

What Does L'nu Tli'suti Teach Us?
Ancestral Teachings, Knowledges and Wisdom in the 21st Century

By

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Gesgapegiag aq Listuguj, Gespe'gewa'gi, Mi'gma'gi

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Abstract

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In response to the fragile state of our Indigenous languages in Canada, immediate actions must be agreed upon between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada on Indigenous language policies, pedagogies, and language medium. Accordingly, this thesis provides qualitative insight as to why we find ourselves in our current situation regarding Indigenous education, by encompassing stories from Lnu'g Elders, fluent speakers, linguists, historians, educators, authors, and professors. This thesis will infuse both written, and non-written sources, interviews, documentaries, ceremonial gatherings, and my living-experience as a Lnu'sgw – Mi'gmaq woman in the 21st Century. Our oral traditions and world views are the foundational interconnections that are embedded and interpreted within our language.

August 29, 2018

Maliaptmu'kl aq Mi'walul¹ – Responsibility & Gratitude

As a Lnu'sgw, artist, activist, leader, and researcher, I have responsibilities to reclaim, nurture and protect, and transfer our ways of knowing and being to the next generations, as my ancestors have done for me. Long before I was born into this world, my spirit knew that it would have great responsibilities, and that I would need the wisdom of my ancestors, guidance from my Elders, love from my parents, and the strength of Mother Earth and all of creation.

In dedication to my ancestors, I wrote this thesis in the best of my abilities, to honour where I have come from, where I am now, and where I am going. I am aspiring to reclaim, maintain, and revitalize our oral traditions, language, world views, and ways of knowing and being. I am forever grateful for, as I continue to be inspired by influential Indigenous language protectors to re-learn my language, so that I could for fill my responsibility to the next generations.

Wela'lioq aq Gesalul creator, ancestors, mother earth, two-legged and four-legged, the birds, the trees, water and the air we breathe.

Wela'lioq mother and father for everything, without them, I would not be here.

Wela'lioq aq Gesalul L'nu Elders who have helped guide my spirit's re-awakening of my role and responsibility as a Lnu'sgw. You know who you are!

Wela'lioq Apaji-wla-matulinej in supporting and guiding my educational journey in writing my thesis.

¹ Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project (Halifax: July 7, 2017).

Wela'lin L'nu Elder and Linguist Bernie Francis for helping with the translations and teachings within our language.

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And lastly, I am grateful for our L'nu who are alive, surviving, and resisting ongoing forms of oppression and colonialism.

Wela'lioq

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Preface

Speaking from *nkamlamun*, “the heart,” meaning that I speak from my heart and mind as inseparable from one another. With that being stated, I am going to share my story about my language and educational journey. In all respect and humility, I wrote this thesis to inspire our L’nu, who are faced with oppression in many forms that are causing epidemics of poverty, high school dropout, and suicide rates, alcoholism and drug addictions in our communities. We need to be reminded of the power within each of us by channeling our energies towards loving and caring about each other’s wellbeing, as our ancestors once did. Thus, my heart is what drives my motivation and passion for the healing of our people – of –all people but we must start with the healing of ourselves, then we can heal others.

Language, this thesis will show, is inseparable from healing. In response to the fragile state of our Indigenous languages in Canada, immediate actions must be agreed upon between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada on Indigenous language policies, pedagogies, and language medium. Accordingly, this thesis provides qualitative insight as to why we find ourselves in our current situation regarding Indigenous education, by encompassing the community stories from Lnu’g Elders, fluent speakers, linguists, historians, educators, authors, and professors. The thesis will infuse both written, and non-written sources such as interviews, documentaries, ceremonial gatherings, and my living-experience as a Lnu’sgw in the 21st Century. Our oral traditions and world views are the foundational interconnections that are embedded and interpreted within our language.

The purpose of this work is to give educational insight into an Indigenous perspective that includes many dimensions of our relationships, interconnections, and connectiveness found within our Indigenous oral traditions, Indigenous languages and Indigenous world views.

Indigenous paradigms form the foundational research process that involves Indigenous and non-Indigenous literature review, digital videos, conversational dialogue with Elders and Knowledge Holders on oral traditions language and world views (recorded and unrecorded), and the method of interweaving my Indigenous auto-ethnography.

A few lessons and blessings along my academic writing journey have contributed to a form of written art. At first, it was funding for interviews that caused some challenges, which resulted in a lack of funding to conduct interviews with Elders and Knowers/ Knowledge Holders.

Nevertheless, after meeting with a few Elders who were willing to do interviews, I gave them our customary gift of tobacco to symbolize our respect and gratitude for sharing. Originally, when the idea of making a documentary out of our research first formed, it was a team effort with another L'nu graduate student, but the funding we applied for did not come through despite numerous attempts at submitting proposals to various organization in Mi'gma'gi. Another research challenge I faced during this journey as a re-learner of the language, was in using the correct Mi'gmaq orthography and spelling system, in accordance with the person or place of reference in respect to the origin of the teachings received. As a result, this thesis works with various orthographies that will be referenced in this thesis.

Pjilita'gw- You Are All Welcome - Introduction

To begin by acknowledging that we are in K'jipuktuk, Mi'gma'gi, the ancestral and unceded lands and waters of the Mi'gmaq Nation, since time immemorial. The Treaties of Peace and Friendship cover these lands and waters of the East Coast of Canada. Our treaties did not surrender the lands and waters but established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship of co-existence and co-operation between nations. Although this is not often the reality that surrounds our inherent treaty rights, as L'nu/Mi'gmaq, we continue to celebrate our survival through resiliency by honouring our sources of life through writing, storytelling, drumming, singing, dancing, smudging, prayer and ceremony, in a good way. Our Elders tell us that, in the past, our extended families would meet regularly at various places throughout our territory. During the *Mawio'mi*- gathering, our ancestors talked about the land, resources, the needs of our people and their families, and how best to care for one another. Thus, these gatherings strengthened our family relations and were central to our way of life and still are today.

In the utmost honorable respect for my ancestors, I must acknowledge the legacy of those who came before me, for they are the reason I am. Without their resiliency, strength, wisdom and love that emerged from their survival, it may be true that my generation and the future generations would cease to exist. In return, my gratitude is expressed through writing about my lived experience as a Lnu'sgw- Mi'gmaq woman learning about who I am, where I am, and where I am going. We need to understand that we as Indigenous, and L'nu are the primary documents of our ancestors that we are the

living proof of the historical and contemporary traumatic events that has plagued our people.

We are all related: the air, the water, and rocks are known to be some of the oldest living organisms on Mother Earth, Indigenous peoples from coast to coast, have known these elements to be our ancestors, the spirit of the ancient ones. Our ancestors, as humans come from the cosmos, we descend from the spirit realm. An example of this is embedded in the Mi'gmaq word, *Skite'kmujeouti*¹ Our ancestors- the Milky Way. Our grandmother moon and grandfather sun, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and honour for sustaining and nurturing us.

As far back as I can go, with the knowledge I have learned about my family history over the years, is four generations ago. Since our clan system derives from the mother's side. I will begin the introduction of my great-grandmother, Natalie Condo-Caplin, who was married to my great- grandfather, Toq'otoq Caplin. They had three kids before my great grandmother passed away from Tuberculosis, when my grandmother, Anna Caplin-Gedeon, when she was two years old. My grandmother grew up without a mother, so all her teachings were from her father, Toq'otoq. When I was engaging in dialogue with my aunt about our family history, she told me of the day my great grandfather died, and that there was a massive thunder and lightning storm on the day of his funeral. The reason I mention this in the thesis, it relates to my spirit name, Flying White Thunderbird, I wanted to make those connections between our ancestors and us. Furthermore, my great-grandparents on my grandfather's side, are Collins Gedeon and

¹ Battiste, Marie. "Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22, no.1 (1998): 17.

Natalie Gedeon, who had many children, one of them being my grandfather, Armand Jay Gedeon.

When my grandparents grew older, they had children and married, after my grandfather came from World War II. Of the children, my mother, Marina Gedeon, survived through all the hardships she faced, from racism to colonialism to growing up in poverty. There was a time when there was no running water in the community, so they had to go to the river to get fresh water to bathe, drink, clean floors, dishes, and other ways we sustain ourselves with water. Back in those days, the *Enfranchisement Act of 1857*² was forced upon my grandfather after coming back from the war, even though he could not read or write. During these times, my family was not recognized as status Indians, because my grandfather became a Canadian citizen, and lost his Indian status. Thus, under the rules and regulations of the *Indian Act of 1951*³, my grandmother and all her children lost their Indian status for marrying a non-status Indian. Consequently, the community of Gesgapegiag were ashamed of my family, and treated them as outsiders. However, after they had received their Indian Status back after the Indian Act amendments in 1985⁴, the start of acceptance of my family back into the community began.

On my father's side, my great-grandmother and great-grandfather are *Aselig Guntewo'q*- Angelique Condo-Marchand and James Marchand. They married and had children, raising their family in Listuguj, until my great-grandfather passed away. This

² Indigenous Foundations. Web. Accessed on August 27, 2018.
http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/#amendments

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

part of my family's history is explained in detail in the chapter entitled, *Nestimk Tli'suti* – Understanding Language. Of their children, my grandmother, Annie May Marchand, had one child, my father, John Marchand. My grandmother was told by doctors that she was not able to have any children, but that my father was a miracle.

Gwe Ni'n Telui'sin Pemaija'sit Wape'k Kaqt'ukewi'skw⁵ - Hi my name is, Flying White Thunderbird. My English name is Erika Gideon Marchand. On my mother's side of the family is from the *Mui'n*- Bear Clan. I was born and raised in the same community as my mother in *Gesgapegiag*- Where the river widens, and where the salt water meets the fresh water, until I was around eleven years old. After that, I moved to my father's community of Listuguj, another L'nu community located in *Gespe'gewa'gi*- The Last Land (Seventh District of Mi'gma'gi), also known as the Gaspesie or the Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec. This is the area where I lived my youth years until I relocated to *Wolastoq*- the beautiful river (Fredericton, New Brunswick) to attend St. Thomas University. Currently, I am living in K'jipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki- Halifax, Nova Scotia as a graduate candidate at Saint Mary's University's, and enrolled in the Master of Arts Program in Atlantic Canada Studies.

There is a need for self-reflection in the ways that colonialism has constructed our world views about our L'nu – Mi'gmaq language, and how we can use this to heal ourselves, communities, and Nations. By self-reflecting, it helps us understand our ways of being and knowing, and our place in society, as L'nu. Until I was six years old I spoke in the L'nu language fluently, but that was stopped by colonial and oppressional forces in

⁵ Spirit name given by a L'nu Elder Jane Meader and Katie Denny from Unama'ki, Mi'kma'ki, at a naming ceremony on November 1, 2017.

the educational system on reserve. In grade four I moved to Listuguj, started attending the school in the community, until I graduated in grade eight. For a brief time, I was reunited with the Mi'gmaq language, this class was only for a half hour, every other day. These classes, at the time, focused on reading, writing, and speaking, but lacked the capacity, in many ways, to flourish and create fluent speakers. These core language programs do not create fluent speakers, only immersion programs have the capacity to do so.

It is essential to begin with understanding the historical and contemporary significance of the L'nu - Mi'gmaq language, oral traditions and world views, for this thesis to prompt any positive change. The purpose of this project is to focus on the teachings and knowledges embedded within our oral traditions, language, world views and the ways in which these are transferred in the 21st Century, to ensure the survival and flourishing of the next generations. In response to the desolate state of the L'nu language and knowledges contained within the language, it cannot be holistically transferred to the next generation without also having a lived experience (praxis) of those teachings and knowledges. For this reason, it is important not only to return to the traditional knowledges but also to give new life to the traditional way of passing these knowledges on to the next generations. However, the environment is no longer the same as that of our ancestors, and so, with changes in how we live and communicate and with the passing of Elders and Knowledge Holders, access to traditional teachings have changed. In response to these changes in the environment and in how we live and communicate, it is essential for L'nu communities to document, live by and transfer their teachings and knowledges for the future generations. It is vital that we reconnect our communities with our knowledge holders, Elders, youth, women and men to liberate and heal ourselves from

the ongoing forms of colonialism. This brings me to my research questions, all focusing on why it is vital for L'nu to reclaim and maintain our identity in the 21st century through the teachings and knowledges embedded in the ancient ways our ancestors? Why is L'nu identity at the core for our own healing and liberation? What does the L'nu language teach us? How can we transfer these teachings and knowledges to L'nu who do not speak our language or have the knowledge of our language? To deny these inherent qualities of Indigenous peoples is to deny their past, by silencing the teachings and wisdom of our ancestors.

To explore what the Indigenous and L'nu languages teaches us, this thesis will engage with Elders and Knowers, to share their knowledge through stories and interactions with the subject matter and listeners. The themes will include, but not be limited to: teachings in the creation story, the cosmos, oral traditions, language and history, relationships and reciprocity, world views, and the foundational basis of values embedded within each of these. All of these themes demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependence of our language, oral traditions and world views. Additionally, the thesis will examine key root words, morphology of words, and the layers of meanings in our oral traditions, language and world views. This will demonstrate the significance of how knowledge is passed on, with an understanding of what our language teaches us about our world views.

Thus, in summary, the goals of this thesis will be accomplished through pursuing the following objectives:

- A) To explore the historical and contemporary interconnectedness of oral traditions, language and world views.

