Pekîwe ᐯṖ∇· Coming Home:
Healing Through Land and Cultural Reclamation

by

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Abstract

This thesis research will explore the ways in which land-based healing and reclamation are interconnected. The Indigenous community members of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge were both collaborators and co-thinkers in this work. Looking at the social aspects of reclamation through an Indigenous lens provides a rich dialogue that will be valuable to the academic literature in both reclamation and Indigenous studies. A unique Indigenous research method is utilized in these processes. Primary qualitative research data is analyzed, outlining the opportunities and challeneges of reclamation and restoration work with an Indigneous community in centeral Alberta. Additionaly, numerous land-based healing methodologies from some Traditional Knowledge Keepers of Maskwacis are presented here.

This research aims to assist in advancing collaboration and co-management regarding reclamation and restoration work. Additionally, this work aims to inspire and encourage Indigenous academics and community members, especially youth, to pursue their own healing journeys. Hopefully this will result in more brilliant and resilient Indigenous minds achieving their goals and bringing their gifts to life. Some key concepts in this area include self-determination, resurgence, treaties, governance, healing, participatory responsibility, traditional ecological knowledge, ecological integrity, restoration ecology, biocultural restoration, eco-cultural restoration, and reciprocal restoration.

Preface

wâciyê nitôtemtik kitatamiskâtinâwâw. ninanâskomâw kîse manitow mâmawohtâwîmâw mâmawokâwîmâw anohc kakîsikâk. Robin Howse nitisîyihkâson ekwa nehiyaw wîhowin wapâstimiskwew. Ohci nîya Miawpukek Mikmaki. (Hello, my friends, I greet you all. I am grateful to the Creator for today. My name is Robin Howse, and my Cree name is White Horse Woman. I am from the Miawpukek Mikmaw Nation). Even though I am of Mikmaw descent, I have dedicated myself to following nehiyaw ways. I have two children who are nehiyawak, from Saddlelake Cree Nation. Because I didn't get the chance to grow up in my home community, I was not able to learn from my family and community about my culture and language. I did not want my kids to grow up missing this part of them. So, I do my utmost to learn nehiyawewin and have raised my children in ceremony. I have ceremonial family in Maskwacis that have adopted me. This ceremony family is whom I have been conducting this thesis work with. The Saddleback family is known all over Alberta, Saskatchewan and the prairies for their vast knowledge and life experience with Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Ceremonial Lodges, and Natural Law. I would not have been able to complete this work without the life experiences, family connections, and community ties that I am blessed to have in my life. This research isn't just about fulfilling the requirements to get a degree, it is about utilizing my time and access to privileged spaces to assist Elders and community members in the best way that I can, while inspiring youth at the same time. I hope my work and life path will continue to do this for many years to come. Even if I plant just one seed, I will feel like my work was worth it. This work is dedicated to my children, to all nehiyaw children, and those children yet to come. An ethics approval was provided to collect data for this project by the Research Ethics Board under the umbrella project titled, Decolonizing Natural Resource Management in Alberta. The University of Alberta Research Ethics Approval ID is Pro00112291.

"*Pekîwe (Come home): To our culture, our language, our spirituality." - KS*

Acknowledgements

I did not complete this thesis work on my own. I had a whole community of support beside me and helping me along the way. I would like to acknowledge the following people and organizations by name. They have all supported me or influenced my work in a deep way throughout my thesis journey. There are numerous other people and organizations that have not been mentioned but have helped me through this process in some way. I am grateful for every contribution that supported my work in this thesis.

Interviewees - Dawn Coyote, Ken Saddleback, Ida Bull, Norine Littlechild, Patrick Buffalo, Peggy Lee, Sheena Hartman-Yellowbird, Robert Johnson.
Elders - Lorna Saddleback, Rose Saddleback, Julie Saddleback.
Committee - Brenda Parlee, Sherry Pictou, Kim Tallbear, Dorothy Thunder.
My Children – Royce Makokis, Isabelle Makokis.
Organizations – Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, Manaciso: Healing with Horses, Mistatim Riding Program, Treaty 6 Hide Tanners, KD Farms.
Language Keepers – Rueben Quinn.
Oskâpewisak – Emily Coyote, Mary Quinn.
Knowledge Keepers – Nadia Houle.
Peers – Cassandra Foy, Lacey Brertton-Larocque.
Academics – Melanie Dene, Joline Bull, Shana Dion, Leigh Sheldon.
Funding – Miawpukek Mikmaw First Nation, Government of Alberta.

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Glossary

nehiyawewin	Chahkipehikanak	english translation
anhoc	ᐊᑐᐦᐅ⁻	Today
asinîwaciy	ᐊᓯᓂᐊᐧᑲ+	Mountains
askiy	ᐊᙆᑭ+	Land
ayisiyiniw	ᐊᔨᓯᔨᓂᐤ	Person, human being
epekîwecik	∇VṔ∇ᐧᑲˋ	They are coming home
ewâsîyak kimâmitoneyihcikan	∇ᐊᐧᓯᓴˋ ᑭᒪᒋᑐᓄᐦᐦᑎᒃᑲ	 Lighting up your mind
iskwew	ᐃᙆᕫᐤ	Woman
kâkesimo	ᑲᕫᓯᒪ	To pray
kakîsikâk	ᑳṔᓯᑲˋ	This day
kihatamiskâtinâwâw	ᑭᐦᐊᑕᒋᙆᑎᓀᐊᐧᐤ	I greet you all
kihtehayak	ᑭᐦᑌᐦᐊᔭˋ	Elders
kihteyamâmitoneyihcikan	ᑭᐦᑌᔭᒪᒋᑐᓄᐦᐦᑎᒃᑲ	Wisdom
kisewâtisiwin	ᑭᔦᐊᐧᑎᓯᐃᐧᐣ	Kindness
keyâpic	ᕫᐣᐱ⁻	Some, more, still yet
kikâwinaw askîy	ᑭᑲᐃᐧᓀᐤ ᐊᙆṔ+	Our mother earth
kîse manitow	Ṕᔦ ᒪᓂᑐᐤ	Creator
kiteh	ᑭᑌᐦ	Your heart
kimâmitoneyihicikan	ᑭᒪᒋᑐᓄᐦᐦᐃᑎᒃᑲ	Your mind
ninanâskomâw	ᓂᓀᓇᙆᑯᐧᒧᒪᐤ	I am grateful to him/her
mâmaw-okâwîmâw	ᒧᒪᐤ ᐅᑲᐃᐧᒪᐤ	Our Mother of all
mâmaw-ohtâwîmâw	ᒧᒪᐃᐧ ᐅᐦᑕᐃᐧᒪᐤ	Our Father of all
manaciso	ᒪᓀᑎᓯ	To heal, Take care of yourself
manitow wiyasiwewin	ᒪᓂᑐ ᐃᐧᔭᓯᐁᐧᐃᐧᐣ	Creators Laws
maskwacis	ᒪᙆᑲᐧᑎᙆ	Hobbema (Bear Hills)
mîmîw sâkahikan	ᑎᑎᐤ ᔦᑲᐦᐃᑲᐣ	Pigeon Lake
mistatim âtayôhkan	ᒥᙆᑕᑎᑦ ᐊᑕᔪᐦᑲᐣ	The horse spirit
mônîyâw	ᒧᐧᓂᔭᐤ	White people
mônîyâkâso	ᒧᐧᓂᔭᑲᓯ	Not acting like yourself

nehiyawewin	Chahkipehikanak	english translation
nehiyaw	ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐤ	Plains Cree
nehiyawak	ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐊᓱ	The Cree people
nehiyawe	ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐯᐧ	To speak Cree
nehiyawewin	ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐯᐧᐃᐣ	The Cree language
nehiyawitisiwin	ᓀᐦᐃᔨᐃᐧᑎᓯᐃᐣ	The Cree way of life
newiyaw	ᓀᐃᐧᔨᐤ	Four-part being
nipâkwêsimowin	ᓂᐟᕽᐧᓯᒪᐃᐣ	A Sundance
nitisîyihkâson	ᓂᑎᓯᐦᐩᑲᓯᐣ	My name is
nipîy	ᓂᐱᐩ	Water
nitôtemtik	ᓂᑐᑌᑫᑎᐠ	My Friends
ohci nîya	ᐅᐦᑭ ᓂᔨ	I am from
oskâpeskwesis	ᐅᓵᑲᐯᓵᐧᓯᓵ	Women helper
oskâpewis	ᐅᓵᑲᐯᐃᐧᓵ	Helper
pakoseyimowin	ᐸᑯᔭᒪᐃᐣ	Hope
pekîwe	ᐯᑭᐧᐁ	To come home
pekîwek	ᐯᑭᐧᐁᐧᐤ	Come home you all
pesâkâstew	ᐯᔭᑲᓵᑌᐤ	Sunrise
pimâtisiwin	ᐱᒪᑎᓯᐃᐣ	Life force energy
pîsim epekîwet	ᐲᓯᐟ ᐁᐯᑭᐧᐁᐧᐟ	The sun is coming home, Solstice
wâciyê	ᐊᐧᑭᔦ	Hello
wapâstim	ᐊᐧᕽᓵᑎᐟ	White horse
wâskamisiwin	ᐊᐧᓵᑲᒥᓯᐃᐣ	Enlightenment, Awakeness
wâhkôhtowin	ᐊᐧᐦᑯᐦᑐᐃᐣ	Relations
wîhkaskwa meskanaw	ᐐᐧᐦᑲᓵᐧ ᒣᓵᑲᓰᐤ	Sweetgrass road
wîhowin	ᐐᐧᐦᐅᐃᐣ	Name

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Heartwork

Many of the Elders that I have learned from have always emphasized the importance of *"Heart Work"* over *"Head Work".* This philosophy is also apparent in the interviews that I have conducted for this research. Because of this, I wanted to start by explaining the importance of *Heart Work*, and how this primarily guided my research methodology. Heart work is guided by our intuition, looking into our hearts for guidance. It is experiential, felt through energy. As opposed to traditional academic work which traditionally follows the mônîyâw train of thought. One way to explain this concept is to utilize nehiyawewin (the Cree Language). In one of Patrick Buffalo's *Manaciso: Healing with Horses* sessions, he spoke about the etemology of the nehiyaw word for elder,

> "*The English word 'elder' comes from a Mormon word. The newiyaw word is kihtehayak. Kiteh is your heart. kihtehayak are the ones connected to the rules in our hearts."* (Buffalo, 2021)

While I have heard the principles of this framework in ceremonial settings, I have also heard this term being used by Janice Huber when I was working with her on the *Growing Faculty, Staff, and Student Foundational Knowledge of Indigenous Philosophies, Epistemologies, Ontologies, and Pedagogies* research project through the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta back in 2019 and 2020 (Peltier, et al., 2022). She spoke of a book titled *Warrior Women: Remaking Post-Secondary Places Through Relational Narrative Inquiry*, that she co-authored alongside Mary Young, Elders Dorothy Moore and Florence Paynter, and other teachers who utilized this terminology (Young, et al., 2015). I wanted to acknowledge the Elders whom I have learned this from, as well as the academics who have already begun to write about this concept.

1.2 Warrior with Heart

A principle that follows this idea of "Heart Work" is a phrase that is heard in a lot of ceremonies in Maskwacis, to be a *"*Warrior with Heart*"*. Pekîwe Cultural Lodge cofounder, Ken Saddleback, is the first Elder that I heard say this phrase (Saddleback K. , 2021). There was some

mention of this principle in my interview data. I will use the interviewees word to explain this principle. Norine Saddleback is a Traditional Knowledge Keeper, and an oskâpewis at the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. She contextualizes the principle of a warrior with a heart in a few ways. She explained the principle of warrior with heart in line with servant leadership,

> "*Ken is just that. He's a servant, but he's a leader. I kicked off my master's in leadership, in Administration. And we call that Servant Leadership. And people sometimes don't like that term because it seems like, oh, you're beneath that. The Western ideologies we put in our heads as academics. When you say that from your heart, oskâpewis. Keyâpic anima my uncle, he's still an oskâpewis, He goes to serve any elder - He's so humble - No questions - He goes."* (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

Robert Johnson, one of the Elders at the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, echo's Norine concisely, "*warriors are from the heart, you look after the people*" (Johnson, 2021). A warrior with heart is someone who understands the importance of not only individual, but also collective wellbeing.

1.3 Framework

This thesis research will explore the ways in which land-based healing and reclamation are interconnected. Looking at the social aspects of reclamation through an Indigenous lens will provide a rich dialogue that will be valuable to the academic literature in both reclamation and Indigenous studies. Moreover, this research aims to inspire and encourage Indigenous academics and community members, especially youth, to pursue their own healing journeys. This will hopefully result in more brilliant and resilient Indigenous minds achieving their goals and bringing their gifts to life.

This thesis is laid out in five chapters. This first chapter is the introduction. It introduces the philosophy of the thesis work via the concepts of "Heart Work" and "Warrior with Heart". The second methodology chapter outlines the wîhkaskwa meskanaw method. The wihkaskwa meskanaw is a methodology and way of life that unfolds through following nehiyaw protocols. The third chapter presents the anaylsis on Indigenous Ecological Restoration at mîmîw sâkahikan. The fourth chapter presents the community discourse on land-based healing. The fifth chapter is the conclusion, where restoration work and land-based healing methods are tied together.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This work responded to the need expressed by the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge's Elders about the importance of mîmîw sâkahikan to the health and well-being of the community. The community of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge were both collaborators and co-thinkers in this work. While I did the writing and composition of the piece, I tried my best to echo and amplify their voices, stories, and perspectives. The community's capacity to engage with this place, was impacted by decades of colonial settlement and damage caused by petroleum extraction. In a conventional thesis, this section is supposed to focus on explaining on the academic methodological principles, approaches, principles, and frameworks, or the "Head Work", that directed my research process. While I will provide some information on the academic literature in the relevant areas, I decided to utilize an alternative approach to writing this methodology section. I want to focus on the community driven methodologies that I have learned over the past 12 years of my life.

2.2 Literature Review

This thesis research falls in the intersection Indigenous Scholarship, Participatory Action Research, and Reclamation or Restoration Scholarship. This chapter will focus on the first two schools of thought. Restoration and reclamation scholarship will be discussed at length in Chapter 3. There is some overlap between these schools of thought. Some key concepts in this area include self-determination, resurgence, governance, healing, participatory responsibility, traditional ecological knowledge, ecological integrity, restoration ecology, biocultural restoration, eco-cultural restoration, reciprocal restoration, experiential methods, shared knowledge practices, respectful relationships, and mutually beneficial results. To heal this land and reclaim it for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, an Indigenous approach to research and action was required. In an academic sense, we brought together methods from Indigenous research methodologies and participatory action research. Our unique research methodology is at the intersection of these methodologies. The following section describes some of the key methodological principles of these areas of methodological scholarship and how these principles were applied in the research.

2.2.1 Indigenous Research Methodologies

One of the most frequently cited Indigenous Research Methodologies publications is the book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*s, by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. She describes Indigenous Research as circular and holistic in representation and practice (Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, 2021). In this book, she uses the metaphor of ocean tides for movement. The four tides represented are survival, recovery, development, and self-determination. She describes them as conditions and states of being that Indigenous communities are moving through. She also uses the four directions - the northern, the eastern, the southern and the western to represent the processes of decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization. She talks about how there are distinct pathways through which Indigenous research is being advanced. Part of the self-determination agenda is the deliberate naming of the world in accordance with Indigenous worldviews, "[This form of] naming is about bringing to the center and privileging Indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than disguising them within westernized labels" (Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, 2021, p. 128). This methodology will be brought to life in this thesis work, as *nehiyawewin* will be centered and used as the theoretical framework for discussions.

In the book, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance,* Leanne Simpson conveys her message from an Indigenous mode of intellectual tradition that is profoundly Nishaabeg (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017). She explains that "The crux of resurgence is that Indigenous peoples have to recreate and regenerate our political systems, education systems, and systems of life from within our own intelligence" (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017, p. 226). She goes on to explain how the dispossession of Indigenous land and bodies are interrelated. "A great deal of the colonizer's energy has gone into breaking the intimate connection of Nishnaabeg bodies (and minds and spirits) to each other and to the practices and associated knowledges that connect us to land, because this is the base of our power" (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017, p. 41). She emphasizes the inherent agency located within the process-centered modes of living that is generated through the grounded normativity of Nishnaabeg Nationhood and governance. Truthfully, the real radical resurgence project isn't radical or even resurgence, it's just Indigenous life as it has always unfolded - As we have always done (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017, p. 247). This methodology is a focal point in this thesis research, as the entire project was guided by Indigenous life as it has always unfolded.

2.2.2 Participatory Action Research

Janice Cindy Gaudet is a Metis Scholar who writes about participatory action research in the article, *Rethinking Participatory Research with Indigenous Peoples*. In this article she explores the ways in which participatory research either reinscribes or challenges dominant relations of power (Gaudet, 2014). She quotes Maori education scholar Bishop who describes a "participatory mode of consciousness" (Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, p. 14). The participatory mode of knowing privileges "sharing, subjectivity, personal knowledge, and the specialized knowledge of oppressed groups. It uses concrete experience as a criterion for meaning and truth" (Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, p. 14) (Denzin, Lincoln, Smith 2008, 14). Gaudet speaks to the scholarly defintions of participatory action that are provided by Grace Getty, Meredith Minkler, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Getty, 2010) (Minkler, 2005) (Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, 1999). They explain that participatory action research includes principles of co-learning, experiential methods, shared knowledge practices, respectful relationships, and mutually beneficial results (Gaudet, 2014, p. 73). This methodology allows for the community to be in the driver's seat for the research process, and to guide it as they see fit. Bagele Chilisa is an Indigenous author from Botswana who has written a book titled, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. In this book, Chilisa presents two types of participatory action research methods, "one with an emphasis on participants as coresearchers and another with an emphasis on personal and social transformation" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 225). A goal of this thesis research is to provide a space for a grassroots Indigenous group of people to become co-researchers in an academic setting on issues that will result in personal and social transformation.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Stage 1 – Wîhkaskwa Meskanaw (The Sweetgrass Road)

Our approach is through Wîhkaskwa Meskanaw. This thesis journey began in ceremony. Beginning in ceremony was not only important for the thesis work, but for my own holistic well-being – spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It was important for me to follow nehiyaw protocols throughout my entire research process. If it wasn't for ceremony, I would not have been able to carry out my thesis work. While I was carrying out my thesis work, I was also doing some massive personal trauma work. I went through a transformational chapter of my life which informed how my thesis work was conducted. Although this process started it ceremony, it did not end there. Ceremony

was a centerpiece right through the duration of this thesis work and continues to be a central part of my praxis.

Concepetually and analytically, ceremony readies you for this work. Spiritual work prepares one for the challenges of, discomfort in, and endurance required for graduate school research. It gives you a place to ground yourself and reach out to ask for help from the Creator, Grandmothers, and Grandfathers. In return a person receives guidance, protection, and the strength to continue moving forward even through difficult times. Unfortunately, I did not have enough time to dive more deeply into this section. It would be very benifical to discuss ceremony as process within depth. In future work, I would like to explain in more detail how ceremony can be key to the research process. There are many relational practices that directly relate to intellectual work. Ceremonial practices are substantive intellectual experiences. They can be profoundly ontological experiences, and these can be described in part like any other profound intellectual shift (Tallbear, 2023).

Before the research work began for this thesis, I brought protocol to a Sweat Lodge to ask for guidance and direction in carrying out the work. I spent the Spring and Summer of 2021 traveling to ceremonies with the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, upholding my community relations and ceremonial commitments to the Creator. In the spring of 2021, I went to three Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, a Sundance Singing, a Fasting Camp, two Chicken Dance Ceremonies, and a Sundance Ceremony. In the summer of 2021, I went to two Sundance Ceremonies, a Horse Dance Ceremony, a Sweat Lodge Ceremony, went medicine picking for sage/sweet grass and fungus, and four Chicken Dance Ceremonies. Afterward, the Elders of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge asked for assistance with the work associated with reclaiming an old oil well site as a part of their cultural grounds. This is where the research began in navigating through the consultation work regarding the remediation and reclamation of the old oil well site. The following table sets out the research process into seven stages, outlining the events within this process.

Table 1 – Methodology Timeline

Task	Dates
Stage 1: Wîhkaskwa Meskanaw (The Sweetgrass Road)	**May 2021 – Current**
P1: Three Sweat Lodge Ceremonies	May-21
P1: Sundance Singing	May-21
P1: Fasting Camp	May-21
P1: Chicken Dance Ceremony	May-21
P1: Chicken Dance Ceremony	Jun-21
P1: Sundance Ceremony	Jun-21
P1: Two Sundance Ceremonies	Jul-21
P1: Horse Dance Ceremony	Jul-21
P1: Sweatlodge Ceremony	Jul-21
P1: Three Medicine Picking Trips	Aug-21
P1: Four Chicken Dance Ceremonies	Aug-21
Stage 2: Groundwork in Remediation & Reclamation Consultation	**June 2021 – August 2022**
P2: Youth Field Day Visit	Aug-21
Stage 3: Data Collection via Semi-Structured Interviews & Surveys	**August 2021 – March 2022**
P3: Interviews 1-5	Aug-21
P3: Interview 6	Dec-21
P3: Interview 7	Jan-22
P3: Interview 8	Mar-22
Stage 4: Groundwork in Pekîwe Cultural Lodge Governance	**May 2021 – Current**
P4: Logo Commissioned	Jul-21
P4: Canada Council of Arts (CCA) Registration	Sep-21
P4: CCA Application Submitted	Oct-21
P4: CCA Funding Approved	Dec-21
P4: CCA Funding Released	Mar-22
P4: Storytelling Lodge	Apr-22
P4: Fasting Camp	May-22
P4: Sweatlodge Ceremony	Jun-22
P4: Medicine-Picking Camp	Jul-22
P4: Land-Based Language Camp	Aug-22
P4: Tea Dance Ceremony	Sep-22
P4: Tobacco Tying Ceremony	Oct-22
P4: Tipi Making	Nov-22
P4: Non-Profit Application Compilation	Dec-21

P4: Round Dance	Dec-22
P4: Storytelling Lodge	Janurary 2023
P4: Storytelling Lodge	Feburary 2023
P4: Non-Profit Application Approved	Aug-2023
Stage 5: Groundwork in Manaciso: Healing with Horses (~50+ Sessions)	**November 2021 – Current**
Stage 6: Data Analysis & Thesis Composition	**January 2022 – July 2023**
Stage 7: Knowledge Mobilization	**September 2021 – Current**
P6: kâkesimo ᑳ ᑭᓯᒧ Pray	14-Sep-21
P6: pekîwek ᐯᑮᐍᐤ Come home you all	17-Sep-21
P6: pakoseyimowin ᐸᑯᓭᔨᒧᐏᐣ Hope	21-Sep-21
P6: asinîwaciy ᐊᓯᓃᐘᒋᕀ Mountains	05-Oct-21
P6: askîy ᐊᐢᑮᕀ Land	08-Nov-21
P6: wâhkôhtowin ᐚᐦᑰᐦᑐᐏᐣ Relations	19-Dec-21
P6: manaciso ᒪᓇᒋᓱ Healing with Horses	02-Mar-22
P6: United Nations Permamanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Presentation	29-Apr-22

2.3.2 Stage 2 - Groundwork in Remediation & Reclamation Consultation

Groundwork to assist the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge with the consultation processes was carried out throughout the entire research process to get the process moving for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to take over the old oil well site. It began with calling the oil company, Imperial Oil. At first, they were not going to talk with us, until University titles were mentioned. After that, we were directed to a higher-ranking employee. This employee informed us that we would have to speak with the consultation offices in Maskwacis to deal with the situation. Since Pigeon Lake 138A is owned collectively by the four Nations of Maskwacis, we had to correspond with four different consultation offices. We began by contacting the Samson Consultation Office. They were extremely helpful in the situation and explained the process that we would need to go through for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to obtain access and use to the land. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge would need support from the four Nations collectively.

So, we set up meetings with each of the Four Nation's consultation offices. We presented to Samson, Montana, Louis Bull and Ermineskin who were in full support. While doing this work, I was invited to a youth field day on August 18, 2021. The oil company, Imperial Oil, the contractors, AECOM, and the Four Nations of Maskwacis hosted youth to show them the reclamation sites, the backfill site, and to explain the remediation and reclamation processes that are taking place in Mameo.

At this field day, the Louis Bull consultation lead expressed her full support for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to take over the use and utilization of the land in question. Another item noted by the consultation offices was that the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge would have to obtain a Band Council Resolution (BCR) to modify the end land use plan for the site. After the initial consultation work was rolling and the summer ceremonies began to wind down, the Elders were at home more often and then I was able to conduct interviews.

2.3.3 Stage 3 - Data Collection via Semi-Structured Interviews & Pilot Surveys

An ethics approval was provided to collect data for this project by the Research Ethics Board under the umbrella project titled, Decolonizing Natural Resource Management in Alberta. The University of Alberta Research Ethics Approval ID is Pro00112291. Elder and community member interviews were the primary data source in this research project. Prior to conducting the in-person research and interviews, I met with the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to understand their goals in this project and obtained a letter of support. They requested my assistance in helping the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to be involved with the remediation, reclamation, and future land use plans in Pigeon Lake at site SE 26-46-28 W4M (2-26) as part of my thesis work.

We received 10 honorariums from the University of Alberta to carry out this work. The interviewees were strategically chosen. There were a total of 8 semi-structured interviews and surveys conducted. Two of the honorariums went to Cree artist Kevin Cardinal, who commissioned a logo for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. Each of the people who received an honorarium signed a consent form and completed an honorarium form. All the interviewees were provided with an interview information sheet to review before the interview took place. I orally interviewed each interviewee before providing the short survey for them to fill out. The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded, and some were audio-video recorded where consent was given. The interview guide was structured in two sections. The first section presented the long answer semi structed interview questions (see Appendix 1.1). The second section was a short pilot survey that collected information from the interviewees regarding reclamation and healing of the land, waters, and humans (see Appendix 1.2).

Interviews with key people involved with or connected to the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge were conducted in August 2021. Five interviews were with individuals directly involved with the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. The first two interviews conducted were with the lead male and female Elders of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, Dawn Coyote and Kenneth Saddleback. The third interview was with one of the lead male oskâpewis for the Lodge, Robert Johnson. The fourth interview was with a key

women's pipe holder for the Lodge, Ida Bull. The fifth interview was with one of the lead women oskâpeskwesis for the Lodge, Norine Littlechild. Three interviews were with individuals whose life work in Maskwacis also aligns with the philosophy of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. The sixth interview was with the founder of the Manaciso: Healing with Horses program, Patrick Buffalo. The seventh interview was with a co-founder of the Treaty 6 Hide Tanners, Peggy Lee. The eighth interview was with a co-owner of KD Farms, Sheena Hartman-Yellowbird. These last three interviews were conducted between December 2021 and March 2022. These interviews provide enrichment to the thesis work and expand on the ways that land based education is healing in different dimensions.

In addition to being utilized in this thesis composition, the interviews were also used to amplify the Elders and community members in having their voices heard. However, the main goal of the interviews was to ensure that I was properly representing the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, and to effectively continue carrying out the required consultation work. They were able to express themselves regarding the reclamation site, as well as the governance structures, and what they consider to be aspects of land-based healing. The interviews helped to contextualize the research and helped to inform how the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge would be set up structurally.

2.3.4 Stage 4 - Groundwork in Pekîwe Cultural Lodge Governance

I assisted the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge with several structural contemporary governance items. While they already have a robust and extensive traditional governance system in place, we needed to find ways to fit into contemporary mônîyâw governance structures in order to access funding to help with the operational costs of the camp. There was considerable thought put into how the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge would be set up as a non-profit society. We also worked on branding the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to help with outreach and officiality. Additionally, infrastructure construction and future land use plans were set in motion. In order to carry out this work, there were several routes we took.

One of the main things I wanted to assist with was finding financial assistance to support the camp in their operations. I worked to have the main Elder registered as a Traditional Knowledge Keeper with the Canada Council of Arts (CCA) in September 2021. The application process was approved, and the main Elder is now recognized as an artist by the Canada Council of Arts. Once this approval came through, we were able to apply for funding. We designed a one-year small-term project outline through their *Creating, Knowing, and Sharing: The Arts of and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples* program. The Canada Council of Arts states that they are "committed to

reaffirming and revitalizing its relationship with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. Creating, Knowing and Sharing acknowledges the cultural sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and respects the concepts of First Nations, Inuit and Métis self-determination. This program supports Indigenous individuals, groups, Indigenous-led arts organizations and arts/cultural sector development organizations that foster a vital and resilient Indigenous arts ecosystem" (Canada Council for the Arts, 2019).

While activites carried out by the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge, such as ceremony, are considered art by some moniyaw definitons, these activites also fit under different moniyaw categories such as science, education, and tourism. The conversations about which boxes that Indigenous organizations fit into regarding funding were interesting. Because these funding catergories and criteria are made by mostly non-Indigneous peoples and communites, Indigenous-led organizations usually don't fit perfectly into one box. This is because Indigenous ways of being are very holistic. The conversations about funding in this case were guided by the Elders of the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge. There is some controversy around funding related to ceremonial work, and some Indigenous groups believe that money should not be involved in such activites. It is a complex topic. However, the Elders at the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge are not applying for funding to get rich, they are not trying to capitalize off ceremony, thet are not trying to make a ridicious amount of money to hoard to themselves. They are just looking for ways that knowledge keepers and community members can be somewhat compensated for their time and efforts. Being able to pay for gas, buy groceries for feast, purchase give away items, and provide Elders with honoriarums are some of their goals. They are looking out for the numerous ways in which they can help their community.

We applied for the $100,000 grant offered by CCA in October 2021. After the selections committee reviewed the applications, in December 2021 we were notified that our application was successful, and we were to be awarded $75,000. This funding was released in March 2022. It was used to financially support one ceremony a month, some operational costs of the camp, some camp food, and to purchase tipis. The money helped to accommodate more people when the camp hosted events and ceremonies. We were able to organize and fund eleven ceremonies with this money: a Storytelling Lodge in April 2022, a Fasting Camp in May 2022, a Sweat Lodge Ceremony in June 2022, a Medicine-Picking Camp in July 2022, a Land-Based Language Camp in August 2022, a Tea Dance Ceremony in September 2022, a Tobacco Tying Ceremony in October 2022, a Tipi Making Workshop in November 2022, a Round Dance in December 2022, and a Storytelling Lodge in January and Feburary of 2023. This money not only assisted the camp, but it is also provided financial help to

other Elders, helpers, and cooks who came to support. To accept the grant, we had to open a bank account for the monies to be deposited into which would allow for easy tracking and reporting of the money. Since the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge was not registered as a non-profit society at the time, we opened a joint bank account in both the lead Elders' names.

That is another contemporary governance item that we explored extensively, deciding whether to register the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge as a non-profit, charity, religious society, or a business. We consulted many people and community members with expertise in legal issues to help us conclude that the best route would be to register as a non-profit. We filled out the non-profit application, obtained the NUANS name search, collected the required signatures and am in the process of submitting the application. Since the corporate registries office was closed due to COVID, we had a delay in registering as a non-profit society, but the process is now complete. Now we have access to additional avenues of funding such as through Alberta Tourism as well as through the Government of Canada.

We also carried out work to brand the camp. In July 2021 we used honorariums provided by the University to hire a well-known Cree artist, Kevin Cardinal, to create a logo for the camp. This helped us to design business cards and pamphlets, as well as professional letterheads and other official documents. In addition to the official documentation, we also designed and ordered sweaters and signage for the camp. I assisted in creating an official email (pekiwe@outlook.com), social media accounts, and created other documents as a volunteer administrative assistant as well.
(Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/PekiweCulturalLodge?mibextid=LQQJ4d)
(Instagram - https://instagram.com/pekiwe_cultural_lodge?igshid=MjEwN2IyYWYwYw==)

The camp currently has existing infrastructure. The existing infrastructure includes a Sweat Lodge, a Teaching Lodge, a Women's Lodge, and an outdoor cook shack. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge members and leaders have a big vision for how this space can be expanded and enhanced. The main cornerstone of this thesis is the reclamation of the old oil well site so that it can be utilized for ceremony and hosting more people on the site. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge would like to see a campground set up for people who would like to stay overnight or for multiple days. For the campgrounds, the end land use plan is to have log cabins to accommodate people. In the meantime, we will be making tipis and purchasing trappers' tents to set up for overnight stays. We would also like to see a powered trailer be brought in for washroom and shower facilities. An administration cabin is requested to be built, it can host and store everything related to the operation of the Lodge. It

would be ideal to have a large camp kitchen built in this building as well. We would like to have one more cabin specifically for groundskeepers and oskâpewis sleeping quarters.

