacting more" (Interview 8) and it would make for better learning experiences. Therese really liked the "transitional program" that she had gone to because of the "life skills component" that had been quite "relevant" to her life then (Interview 9). This was something she "really needed" at the time because it helped her to settle some life issues while at the same time, acquire the skills necessary to succeed in post-secondary studies (Interview 9). For Derek, he experienced something odd while he was going to university to study to become a teacher (Interview 10). He

had been falsely accused of “plagiarism” but when he wrote “a 3,500-word essay in front” of the teacher, she finally believed in his writing skills (Interview 10). Findings show that the Elder’s experiences support Knowles (1980) fourth andragogical principle. The phase of development at each stage of life produces “a readiness to learn” which presents “a teachable moment” (Knowles, 1980, p. 51) whether that meant on-the-job training for Jennifer, Dakota’s preference for Anishinaabe methods of “interacting more” with educators and students, Therese’s sense of appreciation for the “life skills component” of the transitional program or Derek’s experience of being deliberately targeted when he was falsely accused of “plagiarism” because he was an Anishinaabe student, and his readiness to sit and “write a 3,500, word essay in front” of the teacher to pass his course.

Teachable moments in traditional Anishinaabe education. Jennifer who holds a political leadership role in her community felt “more at home and more relaxed” in learning environments where Anishinaabe knowledge was being shared (Interview 1). She said, “we can make mistakes and laugh about them and even make a story out of them (smile)” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Anishinaabe adult educators are more fun (Interview 1). Carson who is a traditional Elder, liked the idea of learning “culture” from someone who actually spoke Anishinaabemowin (Interview 2). To him that was more meaningful because of his Anishinaabe cultural background. Betty who was a single parent, reflected on what she had lost because of the Indian residential school (Interview 6). She said they sort of train you how to “raise your children in the home *but not really...*” (Interview 6). When she became a parent, her “father-in-law” taught her what traditional Anishinaabe parenting was all about (Interview 6). If it hadn’t been for him, things would have turned out differently (Interview 6). As a graduate student, Therese had been very intrigued with the Anishinaabe Elder who spoke at the university she was

attending (Interview 9). She said, “I really started learning about myself as an Aboriginal person, I guess finding my cultural identity and roots” (Therese, Interview 9). I wanted to feel “more connected to the people who were into the ceremonies, into the dance, into the teachings” (Interview 9). His talk moved her to begin doing research “to understand what happened” to Aboriginal people in the past (Interview 9). Finding her Anishinaabe cultural roots was important because that was the missing piece she had been searching for (Interview 9). When Wolf was a student as well, she had spoken of the disturbing depictions of Aboriginal people in the literature (Interview 15). She said “they called us ‘savages’ and ‘dirty Indians’” (Wolf, Interview 15). The depictions were demeaning and deficit-based. There were other changes as well. Burton and Point (2006) said that the older more traditional Aboriginal “...educational systems were incorporated into daily lives under the rubric of Indigenous education: look, listen and learn.” (p. 37). Contrary to what they said, the native way of “watch and learn” doesn’t work anymore because of the impact of colonization and the “social” changes that have reshaped our societies (Derek, Interview 10). As traditional teachers “we can’t teach that way” anymore because “our classroom which is the outside environment is being cut down, you know destroyed” by the “bulldozer” (Interview 10). The research participants had experienced “teaching moments” as it relates to traditional Anishinaabe knowledge which support Knowles (1980) fourth andragogical principle (51).

Orientation to learning

According to Knowles’ (1980) fifth andragogical assumption, adult learners “...tend to have a perspective of immediacy of application towards most of their learning (p. 53). Adults “engage in learning largely in response to pressures they feel from their current life situation” (p. 53). It’s about dealing with the tasks of everyday life. The research participants shared

perspectives about the ways in which this has unfolded as indicated in the following excerpts below.

Colton had spoken of his parents who were avid gardeners (Interview 4). He said “we have our own people who know how to do that” (Interview 4). The knowledge was then passed down to others but that changed during the “impact of colonization” (Ann, Interview 3). Jacob needed help to plant a “hedge” in his yard (Interview 5). He said, I had to ask a guy to come to my residence because they have the machinery and “tools I don’t” (Interview 5). Wolf felt “more comfortable with” her Anishinaabe aunt if she had to learn how to plant flowers (Interview 15). She said “I don’t have a green thumb” but my father “has that ability to garden and he has planted potatoes, you know different things over the years” (Interview 15). This supports Knowles (1980) fifth andragogical principle. The research participants either “engage in learning” to help them in their daily tasks or plan what they would do to learn new ways of doing things.

Motivation

Adults are filled with an abundance of motivations, according to Knowles’ (1990) sixth andragogical assumption (p. 63). He maintains that adults are motivated to participate in various learning activities for differing reasons (p. 63). *External motivators* such as employment related goals or *internal pressures* of improving the “quality of life” for example are the main motivations for new learning (p. 63). The findings show in the following sections what the Elders said in relation to their external and internal motivations.

External motivators. Jennifer started working at the age of “sixteen” (Interview 1). When she finally returned to the First Nations community that she had to leave when she was twelve, Jennifer found employment there such as “brush cutting” on her reserve or working at

the band office (Interview 1). The “income” was important to her because she valued her financial independence (Interview 1). Carson had accepted the invitation to pursue post-secondary studies so he could work in wellness programs (Interview 2). He studied in the fields of “psychology” and “sociology” (Interview 2) with a special emphasis on “social work” and “counselling” (Interview 2) as did Colton who said that he had gone “back to school for a couple of years to able to do the kind of work (mental health) I’m doing now” (Interview 4). For Betty, she purposely “volunteered at the school” her children were attending because of her “fear that anybody (children’s aide social workers) could take your children” and place them in foster care or have them adopted out during the Sixties Scoop era (Interview 6). She landed full time “employment as “teacher’s aide” and then went on to pursue post-secondary studies (Interview 6). Parker worked in the local “town” with non-Aboriginal employees who admired his strong work ethic (Interview 7). He expressed regret for dropping out of school at the age of “sixteen” to work in the logging industry because he said “you need schooling nowadays” (Interview 7). Derek had earned two baccalaureate degrees and then went into the teaching profession (Interview 10). He had been awarded “2 provincial awards and 4 regional awards” for his exemplary career in teaching (Interview 10). Lee said that he just started “working in stores” and then gradually landed employment in social work because the “work relates to your own personal life...who you are...your values” all work together when you’re helping people (Interview 14). He participated in wellness workshops through his place of employment (Interview 14) as did Carson who attended “short term training programs” (Interview 2). According to Statistics Canada (2010) in the changes in participation in adult education and training, 2002 and 2008, said that “almost half of Canadians aged 18 to 64 participated in some type of education or training” (p. 1). Furthermore “...participation in formal education programs

decreased with age while participation in training activities generally increased” (p. 2). Moreover, “...employers continue to be a key source of support for job-related education and training...” (p. 5). Most of the Elders were *externally motivated* to involve themselves in the lifelong, self-directed learning process to help secure and maintain the means to survival. They just wanted to support themselves and their families. It was about the pursuit of education and long-term employment which support Knowles (1990) sixth andragogical principle.

Internal pressures. Carson said that learning communities are ongoing here because “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). Therese loved to read books on “different philosophies” (Interview 9). John’s health problems does not prevent him from keeping up with the latest happenings in the world through the media (Interview 11). His focus is on environmental issues such as pipelines, mining, pollution, “global warming” and forest regeneration (Interview 11). He said there should be more pine cone harvesting and “tree planting programs” for First Nations people (Interview 11). Veronica often sat “for hours” and “read” (Interview 12). Ann liked attending “meetings” in her community just to “learn” and stay informed (Interview 3). Parker liked being a member on different “committees” and he enjoyed “meeting new people” (Interview 7). The Elders were *internally motivated* to stay informed about the latest Aboriginal issues, embrace new learning just for the sake of learning and to meet new people. It was about improving the “quality of life” which supports Knowles (1990) sixth andragogical principle (p. 63).

The most salient theme was that all of the Elders saw the devastation colonization brought to the Anishinaabeg and the need for ongoing healing efforts in the areas of, reconnecting with “Anishinaabe” teachings (Jennifer, Interview 1; Therese, Interview 9), strengthening “Anishinaabemowin” (language) (Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3; Parker,

Interview 7), knowledge seeking from “Anishinaabe medicine people” (Colton, Interview 4), learning how to function in social roles (parenting, grandparenting, spousal relationships and so on) through traditional “Anishinaabe” learning (Jacob, Interview 5; Betty, Interview 6), pushing for “cultural re-emergence” (Dakota, Interview 8), inviting Anishinaabe Elders to do presentations at universities (Therese, Interview 9), teaching our Anishinaabe youth “native community togetherness” (Derek, Interview 10), helping to understand “global warming” and the impact of environmental pollution (John, Interview 11), and taking on the roles of Elder, teacher, leader, mentor and so (Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). Care and concern for others was a notable characteristic that fall in line with the “seven” Anishinaabe grandfather teachings of “love” and “respect” for all life on Mother Earth (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64). The research participants were *internally motivated* to help in the healing and recovery of the Anishinaabeg because they wanted to help improve the quality of life of others.

Perspectives About Educators

The Elders had expressed varying perspectives about the adult educators that they had encountered. Ann had generally good experiences when she was attending university. She said “I never felt inferior to them” (Interview 3). I felt accepted. Betty liked “non-Aboriginal teachers” as well because “they ask more” of their students (Interview 6). She wanted someone who would give more than a passing “grade” (Interview 6). Betty wanted a quality education. Parker preferred Aboriginal adult educators because they’re more “flexible” in their teaching approaches (Interview 7). With non-Aboriginals “everything goes by the book” (Interview 7) which implies rigidity in the methods some educators use. Dakota preferred “Anishinaabe” educators because “there was more joking, it was fun, and time went fast” (Interview 8). Non-

Aboriginal educators tend to be a little boring because as a student “you’re looking at the clock all the time” but “with the Anishinaabe you’re interacting more” and its “fun” (Interview 8). Veronica said that she had been comfortable with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators “sort of” in the later years but this was long after her Indian residential school experiences (Interview 12). Wolf had expressed concerns that the “non-Aboriginal adult educator may not...accept” her (Interview 15). Wolf said “I’m from a different culture” (Interview 15).

Transformational theory

Despite the challenges colonization posed, the research participants had found ways to resume their lives after surviving catastrophic childhood school experiences. Mezirow (1991) in his discussion on *perspective transformation* said that the first step is to become “critically aware” of the problems that we may be facing and the need for change (p. 167). For example, our distress may be attributed to “an externally imposed epochal dilemma such as death, illness, separation or divorce” career related promotions or losses, “failing important examinations,” “or retirement” (p. 168). While “it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance” (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii) meaning the issues related to pain and problems can be transcended over time to healing and recovery despite the challenges life presents. Derek had said even though “I experienced damage at the Indian residential school but I still resumed my education” (Interview 10). This was similar to the educational experiences of Betty, Jacob, Dakota, John, Veronica, Owen, and Wolf who are all residential school survivors. They had taken temporary leave of their studies to recover but then went on to post-secondary studies later as adult learners. Wolf said “I had to take a few years to gain a better perspective” before “I went back to school when I was twenty years old” (Interview

15). Change “requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act or not” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 22). Mezirow offers an example of what that might entail. In his earlier work, he carried out “a national study of women who were returning to college after a hiatus to participate in specialized re-entry programs” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). Findings showed that “personal transformation” involves several different phases of change (p. 168). It begins with “a disorienting dilemma” followed with the process of self-examination, desire for change, exploration of options, skills development as needed, new role acquisition, modification, building competence and self-esteem, and “a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” (p. 169). Transformational learning is said to have taken place once the final stage is attained. This can be an ever-evolving process people experience across the life span if they choose to similar to what the Elders had decided for their lives. Jarvis (2007) talks about the process of change as well in terms of lifelong learning that he defines as,

the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical, and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences, social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing) or more experienced person. (p. 1)

The purpose of transformational learning is to move beyond the challenges life poses whether that directs us to change problematic frames of reference or pushes people to affirmative action to solve the dilemmas.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I presented the exact words of the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who were interviewed. The interview question; *How did colonization impact the process of helping Anishinaabe adults in their lifelong learning?* was organized around the following overarching research questions as follows; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? I presented the findings at the beginning of the chapter, then I provided a synthesis of the research participants perspectives that was organized under the emergent theme of, *transformational bicultural learning* (both Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based). I discussed how the findings resonate with the literature, what the contradictions were, and how the data extends the discourse.

The stories of the 15 research participants in this study were sifted through Knowles six andragogical assumptions to understand what their lifelong, self-directed learning experiences were. It was also meant to help identify the issues or concerns they may have had in relation to their education and long-term employment. Adult educators would benefit if they knew how to help strengthen the bicultural learning (both Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge-based) of First Nations adults.

Knowles' (1990) first andragogical assumption, describes adults as needing to know the why, what and how the new learning applies to their real lives (pp. 57-58). Developing the skills necessary to partake in productive employment for survival purposes would be the main reason that most individuals participate in adult learning activities. Jennifer worked continuously to upgrade her "skills" to fill the requirements of new employment (Interview 1). Financial independence was important to Jennifer. Ann went to university to become a teacher and then taught Anishinaabemowin "for thirty to forty years" (Interview 3). Her hope was that the

Anishinaabeg retain their Anishinaabemowin. Owen studied in the fields of “business” and “law” which eventually led to a political leadership role in his community (Interview 13).

Knowles’ (1980) in his second andragogical assumption, said that children abandon their dependent roles as full-time learners and become independent “producers and doers” or self-directed personalities (p. 46). Individuals take on the freedoms and responsibilities for their lives which is what it should be in the normal course of human development. With “spirit intact” Wolf had realized that “no one” had the right to “tell” her “not to speak” her “Anishinaabe language” nor practice her Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 15). She then decided to enroll in a “multi-cultural” school to finish her studies (Interview 15) which is similar to what Veronica (Interview 12) and the Elders had done despite the challenges that they had faced during their childhoods. They became independent lifelong, self-directed adult learners who underwent a transformational bicultural learning process.

According to Knowles’ (1980) third andragogical assumption, adults “have accumulated a greater *volume* of experience” and they tend to *feel valued* if their prior learning experiences are acknowledged (p. 50). After Carson had completed a wellness program, the management “approached” him and asked if he would be interested in pursuing post-secondary studies in that same field (Interview 2). He said that the opportunity “had a direct impact on my life for sure, a positive one” (Interview 2). Ann had often been invited as an “Elder” to the same university she attended to become a teacher (Interview 3). She often goes there during the “summer” months (Interview 3). Dakota had been asked to think about going into the legal profession because of his “research” capabilities (Interview 8). He declined the offer. There were others who had felt that their prior experiences as First Nations people *were not valued*. Jennifer never liked the racist attitudes of her teachers (Interview 1). She had experienced “a lot of that in those different

schools” (Interview 1). Jennifer didn’t “like it” (Interview 1). Betty thought that was laughable when they were teaching parents “how to act around children” (Interview 6). She said “there’s no other way of teaching” adults (Interview 6). Derek never liked that traditional Indigenous knowledge was being exploited by non-Aboriginal educators in “Native Studies” departments (Interview 10). Adults feel a sense of value when their prior learning experiences are acknowledged. Conversely, they feel “rejected” when it is not (Knowles, 1980, p. 50).

Knowles (1980) fourth andragogical assumption or readiness to learn relates to the process of helping adult learners who may need adult education as they transition through various developmental stages of life or help in their *social roles* (p. 51). This is about “teachable” moments (p. 51). The research participants’ as students and employees showed how their self-directed learning experiences facilitated their involvement in a number of different fields. Areas of interest included native counseling (Ann, Interview 3), native studies (Therese, Interview 9; Veronica, Interview 12), bartending, auto mechanics, forestry, law enforcement, political leader (Owen, Interview 13), house construction (John, Interview 11), life skills (Parker, Interview 7), teaching (Ann, Interview 3; Derek, Interview 10; Veronica, Interview 12), management (Dakota, Interview 8), psychology and sociology (Carson, Interview 2; Therese, Interview 9), multi-tasker and political leader (Jennifer, Interview 1).

There were teachable moments in traditional Anishinaabe education as well. Jennifer felt “more at home and more relaxed” around Anishinaabe teachers because she said “we can make mistakes and laugh about them” (Interview 1). The idea of learning “culture” from adult educators who actually speak Anishinaabemowin is of value to me (Carson, Interview 1). It was through the traditional Anishinaabe teaching and learning process Jacob learned how to be a “husband,” “father,” and “grandfather” (Interview 5) which was similar to Betty whose father-in-

law taught her traditional Anishinaabe parenting skills (Interview 6). Therese “really started learning about” herself “as an Aboriginal person” after listening to the Elder who spoke at the university she had been attending (Interview 9). Finding her “culture identity and roots” was important to her (Interview 9). Wolf said that the teachers who came from multicultural backgrounds and experienced difficult life experiences tend to be “very good teachers because they come from kindness and heart” (Interview 15). Those teachers displayed warmer and kinder approaches, were knowledgeable of Anishinaabe culture and spoke Anishinaabemowin. With the changes modern society now presents, Indigenous people are having to contend with the shifts. Burton and Point’s (2006) description of Aboriginal education as a process of “look, listen and learn” (p. 37) no longer works according to Derek because of the “social” changes in our society (Interview 10). As traditional teachers, he said “we can’t teach that way” anymore (Interview 10). People do things differently now than they did in the old days when the Anishinaabeg were actively involved in traditional lifestyles.

According to Knowles (1980) fifth andragogical assumption, adult learners “engage in learning” to help them deal with daily tasks (p. 53). Learning how to garden for example was a process that had been passed down in Anishinaabe families (Colton, Interview 4). Colton said “we have our own people who know how to do that” (Interview 4). Jacob would have preferred enlisting the aid of someone who lived in his community for help planting a “hedge” in his yard (Interview 5). He said we have no choice because they “have the tools, I don’t” (Interview 5). Wolf preferred the assistance of her family members if she needed help planting flowers (Interview 15). She would feel more “comfortable” (Interview 15).

According to Knowles (1990) sixth andragogical assumption, adults are motivated to seek new learning based on their external motivators and internal pressures (p. 63). *External*

refers to responsibilities adults carry in relation to their skills development training and subsequent employment which is reflected in what the Elders said. After they refused to allow Jennifer to study to be a “nurse” she dropped out of school at the age of “sixteen” and worked in different sorts of employment to keep her financial independence (Interview 1). Colton had gone “back to school for a couple of years to” update his skills before returning to his home community on reserve (Interview 4). Lee had participated in wellness workshops through his place of employment (Interview 14) as did Carson in “short-term training programs” (Interview 2). Statistics Canada (2010) reports that at least “half of Canadians aged “18 to 64 participated in some type of education or training” between 2002 and 2008 (p. 1). Employers play a helpful role in job-related training (p. 5). It goes without saying that adults in many ways are *externally motivated* which is about common survival in today’s world.

Then there are individuals who feel *internal pressures* to seek new learning to improve the quality of their lives. Carson said “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). For example, Veronica (Interview 12) and Therese (Interview 9) loved to read. Ann (Interview 3) and Parker (Interview 7) enjoyed going to meetings on-reserve, meeting new people, being on committees, staying informed on the latest Aboriginal issues, and participated in other general areas of interest. Further analysis of the stories indicated that the research participants all seemed to be internally motivated in one way or another with the healing and recovery of themselves, families, and community members. Most importantly is that the Anishinaabeg, reconnect with the “Anishinaabe” teachings (Jennifer, Interview 1; Therese, Interview 9), strengthen “Anishinaabemowin” (language) (Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3; Parker, Interview 7) and actively seek knowledge from “Anishinaabe medicine people” (Colton, Interview 4). The Elders were *internally motivated* to help improve the quality of life of others.

The research participants had shared their perspectives on lifelong learning and the ways in which these perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning. Findings show that they had transcended their early experiences of hardship to lives filled with healing, recovery, meaning and purpose. The Elders had actively participated in bicultural learning and then secured employment thereafter. They went through a “personal transformation” that began with “a disorienting dilemma” followed with the desire for change, skills developments, new role acquisition, competence and self-esteem (Mezirow, 191, pp. 168-169). They had experienced a transformational bicultural learning process.

CHAPTER 7

**HELPING THE ANISHINAABEG OVERCOME THE IMPACT OF
COLONIZATION IN RELATION TO THEIR LIFELONG LEARNING**

Based on what the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders had shared about their lives, it was important to interview them further to gather more information. The interview questions were organized around the following overarching research questions in my study; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? Gathering the Elders perspectives helps fill the gap in the literature and sheds light to the interview question: *What can be done to help the Anishinaabeg overcome the impact of colonization in relation to their lifelong learning?* A discussion will follow the synthesis of findings and the literature to show the parallels and contractions.