B) To explore the historical and contemporary teachings and knowledges embedded within oral traditions, language and world views.

C) To explore the transfer of L'nu knowledges, teachings and wisdom from our ancestors to *L'uiknekewaq Elmi'knikewaq*- next seven generations.

The importance of a language, as noted above, is not only being able to speak it but also understanding the world views embedded within it. The world views embedded in the language raise one's consciousness that there is more to Indigenous languages than simply translations or by learning how to say words and phrases or being able to converse. An Okanagan scholar, Jeanette Armstrong, shows that a worldview of one's culture is through the language that one speaks: "Words represent generations of relating to the world in a particular manner."⁶ For this reason, the teachings and knowledges embedded in our Indigenous languages expresses the lived experiences of the relationships and understanding of the multiple layers of meaning which are also embodied in our oral traditions and world views. Our oral traditions, language and world views are the foundational basis of L'nu spirit or identity, which is at *ngamlamun*- the heart of where we come from, and where we are going.

To understand educational short comings in the 21st century, an analysis of historical and contemporary injustices must also derive from policies and laws which have openly assimilated and oppressed Indigenous peoples, and how these correlates to the experience of the present day. There is an urgent need for Indigenous-led research on Indigenous education through integrating our traditions, culture, language, world views, and ceremonies. Furthermore, these research results need to be understood and implemented

⁶ Jeanette C. Armstrong, "Land Speaking," *Speaking for the Generations Native Writers on Writing*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), 148 – 194.

throughout Mi'gma'gi. It is vital for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada to educate themselves on broader global research that supports Indigenous education that includes Indigenous language immersion, land pedagogy, oral traditions, and other factors in holistic understanding. My research is intended mainly for Indigenous and L'nu people is interested in innovative Indigenous and L'nu education through Indigenous language, oral traditions and world views, as the basis for education curriculum, and a way of life. Therefore, my thesis is not designed solely for academic purposes; therefore, I intend to keep my research and language understandable enough for the public, while also adhering to academic rules and regulations of the institution.

At first, I wanted to research Indigenous and L'nu - Mi'gmaq language immersion programs for Indigenous and L'nu students, in relation to language rights and policies. After engaging in dialogue with L'nu community members, they expressed that our L'nu language is not necessary in our era, as if to say our ancestral languages are primitive, that our languages are not worthy or something to be ashamed of. Such beliefs imply a valuation of English and French languages, and world views. It was in that moment I realized that the thesis would have to address the influence of colonialism even at the level of communication. I know that learning multiple languages is quite beneficial for humans and that monolingual thinking, conversely, is limited and even harmful to human development. It is up to the listener to decide if my research is true or not. Hence, this is a process of sharing knowledge through an Indigenous paradigm, to present, in an open-ended, non-coercive way. The objective is to encourage people, to look inwards of self, to ask what it truly means to be human, where I am from and where I am going, both individually and collectively.

Photographs of My Ancestor



Noogumee- Great grandmother, Natalie Caplin

Gugumij aq Mijgamij-
Grandmother and
Grandfather, Anna Caplin-
Gideon, Armand Jay Gideon



Gugumij- Grandmother, Annie May Marchand



Nigantug epijig: Matthew Ritchie, James Marchand. Ugtejg gagmit: John Germain.

Mitata- Great grandfather, James Marchand



(Middle Right) Noogumee- Great grandmother Aselig Guntweo'q (Angelique Condo)

Ta'n Teli L'nu'imk – Ways of Being & Knowing – Methods & Methodology

All my relations are the focus of all my research, and accordingly it begins with the L'nu concept *m'st no 'gmaq*- all my relations. This concept is the focus of all my research which is founded on a holistic and relational approach, as it pertains to Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the universe. It is most suitable to approach this thesis from a non-western lens, and yet it will be mainly using the colonial language of English, which throughout the thesis can be seen to produce a certain world view. Often when Indigenous language and ways of knowing and being are researched, it is through a western lens, thus producing western results. From what recent research has shown, this is not a successful approach in Indigenous communities around the world.¹ The research in this thesis will reflect Indigenous paradigms as it is necessary to produce successful and tangible results, and in this way will seek to transcend the use of the colonial language. The basis of Indigenous research paradigms is our Indigenous reality, how we think or know about reality, our values and ethics, and the ways we learn and embody our knowledge about reality.²

Through using Indigenous paradigms in conducting my research, the focus is on Indigenous oral traditions, language and world views, as they are the foundation for understanding the world and our place within our universe. Thus, the research will explore the history of L'nu oral

¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New Zealand, Otago University Press, 2012); Marie Battiste. *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Saskatoon: Purish Publishing Limited, 2013); Shawn Wilson. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Julia Bull. Julie Bull: The intersection of people, policies, and priorities in Indigenous research ethics (2017; Fredericton: Julia Bull, 2017), YouTube Video.

² Shawn Wilson. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 13.

traditions and language. In that context, by building on what is learned about our Indigenous and Lnu'g languages, our world views will become more apparent as expressed in our roles and responsibilities with one another, with the universe, land, water, food and medicines. Equally important, are the ways in which we transfer these knowledges and teachings. Finally, the responsibilities of maintaining and transferring our knowledge, wisdom, and teachings for the next generations yet to come, are vital for our survival, as Lnu'g, as Indigenous peoples, and as humans restoring balance on Mother Earth.

The goal of this thesis is to contribute to research that meaningfully and truly supports our L'nu communities for the overall well-being of the L'nu Nation- Mi'gmaq Nation. A main goal of this research is to explore the significant values embedded in our oral traditions, language and worldviews, and the transfer of our ancient ancestral teachings and wisdom, through historical and contemporary literature and film reviews, sharing circles, Indigenous auto-ethnography, storytelling, dialogue with Elders and Knowers, open-ended interviews, feasts, gatherings and ceremony. Ceremony will not be recorded or documented, although, the outcome from my perspective of the ceremony, may be written in this thesis.

Indigenous peoples in the Academy are actively practicing the Indigenous methodologies that will be essential to this thesis. From what research has shown, Indigenous research is successful when using Indigenous methods and methodologies. Thus, Indigenous methodologies will be methodologically foundational to this research, as they reflect and respect Indigenous research paradigms. For my research, I will use strategies of inquiry that reflect Indigenous research paradigms such as ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (nature of thinking), methodology (how knowledge is gained), and axiology (worth of knowledge).³ As part of my

³ Shawn Wilson. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. 33-34.

approach, I intend to embed the method of Indigenous research participant observer, as it is one of the methods that is in keeping with Indigenous research paradigms framework.⁴ Building on that method, I will use ash basket weaving as a metaphor to interweave my own narrative and connectedness by recording in a journal from my life experiences in relation to this thesis. Thus, it will be most respectful to begin my story with my ancestors, then my great grandparents, grandparents, parents and then myself. The reason for this approach is that Indigenous world views always begin with our life history, which starts with creation and our ancestors as they holistically contribute to our life's experiences and we contribute to their life experiences as well.

A specific method used is the engagement in conversational dialogue with L'nu Elders, Knowledge Holders, linguist, fluent speakers and L'nu language teachers from various districts in Mi'gma'gi. I was approved by the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch on November 1, 2017, and I did not receive approval from Saint Mary's University Ethics Board until February 8, 2018. There was a Women's One Day Gathering in Unama'ki, hosted by Apaji-wla'matulinej - Righting Relations (Eastern Hub), included L'nu Elders and youth, and sharing circles and ceremonies. I informed every one of my project during the beginning of the gathering, the Elders advised that I audio record the sharing circle, so I did. Consequently, I am not "ethically" allowed to reference this sharing circle because I did not get SMU Ethics approval on time. After continuous edits to my SMU ethics application, and waiting to receive approval, I managed to conduct one interview. The interview was at St. Thomas University - Mid-Winter Longhouse Gathering, that was held on February 11, 2018.

⁴ Shawn Wilson. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. 40.

I intend to use a conversational method as a means for gathering knowledge through a story that reflects the relationship between method and paradigm in Indigenous knowledges through oral tradition.⁵ In a sharing circle, an exchange of ideas that engages people in a natural and spontaneous dialogue and encourages the emergence of unexpected traditional knowledge from the person. This allows for everyone to learn and teach each other during the storytelling and sharing circle process that is “an element of improvisation on the part of both teacher and students, which turns the lesson into an emergent encounter between the co-developing consciousnesses of both parties in search of an enhanced shared understanding of the topic at hand.”⁶ For example, if you take a L’nu – Mi’gmaq word such as, ‘Toq-’, it roughly translates to English as ‘all together’, but this depends on the context in which the speaker is in. As a result, this draws on the importance of dialogic pedagogy in Indigenous education.

Additionally, the method of sharing circle discussions described by Shawn Wilson in his book *Research is Ceremony*, which explores the ways of setting up the stage accordingly because, in ceremonies, everyone who is participating needs to be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness.⁷ This allows everyone to be synchronized so that the message can be meaningfully understood.

The heart of my methodological approach is embedded into my research through an Indigenous auto-ethnography and by praxis that is in keeping with Indigenous paradigms.⁸⁹ I will

⁵ Kovach, Margaret. “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research”, *First Peoples Child & Family Review. An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews* 5 (Nov. 1, 2010), 40.

⁶ Skidmore, David and Bristol Kyoko Murakami. *Dialogic pedagogy: the importance of dialogue in teaching and learning (Multilingual Matters, 2016)*, 20.

⁷ Shawn Wilson. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. 41.

⁸ Paul Whitinui. “Indigenous Autoethnography: Exploring, Engaging, and Experiencing “Self” as a Native Method of Inquiry,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43, (2014): 458

⁹ Julia Bull. *Julie Bull: The intersection of people, policies, and priorities in Indigenous research ethics* (2017; Fredericton: Julia Bull, 2017), YouTube Video.

use my narrative to connect my lived-experiences, struggles and successes on re-learning about the L'nu language and world views through engaging with L'nu Elders, Knowers, linguists, fluent speakers, language teachers, and community members.

Finally, this thesis will embrace the methodology of qualitative research. I intend to analyse the data through quality of relationships and experiences, the layered symbolism in the teachings and knowledges, and the interconnectedness and the web of reciprocity. As Wilson finely puts it, “[...] our methodology seems obvious, the more relationships between yourself and the other thing, the more fully you can comprehend its form and the greater your understanding becomes.

¹⁷ The methodology here is building relationships so that actual positive change can occur for others, along with myself. The importance of relationships and reciprocity with all living and non-living beings is at the heart of being Indigenous. An example of this is portrayed through Indigenous languages, which are based on relationships and reciprocity. Furthermore, I intend to conjoin relationality with accountability in my research through embedding appropriate levels of respect, reciprocity and responsibility. By that I mean, my research must carefully reflect and build relationships with concepts, teachings, and knowledges.

¹⁷ Wilson, Shawn. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. 79.

Sa'qewe'l Aknutmatimkl¹ – Oral Traditions

This chapter will explore the diverse characteristics of Indigenous oral traditions and *L'nu sa'qewe'l Aknutmatimkl*²- Mi'gmaq oral traditions through focusing on the value and the connectiveness³ of relationships with self, story, language – connections to land, teachings, and world view. This will be respected and embodied by starting with the foundation of Indigenous oral traditions, especially *L'nu*⁴ creation stories. These creation stories are grounded within our oral traditions, language, and world views that have been passed down from one generation to the next for thousands of years. The Anishinaabek scholar, Deborah McGregor, comments that our “Indigenous world views and knowledge come from the Creator and from Creation itself. Many stories and teachings are gained from animals, plants, the moon, the stars, water, wind and the spirit world. Knowledge is also gained from vision, ceremony, prayer, institutions, dreams, and personal experience.”⁵ This is fundamentally how we relate to our Mother Earth, living and non-living entities, the cosmos, and ourselves. Without our relationship and responsibilities to Mother Earth, we lose balance, when we lose balance it becomes a difficult journey throughout life.

¹ Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project (Halifax: July 7, 2017).

² Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project, July 7, 2017.

³ Murdena Marshall, et al., “Approaching Mi'gmaq Teachings of the Connectiveness of Humans and Nature,” *Ecosystem Based Management Beyond Boundaries. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Science and the Management of Protected Areas*, (Wolfville: Science and Management of Protected Areas Association, May 21-26, (2007): 174.

⁴ L'nu- The people of Mi'gma'gi.

⁵ Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle, Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Our Future”. *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3&4 (Summer & Fall 2004): 388.

Ta'n Wettapegsulti'g – Where We Come From

It is essential to begin by understanding our creation stories, as they are the foundation of our relationship with and responsibility to the people, animals, birds, plants, trees, fish, the land, the water, and the universe. Our L'nu creation stories go deeply into the foundations of where we come from, and, although different versions of the story are told throughout Mi'gma'gi, the message of who we are and where we come from remains the same. Therefore, this path will embrace the readers to engage in and understand the ways we as Lnu'g think, relate to our lands and waters, and the universe, along with our individual and collective values and world views.⁶ To Indigenous peoples, oral traditions are sacred and have been passed down from generation to generation. Furthermore, our creation stories embed teachings of how to be in balance with the universe, and our oral traditions, language, and world views arise from these teachings.⁷ From the beginning, Indigenous people have practiced the passing of knowledge and history orally, mainly because our languages create a form of their own.⁸ As a result, our Indigenous languages create a form of expression to the animate universe, and with every vocal expression, another form is created.⁹

In brief I will reflect on our L'nu creation stories told throughout Mi'gma'gi, starting with the creation story as told by Stephen Augustine, the hereditary chief of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, who learned it from his grandmother Mary Agnes (Thomas) Augustine. He provides a version of the creation story that illustrates this source of L'nu identity in relation to our ways of living and being. Our stories express the importance of life, and that life began with the number

⁶ Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta'tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq*. (Halifax: Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 49.