We also reached out to the Pesâkâstew Treatment Facility to request assistance clearing a section of the land that is already under the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. There is a lot of deadfall and brush that the camp's Elders would like cleared, and to have the land leveled. The Elders would also like to have a small horse paddock put in. The horse pasture would require fencing and gates to be installed. Land use plans for the horse pasture and campgrounds have been discussed at length.

2.3.5 Stage 5 – Groundwork in Manaciso: Healing with Horses Facilitating

After spending the summer of 2021 with my ceremonial families, my adoptive family members suggested I reach out to Patrick Buffalo and go to his Manaciso Healing with Horses program. The elders at the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge have worked with Patrick and his horses in the past and have intentions of bringing the horse healing to their space as well. I contacted Patrick in the fall of 2021 and went for a session, and it was transformational. After I attended a few sessions, I brought my children. This was to help them work through some big emotions, as they also just experienced one of the hardest years of their lives. After we had a few sessions with Patrick, I offered my assistance to volunteer with his program. I began helping him at his clinics and started working for him with his horses. I asked if he would like to be included in my Master of Science thesis work and conducted an interview with him. The safe and gentle nature of Patrick's work has helped me and my two children to overcome many of our issues. I have great respect for Patrick Buffalo and the Manaciso: Healing with Horses Program. Because of this I have referred many people to this program, and they have all had amazing experiences. These people talk about the benefits that this program has had on their recovery journeys.

This section will be expanded upon later in chapter 4. Due to time constraints, I was not able to delve into the theory behind these kinds of healing programs. I would have liked to provide some basic statistics, history, and information on the kinds of transformations these programs have contributed to in different communities. Providing this type of background information about the healing with horses' programs would have allowed me to go a bit deeper into the discussion of how ceremony grounds research. In future work, I would like to discuss the relationship of healing with horses to ceremony in greater detail.

2.3.6 Stage 6 – Data Analysis & Thesis Composition

After I completed the groundwork and data collection, I began working on the transcription and coding process. This was a very long process as some of the interviews are over 1 hour in length, and many parts are spoken in nehiyawewin. So not only was I required to create transcripts, but I also had to translate certain parts. While working through the transcription work, I was coding at the same time. I wanted to make sure that I was capturing what the interviewees were saying without my own labels and biases. To avoid this, I coded each interview individually as I went. This process was taking longer than anticipated, so my supervisor offered to have some of the transcripts written professionally through transcript hero. This helped substantially. After I completed coding all the interview transcripts, I then searched through the land and water codes to find data related to the themes of reclamation and healing. While the initial interviews were based on the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and the final three interviews were based on land-based education and healing practices in Maskwacis, all the interviews had a similar theme: how healing is related to the land.

This is what encouraged me to expand the interviewees to include people outside of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. I wanted to see what their views of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge were, how they view the reclamation process, and what that means to them through their lens. This is how my thesis work shifted to look at the different interconnections between healing the environment and humans. The goal of this thesis work is to help support safe spaces where healing can take place. It started out with the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and shifted and transformed to include other forms of land-based healing, with a large emphasis on mistatim âtayôhkan.

The writing process for me was interesting. I wrote where I could while still engaging in my relational praxis. I wrote parts of my thesis in libraries or at the university as expected, but I also wrote lots in the bush, before and after ceremonies, in teaching lodges, on the land, in barns, at racetracks, anywhere and everywhere I could. I plan to continue with this “research” work after I am finished this degree process. I will continue going to ceremony, working with horses, helping Elders, and connecting youth to these opportunities. This research is NOT an “in and out” research project. I had connections with the communities before the research and will continue to engage in reciprocal relations in the future. This is research as part of a relational ecosystem.

2.3.7 Stage 7 – Knowledge Mobilization

Social Media

My entire thesis work was completed through different land-based practices. However, it is not acceptable for many of these practices to be documented through audio-visual methods (eg: ceremony). So instead, I created a mini visual look into my land-based praxis through seven social media posts on Instagram. The ethics of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable to be photographed and video recorded is community driven and vetted by Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The Elders and Knowledge Keepers within my ceremony circle approve of photography and sharing pictures of certain aspects of ceremony with others, and through social media. Since I wanted to share the process of conducting research work with my communities and people outside of academia, I did this through the utilization of social media.

Expanding on research as a relational ecosystem, I will explain this social media engagement piece. I created a series of Instagram Photo Diary posts to share bits and pieces of my research. The goal of this type of knowledge mobilization outside of the academy was multifaceted. I wanted to share the process of my thesis research, to inspire others to get into school, to inspire others to access land-based education and healing spaces, to encourage others to keep going on their journeys of life and that there are great things out there for all of us. I didn't want my research to result in a single piece of academic literature that would be locked up high in the ivory tower. I wanted to be able to share my work with my communities and try to make academia more accessible for others.

Presentations: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

I was chosen to be a part of the team representing the Ărramăt Project and my thesis research at the 21st session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York from April 25, 2022 to May 06, 2022. This was my first time attending the Forum and I am so deeply grateful for this opportunity. My supervisor, Brenda Parlee offered me the opportunity to go along with three other powerhouse women to the Forum. I met Dr. Sherry Pictou, who is an influential Mik'maw leader and scholar, Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine who was the chair of the UNPFII in previous years, and Zoé Boirin-Fargues who is a student as well as Mariam's assistant. I am grateful to have been able to meet all these amazing women and to have received their mentorship over the week. We attended many sessions together and worked hard to craft statements. Networking was a huge part of this work too, and we all reconnected with people we knew from the past and made new connections.

On Friday April 29, I was able to provide my statement. It was very nerve wracking, but I am glad I had the opportunity to share. I started out speaking the Cree language to introduce myself, then introduced the Ărramăt project briefly while drawing the connections between the Ărramăt project and my own research. I spoke to the importance of having access and jurisdiction over clean lands and waters to be able to engage in land-based education and healing. I made the recommendation to the member states to implement a mechanism for more robust FPIC standards that specifically include the voices of grassroots groups, women, youth, and Elders. Being at the UNPFII has been such a massively transformative pivotal point in my life. It has reignited my passion for academics and advocacy. Below I have provided a write up of my official statement. This statement also gets at the inability to distinguish with settler disciplines the different facets of this work: 'ecological' health, human physical, intellectual, and 'spiritual' well-being (Tallbear, 2023).

Statement - Arramat Project - Robin Howse - Item 6

wâciyê nitôtemtik kihatamiskâtinâwâw. ninanâskomâw kîse manitow mamotâwimaw mamokâwimaw anohc kakîsikisak. Wapâstim iskwew nitisîyihkâson ohci nîya Miawapukek Mikmaki. I am here representing the Ărramăt Project which focuses on Strengthening Health and Wellbeing through Indigenous-Led Conservation and Sustainable Relationships with Biodiversity. We want to strengthen Indigenous voices and capacities to document their knowledge from place-based projects.

My heartwork stems from the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge located in Maskwacis, Treaty 6 Territory, in what is now known as Alberta, Canada. The research that I am currently engaged in is titled, Pekîwe ᐯᑭᐁ· Coming Home: Healing through Land and Cultural Reclamation, and it aims to show the interconnections between ecological health and human wellbeing. The elders have explained that Pekîwe is a nehiyaw (Plains Cree) word that means to come home, but it encompasses much more than that. They encourage everyone to come home to our language, our culture, our spirituality, our land.

In order to have healthy people and communities, we need to be able to have access to and jurisdiction over clean lands and waters. The land and waters are our relatives, our life source, our substance, our pharmacy, and our teacher. To be able to maintain our ways of being, our ceremonies, our languages, we must have access to healthy lands and waters for land-based education and healing practices. Land-based learning is one of the most critical forms of education for Indigneous peoples. There are many forms of land-based activities that are both educational and healing, while engaging in them enacts the inherent sovereignty of our Nations. In order to maintain sovereignty, we need to be self-sufficient, and that requires land.

A quote from a Cree Elder within the Ărramăt Project captures this question perfectly: "If the land is not healthy, how can we be?" – Whapmagoostui Cree Elder. Many Indigenous communities, especially grassroots groups, are often denied access, occupation, and use of lands and waters in their traditional territories. The denial of access to Indigenous homelands can occur through many avenues. In the context of my research, it is happening through colonially constructed government bodies, international corporations such as oil companies, and remediation and reclamation contracting companies.

We recommend: For Member States to implement robust, meaningful and effective legally binding Free

2.4 Results

The results section in this chapter presents the final product of the social media posts. The first post includes a picture of a tipi, focusing on the importance of prayer and following protocol. This is the methodology in which the thesis work was carried out. The second post includes a picture of prayer cloths and ribbons, elaborating on the importance of coming home. This is the goal of the thesis work. The third post includes a picture of a women's teaching lodge, focusing on the importance of hope and having safe spaces for healing. This outlines some of the modalities that can be utilized in coming home to oneself. The fourth post includes a picture of old ceremonial lodges nestled in the mountains, explaining how land-based education and land-based healing is interconnected. This post makes the connections between healing and the need for a healthy land base. The fifth post includes a picture of the old oil well that is currently being remediated and reclaimed near the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, focusing on extending the question of what community-based land restoration and land reparation look like? This post highlights the intended outcomes of the thesis work. The sixth post includes a picture of the beautiful bush of northern Alberta with the sunlight poking through, articulating the importance of reciprocal relations in caring for the land. This is another outcome based post related to the restoration goals of the thesis work. The seventh post includes a picture of an appaloosa horse named Dakota, drawing on the healing process and how it can make a person feel lighter. This is another outcome based post related to the healing goals of the thesis work.

Although I have provided a brief description here, these posts are meant to be left open to interpretation by the reader. Each person's take away message may differ. Just like listening to a good story from an Elder. There are many pieces of the puzzle, and we never get all the pieces at once. Instead, we mut collect the pieces as we go, and figure out our own unique puzzles in life. This thesis work looks at how we can come "home" to ourselves. So that we can feel whole, be at peace, and feel fulfilled in life.

2.4.1 Social Media Posts

kâkesimo ᑲᑫᓯᒧᐎ Pray

May 22, 2021 | Mameo, AB

Photo Description: The canvas tipi at Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, with the door propped open, surrounded by greening budding aspen trees against a brilliant blue sky.

kâkesimo ᑲᑫᓯᒧᐎ Pray

This is one of the words that I hear a lot in ceremonies. The Elders always encourage us to pray and explain how important it is to bring protocol. To bring tobacco, those bright colors, sweetgrass, a gift. Not only when things are tough and we need help, but also when things are going well - for guidance, prevention, protection.

This spring and summer I began the journey into starting my Master's Thesis. I chose to start in prayer through ceremony. Bringing in my protocol was my way of presenting my "proposal" in the nehiyaw way. My thesis work is being done to promote healing through land and cultural reclamation, and I want to be guided and grounded in Indigenous ways.

Even though I am out here tryna get that university degree, I will not let it compromise who I am. I will challenge the university and show that there is not only one "right" way of doing things. Western/European institutions, credentials and knowledge systems are not inherently superior. ☕

#prayer #pray #ceremony #tipi #nehiyaw #mikmaw #indigenous #indigenousacademic #academia #proposals #mastersstudent #mastersofscience #beadsoverdiamonds #landback

pekîwek ᐯᑮᐍᐠ Come home you all

April 25, 2021 | Mameo, AB

Photo Description: Prayer cloths and ribbons tied to leafless aspen trees, against the dull brown ground cover seen on a spring evening at the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge.

pekîwek ᐯᑮᐍᐠ Come home.

When I hear these words spoken at nipâkwêsimowin ᓂᐹᑫᐧᓯᒧᐃᐧᐣ my heart fills with joy and I nearly break down in tears each time. The Elders call us home to the Lodge when it is ready for the dancers to fulfill their pledges and sacrifice that food and water. Whenever I hear this word outside of the context of nipâkwêsimowin ᓂᐹᑫᐧᓯᒧᐃᐧᐣ, it brings me back to this moment every time. As a person who had been searching for a home my entire life, I finally felt like I found it within myself in ceremony. It's about coming home to ourselves. "Pekîwek. To our culture, to our spirituality, to the language" - KSB.

This is partly what pekîwe means to me. What does it mean to you?

#pekîwe #cominghome #nehiyawewin #culture #prayercloth #prints #ribbons #prayer #spirituality #home #healing #love #findingyourself

pakoseyimowin ᐸᑯᓴᒧᐎᓐ Hope

May 16, 2021 | Mameo, AB

Photo Description: Women's Teaching Lodge being built at the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge.

pakoseyimowin ᐸᑯᓴᒧᐎᓐ Hope.

Cultural Lodges provide a space for connection and support for our communities. In order for us to heal and start unpacking our traumas, we must feel safe. A safe place is created when we enrich the cultural life of our community members. Through ceremony, prayer, song, and dance we can collectively heal and grow while embracing our full potential. Having a glimpse of how beautiful life can be can offer hope for a better life and future - providing strength & perseverance to break cycles of intergenerational trauma. By creating safe spaces, people are able to work through the difficult things that are holding them back in life and reach for the stars & chase their dreams. This will result in more of our people, and specifically youth, finding themselves and their calling. We will see healthier individuals, families, and communities. We are coming for everything our ancestors were denied. ✊

#reclaimyourpower #ancestorswildestdreams #landback #cultureback #healing #intergenerationaltrauma #ceremony #nehiyawewin

asinîwaciy ᐊᓯᓂᐊᑎ+ Mountains

June 5 2021 | Near Hinton, AB

Photo Description: Old ceremonial lodges nestled in the foothills of the asinîwaciy asinîwaciy ᐊᓯᓂᐊᑎ+ Mountains.

Land-based Education is Land-based Healing

The two go hand in hand. Land-based teachings are experiential. Learning while being on the land can be very healing. Having a connection with nature, the elements, and non-human beings does something to the spirit. And there is no one size fits all. There are so many different methods. Each one has its own unique strengths and touches on different aspects of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Ceremony, harvesting, medicine-picking, berry-picking, hunting, fishing, working with horses, working hides, connecting with wildlife, plant knowledge, bush knowledge are just some of the ways that come to mind. What are some land-based practices that you have found to be healing?

Pekîwe Cultural Lodge Fundraiser: https://gofund.me/3e39f963

#landbased #landbasedlearning #landbasededucation #landbasedhealing #healing

askîy ᐊᖏᐦ Land

May 22, 2021 | Pigeon Lake, AB

Photo Description: Old oil well site that is in the process of being remediated and reclaimed near the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge.

askîy ᐊᖏᐦ Land

Landback - I hear this all the time, but what does this really mean?

One of the ways in which I can see this concept being brought to life is through environmental remediation and reclamation processes that are being driven by Indigenous communities and members. This can happen in the form of old oil well sites being cleaned up in partnership with Indigenous community members and returned to Indigenous communities for collective use. Restoring and healing the land and its governance processes by its original caretakers for community benefit is one way that I see Landback being actualized.

What does Landback mean to you?

Pekîwe Cultural Lodge Fundraiser: https://gofund.me/3e39f963

#landback #remediation #reclamation #environment #environmentalscience #traditionalknowledge #traditionalecologicalknowledge #nehiyawe #nehiyawewin

wâhkôhtowin ᐊᐧᐦᑯᐦᑐᐏᐣ Relations

August 12, 2021

Near Horse Lake, AB

Photo Description: Sunlight peaking through the dense foliage.

wâhkôhtowin ᐊᐧᐦᑯᐦᑐᐏᐣ Relations

Land Reclamation should not only be about returning the land and ecosystem back to its original state after a disturbance. It is about reclaiming all the relations - Between the land, the water, the air, the soil, the plants, the insects, the fish, the birds, the animals, and humans. Reunifying the physical and spiritual past with the present to carry it forward into the future.

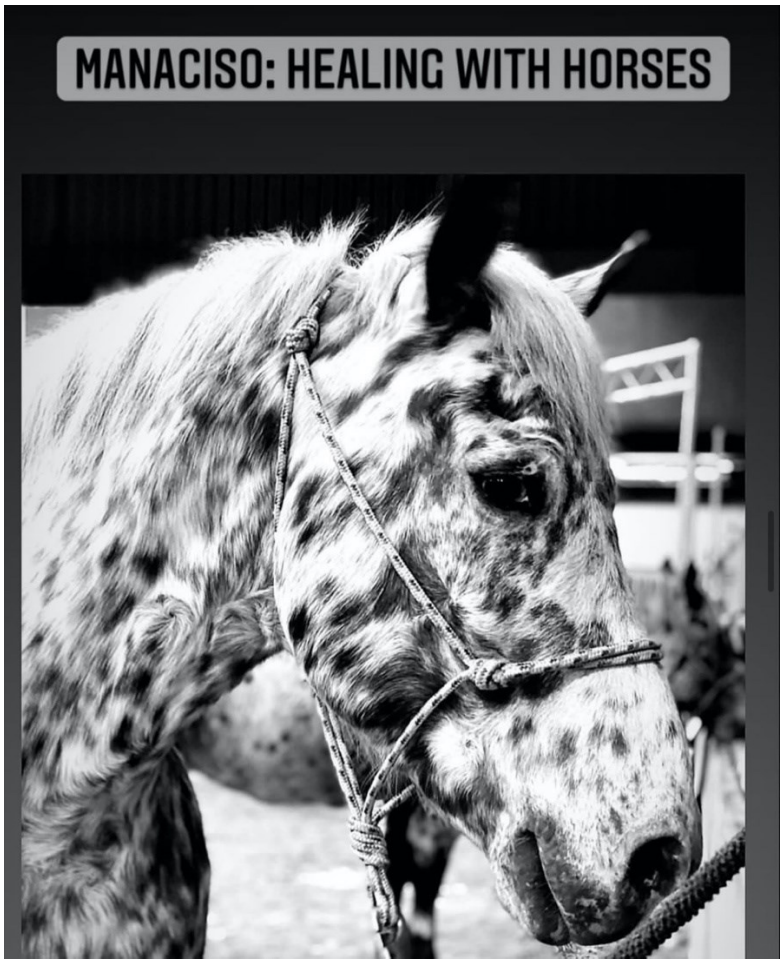
#reclamation #science #ecology #traditionalecologicalknowledge #relations #relationsnotresources #landback

manaciso ᓚᓇᒋᔨ Healing with Horses

March 2, 2022

Panee Memorial Agriplex, Maskwacis

Photo Description: Dakota the Reiki Master appaloosa horse, haltered and ready to work.



manaciso ᓚᓇᒋᔨ Healing with Horses

Pat Buffalo works with the spirit and energy of the horse to help people release their traumas. It is a very transformative and healing process. I always leave feeling lighter and more at peace. I would highly recommend this program for anyone who has experienced trauma, who are working through difficult things in their lives, or for those who are looking for some grounding practices.

Inbox me for upcoming sessions or to book

#equinetherapy #horsetherapy #horse #horses #mistatim #appaloosa #healing #energy #energyhealing #trauma #traumahealing

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an academic literature review on Indigenous Research Methods, Participatory research methods, and restoration ecology methods. Following the academic methodology section, a presention on a unique research methodology that was guided by heart work and followed wîhkaskwa meskanaw was detailed. This is the method through which the thesis work was carried out. The work was detailed, including aspects of governance building, reclamation and restortation work, and healing the people. This chapter wraped up by sharing some of our knowledge mobilization methods via social media and international Indigenous advocacy organizations. This chapter answers the “how” regarding the thesis work.

Chapter 3 - Indigenous Ecological Restoration

3.1 Introduction

> *"We are all stewards here, stewards of the land. It's our responsibility as Indigenous people to take care of our Mother Earth because she provides for us. So, we're going to need a lot of help. We are going to need a lot of oskâpêwis to help us."* (Coyote, 2021)

Humans are oftentimes excluded from the equation when considering reclamation work in a western context. However, through Indigenous epistemological frameworks, it is clear to see that humans are an integral part of the ecosystem. Because of this, humans should be factored into the outcomes when doing reclamation work. Indigenous Peoples can provide insight and guidance in this area. This is also an opportunity to engage local communities' members and land users in these processes and outcomes as key stakeholders and Treaty partners. Reclamation of the land impacted from decades of colonization is also more than a technical and biophysical process; it is about social and ecological healing. I would like to note that there is an entensive literature section on the topic "landback", however I do not disucss this topic here.

Nehiyaw perspectives on land and stewardship include elements of wâhkôhtowin and reciprocal relations as emphasized in the concept of oskâpêwis shared by elder, Dawn Coyote. This quote reflects how land stewardship practices such as reclamation are impacted by oil and gas extraction, requiring both physical and spiritual care for the land to be healed. This chapter discusses this approach to land stewardship as Indigenous cultural restoration based on a 2-year action research projectled by Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, to reclaim an area impacted by oil and gas extraction (SE 26-46-28 W4M - 2-26) at Pigeon Lake, Alberta based at Maskwacis Alberta.

The project led by the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is grounded in the perspectives of nehiyaw Elders, including their knowledge of the land and community as well as their physical and spiritual relationship to this place. We share pieces of their stories documented during eight interviews after which as discussion of the efforts made between 2020-21 to address their concerns and hopes for reclamation of site SE 26-46-28 W4M (2-26). The research revealed key principles for healing the land and healing the people. Interviews and research activites included the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, members of the First Nations of Maskwacis, Makwacis governance bodies, a major petroleum corporation in Alberta, restoration contractors, and the federal government. With the aim of

contributing to the literature on Indigenous-land reclamation, this paper discusses some of the opportunities and challenges facing Indigenous Peoples in their efforts to holistically recover and heal the land and their relationship to lands that are impacted by petroleum development.

3.2 Literature Review

This work builds on and was inspired by the literature related to ecological restoration and reclamation, which brings together ideas about restoration from the natural and social sciences, as well as the scholarship on Indigenous Knowledge. In addition to the broad conceptual frameworks and principles, this research confronts the limitations of conventional reclamation governance and efforts occurring in Alberta specific to oil and gas well sites which have largely marginalized Indigenous Peoples including Cree of the Maskwacis.

3.2.1 Ecological Restoration and Indigenous Knowledge

Ecological restoration has many broad meanings in different literatures and has generally been defined within the natural sciences. This is slowly changing as scholars and those involved in the practices of ecological restoration, take into consideration how social and cultural values as well as relationsships to degraded landscapes is important. Within this context there is also growing recognition of how the values of Indigenous Peoples and knowledges fit within this field of reclaimation. As Winter et al desricbe in their paper, *Biocultural restoration in Hawai'i also achieves core conservation goals*, "When Indigenous perspectives are heard, understood, and prioritized, there is an increase in biological diversity and conservation" (Winter, Ticktin, & Quazi, 2020).

Indigenous Knowledge is defined as the cumulative body of knowledge, practices and beliefs related to the environment and people's relationship to it (Berkes, 1991). Recogntion of Indigenous Knowledge by western scientists over the last twenty years both in academia and in global forums (e.g., United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) has led to "explosive growth in the number of publications on therelevance of Indigenous knowledge in a variety of policy sectors and academic disciplines" (Battiste, 2005, p. 3). For Indigenous scholars, this recognition has many biases and there have been numerous examples where Indigenous Knowledge has been expropriated for the gain of non-Indigenous Peoples. Within this research, the work is inspired by the work of Battiste and others who emphasize Indigenous Knowledge research must be of benefit to Indigenous Peoples and is not a body of knowledge fixed in the past but has the potential for significant new application and innovations (Battiste, 2005).

Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have begun to focus on the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' practices in ecological restoration (Senos, Lake, Turner, & Martinez, 2006). This has included consideration of how Indigenous Knowledge alone or in tandem with western science can contribute to many kinds of conservation and socio-cultural values and outcomes. For example, the lens of "walking on two legs" is also gaining traction in the field of Indigenous restoration; for Indigenous Knowledge and western sciences to work together synchronously in good relations with one another can contribute to the wellbeing of all (Dickson-Hoyle, Ignace, Hagerman, Daniels, & Copes-Gerbitz, 2022).

One such example is the work of Reyes-García et. al, in their work on ecological restoration as described intheir article, *The Contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to Ecological Restoration*. In this article Reyes-Garcia et al showed how Indigenous Peoples and local communities participate in restoration activities through mainstream methods while providing examples of how Indigenous Knowledge can be incorporated in restoration activities, "While there is not a comprehensive explanation of which factors lead to ecologically successful restoration that also benefits IPLC, the literature provides valuable insights on the value of involving IPLC and their knowledge in codesigning restoration activities affecting their territories. This work can ensure short-term direct benefits to IPLC and long-term support of the maintenance of restored areas" (Reyes-García, et al., 2019).

Robin Kimmerer is an Indigenous scholar who speaks specifically about Indigenous approaches to restoration of natural landscapes. Unlike much of the restoration literature that focuses on restoring particularly elements and values to a particular landscape, Kimmerer emphasizes that restoration is about restoring reciprocal relations between people and nature and between the physical and spiritual worlds. In her chapter, *Restoration and Reciprocity: The Contributions of Traditional Ecological Knowledge*, Kimmerer talks about how, "it is not the land that is broken, but our relationship with it. Thus, the work of ecological restoration must be to restore human–land relationship" (Kimmerer, 2011).

Putting ideas of Indigenous ecological restoration into practice has been challenging. Although there is growing in acceptane of Indigenous Knowledge in applications such as fisheries and wildlife management, there are fewer opportunitis and less acceptance in remediation of development (Sandlos & Keeling, 2016). Many values, relationships and stewardship practices to sustain land, water, and wildlife have been disrupted and not recovered as a result of resource development activities. This is particularly in the context of Alberta where over 70 years of oil and gas extraction has fundamentally

altered ecosystems and the relationship of Indigenous Peoples to those ecosystems. This erasure is due in large part to colonial governance and regulatory systems in place have limited and shaped what kinds of landscapes are restored and if/how they are restored (Audet, Pinno, & Thiffault, 2015). Indigenous Knowledge and the values of Indigenous Peoples for landscapes has largely been disregarded. Joly for example, speaks to the differing definitions of reclamation between the Government of Alberta and Indigenous Communities. While the government looks to restore land back to the equivalent capability of the land to support an end land-use, Indigenous Nations also place great importance on quantifiable ecological functions, but also the relationships within these territories, "Muskeg is used as an analytical tool to explore competing conceptions of land reclamation. Mistranslation of polysemantic terms like muskeg occur on an ontological level, and settler colonial relations and power imbalances between competing languages and knowledge systems proliferate in reclamation activities" (Joly, 2021). Garibaldi explains that when environmental health and human health as interconnected, successful reclamation efforts must take into consideration the linked social factors to the ecological functionality (Garibaldi, 2009). There is little work that has been done involving Indigenous Peoples and the reclamation of oil wells in Alberta; this research addresses this gap.

3.2.2 Politics of Oil Extraction & Indigenous Peoples

The oil and gas industry's legacy of environmental impacts has created a disproportionate burden on ethnic groups, communities, countries, and ecosystems (O'Rourke & Connolly, 2003). Kojola's article shows how environmental health risks from pollution are often overlooked, how socioeconomic impacts reproduce whiteness and masculinity ignoring those at risk, and how decision-making processes do not fully recognize and restricts Indigenous sovereignty, he makes suggestions to address systemic environmental injustices and to recognize tribal sovereignty (Kojola, 2019). Westman and colleagues speak to the importance of having qualified social science consultants who can accurately assess environmental issues through the lens of vulnerable communities and Indigenous communities while relaying this information to be able to impact decision making processes (Westman & Joly, 2019).

Even in the face of such discrimination and environmental racism, there are also many examples of highly organized Indigenous resistance movements. Such as in Ecuador, where struggles over land and oil operations fueled a highly organized Indigenous resistance to not only reconfigure national and transnational inequality, but to protect their homelands as well (Sawyer, 2004). This type

of highly organized Indigenous movement also occurred in Canada with the Idle No More movement, Pamela Palmater describes Idle No More as a coordinated, strategic movement led by non-elected Indigenous women with support of grassroots leaders and subsequently grew across the world (Palmater, 2014). Idle No More's demand is that there is a need for Canada to negotiate about the sharing of lands and resources. Palmater also states that Indigenous peoples constitutionally protected section 35 rights, "are Canada's last best hope to protect the lands, waters, plants, and animals from complete destruction - which doesn't just benefit our children, but the children of all Canadians". There are many communities across the globe that are taking matters into their own hands and (re)creating and implementing their own restoration and reclamation processes. For example, Native Hawaiians are reclaiming their land and resources thought their own "restorative environmental justice" model as a way of advocating for their interests (MacKenzie, Serrano, & Kaulukukui, 2007).

Previous research about oil wells suggests there are significant environmental and health risks that are problematic. Johnston et al provides evidence to show how exposure to upstream oil extraction is impacting local soil, water, hair, and human health. Adverse impact to soil, air, water quality creates exposure risks that create potential health impacts such as cancer, liver damage, immunodeficiency, and neurological symptoms (Johnston, Lim, & Roh, 2019). Hydraulic fracturing is a specific type of oil and gas activity that is causing environmental and health impacts. This study shows that the wastewater associated with the process is causing a disproportionate increase in conductivity, chloride, strontium, and barium that are high enough to cause disruption in the reproduction and development of aquatic animals (Kassotis, et al., 2016). Adgate et al examines likely exposure pathways and potential health risks due to unconventional natural gas development from chemical and non-chemical stressors. However, there are many uncertainties. Understanding these uncertainties can assist with future research (Adgate, Goldstein, & McKenzie, 2014).

3.3 Setting

3.3.1 Treaty Number Six Region

The nehiyawak have occupied these lands since time immemorial. These are their ancestral hunting grounds and have been meticulously taken care of and governed by the nehiyawak since the beginning of time. However, according to historians, the nehiyawak are thought to have settled in present day Alberta in the 1700s; originating in the subarctic region of the Hudson's Bay region, the expansion of the fur trade, the advantage of firearms and other technology as well as new transportation corridors led to expansion of the Cree into western Canada (Ray, 1998). "Their early relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company starting in 1670 and Montréal-based fur trade networks starting in 1731, the Cree became central figures in the Western North American fur trade. The Cree maintained [advantage due to] almost exclusive access to manufactured European trade goods, such as firearms, iron knives and hatchets, coarse woolen cloth, wool blankets, cooking utensils, beads, and needles" (Gladue Rights Research Database, 2023).

According to the Treaty of Niagara, Treaties with Indigenous Nations were required to settle the west (Gaudry, 2018). The British Crown required its own citizens to acquire the explicit consent of Indigenous peoples before settling on the land. "In 1877, the Crown and Samson Cree entered into Treaty No. 6 at Blackfoot Crossing, on a nation-to-nation basis, which established a sacred relationship for the peaceful co-existence and shared use and management of the lands, waters and resources within the Samson CreeTerritory" (Northwest, 2021). Treaty 6 is one of eleven numbered Treaties that were signed between 1871 to 1921 in Canada. The signatories of Treaty 6 agreed to establish a relationship of peaceful co-existence with incoming settlers and received assurances of livelihood as well as elements of healthcare, education, andinfrastructure.

Vine Deloria Jr writes about the importance of considering the actions of people in relation to the continuity between the physical world and the spiritual world (Deloria, 2006, p. 213). Indigenous Nations connected to the spiritual world in negotiating the numbered Treaty agreements through prayer and by lifting scared pipes. Robert Williams writes about Treaties as connections, and how they govern Nation's interactions with one another (Williams, 1991, p. 62). Reciprocity is a central theme in the philosophy of "thinking independently but acting for others" (Williams, 1991, p. 64).Treaty diplomacy is based in the rights and duties governed by kin relationships are practiced in

ceremony (Williams, 1991, p. 82). These kinship relations maintain social, political, and military connections.

Aboriginal Rights to use the land in the area to hunt, trap, and fish were also enshrined in Section 35 of the Constitution Act and affirmed in the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, which stated that the province would "secure to the Indians of the Province [of Alberta] the continuance of the supply of game and fish for their support and subsistence" (Tough, 2004, p. 1000). This research will focus on an area within Treaty 6 Territory in what is now known as Alberta, Canada: Maskwacis. Maskwacis is a nehiyaw reserve composed of four nations, Louis Bull, Samson, Montana, and Ermineskin. All four nations of Maskwacis collectively own the area of Mîmîw Sâhkahikan.

> *"When we signed Treaty, our reserve and based on our population, our reserve was from here, from Maskwacis to Pigeon Lake. There was a whole strip of land that was once ours. And it went almost all the way around the lake, I believe. And I've seen a map of it too. Other people have shared that kind of information, historically, anyways, just to show the young people. This was once ours. And in our own ways, we still believe that it's ours. When we have that close relationship with the land, that can't be broken. But the big thing about Pigeon Lake was that was our fishing grounds, we used to take good care of that lake. We were the keepers of the land, and we had to respect the animals. There was once a time where it was very plentiful when I was just a child."* (Lee, 2022)

3.3.2 Mîmîw Sâkahikan: Pigeon Lake Indian Reserve No. 138

The project is based in what is known as Mîmîw Sâhkahikan which translates to "Pigeon Lake". The nehiyaw name for this place shows the long-standing history that the community has had with the ecosystem and environment in this place. Passenger pigeons, which were estimated in billions across North America, including Alberta, at the time of European contact, became extinct less than two hundred years later due to habitat loss (old growth forest harvest) and commercial harvest. Non-Indigenous sources say that the name Pigeon Lake was coined in 1858 by the mission leaders who established an agricultural settlement north of the lake. This reference to "pigeon" was associated with the "huge flocks of Passenger Pigeons that once ranged over the area" (Mitchell & Prepas, 1990).