Findings

The 15 respondents in this study shared their perspectives on ways that would help the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning. Strengthening the *contemporary bicultural learning* (meaning both Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) learning of the Anishinaabeg was the main theme that emerged in the stories. This would help individuals overcome the impact of colonization. Brief highlights of what they said follow.

Contemporary Bicultural Learning

As Anishinaabeg, we should allow room for learning other forms of knowledge as well (Betty, Interview 6; Lee, Interview 14). These days we have to learn “half and half” (Betty, Interview 6) or “both areas” (Lee, Interview 14), meaning two different knowledge bases: European-based and Anishinaabe-based because we live in a very different society now. Lee

said, “there’s nothing wrong” with learning “about other things in your life” but still “remain true to yourself” or “true to” your Anishinaabe “values” (Interview 14). Derek said, we “have to adapt to the changing processes...to survive” in modern times (Interview 10).

Perspectives about Western-Based Education

Jennifer. Educators “should be” more “accepting of people from other cultures to make the learning environment more welcoming” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Jennifer shares,

I guess with non-natives they always seem to be up here and you have to more less you know, like you’re spoken down to all the time, instructed what to do, what not to do, what to think, what not to think, you know like with our own people as teachers, I don’t have to feel like that, I’m on one on one with them, communicating, laughing, and joking around. (Jennifer, Interview 1)

Be sensitive to the memories we carry of being treated badly in elementary and secondary schools just because of our Anishinaabe identities (Jennifer, Interview 1).

Carson. Adult learning settings should be appropriate for adult learners. For example, “the more comfortable the chairs” the better because “your brain can only absorb what your rear end can stand” (laughter) (Carson, Interview 2). I heard that “philosophy” from “the trainer” (Interview 2).

For me, “I research the internet daily” (Carson, Interview 2). I like being on “Facebook” because “there’s a lot of things people post” there (Interview 2). “I don’t know all the computer language but I go through the motions anyway. There is some valuable learning there” (Interview 2). “I think our younger generation has a wealth of learning sources out there you know if they can motivate themselves to learn generally about how you become a more productive person in life” (Interview 2) is what they should be working toward.

I also think that Aboriginal adult learners should be a little more considerate of their fellow classmates (Carson, Interview 2). The proper rules of conduct need to be listed on “a flipchart” in class and discussed beforehand so that everyone understands (Interview 2). I have noticed that “a lot of our people...are notorious for coming in late...” and then “they want a recap because they’re late” (Interview 2). When I used to be “a trainer...I kind of had a hard nose approach...I mean why should we waste our time listening to a recap” when there was no legitimate reason for the learner to be late (Interview 2). I believe “that’s what they call tough love right, that’s how people learn” because “it has to do with respect...that’s one of our Anishinaabe teachings” (Interview 2).

The process of “life-long learning can only occur if a person has that open mind and the willingness to learn” (Carson, Interview 2). I know “there are Elders out there who feel and they openly state that they’re not capable of learning anymore because they already know everything” (Interview 2). People just need to cultivate a more positive attitude. For example, in group settings the key is to try to “make that opportunity as productive as possible” (Interview 2). All members should “contribute” through active participation (Interview 2). They should “ask questions” to clear confusion or misunderstandings (Interview 2). Engage in class discussions by “speaking up” to help everyone learn (Parker, Interview 7). Group learning should be more than sitting there and warming the chair for three or four days just to collect a pay “cheque” (Carson, Interview 2). I say this because I was “a trainer” at one time and I know the importance of getting our teaching concepts across to learners (Interview 2).

Ann. As adults, we have to take on protective roles when it comes to our Anishinaabe children because this is what we did before colonization (Ann, Interview 3). She said “I noticed before I quit working at the school, the way they were treating the children” (Interview 3). In

response to that, “I called one of the teachers over” and “I said, you know the way you’re treating the children” that “must have been how they were treated in residential schools” (Interview 3). The teacher said, “What do you mean?” (Interview 2). I told her what I had observed. “I said you don’t even let that child speak, when they put their hand up, you say...put your hand down” (Interview 3). She “couldn’t even say a word” (Interview 2). The teacher left and “never came back” to the school (Interview 3).

Common courtesy and “respect” for “the people they’re teaching” should be practiced in adult learning places (Ann, Interviews 3). Adult educators should endeavor to “listen to everyone” because they have “something to offer” (Interview 3). Try to make that person feel “relaxed” (Interview 3). Strive to make “that person feel happy to be” there “learning” (Interview 3). “Never put anyone down. Encourage them. Praise them.” (Interview 3). Ann’s father had taught her that, “it’s what you have in your heart” that determines the methods you choose to teach others because that is the Anishinaabe way (Interview 3).

Other perspectives were also passed down to Ann as well in relation to education and career development. Ann’s father said “whatever you want to be, it’s up to you, nobody can do it for you” (Ann, Interview 3). Remember that “you’re not going to get things on a silver platter, you gotta work for things” (Interview 3).

Colton. Adult educators should be more “open-minded” and flexible when it comes to adult learners (Colton, Interview 4). “Allow” them to make plenty of “mistakes” (Interview 4). “Respect where they’re at” (Interview 4). As a teacher “you respect their belief systems, you respect them as a person, as people” (Interview 4).

Colton reflected on his younger days when he used to hunt (Interview 4). He said “I use to be a moose hunter, now I no longer hunt moose” (Interview 4). “I still have the skill to bring

one out...and how my blood races when that moose is coming, you know the excitement..."

(Interview 4). Instead of hunting moose nowadays, I use "my camera" to take photos (Interview 4). For me "it's just the satisfaction of knowing at this stage of my life, I still have the skill to bring one out..." (big smile) (Interview 4).

You "learn as an adult too, even when you become an Elder, you look at life a little differently, like even your interests will kind of shift to a slower kind of life, a more peacefully balanced kind of life" (Colton, Interview 4). He said "yeah I don't think the life learning experience ever ends. Along the way, I had to learn how to use modern technology, like computers..." (Interview 4) before I retired.

Jacob. In high schools and universities, educators should "talk a little bit more of the history of Anishinaabe people" (Jacob, Interview 5). In my opinion, "I'd like to see that in the classroom setting" (Interview 5). For some reason "they don't really want to talk about" those kinds of issues (Interview 5). The Indian "residential school" era was "like the holocaust" that people don't really "understand" (Interview 5). People "were hurt by the residential school, it took all the life out of this community" (Interview 5).

As an adult learner, I had to put myself in therapy of sorts to help in my healing and recovery (Jacob, Interview 5). I had to "draw...pictures on a piece of paper" to help trigger "my residential school" memories so I could begin to talk about them and then let the pain go (Interview 5). Art therapy really "helped me learn" about myself (Interview 5). "I learned to talk a little bit at that time because I never talked. I'd be a very silent guy all the time" (Interview 5). As Anishinaabe, I found that the weekly "45 minute" sessions in counselling were not enough to really process anything "but when you do the Anishinaabe way and you go into a sweat lodge" there's more time to do "intensive work" (Interview 5). It was beneficial to me.

Jacob said, “I believe in education today” especially for my children because ‘they’ will “need that” now especially with the with the lack of opportunities on our “reserve” (Interview 5). I think it’s important to support the education of our “students” (Interview 5). But it can be difficult at times because “every little cent I get” I help “my daughter” pay for rent, books, food and miscellaneous items (Interview 5). For me “that’s how much I want her to finish what she started” when she decided to enroll in post-secondary studies (Interview 5).

Betty. Another important concern is that educators should remember that adult learners cannot be expected to sit in learning environments where there are “fumes coming from the mill” (Betty, Interview 6). This makes it that much more difficult to learn. Fresh air is a must.

Also, find ways to help Aboriginal adult learners alleviate that “lonesome” feel especially for those who had to leave home to attend university (Interview 6). For me, there was no other way, “to get where you wanted to go” in terms of “short-term goals” or “long-term goals” to “achieve something in the long run” that is school related (Interview 6). I wanted to “follow through” with those goals (Interview 6).

Parker. We should have “a little school for learners to go to” to learn more of our “traditional ways” (Parker, Interview 7) similar to the learning programs that are offered at Friendship Centers. For me “that’s why I like going to these Friendship Centers” in towns (Interview 7). When “you walk in” there’s “all these pictures” on the wall (Interview 7). As an artist, “I did a lot of art work and drawings” that I enjoyed doing in my younger days (Interview 7). They should invite the Elders “to teach” more of our “traditional ways” (Interview 7).

Parker said “I’d like to have what you’re doing here...what you’re going through (doctoral studies), I wish there was more of that here” in our community (Interview 7). We’d have more to “look forward to” (Interview 7). I believe that “we’re kind of missing out on a lot”

(Interview 7). Much of our learning activities depend on “funding” and here, in our First Nations community, there’s always financial shortages (Interview 7).

Dakota. Dakota remembered the peculiar line of questioning that the legal professionals often posed (Interview 8). They said “what do you think the Indians are doing now, are they doing better” (Interview 8). Dakota had to reflect on the days when he was ten years old to answer their questions (Interview 8). The Anishinaabeg never owned vehicles in those days, “now you look around you, almost every second car” you see, there’s “Anishinaabe driving it” (Interview 8). He concluded that the people were doing better as far as vehicle ownership but “the only problem now is” that the “majority of society” does not accept us but “it’s getting there” (Interview 8).

Therese. The ideal learning environment for me would be to sit “in a circle” outdoors on “cushions and blankets” or “in a teaching lodge” (Interview 9). I have a difficult time in school settings. I remember “sitting in a lecture hall” and it felt so “cold and sterile” (Interview 9). Even though “you’re there with four hundred people...you couldn’t be more alone...you feel so isolated” (Interview 9).

Ideally, the educator should be a little more “open” and “humble” in the way they present themselves (Interview 9). I like someone who can speak “from their heart instead of their heads” (Interview 9). The method would have more of a “healing” effect for me “as a student” (Interview 9).

Derek. Bring culturally responsive curriculum to “our First Nations schools” where “preschoolers” can learn “the basic words” or “basic sentences” of the Ojibwe language (Derek, Interview 10). Aboriginal children would benefit from “Kermit the frog” puppets or “games” that can only be played using Anishinaabemowin or have an abundance of “books” to read that

are translated from English to Ojibwe (Interview 10). We need “Ojibwe immersion or native language immersion” classrooms for the Anishinaabeg (Interview 10).

Based on “the curriculum even in the high school,” I noticed that “they (teachers) never talked about native people being instrumental in shaping this country” (Interview 10). There was no mention that Indigenous people helped during the “war of 1812” for example (Interview 10). Then there were times when they “found some of the explorers starving” and “native people nursed them back to life” (Interview 10). Nothing was said about that.

John. In my younger days, when I was upgrading to grade ten, I remembered the time my “algebra” exam was graded lower than I had expected (Interview 11). After doing my own recalculations, I found that the teacher had made a mistake on three questions (Interview 11). I brought that to his attention and all he said was, “sorry” (Interview 11). They did a “review” after that and corrected the problem but I just wonder how many “other students” were affected and nothing was said to them (Interview 11). John said, in the old days, “we didn’t have the luxury of our parents giving us money to go to university” (Interview 11). Non-aboriginal students seem to have ongoing support from their “parents” even more so than we do (Interview 11).

Veronica. When I went to “university” I thought the “teachers” were “nice” people (Interview 12). This was contrary to the Indian “residential school” where I had to learn “the hard way” meaning I went through abusive treatment (Interview 12). But “when I went back to school” as an adult learner “I liked” the university I went to (Interview 12).

Owen. Adult educators should show “understanding” and “compassion” for First Nations people (Interview 13). They should know “the history of who the students are and what

they went through” (Interview 13). I always say “be natural and be open and show that you really care” as an educator (Interview 13).

Lee. At times, adult educators try to “insult your intelligence” when they teach and I’m “offended by that” (Interview 14). You can “tell right off” that something isn’t right because “you just feel it” and “within 15 minutes you become disinterested” (Interview 14). But so long as what they share is “coming from the heart” or “coming from their own experience” then “I’m drawn to that” because you sort of know they’re not trying to “BS you” (Interview 13). Educators should demonstrate a measure of “honesty” when they teach (Interview 14).

Teaching should be about “engaging others” in the learning setting as well (Interview 14). As an educator “sometimes they (adult learners) are not really listening, they’re only capturing a few pieces here and there and that’s not totally their fault, that’s just the way it is” (Interview 14). To help their learning, ask them questions such as...What do you think? ... and then let “them talk” (Interview 14). This method has potential to help them learn because “they need to be part of what you’re doing” in terms of the concepts that you’re teaching (Interview 14).

Wolf. The approaches that were used to educate the Anishinaabeg was not good (Interview 15). They put us “in a little classroom” that was similar to a “little box” (Interview 15). Based on my perspective, I know now that, “they tried to disconnect us from the land, from our water, from our ecosystems, and from our medicines and food” (Interview 15). The purpose was “for us to forget that...but where I am today, we don’t forget that, we don’t forget that” (Interview 15).

Perspectives about Traditional Anishinaabe Education

Jennifer. When Jennifer returned “home” years later, she noticed the changes in her

First Nations community (Interview 1). The people were not the way she remembered. There was a lot of “ugly gossip” (Interview 1). Then there were those who had “transferred” to her home community (Interview 1). The people were from “different nations” (Interview 1). They were a little “hostile” and even told Jennifer that she “didn’t belong” there (Interview 1). Nevertheless, Jennifer had been happy to finally be “home” after her forced relocation when she was twelve years old (Interview 1). She said, I realized that “they (in my home community) didn’t embrace me at the beginning (laughter) or value my skills” (Interview 1). They showed no interest in the collective well-being of others contrary to the Anishinaabe teachings of respect and love for all living beings. I remembered my former traditional Anishinaabe education that my parents had passed on to me (Jennifer, Interview 1). As a child, I had been taught to “share” with others, to care “about our people,” and to help one “another” (Interview 1).

As political leader and Elder in my community now, I fully support the idea of “bringing our culture back...teaching our kids to speak their language, going back to learning what our medicines are” and showing “our children how to live off the land” for them to understand a little of Anishinaabe history (Jennifer, Interview 1). She said “I knew how important our culture was to the community” (Jennifer, Interview 1). We are now in the process of developing a “women’s lodge...sweat lodge and wilderness camp” where people can go to learn more about our Anishinaabe culture (Interview 1). I believe “we’re heading on the right path” (Interview 1).

Carson. Strengthening the lifelong learning process might seem like going “back to square one again” but “I don’t think it’s impossible” (Interview 2). At the same time, “I don’t think it would ever be simple” (Interview 2). I think “we can ask the Creator to help us” but we have to help ourselves too (Interview 2).

In the old days, everyone knew how to speak “Anishinaabemowin (language)” because that was a crucial part of the life-long learning process and transmission of traditional knowledge on so many levels (Carson, Interview 2). Nowadays everyone speaks “English” (Interview 2). Even though the Anishinaabe “all know how to speak the language...they won’t use it...they’ll look around to see if there’s a non-Aboriginal person around that might hear them” (Interview 2). It’s as if “they’re ashamed to use the language” (Interview 2). When I shop, “I’ll see them at Wal Mart...they’ll answer me in English and I keep talking to them in Anishinaabe” (Interview 2). I believe that is “the way the language gets lost, when we don’t” speak it (Interview 2). This is “one of the biggest barriers” in our generation (Interview 2). Well-meaning people have tried to keep the language alive. I have noticed what they tend to do at meetings. They ramble

off a list of words, maybe 150 Anishinaabe words. This is what we’ve come up with in this workshop. Yeah well, that’s nice to know that, but to me what needs to happen is you gotta learn how to use those words. Structure them into sentences so that we have natural conversational Anishinaabemowin so I can say a sentence to you and you tell me a sentence and I understand it and other people understand it, right, that’s the objective, in my books, otherwise what the heck is the meaning of having a list of words, I mean a lot of those words. What I see happening too is they’ll come up with words like (quii quuing oo oong), that’s a wolverine, the wolverine hasn’t been around here for 200 years.

(Carson, Interview 2).

We need to do something more than construct a list of words (Interview 2). As Anishinaabe, we have to “put more energy in learning the language” in its entirety (Interview 2). An important point to remember is that, the Anishinaabemowin does not easily translate to English because of contextual differences.

In our generation, the Anishinaabe should be learning other kinds of activities that we used to do a long time ago as well such as knowing how to craft “birch bark baskets,” or carve “wooden bowls,” or make birch bark canoes (Carson, Interview 2). Carson said, “I might be the only person that knows or who has witnessed or participated in creating a canoe from scratch” (Interview 2). I could teach those skills if I were approached to do so and the interest is still there among the people (Interview 2).

Ann. Learning about our Indigenous cultures should be done in our natural classroom “outdoors instead of in a closed in area” where you have to “sit in” chairs (Interview 3). She shares,

When you think about it and I know I did, there should be no sitting in a classroom especially when you’re teaching the language. It should be outside. You know, Anishinaabe people I think are the ones that are closer to the Earth than any other ethnic group. They really respect the land. Give thanks every day for the beautiful world, for everything in it. When I put my tobacco out, I always pray for such a beautiful world that He gave us and all the things, the people, everything. (Ann, Interview 3)

Colton. Colton noticed that Aboriginal youth today, are “seeking the ways of our people especially ceremonies, sweat lodges, pow wows, singing, dancing” and “teaching lodges” (Colton, Interview 4). I admire their curiosity. However, they need to learn “Ojibwe” to understand the Anishinaabe teachings and practices (Interview 4). Colton said that some people learn better through experiential or “hands on” learning and that should be considered equally important to the education process (Interview 4). Our future “generations” depend on the knowledge that they acquire today because they have to pass that on to their children (Interview 4).

Jacob. I noticed that our “Elders” have experienced trauma themselves because they went to the Indian residential schools (Interview 5). There are some who will not even consider “culture” as the means to healing because they’re now “demonizing” our spirituality (Interview 5). We try to work through it.

Betty. In relation to the Anishinaabe culture “just practice the old ways” or “how they did it a long time ago” and blend that with “contemporary” knowledge (Interview 6). It’s about learning “half and half” (Interview 6). For example, we can “combine our (Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) medicines and teachings together” to help “heal” ourselves (Interview 6). As Anishinaabe, we should keep an open mind about working with Western ways as well because that complements both areas of knowledge (Interview 6).

Parker. Parker would like to see the restoration “of our language and culture” (Interview 7). There should be “workshops” in our community where *adults* and “kids” can enjoy cultural programming (Interview 7). As an Elder “I want to continue...learning” (Interview 7).

Dakota. Before Dakota went to the Indian residential school, he said, “I was already set in my grandmother’s and my uncle’s teachings. I already knew the Anishinaabe ways” (Dakota, Interview 8). I was one of the fortunate ones. What concerns me now is the “void” that Aboriginal children must feel especially the ones who went to those schools (Interview 8). They never had the benefit of observing and experiencing what healthy parenting was about or to have known the “Anishinaabe traditions” that was passed down by “grandmothers and grandfathers” or the ones who “carried that knowledge” (Interview 8). Dakota said, “first, there was the loss,” “then alcohol came” and “then the children’s aide societies” (Interview 8). What I would like to see is “all the young people sitting with the middle age group (Elders)” and learning about our traditional Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (Interview 8).

Therese. Bring back the “grandfather teachings” and begin the healing process (Therese, Interview 9). We have to learn how to show “respect” and “love” for all life (Interview 9). Learning how to “wear those” spiritual ideals in our daily lives especially in the ways in which we interact with people is important to building healthy communities (Interview 9).

Derek. Derek enjoys the “quiet” times at his house near the lake (Interview 10). He said “I light a fire and I hear the crackling of flames and wood and that’s when I read” (Interview 10). Then “I open the windows here this time of year (summer) and I hear the loons laughing and I hear the long wailing call” (Interview 10). “Yeah, all kinds of wild life still” comes “around” the yard (Interview 10). “I see the wolves out on the lake in the winter time (big smile)” (Interview 10).

John. As a society, we should “learn from the past” and “record” our history “on paper” that way we don’t make the same mistakes (John, Interview 11). The “government” and “First Nations should work together” to build a better nation in Canada (Interview 11). Keep “an open mind” and search for better solutions (Interview 11).

Veronica. Aboriginal children should be privileged to know “the old ways” that are embedded in our culture (Veronica, Interview 12). Traditional Anishinaabe education is important to their development. As a teacher, I always “try and speak in my language (Anishinaabemowin) to the students at school and they tell me ...oh ...Mrs...is speaking French again (smile)” (Interview 12).