⁷ Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2018), 5.

⁸ Ibid. 5.

⁹ Ibid. 5.

seven, having the first entity as *Gisu'lgw*- the giver of life, *Nisgam*- grandfather sun, *Ugst'qamu*- Mother Earth.¹⁰ Then two lightning bolts hit the ground, creating Glusgap.¹¹ After he was created, his *Giju*- grandmother was created as a wise old woman who would teach Glusgap about everything needed to survive on the earth.¹² Giving thanks, Glusgap wanted to feast with his grandmother, and a martin gave its life for them, after the grandmother instructed Glusgap to gather the seven sparks that were left over from the bolt of lightning, bring seven pieces of wood and put them on those sparks, and with his eagle feather to light the fire.¹³ This is our Kjipuktuk, our great spirit fire, that would cook the meat to celebrate grandmother and nephew's arrival to the world.¹⁴ Not long after, Glusgap's mother was created by leaf through the life force of grandfather sun, life giver, and mother earth.¹⁵ The eagle came to deliver a message to Glusgap and his grandmother from the great spirit, that they must go to the spirit world but to make sure his mother and nephew look after that fire, so it would not go out.¹⁶

Out of the fire, seven sparks will fly and when they land on the ground, seven women will be created. Seven more sparks will fly, and of these sparks seven men will be created. These seven men and women will come together to form the first seven families and go off in seven different directions. The Mi'gmaq are one of seven original families, when the Mi'gmaq reach their territory, they will split up into seven different clans, each having their own fires or Mawiomi. After the passing of seven winters, all the families will once again gather at the site of the original great fire. There they will honour the first four levels of creation by bringing together all their fires to form, once again, the great spirit fire, Kjipuktuk.¹⁷

Mary Agnes Augustine, from Elsipogtog, Mi'gma'gi- Big Cove, New Brunswick, passed down this creation story to her grandson, Augustine. The creation story teaches us how we came to be,

¹⁰ Stephen Augustine. *Tan-Wet-Abeg-Sol-Teagw - Where We Come From*, Video, directed/performed by Stephen Augustine (2000; Gatineau, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, video, June 16, 2011), YouTube Video.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

and how to honour, respect and love one another, as Mi'gmaq- family, within creation.

Additionally, this story emphasizes the value of our Elders and Grandmothers guidance and transferring of wisdom to our people.

The creation story told by L'nu scholar, Marie Battiste portrays a slightly different understanding of creation, including the creation of the moon, the sun, the earth. Interesting about Battiste's version/story is the inclusion of grandmother moon and grandfather sun, which represent the making of Mother Earth, and Glusgap:

On the other side of the Path of Spirits, in ancient times, Kisúkwl, the Life Giver, originated the firstborn Niskam (the Sun), who was brought across Sk-tiékmujawti (the spirit path or the Milky Way) to light the earth. Kisúkwl also sent across the sky a bolt of lightning that created *wsitqamuk* (the dry earth) and united the life forces out of *wsitqamuk* to form the keeper of life known to the Mi'kmaq as Kluskap. Legends recount that this guardian spirit lay naked on *wsitqamuk*, his limbs pointing in the four directions.¹⁸

Glusgap's family extends to the animals, birds, plants, and other life forms that *Gisu'lgw* created through the force of lightning and by the force of Mother Earth. Similarly to Augustine's version, Glusgap's grandmother came from a rock and given life from *Gisu'lgw*, to guide Glusgap with wisdom and knowledge of an Elder and Grandmother.¹⁹ As Glusgap continues to learn how to be human, *Gisu'lgw* made Netawansum, Glusgap's nephew, who is made from the force of the ocean foam grasping the shores and sweetgrass.²⁰ The teachings of life, and the strength of the underwater realms are gifts to Glusgap and his grandmother.²¹ Not long after, a woman is created, and she introduces herself to everyone as Glusgap's mother, and her name is;

Niskanakanimqàsiwsq, "the one giving us direction of the future," whose power lay in her ability to explain the cycles of life and foretell the future. She was born from a leaf on

¹⁸ Marie Battiste. "Nikanikinut." In James (Sàkèk) Youngblood Henderson ed. *The Migmaw Concordat*. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

²⁰ Ibid. 14.

²¹ Ibid. 14.

a tree, descended from the power and strength of Niskam, and made into human form by Kisukwl to bring love and colour to the world. As part of the earth, she brought the strength and wisdom of the earth and knowledge of how to maintain harmony with the forces of nature.²²

In both Battiste and Augustine's version of the creation story, Glusgap's mother is born from a leaf. However, L'nu Elder and educator Jane Meader adds to the L'nu creation story by stating that the woman came from the water, as opposed to Battiste's account, where the nephew comes from the water. What is unique about both versions in Battiste and Meader's story, is that it teaches us about our balance between the feminine, and the masculine elements that are needed in society, then and even more so, today. As Meader explains her version of the creation story, there was the creation of a man named Glusgap; he was made from the sand, but he could not move when he was first made, he was bound to the land. There were two strikes of lightning that set him free, he started to explore the things in the world, and once of the first things he came across was this woman, who was his mother and the first clan mother. The creation story has four beings that started the creation of where the L'nu came from. There are two women who are the elders, and the two men are young people, creating balance.²³

Our creation stories demonstrate the vitality of our roles and responsibly in ensuring balance with all of creation. Some accounts of our creation story have been influenced and attacked by religious and colonial narratives, either by missionaries, historians, or anthropologists. It is important to carefully analyze and reflect our oral traditions which have been historically under attack, but to understand why our oral traditions were targeted is equally as important. At the time of contact, European women were treated very different from

²² Marie Battiste, "Nikanikinut." In James (Sàkèk) Youngblood Henderson ed. *The Migmaw Concordat*. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 14.

²³ Jane Meader. *Mi'kmaq Creation Story - Woman of the Water*, Video, directed/performed by Jane Meader (2016; Turtle Lodge Canada, Jittoa Productions, 2016), YouTube Video.

Indigenous women, who on the contrary were respected equally among the men, whereas European men portrayed themselves as superior to women. Anyhow, before the arrival of Europeans in Turtle Island, Indigenous peoples honoured and respected all genders as being a gift from the Creator. As the O:gwewo:we scholar, Beverley Jacobs defines it:

Women were respected for their spiritual and mental strength and men were respected for their spiritual and physical strength. Women were given the responsibility in bearing children and were given the strength and power to carry that responsibility through. Men had always respected that spiritual and mental strength and women respected the men's physical strength. There was always a balance between men and women as each had their own responsibilities as a man and as a woman.²⁴

Though our Mi'gmaq creation stories differ slightly from the Haudenosaunee, in certain ways, each story embeds key elements that teach us of how we came to be, who we are, and where we are going, as a people, and a nation: most importantly, to honour our responsibility to creation of our spiritual relationship and connection with the universe. Also essential is to honour and respect the gifts we were given by the Creator to be responsible to ensure the well-being of all living entities through the knowledge and wisdom provided by the lands and waters we live on. We as Lnu'g embed gifts within that must be identified, honoured, and shared with all the creation as it adapts and changes in accordance to the world we live in.²⁵

Foundations of Oral Traditions

Since the creation of language, stories have evolved into histories of a people, which are either spoken or sung. This is what is commonly known as oral traditions, representing a form of human communication that Indigenous peoples around the world have been practicing since time immemorial. The term time immemorial is often interpreted by Indigenous peoples as an eternity

²⁴ Beverly K. Jacobs. "International Law/ The Great Law of Peace" (Master of Laws Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2000), 14-28.

²⁵ Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta'tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq*. (Halifax: Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 70.

ago, in the sense that it signifies the beginning of ancient times of our people. Scholars Renée Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod define oral traditions as, “The means by which traditional knowledge is reproduced, preserved and conveyed from generation to generation. Oral traditions form the foundation of Aboriginal societies, connecting speaker and listener in communal experience and uniting past and present memory.”²⁶ Oral traditions are where teachings and forms of knowledge are created, maintained, transferred and reclaimed through traditions, language and world views, all of which are inseparable.

Stories are held in the storytellers’ memory; sometimes they change in the storytelling shaping the story to be fluid, dynamic and animate, more so than written stories. However, this does not make them any less truthful than written history, just unique in the ways people make sense of the world they live in. To put it another way, Wolastoqiyik scholar Andrea Bear Nicholas expresses that, First Nations stories are only one aspect of a more inclusive meaning of tradition. Other aspects are language, ceremony, song, oratory and communal forms of decision-making.”²⁷ All these aspects are embedded within one another; one of these aspects could not wholly and meaningfully survive without the other. These stories illustrate how things came to be, and sometimes how things ought to be. In addition, the Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmawei Mawiomi reveal the connectiveness between the fluidity of our world views and oral traditions, “As there are any sources for our worldview and because they rest on oral tradition, the stories themselves might have been modified through time and space since they as to adapt to changing realities.”²⁸ Indigenous languages are embedded within oral traditions and world views. For the most part,

²⁶ Renee Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod, eds. *Aboriginal Oral Traditions, Theory, Practice, Ethics*. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 19.

²⁷ Andrea Bear Nicholas. *Aboriginal Oral Traditions, Theory, Practice, Ethics*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, eds. Renee Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 18.

²⁸ Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta’tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmaq*. (Halifax: Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 51.

the English language cannot meaningfully translate Indigenous languages because there are some words that can never be translated into another language. Furthermore, when oral traditions are recorded in writing, the writing process detracts from the rhythm and melody of the story teller's voice that is essential to the fluidity and aliveness of the story. Supporting this notion is oral historian Alessandro Portelli:

Transcription by its very nature must adhere to the rules and regulations of its written language- punctuation marks, for example, that give a sense of the way something was said but do not account for the rhythm or melody of one's voice or the variations in diction that emphasize different points or feelings. Traits which cannot be contained within segments are the site (not exclusive, but very important) of essential narrative functions: they reveal the narrators' emotions, their participation in the story, and the way the story affected them. [...] By abolishing these traits, we flatten the emotional content of speech down to the supposed equanimity and objectivity.²⁹

Moreover, the written form does not invite the listeners to comment or ask questions to the storyteller; often, this is fundamental for the whole purpose of oral traditions, to directly engage in dialogue. Hence, oral traditions, world views and language will be discussed in this thesis as interdependent and interconnected with one another emphasizing the multiple forms of oral human communication, such as storytelling, singing, and ceremony.

Since time immemorial, our language, culture, customs and stories have been passed down from one generation to the next through oral traditions. Battiste explains the interconnectedness within our Indigenous ways of knowing and oral traditions:

Fundamental to Aboriginal knowledge is the awareness that beyond the immediate sensible world of perception, memory, imagination, and feelings lies another world from which knowledge, power, or medicine is derived from which the Aboriginal peoples will survive and flourish. The complementary modes of knowing in the tribal world form

²⁹ Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 35.

essence of tribal epistemology and have been continually transmitted through the oral tradition.³⁰

Today, these ancient stories, teachings and forms of knowledge continue to survive, but they are no longer flourishing as they once did. Indigenous oral traditions are encoded with valuable concepts that are not easily translated through the written word or translated to the English language, which makes them difficult to justify in the context of conventional academic approaches. However, the Dakota Elder Eli Taylor eloquently explains that our mother tongue and our oral stories are deeply interconnected:

Our language and the stories perpetuated within that language are not only about telling stories that have some historical data; they are about the perpetuation of a worldview that has its own distinct theories about the past and its significance to the Dakota of today and tomorrow. The language of our people has always been the foundation of this worldview. For those who want to learn about the history of the Dakota from us, not from what written sources might reveal about our people, an understanding of our language and thus worldview is key.³¹

Those concepts that Eli Taylor believes to be embedded within our oral traditions, are the first teachings given to us from the Creator, on our relationships with and responsibilities with all of creation. One of our major responsibilities includes the continuation and revitalization of our language and ways of knowing. This is one of the most powerful methods that successfully resists ongoing forms of colonialism and oppression, and instead ultimately leads to a powerful sense of identity as Lnu'g. Consequently, when our language is no longer being spoken and transferred, the essence or spirit of the language is no longer alive and flourishing. Therefore, our

³⁰ Marie Battiste, "Enabling the Autumn Seed: Towards a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22, Canadian Business & Current Affairs Database: no.1, (1998): 16.

³¹ Angela Wilson Wasiyatwain, and Carolyn Schommer Wahpetunwin. *Remember This!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narrative*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2005), 66.

oral traditions, language and world views are interconnected in such a way that when they are braided together they form a special bond, and when they are divided they weaken.