This area falls within the area known administratively under Treaty 6 as Pigeon Lake Indian Reserve No. 138. The Pigeon Lake Indian Reserve No. 138 A was established in 1896 by the federal government as a "fishing station" for the communities of Maskwacis (previously names Hobbema by the government agents). The Reserve on the eastern shore of Mîmîw Sâkahikan and comprises 12.8 km^2 of land. Although the site was originally larger, a withdrawal of land for the creation of the town

of Mam'eo Beach and subsequent withdrawals for road/highway right of ways, agriculture and petroleum exploration, have dwindled the size of the Reserve to 4,800 acres or 19 km2. The Reserve is one of several tracts of Indian Reserves that were set aside for the Maskwacis Cree, which is comprised of the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin First Nation, Louis Bull and Montana Nations, as noted earlier. The total population of these Nations in 2016 was 7,663; with approximately 420 people living on the Pigeon Lake Reserve.

Mîmîw Sâkahikan was a strategic meeting area of the nehiyawak with the Nakoda, Dene and Métis Peoples; it supported the hunting and livelihoods of many. Sustaining their health and livelihood, would however, become increasingly difficult as settlement and development increased in the Pigeon Lake area. Commercial fishing as well as agricultural settlement also impacted species valued by Cree. A fish packing plant at Mulhurst, was the foundation of a large-scale commercial fish harvest from mîmîw sâkahikan which supplied local markets as well as export markets in eastern Canada and the United States (e.g., New York). "By 1918 more than 81,000 kilograms (90 tons) of fish were harvested from the lake annually, with some 400 commercial fisherman holding licenses. Walleye, Yellow Perch and Northern Pike were in abundance, and the natives and settlers alike fished without limitation" (LaJeunesse, 2019). Over-fishing during this period and into the 1950s, led to the collapse of Lake Whitefish, Walleye and Northern Pike populations. Fish populations havealso suffered from habitat loss due to aquatic vegetation removal and shoreline modification. Whitefish populations and pike populations have recovered to some extent over the last few decades however, walleye was extirpated by the 1960s (Buchwald, 1994).

The tourism industry in Mîmîw Sâkahikan and the town of Mam-eo Beach has also drastically impacted the lake and surrounding region. Recreational fishing of stock species has changed the opportunities and access of Cree communities to the area. Invasive species are now thought to be fundamentally damaging the aquatic ecosystem; zebra Mussels, Quagga Mussels, Eurasian Watermilfoil, and Prussian Carp are among those invasive species highlighted as concern by the provincial government (Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Program, 2018). Eutrophication including regular toxic blue-green algal blooms caused by cottage sewage and agricultural practices in the watershed, have also added stress to the local ecosystem (Pigeon Lake Watershed Association, 2021).

3.3.3 Oil Well Sites

Maskwacis was known for their resourceful oil wells in the 1980's. However now that some of these wells are no longer active, the community is working to have the sites remediated and

reclaimed. Much of this work is taking place in Pigeon Lake 138A. This area is owned collectively by the four Nations because of its historical and contemporary importance to the peoples of Maskwacis.

Oil wells at Mîmîw Sâkahikan are among the other major drivers of change, impacting the land, water, and wildlife as well as people. Oil was discovered in Alberta in 1914 and near mîmîw sâkahikan in February 1947. Imperial Oil Ltd., drilled the Leduc #1 well in a field 15 km west of Leduc; these discoveries led to a boom in American and British exploration in the late1940-1950s and the development and expansion of other wells in the region "As of 2005, the oil well density is variable in the area, ranging from less than 10 wells to up to 100 oil wells quarter section" (Thormann, Logan, & Gray, 2008). A boom of productive oil wells was established in the 1980's and a large number were in and around Mîmîw Sâkahikan. Imperial Oil had an estimated 48 wells located at Pigeon Lake Reserve 138A. Many of these wells are no longer active but still pose environmental and health risks to the community and the local ecosystem. Among these is a site (Site SE 26-46-28 W4M (2-26), it is still managed and monitored by Imperial oil which has been proposed for remediation (See Figure 1).

The four Nations of Samson, Ermineskin, Montana and Louis Bull are making efforts to work with the federal government to remediate and reclaim the old well sites. However, progress has been slow. Although closed in 2008, there has been some cleanup or reclaiming of the site to date (See Figure 2). Remediation and reclamation activities at this site are being carried out according to the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Environmental Quality Guidelines and the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) Upstream Oil and Gas Reclamation and Remediation Program standards. These standards, do not however, include perspectives, values and teaching related to the healing of the land and the healing of peoples' relationship to this place. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is among those organized groups in the community of Maskwacis seeking to heal this area.

Figure 1 – Wellsites at Pigeon Lake Reserve #138A (Imperial Oil, 2023)

Figure 2 – Timeline of Remediation Activity by Imperial Oil/AECOM (Imperial Oil, 2023)

3.3.4 Pekîwe Cultural Lodge

The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is an Indigenous cultural services provider located in Pigeon Lake 138A offering nehiyaw land-based teachings for the community and the public. Pekîwe means "Coming Home" in nehiyawewin. The lodge's vision is to help facilitate cultural, spiritual, emotional, physical, and environmental wellness. To do so, the lodge encourages all to Pekîwe - To our culture, to our spirituality, to our language. Their mission is to provide a safe land-based learning space where people can reconnect with who they are through ceremony, song, and dance. The caretakers of the Cultural Grounds are Elder Ken Saddleback and Matriarch Dawn Coyote. They have opened their space to all seeking a connection through ceremony and teachings of Natural Law. The lodge offers space for teachings to be passed down from the Elders to youth, and everyone in between; to leave something behind for our future generations.

Since 2018, the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge has been seeking to play a leadership role in the restoration, remediation, reclamation, and future land use plans at Mîmîw Sâkahikan, particulary at site SE 26-46-28 W4M (2-26). It is directly adjacent to the property on which the Pekîwe Cultural

Lodge is located. Although the site was closed for oil production, little reclamation or remdiation has been completed which has meant that the site remains legally inaccessiable to Pekîwe Cultural lodge members as well as the broader community. For example, in the summer and fall of 2019, the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge hosted ceremonies onsite SE 26-46-28 W4M (2-26). After the ceremonial lodges were built, the oil company and contractors approached the Elders and informed them that they would have to remove the ceremonial structures from the site because the site was contaminated and was not yet remediated or reclaimed. Usually, once a ceremonial lodge is built, it is not to be taken down. However, the Elders were forced to remove the ceremonial structures from the site. It is in this context that the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge begain working with the University of Alberta (Howse) to explore options for site remediation and reclaimation.

3.4 Methods

The interview data was coded to better understand how the community views reclamation and stewardship. Through the coding process, we utilized a keyword search. The coding keywords "steward", "land", and "water" were searched across all 8 transcripts, a total of 56 pages (See Appendix 2.1). The keyword "steward" was searched, and there was only a total of 3 results. So, we searched the transcripts of implicit ways that stewardship was elaborated on to get a better idea of what stewardship entails for the community. Two of the main ways that stewardship was discussed was through conversations around "land" and "water". Both code words were searched. "Land" was mentioned a total of 94 times. "Water" was mentioned 49 times. To get a better idea about water stewardship, the keyword "lake" was searched because many of the participants utilized this word to speak of water stewardship in a place-based context. The keyword "lake" was mentioned a total of 72 times. The searches for "lake" and "water" combined resulted in a total number of 121 codes. The human dimension of this topic is interwoven within the discussions of land and water and will be discussed in conjunction with the environmental issues and solutions. After the keyword searches were completed, quotes were pulled from the dataset to represent the communities' concerns and proposed solutions in each of these areas. While searching for the quotes related to "land", we came across relevant quotes that we have included into our data set, outside from the code word search. Both reclamation and stewardship were discussed outside of the keyword "land". The quotes pulled from coding the keywords will be used to explain the concerns and proposed solutions relating to reclamation and stewardship in the context of the restoration of the oil well lease adjacent to the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge.

3.5 Results

The research was carried out in 2021-22 with Elders and community members from Maskwacis. Interviews were conducted with the aim of documentating nehiyaw knowledge held about Mîmîw Sâkahikan. This included an effort to understand more about ecological and socio-cultural impacts of oil and gas development at Mîmîw Sâkahikan, as well as the opporutnities and challenges of restoration, and the values, relationships, and use of the area by the nehiyaw community. Eight interviews were carried out in English, some were in Cree and transcribed into English text. A thematic analysis was carried out to better understand the ecological and socio-cultural issues and opportunities and challenges of reclamation (See Figure 3). An initial review of the transcripts revealed a range of interrelated narratives about the water, land and human health.

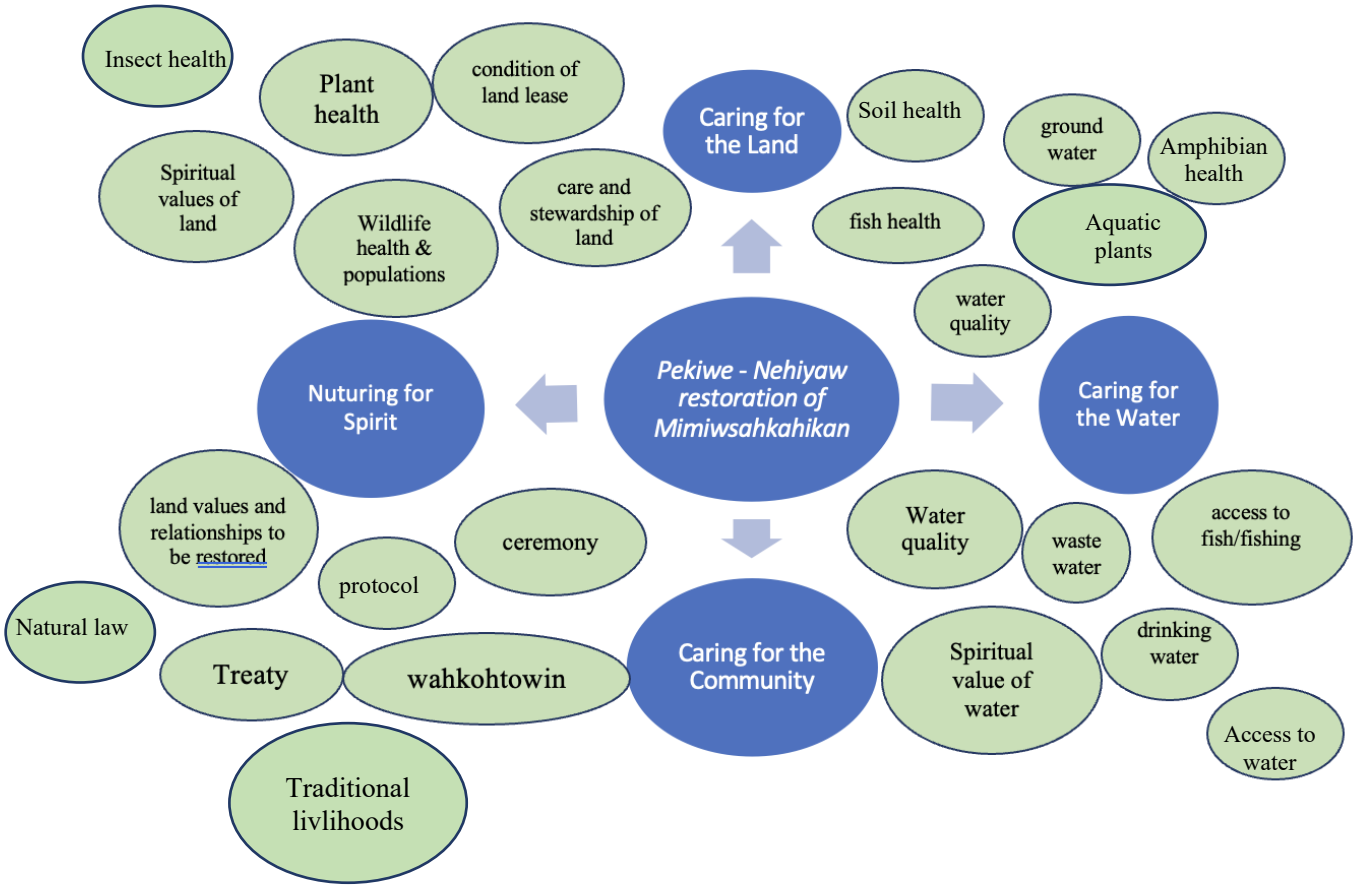


Figure 3 – Themes emerging from Interviews about the Restoration of Mimiwsahkahikan

3.5.1 Water

The main concern across the interviews is around the health of the groundwater, the lake, and the streams leading to the lake. Participants are concerned about the water quality. Wastewater and wastewater treatment was discussed, as well as the issue of water treatment in general and the lack of access to clean drinkable water. Access to clean drinking water is a huge issue. There are also issues with water treatment. Wastewater treatment systems are inadequate or non-existent. The pollution from resource extraction, agriculture, and human activity is an issue. There are concerns about the oxygen and nitrogen levels within the waterbody, algae blooms are becoming more common. The pollution is impacting the fish populations. Fish health is also another big concern. Many participants are concerned about the health of the water and the fish in the lake. mîmîw sâkahikan was a huge source of food for many, and fishing used to be abundant in this place. The fish population has decreased, and fish deformities are present. The impacts to fish populations are negatively impacting traditional ways of life, livelihoods, and diets. There was a lot of discussion around the history of mîmîw sâkahikan as a gathering place and a fishing station for many Indigenous communities. However now there is a great deal of pollution and overfishing that occurred which is impacting the fish populations and the community's ability to access fish from this waterbody. Even with the barriers to access, this place was and still is integral in the communities' lives, livelihoods, health, and wellbeing.

The community members have directly voiced the above concerns. The main concern throughout all the interviews on the topic of stewardship was water. *"What are the things that need to be there for us to be healthy? That's what comes to mind is that we have healthy water"* (Lee, 2022). Peggy Lee directly speaks to the issues of water health in her interview, and along with that concern of the health of the water is the concern of the health of the fish within the water body. *"My concern is the fish and the well-being of that water"* (Coyote, 2021). Dawn Coyote connects the two issues in her quote, which leads into the discussion around fish population health. *"The past few years we have had evidence of how the fish have depleted. They have died off on that lake"* (Bull, 2021). Ida Bull is one of the Elders for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and has watched the fish populations deplete over the decades.

3.5.2 Land

One of the main concerns is the lack of access to land. It is a multi-faceted issue. It started with the displacement of Indigenous community members from the area. The history of the land tenure system at Mîmîw Sâkahikan was discussed. There was a lot of discussion around the controversial land lease at Mîmîw Sâkahikan. The encroachment of outsiders into the area resulted in discrimination and reduced access to land. The displacement of Indigenous peoples from this place is one huge issue that many community members feel was detrimental to the community. All these issues are negatively impacting the ability for Indigenous community members to practice traditional ways of living, including conducting ceremonial practices. The infringement of rights and destruction of ceremonial and religious structures is one of the major issues.

Another main concern is bout the contamination of soil, plant species loss, and decreased wildlife populations. The pollution of the land, including soil, seeds, medicines, herbs, berries, trees, and entire ecosystem health was a huge concern. Harvesting is being impacted by the deterioration of local ecosystems. Food sovereignty is a goal for many community members. Non-Indigenous residents and the tourism industry has had a negative impact on the health of the land, creating a lot of pollution. This is not the only point of contamination. There are also impacts to the land due to the activity of the extractive resource industry. While this resource extraction benefited the community of Maskwacis as a whole, the ecosystem in the sub community of Mimiw Sahkahikan was very negatively impacted. Ida Bull expands on the contamination piece,

> *"They left their sites unclean. So, whatever they left behind, dripped into along the shores, dripped into the land, and killed a lot of the plants that we used for medicines, killed our berries. You know, and it goes on and on. Even up to today. The lack of responsibility on the behalf of the oil companies is detrimental to the livelihood that we supposedly own."* (Bull, 2021)

Regarding land, the main issues are lack of access and contamination. Peggy Lee speaks about how community displacement and the encroachment of outsiders on their lands have resulted in environmental degradation:

> *"Now we don't see that. We don't have that kind of abundance because of whatever reasons, environmental or people encroaching on their lands out there. I know there's still a lot of wildlife and lots of game and such, but it's nowhere near where it once was. So anyhow, back to the land there. We know the history that that people were just displaced."* (Lee, 2022)

Both the lack of access and environmental contamination are impacting the community's ability to practice their religion through spirituality,

> *"The ones that make the decisions, as to how to look at that piece of land, when oil companies tear down our ceremonial lodges. They don't even ask, they don't even demand, they just do it. Now that process to me - they are breaching our teachings. They are breaching our culture. If that was done somewhere else, in another religion, I'm sure there would be a lot of violence."* (Bull, 2021)

These land issues have deep impacts, and the community would like to see these issues to be addressed through the reclamation processes. One of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodges' main goals is the reclamation and restoration of the land, and the cultures that have nurtured the land since time immemorial.

3.5.3 Reclamation

There were discussions around what stewardship and responsibility in reclaiming the land and waters means to the community members and elders. The community brought forward several issues with the current reclamation process. Policy-oriented discussions occurred around the Water Act and Maskwacis creation of the Pigeon Lake Reclamation Committee and the Nipîy Committee In response to the reclamation issue, Maskwacis formulated the Pigeon Lake Reclamation Committee. This was done to help with advocacy on behalf of the Four Nations who are seeking remediation and reclamation of the old oil well sites. However, there are still some holes in this model. Many land users feel as though they have been left out of decision-making processes and want to have a voice and guide the processes. Some community members feel as though they have been left out of innovation. There has been a lack of inclusion and/or miscommunication with Indigenous community members and land users in the decision-making processes related to land planning, governance, and restoration processes. Others feel that their own processes for healing their land and waters have been dismissed and not concerned or factored into land planning within the reclamation process. They want to be able to advocate for the lands and waters in ways that their families and communities have done since time immemorial.

Due to the issues that the community has been witnessing with deterioration of land and water health, they want to be an active partner and co manager of the restoration processes governing the contaminated site. Kenneth Saddleback is one of the cofounders of the Pekîwe

Cultural Lodge, and here in this quote he shows his interest in working with and supporting the restoration work.

> *"Imperial, I think they're the ones that are looking after this clean-up they have to do on these old wells. If it's still not safe, they have to come back and make it the way it was before. So, we have to support that because that's what we want."* (Saddleback K. , 2021)

Norine Saddleback has years of experience working with Industry in environmental issues. She is much more direct in her vision of how co-management needs to allow us to all work together, but to make sure Indigenous Nations are in the driver's seat.

> *"Land planning means planning with your neighbors. Because we have to live beside each other for the rest of our lives. So that's our next kids and our next kids. And if you don't know how to be a Treaty partner, why don't you go home?"* (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

When Elder Ida Bull was asked about the Cree word for "reclamation", this was the explanation she gave. She explained that, in her opinion, there is not a Cree word or description for that concept. This is because according to the Maskwacis Cree, they have never signed over their land. In the case of this land, it cannot be reclaimed for two overlapping reasons---it is not owned and it was not signed away.

> "*But no one has the right to go along the shores of* mîmîw sâkahikan *Pigeon Lake. No outsider has the right to say that that land and the cultural area there isn't ours. We can't use the word "reclamation" because we've never lost it, we've never let it go."* (Bull, 2021)

Ida Bull is one of the most highly respected grandmothers in the community. She has dedicated her life to the revitalization of nehiyawewin and embodies the essence of nehiyawitisiwin (The Cree way of living). The next section will look at ways to bridge the gaps that have been brought up in this coding anaylsis.

3.6. Discussion

3.6.1 Opportunities and Challenges for Indigenous-Led Restoration

There is much room for improvement in the current restoration processes. It would benefit all parties, and the environment to have local land users integrated into the reclamation processes. This form of public participation would help to create a brighter future for all parties involved.

Funding for this type of engagement should be provided. Throughout the interviews, there was a lot of discussion around reclamation and how land stewardship plays a role. Reciprocal relations took a front seat in the discussion. It is very important for the community members to be able to help take care of mother earth because she takes care of us humans. Healing of the land and of the people are of utmost importance.

3.6.2 Reciprocal Relations & Wâhkôhtowin

Indigenous-led restoration and stewardship emphasises the importance of reciprocal relations. In the context of this research, stewardship is defined through a nehiyaw lens guided by Natural Law. It is about reciprocal relations between the ecosystems and humans. The ecosystem provides the elements that humans need for life. In turn, it is a human responsibility to do our utmost to respect the elements and take care of the land and water like a relative,

> "*And now it's up to us to take care of the land, and the water and the resources and the medicines and the animals that are all still there."* (Lee, 2022)

There are many Natural Laws that guide this philosophy. However, I will not go into the details of many of these laws here. Those are teachings that are gained through reciprocal relations with Elders in ceremony. There are protocols to be followed and observed to obtain that information. I do not feel it is appropriate to share that type of spiritual, traditionally oral knowledge here in this academic paper. However, I can touch on some of the laws that have already been written about in academia. One of those laws that have been written about in academia is wâhkôhtowin. Patrick Buffalo spoke about how important that spiritual connection is.

> *"The environment and the relationship with kikâwinaw askîy, with the land, and kikâwinaw, our mother, and the laws of wâhkôtowin. Wâhkôtowin is not kinship. It's that connection, to understand the sacredness of that connection, to the earth as the sacredness to the connection of the horse. So based on what you're studying here with environmental sciences, I think it's very important to really understand, wâhkôhtowin, the connection to it all that we are not above nature. That nature is the law."* (Buffalo, 2021)

3.6.3 Collaboration, Working Together

Ideally it would be great to have a collaborative approach to the restoration, reclamation, and remediation of the land. Land planning is an important issue that the Indigenous community believes should be done in collaboration with the non-Indigenous residents, governments, industry,

and other involved agencies. Co-operative management would be a great goal to work towards. However, at this moment that does not seem attainable because there is little to no community engagement within the processes. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge has not been actively informed, adequately consulted, or meaningfully included within the processes. The main concern in this case is the access to the site in question. They want to expand their ceremonial grounds by building new lodges and facilities for the community. To do this, they need access to the land. The issue in getting access to the land is the slow remediation process and the lack of Pekîwe Cultural Lodge's inclusion within this process. They have attempted multiple times to be included within these processes. First, they reached out to the oil company, Imperial Oil, and the remediation contractors, AECOM. However, this was unfruitful. Imperial Oil and AECOM were instructed by the governance bodies of the four Nations of Maskwacis to not engage with community members. The four Nations of Maskwacis each have their own consultation processes in place through their governance system to deal with reclamation and remediation issues. Samson, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, and Montana are the ones who deal with the contractors and oil companies directly. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge has been communicating with the four Nations consultation offices about this matter since 2021. Overall, there has been support for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge's wishes. The Maskwacis Cree Tribal Council has also offered to advocate for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. But because of the prior lack of engagement and miscommunication, there is still no clear answer about when the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge will be able to access and use this space for ceremony and community gatherings. Once the area is cleaned of contaminates, the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge wishes to reclaim the space in their own way, alongside western science. This would require western governance systems rethinking what jurisdiction and decision-making powers look like between western society and Indigenous societies. The community would like to assert their inherent jurisdiction over the land and water while playing an active role in decision making processes alongside outsiders. Norine expresses the neeed for Indigenous inclusion within these processes,

> *"And so, these kind of governance systems and things like that, that's part of that community planning, but it's also the Canadian Energy Regulator's duty. And in there it says monitoring, in that Canadian Energy Regulating. But they haven't told us yet how they have been monitoring this particular project. Right now, they need us. They need us to oversee this Indigenous Monitoring piece for the longer term. Because we're grassroots advocacy, they live out there."* (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

Jurisdiction is another key issue. For the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to be able to create and implement remediation strategies or future land use plans, they need jurisdiction over this piece of land. A Band Council Resolution (BCR) signed by all four nations of Maskwacis is required for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge to have the jurisdiction over the piece of land in question. We have been trying to get this BCR signed by Samson, Louis Bull, Ermineskin and Montana leadership since 2021. The bureaucracy of dealing with four First Nations governance systems and consultation offices is very time consuming and arduous for the Elders. This is in part due to the rigid guidelines and policies that the federal government has put in place for First Nation governance systems. These impositions have disrupted traditional governance systems and processes. This makes it difficult for Indigenous communities to carry out business in a way that is best for them.

3.6.4 Strengthening Capacity Building & Support

One solution to the issues mentioned above could include support from the oil companies, and governments in supporting capacity building within the community. This could come in the form of financial support. Often Indigenous organizations are understaffed and overworked. Due to the hardships that the colonial systems have imparted on the community, renumeration in the form of funding for Indigenous advocacy agencies would be welcomed. Funding to help organization operational costs and to restore and maintain the area would be a good way to embody reconciliation.

> "*Nipîy Committee should be funded just like the Pigeon Lake Watershed Advisory Committee. They should all be getting equal amounts of funding. Not just because you're in a city, City of Red Deer, Red Deer Watershed. They get funded over almost a million bucks a year. Look at their budget. Us as Nipîy Committee, we're lucky if we get to have a water ceremony funded.*" (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

Providing financial support would allow for the creation and ongoing support for full time positions that could be filled by some of the many capable and education Indigenous people within the community. This would allow for Indigenous community members who can identify the gaps, to be able to fill them with culturally informed, community-based solutions. There are already many Indigenous organizations in place that would benefit from financial support, such as the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, or the Nipîy Committee, the Pigeon Lake Reclamation Committee, or Bear Hills Reclamation.

Another great idea would be to work toward some collaborations between non-Indigenous associations such as the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association and Indigenous organizations such as the Nipîy Committee. Then these organizations could work collaboratively together to find solutions to issues that impact different population sectors in the same geographical area. Dawn Coyote explains that it is important for any outsiders who are trying to do work for the community should come and learn our ways,

> *"I think they should learn our ways. They are trying to help our people. If they want to truly help our people, learn what kind of people we are. So, you can honor when you come onto our land. So, you can honour that, so you can honour our Mother. And that's my biggest - I will echo that until the day that I die. If you're wanting to help our people, learn our ways. And it doesn't matter if that's Blackfoot, Sioux, Cree, Anishinaabe. It doesn't matter, just learn. Come and be a part of our ceremonies. Come and learn how we're healing - and our journey as a people - and that's healing our land as well."* (Coyote, 2021)

3.6.5 Healing Relationships: Land & Cultural Reclamation

One way to repair and reclaim the land is to do it in a cultural context. A solution to the land restoration issue would be to support the reclamation of the Cultural Grounds on reclaimed land. Not only is this healing for the people within the Nations, but it is extending to the ecosystems in which they reside. Reclaiming their rightful place of caretakers of the land, Indigenous Nations are taking a lead in the mitigation of resource development impacts and related work such as environmental remediation and reclamation. It is important to be able to maintain the medicines and utilize natural cycles to regenerate species. Utilizing the natural cycles within the ecosystem was one suggestion. To let the wind spread seeds that are being reintroduced into the area.

Natural Law is the guiding principle in this framework. Community based solutions around land governance are grounded in Natural Law, guided by ceremony. The access to land will benefit the entire community, as the community members will have access to a space for land-based education and land-based healing. Land reclamation and cultural reclamation are interconnected; Land based learning is land-based healing. Colonialism and capitalism have done a number on both the ecosystems and Indigenous peoples. The next chapter looks at how theses observed changes and damages to the land and people are currently being healed by Indigenous communities through Indigenous methods in Treaty 6 Territory.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided a snapshot of some of the issues with the land reclamation and restoration processes in Pigeon Lake 138A. A literature review of the scholarly work in the relevant areas was discussed. The history and background information were presented, and a data anaylsis delved into the examination of socio-cultural and environmental values of importance to Indigneous land restoration in this area. Community-based solutions were presented to remedy the conflicts within these processes through a discussion of challeneges and opportunities to Indigenous land restoration.

Chapter 4 – Healing the Land, Healing the People

4.1 Introduction

Aura energy

Thought, feelings are energy.

Energy is heavy or light.

pimâtisiwin - life force energy

mônîyâkâso - acting like a white person - not acting like yourself.

kihtehayak - elder

kiteh - your heart

kihtehayak - the ones connected to the rules in our hearts.

kihteyamâmitoneyihcikan – wisdom

(Poem inspired by Manaciso: Healing with Horses)

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"See, the first one I'd always talk about is wâskamisiwin, poko wâskamsit ayisiyiniw. Most people believe that means sober up. You got to sober up. But that's not what it means. It means your mind has to be lit, ewâsîyak kimâmitoneyihcikan, and that means enlightenment. And what is enlightenment is awakeness. You got to be awake. Too many people are sleeping through their life, sleeping through their life. And oftentimes when a person's asleep, they play the role of victim rather than knowing that we are the co-creator in our life. We're not the Creator, but we are the co-creator, we are given choice. Wâskamisiwin is a very important word to use in the work I do."
(Buffalo, 2021)

4.2 Background Information

Healing from intergenerational traumas is a process. Many Indigenous peoples have been living in survival mode for the majority, if not all, their lives. Some say healing is a lifelong process that will take generations, not to complete, but to be able to return to a balanced state. Others say that it can happen instantenously. However, there is a resurgence of Indigenous peoples actively seeking healing and returning to land-based healing pratices. The previous chapter talks about the need for a land base in order to carry out land-based healing practices. This chapter provides an extensive look at the interview data, by sharing Maskwacis community members voices regarding land-based healing. The work presented here aims to link multigenerational trauma and land-based healing methods between humans and the environment. There are no academic citations in this section, as this section is dedicated to sharing the voices, ideas, and thoughts of land-based practicioners in Maskwacis. This chapter aims to advance frameworks of Indigenous cultural restoraton by sharing the results of the action research project at Mîmîw Sahkahikan.

Through the interviews conducted for the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, there was a focus on healing through ceremony. Additionally, there was discussion around the powerful healing that horses can bring. The Manaciso: Healing with Horses program in Maskwacis was recommended by the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. Another land-based healing activity mentioned in the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge interviews was hide tanning. The Treaty 6 Hide Tanners are a group of Cree women based in Maskwacis, which is in the same geographic location as the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. KD Farms is an Indigenous-run and owned sustainable homestead that is aiming to provide organic livestock products and garden vegetables, along with educational programming to the community of Maskwacis.

4.2.1 Pekîwe Cultural Lodge

The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is a space for people to reconnect with who they are and ground themselves. A safe place to heal and pray together. To learn traditional songs and ceremonies. To learn the medicines and the stories. Ceremony has had an immense positive impact on my life. It pulled me out of addictions and carried me when I couldn't carry myself. If it were not for ceremony, I would not be where I am today. Due to Canada's history of genocidal Indian policies, many family ties to ceremonial activities have been severed. However, it is space like the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, where people can reconnect with who they are as Indigenous people and find hope

and realize that there is more out there, that we can live a beautiful life still, and find the strength to keep going.

The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is a place where everyone is welcome, and ceremonies are conducted. Ceremony connects us to who we are as Indigenous peoples. Connects us to our identity. Connects us to our language, to our elders, to our ancestors, our spiritual guides, and future generations. It carries us when we can't carry ourselves. We can lean into the love of the Creator and the grandmothers and grandfathers to protect us, watch over us, and guide us. Having access to healthy land to carry out ceremonies is critical for Indigenous peoples and the environments well-being. The well-being of the environment and of humans is inextricably connected.

4.2.2 Manaciso

There are many land-based healing ways to connect with the horse, spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally. Mistatim âtayôhkan - the horse spirit - is strongly revered in many Indigenous cultures. There are ceremonies and protocols to honor our horse relatives. To work with horses, you need a certain level of physical fitness. It helps us to stay physically healthy. The emotional connection that a person makes with horses helps with their mental well-being. There are many ways to work with horses, whether it's through racing, rodeo, healing programs, or other modalities. Here we will be discussing programs that work with horses for healing.