Owen. To help counter the impact of what they did to our Anishinaabe children in Indian residential schools, “our young people” in modern times should be given the opportunity to learn about their cultural backgrounds in classrooms (Owen, Interview 13). History books must reflect all that has happened in the past, so that the Anishinaabe youth become “aware” of

what happened in the past” (Interview 13). The processes of “parliament” as well as the “Indian Act” and “Treaties” could be the focal points of discussion in classrooms for them to understand how that impacted Aboriginal people and the ways in which to counter the impact (Owen, Interview 13). For example, the government should honor our Treaties and not endeavor to “transfer” their federal responsibilities to the “provinces” (Interview 13).

Lee. Our society has changed since the old days when the “Elders” fell into their roles naturally as “teachers” (Lee, Interview 14). They were the ones who passed on knowledge to community members but “as times change...as people evolve...as people do things differently” we have to take more responsibility for our own Western-based education and traditional Anishinaabe-based teachings or find ways to learn “both areas” of knowledge (Interview 14). The Elders play key roles in teaching the Anishinaabeg (Interview 14). The Elder I visited regularly, “said to me, I’m glad you’re coming to see me. I’m glad you’re listening to me. I’m glad you’re here” (Interview 14).

Wolf. As Anishinaabe adults, we have strengthened our roles as traditional teachers of both children and adults. Wolf said, “my parents, grandparents, grandmothers, our relatives and all the people who lived in our First Nations community taught us...that’s how we lived” (Interview 15). This is the way it was before colonization. “Our youth” are starting to become interested in learning more about their traditional Anishinaabe education because they will need those skills when they become adults (Wolf, Interview 15). In our “language camps” they have opportunities to participate in a number of different activities (Interview 15). Wolf said,

They learn how to canoe. They learn how to make a fire safely. They learn how to live on the land and how to collect and harvest. They learn about the plants. They learn

about the trees. They learn how to make medicines. They're being taught. They're having fun. (Wolf, Interview 15)

Observational and experiential learning was part of the “teachings” that the Anishinaabeg used to practice a long time ago (Interview 15). Wolf said “we still have” the strengths of our Anishinaabe lifelong learning processes “in our communities” today (Interview 15). People still participate in “our ceremonies” and “other activities” related to culture (Interview 15).

Synthesis: Strengthen the Contemporary Bicultural Learning of Anishinaabe Adult Learners

Perspectives of the Elders

Supporting the *contemporary bicultural learning* of the Anishinaabeg was the emergent theme. In contemporary times, the Anishinaabeg are faced with having to learn “both areas” of knowledge (Lee, Interview 14) or “half and half” meaning (Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) education (Betty, Interview 6). Suggestions have been offered for improving both areas of knowledge.

Suggestions for improving the Western-Based Education of the Anishinaabeg

One of the main issues that the research participants as lifelong learners had expressed was the education of Anishinaabe children. A long time ago, the Elders were the ones who were responsible for the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg. They still carry their roles as teachers, mentors, and spiritual advisors even in contemporary times. People still offer the Anishinaabe Elders tobacco for them to share their wisdom. I include their recommended suggestions relating to the Western-based education of children in hopes that schools might develop and implement curriculum that speaks to our true history as it relates to First Nations people. The lifelong learning journey of Indigenous people throughout historic times merits

consideration in academic settings. It offers humanity opportunities to help mitigate some of the most complex social problems in First Nations communities that the TRC (2015) has mentioned.

Children's learning. In response to the impact of methods that were used to educate Ojibwe children, Jacob said there should be more discussion in schools about “the history of Anishinaabe people” and the ways in which Indian “residential schools” caused so much damage (Interview 5; Veronica, Interview 12). This would include analysis of the “Indian Act” and “Treaties” that legislated the people right off their land and even regulated how their lives should be lived (Owen, Interview 13). We need to “record” that history on paper in order for us to “learn from the past” (John, Interview 11). Teachers should blend European-based and Indigenous education as well so the children and *adults* would benefit from “games” or “books” that are written in both English and Anishinaabemowin (Derek, Interview 10). If they had better bicultural learning experiences in schools, where teachers are not “treating the children” in bullying ways that was similar to Indian “residential school” methods (Ann, Interview 3) perhaps the Anishinaabeg would feel more positive about pursuing their own lifelong, self-directed learning. There should be more “understanding” and “compassion” for First Nations people (Owen, Interview 13). Teachers should search for ways that “native people” were “instrumental in shaping this country (Canada)” (Derek, Interview 10). Try to understand the impact of colonization on First Nations people and how “they (colonizers) tried to disconnect us from the land” and our traditional ways of life (Wolf, Interview 15).

Adult learning. Adult educators should create learning environments suited to adult learners, for example, ensure that you have “comfortable chairs” (Carson, Interview 2) and that you teach in a place where there are no “fumes coming from the mill” because clean fresh air is must (Betty, Interview 6). Put some “art work and drawings” on the walls for the benefit of

Anishinaabe adult learners (Parker, Interview 7). Invite Elders “to teach” us about our “traditional ways” (Parker, Interview 7). Help out of town students ease that “lonesome” feel so that they can accomplish their “long-term” school related “goals” (Betty, Interview 6). Although you’re there (in lecture halls) with four hundred people...you couldn’t be more alone” (Therese, Interview 9). Anishinaabe adult students should be made to feel like they are among friends and family. There should be other kinds of support as well for students who want to learn how to use modern technology such as “computers” and the “internet” (Carson, Interview 2; Colton, Interview 4). Jennifer said that “adult educators should be accepting of people from other cultures to make the learning environment more welcoming” (Interview 1). It’s about “heart” in the methods you chose to teach others (Ann, Interview 3; Therese, Interview 9). Allow for “mistakes” and “respect where” students “are at” (Colton, Interview 4). It’s about building confidence. Adult learners might be more encouraged to “speak up” (Parker, Interview 7) and “ask questions” in class which helps the overall learning of classmates as well (Carson, Interview 2). Adult educators should “engage” with learners to help them learn (Lee, Interview 14). Ask adult learners “what” they “think” about the content you present and then let “them talk” (Lee, Interview 14). There should be equal valued placed on what they say about the learning material (Lee, Interview 14) and even of the mistakes that are found on, for example “algebra” exams (John, Interview 11). Don’t “insult” the “intelligence” of Anishinaabe adult learners (Lee, Interview 14). Learning should be fun (Jennifer, Interview 1). Educators should try to make students “feel happy to be” there “learning” (Ann, Interview 3). “Never put anyone down. Encourage them. Praise them” (Interview 3). At the same time, learners should know that “you gotta work” to earn an education and secure productive employment because “nobody can do it for you” (Ann, Interview 3). There should be in class rules relating to student conduct similar to

the Anishinaabe teachings of “respect” (Carson, Interview 2). Anishinaabe students would have the benefit of learning how their traditional teachings apply in Western-based learning settings. There should be healing and recovery programs that incorporate Western wellness therapies and traditional Anishinaabe methods of going to “sweat lodges” (Jacob, Interview 5). There should be some sort of ongoing financial support for Anishinaabe adult learners so that parents such as Jacob are not having to pay “every little cent” for their children’s post-secondary education in contemporary times (Interview 5). John had said, when he was a young man “we didn’t have the luxury of our parents giving us money to go to university” like the non-Aboriginal students did (Interview 11). There should be more “funding” for on-reserve schooling because as Parker said “we’re kind of missing out on a lot” (Interview 7).

Support Traditional Anishinaabe Education

In the old days, the Anishinaabeg knew the Anishinaabe “teachings” (Wolf, Interview 15) and how to speak “Anishinaabemowin (language)” (Carson, Interview 2). This was important to the practice of passing down traditional knowledge (Interview 2). Wolf said, “my parents, grandparents, grandmothers, our relatives and all the people who lived in our First Nations community taught us...that’s how we lived” (Interview 15).

Visiting with the Elders in contemporary times “to learn more about our Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin” is important to knowledge transmission (Lee, Interview 14). Merely constructing “a list of words” is not enough, we have to be able to engage in “natural conversational Anishinaabemowin” to communicate the knowledge (Carson, Interview 2). A lot of what they taught was done “outside” or outdoors because the people lived on the land before colonization (Ann, Interview 3). In keeping with the practices, opportunities have been made for Aboriginal people of all ages to participate in outdoor “language camps” to learn what living on

the land meant in pre-colonial times (Wolf, Interview 15). There should be “workshops” in our First Nations community that focus on cultural programming (Parker, Interview 7). They could learn how to craft “birch bark baskets” or carve “wooden bowls” or make birch bark canoes (Carson, Interview 1). It was about observational and experiential learning (Wolf, Interview 15) or “hands on” learning (Colton, Interview 4). Having the Elders sit in teaching and learning circles with the youth as well would help fill the “void” of not knowing the traditional teachings that their “grandmothers and grandfathers” knew (Dakota, Interview 8). Aboriginal youth seem to be searching for knowledge about Anishinaabe “ceremonies, sweat lodges, pow wows, singing, dancing” and “teaching lodges” (Colton, Interview 4). The Anishinaabeg must bring “culture back” such as learning how to harvest “medicines” off the land, and developing a “women’s lodge...sweat lodge and wilderness camp” (Jennifer, Interview 1). In contemporary times, Wolf had said the Anishinaabeg still participate in “our ceremonies” and other cultural related activities in First Nations communities (Interview 15).

Impact of racism. Jennifer had been appalled when she returned to her community after being away for a number of years (Interview 1). The people had changed somehow and not in a good way (Interview 1). In response to the rejecting “hostile” type behaviors she had been subject to in her own First Nations community, Jennifer had taken a leadership role to restore “culture” and bring back the old Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 1). Carson had expressed concern about the sense of shame that some Anishinaabe feel regarding the Anishinaabemowin (Interview 2). He said, before they speak “they’ll look around to see if there’s” a non-Aboriginal person around (Interview 2). This is how language loss happens (Interview 2). In his younger days, Dakota remembered the strange conversations that he had with the legal professionals about “the Indians” and whether they were “doing better” (Interview 8). Although the

Anishinaabeg own a lot more “vehicles” nowadays “the only problem now is” that the “majority of society” does not accept us (Interview 8).

Relationship building. Learning how to “wear” the spiritual ideals embedded in the “grandfather teachings” was another important component (Therese, Interview 9). Relationship building was based on how well the understanding was of one’s spirituality and attitudes toward the idea of “respect” for all life on Earth (Interview 9). With “an open mind” we can “work together” to build a better quality of life for everyone in our society (John, Interview 11).

The Literature – Discussion

The lifelong learning process of Anishinaabe *adult learners* tended to be quite challenging at times. Given that “the launching of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, National Farm Radio Forum, the Antigonish Movement” and so on that “were all Canadian responses to the need for citizenship education and social change” (Poonwassie, 2001, pp. 279-280) that began in the 1800s, the participants in my research had never spoken of the historic adult education movement nor did their parents or grandparents. Instead there were complex social problems in First Nations communities that ensued in the following years which according to the (TRC, 2015) should be addressed.

Humanistic approach. Poonwassie’s (2001) reference to the “humanistic” approach (p. 279) that is considered to be the underpinning philosophical orientation in Knowles (1980, 1990) *andragogy* should be considered further given the historical trauma Indigenous people have experienced. Although Veronica considered her “teachers” at the university she had attended as being “nice” people, her Indian “residential school” memories were always present (Interview 12). Jacob said, a lot of people “were hurt by the residential school” and “we’re just beginning to understand” the level of generational damage of which healing and recovery is needed through

adult learning means (Interview 5). The humanistic approach builds on the strengths of potential learners and "...their innate potential to become self-actualized or fully functioning" (Magro, 2001, p. 83). This "is neither solely a behavioral or cognitive process..." (p. 82). The humanistic approach facilitates "development of the whole person" (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 296).

Adult educators. Humanistic psychologist, Rogers' (1961) in his *significant learning in therapy and in education* chapter talks about the process of creating environments conducive to bringing forth "learning which makes a difference – in the individual's behavior, in the course of action he chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality" (p. 280). Rogerian therapy strives to meet *five conditions* to effect change in the individual seeking help (p. 282). The client's presenting problem (p. 282), congruence (pp. 282-283), unconditional positive regard (pp. 283-284), empathic understanding (p. 284), and the individual's belief that the therapist has shown "congruence, acceptance and empathy" to "the client" (p. 284) are the main goals that the counsellor strives for.

Important considerations "therapy holds for education" is the idea of adult educator as resource person (Rogers, 1961, p. 288). For example, the individual who is in "therapy" carries "the resources for learning" within "one's self" (p. 288). There really is "very little" that the therapist can provide because *the identifying problem* has to be "dealt with" by and "within the person" (p. 288). In the field of "education this is not true" (p. 288) because "there are many resources of knowledge of techniques, of theory," learning materials, and so on that can be tapped in to (p. 288). The adult educator has the opportunity to help ensure that the necessary resources are "available to the students" and "not forced upon them" (p. 288). She or he may use themselves and their own "knowledge and experiences" that students are free to draw on (p.

288). Jacob had to deal with the memories of his Indian residential school experiences so he went in for counselling (Interview 5). The therapist used art therapy. Jacob said “I had to “draw...pictures on a piece of paper” to help trigger “my residential school memories” (Interview 5). Then I was finally able “to talk” about that part of my life (Interview 5). The process “helped me learn” about myself (Interview 5). For him, the weekly “45 minute” sessions were too short so he decided to practice “the Anishinaabe way” and “go into a sweat lodge” because there was more time to do “intensive work” there (Interview 5). This was about drawing on the strengths of bicultural learning. The combination of both approaches was equally helpful. Betty had said we can “combine our (Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based) medicines and teachings together” to help “heal” ourselves (Interview 6). According to Rogers (1961) it “is not just an accretion of knowledge, but” the process “interpenetrates with every portion of his existence” (p. 280). Therese liked educators who were “open,” “humble,” and spoke from “their heart” as this had a more “healing” effect for her as a student (Interview 9). What the adult educator has to share should “be perceived as an offer” whether the learning material was “a book, space to work, a new tool, an opportunity for observation...lecture...map...and so on” (Rogers, 1961, p. 289). Individuals may decide whether the offering is “useful” to their learning (p. 289). Learners know beforehand from the resource person that she or he “cannot enter engineering school without so much math” or land “a job in X corporation” without “a college diploma” or become “a doctor without knowledge of chemistry” and so on (p. 290). The “self-actualizing tendency” of individuals comes into play where they are considered to be in “contact with life problems” and “wish to learn, want to grow, seek to find out, hope to master, desire to create” and so on (p. 289). These “natural tendencies” (Rogers, 1961, p. 290) are conducive to learning and change. Adult learners in their self-directed

learning initiate and take “primary responsibility for planning, conducting and evaluating” their “own learning projects... unlike independent learning, it usually takes place with the help of persons such as teachers or friends, or of an institution” (Titmus, 1989, p. 549).

According to Rogers’ (1961) second condition, “the teacher’s real-ness” or congruence means that the educator strives to become “a real person in the relationship with” the “students” (Rogers, 1961, p. 287). She or he communicates thoughts, emotions, attitudes, enthusiasm and so on as honestly as possible (p. 287) but not to, in any way, cause fear or harm among learners. For example, the educator may express dislike for a certain subject but allows the student freedom to express otherwise without fear of repercussion or favoritism (p. 289). Based on my findings, there was a reluctance for Anishinaabe adult learners to actually offer their true thoughts as people tend to take offense similar to John’s (Interview 11) experience with the “algebra” teacher who did not appear to appreciate the mistake that had been pointed out especially by an Anishinaabe student. Lee liked the idea of adult educators who display a measure of “honesty” when they teach (Interview 14). He said “I’m drawn to” that” (Interview 14). He liked it even better when they didn’t “insult your intelligence” (Interview 14). Lee said, I can “tell right off” what the teachers’ attitudes are because “you just feel it” and I become “offended by that” (Interview 14). I tend to lose interest in what they’re saying “within 15 minutes” (Interview 14). I like adult educators who share “from the heart” because it’s “coming from their own experience” and you know somehow, they’re not trying to “BS you” (Interview 14). An effective teacher is a person who tries to “engage with others” and allows learners to “talk” about the concepts she or he is trying to learn (Interview 14).

In keeping with Roger’s third and fourth conditions or unconditional positive regard

(acceptance) and empathy (understanding), the educator accepts “the student as he is, and can understand the feelings” she or he “possesses” (p. 287). This is similar to the Anishinaabe way of teaching and learning. It’s about human kindness and “heart” (Ann, Interview 3; Betty, Interview 6; Therese, Interview 9; Derek, Interview 10; Wolf, Interview 15). Jennifer felt that “adult educators should be accepting of people from other cultures to make the learning environment more welcoming” (Interview 1). Ann’s father had said “it’s what you have in your heart” that determines your teaching methods (Interview 3). As an educator, “you respect their belief systems, you respect them as a person, as people” (Colton, Interview 4). It’s about building trust. Adult educators should know “the history of who the students are and what they went through” and the impact of generational trauma (Interview 13). Just “be natural and be open and show that you really care” as an educator (Interview 13). The educator “who can empathize with the feelings of fear, anticipation, and discouragement which are involved in meeting new material will have done a great deal toward setting the conditions for learning” (Rogers, 1961, pp. 287-288).

Given that more “older students” are returning to the classroom “educators will need to utilize effective teaching methodologies” to accommodate the learners (Seidman & Brown, 2016, p. 41). Oftentimes adults carry overwhelming responsibilities in the areas of family, employment and recreation which make “it harder to attend classes” (p. 43). Educators must offer a measure of “flexibility” to improve the overall “learning experience for adult learners” (p. 43). Adult educators should strive to make the whole process of learning fun (Jennifer, Interview 1). There should be more “joking” and “laughing” in learning settings (Jennifer, Interview 1). Try to make learners “feel happy” about being there (Ann, Interview 3). “Humor” helps students

“remain focused by keeping them engaged in the subject matter” (pp. 41-42). Humor helps because it “makes the students want to come back” (p 43).

Adult educators should allow for “mistakes” as well (Colton, Interview 4) was another suggestion, that way we can “laugh about them, and make a story out of them” as Jennifer said (Interview 1). Mysliwiec (2005) who is a teacher, shares a valuable learning experience of the time she was “vividly reminded” that teaching “involves more than telling” it is about the process of “doing” as well (p. 5). She provides an example of how this played out for her. A colleague of hers had been on his way out “to a noontime meeting but without lunch” (p. 5). Out of concern for him, she convinced the coworker to heat up one of her “dehydrated standby lunches of Thai noodles” (p. 5). The mistake she made “the first time” the noodles were prepared prompted her to pass on the lessons learned to him (p. 5). Not heeding her instructions, he made “the same mistake” (p. 5). Upon further reflection, she came to the realization that he needed to go through the experience (p. 5). She reminds “educators” to “provide students” with a safe and “supportive environment where” they “can learn by doing” while allowing them opportunities “to learn by making mistakes” (p. 5). Oftentimes, the simple act of “telling” can be fraught with limitations (p. 5). The process of creating valuable “teaching moments” for students was the lesson to ponder (p. 5).

Adult educators should consider alternative ways of teaching. Therese preferred to sit “in a circle” outdoors on “cushions and blankets” because “lecture” halls felt “cold and sterile” (Interview 9). She said, even though “you’re there with four hundred people...you couldn’t be more alone” (Interview 9). Johnson (2005) who is “an instructor at a career-focused university” had decided to take a different approach after having grown tired of the same old lecture style method of teaching in “great classes” and “bad classes” (p. 3). Given what the students already

knew “about the equine industry” he wanted them to “expand” the knowledge and then “teach it to” him (p. 3). Assignments, exams, and grades was to be determined by the class (p. 3). This new approach brought a mixture of reactions among students. Feelings of happiness, confusion, anger, frustration and even fear that “the course” was too “easy” brought a host of unanswered questions (p. 3). After being bombarded with all the inquiries, he simply told them that their class assignment was left to them to decide (p. 3). Not long after, they invited him to visit “them at the horse facility” (p. 3). He said “I found myself face to face with a horse for the first time in my life” (p. 3). More noticeable was that the faces of the students “were glowing and their excitement contagious as they began to show” him “the horse’s jumping skills” (p. 3). No instructor “from the downtown campus” had ever visited “the barn” before (p. 3). On his “second visit” the students spent “several hours” explaining everything they knew about the industry. This ranged from “the different styles of riding,” “business plans for facilities they wished to own,” “videotapes of their competitions,” “the finer points of dressage,” and ways to prepare a horse for “competition” using a process called “lunge” (p. 3). When it came time for students to learn other things in class like prepare for “their professional careers” they were a little “concerned about the high level of detail involved in the assignment” (p. 3). Crafting “the cover letter” he said, “was the ticket into the competition and the resume was the competition itself” (p. 3). He reminded them of what the process of “lunge” meant (p. 3). It was about the need for preparation before embarking on an important task. Of all the students that were in his class, 31 earned 83%, and 6, 100% (p. 3). He had never “given perfect scores on final projects” before (p. 3). When he was approached by “six of the students...to become the faculty advisor for the equine club” he felt unqualified (p. 3). Their response was, “We taught you all you need to know.” (p. 3). The experience had “changed his outlook on teaching” when he reflected on

the process that turned his “students into teachers” (p. 3). The story presents an example of the ways in which adult educators can support adults in their self-directed learning.