Most notably, Bernie Francis and Trudy Stable address the question of the survival of knowledge and language in their book, *The Language of this Land, Mi'kma'ki*, “With the passing of Elders such as Margaret Johnson and Wilfred Prosper”, they observe, “many of the terms associated with the landscape are forgotten, as traditional technologies have fallen from use or land use patterns have changed.”³² It is disheartening to read this quotation, as it reminds and warns us about the crucial significance of the survival of Lnu’g ways of knowing and being in the 21st century. Although the rapid rate of language death is terrifying to Indigenous peoples and we are threatened by colonial languages, there is a way to resist and liberate ourselves. At a recent engagement conference, hosted by the Assembly of First Nations on Indigenous Languages Initiatives in the Atlantic Provinces, Saqmaq Leroy Denny of Eskasoni First Nation made a speech which reminded me about the ways that we have the power from within, that our ancestors are inside of each of us and that we are the ancestors too.³³ Our ancestors are within our DNA, which means that we carry them with us every day, and therefore we are the ancestors too. By being in tuned with who you are, this will allow the ancestors to be in tuned with you as well. The L’nu Elder Miig’gama’qan Bartibogue express the notion that, “We are our ancestors, and we are our loved ones, because the last breath of every departed soul gives out and goes into our cellular level, and this is not limited to only humans, but also animals.”³⁴ Additionally, a

³² Bernie Francis and Trudy Stable. *The Language of this Land, Mi'kma'ki*. (Cape Breton: Cape Breton University Press, 2012), 26.

³³ Leroy Denny, “Indigenous Languages Initiative Engagement Sessions”, *Assembly of First Nations*. (Kjpuktuk–Halifax: October 11-12, 2017).

³⁴ Miig’gama’qan Bartibogue (L’nu Elder and speaker) in discussion with Erika Gideon Marchand, February 11, 2018.

number of Elders have told me that if you ever need the help of the ancestors, just ask yourself what you need to do, and the answer will come to you.

Indigenous & L'nu Oral Literature

There are many rich elements to Indigenous oral literature that come in many forms depending on the people who are telling the story. These elements of oral literature include petroglyphs, pictographs, petroforms, and hieroglyphs. In Mi'gma'gi, petroglyphs are found throughout, most notably at Kejimikujik National Park, and Bedford, Nova Scotia. Our ancestors used myths and legends to teach us about how we come from the land and waters, its nature and its beings. These legends concerning their ancestors and the seemingly strange happenings around them reflected what it meant to be L'nu.³⁵ Some of the legendary characters include the great Culloo, the Star Husband, the Star Wife and Crane, the Horned Snake, and Glusgap. In the book, *The Truth about Stories – A Native Narrative*, Thomas King explains the historical timeline of the main interconnections between Native oral literature and petroglyphs, pictographs, hieroglyphs, and Indigenous writers. King states, “The point I wanted to make was that the advent of Native written literature did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear them talking to each other.”³⁶ Many peoples from diverse cultures and backgrounds from around the world have used these elements of oral literature to record important stories and events. In modern times, this has evolved into film, books, the fine arts, and photographs.

³⁵ Silas T. Rand. *Legends of the Micmac*. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1894), 57.

³⁶ Thomas King. *The Truth About Stories, A Native Narrative*. (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2003), 101-102.

Additionally, our ancestors practiced another form of oral literature and tradition that continues to hold special significance, in the traditional quahog shell wampum belts. Wampum belts are records of our stories that are interdependent with oral traditions. This tradition of wampum belt making incorporates storytelling of alliances with other Indigenous Nations in Turtle Island that created confederacies such as the Haudenosaunee – the people of the longhouse (the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga and Mohawk Nations) – and the Wabanaki – the people of the dawn (L’nu/Mi’gmaq, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Abenaki and Wolastoqiyik Nations). These confederacies represent their own wampum laws, *Lnapsku’g*, which consists of peace agreements with other Indigenous Nations.³⁷ Thus, this is just one of the many oral literature examples that existed pre-contact and post-contact and can be found with other Indigenous Nations on Turtle Island and Mother Earth.

Our oral history affirms that we have been here since the beginning. Hence, the “time immemorial” term used by many Indigenous peoples, and throughout this thesis. However, historians, archeologists, and anthropologists claim that we have maybe only been here for just over 12,000 years. Our oral traditions are easily dismissed within an ethnocentric non-Indigenous context, but for our people who know our stories, many of us understand we do not need to prove or tell our stories and histories to anyone but for ourselves. If believing in stories is what makes them true, why is it that our stories, songs, myths, legends, languages and world views are required to be in written format to be considered quantifiable or legitimate? That question has influenced many contemporary Indigenous writers on reclaiming Indigenous oral literature and histories through writing about their experiences as Indigenous peoples. They include Shawn

³⁷ Marie Battiste, “Nikanikinut.” In James (Sàkèk) Youngblood Henderson ed. *The Migmaw Concordat*. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 14.

Wilson, Thomas King, Jeanette Armstrong, Leanne Simpson, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Sheri Mitchell, and others.³⁸

Storytelling is Medicine

“For once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world.”³⁹

People have told stories since time immemorial. Before language, people told stories through images, signs and sounds. They created carvings and songs which were passed down to the next generations. Indigenous cultures have embedded the medicine of storytelling for thousands of years and it continues to provide us with strength and resiliency. Our Indigenous storytellers include our ancestors who are our grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, cousins, and lastly this includes ourselves, as we each have our personal stories, historical stories, moral and educational stories, and stories that entertain us. Although that is just the beginning as King illustrates, “For Native storytellers, there is generally a proper place and time to tell a story. Some stories can be told any time. Some are only told in the winter when snow is on the ground or during certain ceremonies or specific moments in a season. Others can be told by certain individuals or families.”⁴⁰ Literature pertaining to stories and legends of Indigenous people is not always written on to something concrete or tangible, but it is written in our minds, hearts, bodies, and spirit, just as the three bundles of sweetgrass when braided together form an unbreakable bond. Stories are contained

³⁸ Jeannette C. Armstrong, “Land Speaking,” in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*, ed. Simon J. Ortiz (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), 174-194; King, Thomas. *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. CBC Massey Lectures, 2013; Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. (Minnesota Milkweed Editions, Minnesota, 2013); Shawn Wilson. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Leanne Simpson. *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011); Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, 2018).

³⁹ King, Thomas. *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

within the person's memory; thus, the story can change depending on the situation or the storyteller, but the key message of the story remains the same. We help to keep our stories alive when we speak, listen and meaningfully understand and reflect on the message. In every story, we have our place within it, and in turn we all have our stories to tell. By telling your story and by listening to stories, you can make sense of your place in the world. The Sakewew p'sim iskwew- Plains Cree and Saulteaux- Anishinaabek author, Margaret Kovach adds that conversational method is essential in Indigenous research: "The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm."⁴¹ In this setting the conversation dialogue taking place during that moment transfers knowledge and the relationships that are interdependent on collectivist tradition.⁴²

Stories have the power to heal or hurt depending on the way the story is told. As Thomas King states, "The truth about stories is it's all we are."⁴³ It is true, that everything we do in our daily lives is a living story. To highlight King's claim, he mentions that, "Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous."⁴⁴ This reminded me of an article I read years ago, when I started as an undergraduate at St. Thomas University. The article was by my undergraduate honours thesis supervisor, Andrea Bear Nicholas, who contends that throughout history there have been numerous assaults on our oral literature traditions and on our ways of life.⁴⁵ Many of the assaults on our oral traditions came from non-Indigenous people who invented and changed

⁴¹ Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research," *First Peoples Child & Family Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews* 5, no.1 (2010): 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴³ Thomas King. *The Truth About Stories, A Native Narrative*. 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁵ Andrea Bear Nicholas. *Aboriginal Oral Traditions*, eds. Renée Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod. (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing with the Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2008), 13.

our stories to suit their needs. Often these invented stories represent overt racism through denigration, distortion, invention and omission.⁴⁶ It is necessary to have a critical view when listening and telling stories, because not everything that is heard or said is true. Ignorance towards Indigenous peoples is so prevalent in the 21st century because of the attacks on our oral traditions, language and our ways of living and being. It has made things complicated for Indigenous peoples to reclaim their rights and responsibilities, especially regarding our treaties, Aboriginal rights, Indigenous peoples, lands, waters, animals and fish from the continuous theft, exploitation and oppression of colonial governments and corporations.

During my undergraduate years, my major was Native Studies, and many courses were with the Oneida scholar Roland Chrisjohn. Of the courses in that program, his course on Native Philosophy was the first course I attended and changed the way I thought about who I am and where I am going. If it was not for the teachings that I received during the five years of my undergraduate degree through the professors of the Native Studies program at St. Thomas University, and the Elder in Residence, Miigam'agan, I do not think I would be as passionate about the true history, ways of being and knowing, and the well-being of our people, and of all people. Being awoken by learning about the history of genocide, assimilation and oppression forms the dark side of our Indigenous history, awakening anger, pain, sadness, and fear inside of us - that is, if we choose to solely focus on the negative. For the most part, we must also acknowledge the stories of the resiliency, strength and wisdom of our ancestors to allow for us to flourish, thrive and be happy. Thus, cherishing our stories, myths, legends will ensure that one day they will blossom and flourish as they once did. As author J. Edward Chamberlin, frames it:

⁴⁶ Andrea Bear Nicholas. *Aboriginal Oral Traditions*, eds. Renée Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod. (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing with the Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2008), 18.

Building shape and meaning is what we do in our stories and songs. They are built on the arbitrariness of words and images, which is to say they are built on sand; but they are rock solid as long as we believe in them. And that belief is founded on a sense of ceremony, a ceremony of shared belief. Such ceremonies often seem silly to those who don't grow up in them.⁴⁷

It is our own belief that holds the truth about stories. Written and oral stories are not quite as different as people may think. They are distinct, and yet they share similarities. According to King, the reason why written literature is so often portrayed as superior to oral literature, is because the oral form is portrayed as a primitive form of literature.⁴⁸ Who is portraying oral literature as primitive? In many cases, this derives from a colonial lens, which has been force fed to lead Indigenous peoples to share this ideology, that our culture, language, traditions, world views are primitive and have less value than those of the colonists and settlers. Speaking from experience, in my community there are some people who intentionally reinforce colonial assimilation tactics through targeting people who offer their gifts to help themselves and their community. For this reason, one of the hardest barriers to eradicating and dismantling colonialism is the neo-colonialism embodied in the hierarchal and patriarchal system, which was initiated by the *Indian Act*. The *Indian Act*, first passed in 1876⁴⁹, is a piece of Canadian legislation that was created to force Indigenous peoples of Canada to assimilate into settler society by oppressing and attacking Indigenous governing systems, language, women and children, culture, and ways of knowing and being. However, in the late twentieth century came the first of many landmark judicial decisions regarding Indigenous oral traditions and the courts in Canada.

⁴⁷ Edward J. Chamberlin. *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004), 8.

⁴⁸ Thomas King. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. 100.

⁴⁹ Indigenous Foundations. Web. Accessed on August 27, 2018.

http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/#amendments

It is essential to understand the relationship of oral traditions, treaties, and wampum's connectiveness to language, land, water, world views and all living and non-living entities, beginning with the fundamentals of our L'nu treaty rights and responsibilities with Mother Earth and the newcomers. Interconnected and Interdependent with oral traditions are the prophecies that have been passed down from one generation to the next by Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island. Since time immemorial, our ancestors have foreseen many of our historical and contemporary events through ceremony, dreams, visions, and other ways of receiving knowledge and wisdom.

The relationship between the Wabanaki- (People of the Dawn) and Europeans, at the time, was understood through the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which – though based on earlier treaties dating from the 1670s – were most importantly agreed upon between 1725 and 1779. These treaties declare that the Mi'gmaq Nation, along with other Wabanaki Nations, did not surrender its lands or waters, but insisted that these treaties were meant to ensure trust in sharing the lands and waters in respect for a peaceful co-existence. The peace and friendship treaties are what makes our treaty vital in the journey towards recognizing L'nu – Mi'gmaq inherent right to a moderate livelihood. Our treaties also confirm the right for L'nu to fish and hunt in Mi'gmaq, provincial, federal, and international law. However, it must not be forgotten that we as Indigenous peoples not only have the right but a responsibility to ensure that the next generations to come will have clean water and air, healthy fish and animals, to be happy and proud of where they come from, who they are, and where they are going. This draws on the importance of the interdependency of rights and responsibilities to Mother Earth, the Universe and all living and non-living entities, and the ways in which our treaties affirm not only our rights but our responsibilities as caretakers of the lands and waters we depend on for our survival.

In court cases regarding L'nu Najiwsg'tieg – Mi'gmaq Fishing, an especially ground-breaking case was the Marshall Decision, on September 17, 1999. It began when a L'nu fisherman, Donald Marshall, was charged by Nova Scotia provincial courts with fishing eels out of season, fishing without a license, and fishing with an illegal net. Marshall was initially convicted, but the case was eventually appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which declared that in recognition of the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1725 –1779, and particularly those of 1760-61, the Supreme Court declared “Nothing less would uphold the honour and integrity of the Crown in its dealings with the Mi'kmaq people to secure their peace and friendship”⁵⁰ The aftermath of this decision infused a rage of ignorance from Canadians living in Mi'gma'gi. According to the author of *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights*, Kenneth Coates explains, “The simple fact that First Nations had secured legally, constitutionally protected access to the commercial fishery appeared to be the touchstone in this case, and the hostility and anger among the non-Aboriginal fishers would not die down.”⁵¹ On the contrary, the Mi'gmaq Nation, along with other Indigenous Nations, viewed it as a light shining in a dark space, towards recognition of nationhood, Indigenous Treaty Rights, Aboriginal Rights, and self-governance. Our treaties are powerful in the nation-state Canada, and internationally, the Peace and Friendship Treaties are unique as they did not surrender any rights to the lands and waters of Mi'gma'gi.