Manaciso: Healing with horses, is a program that was created and run by Patrick Buffalo in Maskwacis, Samson Cree Nation. He is a Traditinal Knowledge Keeper, a certified Hypnotherapist and a Reiki Master and uses these frameworks to guide his practice. He works with the horse spirit to help participants release trauma blockages that have been built up throughout their lives and call their spirits back to them. This energy work is a non-intrusive way to work through trauma. As participants do not have to speak about their issues or traumatic events. Participants can let go of heavy emotions and come out feeling lighter. This land-based healing practice that leans on our horse relative for help with our well-being is truly transformational. I can attest to the healing work that is brought forward through Patrick's methods. As an Indigenous woman dealing with the impacts of intergeneration trauma and CPTSD, I have yet to find a program that has been as life changing as this one. Without a doubt, Patrick and his program have had a positive impact on me and my children's lives.

4.2.3 Treaty 6 Hide Tanners

Treaty 6 Hide Tanners is a group of women based in the Maskwacis area who are reclaiming cultural knowledge through hide tanning. They are also hoping to also reclaim one of the old oil well sites in Mameo to be the home base for their hide tanning activities. Many of the members of their group grew up in mîmîw sâkahikan and they want to reclaim not only their traditional practices but also their land. This hide tanning group was mentioned in the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge interviews, and this groups motives and goals align with that of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. Since one of the main Elders, Dawn Coyote mentioned Peggy Lee's hide tanning group, I thought they would be a great group to interview for my thesis work. To add robustness to the analysis and to showcase the amazing work that they are doing in the Maskwacis area.

4.2.4 KD Farms

I was introduced to the owners of KD Farms by Patrick Buffalo. While I was working with Patrick Buffalo at the Panee Memorial Agriplex in Maskwacis, there was also a rodeo program being facilitated for children. Patrick encouraged me to register my children and introduced me to one of the founders of the Mistatim Riding Program, Taylor Buffalo who helped me to register my children in the roping program. It was through this introduction that I met the roping program facilitators, Tye and Sheena Yellowbird. Tye and Sheena are also the owners of KD Farms. Once I got to know them and the amazing vision that they have for the family and community, I asked if they would be willing the be interviewed and they agreed.

4.3 Methods

I conducted a qualitative data analysis of the interview transcripts to look for code words in the theme of healing. Through the coding process, a keyword search was utilized. The coding keywords "heal", "pekîwe", and "land based" were searched across all 8 transcripts, a total of 56 pages (See Appendix 2.2). Throughout this search I found a total of 243 codes. The category of "heal" resulted in a subtotal of 49 codes, the category "pekîwe" resulted in a subtotal of 46 codes, and the category of "land-based" resulted in a subtotal of 84 codes. These three words were chosen because they embody the core principles of healing aspects of this thesis work. Relevant quotes were pulled to showcase how land-based healing helps support healing processes with the core principle of "pekîwe" - coming home. All these practices help Indigenous peoples to come home to who they are.

The category of "heal" had a lot of variation within the code word search. There were quotes identified on the topics of heal (n=4), healing (n=21), health (n=9), healthy (n=13), unhealthy (n=1), and healer (n=1). All the keywords in this section are derivatives of the key word "heal". Within the category of "pekîwe", specific code words were searched to support the data collected in this section. There were quotes selected for pekîwe (n=46), ceremony (n=17), ceremonies (n=16), and lodge (n=31). Ceremony and Lodge were the two supporting keyword searches which were identified within the category of "pekîwe". The category of "land-based" was also supported by two additional keywords. The quotes in this section consist of topics of land-based (n=5), horse (n=16), and hide (63). All these quotes support the healing nature of land-based healing and education.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Pekîwe

The definition of Pekîwe was discussed frequently in the interviews. Pekîwe means to come home. Elder Ken Saddleback and Knowledge Keeper Patrick Buffalo both explain this word using stories. Both Traditional Knowledge Keepers are helping people to come home to themselves, so that our people can lead fulfilling lives. Ken Saddleback speaks to the importance of coming home to oneself through ceremony.

> *"Pekîwe means come home. Pekîwe. Most of the time when I am sharing, I always say people should come back home to the lodge. What I am trying to say is that, at the lodge you will hear songs, word songs, in our language. And that's the only place you will hear original messages that were given to us by our Creator."* (Saddleback K. , 2021)

Ceremony is a core element to nehiyaw identity, and to coming home to oneself. One of the most important aspects of ceremony is nehiyawewin. Patrick Buffalo expands on this by using nehiyawewin to explain the example of the sun coming back, in conjunction with the definition of the concept of pekîwe.

> *"Pekîwe, means to come home. There are so many different aspects of coming home. Like I've heard, yesterday was December 21st, and that's the rebirthing of the sun. I've heard somebody say, pîsim epekîwet. That means the sun is coming home. It is expressing how the sun is coming back, meaning the days get longer. The sun stays with us longer. So even in looking at the sun coming home is applicable."* (Buffalo, 2021)

The rationale behind why the concept of Pekîwe is valuable was a main point that came through in the coding. The concept of pekîwe is critically important to the resilience of our people. Elder Dawn Coyote explains the importance of restoring cultural practices and land uses, so that things coming back to the way it was.

> *"That's the importance of this Pekîwe Lodge to me. And to bring it back to the way it was, to bring it back. Because it needs not only the Cree people that use this area. It was the Stoney, it was a gathering place, it was a fishing place, anybody could come. I see slowly things are coming back to the way it was."* (Coyote, 2021)

The restoration of cultural practices and land use in the Mîmîw Sakahikan area is one of the communities' goals. Norine Saddleback describes the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge as a homing beacon for everyone to come home to. *"That's what for me, what Pekîwe means. It's a beacon to come, when you're, because you're always invited"* (Saddleback N. L., 2021). Cultural Lodges such as Pekîwe educate and teach the next generation of oskâpewis, pipe carriers, knowledge keepers and Elders. Robert Johnson attests to how spaces such as these is where our children will be able to come home to learn our languages and cultures.

> "*So, this Pekîwe, we need more of these places. We need to build this to a place where our children – there's lots of them in foster. Lots and lots. They need to come home, they need to come home and learn their culture because if they don't, they're going to be one angry bunch."* (Johnson, 2021)

The coding in this section revealed some of the methods regarding how a person may actualize the concept of Pekîwe. There are many different pathways that a person could take if they are seeking to come home to themselves. This thesis focuses on a few different land-based methods that can help a person along this journey. Patrick Buffalo works with the horse spirit to help people bring themselves back. He explains how the experience of coming home to oneself is experiential and doesn't have to involve rigorous thought processing,

> "*So, pekîwe, we ask the horse spirit to go and find those parts of you that you have lost, and the horse spirit will bring you back home. Meaning that the soul is retrieved. The soul is brought together to become one again with the spirit that we are… Pekîwe, it's not just an academic exercise. And I want to emphasize that because a lot of programs that are designed to be analytical, figure it out, figure it out. - Oh, I can't remember. I can't remember - You don't have to remember."* (Buffalo, 2021)

Experiential over academic is one of the key points here. It is heartwork over headwork. These land-based healing practices must belt felt with our senses, not simply read about. Norine Saddleback speaks to how the fasting ceremony can help people clear their minds and redirect themselves, *"If you're ready to fast, do your fast to help clear your mind and get yourself ready for the next phase of your life, there's Pekîwek"* (Saddleback N. L., 2021). If people are ready to do the work for themselves, these spaces are here for them. Peggy Lee explains that the type of healing found within ceremonies, hide work, and other land-based practices is impactful because it is optional. People choose to go; they are not forced.

> *"The thing about what you guys are offering with Pekîwe and something like a hide tanning space - those are open for people. You're not going around and telling people they have to be here. This is something people choose. If they don't have it, they're going to go to do other harmful things, whether it's harming themselves or doing drugs or drinking or just being depressed, being disease."* (Lee, 2022)

Key values were identified in this coding work. The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge itself is the embodiment of many traditional values. Kenneth Saddleback explains that family values are what the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is about, when he speaks about bringing our people home, "*That's the idea of Pekîwek. Let's bring them home, let's remind them that we have a story"* (Saddleback K. , 2021). Norine goes on to talk about how the family values within the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge makes it a welcoming place for land-based healing and education. Family values are part of what makes the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge such an inviting and welcome space for people to gather to learn the language and culture within a ceremonial setting.

> "*Pekîwek. I watched it grow. It was a place to gather where you had hope. You had that place where you felt like there was people who cared and didn't judge you … Family values. And Pekîwe is about that. To come home to that, know what it is."* (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

Some of the key themes within this coding section were language, culture, Ceremonies and Lodges. Ida Bull speaks to the important role that the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge has in language and cultural revitalization. She emphasizes the importance of "heartwork" over "headwork" in this excerpt where she explains that it is important for youth to go and observe, see, hear, and learn the processes and procedures firsthand,

> *"Pekîwek Camp has the most brilliant idea, to keep that camp going for all the Cree people of Maskwacis, especially the young. Because we want to keep*

> *our ways, nehiyawatisiwin. More importantly, we want to keep our language because that's where our children learn. They hear, they listen to different teachings with our culture. Not only that, but they also go and observe how a ceremony is, the procedures of it, the process, they get to see that. They get to observe it firsthand. And they don't have to Google any of this information, it's right there for them to learn. So, I am really in favour to keep a camp that's willing, more than willing to pass down information to all people in maskwacis."* (Bull, 2021)

Ida Bull explains that ceremony is crucial to ongoing language and cultural revitalization. Kenneth Saddleback says that he believes in our spirituality, ceremonies - he believes that's what it's going to save our people. Dawn Coyote spoke to why it is important to have space to build Lodges for land-based healing and education, because language and culture are integral to coming home - pekîwek.

> "*My vision is we have more space to build our lodges. My vision is to have people come, to learn. My vision is to have a safe place. An area for them to stay, that it's not too crowded. An area for teachings, an area, a safe place, without judgement. An area where we can have those horses, the spirit of the horse there. An area where we can connect to the land. And those teachings, to pass down those teachings, a safe place to do that. That's what I picture. Like a cultural area. And a safe place for people to stay while they are here, participating & learning & helping. That's what I envision. I envision the future of these young people passing on their knowledge that they are getting from here."* (Coyote, 2021)

4.4.2 Land-Based

Within the section of coding "land-based" there were themes identified that are related to the goals of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge which included horses, hides, and sustainable farming. The co-founders of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, Dawn and Ken, both spoke to the importance of having the horse and the horse spirit present on the grounds. There are many interconnections between humans and the land, and many of those connections include non-human beings such as horses, or animal parts, or plants, and extends to other things even as small as insects.

> *"An area where we can have those horses, the spirit of the horse there. An area where we can connect to the land"* (Coyote, 2021). *"Eventually, we bring our horses here, just make it like hiking trails back there"* (Saddleback K. , 2021).

Norine Saddleback explains how important horses are to the Cree people, and how there is a whole ceremony based around their spirit. Horses are highly revered and are very significant spiritually to Indigenous peoples.

> *"We need to be able to do the horse dances, you know, the bear lodges. There are a lot of things that need to happen out there, and they need some space to be able to do that."* (Saddleback N. L., 2021)

Horses have a very healing spirit and being around them has a lot of positive impact on human wellbeing. Patrick Buffalo lives and works with the horse and the horse spirit everyday. He speaks to the healing nature of the horse and how the horse spirit has helped many people.

> *"And recently, I've incorporated in the last five years, the healing energies of the horse spirit … OK, so I think, culturally, the horse has been with our people forever. And our people understand natural law and they understand spirituality. So, it's not the horse as a four-legged animal. It's the spirit of the horse that is the sacred aspect."* (Buffalo, 2021)

Any topic that includes sacred or spiritual aspects is usually better to learn in person, verses writing or other methods. There are some things that cannot be recorded. Furthermore, science cannot measure everything in the universe, and many spiritual aspects fall into this area. Expanding on this, Pat speaks to the experiential methods that he utilizes in tandem with the energy of the horses to help people call themselves back home.

> *"The healing is very, very experiential versus academic. That it's not an academic exercise when we do the soul retrieval using the horse spirit, if a person really feels … And once I did the soul retrieval using the horse spirit, I have felt nothing. I feel peace. I feel OK."* (Buffalo, 2021)

Dawn Coyote speaks to the importance of the resurgence of Indigenous practices like hide work. Peggy Lee is doing just that. While reclaiming her own teachings and wellbeing through hide tanning, she is also creating community and space for others to do the same.

> *"That is part of our wellness. That is what's going to give us a stronger purpose. And how do you say like, balance, wellness. When I'm talking about doing hides, there's a lot that happens when I when I'm doing hides … That's wellness, that's grounding you, putting you in a different frame of mind, lowers your stress levels. So, you can think clearly and go on your day and be in a good way. Those kinds of little things, it doesn't have to be so structured and so rigid. It's just understanding that these things don't always fit in a box, but you make a space for it, for people to come in they find their own way and they find their own thing out of it. Like I said, I've always had good experiences every time I'm doing hides. It's a different frequency when you're in that. People actually want to be there. They want to learn, they come in a good frame of mind, they come open and it's whatever they get out of is what they put into it. So, I think that's a universal thing. Everybody understands."* (Lee, 2022)

Peggy speaks to the importance of choice, and how a person must choose to participate in these forms of land-based healing. She said that you only get what you put into it. Cofounder of KD Farms, Sheena Yellowbird-Hartman also advocates for the same type of hands-on land-based work. She explains how we need a healthy land base to produce healthy foods to nurish our bodies.

> *"For us I guess it begins, the end result is yes healing through land-based practices. But I guess for us the first and foremost thing is healing the land… The use of pesticides and herbicides for a vast number of years has stripped soil quality and nutritional value of produce. So here at KD Farms our goal is to keep everything organic and heal the land through, I guess what nature intended. Our animals are used to turn over soil, to fertilize soil which in turn then as a person who is utilizing any produce, it comes from the farmers in turn healing as well. We kind of, our goal is a back to nature approach. So, using what nature has given us to then contribute to our produce quality. Everything that's coming from our farm is humanely raised with nutrition at the root, I guess."* (Hartman-Yellowbird, 2022)

Healing the land so that we have a healthy space to grow as a people is a priority. Their sustainable farming practices in Maskwacis is also a form of land-based healing. Putting your hands into the earth does something to a person, and there is a lot of pride that comes with planting, growing, and maintaining your own food. Sheena explains the connection between healing the land and healing the people.

> *"To basically have an open center where people can come get their hands dirty, back to healing on the land. And I mean if you're reaping the benefits of your labor and you're in touch with, you know you get your hands dirty and, in the garden, and you start from sowing the seeds to harvesting the garden and you're 100% involved in that. There is knowledge to be learned, as well as healing with that, so I think for us it's a big importance to bring that back to our community. And have an open place where people can come. And if they're willing to learn then there's a wealth of knowledge that we're willing to give them."* (Hartman-Yellowbird, 2022)

4.4.3 Heal

Throughout the entire data analysis process, the concept of "to Heal" was a very prominent and reoccurring notion. The discussions around this concept range from talking about healing, to health in general, and what it looks like to be healthy. Through this thesis work, I wanted to showcase all the wonderful people and organizations that are creating different land-based opportunities for people to heal and come home to themselves. Elder Ken Saddleback explains how the power of prayer can help people heal and benefit from the ceremonies,

> *"We go outside and if I feel I need, I just take it and I go pray. I put tobacco down. See, that's what we're doing here is asking God whoever comes here will benefit. Whoever is looking for life will find it. Whoever's looking for healing, they will find it here. And the power of prayer, sometimes people think they like we're gifted, or we can make things happen. But it's God that makes things happen."* (Saddleback K. , 2021)

Patrick Buffalo expresses how the power of prayer and Creator's Natural Laws are the guiding values that help us while working through the healing process,

> "*OK, the goal is for people to be real. So that means that we live by Creator's laws, manito wiyasiwewin, kisewâtisiwin. So, it's kindness and compassion, that healing is, when you become that."* (Buffalo, 2021)

Norine Saddleback speaks to the importance of ceremony in a person's healing journey, she explains that the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is an outcomes-based healing organization, and attests that she has witnessed first-hand the healing that happens within the space,

> *"I've seen people turn sober there. I've seen the light in a child's eye when they're told what their Indian name is. I've seen people, the women, come out of the sweat and just, you can see that stress relief"* (Saddleback N. L., 2021).

Peggy Lee talks how hide work is her wellness practice. She explains how being physically active increases endorphins and requires us to make healthier food choices to fuel our bodies in a

healthy way. Land-based practices help us to achieve a wholistic version of wellbeing, she describes this in her interview,

> "*This is my wellness practice. It's where I go or I need to go sometimes when life is too stressful or hectic for me, I'm like - I need a day on hide - To physically be able to do these things, it increases endorphins. When your physical, also you have to eat better, you have to make healthier choices, you have to eat high energy foods. You have to eat better cleaner, in order to operate, to be able to have the energy to do those things… Also, it is a spiritual practice for me. It's where I go to get my emotions in check. I've cried on a hide so many times, that's where I work out my problems. And it's not always just sad things. It's also when there's good things. I've had some very powerful spiritual moments happen when I was on hides, when I'm doing those hides … I think that's what it comes down to is just creating that safety for people to just live and be and heal and do their thing on their own. Just making a space for it."* (Lee, 2022)

Interviwees expressed that they would like to see institutionalized organizations such as Maskwacis Health or Maskwacis Education to incorporate more land-based healing practices into their programming to help people overcome post traumatic symptoms and assist with the mental health crisis.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 Land-Based Healing

Land based healing methods have been a part of Indigenous ways of being since time immemorial. Genocidal colonization tactics attempted to eradicate these ways of being. The state of Canada attempted to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the Canadian politic. While the government's assimilation policies were successful in damaging family systems and kinship ties, they were not fully successful in eradicating Indigenous ways of being. Although Indigenous peoples were displaced from their homelands and ceremonies were outlawed, many Indigenous Elders went into the mountains and other remote places to keep their ways alive. Ceremonies and other land-based healing methods are making a comeback in Indian Country. This paper speaks to the importance of healthy land and land-based healing modalities. We explored how these methods are helping to heal Indigenous communities.

The reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment is cultivated and nurtured through ceremony. The elements are acknowledged for the life they bring us, and we give thanks for that life. We honor all our relations - Our non-human relations, the four legged, the flyers, the crawlers, those under the soil and water. Our human relations, who have passed on into the spirit world, pray for those who are still living, and the future generations. It is in that space that we can nurture our spiritual wellbeing, our physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and mental wellbeing. Ceremony is beautiful, and it is a healing space. But it is not the only space that we can heal. There are many other ways to heal and work through our traumas. Each person is unique, and some methods might work better than others for everyone. Some of the other land-based healing methods discussed here included working with horses, hide work, and sustenance work.

Dealing with intergenerational trauma is a very real lived experience for Indigenous peoples. There are many issues that arise from the damage done to family systems and kinship ties. Some of the impacts include mental health issues, drug addictions, and alcoholism which can result in dysfunction and abuse, sometimes causing homeless and jail sentences. These and other unhealthy coping mechanisms have been adopted by many to deal with intergenerational trauma and other forms of trauma. To escape this cycle of trauma, we need to support each other in finding these transformational healing practices that will help restore our people to their full potential as caretakers of the land. With the ongoing destigmatization of mental health issues and other trauma related stories being shared, there is a wave of people who are seeking healing. epekîwecik, they are coming home.

4.6 Conclusion

This goal of this thesis work is to help support safe spaces where healing can take place. It started out by supporting the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and shifted and transformed to include other organizations that work through land-based healing practices. Through the semi structured interviews conducted with the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, there was a networking of relations that connected this work to the Manaciso Healing with Horses program, the Treaty 6 Hide Tanners, and KD Farms. These organizations added rich context surrounding the multiple forms of land-based healing and education as well as speak to the healing aspect of this thesis.

The work here is just a glimpse into some healing land-based practices. We all have the power within ourselves to break the curses of intergenerational trauma. If a person is interested in

learning more, I encourage them to seek out these types of land-based healing practices and learn more from themselves. As noted earlier, these modalities are experiential, not academic. As such, I did my best to write about them in a way that doesn't distort their nature. In doing so, some of this work may seem disjointed or not contextualized properly. This is because much of the context wthin these spaces are meant to be seen, heard, smelled, and felt with our senses and comes from the heart.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

This thesis work centers around process driven approaches, with not one sole purpose or outcome. There are many paths and solutions when looking at healing the land and people. That is because there is really no ending or conculsion that can sum up this work. The reclamation, restoration, and healing work are ongoing processes, there is no concluding. They are dynamic and relational. Always ebbing and flowing, shifting and moving.

This thesis presented original research based on land and cultural reclamation in the community of Maskwacis, specifically in Mîmîw Sâkahikan. Through this work, a unique research method was presented. One research outcome is the presentation of community-based discourse on reclamation and restoration work through an Indigneous lens. The community brought up many challenges and opportunities within these current processes. Additionally, the community-based discourse on land-based healing modalities was provided.

The resurgence of Traditional epistemologies and ontologies shows the resilience of Indigenous peoples, and in this case, specifically the nehiyawak. Not only is this healing for the people within the Nations, but it is extending to the ecosystems in which they reside. One of the main purposes of this thesis work was to showcase some of the amazing land-based organizations in Maskwacis. There are so many powerhouse organizations working diligently. These organizations are all doing work to help people heal in their community. I think it is important to share these opportunities, especially with Indigenous youth. To show them that there is more to life than partying or drinking or drugs. To know that they don't have to live stuck in dysfunction or trauma. To give them hope that there truly is a beautiful life out there for each and every one of them.

Come home, Pekîwek ❤️

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Appendices

1.0 Interview & Survey Questions

1.1 Guiding Interview Questions

Pekiwe Cultural Lodge Interviews
Long Answer

1. Can you tell me about this place and its importance to you? What is pekiwe to you?
2. What are some of the oldest stories you know about this place? Can you tell me a story about how this place is important to people today?
3. Have you noticed any changes in the health of this place in your lifetime? What are some signs/signals that this place is healthy or unhealthy?
4. How, if at all, to these issues affect you, your family or the community?
5. What are some values, uses and relationships that need to be considered in caring for this place?
6. Do you know any special names in Cree that should be recorded or mapped?
7. How would you like to see this place cared for in the future? What is your vision of how this place might be healed or restored. What should it look like and what kinds of uses should be respected if/when restored? Who should be involved? How should decisions be made?

1.2 Piolet Survey Questions

Pekiwe Cultural Lodge Interviews - Short Answer

1	How often do you use this place? (pick one)	O never, O from time to time, O frequently
2	What are some specific ways you currently use this place? (mark all that apply)	O berry picking O medicinal plant harvest O hunting O trapping O fishing O ceremony O recreation O other
3	If you don't use this place, why?	O other priorities O no access O environmental health O concerns about my health O other
4	Do you think this place should be reclaimed?	O yes O no O I do not know
5	Who should be involved in reclamation? (Check all that apply)	O Indigenous governments O local residents O provincial government O federal government O industry O universities O environmental organizations O other O I don't know
6	How often would you use this place if it was better managed or reclaimed?	O never, O from time to time, O frequently
7	What are some current values that should be **maintained**?	O berry picking O medicinal plant harvest O hunting O trapping O fishing O ceremony O recreation O other
8	What are some current values that need to be **better managed**?	O berry picking O medicinal plant harvest O hunting O trapping O fishing O ceremony O recreation O other
9	What specific values that have been lost and need to be **restored or healed**?	O berry picking O medicinal plant harvest O hunting O trapping O fishing O ceremony O recreation O other
10	What structural improvements would you like to see at this site?	O Access road O Power to site O Culverts O Gate/fence gate O Fences O Gravel pad O new trails O Other

2.0 Coding Analysis

2.1 Reclamation Coding Analysis

	Interviewe Code Word Appearance								
Code	**Dawn**	**Sheena**	**Norine**	**Patrick**	**Peggy**	**Robert**	**Ken**	**Ida**	**TOTAL**
Water	7	2	19	0	8	10	2	1	49
Fish	11	0	5	0	2	2	8	18	46
Lake	3	0	17	1	19	4	11	17	72
Land	8	10	19	1	36	7	5	8	94
Lease	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	7
Reclamation	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	7
Steward	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Human	0	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	7
Health	0	0	4	4	15	0	0	0	23
Warrior	1	0	4	0	0	3	1	0	9
Heart	1	0	8	3	1	2	0	0	15
oskapewis	1	0	2	0	0	3	4	1	11

2.2 Healing Coding Analysis

	Code Word Appearance								
Code	**Dawn**	**Norine**	**Sheena**	**Patrick**	**Peggy**	**Robert**	**Ken**	**Ida**	**TOTAL**
Theme #1 - Heal	**2**	**5**	**6**	**14**	**19**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**49**
Heal	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**0**	4
Healing	**2**	**0**	**5**	**10**	**3**	**0**	**1**	**0**	21
Health	**0**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**0**	9
Healthy	**0**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**9**	**0**	**0**	**0**	13
Unhealthy	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	1
Healer	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	1
SUBTOTAL									**49**
Theme #2 - Pekiwe	**2**	**17**	**0**	**7**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**9**	46
Ceremony	**0**	**1**	**0**	**5**	**2**	**5**	**3**	**1**	17
Ceremonies	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**2**	**8**	**3**	16
Lodge	**8**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**6**	**10**	31
SUBTOTAL									**110**
Theme #3 - Land-based	**0**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	5
horse	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**12**	**0**	**1**	**0**	16
hide	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**61**	**0**	**0**	63
SUBTOTAL									**84**
TOTAL									**243**

3.0 Interview Data

Preface

This appendix item is unique. A lot of thesis work does not include the full-length transcripts from the interview data. However, we (The Pekiwe Cultural Lodge & I) felt the inclusion of the full-length transcripts could be very helpful to help raise the voices of grassroots people. And so that others can read about what the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge's vision and goals. Also, to encourage people to attend ceremony, and to possibly help build more funding connections. Ultimately, we hope it will be able to help move forward the remediation and reclamation processes, and to help find resolution in a good way. These transcripts are the intellectual property of the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge, and the individual interviewees. These transcripts should not be taken and used outside of this research context. Consent must aquired from the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge, or from the individual interviewees to utilize this data outside of this research project.

3.1 Dawn Coyote Interview

Interviewee: Dawn Coyote (Pekîwe Cultural Lodge - Lead Female Elder)
Date: August 27, 2021
Location: Pigeon Lake 128A

Robin [0:00] Hello OK here we go. I think it is good to go. So, the first long answer question is can you tell me about the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and its importance to you?

Dawn [0:24] The Pekîwe Cultural Lodge is very important to me. It started with just one little fasting lodge. I used to crawl in there in the bush, and I would fast by myself. And I would pray in there quite often. I knew it needed to be more. I knew that others weren't as lucky as we were to have this sacred space and to have to have a place to go to pray and to make those sacrifices. Ken and I decided together that it needs to be more. We were put here to share, to share our teachings. Those teachings were taken from me at such a young age, I was six years old. And I walked blind for many years in the loss of my mother. And I didn't know who I was or where I belonged. But lately I've been having little flashbacks and memories of growing up out here. And doing all those things - smoking fish, smoking meat, plucking ducks. And those memories are, I hold them very

close to my heart. And I think, I feel that other Indigenous youth need to have those experiences. And to know who they are, and where they came from, and to be proud of who they are. I walked many years in shame because I didn't know who I was. So, when we started developing these Lodges - the Teaching Lodge, and the Woman's Lodge, the Tipi, and the Sweat Lodge - it's not big enough for our vision, because we have it set up in such a small area now. And we have quite a few people that come to pray with us and come to sing with us. And come to get their Indian names and to figure out who they are as Indigenous people. It's so important for these young ones to know. So, they're not walking blind. So, they're not ashamed of who they are or where they came from. As I did. I stumbled, I fell, I went to others - I tried church, I tried Sioux teachings. I still hold them very close. But I'm a Cree woman. And I honour my Cree family doing this. I honour my mosom Louis Coyote by doing this, I honour all the ones that have gone before us. My mosom Jacob Yellowbird, and Emma, Helen Coyote Gladue. I honour them. I honour my mother because she was so lost in addictions and hiding trying to hide from those pains of residential school that we lost her at such a young age. And I do this for not only them, but for the ones that are not born yet. That will face that same struggle, but they'll have somewhere to go. That's the importance of this Pekîwe Lodge to me. And to bring it back to the way it was, to bring it back. Because it needs not only the Cree people that use this area. It was the Stoney, it was a gathering place, it was a fishing place, anybody could come. I see slowly things are coming back to the way it was. They just had a Hide Camp out here which is great. It's fantastic. Our teachings are slowly coming back. And it's our duty to do that as Indigenous people as Indigenous older people. The women, the men, those warriors need to help each other. The women need to help each other. And that's why it's so important to me.

Robin [5:30] That’s beautiful. Ok the second question is: What are some of the oldest stories that you know about Pigeon Lake? Or also: Can you tell me a story about how this place is important to people today? So, looking at the past, but the past but also today.

Dawn [5:56] Yeah. The past, like I said in the last question, it was used not only for the Cree people but for everyone. It was a gathering place. A place to fish, a place to hunt. And then everybody was included, nobody was sent away. Those are the teachings that I know. We were a community. And I see that slowly coming back. From Blackfoot and Sioux’s and Cree’s all getting along here on this ceremonial space, on this sacred space. And everybody walks with kindness here,

and I see that. And there's all those old traditions of hunting gathering. But they're all coming back. And it's so important for us to do that. Does that make sense?

Robin [7:03] That makes sense. You kind of touched on a little bit of stuff from my next question too. So, the next question is: have you noticed any changes in the health of this place in your lifetime? So, some signals that the place might be healthy or unhealthy? Whether it's for hunting, fishing, or gathering anything like that. Have you noticed?

Dawn [7:27] The fishing has not been the greatest because of the pollutants that are going into the lake. From the ones that leased the land. And they've renewed that lease apparently, from what I hear. So, they were told to get septic tanks. I don't know if everybody has one yet. I think the watershed would know those answers. As a resident of Pigeon Lake Indian Reserve, we're not we're not privy to that information, in which I think we should be. Because those are our fish, we eat those fish, we smoke those fish, we dry those fish, we use them. And now they're in danger. So, we have to go elsewhere to do that. It's our responsibility as women, as the water keepers, to help that water. And I see that, I see these young women when we're together, we go down and we sing those water songs. Which we clean. We try to take care of that land and the water. But we can't do it alone. You know and as for the land, we have lots of medicines around, all right in our backyard. So, we harvest, we go, and we harvest. We don't have to go very far. And a lot of it is here still. A lot of people don't know what they're looking at. And it's a lot of our young people that come, and we teach them. Teach them how to identify those medicines and we're in need of them. And with all these companies coming to take the oil from the land, which is no longer practiced, I don’t think anymore - that we have - more will come. Our pharmacies in our backyard, and the berries we can eat. We can survive here on our own. Because of what mother earth has provided for us. My concern is the fish and the well-being of that water.

Robin [10:13] For sure. You talked about this a lot in your answer to the previous question but, if there's anything else you want to add, I guess. How, if at all, do these issues affect you, your family, and your community?

Dawn [10:33] The water affects us because of the fish. Some of our people here don't fish there in the lake anymore because of the pollutants in it. The berries and the medicines are still here, but we have to look for them. They are abundant in some places, and in other places they are damaged. So yeah.

Robin [11:13] Ok. And then, what are some values, uses or relationships that should be considered when caring for this place, when they're going to be doing this reclamation, and afterwards, what's important in taking care of this place?

Dawn [11:32] We are all stewards here, stewards of the land. It's our responsibility as Indigenous people to take care of our Mother Earth because she provides for us. So, we're going to need a lot of help. We are going to need a lot of oskâpewis to help us. Because Ken and I, we're getting older, we cannot do everything by ourselves. It's going to take a lot of care and love for Mother Earth - to continue to care for her - in the way she needs. And just maintaining those medicines. If we can naturally transplant them, with the seeds. I ask that they do that. Let the wind take them - are some of our teachings – have those seeds, let the wind take them. You know, and just maintain how beautiful she is. Does that answer the question?

Robin [12:52] Definitely. And then just building on that: So how would you like to see this place being cared for in the future?

Dawn [13:02] I'd like to see our young ones come out and learn how to take care of her. And how to harvest in a good way. Where we're not taking everything. They need to know how to cherish Mother Earth - and replenish - allow her to replenish in a good way. So that all comes in teaching right. So, it's all up to them, to come, and learn. Because without them we're nothing. We would have nothing to pass down.

Robin [13:48] Yeah so saying the youth should be highly involved in this. And then, with the restoration of the well site, what's your vision of how this place will look?

Dawn [14:12] What's my vision? My vision is we have more space to build our lodges. My vision is to have people come, to learn. My vision is to have a safe place. An area for them to stay, that it's not too crowded. An area for teachings, an area, a safe place, without judgement. An area where we can have those horses, the spirit of the horse there. An area where we can connect to the land. And those teachings, to pass down those teachings, a safe place to do that. That's what I picture. Like a cultural area. And a safe place for people to stay while they are here, participating & learning & helping. That's what I envision. I envision the future of these young people passing on their knowledge that they are getting from here.