Strengthening Traditional Anishinaabe Education

The Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders shared their perspectives on lifelong learning, and then offered suggestions as to how these perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning. The research participants fully support the idea of strengthening traditional Anishinaabe knowledge and practices. Wolf had said that the Anishinaabeg still participate in “our ceremonies” and “other activities” related to culture (Interview 15). It was Jennifer’s belief that the Anishinaabeg are “heading on the right path” (Interview 1). As political leader in her community, Jennifer fully endorsed the creation and implementation of a “women’s lodge...sweat lodge and wilderness camp” where First Nations community members can go to, to learn about Anishinaabe culture (Interview 1). This is similar to the cultural immersion and “language camps” Wolf had mentioned (Interview 15). It was recommended that Indigenous cultural learning such as “the language” be done “outdoors instead of a closed in area” sitting on chairs (Ann, Interview 3).

Land-based teachings. Wolf said “they tried to disconnect us from the land, from our water, from our ecosystems, and from our medicines and food” (Interview 15). The purpose was “for us to forget that...but where I am today, we don’t forget that, we don’t forget that” (Interview 15). Indigenous writers (Benton-Banai, 1988; Broker, 1983; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Johnson, 1976) have all said that Aboriginal people held sacred relationships with the Creator who placed them here at the beginning of time. Cardinal (2001) noted the similarities “among the 200 million or 300 million Indigenous peoples” across the world (p. 180). The “Latin” definition of the word *Indigenous* “means ‘born of the land’ or ‘springs from the land’

which is a context” (p. 180). This originates out of the Omnipotence of a Great Being who bestowed those “sacred gifts” to the people (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 10). The Anishinaabeg believed that the Earth (kitukiiminong) was on loan to humankind and for that reason, we must “take care” of what we have been allowed to use for our survival (Derek, Interview 10). This would include the preservation of our precious “water” systems (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). Gray (2006) said that “the whole planet is the holy land” (p. 28) and for that reason, “healthy ecosystems are critical to healthy societies and individuals” (Posey, 2006, p. 32). Indigenous people “see themselves living in the world and in relationship to the world in which not only does the world nurture them, but they have a reciprocal obligation to nurture it” (Mohawk, 2006, p. 27). Posey (2006) expressed deep concern over the actions of human kind. He said, “To reverse the devastating cycle that industrialized society has imposed on the planet, we will have to relearn ecological knowledge...” (p. 32). We need to pay attention to the impact of “global warming,” pipelines, mining and diminishment of our forests (John, Interview 11). Preserving our precious ecosystems remains the most important message in our times.

Anishinaabemowin. LaDuke (2006) explains that, “The teachings of our people concerning our relationships to the land are deeply embedded in our language. For instance, in Ojibway, *nishn-abe akin* means ‘the land to which the people belong.’” (p. 23). A long time ago, people knew how to speak “Anishinaabemowin” and this was how the knowledge was shared (Carson, Interview 2). Nowadays, the Anishinaabeg prefer to speak “English” (Carson, Interview 2). This is “one of the biggest barriers” in our generation (Interview 2). Merely constructing “a list of words” and then rambling them off in group settings is not enough, we have to be able to carry on “natural conversational Anishinaabemowin” as well (Interview 2). Kirkness (1998)

said, “It is our belief and understanding that language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared, and transmitted from one generation to another.” (p. 93). Aboriginal “languages must be protected, preserved, promoted, and practiced in our daily lives” (p. 93). With the “rapid die-off of languages around the world” measures must be taken to prevent further loss (Garland, 2006, p. 32). Kirkness’ (1998) call for “action” means that new “legislation” must be passed to help revitalize Aboriginal languages (p. 104). Furthermore, “an Aboriginal Languages Act” that was proposed by “the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centers” should be considered (p. 104) similar to the way Quebec pushed for legitimization of their language. The Quebecois “strongly defend their language and passed laws to make it the medium of commerce and governance” (Garland, 2006, p. 33). The Official Languages Act (Justice Canada, 2016) recognizes and affirms both French and English. Laurendeau (2016) said that “every federal institution has a duty to ensure that positive measures are taken to implement the commitment to the advancement of English and French in Canada...while respecting the jurisdiction and powers of the provinces” (p. 5). Aboriginal languages should receive the same recognition and support.

Challenges of racism. Jennifer had expressed concern that educators “should be” more “accepting of people from other cultures” (Interview 1). She said “I guess with non-natives they always seem to be up here and you have to more less you know, like you’re spoken down to all the time...” (Interview 1). Ann’s observation of the way the teacher had been treating Anishinaabe children in the school reminded her of the old “residential” school methods of teaching (Interview 2). The practices were still present in contemporary times. After Ann had confronted her, the teacher left the school and “never came back” (Interview 2). Jacob said, for some reason, “they don’t really want to talk about” those kinds of issues and impact meaning the

Indian “residential school” era that First Nations people now view as the “holocaust” (Interview 5). Given that in “Canadian history” there was the tendency for writers to depict First Nations people as “heathen, savage, primitive peoples” (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3) this would have provided justification of what happened thereafter in relation to the way that the Anishinaabeg were treated in Canadian society.

Jones (2000) provides a thought-provoking perspective “about the basis of race-associated differences in health outcomes” and possible “interventions” for reversing “3 levels” that are identified as institutional, personally mediated, and internalized racism (p. 1212). The first is called institutional racism which “is defined as differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race” (p. 1212). This “manifests itself both in material conditions and in access to power” (p. 1212). Material conditions might “include differential access to quality education, sound housing, gainful employment, appropriate medical facilities, and a clean environment” (p. 1212). The individual is then, rendered powerless to obtain “information (including one’s own history), resources (including wealth and organizational infrastructure, and voice (including voting rights, representations in government, and control of the media)” (p. 1212). This “is structural having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator” (p. 1212). Institutional racism “is often evident as inaction in the face of need” (p. 1212) similar to the concerns that the TRC (2015) had identified relating to the social problems in First Nations communities.

Personally, mediated racism “is defined as prejudice and discrimination” (Jones, 2000, p. 1212). Prejudice “means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race, and discrimination...differential actions toward others according to their race” (p. 1213). This would manifest “as lack of respect (poor or no service, failure to

communicate options), suspicion (shop keepers' vigilance...street crossing, purse clutching, and standing...in public transportation), devaluation (surprise at competence (John's algebra exam), stifling of aspirations), scapegoating... and dehumanization (police brutality, sterilization abuse, hate crimes)" (p. 1213). These actions can be classified as intentional or unintentional (p. 1213).

Internalized racism "is defined as acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth" (Jones, 2000, p. 1213). This would manifest in a variety of ways such as not placing value on "others who look like them and not believing in themselves" (p. 1213). Carson had been concerned with the Anishinaabeg who refused to speak "Anishinaabemowin" because of the possible presence of non-Aboriginal people who might hear (Interview 2). He said "they'll look around" to make sure there's no one else there (Interview 2). This is how "the language gets lost, when we don't" speak it (Interview 2). Internalized oppression places "limitations on one's own full humanity, including one's spectrum of dreams, one's right to self-determination, and one's range of allowable self-expression" (p. 1213). Individuals might even embrace "whiteness" as the acceptable norm such as using "hair straighteners and bleaching creams" or accept "self-devaluation (racial slurs or nicknames, rejection of ancestral culture, and fratricide); and resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness (dropping out of school, failing to vote, and engaging in risky health practices" (p. 1213). Jennifer had spoken of the sense of abandonment and rejection she had felt when she returned home to her First Nations community and found strangers there who were a little "hostile" toward her (Interview 1). This would never have happened in the old days when the Anishinaabeg still followed the "grandfather teachings" of "love" and respect" (Therese, Interview 9).

In essence, the difficulty lies in dealing with the problematic “frames of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). The process of “healing from internalized racism” (Watts-Jones, 2002, p. 591) involves an ongoing effort to understand how that plays out, and what can be done to overcome “habits of mind,” or “points of view” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5, 6). One of the more empowering ways was to create safe “spaces” for the purpose of sharing stories of hope and music with others of similar backgrounds (Watts-Jones, 2002, p. 594). A sense of unity and appreciation for the beauty of culture can be acquired with regular immersion in such endeavors. For example, Cain (2012) noted that “Native Americans who refused to relocate, eluded efforts to be involuntarily enslaved, and preserved their cultural heritage against all odds” (p. 201). With the lifting of the ban on Aboriginal ceremonies (RCAP, 1996, Stage 3: Respect Gives Way to Domination, para. 12), Indigenous people were free to practice their spirituality. Dakota said “the only problem now is” that the “majority of society” does not accept us, but “it’s getting there” (Interview 8). Jones (2000) concluded that “institutionalized racism is the most fundamental of the 3 levels and must be addressed for important changes to occur” (p. 1214). Authority to do so lies with the government that has the “power to decide, power to act” and “control of” the “resources” (p. 1214). Jones said, “once institutional racism is addressed the other levels of racism may cure themselves over time” (p. 1214). Healing the problem is a societal endeavor. This should be an ongoing collaborative and collective effort.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the perspectives of the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who were interviewed. The interview question; *What can be done to help the Anishinaabeg overcome the impact of colonization in relation to their lifelong learning?* was organized around the following overarching research questions as follows; (1) What are the perspectives of the

Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? I presented the findings at the beginning of the chapter, then I provided a synthesis of the research participants perspectives which was organized under the emergent theme of, *contemporary bicultural learning*. I discussed how the findings resonate with the literature, what the contradictions were and how the data extends the discourse.

Historically, there was the lack of adult learning opportunities for Aboriginal people. Given that the historic adult education movement such as “the launching of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, National Farm Radio Forum, the Antigonish Movement” and so on was of benefit to the European settlers (Poonwassie, 2001, pp. 279-280), the research participants in my study had never spoken of such programs. Instead there were complex social problems in First Nations communities that the TRC (2015) said should be addressed.

Humanistic approaches (Merriam et al. 2007; Poonwassie, 2001) seem to resonate with what the Elders spoke of in terms of dealing with Aboriginal historical trauma and strengthening Anishinaabe adult learning. Rogers (1961) presenting problem, congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy and client experience are five conditions (p. 282) that would help create more accepting and respectful interactions between adult educators and adult learners. The methods apply equally in “education” settings as well (p. 286).

Adult educators can play leading roles. Ann’s father had said “it’s what you have in your heart” that determines your teaching methods (Interview 3). As an educator, “you respect their (Anishinaabe) belief systems, you respect them as a person, as people” (Colton, Interview 4). It’s about building trust. An effective educator should know how to “engage with others” and be able to allow learners to “talk” or process the learning concepts in an atmosphere of safety (Lee,

Interview 14). Be “open,” and “humble” (Therese, Interview 9) and “show that you really care” as a teacher (Owen, Interview 13). Educators should know “the history of who the students are and what they went through” relating to Indian residential schools and generational trauma that has been passed down to family members (Interview 13). Given what Aboriginal people went through during the process of colonization, a warmer gentler approach is needed. Adult learners may shed some of their old fears and dislike for classrooms (Jennifer, Interview 1; Jacob, Interview 5) if they had a more nurturing and accepting environment to go to.

Because adult learners carry overwhelming responsibilities, they must be afforded a measure of “flexibility” when it comes to attendance and completion of class assignments (Seidman & Brown, 2016, p. 43). Learning should be “fun” and “flexible” as well (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3); Colton, Interview 4; Parker, Interview 7; Dakota, Interview 8). There should be more “laughing” and “joking” in learning settings (Interview 1). Humor makes for lighter interactions. It “makes students want to come back” (Seidman & Brown, 2016, p. 43).

Adult learners should be allowed to “make mistakes” without being shamed (Jennifer, Interview 1). Mysliwiec (2005) shared the story of how she had tried to pass on a valuable lesson to one of her colleagues but it did not work because he had to go through his own mistakes to learn (p. 5). She said that teaching “involves more than telling” it is about the process of “doing” and “making mistakes” as well to get it right (p. 5).

Therese never liked “lecture” halls because the environment felt “cold and sterile” to her (Interview 9). Adult educators should consider other ways of teaching. Johnson (2005) described how he took a different approach with his students at a “career-focused university” (p. 3). He sent them off to learn everything there was to know “about the equine industry, expand it, and then teach it to” him (p. 3). As a result of their experiences, they were able to apply the

research lessons learned to the rest of their regular class assignments successfully (p. 3). This is an example of the ways in which the teacher as resource person broke away from traditional methods and sent his students off on a self-directed learning venture of which the lessons learned were later applied to their regular classroom activities.

Strengthening traditional Anishinaabe education was another recommendation of the research participants. In contemporary times, cultural immersion through outdoor “language camps” were developed with the Anishinaabe in mind (Wolf, Interview 15). Jennifer who is a political leader fully supported the creation and implementation of a “women’s lodge...sweat lodge and wilderness camp” where First Nations community members can go to, to learn about their Anishinaabe culture (Interview 1).

Wolf expressed concern with the methods that were used to educate the Anishinaabe (Interview 15). She said “they tried to disconnect us from the land, from our water, from our ecosystems, and from our medicines and food” (Interview 15). The purpose was “for us to forget that...but where I am today, we don’t forget that, we don’t forget that” (Interview 15). There is the understanding that Indigenous people had been living and working on the land since the beginning of time (Benton-Banai, 1988; Broker, 1983; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Johnson, 1976). They were placed here by the Great Being who bestowed the “sacred gifts” to the people for their survival (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 10). The term *Indigenous* “means ‘born of the land’ or ‘springs from the land’ which is a context” (Cardinal 2001, p. 180). Given all they had been allotted, the Anishinaabeg believe that the people must “take care” of the “Earth” (kitukiiminong) that is on loan to us (Derek, Interview 10). Preserving our precious “water” systems was also the message (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). Nurturing “healthy ecosystems” (Posey, 2006, p. 32) on our “holy land” (Gray, 2006, p. 28) is “critical to healthy

societies” (Posey, 2006, p. 32). We have a “reciprocal obligation to nurture” that which we have been given to “nurture” us (Mohawk, 2006, p. 27).

The teaching and learning processes are connected to our “relationships to the land” that are “deeply embedded in” the “language” (LaDuke, 2006, p. 23). Carson said, in the old days, the Anishinaabeg knew how to speak “Anishinaabemowin” but now in contemporary times, they prefer to speak “English” which is “one of the biggest barriers” we face (Interview 2). Kirkness (1998) supports the idea of new “legislation” that helps prevent the further loss of Aboriginal languages (p. 104) similar to the “Official Languages Act” (Justice Canada, 2014).

In historic times, writers tended to portray First Nations people as “savage” and “heathen” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3) and those misconceptions manifested in negative ways. Jennifer never liked “spoken down to all the time” by non-natives (Interview 1). Jennifer had been dismayed when she returned to her First Nations community after being away for a number of years (Interview 1). The people who had relocated to the reserve were a little “hostile” toward her (Interview 1). Nevertheless, she decided to take her role as Elder and bring “culture” back to the people (Interview 1). People need learn the “grandfather teachings” of “love” and “respect” (Interview 9). Eliminating the impact of racism should be an ongoing process (Cain, 2012; Jones, 2000; Watts-Jones, 2002). It means changing problematic “frames of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6) and learning to appreciate and support diversity in our society.

CHAPTER 8

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY, SYNTHESIS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Introduction

I was privileged to have known the peace and joy of living with my Anishinaabe parents for the first six years of my life. I had experienced what the process of observational and experiential learning meant under their parental direction. I took pride in all of my accomplishments that self-directed learning brought even as a child. Becoming an adult was a stage of life that I looked forward to and I wanted to do it well. I loved my family and all life on Earth. I respected the land that we lived on.

I felt that my life had changed drastically following the first day I was left at the Indian residential school at the age of six. The precious bonds of family, culture, language, and sense of belonging became but distant memories. I came to know the aching loneliness of being a defenseless child as I was being subjected to spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical abuses at the school. After I was released, I went home to be with my family but there were serious and persistent problems there that included poverty, addictions, lack of education and employment, violence, and family breakdown.

I have always believed that my life unfolded differently, even unnaturally compared to most people. They had been privileged to know their families of origin, attain post-secondary education as a young adult, secure long-term, meaningful and productive employment, take out mortgages, purchase furniture, vehicles and stuff, fall into parental responsibilities naturally, have the support of family, political leadership and community members, and manage to save for retirement. With everything that had happened in my life, I reflected on how all this came to be, and what could have been done to mitigate the difficulties.

Early stages of my analysis began with a preliminary glance through the literature for information to the more perplexing problems in First Nations communities particularly in the area of Aboriginal lifelong learning. It was important to understand what motivated people to engage in adult education of sorts to help solve the more pressing challenges in life. Knowles (1980) said that adults are “generally self-directing” in many respects but it happens “at different rates for different people and in different dimensions in life” (p. 43).

It has been said that First Nations people have been in North America since “the beginning of time” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3). The fact that Indigenous societies had “developed their political, social, educational, economic, and spiritual structures and institutions” (p. 3) in historic times indicated the possibilities of bringing forth an understanding of what the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabeg had been at the time. Because there would have been a trickle-down effect related to the learning processes of the past, it seemed like common sense to conduct further research into the matter.

Various approaches and methods have been employed to educate Aboriginal adult learners. Examples include, provision of a Christian-based education to “set” First Nations people “apart from their traditional ways of life and carefully control their integration into the cultures of the colonizers” (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 38), increased funding for post-secondary studies (INAC, 2000, para. 1), implementation of Native Studies departments in colleges and universities (Crum, 2015, para. 6), the creation of adult education programs in urban settings (Selman et al. 1998, p. 188), partnerships between Ontario Aboriginal educational institutes on-reserve and post-secondary institutions (OME, 2013, para. 1), and community-based programs on reserve (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 277). With the abundance of learning opportunities available, one would ponder the reason Native people are “ranked among the poorest of Canadians”

(Wilson & MacDonald, 2010, p. 3). Gathering further information was needed to garner insight in to the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg.

Research Questions

The following overarching research questions will be addressed here in the final chapter; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? The 15 research participants shared their perspectives on lifelong learning in response to the following interview questions that were organized around the research questions; (1) What was the process of helping the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning? (2) How did colonization impact the process of helping the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning? and (3) What can be done to help the Anishinaabeg overcome the impact in relation to their lifelong learning? Although, the interview questions were meant to gather as much information as possible on the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg, the third question was also intended to understand how the perspectives might be used to effectively support the Anishinaabeg in their self-directed learning.

The stories that the Elders shared on lifelong learning and synthesis of the research participants perspectives that were presented in previous chapters was organized under the five emergent themes of observational learning, experiential learning, disrupted bicultural learning, transformational bicultural learning and contemporary bicultural learning. Brief excerpts in the following section indicate how their perspectives resonate with previously reviewed literature and even offers insight into the contractions and gaps. A discussion of the implications for practice, theory, policy and the need for extending the research will follow.

Synthesis of Findings and the Literature

Given that the very nature of the term “lifelong” means “the entire lifespan from cradle to grave” (Kheng Ng, 2008, p. 247) definition, it seems appropriate to include all pertinent literature on the topic of discussion and the stories of what the research participants had shared about their adult education and self-directed learning. Adult learning or andragogy “are not viewed as distinct from those of children, but rather learning is a lifelong self-directed process of experiencing, processing and reshaping existing knowledge...” (English, 2008, p. 305). Wolf said, “It’s an ongoing never-ending process” (Interview 15).

What was the Process of Helping the Anishinaabeg in their Lifelong Learning?

Creation stories of the Anishinaabeg describe how the Earth and all living beings came to be which included the “Great Laws of Nature” that bring order to seasonal changes and processes (Johnson, 1976, p. 13). It is said that “Original Man” was the last to be lowered here and he was instructed to live peacefully and respectfully with all life (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 3). The seven grandfather teachings of, knowledge, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, truth (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64) and thanksgiving (Johnson, 1976, p. 149) provided spiritual guidance to the way individuals conducted themselves. With the land and natural resources “that was given” the “people” for their survival (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 10), the blessings also included the “Anishinaabe teachings” (Wolf, Interview 15). First Nations people were bestowed their own “Aboriginal languages” and dialects (distinct language families) specific to the geographical locations that they were on (Statistics Canada, 2014, para. 1). Values, traditions, practices and beliefs were viewed as unique and varied to each locality.