A common misconception amongst non-Indigenous people, reinforced by regarding the ignorance of treaties, stems from the ideology that alienates Indigenous peoples from their own land and waters. Therefore, the colonial regime is continuously reaffirmed by lack of education, and notably by the failure of non-Indigenous education to create in the settler population an

⁵⁰ CBCNews, “The Marshall decision,” Indepth: Fishing. *CBC NEWS*. May 4, 2004. Web. <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/background/fishing/marshall.html>

⁵¹ Ken S. Coates. *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill – Queen's University Press, 2000), 129.

understanding of the important truths that are embodied in oral tradition. Immediately after the Marshall decision, L'nu fishermen started fishing out of season. In turn, this caused highly violent and racist tensions between L'nu people and settler Canadians, particularly in Esgenoôpetitj – Burnt Church. Tensions grew for three years in the Miramichi Bay between 1999 and 2002, as non-Indigenous fishermen complained that lobster stocks would dwindle in price because of more lobster on the market and the lobster would be over fished.⁵² In other words, Non-Indigenous fishermen, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, were united in believing that Mi'gmaq people are not capable of sustaining life or protecting the sacred. As oral traditions affirm, my ancestors have always been the caretakers of these lands and waters, and the fact that we are still here today, on unceded L'nu lands and waters practicing our ancestral ways, establishes and affirms our strength and resiliency as a nation.

Before the Marshall Decision in 1999, there was a salmon fishing incident police raid in 1981, which involved the L'nu from Listuguj and the Quebec government. On June 11, 1981 around ten o'clock in the morning, a Mi'gmaq community known as Listuguj was attacked by the Province of Quebec. Approximately five hundred police officers, fisheries officers and game wardens invaded the community with force destroying boats, fishing nets, stealing salmon from fishermen, and arresting and beating community members. The community successfully organized to protest the second raid on June 20, 1981. Listuguj called on all Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island for support, many of them showed support by being there when the second raid occurred. However, the community knew that the violence and protest could not go on much longer, they needed a solution that would sustain the next generations of L'nu. Not long after, the

⁵² Ken S. Coates. *The Marshall Decision and Native Rights*. 129.

Chief and Council of Listuguj Mi'gmaq Government started negotiations with the government of Quebec to resolve the issue. According to the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Fisheries, "With that meeting, the Listuguj Mi'gmaq people began a nation-rebuilding journey that would last more than a decade, culminating in 1993 when they established a framework – in the form of a Mi'gmaq law – for the effective exercise of their right not only to fish but to manage the resource on which they depend." After years of incredible qualitative and quantitative research with community members to create a fisheries management plan, which is the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Fishing Law, "The law, which was passed in 1995, sets conservation targets, outlines rules about how fish are to be harvested and identifies areas that must be protected."⁵³ The Listuguj Mi'gmaq have survived and thrived since time immemorial because of their relationship with the river, salmon, land, ancestors, and with one another to share the responsibility in protecting and nurturing that which is sacred, namely life. Today, the L'nu of Listuguj host the annual Migwite'tm Commemoration Walk in respect for the Incident at Restigouche, in honor of our ancestors, the river, land, the salmon and our people.

Soon, however – after the passage of the Listuguj Fishing Law and while the Marshall Case was making its way through the courts – a new court decision would directly affect the legal significance of oral tradition. In December of 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada in its ruling in the Aboriginal title case of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* finally, in the eyes of the colonizers, recognized our oral traditions, as they pertain to Indigenous history, culture and ways of living and being. Showing the correlations between oral traditions and land is one of the ways in which Indigenous peoples have challenged the courts of Canada to reclaim title to their

⁵³ Centre for First Nations Governance. "Making First Nation Law: The Listuguj Mi'Gmaq Fishery." March 2011. Web. Accessed on March 30, 2018. <https://mikmaqonline.org/>

territory. The case of *Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia* that was started in 1984 by the Gitksan and the Wet'suwet'en Nations and lasted until the landmark judgement in 1997. There were many obstacles leading up to the Supreme Court's ruling on *Delgamuukw*, a major one being the insistence of British Columbia Chief Justice Allan McEachern that oral traditions could not stand alone as historical evidence. This contention was overruled by the Supreme Court in 1997, meaning that, the Canadian court system now recognizes oral traditions, as they pertain to Indigenous history and customs. This case also established criteria for determining Indigenous rights to land, and so was a critical decision in many respects.

Unfortunately, there have also been things that have not changed after the *Delgamuukw* case. For instance, some of the racist ideologies in Canada that portray Indigenous peoples as having no right to the land still persist. I have heard countless politicians, and other colonial officials state in their speeches that they recognize and acknowledge that they are on unceded territory of the Mi'gmaq Nation, but they fail to live up to the words they speak. In the Supreme Court of Canada *Decision on Aboriginal Title on Delgamuukw*, it states:

This appeal requires us to apply not only the first principle in *Van der Peet* [a preceding legal case] but the second principle as well and adapt the laws of evidence so that the aboriginal perspective on their practices, customs and traditions and on their relationship with the land, are given due weight by the courts. In practical terms, this requires the courts to come to terms with the oral histories of aboriginal societies, which, for many aboriginal nations, are the only record of their past. Given that the aboriginal rights recognized and affirmed by s. 35(1) are defined by reference to pre-contact practices or, as I will develop below, in the case of title, pre-sovereignty occupation, those histories play a crucial role in the litigation of aboriginal rights.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010 at para. 84

Chief Justice Antonio Lamer pointed out that those rights may be infringed, both by federal and provincial governments. The results have been far-reaching in terms of court proceedings and land claim processes.

For five hundred years, racial doctrines and their discourses of the destruction of Indigenous legal status and rights have been driven by European settler states to justify colonial activities in Indigenous people's territories. The fact that historical evidence reveals numerous attacks on Indigenous oral traditions, gives insight to why our Indigenous languages in Canada are endangered, and some on the brink of extinction. Even though *Delgamuukw v British Columbia* was a victory and considered a landmark judgement, it also opened discussion on how to prevent further loss of language and associated traditions. To this process, oral tradition continues to be central.

Long before our ancestors encountered other nations, Indigenous peoples prophesized the arrival of Colonists, disease, railroads, and other historical, current and future events, such as the creation of pipelines on Turtle Island to spirits being re-awoken from hibernation. Depending on where the story comes from, the message varies. However, the strength of oral traditions, ceremony and dreams has and continues to be the messenger of the prophecies, ensuring the transferring of knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next. In this moment, we are living in a time of prophecy, in the book, *Sacred Instructions* by Penobscot author and attorney, Sherri Mitchell provides a deep understanding of ancestral knowledge, and lived-experience as a Penobscot to help people on their journey of self-discovery and spiritual awareness.⁵⁵ The

⁵⁵ Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*.

Wabanaki prophecy is the “Opening of the Eastern Door,” that foretells people in the east re-emerging light into the darkness, as Mitchell eloquently conveys:

Our ancestors tell us that the Eastern Door is where we will gather to begin the healing of this land. It is here in the east where first contact was made between the Native peoples and the newcomers. It is here that the first blood was spilled between our people, and the long history of violence began. And, it is here on this same land that the healing must begin.⁵⁶

Our grandfather sun and grandmother moon arise from the east each day and evening, weaving the circle of life around Mother Earth. For us as humans to repair the damage, we must unite together to heal our wounds, and continue resist oppression and colonialism. The Wabanaki prophecy continues as told by Mitchell:

We are told that when the people of the world rise up, a great healing will begin. In order for that healing to take root, the people must return to the place where the initial wounding took place and join together with one heart and one mind to heal wounds that they carry with them, and those carried by Mother Earth. When they do, the Eastern Door will open and the Creator will begin to renew this land. The opening of the Eastern Door will usher in a new beginning and a new way of life for the people of the Earth.⁵⁷

What makes these prophecies valuable, is other prophecies from other Indigenous Nations supporting and dreaming a similar message of an awakening of humankind. These stories do not mention a specific time the prophecies will unfold, but Mitchell points out that our current events are awakening people and prophecies from all over the Earth.⁵⁸

Indigenous Nation prophecies from elsewhere in Turtle Island embed a similar message, as can be illustrated and understood through the Anishinaabek Prophecy of the Seven Fires: Lighting the Eighth Fire or as Anishinaabek author and professor, Leanne Simpson’s version is entitled, *Oshkimaadiziig, the New People*. Simpson describes the ways in which Indigenous

⁵⁶ Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*. 215.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

Nations have used prophecy as a way of conveying our history since the beginning of creation.⁵⁹ The seventh fire represents the five hundred years of colonialism and cultural loss on Turtle Island, and a new people would emerge, thus, lighting of the eighth fire for all humans.⁶⁰ These new people are responsible for restoring the relationships with Elders and are responsible for the resurgence of our Nations by returning to the original visions of peace and justice of the Nishnaabeg.⁶¹ This fire cannot be lit until settler society decolonizes its relationship with the land and waters, and joins with Indigenous Nations in building a flourishing and sustainable future based on mutual respect, justice and recognition.⁶²

In conclusion, our creation stories provide key concepts that teach us our relationship and responsibility to Mother Earth and to the rest of creation. Our home, Mother Earth, is suffering and dying. The more she provides and sustains us with life, the more destructive we are as humans and yet we expect her to always provide for us. It is quite naïve for those of us who may think this way. We need to be conscious of our mind and heart, be aware of colonial and capitalist ideologies that lead us to believe in destroying and exploiting by alienating our spirits' connection to our Mother Earth.

For the late Santee Sioux activist, and poet/musician, John Trudell, life's purpose was to re-awaken the humans by telling the truth about the ways that western society has lost touch with the "spirit of life."⁶³ The rise of industrial capitalism has taken a crucial role to the continuous disconnection in western society's natural relationship of Mother Earth:

⁵⁹ Leanne Simpson. *Lighting of the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, ed. Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2008), 14.

⁶⁰ Leanne Simpson. *Lighting of the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*. 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 14.

⁶² *Ibid.* 14.

⁶³ Christopher Craig, "John Trudell and the Spirit of Life," in *Works and Days 65/66, 67/68*

This learned disrespect for the earth cuts us off from the ancestral knowledge of what it means to be a human being. Trudell claims that we must rediscover this knowledge if we intend to take back the land from the ruling class. Only through re-establishing our place in the natural order of the world can we liberate ourselves from the diseased thinking and behaviors that have resulted in class division, environmental destruction, racism, sexism, and global war.⁶⁴

Supporting this notion is Thomas King's explanation the foundations of the capitalist system:

Corporations own land. They own resources. They get government grants and subsidies. It's one of the benefits of a free-market economy, where the façade of capitalism is supported by public largesse. Matter of fact, if it weren't for infusion of free public money into the private sector, capitalism would have a very difficult time maintaining itself.⁶⁵

This notion of "free public money" is based on money that comes from the people who buy into and support the capitalist regime. The capitalist regime is set up in such a way that it depends on the over exploitation and extraction of our natural world and human labour and leading us to believe we are isolated into a dimension called loneliness.⁶⁶ These are the fundamental values that corporations rely on to support their power in controlling society. In some cases, these corporations have more rights than individuals within any society, city, or even country. The fact that countries and corporations continue to support such capitalist regimes reassures the very essence of dehumanization and alienation from nature they enforce on society. Consequently, if we continue to allow corporations to have power and control over the well-being of the people, Mother Earth, and all living and non-living entities, we go down a path of fear, when we must go down the path of love.

Our liberation from capitalism and oppression involves actions towards living in balance with one another, with our Mother Earth, and the universe, to which oral traditions are central.

in collaboration with Cultural Logic: Scholactivism: Reflections on Transforming Praxis Inside and Outside the Classroom 33 & 34, ed. Joseph G. Ramsey (Indiana: University of Pennsylvania, 2016 -2017), 487.

⁶⁴ Christopher Craig, "John Trudell and the Spirit of Life," 487.

⁶⁵ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories, A Native Narrative*. 145.

⁶⁶ Christopher Craig, "John Trudell and the Spirit of Life," 487.

Envisioning our Mother Earth, the way a baby would their mother, you will find that she creates life, she loves and nourishes us, in hopes that we would honour, love and respect her. An example of relational reciprocity is portrayed when we learn and understand the importance of the mutual respect and well-being of one another. It reminds me of one of the conversations I had with my mother, who is trilingual, being that Mi'gmaq as her first language, English is her second and French is her third language, I asked her about a Mi'gmaq word, *Ugst'qamu*.⁶⁷ She said it can translate to Earth, but it can also refer to “a woman giving birth,” depending on the context of the situation. However, I have also been told by a Lnu'g Elder from Listuguj that it means “the baby was already born,” again depending on the context of the conversation. According to the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Dictionary, the term *Ugs'tqamua'latl* means, to give birth, bring into the world.⁶⁸ Similarly, Alfred Metallic and Robin Cavanaugh describe this as a family kinship that is extended and understood through the word *Ugs'tqamu*, which is the force of Creation.⁶⁹

Thus, the fluidity of the language and oral traditions came alive as my mother and I had dialogue, along with the L'nu Elders who spoke and practiced the old ways of our ancestors, and who has been one of my spiritual guides since I was a child. The concept that Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall refer to as connectiveness,⁷⁰ embraces Indigenous oral traditions, language and world views that have been resilient, and continue to be passed down throughout the generations. In final analysis, most Indigenous literature pertaining to stories and legends is not

⁶⁷ Listuguj Mi'gmaq Dictionary – English. 210.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 210.