Robin [15:32] That's beautiful. And then one more last question here. So, looking forward to when it's restored and reclaimed, and we're able to host these types of spaces for youth and for community, how do you think decisions should be made? Around the camp, around the Cultural Lodge, around the governance of it?

Dawn [16:07] I think this should be done like the old way. Through the elders. Or as a community. Bringing back those old teachings. In a kind way - not to publicly shame anybody or hurt them intentionally. That's not the people we are. I believe that the elders have a big say in how we walk as a family. Matriarchal and patriarchal.

Robin [17:00] I guess just before we finish, is there anything else you think would be important for either the oil company, imperial oil, or the contractors AECOM, or even the Four Nations consultation offices? Is there anything that I missed, that you think is important, that should be brought forward?

Dawn [17:21] I think they should learn our ways. They are trying to help our people. If they want to truly help our people, learn what kind of people we are. So, you can honor when you come onto our land. So, you can honour that, so you can honour our mother. And that's my biggest - I will echo that until the day that I die. If you're wanting to help our people, learn our ways. And it doesn't matter if that's Blackfoot, Sioux, Cree, Anishinaabe. It doesn't matter, just learn. Come and be a part of our ceremonies. Come and learn how we're healing - and our journey as a people - and that's healing our land as well. I'm big, I'm very big on that. So, just understanding.

Robin [18:22] That’s important. Ok if there's nothing else you want to add, I think that's it for the long answer.

3.2 Norine Saddleback Interview

Interviewee: Norine Saddleback (Pekîwe Cultural Lodge - Female Oskâpewis)
Date: August 30, 2021
Location: Louis Bull, Maskwacis

Robin [00:00:00] Okay. We're good to go. So, before we start if you just want to introduce yourself.

Norine [00:00:06] Ok, I'm Norine Saddleback. I was married last August so I go by my legal name, Norine Littlechild today. Kîsikâw acahk iskwew nitisîyihkâson. DayStar is my Cree name, and I am Day Star Woman.

Robin [00:00:28] Ay hiy. So, for this interview here, the first question is - just if you're able to explain a little bit about the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge in Pigeon Lake, what you know about it, what happens there, and its importance.

Norine [00:00:49] Pekîwek. I watched it grow. It was a place to gather where you had hope. You had that place where you felt like there was people who cared and didn't judge you. Coming as a recovering alcoholic, my uncle used to mentor me, and that's Ken. Kens coined the term - to be a warrior with a heart - and he always used to tell us that as his nieces and nephews. Be a warrior with a heart, you know? And I think that that really if you get to know me, I'm pretty –one of those - what color did they say, I think I was orange? I think, I'm real, I feel it and I'll do it. And when I say I do it, I make sure in my head I can manage it. And in my heart, I always know that I want to do that. And so Pekîwek is something of a home in Pigeon Lake that our family, thanks to Dawn, we're able to go and just be in a place of pure awe and pure bliss. They advocate for anybody. And that's rare. It is. I've worked on two national committees. I served the various leaderships in Indian Country from Treaty Seven, Six and Eight, and I really enjoy what I do. At the end of the day, Pekîwek needs to be a place, a central place, like a homing beacon. That's what for me, what Pekîwe means. It's a beacon to come, when you're, because you're always invited. It's not someplace, you know, it's not for homeless. I have nothing against homeless people, but it's a place where if somebody needs to heal and they are ready and willing and able, to pick themselves up,

dust themselves off and say, I commit myself to the Creator, and to the tasks I need to serve. I need to be a good server now. And Ken is just that. He's a servant, but he's a leader. And I took my master's in leadership and administration. And we say, we call that servant leadership. And people sometimes don't like that term because it seems like, oh, you're a servant, you're beneath. That's the Western ideologies that we put in our heads as academics. When you say that from your heart, oskâpewis. Keyâpic anima my uncle, he's still an oskâpewis, He goes to serve any Elder without - He's so humble - No questions - He goes. And that type of knowledge is accumulated over years - It's not - and decades. It's not given to you on a silver platter. You earn that. And people need to come to an understanding that we're limited in numbers. When it comes to going to get - even for a feast locally here - people are scrambling. And yet here, here's you know - him too. I find he's everywhere all the time. And my part, is pray for him. When he says we need cooks, that's what I've been taught is, when I can, I always try to make time, you know, for my uncles. Because of what they invested in me. I wouldn't be where I am today without their guidance because each and every one of us gets lost somewhere some time. But for your family to reconnect you and say, I know you're over there. Get over here, we need to talk. Yeah, I know. And that's very rare. And I didn't know that. Because I've had friends' struggle. And not have that type of family values. And here's Ken giving it all to anybody who walks through the door. So here I said, I'm getting emotional, but it's hard to watch him as a young elder gets scrutinized from all of the decades, he's invested his time into Indigenous knowledge. And that's what I'm here for.

Norine [00:06:09] When they asked me to have an interview. I thought, He's the one. There are so many of them, my uncles that have mentored me and told me. I have to do it now. And so, I did. I went on my merry way. I did at a national level. I sat on two environment major pipelines, the Enbridge Line three, which is shut down now, and the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Project. I sat as an Indigenous advisor. I met with Trudeau like this, face to face and I told him, I shared. But most of all, I had to tell him, the messages I had received across Canada from so many elders. You know, I had the honor of working with Elder Creshane and the knowledge, if I had him and Ken in a room, you know, I probably just sit there for 12 nights, 12 days of the whole Creation story and let them absorb. Because what he said, and what Ken says, anishinabee to the nehiyawak. What a lineage. And I had the honor of sharing that with you today. That Treaty partnerships are just that, whether we're in Treaty 1,4, 6 or Nisga'a. We as Indigenous people always were peace and

friendship. You know, even though we had our differences, the values have always been the same. Family values.

Norine [00:07:58] And Pekîwe is about that. To come home to that, know what it is. What is it, when you are an addict or an alcoholic, or a single parent that's been traumatized by some vicious or random act of violence? If your spouse and you didn't work out, and the children are number one. But you're struggling. That what that place is, it's a place to come get that beacon and show you back to your fire. Because your fire didn't leave. You're still breathing. You're still walking amongst us. We just kind of snap you back hey, in a cultural context, to say this is who we've always been. And somebody somewhere in each Indigenous tribe does that. They have a gift in, whether it's hide tanning like my buddy, Peggy Lee, whether it's Robin Howse here with her quillwork, and Clayton Saskatchewan with his daughters. Somebody somewhere has these talents and these gifts. And that's the thing about the lodge there. I think it's a, it's a hidden gem. It's a diamond in the rough that we just need to advocate for it.

Norine [00:09:27] And they need that space to be able to grow like any other business that's flourishing. They don't even have room there. You know, right now for some of those things, we need to be able to do the horse dances, you know, the bear lodges. There are a lot of things that need to happen out there, and they need some space to be able to do that.

Norine [00:09:47] Where I come from in my 17 plus years of consultation related and land activities, oil and gas negotiations. Oh. I was forced at a young time in my career, many about 20 years ago, we were hit by the Federal Water Act. And Canada came and said, we own the water, its ours, you know. And here we had honored them with that name. Canada, kanâta, ekikanâtakoki kitaskînaw. The land was clean. And they dishonor their own name today. And I'm not one to shy away from that because I'll go to a hearing, and I'll show you how you impact. And I'll tell you what our socioeconomic impacts have done and led to. And then I and I believe to missing and murdered children even today after too many years of residential school because we were kept away from innovation, because we were told to stay on the reserve, and now they're doing it again here with the reclamation. You don't tell us. They're practicing. Even our own leadership has to stop right now, in the four nations and say, "Do you advocate the same way?" And I'm not being

disrespectful. If that was an old church on that very site, would we advocate the same way? I want to know. And I want that same respect. Because not too far down the road from Pekîwek is all the bodies rushing into the lake, because we can't expand the cemetery. We, the Maskwacis Cree, need to look at land planning. And if somebody like Ken and Dawn who are sober. The sobriety is years there, round them up. There over 100 years I bet, in one home. And so, why not support people who are finding their own moneys, using their own resources, and holding people to their identity and their language and the old way of life. And I know that we can still survive, which we did.

Norine [00:12:21] They actually helped during the pandemic. Ken and Dawn were the ones where you went over there, for skunk Juice. They delivered it without question, without protocol. They knew we were in a pandemic. And nobody said thank you. I am saying Thank you. I was sick. My whole house fell like dominos. And we were sick. And I did everything they said. Wash your hands. Don’t leave. And only me and my husband went out. The kids never saw out the gate for I don't know how many months. You know, and I was doing that, too, because of the family values that they share with us. I was getting food from my uncle Leonard and Julie or from superstores and delivering them to homes in and around the community during the early stages of the pandemic because people were getting hungry. And they couldn't have jobs. People were losing jobs, you know. And so Pekîwek is not only the socioeconomic component and the value they've already brought to our community knows kind of herbs, those kinds of herbalists, those kinds of medicine men. Need to be praised for their accomplishments. And as a couple, they work darn hard. You know, Dawn needs a lot of credit because she's the one doing some skinning, the cutting, the mixing, and the boiling innards. That's the traditional way of. I understand. Even in the Christian way. We are married. They're married. They're a couple. And it's no different from life to the environment as Indigenous people. We are in the environment. We are. We are the kids and. When you came to me, I had to really step back and think, how long was I actually doing this? Why would they ask me?

Norine [00:14:46] In 2000, I was hit with the Water Act and became a policy analyst for Samson Cree Nation. First year out, fresh out of school as a millennium graduate. And I was so proud to graduate in 2000 because I knew it was a turning point. In history, there was going to be innovation. And then when I learned how fast and hard what the Water Act meant across Canada and a lack of

inclusion of our people. I learned that I needed to talk about that and write a law for my nation and send it to them and say, “This is how we manage it. Don't tell us how to manage it”. And I was fresh out of university. That's all I knew. And since then, they've formulated Nipîy Committee over the years. And I've had the honor to work with various scholars in the field of environment science on behalf of Samson and the Reclamation Projects.

Norine [00:15:59] Um. There was a fabulous four in the beginning, I call us, Carol Wildcat, myself, Lorraine White from Louis Bull, Melanie is over there now, Melanie Daniels, Carols still with Ermineskin, I can't remember who is at Montana, but Montana's always been with us in general, and Gena LongJohn and the girls, Leanne Louis. And this journey through this reclamation was not, all it is to me. I have a lot of history on how we were treated actually. And as Indigenous women advocating on behalf of our nations for our lands, the even that, the stigma of “she's just a little --”, I was actually called a squaw on my first meeting. “What do you know, you’re just little squaw.” And this was a land agent. Ahhh Gordon. I still remember his name, Something? Gordon. And he blew my whistles, and I lost it for the first time as a manager and I told him I would be back. And said I needed to consult my leadership on the issue. He said, “You can sign right there on behalf of your nation”. And I said, “I will not”. You are asking me to go and do some work on Mother Earth I'm not cool with, you know, and I'm not the decision maker. So, I've had 12 plus years on this one project.

Norine [00:017:40] We formulated the Pigeon Lake Reclamation Committee because it had to be the four bands. It is a four-band project. The bands came together. Mom talked about the history. Um, but of course there's BCRs I came across over the years, we sold that village. And so, I am kind of concerned about where and how people interpret information. And it's up to the leadership to communicate that, not us technicians, you know. And we're here to support leadership to do good work. And I've always been like that, and I believe in the leadership. But we also have treaty partners. Those treaty partners are Indian Oil and Gas Canada. Indian Resources Canada, the Buffalos, Stephen Buffalo, and his group there, my cousin Stephen Saddleback works over there.

Norine [00:18:45] And so we put a fire under Canada as their fiduciary responsibility to Tech team had said. Put up the money because you have done damage. Prove it? Well, I think that was a dumb

thing to do because we did eventually prove it. We got some funding, and we pushed for the funding. And we know there's a lot of contamination. The other thing is that the water. Is if we need water, we don't look at Pigeon Lake as a hub for future water, clean water use. We need to do that. To protect our interests in this, and this reclamation project has damaged groundwater that we could have relied upon into the future. And that's the things people like me want to know. Not the soft stuff, “do you want berry trees, do you want…”, And that's a given. You got to do it anyway or get out. Because if you don't fix it, there are consequences. There are damages, long term. And who advocates for that on our behaves?

Norine [00:20:05] As I would deem this a sacred site. I would. If I was an archeologist, Head of Alberta Culture, Valerie, Kanagas team out there. They need to come and do a site assessment here and be on the team here. Because there's the federal lands responsibility that IOGC and the leadership have done. In my humble opinion, they've done what they could to get us to where we are today to clean it. We know it needs cleaning. Okay.

Norine [00:20:40] And that's the part that's hard given take sometimes of industry impacts. Maybe they want to leave it just exactly as it is, knowing full well it's contaminated. But what if right now Pekîwe has the option of digging out that dirt and coming to transplant even cedar trees. Bring home cedar. This was the boreal forest, we had cedar. What happened is we got so much industry and agricultural development that it changed the species. Period. It's evolution. And so. So goes the story of the herbs. So goes the story of the fish. Because there's a little creek. If you go across along the road there by Pekîwe, right across the ditch on the other side of the road, there was an actual creek there, it still runs today. It's like this tiny and this deep. But that thing was a creek, I think it was called Maskwa Creek. And the elders talked to me over the years. So many of them wish we could just go over there again and bat them out of the water, as a little girl. We could just bat ‘em out, like a bear. We had that much fish. And they travel through that creek into the lake. You know, and there were two outlets I remember at Camp one, we used to watch the whitefish just come out of at that culvert area. It was just amazing to see how many fish. And I bet you I was like 6, 4-6 years old. We always made an effort to go out there in the summer. My dad did. My late dad. Because he was so proud that we had, he said. He called it lakefront lake front properties. He always had a sense of humor. And my dad. And he'd say, “just imagine if we built all these cabins

ourselves. Just imagine if we built cabins here and we rented them out". You know, he had big dreams. He was actually there for that, that administrator.

Norine [00:23:04] He even used to talk about the airplanes coming through Maskwacis and going through Pigeon Lake out there because of their contamination of the jet fuel and Indians should be fighting for that airspace. Because we didn't give it up. He said, "you know, beneath and below, it was only the depth of the plows". So, in my humble opinion I think that we, Pekîwe, need a very strong advocacy.

Norine [00:23:36] The other site that was a cultural use area. Two of them. I know one is by the dump. There's a Sundance right there. The other one is by the playground, right by the rec center. That was actually where they used to have their powwows and the recreation stuff. I remember that because my little brother here, Harrison, was initiated at that powwow. Yeah. And so, they put a playground there, not too far from the grand entry area. And so, what happened? That became another oil company's headache because it was so contaminated, we had so much spillage. There are days out there when I was doing walks, I could smell I could smell the downwind from some of the sites that are currently and still active out there. Um.

Norine [00:24:40] But the berry patches around those lease sites are done, they are few and far in between and they actually used to have blueberries out there. Now they don't. And so, even by the cemeteries, there's no monitoring of things. So, I don't know if young people would know if they were not with an elder, "Don't eat those berries. That's formaldehyde, those are dead bodies". So, we were told during our studies that needed to be communicated. Do I see any signage? Do I? No. We were told, those are in your guys' meeting minutes. So, if you don't want to do it over there and give us a guardianship program, a long-term investment of these things, I'm going to go into some of the history I have talked about. The Chiefs came together, apparently, and did some work. And that's what's happening today. It took our chiefs to get together and push. I guess after I left, I don't know what happened. All I know is they came together. I was listening to a lot of this on the radio and the communicates. Because it forced, over the years, everybody out of there. There it's said was so contaminated. At one point, it looked like a desert. With the blow down happening across the

street, where the big buildings were. Where Vinny and them all work, Vinny and Terry Ermineskin, they all worked out there.

Norine [00:26:30] And I think we have two maybe, Indigenous reps, Al Little Poplar, was kind of a liaison too, he was an operator. We never had more than 5% of Indigenous representation, so nobody knew the industry at the end. Nobody was mentored and nobody was invested in. There was no college fee fund paid, no scholarship bursaries. And yet these are major world global companies that are right in our back doors, not one. And we asked for scholarship programs. Invest in the language, Mom said today. Yeah, we got a pamphlet that has syllabics. But anyway, you know, we've got some work to support, this process, but it's taken 20 plus years. And that's what change is about, change management.

Norine [00:27:30] How well do you manage change? Even us as the Maskwacis Cree. I watched change as a young girl. From having, I can go to the bank and make $1,000 deposit from a special payroll money cheque at 14,16. My mom and I were depositing five grand by the time I turned 16, I could afford a truck. Like, seriously, I had. I only had no use, I was in school, but I was getting these pays. And mom was always a good manager, you know. And so, I didn't know what to do with this stuff. I just kept going to school. But all the years I watched that place deteriorate, my friend's parents weren't working, that place looked like sand dunes, people began addictions were rampant, and then the violence escalated. We've had some really scary deaths out there where addictions and alcohol were the major cause. That was really traumatizing to know, you know, some of the things went into the incidents out there. And what are we going to do about that?

Norine [00:28:52] You know, what are we going to do about? The safety of people out there if you don't have a beacon of hope? What do you do? What? What ball? What weights? You know, what programs? I commend the staff out there for doing what they do because they're trying with such limited resources. And yet here's major companies, who can't buy us basketballs for the kids. Like come on. I've been here a while. We've asked for some of this stuff. Where does it go? Let's not have deaf ears when it comes to our cry out. And you can send this to them, Robin if you want, to Alberta Culture and Tourism, come and fund the Lodge, come, and do the site. Come and help us protect that site as a sacred site.

Norine [00:29:48] After and this whole post pandemic, and now we got a delta variant in the house. Right here in Maskwacis, so people are going COVID Mad. I don't know what the other terminology for it, but people are mad. I think you're gone full blown addictions, or you've gone full blown depression, or you're a gamer, or you're a hard worker who is just so overworked. Or your kid just doesn't know why I can leave the house. My daughter went through that. She got COVID, it hit her twice. She was home for six weeks straight in her room. We built her a ladder to come down on the tree so she could go for a walk. Go have a smoke. Take a break. But see there is a mental health crisis we're affected with. I as a parent, as a grandma, I see it.

Norine [00:30:44] And with no safe houses here in Maskwacis, for people, what are we going to do? And over there, at least if you're ready to fast, do your fast to help clear your mind and get yourself ready for the next phase of your life, there's Pekîwek. You know, we're not there just to sober people up. I disagree. I think when you're there, is when you're going through your whatever phase it is in your relation, your sobriety, your addiction, whatever, in mind, and becoming a young man. I'm an innocent young man. I need somewhere to go learn about how to be a man. Those kinds of activities are happening there. And that's a cultural camp, an everyday culture camp, if you ask me. You know, and I think they should integrate that into the MESC program. If you're going to say land-based teaching, right there buddy IS land based teaching at its finest, you'll never get nothing better.

Norine [00:31:56] Um. There are other people who do land-based teachings. I respect that. But when it comes to living it and having done your PhD for it. And not just one or two. To me, it's very important as a researcher and as an advocate or an academic. I don't go to one Elder, and I'm not being disrespectful. I'm going to say what I have to say today because it's my space, and these are my ethical spaces. So, I go to various Elders the way that my uncles have and always did. That's why we have so much extended family. I can go to Thunderchild and have somewhere to sleep. I can go to Saskatoon, I have somewhere to sleep. There's family. And I married a man who now has family in Saskatchewan. I didn't even know that, right, when I met him. And how he's now got that Indian name. And they ask questions to us now, what do you guys do? You know, when I invite them, because I think it's everywhere. It's not just Maskwacis. I've been, everywhere, man, for a

little bit here looking at the various communities and I think creator does that for a reason to someone that says, go see, go do. Jim O'Chiese told me, Ken told me. Leonard told, oh my gosh. And they are like, "You need to go tell our story. You need to go and tell people what this whole gift of knowledge, Indigenous knowledge is". You know, there shouldn't be just one head Elder there in our school or land-based teaching systems. There's never one. Look at you, got the quilling, Robin. So does, there's Clayton. And that's already two directions I can go. That means there's two more and the other two that I could go find. Because we're fours, we do everything in four.

Norine [00:34:00] Such as this land, we need to work together as the four Maskwacis Cree nations and protect this area. It's a cultural outlet. And that for me, that's what it is. If I need a sweat, uncle, suppose I'm going. Oh, he shouldn't be posting that on social media. You shouldn't be showing your boobs. You shouldn't have your shirt so skimpy. Social media, you choose what to post. It's your space. It's your social profile. And so. For me, it's a motivator and I'm already motivated by it because its outcomes based. It's a needs-based place, but its already outcomes based. And people can say, no, it's not. Oh yes, it is. I've seen people turn sober there. I've seen the light in a child's eye when they're told what their Indian name is. I've seen people, the women, come out of the sweat and just, you can see that stress relief. And they're very Respectful. And that's one thing. My brother is dying. He's LGBTQ. Sick, sick, sick right now he's in phase four. And even that, I forgot to tell him to go see Ken. Maybe that's somewhere he should go spend the- after his chemo - maybe he should spend the night there. Just spend the night in the lodge by the fire.

Norine [00:35:45] Because we have such limited resources, whether it's for mental health, whether it's post-traumatic symptoms. Maskwacis Health needs portals for Indigenous knowledge inclusion. And if Saddle Lake can do it, we can do it. We just need to find ways to partner and work together. But first and foremost is that protection and prevention and conservation of that area that we're talking about. Because it has good vibes. You know, I would love to have a needs based or a gap analysis done on that, and I would love to see it integrated by Alberta Energy Regulator and the Canadian Energy Regulator. They've changed policy recently. They have money. And what innovative partnership that would be between industry, the government, the energy people to render guardianship programs for the long term. That's what Ken and them are doing. They're guardians, they're protectors and they want to do it for the rest of their lives. They've already invested in it. So,

they can ask us for equity. We have the people. We got the resources. We are always here for him. And it would be nice to have salaries. But right now, we're all unemployed and we do what do because it's how we're built. And it's how we were told we had to do it.

Norine [00:37:35] And so the current system of governance here, whether it's the Maskwacis Cree Tribal Council that brings us to the table, whether it's Samson Cree Nation and Ermineskin Cree Nation. Because Dawn's Ermineskin, Kens Samson. They have the highest populations out there in terms of space and occupancy. But even that that's a true partnership. There is a fiduciary responsibility and responsibility to do this anyways. Canadian Energy Regulators brand new. They don't even know how to talk to the Alberta Energy Regulator. And I tell you, people like me, we have friends in those kinds of places that need to talk to each other. Because right hand and left hand, and we're right in the middle nearest to their hearts. So, if it's us that has to bring you guys together, I think policy wise and governance wise, that's something that's an easy fix.

Norine [00:38:40] But when it comes to the impacts of that remediation project, I'm going to be honest. And I think my uncle and everybody is, I think they should dig out what's there. Leave the trees intact with all the print around so it's maintained. Take out that contaminated dirt. Because you do have the responsibility to do that. And if we don't do it, what happens is it migrates. You can clean the one beside it and not this one and 10 to 1. Within five years it's migrated again. That's why it's so important to dig it out right now. I'm not an expert in the environment. What I've done is I've educated myself through various conferences, ESA Environmental Services of Alberta. For me, I'd like them to have a cedar farm there because we have no cedar locally. I think that's a plan. And they need to have a walking trail over there. And just like we do in Maskwacis, I've heard Pigeon Lake Elders and people, even the kids, you know, recognize Laron Northwest's Group, you know that Kyra, Kaylyn. They got four playgrounds, and they made sure one went to Pigeon Lake. Health wise, you know, as they're cleaning this, it doesn't hurt to put a little bit of asphalt in each lease site to connect one to the next one. You know, why not do it while you're there? Save us some money and invest in our community, because eventually I see that building into a tourism trail.

Norine [00:40:47] You know what? Pekîwek is dead center in the middle of a Parkland Area. It's called Parkland Zone in the municipal terminology. Parkland Zone means you don't build things in

a park. But they keep building. And when they build in a Pigeon Lake, they are always going around the reserve. They leave us out of clean water. They've left us out. They left us out of the waste and wastewater treatment plants. And what happened? They had to stop because they got on to the reserve. And so now they're asking, “Hey, ah, do you want to plan?”. Land planning means planning with your neighbors because we have to live beside each other for the rest of our lives. So that's our next kids and our next kids. And if you don't know how to be a treaty partner, why don't you go home? Go home where you came from and give it back. Because you sure don’t, or we sure don't see that money. Mom here over there is worse. They turn on their taps. And you know what? You light a fire, and you get a big boom. That's Pigeon Lake housing. How is it? They're in third world living conditions and nobody says boo about it. So as for me, you know. All industry, or these AECOMS must do, is build that same Peace Hills pure water oxidization treatment. That's right here in Wetaskiwin against the wall. Go build one at the Rec Center in Pigeon Lake so they have clean water, every day, for the rest of their lives. That is doable. That is an investment. Until we get clean water out there again. Because the clean water you damage as not AECOM, but as the many different oil and gas companies over there. This one is Imperial Oil, I know that. They’ve had the most lease sites, 40 plus lease sites. So, you did the most damage. It's just common sense.

Norine [00:43:04] Those environmental impacts caused these socioeconomic impacts. People are dying of cancer out there. And nobody is looking at the impacts of the traditional diet to our Maskwacis Cree people in Pigeon Lake. Nobody looked at what happened when the fish left. No different than when the buffalo left in the plains. This was our staple, and it was gone. So, if treaty partnerships are just about that peace and friendship, peace and friendship. It doesn't mean take it, and not fix it properly or holistically. It means protecting the best interests. It’s your fiduciary responsibility as the IOGC and IRC here. So that community land planning they're doing there, just a reminder, that's a parkland zone. And so, as a designated Parkland Zone, they were left out. We don't even have –Nipîy Committee should be funded just like the Pigeon Lake Watershed Advisory Committee. They should all be getting equal amounts of funding. If you have a water advocacy, not just because you're in a city, city of Red Deer, Red Deer Watershed, something, society. They get funded over almost a million bucks a year. Look at their budget. Us as Nipîy Committee, we're lucky if we get to have a water ceremony funded. And so, these kind of governance systems and things like that, that's part of that community planning, but it's also the Canadian Energy Regulator's

duty. And in there it says monitoring, in that Canadian Energy Regulating. But they haven't told us yet how they have been monitoring this particular project. Right now, they need us. They need us to oversee this Indigenous Monitoring piece for the longer term. Because we're grassroots advocacy, they live out there. And all the damages, Here's Pekîwek, that gives you that sense of at least a little bit of balance, in a human socioeconomic context.

Norine [00:45:36] And so I think that for me, I tried to encapsulate your major questions, so that when the next time the elders speak, it speaks on that home front that environmental impacts have impeded many of the dietary herbs. When we were even out there, we thought we found an old scraper. The problem was, in and around Pekîwek, there's so much silent dumping nobody's talking about. And we had to advocate for that, too. You can ask Samson Cree Nation. We took the elders. We were finding piles of dump, of concrete, of old rocks and stuff that had been dug up. And so, this one in particular object was an actual old scraper. And nobody wanted to say, you know. It was more like, Norine's not an archeologist: What does she know? You know? And I thought, wow, I should have taken it at that time to the Alberta Culture. You know, there's a lot of history in that small area. It was actually the hub for the trading of the herbs. Um, we don't do that anymore. Some of us do. But I know for me, I can go there now. I can go to Pigeon Lake and get the mint, and get, you know, whatever I need when we need it. And that's the good thing about having a home like that.

Norine [00:47:20] Pekîwe means bring it home. And so, it's incumbent upon all of us to play a role in Pekîwek. As a family, we take our hearts to him, I do. If he showed us something, if I can't get it, I'll work again. Make some connections. But for the most part, though, they have built their resources on nature's law. And I think that's what a warrior with a heart is. I think that's what Ken is. I think, and I know, that's what Dawn is. You know, I don't know how she does it, but she does it. I think Indigenous women need that, to know, how powerful their energies are. And when you're with Dawn, you want to work. You want to be part of whatever she's doing, you know? And she just radiates, and emanates that love, we're humankind. So, I don't mean to cry again. It's just when I think about that. I think that our generation, because I'm right behind them, it's our generation that has to step up. And I know many of us were told that. Even me, I was told, you got to step up because there is not enough Elders with that knowledge. And I went into hiding since May. I just

needed to be well, I did. And I'm so wowed today that everything makes me happy cry. So, like, what's wrong with me? So now I learned, I left first phases of menopause as a woman, and that's going to be a new journey. And that's where I'm going to go over there to learn about it, because I know when I ask them, they'll find somebody to help me through that phase in my life. And I know my mom's here and Auntie Rose and Lorna.

Norine [00:49:25] But the other thing I'd like to end with is: Don't tucker out my relatives, whoever, wherever you are. I love them, too. And I have lots to learn that I know they need to transfer to some of my sons, nieces, and nephews, and stupid us weren't listening. We're here today, we are listening, and I am in a happy place of my life with the family, and I've been honored to be a part of that. It's my turn. And I told them that I'm home now. I'll quit being a wandering spirit. And if it means advocating for this, and other cultural use areas in Maskwacis for the Maskwacis Cree and our children, because we're all related. We're all related here. I will do it. I would stand. I used to tell my council that I'd stand in front of a bulldozer. Do you want me to go pitch up a tîpî over there? Because I'll stay in and I'll fast, you know? And I mean it. That's just how much Mother Earth means to me. ME That's what she spells in non-indigenous is ME. Nîya, no different in the translation. Mother Earth is the acronym. Me means nîya. Nîya means I am. Nî-ya. And so, as you learn your language, Pekîwek, will demand you to learn your language as you go. And because you had such a nice, safe place to be, it just comes naturally. And that's what I like about Pekîwek, they really mean it, and those are warriors with a heart working out there. And we'll do what we can as a family to support that mission, because it's a mission that we all have to take. If we want to be well, and if we don't want to forget who we are. Ay hiy kinanâskomitin. If you have other questions, I am willing to take them.

Robin [00:51:41] Hmm. You answered all my questions and then some. I didn't even have to say anything. Ay hiy, I thank you so much. It was really beautiful.

Norine [00:51:50] Oh, you're welcome. Yeah, I think that's it. I mean, I just, I hope that they can all work together again to support Ken and Dawn in that next phase of their process, because there's a lot of funding out there. And I think that they should be. I really do. If it's about land-based teachings, whatever you guys this next journey is and who's ever, you know, thank you for the gift

today. I really appreciate that. I'm not working, and I need that for groceries. And so, I go and do some of these things today. I was in three meetings. It was a good day. It was a good day. Kinanaskomitin, Robin for your work. Keep it up.

3.3 Sheena Yellowbird-Hartman Interview

Interviewee: Sheena Yellowbird-Hartman (KD Farms Co-Founder)

Date: January 24, 2022

Location: Samson, Maskwacis

Robin [0:00] Okay So the first question I have is can you tell me a little bit about KD farms and its importance to you?

Sheena [0:12] It started off as just a desire to be able to provide for our family, have constant food, produce, accessible and coming in, and then having higher quality and organic. And then we are seeing that there was an opportunity or more interest in it for our community. As well as the desire to be able to produce that, or offer that, to community members. So, kind of what started as our own desire for our family then grew too being able to look after our community as well.

Robin [0:55] Awesome. So, another question I have here: So, a lot of my research is about the importance of healing through land-based practices. So how do you see KD Farms being a part of being, based in Samson, and operating for the community members of Samson, do you see that as being a healing land-based practice? And if you do, how would you explain that?

Sheena [1:30] So for us I guess it begins, the end result is yes healing through land-based practices. But I guess for us the first and foremost thing is healing the land. The use of pesticides and herbicides for a vast number of years has stripped soil quality and nutritional value of produce. So here at KD Farms our goal is to keep everything organic and heal the land through, I guess what nature intended. Our animals are used to turn over soil, to fertilize soil which in turn then as a person who is utilizing any produce, it comes from the farmers in turn healing as well. We kind of, our goal is a back to nature approach. So, using what nature has given us to then contribute to our produce quality. Everything that's coming from our farm is humanely raised with nutrition at the root, I guess.

Robin [2:50] Thanks. Yeah so, you're talking a bit about how you want to see the land healed or restored. Another big part of my thesis research is looking at environmental impacts of industry and

in this case, I guess agriculture. So, have you noticed any changes in the health of the land or this place over your lifetime since you've been here? And if so, what are some signs and signals that the place may be healthy or unhealthy?