Observational learning began as soon as the “babies” were “born” (Colton, Interview 4). In the old days, people nurtured their children because they were “valued” (Wolf, Interview 15). Parents laced their babies in cradleboards and propped them in places where they could *observe*

all of the daily activities such as “work” and “play” and even hear how the language was used to describe what was going on around them (Broker, 1983, p. 16). Jarvis (2007) said “the first stage of human learning” (p. 2) involves the natural bodily functions of “sight, sound, smell and so on” and “these sensations” undergo a transformation process as people construct meaning (p. 3). Ann said “you learn by doing, seeing, looking” or in other words you use “all the senses” (Interview 3).

The land-based seasonal practices of harvesting and gathering, tool making, water craft making and so on were ongoing. Indigenous people were actively involved in “complex...adult education” processes (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 36). It was about *experiential learning* (Carson, Interview 2; Colton, Interview 4). Carson said “if kids would be there to watch and to participate, that’s how you learn, you learn by doing” (Interview 2). Passing down cultural knowledge through *storytelling* and *legends* was very much part of the process in those days (Carson, Interview 2). This was done through the “oral tradition” of the Ojibwe (Legarde-Grover & Keenan, 2006, p. 393). It also included demonstrations of what *healthy parenting* and positive *role modelling* was all about on a daily basis (Carson, Interview 2). Parents “were totally engaged with the child” (Interview 2). Betty learned the true meaning of altruism when she travelled with her grandparents to neighboring communities to help those in need (Interview 6). She said you’re a “part of” of an Anishinaabe family who cared about others (Interview 6).

Ojibwe education is about ongoing observation, reflection, and action or experiential learning (Legarde-Grover & Keenan, 2006, p. 394). This is similar to Kolb’ (2015) experiential learning theory that involves a four-stage learning cycle of concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active experimentation (p. 51). Kolb’ model has been used extensively in education.

How did Colonization Impact the Process of Helping the Anishinaabeg in their Lifelong Learning?

The Treaties (INAC, 2011), British North America Act, 1867 (Justice Canada, 2014), and Federal Indian Act, 1876 (Justice Canada, 2014) provided the legal framework for controlling the lives of Indians and lands reserved for the Indians (Hogg, 2007, p. 599). The education of Aboriginal people was included as well. The government and church authorities targeted Aboriginal children for Indian residential schooling (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867 – Present, Indian Education and Residential Schools, para. 1). Wolf said, they “decided for us, that our Anishinaabe children should go to Western schools” (Interview 15). About half of the Anishinaabe Elders (Jacob, Interview 5; Betty, Interview 6; Dakota, Interview 8; Derek, Interview 10; John, Interview 11; Veronica, Interview 12; Owen, Interview 13; Wolf, Interview 15) in my research had been forced in to the schools where they experienced horrendous abuse that their families were powerless to stop. The practice of passing down traditional Indigenous knowledge became challenging for parents as their children had to be housed there at least ten months of the year. This impacted the traditional Anishinaabe learning processes embedded in *storytelling, legends, healthy parenting, positive role modelling* and so on (Carson, Interview 2).

On and off-reserve schools tended to be just as problematic for the research participants. When Jacob had been transferred there, he said “it was still the same thing, you still got the old physical beating every day in the class room” (Interview 5). Anything related to Anishinaabe culture was frowned upon as well in the elementary school that Parker had gone to (Interview 7). He could not “grow long hair” nor bring his “bird” carvings for example, to the school grounds (Interview 7).

The “watch and learn” method did not work anymore because of the “social changes” in

society (Derek Interview 10). Derek said, “our classroom which is the outside environment is being cut down, you know destroyed” by the “bulldozer” (Interview 10). He said “we can’t teach that way” anymore because of the damage that is being done to our “Mother Earth” (Interview 10). It’s about changing ourselves “as the world changes” including our “teaching methods” (Interview 10).

Then there was the tendency for the Anishinaabeg to lose interest in the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (Lee, Interview 14). Lee said colonization “really changed people in different ways” (Interview 14). “Alcohol” played a catastrophic role (Veronica, Interview 12, Owen, Interview 13; Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). This is when the “social problems” began to escalate in First Nations communities (Lee, Interview 14), and “now in our children’s time, now the drugs” and suicide (Wolf, Interview 15). Intergenerational trauma became problematic (Yellow Horse Brave heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

The Elders had experienced *disrupted* (Betty, Interview 6; Wolf, Interview 15) *bicultural learning* meaning there was a disruption to both their traditional Anishinaabe-based and Western-based education. The problems originated in historic times with the onslaught of cultural genocide practices that played out in Indian residential, and on and off reserve public day schools. Years later, the political leadership in Canada formally apologized for the crimes that were committed against the Indian residential school children (INAC, 2008).

Globalization brought significant change to North America as well. With the hunting and gathering societies (Jennifer; Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3; Colton, Interview 4), that shifted to agrarian (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 6), industrial, and information and knowledge (p. 26) came a “technologically-complex global society” (Kungu & Machtmes, 2009, p. 501), that has linked

“the world through economics and consumerism...” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 26). This has brought change to “adult learning” and the employment sector in our society (p. 26

To address a rapidly changing society, the research participants had made significant life choices in relation to adult education and self-directed learning. The stories that the Elders had shared was sifted through Knowles (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions as follows; (1) learner’s need to know, (2) learner’s self-concept, (3) prior learning experiences of the adult learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation. The purpose was to understand what their lifelong learning experiences were, the problems they encountered, and the ways in which their perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe adult learners.

In view of Knowles (1990) first assumption as it relates to the learner’s need to know, the what, how and why of new learning, the experiences vary as the following excerpts show. Colton said “I had to keep up with the changing times” (Interview 4). “I had to find a different way of making a living” so “I went back to school for a couple of years to be able to do the kind of work (mental health) I’m doing now” (Interview 4). Jennifer never “liked” her school experiences because of the racism and abusive teachers (Interview 1). She preferred on-the-job training as did John (Interview 11) and Lee (Interview 14). Carson studied in the fields of “psychology” and “sociology” and then worked in the areas of “social work” and “counselling” (Interview 2) while other research participants went into the teaching profession (Ann, Interview 3; Derek, Interview 10; Veronica, Interview 12). Jacob had decided on a career in the logging industry but he also participated in a number of “self-awareness programs” to help address the impact of “residential schools” on First Nations people (Interview 5). He said the “residential” school “took all the life out of this community” (Interview 5). Betty purposely “volunteered at the school” her children were attending because of the “fear that anybody could take your children” during the Sixties

Scoop era (Interview 6). This led to full-time “employment” as “teacher’s aide” and then on to post-secondary studies (Interview 6). Parker regretted his decision to drop out of school at the age of “sixteen” to work, because no matter what, he always felt “out of place” among coworkers (Interview 7). After taking “life skills workshops” his life changed in a positive way (Interview 7). He said “you need schooling nowadays” (Interview 7). Dakota had taken “all kinds of courses” at the post-secondary level and was even invited to pursue studies in the legal profession because of his “research” capabilities (Interview 8). He declined the offer. Instead, he went into “management” where he pushed for “cultural re-emergence” (Interview 8). There she had enrolled in “a transitional program” to get into university (Interview 9). The “life skills component” was something she “really needed” at the time (Interview 9). Owen worked all through high school (Owen, Interview 13). He did all sorts of things such as bar tending, mining, and forestry (Interview 13). Owen had worked in law enforcement and then left to take the role of political leader in his community (Interview 13). He said “you know that traumatic (Indian residential school) experience, even today, I feel it” meaning he still had to “deal with” his Indian residential school memories (Interview 13). Wolf had dropped out because of the racism in non-Aboriginal schools (Interview 15). She enrolled in a “multi-cultural” school to finish her studies and then worked for the government until retirement (Interview 15). The research participants experience support Knowles (1990) first assumption as it relates to the learner’s need to know, the what, how and why of new learning.

Because of what First Nations students have had to deal with in relation to the impact of the schools that they had previously gone to, it would have been difficult to undergo a healthy learning process as a child. Knowles (1980) in his second assumption said that as children mature their self-concept changes as they move beyond the stage of dependence to becoming

more independent self-directed adults. What Knowles described was a natural unfolding process for individuals who did not experience abuse as a child. Wolf and Veronica are survivors of the Indian residential school. Both had dropped out before graduating high school. Both underwent a process of healing and recovery before they resumed their education. Wolf came to the realization that “no one could tell” her “not to speak” the “Anishinaabe language” or be forced to forget about the Anishinaabe teachings (Interview 15). Veronica went on to become a teacher (Interview 12) despite her childhood memories of the nurse who beat her up at the Indian residential school. Veronica had “worked in education for thirty-five years” (Interview 12). Although Wolf and Veronica had experienced abuse and disrupted learning as children, they moved beyond dependency and became independent self-directed adult learners the way Knowles (1980) described in his second assumption.

There were a number of positive experiences relating to Knowles (1980) third assumption of acknowledging the prior learning experiences of adult learners. After Carson had completed a “wellness program” the management recommended that he pursue “post-secondary education” in the areas of “social work” and “counselling” (Interview 2). Carson said “it had a direct impact on my life, for sure, a positive one” (Interview 2). He went on to become political leader in his First Nations community. Betty had been complimented after she accidentally completed and passed a university level questionnaire that was in her “mature” student “test” booklet designed for college and university entrance programs (Interview 6). She said “I didn’t think they were relevant” but I answered them anyway (Interview 6). Betty said, that was “crazy...see how good I am (laughter)” (Interview 6). Parker said earlier that he liked his “life skills workshops” because the “trainers and trainees” had often asked for his perspectives (Interview 7). He said “you feel great about yourself” (Interview 7). Dakota also mentioned earlier that he went into

“management” rather than pursue legal studies (Interview 8). Dakota’s colleagues had recommended that he seriously consider studying law because of his “research” skills (Interview 8). Therese liked the “interactive approach” the professors took at the university she had attended (Interview 9). It was during class times, when Therese spoke up and said “I don’t exactly fit into the concept that you’re talking about” that prompted further discussions (Interview 9). She believed that the professors were beginning to think about who the “Anishinaabe people” really were (Interview 9). Wolf said that her teachers in the multi-cultural school that she had gone to, were “very intrigued” with native people (Interview 15). She had often been asked to share her perspectives in class as well. The prior learning experiences of the research participants support Knowles (1980) third andragogical assumption.

There were others who thought that their prior learning experiences as adult learners was not valued. Brief excerpts of what the Elders said follow. The abusive way Jennifer had been treated as a child in the schools she had attended influenced her decisions later when it came to formal education because she declined the offer to become “a computer technician” (Interview 1). Jennifer “found it difficult to speak to non-Aboriginal teachers” (Interview 1). Betty thought that was laughable when her teachers were telling parents “how to act around children” (Interview 6). She said, in classrooms “there’s no other way of teaching” adults (Interview 6). John did not appreciate what First Nations people had to do to obtain a boat license (Interview 11). He said, now we have to learn new “ways of going up and the river” system which we already know because we lived here for years (Interview 11). Owen said that they (the educators) “never talked” to him “about anything” (Interview 13). However, the “economics” paper that he had written had been acknowledged in class but no one really knew whose work had been mentioned (Interview 13). Derek did not like the idea that Indigenous knowledge was

being used disrespectfully in academia (Interview 10). He said, “now non-native people are running Native Studies programs and languages” (Interview 10). Knowles (1980) had said, when “adults find themselves in situations in which their experience is not being used, or its worth minimized, it is not just their experience that is being rejected – they feel rejected as persons” (p. 50).

Because adults fill a variety of social roles in their lives, each developmental stage, according to Knowles fourth assumption “...produces a ‘readiness to learn’ which at its peak presents a ‘teachable moment’” (p. 51). Jennifer preferred on-the-job training rather than formalized institutional learning (Interview 1). Derek never cared for “lectures” in universities because there was little interaction between students and educators (Dakota, Interview 8). He said “you’re looking at the clock all the time, time for recess, time for lunch, time for this” and that, but “with the Anishinaabe educator there was more joking, it was fun, time went fast” and “you’re interacting more” (Interview 8). Then there were times when it was about the educator who needed to learn. Derek had been falsely accused of “plagiarism” (Interview 10). He had “to write a 3,500-word essay in front of the teacher, then she finally believed” in his writing abilities (Interview 10). John never received acknowledgment for correcting the mistakes on the teacher’s “algebra” exam (Interview 11). The readiness to learn as Knowles (1980) described presented “teachable” moments for the research participants and the educators.

There were “teachable” moments relating to traditional Anishinaabe learning as well. Jennifer said “we can make mistakes and laugh about them and even make a story out of them (smile)” (Interview 1). Jennifer felt “more at home and more relaxed” with Aboriginal teachers (Interview 1). Carson preferred to learn about “culture” from someone who spoke Anishinaabemowin (Interview 2). He said that was more meaningful for him (Interview 2). As a

mother, Betty learned what traditional Anishinaabe parenting was about from her “father-in-law” (Interview 6). It helped Betty to raise her children in a more traditional way. Therese, a graduate student, appreciated the Anishinaabe Elder who had spoken at the university she attended (Interview 9). Because of him, she said “I really started learning about myself as an Aboriginal person, I guess finding my cultural identity and roots” (Therese, Interview 9). There were other “teachable” moments as well. Wolf had been appalled to learn how First Nations people were being described in the “history books” (Interview 15). The Anishinaabe Elders “were all deeply saddened” that Indigenous people were depicted as “savages” and “dirty Indians” (Interview 15). Wolf said, they eventually “took those history books off the shelf” (Interview 15). Knowles (1980) fourth assumption comes to mind in relation to teachable moments.

Adults tend to “engage in learning largely in response to pressures they feel from their current life situation” (Knowles, 1980, p. 53). Their orientation to learning focuses mainly on “immediacy of application” (p. 53). When Jacob needed help to plant a “hedge” in his yard, he hired someone from off-reserve to come to his place of residence (Interview 5). Jacob said, they have the machinery and “tools I don’t” (Interview 5). Wolf “felt more comfortable with her” Anishinaabe aunt if she had to learn how to plant flowers for example (Interview 15). Wolf shared memories of her father who had been an avid gardener (Interview 15). He “planted potatoes” and “different things over the years” (Interview 15). The findings support Knowles (1980) fifth assumption in relation to what the research participants said about the ways in which they deal with daily tasks.

Adults engage in learning activities because of external or internal motivators according to Knowles (1990) sixth andragogical assumption. The research participants were externally motivated meaning their motivations were related to educational pursuits and the search and

retention of employment. Jennifer worked in a variety of employment because the “income” was important to her financial dependence (Interview 1). Carson attended university and then worked in the areas of “psychology” and “social work” (Interview 2). Colton went “back to school” to earn the credentials necessary to work in the area of mental health counselling (Interview 4). The findings show that the research participants had been externally motivated which support Knowles (1990) sixth assumption.

The Elders were internally motivated to improve the quality of their lives. Carson had said “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). For example, both Therese (Interview 9) and Veronica (Interview 12) are avid readers. John’s health problems in no way prevents him from taking an interest in environmental issues such as pipelines, mining, pollution, “global warming” and forest regeneration (Interview 11). Ann attended “meetings” in her community just to “learn” about all the latest Aboriginal issues to stay informed (Interview 3). Parker enjoyed being on different “committees” and “meeting new people” (Interview 7). A point of interest was that the Elders had witnessed the devastation of colonization on First Nations people and the urgent need for the Anishinaabeg to reconnect with the “Anishinaabe teachings” (Jennifer, Interview 1) and strengthen the Anishinaabemowin (Carson, Interview 2; Ann, Interview 3). The findings show that the research participants were motivated to take an interest in the world around them and to make their lives better which support Knowles (1990) sixth assumption.

Perspectives about Educators

There were a variety of perspectives relating to the experiences the research participants had about the adult educators that they met. Ann felt very accepted (Interview 3). She said “I never felt inferior to them (non-Aboriginal educators)” (Interview 3). Betty preferred “non-

Aboriginal teachers” because “they ask more” of their students (Interview 6). She wanted a quality education just like everyone else. Dakota preferred “Anishinaabe” teachers because “there was more joking, it was fun, and time went fast” (Interview 8). Veronica was “sort of” ok with both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal but the memories of her Indian residential school experiences as a child was hard to leave behind (Interview 12). Wolf said the “non-Aboriginal adult educator may not...accept” her because “I’m from a different culture” (Interview 15).

Transformational theory

Because of her Indian residential school experiences, Wolf said “I had to take a few years to gain a better perspective” before “I went back to school when I was twenty years old” (Interview 15). Change “requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act or not” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 22). Derek had said even though “I experienced damage at the Indian residential school but I still resumed my education” (Interview 10). It begins with “a disorienting dilemma” that is addressed through the processes of self-examination, desire for change, exploration of options, skills development as needed, new role acquisition, modification, building competence and self-esteem, and “a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 169). Once the final phase is reached, the individual has experienced *a transformational learning* process similar to what the research participants had experienced. They had had taken affirmative action.

What Can be Done to Help the Anishinaabeg Overcome the Impact of Colonization in Relation to their Lifelong Learning?

The findings show what the Elders said about having to learn “half and half” (Betty, Interview 6) or “both areas” of knowledge (Lee, Interview 14) meaning the two different knowledge bases that must be addressed: Western-based and traditional Anishinaabe-based.

Lee had said, you can “still learn about other things in your life, there’s nothing wrong with that” (Interview 14). Supporting the *contemporary bicultural learning* of the Anishinaabeg adult learners was the main theme.

As a self-directed, lifelong learner, Carson liked the whole process of learning (Interview 2). His perspective resonates with the literature. Helterbran’s (2017) findings showed that the motivation for pursuing a college education was to take care of “unfinished business,” show that they could “cut the mustard” and leave “a sense of legacy” p. 14). Helterbran’s research participants offered suggestions for supporting adult learners which included making available to them, the provision of “large-font textbooks, note-taking services” and décor suited to adult learners (p. 17). The furniture should be suited to older adult learners such as “comfortable chairs” (Carson, Interview 2). Betty found it difficult to learn with odors “coming from the mill” outdoors (Interview 6). Helterbran’s (2017) participants had also asked for campus orientation, age appropriate advisors and mentors, workshops on research, library and technological needs, and information about tutor assistance (pp. 17-18). It was through those types of services Colton learned “how to use modern technology, like computers...” and then photography later after he retired (Interview 4). Carson enjoyed going on “the internet daily” but he needed additional training to gain a better understanding of computers (Interview 2).

Adult educators should have some sort of idea of what First Nations people have had to go through that is related to generational trauma (Jacob, Interview 5; Wolf, Interview 15). Morgan (2010) calls for educators to take an interest in schooling themselves on Native American diversity...to gain a better understanding of “the learning styles or culture of this group” (p. 44). Owen said, they should know the history of the Aboriginal students they teach in terms of “traumatic experiences” (Interview 13). This resonates with the humanistic approaches

(Merriam et al. 2007; Poonwassie, 2001) to wellness that has potential to help the historical trauma of Indigenous people. Rogers (1961) presenting problem, congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy and client experience are five conditions (p. 282) when applied to “education” settings (p. 286) fall in line with what the research participants in my research said about approaches educators should employ. Ann’s father had said “it’s what you have in your heart” that determines your teaching methods (Interview 3). As an educator, “you respect their belief systems (the Anishinaabeg), you respect them as a person, as people” (Colton, Interview 4). Build trust. Teaching should be about human kindness and “heart” (Ann, Interview 3; Derek, Interview 10; Wolf, Interview 15). Educators should “engage with others” and allow learners to “talk” or process the learning concepts (Lee, Interview 14). Be “open,” “humble” (Therese, Interview 9) and “show that you really care” as a teacher (Owen, Interview 13).

Seidman and Brown (2016) stressed the importance of “accommodating the needs of adult learners” in helpful ways (p. 43). A certain measure of “flexibility” should be allowed in terms of time spent in the classroom and completion of assignments (p. 43). Adult educators should create learning environments that are “fun and flexible” (Jennifer, Interview 1; Parker, Interview 7; Dakota, Interview 8). Moving beyond the seriousness that tends to permeate those kinds of learning environments at times would cut boredom, make for livelier discussions, and time spent there a little more productive especially where adults learn. The methods tend to make “students want to come back” (p. 43).