⁶⁹ Alfred Metallic and Robin Cavanaugh, *Nia'tugwaqanminen: Our Story: Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gma'gi*, ed. Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawioimi (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 69.

⁷⁰ Murdena Marshall, et al., “Approaching Mi'kmaq Teachings of the Connectiveness of Humans and Nature”. *Ecosystem Based Management Beyond Boundaries. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Science and the Management of Protected Areas*, (Wolfville: Science and Management of Protected Areas Association, May 21-26, 2007), 174.

written, it is spoken. We help to keep the story alive when we hear it. We have our place in the story, and in turn we all have our story to tell.

Nestimk Tli'suti¹ – Understanding Language

I Lost My Talk by Rita Joe

I lost my talk,
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl,
At Shubenacadie school.
You snatched it away:
I speak like you,
I create like you,
The scrambled ballad,
About my word.
Two ways I talk,
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.²

Many moons ago, my mother spoke to me in our language, from the time I was conceived to the time I told her to stop. It was in Kindergarten when I was led to believe that if I stopped speaking my language, the bullying would end, but it did not. As a child, I was not aware of the value within our language, nor did I really care because no one else my age was speaking Mi'gmaq. As a result, my mother did what she knew best, and that was to protect her daughter from harm, and stopped speaking and teaching me in our language. From that moment, I lost a

¹ Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project (Halifax: July 7, 2017).

² Rita Joe. *Songs of Rita Joe: Autobiography of a Mi'kmaq Poet* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

piece of myself with it. As a result, after years of contemplating about who I am, my curiosity led me to engage in dialogue with other Lnu'g on questions like: What does our language teach us about who we are as L'nu? Or, is it possible that if we stop transferring our stories, culture, language and world views, we lose who we are as L'nu?

During my travels through Mi'gma'gi, it has been a blessing to meet many of our respected and honored Elders, leaders, Knowledge Holders, community members, educators, and linguists. In turn, this led to having the opportunity to have meaningful conversations in a setting that respects our ways of knowing and being. From what I gather from our community members, nothing can ever be lost forever, we are the ancestors, and the answers we search for are within each of us! Finding out who we are, regardless of ethnicity, we as humans can find healing and our path through the ceremony of self-reflection. This is done when we look inwards towards ourselves which is where the healing from oppression, attempts of genocide and assimilation takes place. As Mahatma Gandhi, the non-violent activist against injustices, once said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."³ Since I started my educational journey towards healing my spirit, I started becoming more accountable for my thoughts, words and actions. By that, I mean that I cannot critique or advocate for something while not being aligned with my own actions. Thus, the interweaving of my experiences in relation to the thesis supports and respects Indigenous paradigms in Indigenous research.

To understand why our Indigenous languages are at the core of spirit, it must be clear that language is the foundation of culture and the process of being, which is what defines us as distinct and unique peoples and nations. When we speak in our Indigenous languages, our

³ Gandhi, Mahatma. Quotable Quote, Good Reads. Web. Accessed on April 29, 2018. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/24499-be-the-change-that-you-wish-to-see-in-the>

ancestors' spirit lives with us, guiding us through the language, meaning there is more to language than a way of communicating. Language characterizes one's mind, body, emotion and spirit; it is a lens through which we see the world,⁴ and is the foundation of culture.⁵ It is essential to understand the ways Indigenous languages are alive and embedded spiritually as a way of "expressing a relational and dynamic universe in flux – a reality that is constantly moving – and one that exists in understandings of self-in-relationship to that universe."⁶ Our ancestors' language is verb-based, allowing the language to be alive and exemplifying how our cultural value of language is creative, historic, scientific, and social and represents spirituality. Throughout, the past, present and future generations, our language has been and remains the backbone of our nations, as it holds all the transmittable knowledges and teachings from one generation to the next.

Indigenous Language Education

Mu na'tali-apoqnmawgw L'nu Tli'suti, na getlewe'g n'tutesnu – If we don't do something about our language, we will lose it. In Canada, Indigenous languages have been rapidly declining over the past 20 years, and in some cases, there is a threat of imminent extinction.⁷ Unless immediate actions are taken to revitalize Indigenous languages, the knowledges and teachings embedded within our Indigenous languages could be lost, and it will not be easy to revitalize our languages while we continue to lose our fluent speakers and Elders. Nevertheless, there is hope.

⁴ *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

⁵ Andrea Bear Nicholas, "Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples" (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, 2009), 7.

⁶ Sandra D. Styres, "Indigenous and Dominant Western Philosophies: A Bridge Too Far?" *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education* (2017), 143.

⁷ Andrea Bear Nicholas, "Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples." (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 3.

Last fall, the Assembly of First Nations hosted the Indigenous Languages Initiative Engagement Sessions, from coast to coast, in Canada. There were four engagement sessions for all of Canada, to engage with Indigenous community members on what must be included in the new legislation; to provide information on the resulting opportunities as a result; and to provide an update on the expected Indigenous Languages legislation. All of this was in accordance with Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau's speech to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly on December 12, 2016:

We know all too well how residential schools and other decisions by governments were used as a deliberate tool to eliminate Indigenous languages and cultures. If we are to truly advance reconciliation, we must undo the lasting damage that resulted. So today, I commit to you that our government will enact an Indigenous Languages Act, co-developed with Indigenous Peoples, with the goal of ensuring the preservation, protection, and revitalization of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages in this country.⁸

I was present for the engagement session for the East Coast, which was hosted in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on October 11th and 12th, 2017. The overall goal of these sessions was to engage First Nations leaders, fluent speakers, linguists, educators, and policy makers in the process of co-creating this legislation; and to create ongoing opportunities for providing input.

During the lunch break, I had the opportunity to be introduced by Andrea Bear Nicholas to the Dean of the Faculté de droit at the Université de Moncton, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Dr. Fernand de Varennes. As we talked about who we were and about my academic future, Varennes suggested that I apply to the law school at Moncton University after I complete my master's degree. Shortly after our talk, he gave a speech, as the guest speaker, on *Indigenous Language Recovery: The Promise of Second Language Speakers*.

⁸ Justin Trudeau, "Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Speech to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly," *Justin Trudeau Prime Minister of Canada*. Gatineau, Quebec. December 6, 2016. Web. <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/12/06/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-speech-assembly-first-nations-special-chiefs-assembly>

In addition to his speech, everyone who attended received an article in relation to his speech and the overall theme of the engagement sessions, entitled, *What Canada's New Indigenous Languages Law Needs to Say and Say Urgently* by Lorena Fontaine, Andrea Bear Nicholas, and Fernand de Varennes. Encapsulated in the title, the article portrays a distinctly powerful theme from which emerge statements and justifications about the urgency to revitalize our Indigenous languages in Canada at the expense of the public and to have federal public services delivered in the original Indigenous language(s) of that place. Furthermore, they proclaim that it is a constitutional responsibility, in the sense that:

The Government of Canada is obligated to fund all schools, including immersion schools, and other educational programs dedicated to transmitting the ancestral languages of the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada to the children of those peoples; this obligation applies whether the children are resident on or off reserve and whether the school is located or the program is delivered on or off a reserve.⁹

Enforcing the promised *Indigenous Languages Act*, as these scholars and linguists have suggested, would be counteractive towards language resurgence, if there is no funding obligation on the part of the federal government, “It would be meaningless to recognize Indigenous language rights without also providing the means to exercise those rights in a modern context in order to ensure the transmission of these languages from generation to generation.”¹⁰

Additionally, the article expresses the justifications that are supported in Canadian and International legislation on Indigenous peoples:

Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal rights of all Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples to transmit their ancestral languages from generation to generation; section 25 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* protects this aboriginal right from abrogation or derogation; Article 14 (3) of the 2007, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take

⁹ Lorena Fontaine, et al., “What Canada’s New Indigenous Languages Law Needs to Say and Say Urgently,” *Observatoire international des droits linguistiques*. Université de Moncton. Friday, September 17, 2018. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 2.

effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language; and the federally funded Indian Residential Schools.¹¹

Of all these justifications, the most influential rationale is the fact that Indian Residential Schools were federally funded and in partnership with the churches that attempted to destroy our languages, culture, and ways of knowing and being. As a response to this, it would be necessary to hold the Canadian government accountable for its settler and treaty obligation with “Reconciliation” towards Indigenous peoples, to establish Indigenous language rights legislation, and to adequately fund Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization as a constitutional responsibility to Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, there are other documents that must be highlighted to justify the urgency for Indigenous language resurgence in Canada. In a recent document, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, was funded and constituted by the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*, after former Prime Minister, Stephen Harper’s “apology” in 2008 concerning the residential school policy, was established.¹² According to *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: The Final Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* in 2015, over 6,000 witnesses of the Residential School Survivors shared their stories.¹³ The report makes clear that, Indigenous language and culture education is strongly advocated by Indian Residential School Survivors, and Calls to Action 13 – 16 are accordingly devoted to Language and Culture:

¹¹ Lorena Fontaine, et al., “What Canada’s New Indigenous Languages Law Needs to Say and Say Urgently,” *Observatoire international des droits linguistiques*. Université de Moncton. 1-2.

¹² The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. “Preface,” *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication. 2016. V.

¹³ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. V.

13. We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights;

14. We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principles:

I. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them.

II. Aboriginal language rights are reinforced by the Treaties.

III. The federal government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funds for Aboriginal-language revitalization and preservation.

IV. The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.

V. Funding for Aboriginal language initiatives must reflect the diversity of Aboriginal languages;

15. We call upon the federal government to appoint, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner. The commissioner should help promote Aboriginal languages and report on the adequacy of federal funding of Aboriginal-language initiatives;

16. We call upon post-secondary institutions to create university and college degree and diploma programs in Aboriginal languages.¹⁴

These calls for action from the TRC are not new statements, but rather have been continuously expressed for many years by Indigenous Nations in Turtle Island. Thus, a historical background of Indigenous education and language initiatives, is crucial to understanding the events leading to the proposed *Indigenous Language Act*. Indeed, there is skepticism from Indigenous peoples regarding the Canadian political motives involving First Nations, which often create illusions that provide a smoke screen to the reality of the situation. This may also be the case with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement on the new *Indigenous Languages Act*.

In Turtle Island, Indigenous languages have survived and thrived since time immemorial. Although there were many attempts by colonists, settlers, and missionaries to dismantle and

¹⁴ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 321 - 322.

destroy our Indigenous languages and cultures, we continue resist ongoing genocidal regimes.¹⁵

In the article, “Genocide and Indian Residential Schooling: The Past is Present”, the authors analyze the historical evidence on the legislation and intentions of pre and post-Canadian-state on the genocidal policies against Indigenous peoples, revealing the tactics used to terminate its “Indian Problem”. Furthermore, the authors provide strong supporting argument that is backed up by several primary documents and episodes confirming the colonial genocidal agenda against Indigenous peoples by stating that;

Pre-Confederation initiatives, such as the *Gradual Civilization Act* (1857), gave rise to various institutions patterned upon those having already shown ‘promise’ elsewhere in North America and the British Empire for “reducing” Indigenous populations. While publicly justified as a Canadian version of the White Man’s Burden, they had the explicitly materialist basis of training Indians for trades relevant to settler society while expunging forms of life that would interfere with settler power and control.¹⁶

Additionally, the motives in the pre-Confederation era persisted into Canadian Confederation.¹⁷

In the 1600s, the French established the first residential schools in Canada that were aimed at converting and colonizing Indigenous peoples in what used to be known as “Stadacona”, or modern day Quebec City.¹⁸ According to the TRC, the residential schools in New France were not successful enough to withstand the British conquest of New France in 1763.¹⁹ Until the idea came back, in the early nineteenth century, “the New England Company, a British-based missionary society, funded a boarding school operation in Sussex Vale, New

¹⁵ Roland D. Chrisjohn, et al., “Genocide and Indian Residential Schooling: The Past is Present,” *Canada and International Humanitarian Law: Peacekeeping and War Crimes in the Modern Era*. Edited by Wigger, R.D. & Griffiths, A.L. Halifax, Dalhousie University Press. 2002. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 2.

¹⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 50.

Brunswick.”²⁰ It did not stop, there as colonial attacks on Indigenous languages and culture grew rapidly after the federally funded establishment of the Indian Residential Schools and Indian Day Schools were developed as a testament to both pre and post-confederation genocidal agenda:

Indian residential schools started up in 1879 as a newly independent Canada broke away from the historical relations (and legal obligations) the British Empire had accumulated with respect to First Nations. Where Great Britain had recognized (at least in theory) international treaty obligations to long-standing allies in the wars for control of North America, Canadian leader now saw only impediments to their expansion manifested in creature irrelevant to the national integrity they envisioned.²¹

Ten years after confederation, the *Indian Act* of 1876, was created and enforced by the government of Sir John A. Macdonald. In addition, further amendments were made to the *Indian Act* in 1880 and 1886, while the *Indian Advancement Act* in 1884:

Established Canada’s wholesale abrogation of its responsibilities, implementing a host of direct attacks on First Nations forms of life, including: the abolition of status as independent, self-governed peoples, legislation of the rules of band membership; abolition of traditional political systems and imposition of federally-controlled election systems; banning spiritual activities; and formal creation of residential and industrial schools.²²

Consistent lies have been told by the Canadian -state to justify the existence of the *Indian Act*, in which the government continues to claim responsibility for Indians as if we are wards of the state, and not the strong Indigenous Nations that we are. The examples listed above are the most critical to understand because every element of Indigenous way and was targeted to be forcefully removed and replaced with the rules and regulations of the *Indian Act*. Comparatively, the L’nu scholar, Bonita Lawrence maintains this notion of the aftermath of the *Indian Act*;

²⁰ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 50.