Sheena [3:23] Absolutely. We've recently done some soil tests. The results were evident that the soil has been stripped of any nutritional value or nutrients. As well as the water quality. So, it's been proven that there's a lot of leaching into the soil from herbicides and chemicals used on the land. Especially here on reserve. A lot of our wells are situated within the field that is being sprayed on. So, the leaching into the soil is then affecting water quality. As well as where we're at, you don't typically see any wildlife. And I feel like personally that is a huge sign. if you don't see wildlife inhabiting the land that you're on its kind of a red flag, their avoidance of it because there's nothing useful for them even there.

Robin [4:30] Yes, I totally agree. So, another question I have based on that is - how do you see these impacts affecting the community or your family or the people who live here?

Sheena [4:48] Specifically in our community, everybody, the land is leased. And the people that leased the land, their desire to have a flourishing quarter section if you will, is non-existent. It kind of comes back to greed. So, I feel like I'm straying away from the question -

Robin [5:40] That’s alright - there's no right or wrong answer. So, like the impacts like from the pesticide and the fungicide, and the herbicide use - and how that's - you know you've seen changes in the land - less wildlife here. How does that affect you, your family, or your community here? Does that impact your quality of life? Does that impact your family's quality of life?

Sheena [5:46] So as a mother my goal is and will always be to give my children the best chance they have at a flourishing life. We've tried to eliminate as many chemicals in our life as possible. Um it's kind of, it kind of puts a damper on it when all the land surrounding us is being used, it's being stripped by chemicals. Which yes in turn affects my family personally. As well as the community. I don't think anybody really realizes the impacts of chemicals. Whether it be infertility in women, or carcinogens. The education isn't quite there for them to realize what it is impacting

their life. But for me personally, as far as quality of life, I'm striving to give my children the best quality of life possible. And keeping them free of chemicals and different things that might harm them. The use of chemicals sprayed on the land. And there's no regulation for it. Usually typically in different counties there's a there's regulations. Where it's anything pertaining to reserve there's no regulation as to what types of chemicals they can use, or in what amounts. So yeah, it absolutely affects me personally, as well as the community, whether or not they're aware of it or not.

Robin [7:18] I totally agree. So, with KD Farms, you guys are trying to utilize organic methods to reduce that impact that is being had on the land through large scale agriculture in this area. So, building off that I guess, my question is - Moving forward, you guys are working in this kind of bubble to do your part, but how do you see, how would you like to see this land be reclaimed in a way, from large scale agriculture? It sounds like you guys have some really good ideas locally for your family, but do you see that like expanding in Maskwacis anywhere?

Sheena [8:07] Long term I guess that's our hope and desire. It started off specifically as a need or desire for our family, but here we hope to open the door to education. Whether it be on a personal level with different families in the area or if we're able to incorporate the bands as well. To see what we're doing and if it can be utilized throughout all Four Nations here in Maskwacis. We hope to educate people as well. They can take it back to their families. And it's really quite simple. I mean it doesn't take a whole lot to have an organic garden or to raise chickens or what not to be able to provide for their own families. But we're hoping that it kind of catches fire in a sense. That families in the band see the potential in it and really the longevity of it. Food scarcity is a big thing. If people have the knowledge to be able to look after their families, I see the community flourishing for it.

Robin [9:21] I totally agree. I guess I just have one other question. You kind of touched on all my questions in your answers. So, trying to wrap it up a little bit here. My last question to you, the only one left is: Is there anything I didn't ask you or mention that you think is important to share about what you guys are doing here at KD Farms? Or how it can be beneficial to not only your family but the community of Maskwacis?

Sheena [9:59] I think you asked everything, and it was kind of answered. But I guess something to elaborate a little bit on would be um our desire to reach out to different groups or focus groups within the community. To basically have an open center where people can come get their hands dirty, back to healing on the land. And I mean if you're reaping the benefits of your labor and you're in touch with, you know you get your hands dirty and, in the garden, and you start from sowing the seeds to harvesting the garden and you're 100% involved in that. There is knowledge to be learned, as well as healing with that, so I think for us it's a big importance to bring that back to our community. And have an open place where people can come. And if they're willing to learn then there's a wealth of knowledge that we're willing to give them.

Robin [11:08] That is awesome. Well thank you so much for your time. That's all the questions I had. I'm going to stop there.

3.4 Patrick Buffalo Interview

Interviewee: Patrick Buffalo (Founder, Manaciso Healing with Horses)

Date: December 22, 2021

Location: Wetaskiwin

Robin [00:00:00] All right, it's going. So, the first question is, can you tell me about your work and its importance to you?

Patrick [00:00:15] OK, so my work is based on wellness and healing. And it's very important to me, because basically, it's been my mission in life for the last 30 years. So, I see a huge need for healing. But often times, it seems like people don't want the healing. So that's what I do. And recently, I've incorporated in the last five years, the healing energies of the horse spirit.

Robin [00:00:59] All right. So, with the horse spirit and the horse healing that you do, how does this impact you and your community? How does it help you and your community?

Patrick [00:01:23] OK, so when we look at wellness and healing, definitely, it is a community issue living in Maskwacis all my life, and I'm 64 years old. So, I've been exposed to the community all my life and I'm not planning to go anywhere. I'll be here for the rest of my life. But what happens in the community, although we're huge, probably close to 18,000 people and many of us are related. And the younger people, younger generations, I can't say I know them, but definitely the older generations. And where each person has a grandparent that I would obviously know. And it does become a community situation like 1,000% of the work I do is based on community and it's the families. It's families that make up community. And historically, I believe that okawimaw, the mother, the matriarch is the glue that keeps family together. And in my family, in 1992, my mother passed away. And when she passed away, my oldest sister stepped into that role to be the okawimaw to keep family together. Then she passed away in 2005 and nobody has stepped in. So, our family todays fragmented. And I see that right across the majority of the community, where the families do not understand the roles, especially the matriarchal role, because I believe that we are a matriarchal society. And part of the problem is that foreigners have changed the way we think. And because of that, our foundation has been shattered as a healthy community. I remember a healthy

community when I was young that everybody was healthy. Everybody's active. There was no cancer, there was no diabetes, there was no poverty, there was no addictions, everybody was healthy. And we've strayed away from that because we don't know ourselves. So, identity is very important.

Robin [00:04:23] Definitely. So, you talked about some of the changes in the health of the people and how you see it becoming more of an unhealthy space. So how does your work with the horses aim to shift that?

Patrick [00:04:40] OK, so I think, culturally, the horse has been with our people forever. And our people understand natural law and they understand spirituality. So, it's not the horse as a four-legged animal. It's the spirit of the horse that is the sacred aspect. And that's where the healing comes from, is the sacredness of the horse spirit.

Robin [00:05:17] Yes, so talking about the sacredness of the horse spirit, and how that is important for people to connect to, in order to heal the broken links and the community or the families. And one of the words, that's important to here in these interviews that I've talked a lot about is Pekîwe. And I've asked the people I've interviewed, what does that word mean to them? What does that word mean to you?

Patrick [00:05:50] OK, so, of course, the word means to come home, Pekîwe, means to come home. So, there's so many different aspects of coming home. So, like I've heard, yesterday was December 21st and that's the rebirthing of the sun. And I've heard somebody say, pîsim epekîwet. That means the sun is coming home, is expressing how the sun is coming back, meaning the days get longer. The sun stays with us longer. So even in looking at the sun coming home is applicable. But as a horse spirit, I believe that the horse spirit can play a role in bringing a person home to himself. That oftentimes in the work I do, people say I feel lost. I'm feeling empty. And what does that mean? So, if a person is feeling lost, I truly believe that people soul can become fragmented. In my experience, in my life, when my brother died, a big part of me died with him. And that's how we lose ourselves is through loss, which becomes grief. And in relationships, somebody breaks her heart, or somebody is violated, and they're attacked, they're beaten up or even sexually assaulted,

they lose a big part of themselves in that assault. Through trauma in a person's life, we lose ourselves big time. So, pekîwe, we ask the horse spirit to go and find those parts of you that you have lost, and the horse spirit will bring you back home. Meaning that the soul is retrieved. The soul is brought together to become one again with the spirit that we are. It's very applicable in everything we do. I know the elders talk about calling what they would say our spirit home, I prefer to say soul. We would call our soul back into our heart. So, we become whole and based on my own personal experience, I have felt it. The healing is very, very experiential versus academic. That it's not an academic exercise when we do thesoul retrieval using the horse spirit, if a person really feels. So, for me, the way I felt that is that before I did a soul retrieval, that I felt heaviness, I felt sad and depressed every Christmas year end for 55 years. Every time, December 1st rolls around, I feel it that I lose myself during the Christmas time. So, I felt whole. I felt complete, meaning I felt light. I didn't feel the sadness since I've done the soul retrieval ever since I said pekîwe. Pekîwe, you invite yourself back home with the help of the horse spirit and it's real. The person really feels it. So, I have not felt that heaviness since. December 1st rolls around, I feel nothing. December 25th comes around, I feel nothing. I mean, January 1st, December 31st, all the times what people will categorize as a special day. But for many people, those special days come with heaviness and grief. And once I did the soul retrieval using the horse spirit, I have felt nothing. I feel peace. I feel OK. So, really, that's the point. It's real. It's real, pekîwe. Pekîwe, it's not just an academic exercise. And I want to emphasize that because a lot of programs that are designed to be analytical, figure it out, figure it out. “Oh, I can't remember. I can't remember.” You don't have to remember. When you experienced the healing, you don't have to remember the past, what happened, because the reality is right now, right now. So that's part of that being lost is being lost into the past. But to bring yourself back whole in the present time, that's real.

Robin [00:11:24] Definitely.

Patrick [00:11:25] Tapwe

Robin [00:11:28] Thank you so much for sharing that. You kind of answered a bit of my next question because you were talking a bit about how you envision people bringing their spirits back and becoming healthier. So, Maskwacis as a community, how do you envision this place – how do

you envision it being healed or restored? What's your vision with the work you do with the horses and the people? How do you envision that? Like, what's your goal?

Patrick [00:12:06] OK, the goal is for people to be real. So that means that we live by Creator's laws, manitow wiyasiwewin, kisewâtisiwin. So, it's kindness and compassion, that healing is, when you become that. Not just fake it. A lot of people fake their kindness, a lot of people will fake things. But for me, real healing is when you don't have to fake it. Just be, just be who you are. And it's OK to be who you are, regardless of what people think. But more and more people can be awake, this is the key is waking up. We got to wake up to who it is we are, and we have to manage that awakeness. So that's what I would like to see is that people are living it. They're being it and not faking it. Too many times, people will turn to ceremony, people during turn to smudging and they expect the rituals to do it for them. That doesn't. The ritual is there to remind you, that you are creating a sacred space and you got to be that sacredness outside of that sacred ceremony. You leave that ceremony, and that's who you are, is that sacredness. Too many times I see people do the ceremony and after the ceremony is done, they're telling the foul jokes and criticizing people, laughing at people. Well, that's not very sacred, coming out of a sacred circle. That sacred circle has to expand to be inclusive 24/7. It's not just a moment that we become sacred. Then we forget, turn it off. Oh, I did it anyways. That's no different than going to church and being forgiven every week for your sins. Now, this is completely different. We become. That's no better way of saying it. We become; we are. We are that sacredness and doesn't matter who's watching. Doesn't matter. You are who you are, doesn't matter where you are. And also, when people have a job and they're expected to be professional. Well, what does that mean? You are who you are, doesn't matter where you are. And so, if you're hurting, and you come to work, you're not going to shut that hurt off at the door and become professional. No, you got to deal with that. Let's say it's a grief. Somebody informed you that somebody passed away that was close to you and you're feeling it. You're who you are, it doesn't matter where you are. Same thing with that sacredness. It doesn't matter where you are and it's a choice. It's a choice and knowingness, we have to know.

Robin [00:15:29] Just one other question. Are there any words in Cree that you want to share that are important to the work you do with the horses that you would like shared with youth? Or I guess the most important ones if you think there's any that come to mind?

Patrick [00:15:50] Yup. See, the first one I'd always talk about is wâskamisiwin, poko ewâskamisit ayisinew. That means most people believe that means sober up. You got to sober up. But that's not what it means. It means your mind has to be lit, ewâsîyak kimâmitoneyihcikan and that means enlightenment. And what is enlightenment is awakeness. You got to be awake. Too many people are sleeping through their life, sleeping through their life. And oftentimes when a person's asleep, they play the role of victim rather than knowing that we are the co-creator in our life. We're not the creator, but we are the co-creator, we are given choice. Wasikamciwin is a very important word to use in the work I do. Mistatim âtayôhkan is the horse spirit. Mistatim is the horse. So, I think our language, first of all, is not Cree, it's newiyaw. So as newiyaw, I've demonstrated the sacredness of our language, the gentleness of our language. So, as we use our language, wow, it's powerful. Ehmahtawa, like it's a mystery. The power is a mystery like beyond comprehension and that's all encompassing in who we are as newiyawak. That four-part being, called being who we are as a spiritual being, living by the laws of nature, the laws of Creator, the laws written in our heart, that are inherent. So, any of these laws are critical. They're so important. kisewâtisiwin, sâkihitowin, and those are what people refer to as the tipi poles, I think, the teachings of the tipi poles, and that's the basis of who we are as beings. Very, very different. And yet our people have been lulled to sleeping not knowing themselves, not understanding the sacredness of our language.

Robin [00:18:45] That's good. I guess the last question, real last question is, there's anything else you want to share about the work you do? The connection to pekîwe that word, or if there's anything I missed?

Patrick [00:19:03] Yeah. I think based on what you're studying, the environment and the relationship with kikâwinaw askîy, with the land, and the land, kikâwinaw, our mother and the laws of wâhkôhtowin. Wâhkôhtowin is not kinship. It's that connection, to understand the sacredness of that connection, to the earth as the sacredness to the connection of the horse. Or the mountains, asinîwaciy, sîpiy, the rivers, the lakes. So based on what you're studying here with environmental sciences, I think it's very important to really understand, wâhkôhtowin, the connection to it all that we are not above nature. That nature is the law. So, no Trudeau or Trump can dictate, or anybody can create a policy to control the weather or to control a storm, to control the flood. People are

blown away by nature when nature steps up. Whether it's a flood, a hurricane, tornado, or any kind of storm that it's important that we'll know that our ancestors knew the laws, they knew the connection to the elements. That it's important to emphasize that in the work that you do. That it's not just cleaning up for what do you call them? What is the fancy word? Cosmetic features that it looks nice. It’s beyond that, it's beyond that. It's beyond the surface that this work is important. I've seen a comparison between the pipeline that was a forest site where the before and after. So anyways, so yeah, I think I said what I needed to say there.

Robin [00:22:17] ay hiy, Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

3.5 Peggy Lee Interview

Interviewee: Peggy Lee (Co-Founder, Treaty 6 Hide Tanners)

Date: January 24, 2022

Location: Ermineskin, Maskwacis

Robin [00:00:00] All right. So, the first question is, can you just tell me a little bit about your work and its importance to you?

Peggy [00:00:09] OK, so I've been doing hide tanning for 11 years and I'm going on to 12 yearsin 2022. I started doing hides in 2010. We were doing life skills training, Maskwacis Life Skills Training. It was a big grant from Alberta Health Services. It was three-year project. There was a whole group of us that were employed to do the research part of it, which was to go out and get permission from parents for their children to participate in our life skills program, but also be part of the research. So, we had to go around and talk to people. There was a great deal of training that was from non-Indigenous way of thinking. We had a lot of trainings with the university, they kept taking – or bringing facilitators to us, just to have us trained and understand what the work that we were doing. We were spending a great deal of time learning this Western way of thinking. And the principle that was based on our culture is. The whole project was based on this Botman/Gotman life skills or whatever it was called. And they adapted this book that was researched and proven in the United States and all over Canada. It had all these great achievements and was recognized for making a difference. They take that model, and then they wanted to translate it into a Cree way of thought. Everything had to be translated. It took elders a year were at work before we even came along. These elders had been working already for like a year and a half or something on this adaptation. Everything had to be changed into the language, phrases that weren't easily translated, they had to have consultations with all of these elders to come up with the right words to describe those things. It was a very big project for our people. And I was employed as one of the researchers and facilitators. The first three months, like I said, was all this training. And they kept bringing it back to our culture, "What do you know about your culture?" It was on us really to actually know our culture, to actually be active in our communities and wanting to learn our language and learn our ways, that seemed to be as a baseline for us. The requirements of what they were looking for. All these people that we were working with already had this keen interest in our culture and our

language and our practices. it was easy for us to want to be able to teach our ways in our culture and that appreciation to children. Like I said, in the beginning phases, they had us all this training. And one day, my friend and I, we had become close. We said, “Well, where is our learning? This is wonderful and good that you're teaching us the skills to do this research and gather all this data and where it's going to go. But what about us?” Like we're supposed to be teaching our culture and our ways and these things to children.

Peggy [00:03:53] So that seems more important to us. When are we going to make space and time for that? Which was great because the leads on our project, Dr. Lowell [Badala? 00:04:08] and Faye Fletcher, Dr. Faye Fletcher. They were both on that project. And they listened to us. They heard us when we said that. You're like, “You're right. We’re teaching you all these other things. What do you want to learn? What does that look like?” And my friends and I, we just kind of like, “Well, I have just done a workshop that summer with my mom”. And I only been there for a day, at least joined in on her one day and for her workshop where she was fleshing hides and teaching people. And then I mentioned that to the group, I said, “Well that's something I never got to learn. That's something I would like to learn, for me personally.” And I just threw it out there too few people in our work there, our group and they said, “That's a great idea. Why don't we do that?” It was just started from a little conversation. And then we talked to the head researchers, and they said, “Well, great. Can you put something together?” And so, my friend and I, we worked on that together, and we wrote a proposal. And we got funding for that summer. They gave us three weeks of doing to do hide tanning. The university had to speak on our behalf because we wanted to do this. It seemed more important to us to spend that time learning our culture and practicing our ways than learning the Western thoughts.

Peggy [00:05:43] So they gave us that time in the summer, and we spent three weeks. We have been in classrooms for the winter and did our research and our project. We shared what they had given us, they had already completed half of the book by that time. We had enough to start doing our delivery in classrooms. And I was one of the facilitators that was sent to Pigeon Lake. I was born in Wetaskiwin and I was raised in between Ma-Me-O and Maskwacis here in Ermineskin. My dad's family is situated on the lakefront of Pigeon Lake, my grandmother and her two sisters. So, the three sisters were on the lakefront there for my great grandfather, that was his lands. And he had

given that to his – made sure his daughters had a home. I have a lot of family out in Pigeon Lake. It was an easy fit for me to go and delivered in that community. Even though I have been away for many years from there, my family is there. And I'm easily recognized because I look like my mother and my family over there. People automatically knew that I was from there anyway. There was never an issue about that. It was easily accepted for me to just go in and be with my relatives. It was an easy transition for me to be in that school. I made relationships with the Cree teacher, with all the teachers and the principal. It's a very small school there. And there were a less than 100 students at the time, I believe. It was very small, and it was easy to make those connections for me. And so, I think it was a good fit for me. And it made my work easy to do. It made it a lot more enjoyable too because I got to know and meet relatives, my cousin's children or children that were my cousins. It was so funny, because here I am an adult and they're these little eight, nine-year-olds, and they're my cousins. So, it was really nice to make those connections again there. But like I said, it all started from that workshop. We had to write a grant and request that time.

Peggy [00:08:20] And the university paid our wages and made sure that our facilitators were covered. We employed my mother and her partner at the time to come back and teach us how to do these hides. And during the three weeks, we did, I think it was something like seven or eight hides. And it was the hottest time in the summer and working in August. But those three weeks were amazing. It was worth a lot to the group, for all these people that we had been working with for a few seasons. After the three weeks, it seemed like we were on a high. In those three weeks, we became a community. Everybody just naturally fell into their roles. Hide tanning isn't for everybody. Not everybody can stand the smells, or to stand there and work and do the physical labor, but those people would find a place. They would help with preparing meals or bringing wood or running to go get fetch supplies for us. But even just sitting there was like being in good company. Everybody got something out of it. Everybody just naturally took their own place, their own roles. They just fell into where they needed to be. And so, like I said, it became like a community for us. And in those three weeks that we were doing our hide tanning, there's nothing like this out here in our community. When we put up our hide tanning, the word spread. Everybody wanted to know what we were doing, they asked if they could come by. And so naturally, we were quite open and welcoming. There were programs from the health centre. They brought a bunch of youth; they have youth programming there. The nation that we were in was Louis Bull, close to

Highway. There, they sent a bunch of people too from their youth programs, from different workshops. People were just coming by, and we had them sign our guestbook, which was smart, because we're a bunch of researchers, or we have to know, we know to keep current track of all this data. Every day we had a book, a logbook. And whoever was doing whatever roles, we'd fill it in and our guests, we asked our guests to sign our guestbook, every time we had newcomers.

Peggy [00:11:08] And at the end of our three weeks, we had over 100 guests. So that was like a huge thing for us to have that kind of recognition, and to see that it was so welcomed. And people were really curious, genuinely curious about it. And the funny thing about hide tanning is, since then, I've been doing like 10 years, 11 years now. And I'll do a hide tanning on my own time. When I have the time, we'll just bust out a hide, and we'll get to it. I'll usually make an invitation for people, or let it be known amongst my circle. I even put posts up on my social media, like we're doing hides, whatever, a few days of hides. And it's funny, because I'll always get lots of messages and inboxes and people that are curious. And they want to show up. But they don't like. Or if somebody comes for one day, they come and they see how stinky and fleshy and bloody and messy it is. And then they don't come back. And that was how it was before for like 10 years. And then, in this last year, when I started to do hide camps, people come back the next day. People have been coming to do hides with me and they dread having to go back to their work. So, to me, it's grown a lot since that first time versus those three weeks of doing hides. That was wonderful because we were paid to spend time learning and practicing our ways. That was a huge gift that we were given. So, like I said over those years, it has brought a lot of good things and those people that I worked with even, there's only a few of them that want to come out when I'm doing hides. So, it started something in them back then. And they continue to want to learn that stuff, so they want to be a part of it. And yeah, like I said, people have started to come more now that I've started doing the hide tanning, the camps. I think that's been the evolution since starting there and to now being able to do the hide camps. Every year, I was working at another job for many years. And only in the last two years now, since COVID that I've had more time to do my hides. Before it was like I was lucky to get a week off from work. I remember taking time off from work and going to do hides and then I would get calls from work.

Peggy [00:14:24] And I would have to leave my aunt and my cousin whoever was helping us. I'd have to leave them just to go work for a few hours and I'd come back. It was hard to be in that space because I kept having to fulfil my other obligations and my career and the other social work kind of field. It was taking a lot of time away from my life. I wanted to do this so bad that I would just make that time and now That's what I continued to do for 10 years, was just to make my hobby into my work now. So just started out from a little, like I said, a small beginning. And gradually over these years, I realized that I loved it so much, why am I not doing this? Whenever I'm in that space, I've grown so much, and I love it so much. And I've learned every time I do it, every time I go and spend that time, that has been my classroom, learning myself and these natural laws and how to be in community and how to have that relationship, and respect for that animal, and how to have respect and care for the land. There are certain rules that we follow when we do these things. And we have to teach other people those things as well. And so, like I said, every time I go out, there's more lessons to be taught, there's more things to share, and to learn and to grow. Like I said, it's been a long time since I started. And I have other friends that have been doing it almost all their lives. One of my friends, he's only a couple years older than I am. And he's been doing hide since he was like 10, 12 years old with his mom. And like, he's a master hide tanner. I would consider that guy a master hide tanner. He has been doing it for like three decades, at least. And we're about the same age. So that goes to show like I still feel like a novice at times. I still have a long way to go. And yet, I already have so much knowledge. And I feel like, it's not just my knowledge. This was something that everybody had at one time. And I feel like, I have just one small role to play, and to help them to have that information back. This is not mine. I can't keep it. So, like I said, I have to pay it forwardand I have to continue on this path. So yeah.

Robin [00:17:30] That's awesome. You're talking about how a lot of the work you did was out in Pigeon Lake, and you guys worked at the school.

Peggy [00:17:40] When I worked there, yeah.

Robin [00:17:43] Yeah. My thesis work is based around the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge out on Pigeon Lake, the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge. And because of that, one of the questions I have here is, what are

some of the oldest stories you know about Pigeon Lake? And how was this place important to people today in your eyes?

Peggy [00:18:10] OK, so the history, and why is it important to me? And why to share it? Is that what you're saying?

Peggy [00:18:17] OK. I was very lucky to have a family that is deeply rooted in our culture and our language and ceremonies. So not everybody has that. And I think that's what is important about having that identity. You're lucky if you came from that family, but if not, you're still not very that unfortunate. You can learn these things and make them more meaningful in your life. The thing about Pigeon Lake is that is our history. It's a big part of our history here in Maskwacis as Plains Indians, as people that existed here before Treaties. This was our traditional migratory territory. We have a history that's not always included in our children's curriculum. Our children are being raised with a way of thought that isn't our own. And so, in our own families, that's where you get your real Indian education. That's where you learn about Treaties. That's where you learn about your identity. And that's where you learn about the land and the history and all these other things that go with it. Those are things that are not written in books, and you can't expect teachers and schools to educate your children on that. So luckily, my family taught us these things. Like I said, when we go to ceremony or gather, we speak about these things and these histories. It's to have that collective memory so that we remember these things and we will remember people that were tied, so it all connects into our story. Part of the history there is that Ma-Me-O was our fishing camp, was part of our traditional territory. We sort of travelled from the plains here in Maskwacis all the way to Ma-Me-O to Buck Lake and into the mountains. We have sacred sites all along the mountains to Kootenay Plains and Smallboys Camp where we now know is Smallboys Camp. All along these areas, we have sacred sites, we have places, we have names for things. We know where the medicines are. We know about certain battles and histories and things that happen there. So, I'm lucky when I'm with my uncles, or with the older people, they'll share those things with us. Part of the history with Pigeon Lake, like I said, this was our traditional territory. These were our hunting grounds.

Peggy [00:21:05] And so when we signed Treaty, our reserve and based on our population, our reserve was from here, from Maskwacis to Pigeon Lake. There was a whole strip of land that was once ours. And it went almost all the way around the lake, I believe. And I've seen a map of it too. Other people have shared that kind of information, historically, anyways, just to show the young people. This was once ours. And in our own ways, we still believe that it's ours. When we have that close relationship with the land, that can't be broken. But the big thing about Pigeon Lake was, that was our fishing grounds, we used to take good care of that lake. We were the keepers of the land, and we had to respect the animals. There was once a time where it was very plentiful when I was just a child. This would be the early 80s. I was born in 1979. This would have been in the early 80s. My mom remembers my dad, my late dad going hunting. And him and my late uncle, they would go out hunting. And she said one time they went on hunting, and they came back, they must have made like four trips. And my mom and my auntie, that's all they did all day was cut up meat. And then my dad would come back. And he would take whatever was quartered up and big pieces. And he'd go out and feed the elders, he'd go out and feed the ones that had big families, whoever needed it, whoever they thought needed it, they would just go and share it. And so back in the 80s, that was a time of plenty. So now we don't see that. We don't have that kind of abundance because of whatever reasons, environmental or people encroaching on their lands out there. I know there's still a lot of wildlife and lots of game and such, but it's nowhere near where it once was. So anyhow, back to the land there. We know the history that that people were just displaced. There are stories about that. My mom's grandparents lived out in Ma-Me-O and she remembered going out there when she was a kid. One of her grannies had still lived out there. But she said that one day, they were just told that they didn't live here. You have to leave. They had their own farm, their little shacks, little homestead.

Peggy [00:24:15] One day, the RCMP and the Indian agent just shows up and tells you, “You don't live here anymore.” They literally had to pack whatever they could carry and go into the land that is now Ma-Me-O, Pigeon Lake, our Indian reserve. So, they were displaced from where they lived on the, I believe it's like the North Shore past Mulhurst. So that was our reserve all the way around and past Mulhurst. My great grandparents just were asked to leave. Well, basically told to leave. There was a lot of people that got displaced. If you think about that, since the time that they started Treaties, they kept coming back, and then they would tell you, “You have to leave.” Over the

course of decades, we got sent further and further back to what is now we're left with the small little land base, whereas we were originally given – we originally signed for all this land from here to there. If you look at that on a big map, that's a lot of land. If you were to look at the map of Alberta, to see from Maskwacis to Pigeon Lake, it takes us 35 minutes to get there from here. If I was to get into my vehicle and drive, that's almost 40 minutes in the vehicle. So that's a long way. I don't know the exact square footage, square miles, whatever it is, but you can see it, it's noticeable. When we tell our children the stories of that, it's also to make them know that this is ours still. This is our land. This is Treaty Six Territory; we signed these Treaties. Just because we have a little piece of land here and a little tiny piece over there, just to give it a different context just to show them. In name, it may be this, but in our ways, it is this. It is all ours. We have a responsibility to it. Because ownership isn't like its mine, it's ours. Ownership means responsibility as well. And the Indigenous way of thinking, that's how we think of it, it's our responsibility. It's not like, it belongs to me, and I can reap the benefits. It's not about that, it's about being a steward of that land. It's not about owning it in name, and you can have possession of it. It goes beyond that. When we're talking like that toward children, we're teaching them that, this is just part of our traditional lands. This is just one piece of where our lands are that we have a responsibility to take care of them. And part of that responsibility is to keep those ceremonies and things going in those spaces. When we're talking about our history, and what that land is to us, that's in my way of understanding, it's about having the responsibility to take care of it. So that's what's important when we're talking like that to our children, or to our peers, and to our family and loved ones. That's what our grandparents and our parents teach us these things.

Robin [00:28:04] Totally agree. You talked a lot of what the importance of relations to land and how that important that connection with the land and how it's not about ownership and possession, but about stewardship. And so, I guess my question for you is, in regard to the land, how would you like to see Pigeon Lake, especially with the old oil well sites, how would you like to see that land be remediated and reclaimed and used by community members? As a community member of Pigeon Lake, how would you like to be included in that? If you were able to utilize one of those sites as a place for your hide tanning camp, how could you see that rolling out? And why is obtaining land not as a possession but as a relation important to you?

Peggy [00:29:04] That's a pretty broad question. Yeah, so as far as me needing a space to do hide tanning, that's something I considered because like I said, my grandmothers have that spot. The pekîwewin is right next door to where my grandmother's home is, my grandparents, where I grew up. My belly button is probably just in those bushes there behind where your new camp is. To me, I'm rooted there. That's where I'm from. Like I said, I have roots there. That's my family. Those are people that I love and care for. To me, to be in that space is to just to honour my grandparents and all the things that they've shared with us. To have that space reclaimed, how do I see those oil well sites being used? I know that first of all, there is soil contamination. That's the first issue. I understand that's why Pekîwe had to move, so that this soil and land could be cleaned first. So, that's important, that's absolutely necessary and it starts with that. In order to reclaim those lands, we have to follow these processes, which you guys have already done. For someone like me, I would have to go through my own process to ask for permission for one of those sites. And that's on my list now of things that I have to do. What happens on those sites, it should be LandBack. There's this big movement all across Canada, everybody's talks about LandBack. But what does that mean? We all have our own definitions about what LandBack is. Well, to me, in this situation, the LandBack is that we took a valuable resource from our mother, we took that oil from her, we ask for blessings in exchange. There's a transference there. We have to have that relationship with that she was blessing us and giving us all this plenty. And we took that, and we used it. It made people's lives very comfortable out here, but it also made a lot of chaos for people that were unhealthy. I'm a victim of that, of that time with all this crazy money and people that weren't ready for that. And so, we have a relationship with the land. She gave us all of these blessings for us. And now it's time for us to take care of her as well. So that lasted for what, a couple of decades. Now, we have more, the future to take care of it afterwards. We've already depleted what oil was there. And now it's up to us to take care of the land, and the water and the resources and the medicines and the animals that are all still there. So, if you think about that, about the LandBack and how that all works together, we think about our food sovereignty. What are the things that need to be there for us to be healthy? That's what comes to mind is that we have a healthy water. I think that's the more important thing that we're facing right now is where's our water? What's the state of our water at? Are they going to reclaim and clean up the groundwater? I don't know. That's a question that's yet to be answered. I know that as far as polluters around the lake, I think maybe the reserve is probably one of them. I'm sure there's science and studies that to back that up. To me, LandBack is also all of those things.

Are they going to improve plumbing and septic systems for people around the reserve to clean that up? That's an issue that I have. But also, my big issue is also about food sovereignty. We have foods and berries and medicines, things that could be traditionally harvested and grown. So that's another part of that. So, me, personally, I would like to see those sites to be planted with medicines once they're cleaned up. Start with that, start with medicines. Once you have the plant medicines and the foods, the animals come. You're giving them also clean food. We eat those animals, they need to be having a healthy diet, they need to eat these medicines, in order for us to eat those medicines as well. Our food is our medicine. If we think of it that way, then we have to start out at the bottom and not at the top. That's a backwards way of thinking that's what we would think of. To be selfish, we would start with ourselves and our own needs. But if we think about the LandBack and our relationship to that space, that's what's more important is starting off with healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy bugs, and then you'll have the other animals will come. To me, that's what I think of. And to me, that's the relationship that I have that I learned from working with the deer and the moose because they're relying on all these other little creatures and these other plants and other little things. So those things have to be healthy in order for them to be healthy. I just get the end product. I'm working at the end of that. In my way, I think I have to take care of the beginning as well, in order to have that balance, in order to have that connection.