Allowing for “mistake” making without shaming is the Anishinaabe way of learning (Jennifer, Interview 1). Being able to laugh at our mistakes, and even “make a story out of them” (Jennifer, Interview 1) was part of the approach for accepting where learners “are at” (Colton, Interview 4). Mysliwiec (2005) came to understand that teaching involves more than

“telling” it is about the process of allowing individuals to learn through trial and error (p. 5). This should be carried out in safe learning environments.

Therese liked the idea of sitting “in a circle” outdoors on “cushions and blankets” to counter the feel of “lecture” halls that felt “cold and sterile” (Interview 9). Although “lectures” are the accepted methods of teaching, Dakota said there was little interaction between professors and students (Interview 8). Johnson (2005) who is “an instructor at a career-focused university” decided to break from the old lecture style method of teaching and offer his students a chance to venture off in to self-directed learning over a period of two months (p. 3). They were to research “the equine industry, expand it, and then teach it to” him (p. 3). Although they were in charge of exams, and assignments, the instructor gave the final grade based on the quality of work completed (p. 3). All passed with flying colors. The lessons that they had learned in their self-directed learning adventure had been transferred to what was required of them to successfully complete the required “introductory career-preparation course” that they had initially enrolled in (p. 3).

Strengthen Traditional Anishinaabe Education

The research participants had said that the Anishinaabeg should strengthen their traditional knowledge. They should know their “cultural” backgrounds (Owen, Interview 13). They should know their own “history” (Interview 13). The stories of creation offer insight into the importance of honoring all that we have been given.

The Great Being created all life on Mother Earth (Johnson, 1976, p. 13), and for that reason, we carry the responsibility for seeing to the wellbeing of our planet or the “holy land” (Gray, 2006, p. 28) because “healthy ecosystems are critical to healthy societies and individuals” (p. 32). We must take care of our “gift” (Derek, Interview 10) including our precious “water”

systems (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). Relearning “ecological knowledge” means that, as a society we work collectively to preserve our precious planet (Posey, 2006, p. 32).

Because Aboriginal people had lived and worked on the land for thousands of years, the language is “deeply embedded” in that relationship (LaDuke, 2006, p. 23). Carson said, in the old days, everyone knew how to speak “Anishinaabemowin” (Interview 2) because that phase of development was important to the Anishinaabeg (Veronica, Interview 12). Carson’s concern was that, it is not enough for people to ramble “off a list of words” that are on a blackboard, we have to be able to carry on “natural conversational Anishinaabemowin” as well (Carson, Interview 2). Both children and adults today need to hear how the “language” is used to describe the happenings in their daily lives (Interview 2). This is how traditional knowledge was passed down (Interview 2). Traditional parenting, role modelling, storytelling and legends were methods that had been used to transfer knowledge to children and adults using the language (Carson, Interview 2).

Ann felt that the Anishinaabemowin should be taught outdoors because a long time ago, the people lived on the land and they were “close to the Earth” (Interview 3). In more modern times, the Elders see the value of creating “language camps” in nature settings outdoors for the purpose of providing the Aboriginal adults and youth with glimpses of what it was like to live on the land in the old days (Wolf, Interview 15). Both adults and children benefit from cultural programs designed to include the “activities” of harvesting of traditional medicines and foods, crafting birch bark items, making a fire safely, learning how to canoe, and so on (Interview 15). Jennifer who is a political leader fully supported the creation and implementation of a “women’s lodge...sweat lodge and wilderness camp” where First Nations community members (both adults and children) can go to, to learn about their Anishinaabe culture (Interview 1). Colton had

noticed that Indigenous youth seem drawn to “ceremonies, sweat lodges, pow wows, singing, dancing” and “teaching lodges” (Interview 2). Dakota expressed concern about the “void” that Indian residential school survivors must have felt, when they could no longer learn their Anishinaabe teachings and the language from parents, grandparents, and community members (Interview 8). This was one of the reasons Lee stressed the importance of taking the lead in learning “more about the Anishinaabe teachings” (Interview 14). It was there that Jacob had found healing and recovery after his horrendous experiences at the Indian “residential school” (Interview 5). He learned how to fill his social roles as husband, father, and grandfather (Interview 5). Betty believed in the idea of combining both Western-based and traditional Indigenous knowledge of medicines, for example, to help “heal” ourselves (Interview 6). Carson expressed concern over the potential loss of the Anishinaabemowin (Interview 2). He said, this is “one of the biggest barriers” in our generation (Interview 2).

The “rapid die-off of languages around the world” is a global concern (Garland, 2006, p. 32). The process of globalization, demographics and technology which has shifted “all of society’s endeavors including adult learning” (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 25) has changed life for everyone. For that reason, Aboriginal “languages must be protected, preserved, promoted, and practiced in our daily lives” (Kirkness, 1998, p. 93). Passing “an Aboriginal Languages Act” that was proposed by “the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centers” should be considered (p. 104), the way that The Official Languages Act (Justice Canada, 2016) recognizes and affirms both French and English.

Paying visits to the “Elders” is another way in modern times to learn about the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin (Jennifer, Interview 1; Lee, Interview 14). The Elders are considered to be “very highly respected older persons who” have “knowledge of the

ancient spiritual and cultural ways of her or his people” (Kulchyski et al. 1999, p. xix). They know about Indigenous “ceremonies, traditional teachings, language and heritage as it applies to mind, body and spirit” (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 42).

More emphasis on traditional Indigenous knowledge as legitimate possibilities for supporting the cultural learning of Aboriginal people should be considered. A sense of wrongness about Indigenous cultures seemed to pervade in history. This played out through Indian residential, on-reserve federally funded schools, and off-reserve provincial public schools that the research participants went to. Even as children, the Elders refused to allow cultural genocide practices to convince them to let go of their traditions (Derek, Interview 10; Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf said they put us “in a little classroom, in that little box” (Interview 15). Their colonized education was designed “to disconnect us from the land, from our water, from our ecosystems, from our medicines and from our food” (Interview 15). Furthermore, they tried “to make us forget that but where I am today, we don’t forget that, we don’t forget that” (Interview 15). Breaking free of colonial violence against the Anishinaabe is what Wolf had alluded to when she said they put us in a “little classroom” or “little box” (Wolf, Interview 15) that was intended for the Anishinaabe to break their connections to centuries old traditions of respectful and ongoing relationships with the land and all living beings.

Addressing the impact of racism should be an ongoing concern. The full onslaught of violence that had been directed toward First Nations people during colonization make no sense really in light of the contradictions that the civilized European society purported. Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) noted that in “Canadian history” there was the tendency for writers to depict First Nations people as “heathen, savage, primitive peoples” (p. 3). Derek said then they viewed us as “savages” because we did not speak English, French or Spanish (Interview 10). The

“frames of reference” or habits of mind Mezirow (1997) described (p. 6) had to alter the course of Indigenous lifelong learning.

Racism and discrimination did not help as Wolf said, after having been forced to drop out of school because of the non-acceptance of Aboriginal people there (Interview 15). She said “I tried to finish my white schooling but I had a very hard time. Things didn’t go well for me” because “I knew that white people” viewed me as “strange” (Interview 15). Jennifer said she never cared for her own schooling as well because they always “seem to be up here” and “you’re spoken down to all the time” (Interview 1). The labels continued years later as evidenced in the peculiar line of questioning Dakota had gotten from the people he worked with about the “Indians” (Interview 8). Then the movie industry laid the ground work for reinforcing the powerlessness of Aboriginal people using ludicrous war scenarios that always seemed to position non-Aboriginal cowboys on the winning side (Derek, Interview 10). This helped to perpetuate negative stereotypical images of First Nations people in a deficit-based way. Families were deeply impacted. Jennifer (Interview 1) and Therese (Interview 9) expressed concern over the changes they saw among the Anishinaabeg. When Jennifer moved back to her First Nations community, the people were very different in their attitudes. She said, they were a little “hostile” toward her. Therese had been dismayed at the level of lateral violence in her home community. (Interview 9) and “ugly gossip” (Jennifer, Interview 1). Therese said that “depth of oppression” must be dealt with (Interview 9). Racism in schools explains the reason for the avoidance of educational settings particularly where one was “treated with disrespect” (Knowles, 1980, p. 46) that resulted in “poverty” among Aboriginal people (Wilson & MacDonald, 2010, p. 3).

Jones’ (2000) description of institutional, personally mediated, and internalized racism provide insight in to how “differential access” to education, housing, employment, medical

services and so on based on “race” might play out (p. 1212). Watts-Jones (2002) said that one of the best ways to counter racism is to create safe “spaces” for people to immerse themselves in their culture (p. 594). There they can share stories of courage and hope, and even different sorts of music depending on their backgrounds (p. 594). Cain (2012) noted the strengths of Native American culture that had survived despite the impact of colonization (p. 201). The Anishinaabeg in Canada had also preserved the “Anishinaabe teachings and the Anishinaabemowin” (Wolf, Interview 15) despite the ban on ceremonies (RCAP, 1996). Racism is a societal problem that must be healed through an ongoing collaborative and collective effort. The late Dakota’s long held wish was that the “majority of society” would one day accept Indigenous people (Interview 8).

My Perspectives

The 15 Anishinaabe Elders shared their lifelong learning experiences. They had faced seemingly insurmountable challenges related to their bicultural learning. Because of what the research participants underwent in residential, and on and off-reserve public schools, there was the need for the Elders to withdraw before graduation to undergo healing and recovery before resuming a Western-based education. It was about participating in “a caring pedagogy” that espouse “the vision and richness of possibilities offered” (Darbyshire, 1993, pp. 333-334). Ann liked her teachers (Interview 3). She said “I never felt inferior to them” (Interview 3). It was about strengthening the Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin based learning as well.

What the research participants shared about their lives and the need for supporting the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabe resonated with the humanistic philosophical orientation that underpins adult education and self-directed learning. Extending Western-based approaches that include Anishinaabe perspectives seemed the best course of action to help

address Aboriginal historical trauma. It should be noted that humanistic psychology “has been critiqued for its individualism, its focus on the self, personal choice and freedom” (English, 2008, p. 568). It was said that humanism “ignores the complex relationship between the individual and social; it denies collective action, common interests and human interdependence” (p. 568). For example, SDL “may not apply to those cultures that value the collective over the individual” (p. 568). Furthermore, “it may not apply universally to adults” but “rather it reflects the context that spawned it – white, middle class, male, North America” (p. 568). It implies “homogeneity” rather than “diversity” (p. 568). It questions “whether SDL” is “emancipatory and/or prescriptive” (p. 568). Prescriptive requires “learners to conform to existing social and political systems” whereas, emancipatory implies “social action” (p. 568). In the final analysis, SDL “is contested” meaning “there is no agreement in the literature about what it is, to whom it applies or how it might be implemented in practice” (p. 568). The onus is on us “to decide how we understand it and how it will play out in our practice” (p. 568).

The difficulty of exercising a basic human right like self-directed learning that Knowles’ (1980) described in his second andragogical principle was not to be realized by Aboriginal people until the later years. Because tribal nations were subjugated on many levels, their Western style learning would not have been theirs until long after the settlers had enjoyed the full benefit of that type of education. The 15 Anishinaabe Elders had never mentioned the historic adult education movement that was brought to Canada nor did their parents or grandparents. In the mid-1800s, “The formal education of Aboriginal adults was still restricted to agriculture and husbandry, land management, and home maintenance” (Burton & Point, 2006, p. 43). Adult education “was not formally practiced in Canada until the 1830s with the establishment of the Mechanic’s Institute and the Danish folk schools” (Burton and Point, 2006, p. 39). It was

believed “Aboriginal adults were often precluded from the activities to which such education enterprises were attached” (p. 39). In, 1960, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) established “the Indian-Eskimo Association” that was “later changed to the Canadian Association for the Support of Native Peoples” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 57). The CAAE “incorporated a forum in which representatives of native peoples met together to examine many of the issues and to identify solutions for native people in Canada” (p. 64). Nothing came of it. In 1967, there were only “200 Aboriginal students enrolled in Canadian universities” (McCue, 2015, *Different Status, Different Stream*, para. 3). In 1982, the findings of “a survey of adult education in Canada...identified several groups in Canadian society who were not being served by adult education, including women, native people, older adults, challenged people, immigrants, adults with low educational attainment, and francophones living outside of Quebec” (Draper & Carere, 1998, p. 71). The process of closing Canadian Indian residential schools began in “1970” and ended in “1996” (McCue, 2015, *Development of European-Style Education*, para. 5). One can only imagine the kinds of damage that had been inflicted on Indigenous children right up until 1996 and what the long-term challenge would be for them as adults. Welton (1998) reported that, Draper and Carere’s (1998), *Selected Chronology of Adult Education in Canada*, shows that, “we don’t learn much...about the learning of aboriginal peoples and the multitudes of ethnic groups that make up our country” (p. 32).

The findings in my study, shed light on what the 15 Anishinaabe Elders had experienced in their lifelong learning, the problems they encountered in their bicultural learning and the ways in which Anishinaabe adult educators might effectively support Aboriginal adult learners in their self-directed learning. Self-directed learning or SDL is viewed from a ‘collaborative constructivist perspective’ (Garrison, 1997, para. 4). It “has the individual taking responsibility

for constructing meaning while including the participation of others in confirming worthwhile knowledge” (para. 3). The perspective reflects “the cognitive and social perspectives of an educational experience” (para. 3). In the final analysis, “meaning and knowledge are both personally and social constructed” (para. 3).

Lee had said “as times changes...as people evolve...” it is up to the Anishinaabeg to learn “both areas” of knowledge meaning Western-based education and traditional Anishinaabe-based knowledge (Interview14). Cajete (1994) provides a thought-provoking perspective about the ways in which the Mayans constructed a “new reality” (p. 28). He said the Mayan societies evolved through the process of “a constant building upon earlier realities” (p. 28). With each passing “Mayan dynasty, the nobles of the ascending dynasty would commemorate their new order by erecting a symbolic” structure (p. 29). The “ceremonial pyramid” was built “by encasing an older one” and recycling “many of the materials used previously in the structures” until it was completed (p. 29). In doing so, it was believed that, although, “the newest reality may seem different from earlier ones...its essence...remain tied to the...ancient foundations” (p. 29). It was about connecting “both past and present” or “building on the earlier realities of past generations and expressing new realities, while remaining true to basic principles...” (p. 29). Similarly, the process of “Indigenous education...is being built from the stones and upon the foundations of prior structures” (p. 29).

Reflections and Reflexivity

I began this journey with a reflective look at the events that had happened in my life. I experienced a bit of heaven on Earth the first six years of my life when I was home with my Anishinaabe parents. I decided that my research should include more than my personal life story as a person of Anishinaabe descent. I am deeply grateful to the 15 Anishinaabe Elders who

made this study possible. It was important to understand their perspectives on lifelong learning, and how these perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning. I went through a period of observational, experiential, disrupted, transformational and contemporary bicultural learning processes similar to what they had experienced.

I am thankful to the University of Alberta for offering me the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies. This journey was not without challenges. Following a lengthy battle with diabetes complications, my father finally succumbed to his failing health. As I sat by his bedside at the hospital, I listened to the phrases he uttered of things I did not understand. At times, he sat up and laughed a little, amazed that he was “always coming back here.” Then he would talk about a rain barrel. He smiled in wonder. Another time, he reached for his wallet, pulled out his bank cards and handed them to me saying that he would no longer need those and that I may as well use the money. My father passed away a few days after he had been admitted to the hospital. As I stared out the window, there was a soft mist falling, and I imagined him to be travelling to distant places in search of peace and rest. Closing his residence and packing his belongings after the funeral felt devastatingly final. My mother had already been in a retirement home for the past year. I experienced deep anguish on a daily basis knowing the rapid onset of her mental deterioration before she passed away. In the midst of all this, my brother had just received a prostate cancer diagnosis and was told to put his affairs in order. Even with the prognosis he believed that he should live life to the fullest. He still works part-time. After making numerous visits to the local hospital myself, I was diagnosed with diabetes. Managing that was a full-time job in the beginning but after a long battle to normalize my glucose levels, I am now in the process of simple maintenance. The siblings who had been adopted years before

began calling to share their terrible memories with me. Amidst what I call catastrophic life events, I struggled to stay focused on my doctoral studies. Tossing everything came to mind a few times even though I sensed the importance of this journey. Dr. Jose da Costa, my Research Supervisor offered support and encouragement to continue with my studies. I found comfort in the solace of writing during the more challenging times in my life. Sending notes to my Research Supervisor lifted some of the stress I felt. When life settled, I was able to focus a little more on my studies and the literature review that I had already begun. I believe that my life experience taught me that pain and suffering can be transformed to better places in life. I also found that, in addition to the roles of spouse, sibling, aunt, friend, mother and grandmother, as a doctoral student my life calling expanded to, comforter to those in my family who were in the throes of grief, post-traumatic stress and post-adoption problems, patient consultant, celebration of life planner, estate handler, doctoral researcher, and writer. I remembered the phrase that my mother uttered to no one in particular about the potato peel. It was up to me to do the very best at whatever life presents.

Implications

The findings in my research was based on the responses of 15 Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders to the following overarching research questions; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? This study serves as a call to action in the area of Anishinaabe lifelong learning. Strengthening the process depends on the ongoing support of Canadian legislators, local and global communities, First Nations leaders and their administrations, and adult educators. More should be done in the areas of policy, theory and practice.

For Canadian legislators

The Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders had shared their perspectives on how the process of lifelong learning had unfolded for them. The findings indicate that the impact of colonization posed a number of challenges to a timely completion of post-secondary studies and stable ongoing full-time employment. The hardships that the research participants had faced provide the rationale for supporting the self-directed learning of Anishinaabe adult learners.

1. **Both federal and provincial governments must work to influence educational institutions to incorporate traditional Anishinaabe-based knowledge in the school curriculum at all levels of education to understand who Indigenous people were before colonization had begun**

Anishinaabe writers (Benton-Banai, 1988; Broker, 1983; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; and Johnston, 1976) and the 15 Elders in this study have said that the Creator placed Aboriginal people in North America at the beginning of time. Their evolving “political, social, educational, economic, and spiritual structures and institutions” was ongoing “like many other peoples or nations” (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 3). This brought balance and harmony to First Nations communities. They were fully “functional” and independent societies before colonization (Derek, Interview 10). Veronica said “everybody learned to work and feed their families” (Interview 12). *Observational and experiential learning* was part of the traditional educational practices that helped the Anishinaabeg (Carson, Interview 2). This was a collaborative and ongoing collective effort. “Spirituality” was the driving force behind the lifelong learning process (Colton, Interview 4). The seven grandfather teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty,

humility and truth were teachings that provided direction for living in harmony with all living beings on Mother Earth (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64).

2. Both federal and provincial governments must push for policies and financial resources to help cover the costs associated with the reversal of *disrupted Indigenous bicultural learning*

The process of colonization and the loss of land and natural resources to the European settlers impacted traditional Anishinaabe lifelong learning (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3). It began with the Canadian Constitution (Justice Canada, 2014) that gives full authority to the federal government in their paternalistic role over “Indians and lands reserved for the Indians” (Section 91(24), the Treaties which was about the loss of Indian land to European settlers (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 1867 – Present, The Numbered Treaties, para. 1), the Indian Act (Justice Canada, 2014) that constrained the lives of First Nations people (RCAP, 1996), and Indian residential, public and on-reserve day schools all worked to disempower Indigenous nations. Jacob said that the Indian “residential school” era was “like the holocaust” that people don’t really “understand” (Interview 5). A lot of people “were hurt” (Interview 5). It took the “life” out of his “community” (Interview 5). Jacob participated in “self-awareness” programs to help him deal with the horrendous abuse he went through in the “residential school” (Interview 5). This was similar to what Wolf had done. Wolf had dropped out of school to deal with the “severe abuse” she had gone through in Indian residential and off-reserve public schools (Interview 15). Wolf “had to take a few years to gain a better perspective” before she resumed her education (Interview 15) which is similar to what the research participants had done. Owen had experienced similar abuse (Interview 13). He said, I still “feel

it...even today...but I try not to” (Interview 13). The expectation in historic times was for First Nations people to abandon their values, practices, traditions, and languages (INAC, 2011, Canadian Era – 0867 – Present, Indian Education and Residential Schools, para. 1). Now there are a host of social problems in First Nations communities that include lower life expectancy, health problems, family violence, addictions, lack of educational attainment and employment, imprisonment, and so on (RCAP, 1996, Stage 3: Respect Gives way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, The Life Chances of Aboriginal People, para. 2). Wolf’s perspective of, “now in our children’s time, now the drugs” (Interview 15) implies what the far-reaching impact of colonization has been on the Anishinaabeg in relation to generational trauma. Aboriginal people went through a period of *disrupted bicultural learning* which means there was disruption to their Anishinaabe-based learning and Western-based learning. The recovery effort of Indigenous people has been a long-standing issue. To help counter the impact of colonization on Anishinaabe lifelong learning processes, Derek said “My passion is the future generations. I like to see smiling faces on kids. The Indian residential school people wanted us to be silent. My classes today, are noisy. I ask the silent students; Are you sick today?” (Interview 10). Measures should be taken to counter the “void” that was created by the cultural genocide practices of the past and help the Anishinaabeg strengthen their Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin as well (Dakota, Interview 8). There should be adequate “funding for on-reserve schools” (Derek, Interview 8). Lavoie (2011, p. A5) stated that “First Nations schools receive at least \$2,000 less for each student at a reserve school than non-aboriginal schools” (para. 6). Sufficient funding must be allotted to educational institutions at all levels and even

for the different learning environments where Aboriginal adult learners go to, to learn. Parker said, our learning activities depend on “funding” and here, in our First Nations community, there’s always financial shortages (Interview 7). To balance all that has been done thus far in relation to the healing and recovery efforts of the Anishinaabeg, a new chapter must also include what the Canadian government has done to support the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabeg. The Canadian “government” and “First Nations should work together” to build a better nation (John, Interview 11).