²¹ Roland D. Chrisjohn, et al., “Genocide and Indian Residential Schooling: The Past is Present,” *Canada and International Humanitarian Law: Peacekeeping and War Crimes in the Modern Era*. Edited by Wigger, R.D. & Griffiths, A.L. Dalhousie University Press, Halifax, 2002. 2.

²² *Ibid.* 2.

The Indian Act in Canada, in this respect, is much more than a body of laws that for over a century have controlled every aspect of Indian life. As a regulatory regime, the Indian Act provides ways of understanding Native identity, organizing a conceptual framework that has shaped contemporary Native life in ways that are now so familiar as to almost seem “natural.”²³

Equally important is the connection between the assault upon and the discrimination experienced by Indigenous women in the *Indian Act* and the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869*. These pieces of legislation have enforced sexist, oppressive rules and regulations that marginalize Indigenous women, through stating that any person who wanted to claim Indian status had to prove their “Indianness” from an Indian male blood relative, and any Indigenous woman who married anyone but a status Indian man, was not allowed to have Indian status or in some cases band membership. Furthermore, any non-Indigenous or non-status woman who married a status Indian man acquired Indian status. In addition, the titles of land on reserve could only be registered by a status Indian man, therefore, status Indian women could not. This continued with the additional gender discrimination in the *Indian Act* in 1951.²⁴ As a result, Indigenous women were heavily impacted and advocated for the repeal of the *Indian Act* provision in 1985.²⁵ Justice would not be seen in the case of Jeannette Corbiere Lavell and Yvonne Bedard, and the *Supreme Court of Canada*, who lost their Indian status in 1971 for marrying white men.²⁶ It was only after 1981, when a Wolastoqiyik woman, Sandra Lovelace, “took her case to the United Nations of Human Rights Committee that Canada was forced to address this issue.”²⁷ In that case, Canada was found guilty to be in violation of the *International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights*, and she was allowed to obtain Indian status after “Bill C-

²³ Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview.” *Hypatia* 18, (no.2, Spring 2003), 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 13.

31, An Act to Amend the Indian Act, was passed in 1985.”²⁸ To demonstrate the ripple effects of this policy, I will share a story about my family history, passed down from my father, John Marchand, who heard it from his mother and grandmother, Annie May Marchand and Angelique Condo.

Anyone could live, but to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. Thus, to survive those circumstances that were forced upon my great grandmother, a common feature Indigenous woman fiercely expressed then, and now.

During the winter months of 1939, my great-grandfather, James Marchand travelled from the mountains and across the frozen Restigouche River. While doing so, he slipped through a crack on the ice and, drowned. Shortly after the funeral, the local Indian Agent told my great-grandmother that there was “no record” of her having Indian Status or right to the land that was in her husband’s name. As a result, my great-grandmother, my grandmother and her sisters were forcibly removed from the family home in Listuguj, Gespe’gewa’gi. Thankfully, her eldest daughter was already living in Montreal, Quebec, where my great-grandmother could go and live with her family, until she passed away.

Without Indian status, she and her daughters no longer had the right to live in the community and were forced to move off-reserve and assimilate into mainstream society. Thus, under those circumstances, my father grew up only listening to older family members speak in Mi’gmaq, but was not taught how to speak it. Curious about why things are the way they are, I asked my father why his mother didn’t teach him our language, as my mother did with me as a child. That is when he told me about our family’s history. His mother did not believe that she,

²⁸ Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview.” *Hypatia* 2, 13.

her son, or her family would ever be welcomed back to her community and she felt the Mi'gmaq language was not necessary to survive in the city. It must have been confusing and difficult for my grandmother because, one minute she is a Lnu'sgw speaking in her mother tongue, the next she is a non-status Indian living in Montreal. On the other hand, she is a status Indian but not "recognized" by the government of Canada until 1951. Amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951, created a main register for "Indians" registered under the Act, and in section 11 designated those people entitled to be registered, and in section 12 those people not entitled. "Status" or "registered" Indians were also generally band members, with rights under the *Indian Act*.²⁹ Nothing new here - for hundreds of years there have been many attempts to round up the Indians, count them, and either directly or indirectly, kill or force them onto small pieces of unwanted land.

Around the time my grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer, she and my father moved back to Listuguj. Considering the gender discriminations within the *Indian Act*, my father was not allowed to have Indian status on the premise of his father being French, regardless of his mother's status. In 1985, *An Act to Amend the Indian Act* was passed based on the gender discriminations and protests from Indigenous women. Section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act*, that denied Indian status to children of Indian status women, and if the father was a non-status Indian or if the Indian Agent wanted to protest the status of an Indian, was removed.³⁰ Hence, the acquisition of the Mi'gmaq language I experienced with my father was very limited because of these circumstances.

²⁹ Indian Act, S.C. 1951, c. 29, 15 Geo. VI. A number of minor amendments were made prior to 1985. References here are to Indian Act R.S.C. 1970, C. I-6. <https://lop.parl.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/bp410-e.htm#4>

³⁰ Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview." *Hypatia* 2, 13; First Nations & Indigenous Studies the University of British Columbia, "Bill C-31," last modified 2009. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/bill_c-31/

This family experience illustrates the broader process of suppression of Indigenous languages. According to many scholars advocating for the resurgence of our Indigenous languages, its effects have been far-reaching:

The consequence for Indigenous or minority languages is that once several generations are exposed to this form of education, their languages become underdeveloped, particularly in formal areas, precisely because they are not used in school where children spend most of their day. And since the speakers of the languages who are subjected to this form of education inevitable come to believe that their language has less value than the dominant language, each passing generation tends to use their own language in fewer contexts, and the dominant language in more contexts.³¹

In Canada, the languages of English and French are promoted and supported in the education policies. For example, the *Official Languages Act* of 1969, to present day, only acknowledges French and English as the official languages of the Canadian -state, while omitting the original languages of these lands and waters. That this is the case also reflects the broader struggles taking place at this time, which had important effects on language and education. In the same year of 1969, the Government of Canada proposed the *White Paper*, attempting to assimilate every Indian into Canadian citizenship and culture, until there was no Indian left to protest the theft of Indigenous lands and waters. This would have erased all prior federal responsibilities relating to the treaties, the aftermath of the residential schools and all the policies regarding the “Indian Problem.” In response to this legislation, the *Red Paper* policy advocated by Indigenous leaders rejected the *White Paper* proposal on the status of Indians. The resistance was successful in derailing the *White Paper*, and it led to further important initiatives.

In the 1970s in western Canada, Indigenous communities responded to the closure of some Residential Schools by advocating community control of the residential school buildings,

³¹ Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples.” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, 2009), 5.

which then led to the 1972 National Indian Brotherhood policy statement on Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE).³² The federal government responded by allowing limited administrative responsibility and funding to band councils for education. For the most part, even though the federal government claimed to support ICIE, according to the Haudenosaunee scholar, Dianne Longboat, “The deception surrounding the concept of control has been built by the federal government, which offers the pretense of free choice of control only within a carefully managed framework of possibilities.”³³ Without the full spectrum of self-determination in education within Indigenous nationhood, the subjugation of Indigenous cultures and languages remains powerful in Canada, despite the concessions prompted by the ICIE initiative.

The policy evolution regarding Indigenous languages continued to follow a troubled path. The 1982 Constitution Act of Canada through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms confirmed “existing” Aboriginal and treaty rights but did not define them.³⁴ More than a decade later, in 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples made recommendations regarding language that foreshadowed those of the TRC, but with results that amounted to reinforcing the trend of government-induced smoke screens regarding Indigenous education in Canada. Two years later, the *Aboriginal Languages Initiative* (ALI) was created through a federally funded program by the Department of Canadian Heritage. This program was and is severely limited and insufficiently funded only five million dollars annually to revitalize all First Nations, Michif, and

³² Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Canada’s Colonial Mission the Great White Bird.” In *Aboriginal education in Canada: a study in decolonialization*, eds. K P Binda and Sharilyn Calliou (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Educators’ Press, 2001), 8.

³³ Dianne Longboat, “First Nations Control of Education: The Path to Our Survival as Nations,” Jean Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada 2*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987), 26.

³⁴ Stephen Azzi, “Constitution Act, 1982,” *the Canadian Encyclopedia*. February 6, 2012. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/constitution-act-1982/>

Inuktitut languages.³⁵ In addition, the establishment of the AFN's Chiefs' Committee on Languages and renewed call for Language Policy: 1998 – 2000, declared that our Indigenous languages were in a “state of emergency,” advocating that for the government of Canada to take responsibility in recognizing their role in their finically obligation to support First Nations language maintenance and revitalization.³⁶

Furthermore, the 2003–2005 Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (TFALC) conducted consultations in Indigenous communities, national and regional organizations, circles of Indigenous experts, guidance from Elders. It researched themes such as language loss, legislation, revitalization, and best practices, including guiding principles for ethical research regarding Indigenous languages. Ultimately, it launched a 142–page report with 25 recommendations.³⁷ Originally, the government of Canada allotted \$172.5 million over an 11– year span, but the funding of \$160 million was removed after the Conservatives took office in spring 2005, months after the report was released.³⁸ Had there been any effective linguistic rights within the federal law that would guarantee funding for Indigenous languages, there might have been a reverse in the status of Indigenous languages that are endangered, and extirpated.³⁹

³⁵ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. “Budget 2016 Highlights – Indigenous and Northern Investments.” *Government of Canada*. Last modified March 22, 2016. Web. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1458682313288/1458682419457> ; Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples.” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 32.

³⁶ Canadian Heritage. “Support for Indigenous Languages in Quebec.” *The Business Journal*, May 9, 2018. Web. https://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/2018/05/09/C7280

³⁷ Rose- Alma J. McDonald, “Assembly of First Nations National First Nations Language Strategy Annual General Assembly, July 10-12, 2007.” *Assembly of First Nations*. Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 5, 2007. Web. <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/languagesnationalstrategy2007.pdf>

³⁸ Rose- Alma J. McDonald, “Assembly of First Nations National First Nations Language Strategy Annual General Assembly, July 10-12, 2007.” *Assembly of First Nations*. Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 5, 2007. Web. <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/languagesnationalstrategy2007.pdf> ; Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples.” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 33.

³⁹ Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples.” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 33.

Twenty years later, in 2017, the Canadian government gave an increase of funding to ALI, announcing \$89.9 million to be invested over the next three years to preserve, promote and revitalize Indigenous languages and cultures through.⁴⁰

Yet, in all, the enforcement of the colonial agenda has repeatedly attempted to eradicate, destroy and assimilate Indigenous peoples with the intentions of cutting all ties with our relationship with the universe. Our colonial history testifies the intentional disruption of knowledge transmission within Indigenous cultures all around the world. Moreover, out of all the colonial tactics, women and children – notably through the policy on loss of status, noted above – have been and remain the main targets breaking these connections through colonial education, language, policy and other oppressional and racist structures that support it. Before these colonial tactics, Indigenous women, and Elders were the educators that passed down language and knowledge on how to be in the world. Not to say that men did not educate, but they did so when the boys were going to a life stage passage into becoming a man, when at this time the men and Mother Earth would teach them how to live off the land to provide for their communities.

Indigenous peoples did not sit idly by while colonists instated extermination and assimilation policies towards them, instead Indigenous resistance to these policies and racist ideologies persisted well into present day and could move forward into the future. Thus, I carry on my ancestors' tradition of resisting colonialism, by simply existing as a *Lnu* 'sgw- a native woman.⁴¹ The reason why I say my existence is my resistance is based on the attempted genocide by the Canadian-state against First Nations. What comes to mind is a racial slur that

⁴⁰ Rose-Alma J. McDonald, "Assembly of First Nations National First Nations Language Strategy Annual General Assembly, July 10-12, 2007." *Assembly of First Nations*, 2007.

⁴¹ Mi'gmaq-Mi'kmaq Online. Web. Accessed on May 27, 2018.

<https://www.mikmaqonline.org/servlet/dictionaryFrameSet.html?arg0=lnu&method=searchFromMikmaq>

connects racist ideologies with the justification of genocidal policy throughout Turtle Island, as told by Theodore Roosevelt in his speech in New York, January 1886, “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are the dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every 10 are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth.”⁴² Again, I say that our existence is our resistance, but this is not the only means of resisting colonialism and oppression, as our spirit requires other elements to be nurtured as well.

In Language is Life. In Language is Death.