Robin [00:35:55] I totally agree. You talked a lot about the health of the place and the relation and interconnection of everything and how it's all important to consider moving forward. And I guess the one other thing I wanted to touch on was in relation to, so we need a healthy environment, we need healthy berries to have healthy moose, to have healthy food sources, to have a good life. What about healthy people? How do you see healthy people in this picture? What does healing look like to you through land-based activities?

Peggy [00:36:44] Well, I liked the Pekîwe is. I know my grandparents had a sweat in their house like I said next door to there, to this site. I haven't been to sweat since my grandfather was alive and he's passed away almost like 15 years ago now. So, to me, I haven't been in ceremony in a Sweat Lodge at the lake since that time. The fact that you guys are bringing back that, there's a safe space for me and brings back healing and good things for me. I feel like welcome and that I have a right to be there. I come in a good way, and I want to my own healing. So that's something that's an option

for me. Also, it's an option for people that are already on their healing journeys. This is something that's not just like take as prescribed. This is something that we do in order to keep our wellness and our sense of self and well-being. Olden days, they say that women didn't have to sweat. And maybe that was just whatever, because of colonization, I don't understand that really. But nowadays, it's important for women to have that. We're bombarded with all these different things in our lives, all these different stressors and worries and things that deplete our energies. And we need to recharge, we need to recover, we need to rest and recover and take care of ourselves. And whatever wellness that looks like for us, having that spirituality is one component, having those physical outlets is another component, to walk and exercise and be able to do these things. When we look at it from the holistic sense, we have the four directions. They're always coming back to that. Spirituality is one, physical is one. Emotional, well, that's where we have your supports, you have people in your circle, you have counsel that you seek from elders are knowledgeable and kind people. Those are roles that are naturally filled in our lives by people around us. And to have that space to be well, to practice these things. That is part of our wellness. That is what's going to give us a stronger purpose. And how do you say like, balance, wellness. When I'm talking about doing hides, there's a lot that happens when I when I'm doing hides. This is my wellness practice. It's where I go or I need to go sometimes when life is too stressful or hectic for me, I'm like, "I need a day on hide". To physically be able to do these things, it increases endorphins. When your physical, also you have to eat better, you have to make healthier choices, you have to eat high energy foods. You have to eat better cleaner, in order to operate, to be able to have the energy to do those things, I can't do that if I'm eating KFC or McDonald's. I'll just have a heavy gut. You don't naturally just avoid those choices. You're going to eat better quality food when you're doing this kind of stuff. Also, it is a spiritual practice for me. It's where I go toget my emotions in check. I've cried on a hide so many times, that's where I work out my problems. And it's not always just sad things. It's also when there's good things. I've had some very powerful spiritual moments happen when I was on hides, when I'm doing those hides. So, to me, it's important to do these things. There's spirituality, there's meaning there's purpose to these things that we do, we just need a space to have them that's welcoming, that's open for people. I know that even if I had a space for hide tanning, I could have it open for people. If I have a structure, then I can be doing hide tanning all year round. That's my dream, that's my goal is to get these things in place. And I don't know how it's going to come, but I know it's coming. I don't

understand how things work, but I have faith. And I know that the path that I'm on is the right one, and that things are coming together.

Peggy [00:41:58] So, like I said, that wellness, what you're talking about, it looks different for a lot of people. It's what we choose to do, but it doesn't look like one thing. You can't just write a prescription and like, "Here you go." It doesn't work like that. When we want to be well, we have to think about all these things get considered like having a space for these things, puts you in a different frame of mind. And again, it comes back to having those connections to the land. When we go to pick medicines, when you go to pick berries even, there's some down my road here. In the spring, in the summer, I went to go pick berries and we put down our tobacco, just that little act of going on your driveway and picking some berries is like that's connecting. That's wellness, that's grounding you, putting you in a different frame of mind, lowers your stress levels. You can think clearly and go on your day and be in a good way. Those kinds of little things, it doesn't have to be so structured and so rigid. It's just understanding that these things don't always fit in a box, but you make a space for it, for people to come in they find their own way and they find their own thing out of it. Like I said, I've always had good experiences every time I'm doing hides. It's a different frequency when you're in that. People actually want to be there. They want to learn, they come in a good frame of mind, they come open and it's whatever they get out of is what they put into it. I think that's a universal thing. Everybody understands. You're only going to get what you put into it.

Robin [00:44:05] Totally agree. That's pretty much it for all my questions. I guess just one more, I'll just open it up if there's anything else you think I've missed or that you want to add in relation to your hide tanning work, I guess I'll just open it up for you if there's any.

Peggy [00:44:27] For hide tanning? OK. Like I said, to me, it is about spirituality there. It's a lot of things and finding out like, how do I say this? I found my purpose a long time ago and it was doing hides. Like I said, in 2010, when we did that three-week workshop, there It was a very powerful moment for me there. And I've shared this with people. I've shared it a few times now. And one of the friends I was sharing with was Alanna Bitsy or whatever she calls herself. Anyway, she's from the University of Alberta. She was working there. And Alanna Ross is what her name was, but she now has a married name. I met her at this symposium a few years ago. My science teacher, I was

doing upgrading at Norquest, he said, “You should go to this. You're looking to get into sciences. I think you should go to this” and it was for Native people. They sent me there. And I went, and I sat at this table, I didn't know anybody in the room. And here, I sit down, and there's this nice-looking Native lady. And she comes in, like smiley and sits at the table with me and we just struck up a conversation. And I'm surrounded in a room with PhDs. And here I am doing our academic upgrading at Northwest. I'm like in high school, basically. And I'm sitting at a table, and I happen to be sitting with this lady who just finished her Master's and accomplished many great things in academia. We're sitting there and we struck up a conversation. She asked me if I was one of the PhDs if I was one of the PhD students. And I kind of laugh, I thought it was funny. I was like, “No, but thanks for pumping my tires”. Anyways, we had this conversation, and I told her that, I said, “Well, I wanted to get into sciences because I didn't know where this fits in.” She's like, “What do you mean?” I said, “I love to do hides. I love doing hide tanning. I finally found my passion. And I'm deciding that this is what I want to do and whatever way that fits into academia, I hope it fits. I’ll find the way.” Anyway, so we had this conversation, I told her, she says, “Well, really? What made you decide that, that it was hides?” I said, “The first time that we did hides was in 2010”. It was early morning. We're all in a rawhide. We were ready to soften this one big moose hide. And we had it spread on the ground, and my mom had just cooked up the brain solution. It's all nice and hot and looks like mushroom soup. And she had this big pot of it. And she brought it out and she's like, “OK, everybody gather around.” We’re all kneeling down on the ground, on the grass. We have this rawhide spread out. And she says, “OK, we're going to pour this solution on, and you just have torub it in. Mash up any bits of the brain and the fat, just break it down and put it in there.” And so, we're all excited. We're like, “Oh, it looks good.” It looks like soup, right? It looks good. But you know, it's brains. It's not good. Anyhow, she pours it on there. She pours cups in front of us on the solution and we just get to work, start spinning circles and rubbing it in. And when she poured it in front of me, and I started to massage, I just moved my hands. I was like, oh my god, the smell, and the feeling, it was like a very powerful moment. It just felt like a lightning bolt went right through me. I felt this thing was like surge of power like right in my solar plexus. Right in my gut. It was just like bing. And I had this sensation when I smelt it, my mouth salivated. I wanted to eat this. All in this one moment, like everything, just my whole senses just went poof. I was like, “I want to eat this.” And I remember saying it and everybody busted out laughing because they’re like, “Ew, you're not going to eat brain.” And I was sharing this with Alanna. She’s like, “Oh my God.

That was your DNA waking up." And I said, "Yeah, yeah, it was." Every time since that time, I'm chasing that high whenever I get on a hide. I said that feeling is what keeps me going and I've had it how many times since then. That's not the first and only or the last but I can't deny that. There's something so powerful that my body was like poof. That's something I can't even put into words even as I tried to describe it. The words can't even express it fully. Every time I'm out there on hides, that's what it was for me. Yeah, so I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. And like I said, every time I go to hides, new people come. Like I said, the first one, every time after that, when we would call people, "We're going to do hides. Come and check us out." We'd let people know ahead of time. For years, for like five years, we just go out new hides, like I said, for a week, whatever time we could get. We call out for people to come by, and then somebody would show up, and they won't come back. Like my cousin, she came, and she was deadly at it. She was wicked. She would work really hard, but even her, she lives in Edmonton. She couldn't come back and just do it whenever you want to. Choosing to be a nehiyaw is a hard thing in this life, especially now. You got to pay your bills, you got to pay your rent, you got to pay cell phone, you got to pay your Wi-Fi, you got to pay for your car, your gas. Every other thing.

Peggy [00:51:44] So I really like admire people that are making it happen, figuring out ways to make it happen, like going for grants, or having a side hustle, which is what I've had to do. I make tipis, I bead, I sew, I do other things just so I have time, money, resources to do hides. I started doing hide casts last year, and we did seven out of our own pocket, out of our own sheer will. We don't have funding; we don't have a grant to work on. We just decided this is what we want to do and we're going to do it. And we just made it happen. Because of that, I had to charge people when we were doing hide camps. I started charging $500 a person. And the first one I didn't even charge people. My friends, I think I charge them $50 come over for the week. I charged my friend $50 for the first one I did in May. And I did get like a little bit of money but that's what I spent on the food. It wasn't even like I was putting into my pockets. I was putting it so that we had food and water and things that we needed while we were working. And then my friend is like – I was very grateful for my good friend coming because she's famous and whatever. I didn't even know she's famous. She's just my friend. She just shows up. And then because she shows up, she invites some other even more famous hide tanners and people. And then they showed up. My sister told me, she's like, "If you build it, they will come. This is your field of dreams. And I was like, Oh my God. And like,

totally, that's what happened. I had two of my main mentors and their wives. And my good friends, Miss famous beadwork artist show up in my backyard. I was sitting with two masters of hides and their wives. I was on cloud nine. This was huge. I couldn't even expect that in my wildest dreams. That was a huge, big deal for them to show up and support me like that. At the second camp I did at my house in June, my mom was coming. I was like, great. My mom's going to be here. She can help me, and I was like oh my god, because my mom's been doing this for a lot longer. She's been doing it 15 years, which is I guess a few years ahead of me, but she has more experience. She's the cultural arts instructor. This is what she gets paid to do. I thought, great, she's coming. I had that boost of confidence. But for the first four days, it was on me, and I charged $300 to my friends and participants that time. And I got told, "You're not charging enough." I went from $50 to charging $300 and that's not enough. The next camp, I said, "OK, we got told that's not enough money." There's other camps that people are putting up and they're charging a lot of money. And it's basically, it's whatever they they're willing to share with you. But it's basically the same idea, you go there, and they feed you and shelter you and all of that. I thought, OK, not ever having any real idea what a hide camp is.

Peggy [00:55:22] I went to one in 2019 and I say it's the best one. I went to LutselK'e in Northwest Territories. That was before COVID and I wanted to go back again, but it would have been too costly. I would have to isolate twice and pave like a lot of money just to go there and stay in hotel and extra, extra stuff. Because you have to isolate once you get there, then make the clearance to fly in from Yellowknife to LutselK'e, a fly in community. It was a major operation; I wasn't going to go back. That's why I had decided to do my first little camp in May. And so yes, I had been to one big hide camp before this. And we used to host kids culture camps and all that stuff. I've done all of that before. This was something new for me this last year was to just start doing hide camps. It was like, OK, there's a need for this, people want this, and I'm able to do this. I had to step out of my comfort zone and grow some confidence. And believe that what I had is of value and that people wanted it. And they responded, they absolutely did want to be part of this. And in fact, now I'm getting requests for, when am I doing the next one? When are my next ones, which is a good thing, because we are planning to do some more again this year. I don't know if it'll be seven butknock-on wood that it'll still be substantial. But like I said, it's not my main moneymaker just yet. Like I said, we did this all out of love and pure joy in our hearts to bring this. What like I said, it was all on a

shoestring budget every time we did it. So now that we've got a little bit more experience, we're going to make something out of it. Perhaps start our own society here soon or access monies so that we can deliver this kind of programming for people. And like you said, to have a space for us to have a space out in Ma-Me-O would be a very ideal situation. And I think it's important to have it there because of that history. I hosted it here in my house in Maskwacis, like I said, three times now this last year. And that's fine. I have land, I have trees, I have what I need here. But in order to host people, in order for them to camp and have a place, that is what I'm going to need, is a big space to do all of that. And there is trees, the lake is right there. There's all these people that live in that community that would be willing to come and learn how to do this. I would have the manpower; I would have the people. It's just needing those resources to feed these people, to have enough money to purchase the shelters, and have water and toilet, whatever they need.

Peggy [00:58:54] So I don't know if that's a permanent structure. I don't know what that looks like right now. In an ideal world, yeah, there would be a building because like I said, I could be doing hides in the wintertime if I had a space for it. Also comes the problem of sanitation of people need to shower, they need to use the washroom, they need to do their laundry. Those are an issue. If I was to have a spot, then there needs to be a shower house. It needs to be someplace for people to clean up. It is stinky work; you want to shower afterwards. You don't expect somebody to stay like that for five days. You wouldn't do that to anybody. You wouldn't do that to yourself. You wouldn't do that to anybody. Things like that, that's part of the plan. How do we make it permanent or to be a space for people to just come? It is something to charge people that have the means, have the resources to pay for that. But there's also been a great thing when we did our hide camps this year. One of our friends in our group, she's an artist and she has lots of followers on her Instagram or social media. She put out a call, she says, "Well, I know we have like a couple of spots, but maybe we can get sponsorships, so that somebody that wants to come to hide camp and can't afford it, maybe they can come if they're sponsored." And that was a really great idea. In our ways, we're always generous. I was keen to it as soon as she said it, because yeah, I always want to give more than what I'm receiving. So even with charging that fee, I felt like is that enough? I always wanted to give more. And so, when she said that, it was like, yes, let's do it. And then this lady sent us sponsorship for our next camp in Jarvis Lake in Hinton. She sent us sponsorship money. And it was great because we had all these extra kids. The participants that came, well, they brought their kids.

And we had our budget for foods and stuff, but we were feeding everybody. When this lady gave us a boost with fees, it was like boom, that helped to cover all that extra that we were spending on feeding everybody and making sure we have water and these other things. This couple had come, they were sponsored, but they bought their kids, and the kids were helping them work on their hide, and they finished their hide together in that hide camp. So those are the important things like that, to have that, like you said, the community, a sense of that other people can be included. So that would be nice to have, to be able to have a space to do camps, and to have sponsorships for people that want to be there but don't have the money. Or it's not so easy to access money from their nations. We're lucky to have money from our nation that will sponsor us, but you just have to get there in time. you have to give it enough time and notice to get your funding or your fees paid for. So, like I said, that would be something great that other people can benefit from. The thing about what you guys are offering with Pekîwe and something like a hide tanning space, those are open for people. You're not going around and telling people they have to be here; this is something people choose. If they don't have it, they're going to go to do other harmful things, whether it's harming themselves or doing drugs or drinking or just being depressed, being disease. You have to have these options when you're talking about people having reconciliation. There's all this big buzzword about let's reconcile. What does that even mean? What does that even look like? Well, yes, they have a health centre. Yes, we have a rec centre, but we're in COVID. Those places and spaces aren't always open for us. Nor do people have the desire to go there, whatever it may be.

Peggy [01:03:56] Those things are there, but you need all these other things. You can't just say, oh, because we have a health centre, it all relies on the health centre. Well, that's not how it works in reality. That's not how it works in life. You just need to have these spaces for people, and they'll naturally find their way there. You'll get your loyal followers; you'll have your supports. In the long run, you want to talk about science and having those numbers to back you up. You have that data, that quantitative or qualitative data, you have to make a shift, it has to be measurable. Well, if you were to take a baseline now, I think that would be ideal as well. Because where's it at right now? If you're trying to make a shift and prove that you can make a shift, well, you have to have that baseline, you have to have that data, what is really out there for people. And yeah, it comes from a sense of duty to your community, but it also comes from a sense of your purpose. What are you going to do with your time here on this earthly realm? You're giving people those tools. There's

more of that just gets done in a lodge. There's lessons in life and in how you take care of yourself, and how you take care of your children, and how you take care of your relationships, and all these other things get connected. All these other pieces come together for. Everybody has a role to play. They just need to be reminded that they matter and that they're appreciated. Giving people spaces like that makes a difference, makes them be proud of who they are, to know that they have a place, that they are valued, that they are loved, that they can be in a safe space. I think that's what it comes down to is just creating that safety for people to just live and be and heal and do their thing on their own. Just making a space for it.

Robin [01:06:20] 100%, totally agree. All right, well, that was all for the questions.

3.6 Robert Johnson Interview

Interviewee: Robert Johnson (Pekîwe Cultural Lodge - Male Elder)

Date: August 29, 2021

Location: Pigeon Lake 138A

Video Recording

Robin [00:00:00] So I guess just to start off, if you want to introduce yourself?

Robert [00:00:14] Hello my name is Robert Johnson. I am Samson Cree, Plains Cree. I am a resident, I used to be a resident of Mameo Beach in my early years. But as a result of no economy here, I have had to go off reserve and earn a living so that I can feed myself, so that I do not become dependent on the state. So, I am 63 now, and the year is 2021, we are just at the end of August, and I have been asked to do an interview. So, one of the things that I want to tell you is that there is a lot of misconceptions about taking pictures in a ceremonial lodge. A lot of that I think, has to do with residential school and the government trying to wipe out our way of worshiping, our spirituality. A lot of the things that we do today were outlawed. You actually could have been shot for doing any of this. So there has been a misconception that you are not allowed to take pictures. Or for anybody else to see. Probably because it was driven out of fear. The only thing that I know is that when the pipe is connected, that's when you're not allowed to take video recordings. I have one of my pipes here. I am a federally recognized Elder. I work for Corrections Canada currently, have been for the last four years. And so, let me tell you that it is one tough road. A lot of hurry up and wait, kind of thing. So, we here, the ones who do ceremony with Ken, belong to the bears. And I have my bear claws here with me today. The bear is the healer, and the one that tends mother earth. And so Pekîwe, Pekîwek, is coming home, come home. So, for me, coming back to Pigeon Lake, and to Mameo, after having spent a good part of my life off of the reserve in a major urban centers, trying to stay alive, for me it really applies. And I am glad that Kenneth and Dawn have decided to have their cultural and traditional camp here in Pigeon Lake. It was, how Pigeon Lake came about is that it was a fishing station for the larger Maskwacis area. My grandmother is an original settler, or an original resident of Mameo Beach. So, my roots go pretty deep. I was here long before the new highway went in, and the new recreation center. Relatively new, like its 40 years old, so it was

new 40 years ago, and the school and all that. When I was a baby boy, probably about 3 or 4, it was all bush land. And one of the things that I really appreciate about Pigeon Lake is that, although there has been oil exploration, and there has been oil contamination from Fluorocarbons – I think I said that right. Pigeon Lake used to be, back when I was a kid, one of the major gas producers in North America. They used to be able to syphon off the stuff that percolated from the oil up, and they would syphon it off and shoot it over to bonny glen. And they were able to make car gas here no problem. Probably because it was - We do still sit on a vast oil field here, but the technology isn't there to extract it, so it's kind of gone dormant. So, there is a lot of history around the lake. It's been here for a really long time. I have found what they call glacial boulders, up on the hill here. So, there is a ceremony that you can do that you put the print on the actual rock, then your tobacco, whatever. So, man that was some grandfather rock, I tell you. I kind of stumbled into it, because I can't remember what I was looking for, but I found that up on the hill there. So, it is a probably is a glacial lake. I'm not sure, I am not a geologist so I couldn't tell you. So, and basically, whenever I am standing in front of the camera, I get starstruck and start babbling on. Like, we will go to the interview.

Robin [00:06:20] Next question? Yes, the questions. You already started answering some of them already, so thank you. The first one is: Can you just tell me about the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and its importance to you?

Robert [00:06:36] Well for me, it is really important, like I said, because for me, coming back to the land, and coming back to the Pigeon Lake area is really moving for me. I remember the first sweat I attended here. We were in the sweat and when we were singing, and I could hear echoes into the woods. And it was something that, with the ceremonial songs and that kind of thing, was really moving for me. And it takes a lot to move me. I am a gruff old guy. So, it was really interesting. I'm sorry what was the rest of the question?

Robin [00:07:27] The importance to you, which you've talked about. Um, maybe you can just explain a little bit about what you know happens here?

Robert [00:07:38] Well in 1958 there was oil discovered here, and that was the year that I was born. And there were 52 producing oil wells in the area. When, it was kind of a boom-and-bust kind of thing. Where the oil companies would come and work during the high oil prices. And they took a fair amount from us here. And returned probably, I'm guessing 1% of what they took here. But now, they closed down the oilfield, and they are cleaning up the oil sites, those lease sites, which is good. I'm one of those people who enjoy the woodland area. Because in the old growth forests out there, our Elder Kenneth Saddleback tells us, that out there in the old growth forests is a medicine for every part of the body. So, we can still find medicines here. So that's one of the things I really enjoy. When you come down the hill, you drop into bushland. Everywhere else, where the white man lives, the settlers live, has been torn down. And the agriculture, lot of agriculture in the area. So, this land here, in the Pigeon Lake area, has pretty much been left untouched, save for the lease sites. I am sure that there is still a lot of medicines out here. One of the things that I wanted to say to Samson Chief and Council is that they need to come out here and, build us, help us build a sustainable economy. In Scandinavia they do what they call managed forests. And I don't see any reason why, that kind of knowledge and technology couldn't be moved here. The Scandinavians love us, love us native people. And so, and they are northern, they are in the northern hemisphere of the globe. It's really similar environments. The other suggestion that I might make also is – I given this to a council woman, and I was pretty much told to write a proposal – and that is to get a buffalo paddock out here. So that we can bring back, although not common in the area, buffalo. Plains Bison. I think the original tribe of buffalo from - North Dakota, South Dakota – I remember when I was a kid, it was a big thing. That they were bringing up the last tribe of the real buffalo. I think some of them still have them with the farm and ranch division. Ya so, it wouldn't cost a whole heck of a lot to do something like that. But I think that the people are busy chasing the economy out there, thinking that going off reserve and making investments is helping the people of the area. And we haven't received any of the dividends, that we, of the property we own, and the vast holdings that we have. We see none of it, I mean none of it. And, you can check your records. We as people, as shareholders, do not get any dividends from our companies that we helped fund and build in the early years.

Robin [00:12:23] You answered one of my questions that I was going to ask about - if you have you noticed any changes in the environment and the surrounding area with, the farmers and how

they changed that environment? I was going to ask if you noticed any changes. And then, I was going to ask what some of the signs are that you have noticed if Pigeon Lake is healthy or unhealthy. Whether that is the land, the water, the animals, or the medicines?

Robert [00:13:00] Well, a long time ago you could actually eat fish out of the lake. Now your kind of taking a chance, eating the fish out of the lake. People don't eat the fish; we don't eat the fish from here. We go to a cleaner lake to do the fishing. Because of the large settlements around the area. And the massive amount of sewage that pours onto the water table or right directly into the lake. We get a lot of algae bloom. And that was something that I never saw as a child if I wanted to go swim. And that's what we used to do, we would go to the lake, we would feed ourselves, we would roast wieners or meat over the open fire. It was an idealic lifestyle we lead as children. But it has changed tremendously. Now we have algae bloom and the traffic, and the particles that come off of rubber tires, is probably infused into the environment. The use of the lake has dropped off tremendously. So environmentally, it seems like wherever our white brothers go, the environment changes tremendously. A lot of the keystone species that are common to the area have been wiped out. So now it is mainly agricultural in the outlying areas. But the further west you go, the more wild land there is. So, and there has been a lot of run off from – because where the oilfield is actually on a hill, a lot of the runoff runs into the lake. **[00:15:16]**

Audio Recording

Robert [00:00:00] So when I'm wandering around out there enjoying my day in the woods, I'll sometimes see a sheen on water that's running. One of the tributaries, or one of the springs, there's a lot of springs in the area as well that feed streams that go into the water. It has changed tremendously. I think the oxygen levels dropped quite a bit in the water itself. That's one of the major impacts that encroachment on the lake has brought about. What else? I remember, my late grandmother, we don't have cancer in the family. It's not a hereditary thing. I remember when I was a kid, we would get rotten egg gas smell all the time. And she lived here her entire life. And as a direct result, I'm sure, that she got brain cancer. So, it affects the people. Yet, there have been no attempts to give back to the environment, what was taken away. Like the oil company should be coming out and reforesting what it is that they've taken away. So, I don't know if I've answered the question.

Robin [00:01:59] You did. You answer the question and my next question. I was going to ask about impacts. So yeah, you answered both questions. At the same time there. On the same line, I guess, when we're thinking about the remediation and reclamation of these well sites, what are some things that should be considered like values, uses, relationships when moving forward and caring for this place?

Robert [00:02:30] Well, I think that there should be, like I say, they should do the managed forests. And I think a lot of the, one campsite in particular, has really made it OK for white people to be on the land and to ride their ATVs and tear up the land. And basically, abuse the wild area. I believe that the oil companies should reintroduce species to the area, because after all, it was their noise and their contamination that wiped out or chased off the wildlife. Because at one time when I was a boy, when I was a little boy, we could live here. Like I say, it was a fishing station. Now, we can't fish here. So really, I honestly believe that they should make an attempt to clean up the water that is so important to us, as Native people. And important to them as well, because without water, none of this would exist. None. I mean, I don't know if you've ever been to desert states, but there's no water there and there ain't nothing there. Pardon the grammar, there isn't anything there. So, I honestly believe that there should be a moratorium on the use of nitrogen in the fertilizer. That's another factor in algae bloom because we live in a valley. All of the water that runs off, runs through agricultural land and contaminates the water. So, I think there should be a moratorium where the oil companies are the major companies that make this fertilizer should find biological, something that doesn't interfere with the natural environment. There should be, because the longer we go, the bigger the population gets, and the more contaminated our water sources become.

Robin [00:05:36] Yeah, that's true. That goes into my next question, too. I was going to just ask you about your vision for how the place, how Pigeon Lake and these oil wells sites should be healed or restored, which you talked about. But also, who do you think should be involved in those processes? And how should decisions be made with all of that?

Robert [00:05:58] Well, I think that we have waited for a long time for our chiefs or band chiefs in council to make those kinds of decisions at a central location of Ma-Me-O Beach. I think they

should have discussions with the people who actually live here day to day and find out from them. When you approach to Chief in Council and talk about the grassroots people, they say, “We are the grassroots people, but we don't drive $60,000, $70,000 units and wear Gucci shoes.” There, if you're grassroots then be grassroots. Don't use it as just a bargaining chip to go to the federal government and tell them, “We are the grassroots people.” I think that they need to stop the centralized governance system and bring the governance system back to the land, back to the people who actually live on the land. Sounds rebellious. I’ll leave it at that.

Robin [00:07:38] That’s good.

Robert [00:07:40] I’m digging a pretty big hole here.

Robin [00:07:44] That’s good. That needs to be said. Definitely needs to be said. I guess one more question I have here is about, why it's important for this well site to be reclaimed and for it to become a part of the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge, the connection between those two?

Robert [00:08:03] Well, in the area, we have all kinds of – I think there's a Lutheran camp over here. I mean, they're not environmental people. I'm not trying to take anything away from the good work that they do. But I think that we need to have something that's Indigenous based here in Pigeon Lake and Ma-Me-O Beach. Where else could it happen? We're that close to technology and that close to the central location that it should work. Because we know that me being a federal corrections elder, know the loss of culture, language, and I see the impact of the 50 year old’s who are just finishing their time. Now, there's a whole almost lost generation who are 18 and 19 coming and they don't speak the language. The only place that they learn their culture and spirituality is when they are incarcerated. I figure, it’s almost unlucky because I have good teachers who come from Maskwacis. I took it for granted that everybody knew what I know, or what I've learned, but not all people because of the residential school impacts and we've lost a generation. Now, because of that loss, there's now social ills that occur in our system. And so, we really need this to reconnect our children, our babies with where they come from. I've often heard that if you know where you come from, you'll know where you're going. And it's true. If you're not comfortable with your past, and all those things that happened to you, you're going to struggle with your life as you move

forward. And the system is designed so that we do struggle, so that they can continue to eliminate us from the economic spin offs that non-Native people feel entitled to. So, what the larger society doesn't understand is that we paid. They say, “Well, you're not working, you're not paying taxes.” That's BS, we pay taxes, and we work. But try to get a job in a white company. Because of how you look, you are easily eliminated because you're visible. So OK, get a job. OK, well, give me a job. Give me an opportunity so that I can also drive a $60,000, $70,000 dually that white people say, “Well, look at what I've got. Get a job.” Well, OK, yeah, give me a job, I'll do it. Anyway, it's designed like that. They knew psychology back when they first settled the area, they knew they knew it. They knew that if you give turmoil to a group of people, that it would take them 100-200 years to get better. And so, we're working on getting better. And you know what, I think the larger society is afraid of us, because all of a sudden, we're getting smarter. You know, we're taught as Cree people not to hurt people. That we were told a long time ago, even before the white people touch North American, we were told they're going to be here. And the law, this is Creators law, you are supposed to help those ones survive. Don't hurt them, no matter what they do to you, do not hurt them. So, we live by that edict that came from the ceremonies. We live that. They're terrified that we are going to all of a sudden rebel and start slaughtering people. That's not us. We're not allowed to do that, I'm sorry to say. And I think people all of a sudden think that if we let them into our system, that this is what's going to happen. They'll get rich and build an army. Well, we were told not to do that. And also, what we were told was that these people that come here, these new people, they are going to become your little brothers. And you are to protect them, and you are to make them survive. You teach them absolutely everything. Everything that you know, but we never knew that if you taught them how to hunt that they would hurt you, you know what I mean? We weren't prepared for that. We thought that we were going to get along.

Robin [00:14:38] Yeah, that's true. There's just one more question and it's about the map and the area around Pigeon Lake. If there's any places that you want to indicate as being very important or significant or if you have any place names in Cree or stories you wanted to share?

Robert [00:14:57] No, I don’t. That's those are questions that should be asked of the old residents because I was never taught that. But I noticed you don't have my granny's house here.

Robin [00:15:13] No houses.

Robert [00:15:19] Yeah, no houses. What I do know is that the village over here is actually our land. These people came. To us, time is, I won't say irrelevant. Anyway, so on handshake deal, they leased the land for 99 years. And now you see million-dollar homes there, but yet, those million-dollar homes that don't take into consideration the impact that they have on the water and the watershed. So, I think that they should be made to recognize that. They should have a course on how to live on the lake because we do impact the surrounding area. I'm 63 now and they treat us the same way they treated my predecessors like we're immaterial like we're not there. They see past us; they don't even talk to us. Almost like we're ostracized, like they don't see us when we go into the store. Everybody ignores us except when we come to cash register. Our money is as green as everybody else's. And a good majority of the population that comes out to the lake as tourists are pretty self-indulgent, selfish, and what's that's the word I'm looking for, privileged. What's interesting is that when I was a little boy, I had younger brothers and I had older brothers. And one of the things I learned about being a little brother is that I could take my older brother's stuff. And when he would retaliate, I would start to cry, I would start to cry terribly, and make like I was being, I remember this, being hurt terribly. And that whatever I was trying to take away from him was mine. Because if it didn't turn into mine, then I would say, "Mom." And the mother would say, "You know what? He's a little boy. Give it to him."

Robert [00:18:24] So the same kind of mentality that goes on in larger society, and it's true. There are little brothers, and they want. "Give me, give me, all for me, all for me, all for me, all for me. It's mine, you can't have it. You can't have it." So, it's true. They are our little brothers now. But I think they need to learn how – they may need us again. They needed us a long time ago, when there was unfriendly tribes in the area. The Cree were the cops before the cops, before the RCMP arrived. That was us. We were considered the police. My family is one of those warriors. A lot of people think that warriors are our banded groups. No, warriors are in the heart. They look after their people; they look after their people. And not lot of that is recorded in Wetaskiwin history. What does Wetaskiwin mean? Hills of peace. Wetaskiwin. Hills of peace because we made the peace. We picked up the gauntlet that somebody threw, and we settled it for all time. Again, I got carried away.