3. The Canadian government must endeavor to fill the recommendations of the RCAP (1996) and TRC (2015) findings to help mitigate the “social problems” Lee had spoken of (Interview 14)

The social problems in First Nations communities had prompted the government to launch a Royal Commission in 1991 “to investigate the issues and advise the government of their findings” (RCAP, 1996, A Word from Commissioners section, para. 2, 3). Along with the recommendations for addressing the problems, there was a twenty-year commitment to renewal (RCAP, 1996, Notes to Readers section, para. 2). Years later, in response to the devastating impact of Canadian Indian Residential schools, the Government of Canada “provided about \$72 million to support the TRC’s work” (INAC, 2017, About the Truth and Reconciliation Commission section, para. 3). The findings have identified 94 calls to action that address child welfare, language and culture, health, justice and so on (TRC, 2015, Calls to action section, p. 1-11) which were similar to the social problems reported in the 1996, RCAP report. One of the areas of concern that the TRC (2015) highlighted was education, and the “call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment

gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians” (p. 1, 2). However, “it has been difficult to create the conditions for reconciliation to flourish” (TRC, 2015, p. 186). In the years following the RCAP (1996) report and the TRC’s (2015) findings, very little has been done.

For local and global communities

Local and global communities as a whole should endeavor to learn about Canada’s First Nations people to gain a more informed understanding. This would help undo racism. It would help local and global citizens to help create egalitarian societies that wholeheartedly accept and support Indigenous people especially in a variety of learning environments.

1. Make concerted efforts to understand the diversity of First Nations people

There tends to be a lack of accurate information about Indigenous people. Wolf had said that non-Aboriginal historians portrayed the Anishinaabe as “savages” and “dirty Indians” in “their history books” (Interview 15). Much of what has been learned reflects erroneously in textbooks and very little of “Native American view of American history” (Morgan, 2010, p. 45). One of the examples might be that, most people have no idea the location of Indian reservations or “that sovereign tribal governments exist in their state” (p. 45). People may not even know what that means. Espousing that “a totem pole made by the Northwest Indians next to a tipi used by the Plains Indians” is reflective of all Indigenous people promotes mistaken perceptions “and stereotypical ideas in children” (p. 45). Educators should talk about the “history of Anishinaabe people...in the classroom setting” at all levels of education (Jacob, Interview 5) to evoke “compassion” and responsible citizenship (Owen, Interview 13) that helps build egalitarian societies. Jacob had said, for some reason, they (educators) don’t seem to want to talk about Indian

“residential” schools which created generational trauma that First Nations people now experience (Interview 5). Adult educators should know “the history of who the students are and what they went through” (Owen, Interview 13). Because First Nations communities are “more isolated than other groups” most people have not benefited “from direct experience” (Morgan, 2010, p. 45). Reaching out to one another is the first step to reconciliation.

2. Newcomers to Canada should be more informed

Another helpful method to building a better understanding would be to revise “the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools” (TRC, 2015, p. 10, 11). The provision of accurate information would lessen the negative images of the Anishinaabeg that was born in history. Derek had said, they (the settlers) tended to view native people as “savages” (Interview 10).

For First Nation’ political leaders and the administration

First Nations political leaders and their administration must support the lifelong learning process of the Anishinaabeg.

1. Begin decolonizing efforts immediately to help reverse the impact of colonization in First Nations communities

Aboriginal historical trauma brought significant change to traditional Indigenous ways of life. This has created a number of social problems in First Nations communities that include lower life expectancy, health problems, family violence, addictions, lack of educational attainment and employment, imprisonment, and so on (RCAP, 1996, Stage 3:

Respect Gives way to Domination, Policies of Domination and Assimilation section, The Life Chances of Aboriginal People, para. 2). When Jennifer had returned home to her First Nations community, the people were a little “hostile” (Interview 1). She knew that their attitudes were contrary to the Anishinaabe teachings of respect and love for others (Interview 1). Therese said that her community needed adult educators to help the people reverse the impact of internalized “oppression” (Interview 9 and “ugly gossip” (Jennifer, Interview 1).

2. Indigenous people have a fundamental legal right and human right to live free of violence

When Ann had observed the ill treatment of an Anishinaabe child in a classroom, she confronted the teacher who was using the old Indian “residential school” method of silencing the student (Interview 3). Ann knew that the young Anishinaabe child had every right to receive a quality education in a non-abusive learning environment (Interview 3). The Canadian Constitution, 1982, defines what those legal rights are. It reads that, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice (Part I, (7)). Furthermore,

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2016) defines the human rights code as, a provincial law that gives everybody the rights to be free of discrimination in... five social areas” that include “employment, housing, services and facilities (such as education, health care, police, government, shops or restaurants), unions and vocational associations, and contracts or agreements. Furthermore, the *Code* prohibits discrimination and harassment based on 17 different personal attributes – called

grounds: age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (including Indigenous spiritual practices), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, place of origin, race, receipt of public assistance (in housing only), record of offences (in employment only), sex (includes pregnancy and breastfeeding, and sexual orientation. (para. 1 and para. 2).

Those rights apply equally to First Nations people. Support the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong learning.

3. Collaborate collectively with adult educators, professors, community members, and Elders in the creation and implementation of schools on reserves

Engage with Colleges and Universities in mutually respectful relationships. Bring post-secondary programs directly to First Nations communities. Parker said “what you’re going through (doctoral studies), I wish there was more of that here” (Interview 7). We’d have more to “look forward to” (Interview 7).

4. Partner with Colleges and Universities to develop and implement on-reserve, Research and Ethics Boards answerable to the grassroots people, political leadership, Elders and University Advisory boards

Recognize the value Indigenous research plays in practice, theory and policy as it relates to improving the quality of life for First Nations people. Be more open-minded and accepting of Indigenous scholars who approach your communities seeking vital information from your grassroots people. Help us build Indigenous canons that researchers, politicians and educators may draw on. Be a little more trusting of First Nations scholars in your Treaty area who simply want to make a difference in the lives of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people in Canada.

5. **Begin a library that holds local stories as one method of passing down traditional Indigenous knowledge to community members**

Place more value on the Elders in the community especially those who carry traditional knowledge particularly as it relates to vital information specific to your geographical area. Offer them tobacco. They are the “teachers” (Lee, Interview 14). Wolf had said, in the old days (before colonization) everyone knew the *Anishinaabe teachings and Anishinaabemowin* because in my “family” line, “our Elders” were the ones who taught us (Interview 15).

For adult educators

Adult educators must support the lifelong learning processes of the Anishinaabeg.

1. **Support the transformational bicultural learning and contemporary bicultural learning of Aboriginal adults**

Draw on the counsel and wisdom of Indigenous “Elders” in each First Nations community (Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). Ask how adult educators might help with the lifelong learning process of Aboriginal adults. One suggestion might be to “make yourself and your expertise accessible to those who seek your knowledge and advice, regardless of how informal or tentative the occasion” (Conrad, 2001, p. 212). Given the unpredictability of life, “your thoughtful and informed counsel might provide the necessary catalyst in someone’s decision-making process” (p. 212) to seek post-secondary education in a number of professions.

2. **Employ humanistic approaches. Draw on the seminal work of pioneers such as Rogers, Knowles, and Maslow for their perspectives**

Unlike Canadian residents, know that the impact of historical trauma presents unique challenges for Aboriginal people. Always “seek professional development opportunities that enlarge and nurture your abilities” (Conrad, 2001, p. 212). Be mindful of “adult education’s philosophical underpinnings” (p. 212). Humanistic approaches foster more positive and empowered learning experiences for adult learners.

- a) Review Rogers’ (1961), *On Becoming a Person*. The five conditions of, presenting problem, congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy, and understanding of the clients’ experiences can be readily applied in the interactions between adult educators and adult learners. It’s about “heart” in the methods you choose to teach because that is the Anishinaabe way (Ann, Interview 3; Derek, Betty, Interview 6; Interview 10; Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf liked the “multicultural” school that she had attended as an adult learner (Interview 15). The educators were “very intrigued” with native people and this provided opportunities for Wolf to “voice” her perspectives in the classroom (Interview 15). She said “they were good to us so I excelled in that school and I blossomed” (Interview 15). After taking “programs” and “life skills workshops,” Parker felt that the learning opportunities changed his life in positive ways (Interview 7). He said “you feel great about yourself” and even more so when the “trainers or trainees” ask for your perspectives (Interview 7). Learning should be “fun” and “flexible” as well (Jennifer, Interview 1; Parker, Interview 7; Dakota, Interview 8). Of the utmost importance is that “the psychological climate” reflect acceptance, respect and support “in which there exists a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers; in which there is freedom of expression without fear of punishment or ridicule” (Knowles, 1980, p. 47).

- b) Review Knowles (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions of; (1) learners need to know, (2) learners' self concept, (3) prior learning experiences of adults, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation. It helped to understand the lifelong, self-directed learning processes of 15 Anishinaabe Elders. Carson's life had changed in a "positive" way when he had been approached to enrol in post-secondary studies (Interview 2). Derek (Interview 10) and Veronica (Interview 12) went on to become teachers despite the abuse they had gone through as children at the Indian residential school. Therese said that "life skills component" of the "transitional program" she had enrolled in to get into the university program she was interested in had been quite "relevant" to her life then (Interview 9). She "really needed" help to deal with some personal life issues (Interview 9). Be prepared for emotionally laden stories of anguish. Uncomfortable silences following the sharing of such experiences can be equally devastating. Be gentle with hypersensitive students who carry personal histories of trauma. Never be condescending, bullying, shaming or indifferent.
- c) Review Knowles' (1980) description of the ideal *learning setting* that include furniture and equipment suitable for adults. It should be designed for comfort and ample elbow space, have good "lighting" and "acoustics" for mature learners, and position visually appealing decorations or artwork on the walls or table stands (p. 46). For example, "the more comfortable the chairs" the better it is for learning (Carson, Interview 2). When Parker went to different "Friendship Centers" to participate in their informational seminars in towns, he liked the "pictures" on the walls because that resonated with the "artwork and drawings" he used to do in his younger days

(Interview 7). He wished there was “a little school for learners to go” to in his community where the Elders could “teach” more of the “traditional ways” relating to art and other areas of learning as well (Interview 7).

- d) Review Jarvis’ (2006) descriptions of lifelong learning, and Caffarella’ (1993), Garrison’ (1997), Hiemstra’ (1999), and Merriam’ (2001) perspectives on self-directed learning (SDL). It helps to understand how to effectively support the Anishinaabeg in their lifelong, contemporary bicultural learning.
- e) Review Maslow’ (1954), *Motivation and Personality* to learn how adults progress upward in the hierarchy of needs. The physiological or lower level needs of food, water, clothing, shelter and safety must be satisfied before the higher needs of love/belongingness, esteem and self-actualization are sought. Betty remembered the days when she and her family travelled to “different communities” to help others (Interview 6). She had experienced what it was like to be “part of” an Anishinaabe family who cared about the wellbeing of others (Interview 6). Helping adult learners progress upward in the hierarchy of needs must be the aim of adult educators.

3. Review Jones (2000) and Watts-Jones (2002) on institutional, personally mediated, and internalized racism

The research participants had expressed concerns relating to the impact of racism in their lives. Ann had been concerned about the Anishinaabe youth in her community (Interview 3). She said they don’t really want to go to school because of the racism and discrimination” (Interview 3). The learning environment should be welcoming for adult learners coming from diverse backgrounds. Jennifer’s hope was that, educators accept “people from other cultures” (Interview 1). An adult educator should endeavor to make

“that person feel happy to be” there learning (Ann, Interview 3). As an educator, “you respect where they’re at, you respect their belief system, you respect them as a person, as people” (Colton, Interview 4). Dakota had said that “the only problem now is” the “majority of society” does not accept us.

4. **Create support services for Indigenous adult learners in different learning spaces and places of employment to ease that “lonesome” feel (Betty, Interview 6)**

Show compassion for adult learners who have no other choice but to move off-reserve in search of post-secondary education and long-term employment. These moves cause psychological and emotional hardship for families and friends who are left behind in their First Nations communities. Being away from loved ones makes life lonelier and emptier.

5. **Resume the adult education movement in modern times but with Indigenous contexts in mind**

Create informational packets on a number of topics similar to the subject material that the European settlers were privileged to when they settled in North America. Carson said “I don’t think you’re ever too old to learn” (Interview 2). Therese (Interview 9) and Veronica (Interview 12) loved to “read.” Ann (Interview 3) and Parker (Interview 7) liked going “meetings” because you learn a lot of things. Knowing about Canada is of interest to all Canadians.

6. **Strengthen traditional Anishinaabe lifelong learning including the Anishinaabemowin (language)**

In the old days, before colonization “we already had our Anishinaabe teachings” and “Anishinaabemowin” (Wolf, Interview 15). Wolf said “Hardly anyone was sick. The men trapped. We picked wild rice. We picked blueberries. We used the medicines from

the ground. We built our own homes. We travelled around as well, supporting ourselves. We were independent within ourselves and in our communities. When I was a child, we still practiced our old ways of life as Anishinaabeg” (Interview 15). Anishinaabe parents were heavily involved in traditional “parenting” and “role modelling” (Carson, Interview 2). They were “totally engaged with the child” (Interview 2). Our “neighbors, relatives” and friends would come to our houses “unannounced and then they’d sit and have a cup of tea or whatever and there was conversation” (Interview 2). “They talked about the everyday situations in their lives. They shared their life experiences. If they had a problem, this is how they overcame that problem” (Interview 2). Because “they shared their learning experiences...that was further transferred to the kids” (Interview 2). Everyone “heard” the “words” of how that “language (Anishinaabemowin)” was used to describe what was going on in the daily lives of the visitors (Interview 2). The visits addressed “language learning, cultural, spiritual...emotional (Interview 2). “One of the most valuable sources of learning was from storytelling and legends” (Interview 2). There had to be “100 different teachings that came out of that one legend” (Interview 2). The Anishinaabe “grandmothers and grandfathers carried that knowledge” and then that was passed down to incoming generations (Dakota, Interview 8). Carson said “now nobody does that you know so where are they (the Anishinaabeg) going to learn from” (Interview 2). Colton said that “there’s different learning especially with the Anishinaabe” (Interview 4). “One of the greatest things that there is, is spirituality...like the vision quest” (Interview 4) and the “grandfather” teachings (Therese, Interview 9; Owen, Interview 13). Spirituality was considered the foundational cornerstone of the Anishinaabe teaching and learning

process. It was about speaking “from the heart” (Derek, Interview 10). Supporting the Anishinaabeg in their self-directed traditional learning is what the Elders recommended to help overcome the impact of colonization. “It’s what you have in your heart” that determines your teaching methods (Ann, Interview 3). It’s about kindness, warmth, inclusiveness and lightness. Learning should be “fun” (Jennifer, Interview 1; Ann, Interview 3; Dakota, Interview 8) and “flexible” (Parker, Interview 7). Wolf supported the idea of creating and implementing outdoor “language camps” so Anishinaabe youth and adults could strengthen their traditional knowledge and Anishinaabemowin (Interview 15). As political leader, Jennifer has been instrumental in helping to develop the “women’s lodge,” “sweat” lodge, and “wilderness camp” in her First Nations community (Interview 1). Wolf carries a teaching lodge that the Anishinaabe can go to, to learn about the “teachings” (Interview 15). Lifelong learning is “an ongoing never-ending process” (Wolf, Interview 15).

Extending the Research

My research focused on gathering the perspectives of 15 Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and how these perspectives might be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning. Given that the study did not specifically look at the differences in gender in terms of understanding the lifelong learning experiences of First Nations women and men, further research is needed to address the concerns. Although “Aboriginal women are outpacing Aboriginal men in educational attainment” (Wilson & MacDonald, 2010, p. 20) there are serious and persistent social problems among women such as poverty, violence, and single parenthood (p. 20). Studies should be conducted to gain insight in to the possible causes of such dilemmas in order to inform practice, theory and policy.

Concluding Thoughts

I began this research study with a story of my lifelong learning experiences as a person of Anishinaabe descent. The purpose of sharing the more unpleasant memories was to try to understand how things could have turned out differently than what most families experience. Extending the lens of one personal account seemed the best option for gaining deeper insight in to the lives of others through the interview process. The interview questions had been designed around the overarching research questions; (1) What are the perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe First Nation Elders on lifelong learning, and (2) how might these perspectives be used to effectively support Anishinaabe/Ojibwe adults in their self-directed learning? I present brief highlights of what the research participants shared and then blended their perspectives with the literature to show parallels, contradictions and gaps.

Through the storytelling traditions of Anishinaabeg writers (Benton-Banai, 1988; Broker, 1983; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Johnston, 1976) and the life experiences that the 15 Anishinaabe Elders in this study shared, I came to appreciate the Anishinaabe worldview. I learned that the Creator had been gifted with a beautiful and powerful vision while he was in a deep state of prayer and meditation. He thought that was absolutely amazing. His vision moved Him to carry out everything that He had seen. All life originated out of His immense power and this included the sacred Natural laws that govern how every living being was meant to function. Man, was the final creation that the Creator blew life in to and he came with specific instructions to live peacefully and respectfully with all life on Mother Earth. Out of him came numerous tribal nations each with a variety of land-based languages that we know in modern times.

The Anishinaabeg consider themselves to be the original inhabitants in North America (Derek, Interview 10). They were given the land and natural resources to take care of, and in turn

this would provide for all of their needs in the years to come (Interview 10). Social role development was based on what was required of them to lead a better quality of life. Harvesting and gathering were some of the land-based survival activities that the people were heavily involved in (Broker, 1983). They were grateful for the sacred blessings. Thanksgiving ceremonies were carried out to show love and respect to the Creator for all that they had been blessed with. The people lived and worked on this continent since time immemorial (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000). Ojibwe babies were privileged to the processes of *observational and experiential learning* (Carson, Interview 2; Colton, Interview 4). They learned what those Anishinaabe teachings were and then they in turn passed that down to their children. Learning was infinite.

The spirit of the times brought a number of significant challenges for Aboriginal people (INAC, 2011) and that began with the loss of land and natural resources to the European settlers. It impacted the self-directed learning processes of Indigenous people. Anishinaabe ways of life changed even further with their forced relocation, disempowering legislation, Indian reservations, restricted travel, damage to vital ecosystems, assimilation and acculturation practices, poverty, and illness (RCAP, 1996). Aboriginal education had become a contentious issue for European settlers (Ray, 1996) who decided to take matters in to their own hands without even considering Indigenous worldviews as legitimate sources of learning. Cultural genocide practices that were carried out in Western-based schools eventually played a catastrophic role in the lives of First Nations people (Poonwassie, 2001). Psychological, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social violence took a toll on families and communities. Many withdrew before graduation and then struggled later to survive in colonial society. They experienced a phase of *disrupted bicultural learning* meaning there was disruption to their

Western-based education and traditional Indigenous learning. The Elders said that the Anishinaabeg abandoned their teachings and languages and even embraced foreign religions as their own which explains the reasons for all the social problems now (Colton, Interview 4; Lee, Interview 14; Wolf, Interview 15). Adapting to European culture did not go well for Aboriginal people. The need to create culturally appropriate assessment tools that address historical trauma is what is now needed to heal the root causes of all the social problems in First Nations communities (Bergen, 2015, p. 1). Racism had posed a number of difficulties for Aboriginal people in the areas of education and career development as well. All of society must heal from those attitudes (Cain, 2012; Jones; 2000; Watts-Jones, 2002

The historic adult education movement (Merriam et al. 2007; Selman et al. 1998) could have changed how Indigenous people adapted to European culture. Even with the missed opportunities crucial to keeping up with the times, in the later years, the Elders still enrolled in colleges and universities as adult learners. They underwent a *self-directed, transformational bicultural learning* process that led to long and meaningful careers. Mezirow (2009) in his discussion on the processes of transformation said that learners “make an informed and reflective decision to act or not” (p. 22). This opens “new vistas to lifelong learning” (Foote, 2015, p. 84) which is what the Anishinaabe Elders had done to fill their social roles.

Western theories must be viewed as equally helpful for the strengths embedded in such processes. Humanistic approaches as described by Maslow (1954) and Rogers (1961) seemed the best fit to Aboriginal adult learning according to what the research respondents shared. This approach emphasizes “choice, freedom, creativity and self-realization as essential aspects of meaningful learning” (Magro, 2001, p. 82) and “human potential for growth” that lead to self-actualization (Merriam et al. 2007, p. 281).

Knowles' (1980, 1990) six andragogical assumptions of the learner's need to know, learner's self-concept, prior learning experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation helped to understand the problems that the research participants may have encountered and how Aboriginal adult learning might be strengthened. Knowing that other measures had also been tried shows that policy makers and educators in general were just as concerned with the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational attainment. For example, funding for Aboriginal post-secondary students and the creation of transitional programs (INAC, 2000) helped to somewhat increase the graduation rates over the years. Creating culturally appropriate programs in urban areas to help with upgrading and transition to city life (Selman et al. 1998) and even bringing post-secondary programs to on-reserve members have all shown promise (Ball, 2004; OME, 2013).

Contemporary bicultural learning must be the aim of Indigenous people. Adult educators have opportunities to play leading roles in the approaches and methods that they choose as it relates to helping the Anishinaabeg in their self-direct learning. Adult educators could learn how to be more culturally responsive as well given what the changing demographics, technologies and globalization has brought to our society. This does not mean that they should learn everything there is to know about Indigenous cultures. They should develop a more empathetic understanding of what the people have been through in historic times and find ways to overcome the impact (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2015; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Be more accepting, welcoming and inclusive. Undo racism. Find a way to fill uncomfortable silences in classrooms after an Aboriginal student shares something about their lives or cultures. Realize that there will be emotional spillage at times and as adult educators we should learn how to nurture those who are in recovery. Help educate all students about our true realities. Hidden

knowledge helps no one. Sitting on the sidelines observing the social problems in First Nations communities does nothing in the way of solutions.

Teaching traditional knowledge that is embedded in diverse Indigenous groups in Canada should be left to the First Nations Elders who reside in those communities. Indigenous language development should be left in their domain as well to accommodate the differing dialects and words specific to that particular locality. Carson said that the mere construction of a list of Anishinaabe words is not enough (Interview 2). We have to be able to put those words together and carry on a *conversation* (Interview 2). Our language should be meaningful to us and to those who pivot in our orbits. Communicating with an open *heart* is the Anishinaabe way (Ann, Interview 3; Derek, Interview 10; Wolf, Interview 15). The Elders said that the Anishinaabeg should learn everything there is to know about their cultural roots as that will ground learners in the seven grandfather teachings. This would help to feel a sense of belongingness (Betty, Interview 6) similar to the way it was previous to colonization. As they said, what was before must be again. Building on prior structures is what the process of Indigenous education is all about (Cajete, 1994). This will help to mitigate the issues of Aboriginal poverty in Canada that Wilson and MacDonald (2010) reported on.

The Elders in this study navigated through two different knowledge bases or two different worldviews without distorting either. They learned what was required to succeed in colleges and universities in order to fill their social roles as spouses, employees and so on while staying true to their cultural identities, values, practices, traditions and language. The Elders have much to share with others but care must be taken not to misuse traditional knowledge (Derek, Interview 10). A well-rounded education that takes in the personal realm as well helps to create healthier grounding within ourselves and this in turn improves our relationships with

others (Jennifer, Interview 1; Therese, Interview 9). Doing all of this will help Aboriginal people in their self-directed learning, in essence, their lifelong learning. More research must be done to address not only the Anishinaabe adult life-long learning process but other social issues that First Nations now contend with.

The 15 Anishinaabe Elders in this research study are actively involved in the helping process. More credit must be offered them for their tireless volunteer work. Living a good life was what they hope for all people on our Mother Earth. Rogers (1961) said, “The good life is a *process*, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination.” (p. 186). It is about “movement in a direction which the human organism selects when it is inwardly free to” do so (p. 187). Adapting to the process of change while remaining true to our Anishinaabe identities was the wish for Aboriginal adult learners (Betty, Interview 6; Derek, 10; Lee, Interview 14). *Contemporary bicultural learning* is what the Anishinaabeg must incorporate in to their lives through self-directed learning processes with the support of adult educators, policy makers, First Nations political leaders, global societies and helpers.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

PART I: ANISHINAABE LIFE-LONG LEARNING

1. What does the Anishinaabe life-long learning process mean?
2. How did colonization impact the process?

PART II: ANDRAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

LEARNER'S NEED TO KNOW

3. Describe some of your Western-based educational experiences as an adult learner?
4. Was the learning relevant to your real life then? Please describe.

THE LEARNER'S SELF-CONCEPT

5. Did you look forward to future Western-based adult learning opportunities? Why? Why not?

PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF THE LEARNER

6. When you participated in Western-based adult learning opportunities did you feel that the adult educator/trainer/facilitator valued your previous learning experiences? Why? Why not?

READINESS TO LEARN

7. What social roles have you held over the course of your life?
8. Would you be more likely to seek the services of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal adult educators to help you perform better in your social roles? Why? Why not?

ORIENTATION TO LEARNING

9. Are you likely to seek assistance from Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal adult educators to help you perform tasks or deal with problems that you confront in real life situations? Why? Why not?

MOTIVATION

10. What motivates you to participate in adult learning activities?

ADULT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

11. What characteristics should the non-Aboriginal adult educator possess?
12. What characteristics should the Aboriginal adult educator possess?
13. Describe the ideal learning setting for Aboriginal adult learners. Location?
14. How can we strength the Anishinaabe life-long learning process?

APPENDIX B

LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY

Date _____

Name of First Nations community _____

Letter hand delivered (with tobacco)

Dear Chief _____,

I am writing this letter to ask for your permission to come to your First Nations community on two separate occasions this year to visit with a few of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders. The first visit will be to carry out the initial hour-long interview and the second, to verify the accuracy of the interview transcription and my understanding of what I was told. I plan to select the names of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders using a combination of purposive and snowballing techniques. Purposive simply means that I will select the first Elder based on my knowledge of the helping work of the individual in our Treaty area, having lived here all my life. I hope you will allow me to carry out research in your First Nations community. At the conclusion of the interview I will ask the Elder to recommend another Elder participant. This is called the snowballing technique. Their knowledge will make a significant contribution to the study.

Background

I am currently enrolled as a PhD candidate in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, Indigenous Peoples specialization at the University of Alberta. I completed all the required course work. Now I must carry out doctoral research to finish my doctorate and graduate. The only personal benefit to me is that the results of this study will be used in support of my thesis only and I will gain no profit.

My study is titled *Perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders on Aboriginal life-long learning*. A review of scholarly literature indicates that First Nations people were flourishing on the North American continent previous to colonization. Our evolving spiritual, political, social, educational, and economic systems sustained our First Nations communities for generations. Aboriginal life-long learning was a strengths-based process. Colonial policies that established federal and provincial powers, the Treaties, and Indian Act brought many changes to Aboriginal people including the loss of land, natural resources and freedom to exercise their inherent rights as legitimate sovereign nations.

The historical adult education movement in Canada, well documented in Western literature was instrumental in developing our nation during colonization. Many of the new settlers brought with them the knowledge of various learning programs such as reading, writing and arithmetic before public education came to Canada. Furthermore, there was a number of

radio broadcasts, film circuits and discussion groups on a variety of topics such as religion, agriculture, international trade, community and family life and so on.

The colonized education of Aboriginal people became problematic. As early as the 1500s the missionaries and colonial governors strategized to assimilate Aboriginal people into colonial society. Failed strategies include Christian-based education, sending young Aboriginal adults to France to learn colonial ways, relocating First Nations communities closer to European settlements, Indian Residential schools and public education. Other times the colonized education of Aboriginal people simply did not happen though adult education movements in Canada had already begun. Even the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning process was not readily archived because of the oral nature of First Nations societies.

Purpose

The purpose of this Indigenous qualitative study will be to interview Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders who reside on and off Treaty #3 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario in order to understand their perspectives on life-long learning and how the strengths of such a process might be used to help Aboriginal adults engage in their own self-directed learning. The general benefits to scholarship and society will include original research that contributes to the body of knowledge on Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning. The study calls attention to Canadian legislators, funders, adult educators and society as a whole including the global community to help First Nations' people rebuild their communities.

Study Procedures

I will follow the ethical guidelines of respect for persons, concern for welfare and justice. Applying the core principles means that the Elder participants will be provided with all the necessary information as stated in the enclosed letter of invitation and description of the study, consent form and confidentiality agreement to help them make informed decisions. If the Elders are interested in being part of my study, I will have them sign the consent form or give their oral consent on audiotape recording equipment. I will review participants' privacy and confidentiality of their information with the audiotape recording equipment technician and have her or him sign the confidentiality agreement. After the interview, I will ask the Elder to recommend another First Nations Elder who can provide further information. At the conclusion of the interview I will schedule another visit with the Elder a second time. I will ask her or him to help me verify the accuracy of my transcription of our first interview and that she or he help me make sure that I understood what she or he wanted me to know. I want to make sure that my understanding of what she or he shared during the first interview is correct and to include any after thoughts she or he may have. I ask for one hour of their time to do this. I will present what the Elders said in my final research paper in a strengths-based way. The length of this study will be one year or the time it takes for me to write the final paper.

Benefits

The Elders will benefit from being in the study. In keeping with the Anishinaabe protocols I will offer them tobacco, a gift, and \$100 honorarium in appreciation for their valuable

contribution to the study. When I visit them the second time I will offer them tobacco and \$25 honorarium. There will be no direct cost to them for being in the research. I hope that the information we obtain from doing this study will help us to better understand Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning and how the strengths of such a process might be used to help the Aboriginal adult learner engage in their own self-directed learning.

Risk

The risks are minimal for being in this study. I will simply have a conversation with purpose with the Elders and they can choose to answer my questions or they can decide not to answer.

Voluntary Participation

The Elders are under no obligation to participate in this study. Their participation is completely voluntary. They are not obliged to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study. Even if they agree to be in the study they can change their mind and withdraw at any time. They can ask to have any information they provided to be withdrawn from the study within a period of 30 days from the date of the second interview or within 30 days of the first interview.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher, Valerie Fisher will use the results of this study to complete her thesis/dissertation; she may also publish research papers and make research presentations using the results from the study. The Elders confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. An interpreter/translator will be provided if they are not fluent in the English language. The researcher will review participants' privacy and confidentiality of their information with the interpreter/translator and have her or him sign the confidentiality agreement. The Elders have the choice to be personally identified or not in any of the research. If they choose not be identified, the researcher will give a pseudonym (a fictitious name) to identify their contributions to the study. Their names will not be used during the sharing of research findings (their confidentiality will be maintained) unless they tell the researcher to use their names. The data will be kept confidential. Only the researcher, Valerie Fisher, will have access to the data. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room at Valerie Fisher's place of residence for a minimum of 5 years following completion of this research project. Data that are stored on a separate storage device will be password protected or encrypted. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed or shredded along with the storage device to ensure the Elders privacy and confidentiality. The Elders and Chiefs may request a copy of the executive summary of the research findings if they so desire; please just the researcher know. In the event that Valerie Fisher learns of any Elder abuse, she must break the agreement of confidentiality since she is legally obligated to report evidence of abuse of an Elder to the police.

As Chief of your First Nations community your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to be in this study you can change your mind and withdraw at any time.

Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. The risks are minimal for being in this study.

Further Information

I humbly ask for your support. I ask that you sign below giving me permission to carry out research in your First Nations community.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor, Dr. Jose da Costa.

Miigwech (thank you),

Valerie Fisher
PhD Candidate
52 B Davies Street
Kenora, Ontario P9N 3R6
807-468-7443

Research Supervisor

Dr. Jose da Costa, Professor
7-104 Education North
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
jose.da.costa@ualberta.ca
780-492-5868

I, Chief, _____ give my permission for the researcher,

Valerie Fisher to carry out research in my First Nations community.

Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INVITATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Title of the Project: Perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders on Aboriginal adult life-long learning

Researcher: Valerie Fisher

Date _____

Letter hand delivered (with tobacco)

Dear _____,
(Participant name)

You are being asked to be in this study because of your life experiences, knowledge and wisdom. I selected your name using a combination of purposive and snowballing techniques to identify the Anishinaabe/Elders I would like to interview. Purposive simply means that I selected the first Elder based on my knowledge of the helping work of the individual in our Treaty area, having lived here all my life. I hope you will give your consent to be interviewed. At the conclusion of the interview I will ask you to recommend another Elder participant. This is called the snowballing technique. Your knowledge will make a significant contribution to the study.

Background

I am currently enrolled as a PhD candidate in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, Indigenous Peoples specialization at the University of Alberta. I completed all the required course work. Now I must carry out doctoral research to finish my doctorate and graduate. The only personal benefit to me is that the results of this study will be used in support of my thesis only and I will gain no profit.

My study is titled *Perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders on Aboriginal life-long learning*. A review of scholarly literature indicates that First Nations people were flourishing on the North American continent previous to colonization. Our evolving spiritual, political, social, educational, and economic systems sustained our First Nations communities for generations. Aboriginal life-long learning was a strengths-based process. Colonial policies that established federal and provincial powers, the Treaties, and Indian Act brought many changes to Aboriginal people including the loss of land, natural resources and freedom to exercise their inherent rights as legitimate sovereign nations.

The historical adult education movement in Canada, well documented in Western literature was instrumental in developing our nation during colonization. Many of the new

settlers brought with them the knowledge of various learning programs such as reading, writing and arithmetic before public education came to Canada. Furthermore, there was a number of radio broadcasts, film circuits and discussion groups on a variety of topics such as religion, agriculture, international trade, community and family life and so on.

The colonized education of Aboriginal people became problematic. As early as the 1500s the missionaries and colonial governors strategized to assimilate Aboriginal people into colonial society. Failed strategies include Christian-based education, sending young Aboriginal adults to France to learn colonial ways, relocating First Nations communities closer to European settlements, Indian Residential schools and public education. Other times the colonized education of Aboriginal people simply did not happen though adult education movements in Canada had already begun. Even the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning process was not readily archived because of the oral nature of First Nations societies.

Purpose

The purpose of this Indigenous qualitative study will be to interview the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders who reside on and off Treaty #3 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario in order to understand their perspectives on life-long learning and how the strengths of such a process might be used to help Aboriginal adults engage in their own self-directed learning. The general benefits to scholarship and society will include original research that contributes to the body of knowledge on Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning. The study calls attention to Canadian legislators, funders, adult educators and society as a whole including the global community to help First Nations rebuild their communities.

Study Procedures

If you agree to be part of this study, I ask for one hour of your time to interview you at your choice of location. I ask that we meet in a quiet place free from disruption. Before the interview, I will review the letter of invitation and description of the study, consent form and confidentiality agreement with you. If you agree to be in the study, I ask that you sign the consent form before we begin the interview or give your oral consent on audiotape recording equipment. After the interview, I will ask you to recommend another First Nations Elder who can provide further information. At the conclusion of the interview I will schedule another visit with you a second time. I will ask you to help me verify the accuracy of my transcription of our first interview and that you help me make sure that I understood what you wanted me to know. I want to make sure that my understanding of what you shared during the first interview is correct and to include any after thoughts you may have. I ask for one hour of your time to do this. I will present what the Elders said in my final research paper in a strengths-based way. The length of this study will be one year or the time it takes for me to write the final paper.

Benefits

You will benefit from being in the study. In keeping with the Anishinaabe protocols I will offer you tobacco, a gift, and \$100 honorarium in appreciation for your valuable contribution to the study. When I visit you the second time I will offer you tobacco and \$25

honorarium. There will be no direct cost to you for being in the research. I hope that the information we obtain from doing this study will help us to better understand Anishinaabe/Ojibwe life-long learning and how the strengths of such a process might be used to help the Aboriginal adult learner engage in their own self-directed learning.

Risk

The risks are minimal for being in this study. I will simply have a conversation with purpose with you and you can choose to answer my questions or you can decide not to answer.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study. Even if you agree to be in the study you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. You can ask to have any information you provided to be withdrawn from the study within a period of 30 days from the date of the second interview or within 30 days of the first interview.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher, Valerie Fisher will use the results of this study to complete her thesis/dissertation; she may also publish research papers and make research presentations using the results from the study. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. An interpreter/translator will be provided if you are not fluent in the English language. The researcher will review participants' privacy and confidentiality of your information with the interpreter/translator and have her or him sign the confidentiality agreement. You have the choice to be personally identified or not in any of the research. If you choose not to be identified, the researcher will give a pseudonym (a fictitious name) to identify your contributions to the study. Your name will not be used during the sharing of research findings (your confidentiality will be maintained) unless you tell the researcher to use your name. The data will be kept confidential. Only the researcher, Valerie Fisher, will have access to the data. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room at Valerie Fisher's place of residence for a minimum of 5 years following completion of this research project. Data that are stored on a separate storage device will be password protected or encrypted. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed or shredded along with the storage device to ensure the Elders privacy and confidentiality. You may request a copy of the executive summary of the research findings if you so desire; please just let me know. In the event that Valerie Fisher learns of any Elder abuse of you, she must break the agreement of confidentiality since she is legally obligated to report evidence of abuse of an Elder to the police.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor, Dr. Jose da Costa.

Miigwech (thank you),

Valerie Fisher
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Research Supervisor

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780-492-5868

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Perspectives of the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe Elders on Aboriginal adult life-long learning

Researcher – Valerie Fisher

Voluntary Participation

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that the researcher will protect my rights as follows:

- I am under no obligation to participate in this study.
- My participation is completely voluntary.
- I am not obliged to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study.
- Even if I agree to be in the study I can change my mind and withdraw at any time; I will still receive the \$100 honorarium for the first interview.
 - However, if I withdraw before the second interview I will not receive the \$25 honorarium allotted for the second visit.
 - If I withdraw after the second interview I will receive the \$25 honorarium for the second visit.
- If I withdraw, I can ask to have any information I have provided to be withdrawn from the study within a period of 30 days from the date of the second interview or within 30 days of the first interview if I don't agree to a second interview.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

I understand that the researcher will protect my confidentiality as described below:

- The researcher will use the results of this study to complete her thesis/dissertation; she may also publish research papers and make research presentations using the results from the study.
- I have the choice to be personally identified or not in any of the research. If I choose not to be identified I will be given a pseudonym (a fictitious name) by the researcher to identify my contributions to this study.
- My name will not be used during the sharing of research findings (my confidentiality will be maintained) unless I tell the researcher to use my actual name.
- The data will be kept confidential.
- Only the researcher, Valerie Fisher, will have access to the data.
- The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room at Valerie Fisher's place of residence for a minimum of 5 years following completion of this research project. Data that are stored on a separate storage device will be password protected or encrypted. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed or shredded along with the storage device to ensure your privacy and confidentiality.
- If I wish to receive a copy of the executive summary of the research findings, I just need to let Valerie Fisher know.

- In the event that Valerie Fisher learns of any Elder abuse related to you, she must break the agreement of confidentiality since she is legally obligated to report evidence of abuse of an Elder to the police.
- An interpreter/translator will be provided if you are not fluent in the English language.
- Data from this study will not be used in future research projects.

Please circle one:

I give my consent to be interviewed by Valerie Fisher.	Yes	No
I give my consent to be audiotaped	Yes	No
I give my consent to have the audiotapes transcribed onto paper.	Yes	No
I give my consent to be quoted.	Yes	No
I wish to be identified in the study.	Yes	No
I understand that the researcher, Valerie Fisher, must keep the audiotape recordings and written transcripts in a safe location under lock and key for a period of 5 years.	Yes	No
I wish to receive a copy of the executive summary of the research findings.	Yes	No

Participant name (print)

Participant signature

Date

Valerie Fisher

Researcher name (print)

Researcher signature

Date

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Research Supervisor

Dr. Jose da Costa, Professor
7-104 Education North
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Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
jose.da.costa@ualberta.ca
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