Robin [00:20:21] That's good. Thanks for sharing. So that's pretty much all my questions. I just wanted to open it up to you if there was anything you think I missed regarding either the reclamation of the oil site and how you want to see that done and how you envision it to come to life or if there's anything you wanted to add about the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge? Just any closing.

Robert [00:20:45] Yeah, I didn't start out as an elder. I started out as an oskâpewis. And luckily for me, I searched around for a long time to find an elder. Luckily, I found Ken Saddleback. I'm an orphan. I was an orphan. I was orphaned when I was a baby. I got taken to foster home. And when I came back, my family, my own blood relatives didn't want me. They would literally run me off as a teenager. "Oh, you're not this, you're not that." I went away and did things on my own for a long time. And then I came back. I think I was about 30 when I first started coming back to Maskwacis. I got an opportunity to start as an oskâpewis. I didn't want anything. I didn't want anything. I just wanted to belong. And they gave me a place to belong ceremonially. And occasionally, they gave me a place to rest my head. So, this Pekîwe, we need more of these places. We need to build this to a place where our children – there's lots of them in foster. Lots and lots. They need to come home, they need to come home and learn their culture because if they don't, they're going to be one angry bunch. And we're the ones that are going to suffer as a result because they're going to be suing us because we didn't live up to our obligations as parents and grandparents. So, we need to train more oskâpewis because where I sit today, I'm not going to be here forever. We need more of them to come in so that they can sit here and they're going to be educated. They're going to be educated. So, we need Pekîwe, we need places like that. We need teachers. Don't let the family squabbles get in the way of our ceremonies. We're taught that you're not going there because you like or dislike somebody. You're going there for the ceremony. So, swallow your pride and come to the ceremony. Go learn the ceremony because it's not about the human because the human is temporary. So anyway, I hope I answered the question.

Robin [00:23:50] Yeah, you did. Thank you for adding that. That's all my long answer questions.

Robert [00:23:57] OK. Alright, thank you for the interview.

3.7 Kenneth Saddleback Interview

Interviewee: Kenneth Saddleback (Pekîwe Cultural Lodge - Lead Male Elder)

Date: August 27, 2021

Location: Pigeon Lake 128A

First Video

Robin [00:00:00] So the first question is, can you tell me about the Pekîwe Cultural Lodge and its importance to you?

Ken [00:00:19] Pekîwe means come home. Pekîwe. Most of the time when I am sharing, I always say people should come back home to the lodge. What I am trying to say is that, at the lodge you will hear songs, word songs, in our language. And that's the only place you will hear original messages that were given to us by our Creator. No human composed those songs. And they were given to us by those angels, spirits. To deliver a message. Even through these Creation stories, verifies what we are trying to share is the truth. That's one. The other one is a vision these Elders had. I go back to late Lazarus Roan. He had a vision to take families, young people to the mountains and to live off the land. To teach them this Indian way. That's the other one. The other Elders, they tried to help the University of Alberta, trying to have a school. Those Elders they used to call it Indian school. I believe that were trying to make oskâpewisak, medicine people, singers, mostly servants, oskâpewisak. And then all these Elders, their message before they left, is the only thing that we have left, so that we can have prevention and protection, is that pipe and sweetgrass. I am not saying I know it all. But this camp. Like you go around Pigeon Lake and you see all those, what do you call, bible camps, and you go there, and you will find that there's cabins named after their sponsors, so they get donations. And if we have freedom of religion, so its legislation that this is our freedom to practice. It's no different, you know, that teaching lodge, it's just like building a church. that's our church, we use it for ceremony. We have already have lodges, that we had to bring down, because of Imperial. In this reclamation, they are going to clean up this area. And I believe that if you provide a place for people. Because you know through social media, like young people every day, they want more than besides just talking about mother earth. Young people are demanding that they want more. A lot of them do not understand that it is their duty to go visit elders. There is only so much that we can do with media. Also, I'll probably answer some of those questions there. I look at APTN, there's already stories there. They talk about

wîsahkeâhk, they talk about warrior stories, legends. They use animations. So, a lot of people probably think they are fairy tells. But when I look at them, I watch, listen, those are true stories. Because those same stories, I see, I like the way that they remind our kids. So, in order for us to fast track this knowledge, we have to use technology. And we do. We do have the technology. It's just that, when I was growing up, these Elders used to say don't go to the city, don't take your pipe there. You know, moniyâna, you know means white population, don't go there. I believe at one time, we couldn't. Because of the law, because of the government, imposed policy, because of our way being outlawed. And I believe those older people, the older men, our musoms and kukoms, our uncles and aunties, like it's passed down to the next generation, that we are not allowed to go and practice. Or keep it secretly. Our people they never had a choice, they became secret societies. They had to practice, wait for the sun to set. Start singing at the sundance when the sun sets. So, I've seen changes here, even in Maskwacis. Where most of those lodge keepers they waited for the sun to set, and then they would start. I am not saying that I came here to make changes. But when I started doing sundances, we started singing, we invite people at noon. And we try to start 1 o'clock 2 o'clock in the afternoon. So that was like in the 80's, and that's not too long ago. Before that, the older lodge keepers, they would wait for the sun to set. So that was difficult. Because the older Elders started seeing these younger Lodge Keepers starting early. And that was difficult. Because too many, there's too many that were used to practicing that way, at night. A lot of these changes that are happening, I have witnessed a few things. Like one of my musoms he sang 8 time. He did a sundance, he started in November. November first singing. November, December, January, and February. Every month he hit those moons. Then in March again, he sang. That was the fifth time. When he sang the fifth time, the other Elders told us not to support him because they never witnessed, they never seen that before. This old man, Red Bear. He got us together. When we already knew he sang four times. Usually, the fourth time is camping day. So anyway, he skipped April, because that's like Frog moon. In respect of the Thunderbirds. Because basically, it's time to eat. We respect that moon, so we try not to do ceremonies, we jump over ayikipîsim. In May he sang. Leading up now to camping day, so every two weeks he sang. Camping day was his 8th singing. See stuff like that. These Elders, they were so surprised because they never seen that before. But what my musom was doing, was he was doing the sundance from way back. There's a sundance that they used to do where they would hit the four moons and then four more singings leading up until the camping day. Anyways, I understand what the Elders are saying about changes. I have heard them prophesized. That there's these young people that would -

[Phone call interruption]

So anyway, I have so many reasons of wanting to do this. As an older man I understand it is my duty to connect young people. I am going to do my best not to mislead these young people. Those Elders, that seen these changes, the reason that they stood up and questioned it, is because they were told to keep it the same. You know, don't change, don't add, don't delete. But we had no choice. You know the time when mônîyâwak came here and forced their way on us. We had no choice but to go hide in the bush, and wait for that sun, so that we wouldn't get busted, and we wouldn't go to jail for being an Indian.

Second Video

Ken [00:00:00] To me, like, why not have a place for our young people? Because you go around Indian country, the problems are common. There's alcoholism, there's drugs, family units are not working together. There are some things that we stop doing. Some of these are seasonal. Our ceremonies are seasonal. There are some things that we cannot share during the summer because we got to wait for the snow to get here. To try and run this, a school. Taking baby steps, because I see these older guys and ladies that are trying to overstep, jump into something they don't understand. Because they want to help, they want to heal. But they are not ready. It's just like any university student wanting to be a teacher, but you have to go to school. And because everybody, most of these people who are into this Sweetgrass road. Sometimes it's a livelihood eh. Sometimes there is money involved. And because of technology too, like there's YouTube right, some people learn from there. It's not like hands on. So, we are just trying to find a way to help people do it right, make it right. And follow this Indian way. See if we teach all the older men the older women those Creation stories, like even that, it wasn't my choice. Because to me, I believe that it was sacred knowledge, and I was careful not to share too much. The other thing too, there were Elders here that I learned from. Some of them said kiyanaw poko, just between us. So sometimes I misunderstand because I was too young. I became stingy, I didn't want to share, I didn't want to tell anybody what I know. Because to me, I fasted, like no kidding, I worked hard to be where I am today. And that knowledge, I might have misunderstood, kanaweyihtamaso. To want to keep it to yourself. But then there were some that were stingy, I guess, that didn't want to share, just us, don't tell anyone else, just us. So anyways I seen that through experience, going to Elders meetings. Trying to share Creation stories. Where I got stopped, and that's too much, that knowledge

should only be told to worthy people. To me, those stories, everybody should know. That connection, that relationship that God gave us. That should be common knowledge, **[00:04:45]**

Audio Recording

Ken [00:00:00] They were blown away because they never heard it before, and they wanted it for themselves. That's this mônîyâw way, like egos get in the way. But to me that's what I'm trying to do to all those oskâpewis. When I was over there hearing these, some of my peers, they thought it's going to be the same. It's monotonous. Same thing over and over and over again. And some of them are not sharing. It's obvious. They didn't pay attention. They didn't listen. And now when we come to get together, they say, "I remember." So, they remember bits and pieces. Thank God that these Elders, before they passed away, they shared and some of them, we recorded. So, I have oskâpewisak here. Even though I remind them, you want songs, you came here for song school, light them up. And a lot of them come here late at night. No time to light them up. What do they do? They bring their phone, so we record them. I think about that, but I also remind them, you're supposed to light them up. And those are the things people will learn if they come here. I will remind them. But they want to help, they want to sing at the sweat. And it always happens, it doesn't matter how old you are. Sometimes our egos get in the way. Sometimes, because of influence. The worst thing a community goes through is lateral violence, envious, jealousy. If you can overcome that and be selective. So that's some of the stuff that I always remind people is that power and control. They don't understand it. But when it's happening, they're very aware because of those creation stories. What happened in the beginning. I always do my best to help myself overcome when it's happening. So that power and control, sometimes it gets in the way because everybody wants to be the chief or wants to lead and it always happens, because it happened to me. And I've learned. I'm catching myself, like what am I doing? He's an Elder, he's been here longer. Why am I doing this?

Ken [00:04:02] The other thing too is some of the teachers that I had, they couldn't help it because it seemed like there's always been a trust issue. What I'm trying to do at the same time, it's not going to be easy because you know, or I know, that this lateral violence, it's going to kick in off and on. It depends how I handle it. So anyway, there's so many things that –like we have a lot of work to do in this school. To me, I'm good at ceremonies. I run ceremonies, but I'm not good at syllabics but we have my sisters that are good at it. And collectively, if we know our role, it will run smooth. Just like a

ceremony, those oskâpewisak, they're supposed to know what to do. That's why it's quiet. That's why sometimes it gets out of hand when somebody starts yelling. And yet, they should do it themselves. There should be no bosses who are supposed to know what we're doing. But again, see, that's when, if I recognize that, I want to address it because our Elders, they were good teachers. We had good teachers. They always remind us just work, get along.

Ken [00:06:23] So that's the whole – not the whole but that's the idea of Pekîwek. Let's bring them home, let's remind them that we have a story. Our story that's the most important story because sometimes you have to take them back to the beginning. And then in this circle, in this group, we have people that are studied residential school there. We have Elders here that are familiar with Treaties and policy. We have that. And then we have local Elders here that know some of the stories. Pigeon Lake, Ma-Me-O Beach were Cree's. We should have our Sundance grounds; we should have a place where we can have ceremony. And to me, that's important. We have to have proof that we were here 100-200 years down the road. And it's got to be visible. Someday those archaeologists will find, there was lodges here.

Robin [00:08:05] Talking about those cultural grounds, do you have any old stories of Pigeon Lake of what used to happen here that you wanted to share?

Ken [00:08:21] The only thing that I remember is trading, right? See the reason why, most of the reasons why we live around rivers and lakes because we live off the land. There's fish. So as a child, my dad used to load up a truck and then he would come here to feed people. But in return, we would get whitefish. Some of my friends when they remind me changes. Like us, my dad used to like boiled fish. We got used to that. So that's why to this day, we buy fish. And I asked some of these guys here that I know, kipakitawâwak means "Do you do net fishing?" And there's only one that I know here. Larry Cutarm. But anyway, our neighbour here, late Joe Boysis, he used to come, and my brothers and I used to buy fish from him. But that's what I remember. My dad used to drive along this road here. There's an old man wap'ciyahp, a lightning. He used to bring food, feed people. And a lot of times, there was no fish, right? But that's what my dad did, was he fed people. I remember that. And I think that's mostly reason why my sisters, they always feed to people. You'll see my sisters driving around, giving away food. And the odd time, I do that because we were raised with those values, to feed people, to help people.

Ken [00:10:50] Just like yesterday went to visit Peter Johnson. And right away, I thought I'm going to bring something, bring him food. We remember, right? We remember our parents, our brothers. My brother, that was one of his best friends yesterday. And because of COVID too, I haven't seen him for a while. Even some of the friends that I have in round dance circle, they asked me about him. So that's a good excuse to go see him. See how he's doing. So, something about this community like we should be visiting each other. And sometimes we forgot, I guess, we're not doing that. And if we address all the concerns of Pigeon Lake, why we're doing this, if they read it, in hopes of they support what we're doing and would, again, it's kind of difficult sometimes for people to support because what are they going to benefit from? And to me, it's just going to take time to prove that there is a need for it. Gordon Lee, he visits here once in a while, and then he tells me stories like a long time ago, like even around – I know they're sad stories like who drowned and how they would depend on Elders how to find those bodies. And I don't know if they would share that. But only some of us would understand because sometimes you have no choice to go to these Elders that are gifted like spiritually, how to find people. And then their stories were – the surrounding farmers, they became family because our relatives here, they used to work around – working for farmers for money or for food.

Ken [00:14:00] And mostly, that's what I remember is that my dad because he loved whitefish. But I really didn't understand because the people from Pigeon Lake because I grew up in Maskwacis in Samson. But I would hear people come to open band meetings, "We're forgotten. We want this and we want that." Just supposing you got converted into Christianity, that's what you know, you're good at it because Jesus will save you. In our family, my mom I took us to the tipi church and my dad would bring in Mormons. We learned stories. And for me, I studied Anglican like the book of Revelation because those apostles, they had visions, and I heard same stories from our Elders, prophecies. So, I was interested in that, so I studied it. But anyway, the point is that if you're into religion, then that's what you know, that's what's going to save people. It's no different what I'm doing. I believe in culture, I believe in our spirituality, ceremonies. And I believe that's what it's going to save our people. But I'm open minded. I have brothers, when we have ceremonies, I have one brother and he's the oldest. When he does his prayers, he reminds people. He talks about Jesus because the Elders used to call him jesa, manitow wikosisan, peyakosan. He's talking about Jesus. And me, I like that. I love it because I used to hear it from my mom. I used to hear it from my dad. But my dad didn't go to church. I go wait for him at the sweat or I listen to him singing at the Chicken Dance or at a Ghost Dance. I'd wait for him.

Ken [00:17:04] I believe that even though this is not going to be easy like we need money, if I had the money, I would get to work right away. If I could afford buggies, cats and whatever, if I can afford dirt to levelit and make it beautiful, so that we can have sun dances, so we can have ceremonies. And there's so much here we can do. It's going to take some time. And hopefully that things fall into place. Eventually, we bring our horses here, just make it like hiking trails back there. The lake is not too far but even though, it's got to be developed. There's just so much work there. Hopefully, once we have pamphlets and stuff like that because people should be aware, instead of hearing rumours or whatever. And eventually, maybe even go talk at the radio station because I don't know. No matter what, I don't want people being discouraged because that's so easy to bring something good and try and destroy it by not getting all the information. It'll give us a chance toobecauseI wish I knew of lots of stories. Who was the first one here in Ma-Me-O Beach? And who are the originals here? But even though, to me, that don't matter. If you're Maskwacis, nothing should stop you from developing here because there's no room in Maskwacis. At least here, you have a place. And once these young people – and I know young people are going to take over. If we don't get going on this, we're going to have graduates, all policy oriented, they're not going to understand the spirit and intent those Treaties. And us, we can give them that connection. Why did they base that Treaty on that sun, on river, on water? And lot of people don't understand grass, the grassroots. We are grassroots. Once you understand connection, relationship, then you realize like these Elders, they succeeded. Treaty based on natural law. They said that in this whole wide world, it's illegal to have a Treaty like that on natural law.

Robin [00:21:27] We talked about a lot of changes in the culture. Have you noticed any changes in the environment around here? The health of the water and the land, the medicines?

Ken [00:21:43] Yeah, actually, that's another thing too. As men, we're supposed to live off the land, but we want to make sure it's safe. Like Imperial, I think they're the ones that are looking after this clean-up they have to do on these old wells. If it's still not safe, because they have to come back and make it the way it was before. We have to support that because that's what we want. We want to make sure that our medicines are safe because the Elders, they tell us, the environment, that's our pharmacy. So those medicines, if we pick, we want to make sure they're not contaminated, right? We want to make sure that because we're going to eat them. And we're going to make herbal tea. So, we have to meet them halfway. We have to make sure that it's safe. And then through those stories, these spirits in the beginning, when they started shapeshifting. And then once they married the human, they can

never be a bear. They can never be an eagle. They can never be a tree. They can never be a rock and they stay human. So that means we have to advocate for them. Because even you ladies, if you guys weren't given to be the waterkeeper, why are you not advocating for the ones in the river and the lake? You're supposed to because those are family. When we see a bear, you'll find some books that say, we live in harmony. Those are our four-legged brothers and sisters. That's what I read. But when you get detailed information, why we say that. And it's got to make sense. If it doesn't make sense, then of course, you're sceptical. There's so many things that science, there's only so much they can do. We talk about those sacred sites, not just Pigeon Lake, Maskwacis, Sweet Grass like you name it. There's places where they're their stories, you know, Cypress Hills.

Ken [00:25:22] CLICK HERE TO HEAR KEN AUDIO EXCEPRT #1 WITH NEHIYAWEWIN:

https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103506/file/203527

Robin [00:28:45] That makes a lot of sense. I think you answered all my questions without me even having to ask them. But there's just one more about the place names. I have those maps there if you want to use them or if you want to draw your own. Or if there's any places around Pigeon Lake or Maskwacis that are important that you want to share, especially those Cree names, so the youth can know those stories.

Ken [00:29:20] See, that's another thing too, like maskipiton, that camp over here and that other camp, Samson band takes their young over there for retreats and stuff like that. Well, there's places around the lake that we rent, that we send our young people to go remind them these values. So, when you walk around those camps, they're honouring people that donated. But here, it's like we're going to do our best to run it like that, to honour some of those Indian names, the Elders that were here. Supposing we build a cabin in honour of, like even wapcih. Because not only Pigeon Lake will see him for spiritual advice, for prayers, to do their feasts and stuff like that will be Maskwacis would come here and come down. We will eventually ask permission from their descendants to honour those Indian names. There's a gazebo over here, one of those places that we took our youth last year and that gazebo is named after whoever funded that. They honour their funders. It's just like coming home to history, coming home to who the original people were here, to honour them that way. And also, to have those, so they can read. I don't even know his English name, but I know he was wapcihyahp. I've sweat with him when I was a kid, teenager because he had good songs and we depended on him, and he was our musom. And

then another one that – because we're all from Maskwacis, Mark Yellowbird. When I was 14, I walked through those doors of alcoholics anonymous, AA meetings and listening to him was like listening to a good song. In fact, he was talking about me, but he was experienced and trying to help us maintain sobriety and he spoke in Cree. So those AA meetings, I went there at 14 and I heard them speak in Cree. They help. It's too bad most of the time, we have to say this in English. In the mid 90s. I want to work in John Deere, Fox Lake, kids speak Cree, so that was easy to teach. Just imagine speaking in Cree.

Robin [00:33:51] Even if you wanted to share in Cree about the places or anything like that, I can get Ida to help with translation. If you wanted to share anything in Cree, you could too.

Ken [00:34:11] Actually, I intended to do that anyways.

Robin [00:34:15] Maybe that's what you could finish off with. If there's anything else that is missing that you want to talk about, about how you want this land to be healed and restored, how that's going to help our youth and the importance of the land and the place names. Anything you want to share in Cree. Anything we missed, I guess, that you think is important.

Ken [00:34:43] I find sharing through Facebook, even last year, I started sharing to remind our family friends, our relatives don't think that smudging is good enough. I'm not saying that it's wrong. I'm just adding, reminding people put the tobacco down. When you pray, you put tobacco down because that's what the spirits like. They like a good smoke. It's just like going to the doctor, I don't know. I forget what they're called but they give you pills that are not quality. What do you call that?

Robin [00:36:04] Like a placebo? They say it's going to do something, but it doesn't.

Ken [00:36:19] No, no. Just like No Frills, those yellow ones. They're cheaper. Yeah, No Name. So sometimes you get that, No Name. But I don't even know why I'm trying to compare that but it's like, when you smudge and pray, it's just like No Name but when you put tobacco down, it's like you get the quality, the real things. Your prayers will be answered because you gave something back. You're offering, you're not just asking, you know what I mean? And all it took was a few times and pretty soon, people were putting tobacco down just like what we do here. I don't know how many pounds of tobacco is right here, literally. We go outside and if I feel I need, I just take it and I go pray. I put tobacco down. See, that's what we're doing here is asking God whoever comes here will benefit.

Whoever is looking for life will find it. Whoever's looking for healing, they will find it here. And the power of prayer, sometimes people think they like we're gifted, or we can make things happen. But it's God that makes things happen. If it wasn't for God, we can't do much. We just have to continue and just believe. There's one thing that I'm always careful because even stories about Jesus, Jesus went around to handpick his apostles, disciples. And there's always somebody that will Judas you. Its just life has a way of repeating itself. And sometimes, most of the time, maybe it's about money. But I share, I remind most of the time, a rare time maybe, I'll remind oskâpewisak that there's always somebody that will turn against him. And my fear is just supposing I teach them everything I know and then they turn against me. They'll use what I taught them against me. And sometimes that happens. So, if it was a mistake, so Jesus made a mistake. We're not all perfect but once you understand a little bit of history and once you understand those creation stories, like for me, I have no choice, I feel that I'm unstoppable. For some that try and stop me, it's a little too late. It's just common sense. Common sense tells me that I have a lot of work to do in and I have very little time for petty issues. And if people want to blame me for stupid choices they make, because really, even mônîyâwak, they say mônîyâwak, they can't measure two things. That's the universe and stupidity, and I get stupid sometimes. But it's hard because that's supposed to be my dad's job to correct. But at the same time too, I had a good mom. My mom allowed me to make mistakes. She minded her own business. When I did go to her, I didn't like what I heard because that was the truth. But I had no choice because I realized sometimes, I made a mistake. And she did her best to make it right, but it was always my free will. The younger ones, I lost a son. I mind my own business, let them make mistakes. But at the same time, in my own way, I try and warn them ahead of time. But at the end of the day, they have free will. It's not that I don't care. They may think that I don't care, but they have to find their own way and because sometimes life has been difficult for over a year. So, my daughters and sons sometimes go through anxiety attacks because some of them, they try smoking and whatever, drinking and whatever. But I just believe in prayer, I believe that things will go back to normal but it's not my place to go and interfere and tell them, "Hey, you know what. Quit being stupid." Life is too short. Because I have experience, like I was an alcoholic, I did drugs. Most of the time you're going to hear me, "Don't drink Don't do drugs. Been there, done that. Don't backstab. Try and get along. Try and work together." Been there done that and it's so simple. To me, life is simple. Keep it simple. Just wake up, smudge and practice this Indian way and work hard. I tried working for the band. One time, two leaders from the council paid the Elders to tell me to shut up. That I wasn't an Elder and I was already doing sun dances. To me, anybody, even a young

person, when you do a sundance, you become an Elder. Automatically, you're an Elder. You have to be strong when you follow this Indian way.

Ken [00:45:37] CLICK HERE TO HEAR KEN AUDIO EXCERPT #2 WITH NEHIYAWEWIN:

https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103506/file/203528

Robin [00:51:04] That's really good. Ay hiy

3.8 Ida Bull Interview

Interviewee: Ida Bull (Pekîwe Female Edler Pipeholder)

Date: August 30, 2021

Location: Louis Bull, Maskwacis

Robin [00:00:00] Ok its going, so we will just start with an introduction, if you want to introduce yourself and where you're from?

omihkwan [00:00:10] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #1 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203533

Robin [00:03:10] ay ay. The first question is about the Pekiwe Cultural Lodge, can you just explain a little about what you know about it and its importance to you?

omihkwan [00:03:29] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #2 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203534

Robin [00:08:30] ay ay. The next question is about Pigeon Lake. Do you have any old stories about that place and why it is important?

omihkwan [00:08:45] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #3 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203535

Robin [00:11:02] ay ay. The next question is talking about changes in the health of the environment. You mentioned the 100-year lease and the changes in the fish. Have you noticed any other changes in the land, plants, water, medicines, or animals in that area?

omihkwan [00:11:28] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #4 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203536

Ida [00:12:53] And even the way that the fish were, some of them were very deformed because of the bad, the chemicals that were throwing into the lake. It had killed off the fish pretty much. And that site was allocated for Hobbema at the time, for the Four Nations to use as their ways of living at the time. It didn't mean for the people who are living at the surrounding lake there. It was never meant to let them kill off our fish. Maybe that was one way for them to get rid of us. And I truly believe that the government has a lot to do with that. Because it seems to me, when I look at the lake, it was meant to save it for tourists. It was never meant to be a tourist site. I know my family, my own family, my dad, and my older brothers, they had a little site right across the lake. There were little cabins built. It was nothing fancy, but they had little cabins. Enough for a tiny little bed, enough for a stove, and they had their, that's where they would stay when they would go fishing way back when I was growing up. And my oldest brother Henry took me to this site a few years ago and said come on I'll go show you, this is where dad and I used to fish. And he found that site. And he said, the surrounding people here, the farmers, the story is that they had burned down our cabin, to get rid of us so we wouldn't be fishing along those shores. And that cabin, there was a fence around it. A way to notify the surrounding people that the dwelling there, to let them know that that site was for the Saddleback Fishing Rights. And so, when they inquired, nothing was done about it. So, we still go to that site just to have some kind of a memory of our past history. And there's, you can still see the remains of our old stove, there's still some pots and pans there, and of course the charred cabin still shows. So, these are some of the things that, some of the places that our leadership need to look into. And claim, they don't have to "reclaim", they have to "claim" them because they are ours. And we have said that before many times. I know that the four Chiefs and the consultation crew in Samson, they have inquired into that subject many times and I understand that there are still negotiations going on. But no one has the right to go along the shores of mimiwsakahikan Pigeon Lake. No outsider has the right to say that that land and the cultural area there its ours, we cant use the word "reclaimation" because we've never lost it, we've never let it go. So to me, Pekiwek Camp has the most brilliant idea, to keep that camp going for all of the Cree people of maskwacis, especially the young. Because we want to keep our ways, nehiyawatisiwin. More importantly, we want to keep our language because that's where our children learn. They hear, they listen to different teachings with our culture. Not only that, they go and observe how a ceremony is, the procedures of it, the process, they get to see that. They get to observe it firsthand. And they don't have to Google any of this information, it's right there for them to learn. So, I am

really in favour to keep a camp that's willing, more than willing to pass down information to all people in maskwacis.

Robin [00:18:43] That's great, you answered my next question with that too. You talked about the reclamation, and how it's not really reclamation because it was already maskwacis in the first place. So, when these oil companies and contractors are coming in and trying to do these things that they call reclamation, what are some values and important things that should be considered in caring for that place?

Ida [00:19:24] Well I know when the oil companies started drilling there many years ago, yeah, we benefitted from it by getting some oil money, but there were no real future plans on behalf of the oil companies. Because why I say that they left their sites unclean. So, whatever they left behind, dripped into along the shores, dripped into the land, and killed a lot of the plants that we used for medicines, killed our berries. You know, and it goes on and on. Even up to today. The lack of responsibility on the behalf of the oil companies is really detrimental to the livelihood that we supposedly own. Again, we have nothing to reclaim. It ours to begin with. I know that the old people in the past, my kukoms and musoms, they used to gather over there, different seasons, and some of them would trade, even back as late as the 70's. I used to see my brothers, they get so much of the berries, and they trade for the fish. For some people. And when it came to ceremonies, those fish were important because it was a part of our staple. And now we have to travel so many places, we even have to get license for crying out loud. And the type of women that we had at the time,

Ida [00:21:35] ekimamonitocik mana ohiskwewak and they would have their, as the fish were being brought in, they would have their dry racks ready. They would have their pots and pans ready for the men to eat after the fishing. So, you know there was a lot of happiness back then. And as far as the government, I have nothing nice to say about how they treated maskwacis Hobbema with that lake, because they left us a big mess. And having that oil money, that should have been another 100-year payment as far as I am concerned. With the amount of monies that is going towards cleaning up most of that mess from the four nations, and that is never talked about, you know, that's the proud Indian, that's the proud Cree, when they don't, when they go ahead and clean up somebody else's mess, and I truly think that that can be still, that lake can still be recovered. And let

the maskwacis people use it for as long as our children are in this earth because they need to know the history of that lake. When we want to talk about wahkohtowin, we are not racist, we are not talking about racism here. I'm talking about the dead land that we are being left when it was rich at one time. The dead lake from our fish you know, that was never foresighted by our ancestors. They were happy to have a place to fish. And that's been demolished. And you know it's sad to say that.

Robin [00:23:59] The next question is about Cree names for the area. You already talked about the Cree name for pigeon lake, but if there are any other areas? I have a few maps here, is there anywhere that you think should be noted for the youth? Ken was talking about doing a place names map for the youth so that they know about the traditional names for the areas. Also, I was just thinking about how you spoke about the word reclamation and how it doesn't really fit, is there a way to say it in Cree that would make more sense?

omihkwan [00:24:52] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #5 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203537

Ida [00:26:28] The government had the responsibility to consult those people, all these 100 years. That when those 100 years came to an end, that it belongs to the maskwacis Cree people. That's how I understood it. And nobody is going to make me understand otherwise, because that's been handed down generation to generation already. So, for us to negotiation and say, oh they can have that Pigeon Lake area where moniyawak live moy nantaw awiyak, I don't think so. Why should it be, ok? It belongs to the maskwacisak.

Robin [00:27:20] I agree. So, going forward, when these oil companies and their contractors are coming in and trying to take out all these contaminants and fix what they did, how would you like to see it being cared for? And taken care of – to be healed and restored – what would you like to see?

omihkwan [00:28:00] CLICK HERE FOR IDA AUDIO EXCERPT #6 IN NEHIYAWEWIN: https://ualberta.aviaryplatform.com/collections/1778/collection_resources/103499/file/203538

Ida [00:29:45] No oil companies should have the right to say you can't do that lodge here, Take that lodge out of here. Because that's not our way. You know even talking about it upsets me right now. Because once you build a lodge, there's a process. And what moniyaw is going to understand that? And yet they break down our lodges, that's not right. The young people see, "oh there was a lodge here a week ago it is gone. What's going on that's not what our elders are telling us?" So now the oil companies are making us elders look bad. Because they go ahead and break these lodges. They have no right to do that. So once again, we own those pieces of land. No elder should have to be going through the pain of seeing his lodge broken down. When he's already taught the teachings, the good teachings, the honest teachings, the faith teachings of our culture. Again there. Why should we reclaim? It's ours. I'd like to see more younger generations. I always tell mothers that come to our lodges "Keep bringing those children, those children are watching, they are observing" Yeah, they might be playing on the side, talking to another child on the side. But my observation has taught me through experience that those children as they grow up, they follow those ways, because they have been brought to those ceremonies. And that site there, that Pekiwe site, it's such a good place to start. And I wish that I could, I had the money to fund that place, to help. Because I see young mothers, younger fathers, even grandmothers and grandfathers bringing in their children in these lodges. Not only that, but the lateral violence that we go through. In every reserve, there's a place there for people to go and spill their pain. And they bring protocol. And in the end, a lot of those people that are having such painful hard times, they come back, and they say thank you for helping me. That statement tells a lot. So, take it for what it's worth.

Robin [00:32:52] Mhm. I just have one more question. It's about the decision-making process. So how this process is going on, and like what happened over in pigeon lake, with the lodges, how they were told they had to take them down. All these decisions are being made, and people are upset with how it's going, and not only with that, but also with the reclamation and remediation processes in general. So how do you think decisions should be made to make these processes less harmful?

Ida [00:33:38] ana ekwa en'kokaya kawihotakik, the ones that make the decisions, how to, as to how to look at that piece of land when oil companies tear down our ceremonial lodges. They don't even ask, they don't even demand, they just do it. Now that process to me, they are breaching our teachings. They are breaching our culture. If that was done somewhere else, in another religion, I'm

sure there would be a lot of, lateral violence ill call it. Because I see it all the time, look at how the blacks are treated. This is no different. How the monks, if something happened to their buildings, I'm sure there would be people protesting. And I think that's one thing we should consider is protesting the government. It seems to me that every time tribes protest, that's the only time something happens. But to me that makes sense with Pigeon Lake.