“In language is life. In language is death.”⁴³ - *Hawaiian Saying*

Language has many levels; it is at the heart of our culture and who we are. Intertwined within language are songs, poems, dances, chants, laughing, and art; all are manifestations or expressions of language. The Okanagan poet, educator, and activist, Jeannette Armstrong’s poetry reflects an understanding of her connection to the land: “All my elders say that it is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher. It is said in Okanagan that the land constantly speaks. It is constantly communicating. Not to learn its language is to die.”⁴⁴ These forms of linguistic expression help shape and give meaning to our world by connecting us with communication with place and spirit. According to the linguist Nick Evans, speaking in the documentary *Language Matters*, Indigenous languages have undeniably valuable meanings embedded within words, “If you lose that name, you lose the ecological information and the information that the natural world gives you about what you should do next.”⁴⁵ The host of the

⁴² Alyssa Landry, “Theodore Roosevelt: ‘The Only Good Indians Are the Dead Indians.’ *Indian Country Media Network, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Embassy of Tribal Nation*. June 28, 2016. Web. <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/theodore-roosevelt-the-only-good-indians-are-the-dead-indians/>

⁴³ *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

⁴⁴ Jeanette C. Armstrong, “Land Speaking,” *Speaking for the Generations Native Writers on Writing*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), 176.

⁴⁵ Nick Evans, *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

documentary, Bob Holoman estimates that “there are over 6,000 languages in the world. Half of them are destined to vanish in this century.”⁴⁶ As a result, diversity enshrines a respect for one another’s ways of living and being in the world, in that humans are capable of learning multiple languages naturally: “We are built to speak many languages. People who live in large-scale modern society are in this odd situation of thinking that being monolingual is normal, and we think of it as hard to learn other languages.”⁴⁷ In addition, Hawaiian composer, singer and Hula Master, Keali’l Reichel explains that, “When you lose a language, you lose a huge part of that culture.” He also states that, “There is no culture without language.”⁴⁸

Our people have always wanted to survive, and in many cases, this meant resisting being forced by colonial powers through any means necessary, to abandon our language by assimilating into a colonial language, either English or French. Linguicide would be the ultimate result insofar as the ongoing oppression of colonial regimes has resulted in our people believing that our Indigenous ways of living and being are inferior to the western ways of living and being. The term linguicide was coined by Dr. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Dunbar; it translates to killing the spirit and identity through linguistic genocide caused by our Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational systems that are predominately in a colonial language.⁴⁹ In turn, this has created a vicious cycle of neo-colonialism,⁵⁰ which is our current predicament in the 21st century.

⁴⁶ *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

⁴⁷ Nick Evans, *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin.

⁴⁸ Keali’l Reichel, *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin.

⁴⁹ Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Dunbar, preface to Indigenous Children’s Education as Linguistic Genocide and a crime against Humanity? A Global View. *Gáldu Čála – Journal of Indigenous Peoples Rights* (no. 1, 2010), 6 http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/indigenous_childrens_education_as_linguistic_genocide_skutnabb-kangas_&_dunbar_2010.pdf

⁵⁰ Taiwo Oseni Afisi, “Neocolonialism,” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Reviewed Academic Source. Lagos State University, Nigeria. Web. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/neocolon/>; Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Canada’s

Today, many Indigenous peoples are still in the survival mode with regards to Indigenous languages, as our Indigenous languages cannot currently thrive, with the number of speakers declining each year. Further, available funding is inadequate, as each community applies and competes for a small pot of federal funding that is not enough to meaningfully revitalize our Indigenous languages.⁵¹

Foundations of L'nu Tli'suti

L'nu Tli'suti- Mi'gmaq language is related to the Algonquian language family but is uniquely distinct to the land and waters from which it was created. The nature and structure of the Mi'gmaq language is verb-based. It encompasses animate and inanimate objects and includes past, present and future tenses. In the book, *The language of this land, Mi'kma'ki*, scholar Trudy Sable and L'nu Linguist Bernie Francis state that, "Each language has its own semantics, the ascription of meaning to words and word parts (morphemes) that hold the implicit values and assumptions underlying a culture's world view."⁵² Thus, every language contains words that have deep-seated meanings embedded within the world views of that culture: "Language is a lens in which we see the world. Through language, we become more fully ourselves."⁵³

Another profound aspect of our language is its fluidity, as it labels information as being passed on by me to you, from a second person reference. When you speak of past events, there is an option of the ending P-past and the S-past, such as, pegising'p vs. pegising's. Both translate to "she arrived, and she came," but the P-version states that I saw it happen directly. The S-version

Colonial Mission the Great White Bird." In *Aboriginal education in Canada: a study in decolonialization*, eds. K P Binda and Sharilyn Calliou (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Educators' Press, 2001).

⁵¹ Andrea Bear Nicholas, "Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples." (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 29-35.

⁵² Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi'kma'ki*. (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2012), 28.

⁵³ *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

says I did not – I must have in a second person way of assuming it happened. For example, I see her moccasins at the house now. Thus, the language is riddled with very basic and essential markers that keep people from going around just asserting you must believe each other all the time. Profound teachings, wisdom, and knowledge are tied up in our Mi'gmaq language.

In general, language reflects an experience that is then expressed through thought or words. Words have the potential of being lost forever, unless they are recorded or transferred to the next generation: “Words are how we connect and how we differ. Words are how we learn from and about each other.”⁵⁴ Recording language and passing on a language through oral tradition are quite different. Only through actively transferring a language as informed by its original instructions of theory, and practice, can we embrace the natural state of the language. For instance, some Indigenous languages contain words that have multiple meanings depending on various elements and contexts. As Nick Evans notes, “A culture evolves a language it needs and what historic Aboriginal culture needed was a large chock-full of information about plants, animals, and the ecosystem in which they live. For Aboriginal people, words have always been a survival kit.”⁵⁵ An example found in the L'nu word *pesqaw* (it is snowing) and *gipesqaaq* (it is raining). It is commonly known that rain comes before snow, and so, the root word *pesqa* is the same by adding or changing a letter at the beginning or ending to change the meaning of the word. Therefore, without our Indigenous languages, it would not be possible to have that knowledge without the word and the meaning.

Furthermore, in the book *Nta'tugwaqanminen – Our Story: The Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq* written by the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi (organization that

⁵⁴ *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

⁵⁵ Nick Evans, *Language Matters with Bob Holoman* directed by David Grubin, (2014; David Grubin Productions), DVD.

represents the three Mi'gmaq communities of Listuguj, Gesgapegiag and Gespeg) the work of archaeologist Stuart Fiedel is referenced in concluding that:

All other Eastern Algonquian languages share around 77 percent of the same vocabulary, while Mi'gmaq has only 50 percent of its vocabulary in common with other Eastern Algonquin languages. And when we compare Central Algonquian languages with Eastern Algonquian ones (except Mi'gmaq), we find out that Central Algonquian share at least 68 percent of the same vocabulary. Once again, Mi'gmaq figures as the exception.⁵⁶

Thus, the Mi'gmaq language, although closely related to other Algonquian languages, is entirely distinctive.

The intrinsic interconnections and interdependency that the language and land share have created many dialects and orthographies throughout Mi'gma'gi. The L'nu scholar from Listuguj, Gespe'gewa'gi, Fred Metallic, explains the ways we as Lnu'g are connected to our territories is through our language: “The language emphasizes relationships and the processes that are needed in order to live with the environment: social, political, spiritual and physical.”⁵⁷ Throughout the years of my travels in Mi'gma'gi, learning new dialects from different districts is interesting as some words are pronounced differently or do not mean the same thing. These differences are not easy to pick up through written text but can become easily identifiable through listening to the accent, tone of voice, facial expressions and body movements. However, there are words that are distinct and unique to the language of any given place.

To emphasize, in *Nta'tugwaqanminen*, it is noted that there are words in our language that are embedded within the landscape: “One geographical name helps us identify the boundaries of Gespe'gewa'gi. This one word, *bogan*, is used to name salmon pools and river

⁵⁶ Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta'tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 31.

⁵⁷ Fred Metallic, *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* ed. Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008), 68.

inlets where waters flow steadily. Interestingly, the word *bogan* is not shared with other Algonquian languages, whether Central or Eastern.”⁵⁸ The uniqueness of language in the meaning of words change depending the dialect of the location, which is why I am borrowing multiple dialects based on where I received the teaching in respect for those ancestors. Furthermore, Indigenous languages originally stemmed from the land speaking, then translated and expressed through words that embed our current reality:

In this sense, all Indigenous peoples’ languages are generated by a precise geography and arise from it. Over time and many generations of their people, it is their distinctive interaction with a precise geography which forms the way Indigenous language is shaped and subsequently how the world is viewed, approached, and expressed verbally by its speakers.⁵⁹

Accordingly, place names in Gespe’gewa’gi that are based on the Mi’gmaq word *bogan*, express the distinct exclusivity of the people’s relationship with language and place:

Coming back to the word *bogan*, after several inquiries we found that Mi’gmaq people south of Gespe’gewa’gi do not seem to know the meaning of the word. Nor is the word a borrowing from the sister language Maliseet, where it does not exist. Its exclusive use within the limits of Gespe’gewa’gi brings evidence to the fact that the Gespe’gewa’q – were and still are a distinct cultural group that named similar places with the same name, one unique to its language.⁶⁰

Lnu’g Tli’suti Gegina’matimgewei – Mi’gmaq Language Teachings

Thus, there is more to languages than a tool for communicating. Moreover, there are valuable teachings embedded within the Mi’gmaq language, expressed in the concept, *M’sit no’gmaq*. This concept describes our relationship with all that is connected into the web of life, and that we must acknowledge, honor, and respect all living and non-living entities. When this

⁵⁸ Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta’tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmaq*. 31.

⁵⁹ Armstrong, Jeannette C. “Land Speaking.” In *Speaking for the Generations: native writers on writing*, ed. Simon J. Ortiz (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), 178-179.

⁶⁰ Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta’tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmaq*. 33.

concept is translated into English, it means “to all my relations,” but even this translation is only the tip of the iceberg because of the world view that comes with Indigenous languages. Elders and fluent speakers know that their languages are the culture, and that without their ancestral languages, it becomes impossible to transfer the deeper meanings of words and concepts in a different language.⁶¹ Hence, the value and meaning of words and concepts ingrained within Indigenous languages begin to lose their meaning when the language is not actively used in dialogue and conversations. According to Passamaquoddy scholar Dr. Gail Dana-Sacco, Indigenous knowledge and teachings, “are embedded in the spoken language, not just in the words but also in the singular moments in which the conversations take place.”⁶² For this reason, the conveyed message and teachings are transferred, informing each other on how to be human on Mother Earth. For example, according to Sable and Francis:

The Mi’kmaw verb infinitive, *weji-sqalia’timk* is a concept deeply ingrained within the Mi’kmaw language, a language that grew from within the ancient landscape of Mi’kma’ki. *Weji-sqalia’timk* expresses the Mi’kmaw understanding of the origin of its people as rooted in the landscape of Eastern North America. The “we exclusive” form, *weji-sqalia’tiek*, means “we sprouted from” much like a plant sprouts from the earth. The Mi’kmaq sprouted or emerged from this landscape and nowhere else; their cultural memory resides here.⁶³

Thus, this concept reveals the origin of our L’nu ancestors who continuously remind us of our relationship with Mother Earth. Our language is an interpretation of the past, present and future that becomes active only when a relationship has been developed between storyteller and listener.

⁶¹ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *The Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Vol. 3 – Gathering Strength, 1996. 380.

⁶² Gail Dana-Sacco, “The Indigenous Researcher as Individual and Collective: Building a Research Practice Ethic within the Context of Indigenous Languages,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 34, (No. 1, University of Nebraska Press, Project Muse, Winter 2010), 71.

⁶³ Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The Language of this Land, Mi’kma’ki*. 17.

It is the fluidity of our Mi'gmaq language that allows for various concepts that teach us about our relationship with the universe. Since our language creates our world view, the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi claim that -the concept of the Mi'gmaq world view is embedded in the Mi'gmaq language, *ta'n tela'gusin*- the state of relationship, or the fact and the way of having a relationship, or how you are in a relationship.⁶⁴ The Mi'gmaq word, *tela'gusin* is a verb, and depending on the context, it can come together, as in *ta'n tela'gusultigw*, “how you all are in relationships,” and *ta'n tela'gutin*, “how am I in a relationship.”⁶⁵ The relationality of our kinship is embedded in our language. For example, the word Mi'gmaq itself translates to family, representing the name other Nations called us even though we know ourselves as L'nu-the people. The word *Mi'jipjawei*- is used to describe our respected relationship with animals or birds that we eat. In the film, *Wi'kupaltimk* (Feast of Forgiveness), L'nu linguist and Elder Bernie Francis explains that *Mi'jijawei* does not only translate to food, but contains a deeper meaning, “Our people not only respected animals but they also gave thanks, each time that bounty was good.”⁶⁶ In the words of Francis, “There is sacredness about this concept in the form of ‘forgiveness.’ *Wi'kupaltimk* can be extended in meaning as in ‘feeding one another’s spirit’ since it’s the reciprocal form of the verb.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, in the Mi'gmaq language, the depth of relationship of kinship is portrayed in the words *nji'nmen*- husband, “means he who takes me under his skin, and *nte'pitem*- wife,

⁶⁴ Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta'tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq*. 68.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 68.

⁶⁶ Bernie Francis, *Wi'kupaltimk* (Feast of Forgiveness), Kent Martin (2016; Kjiptuk (Halifax): Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network,2016), Online Video.

⁶⁷ Bernie Francis, *Wi'kupaltimk* (Feast of Forgiveness), Kent Martin (2016; Kjiptuk (Halifax): Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network,2016), Online Video.

meaning “she who keeps me connected to my heart.”⁶⁸ This symbolizes the interdependency of relationship between husband and wife, regarding which our language embeds sacred instructions to ensure well-being and balance for all life.

Another significant aspect Mi’gmaq language fluidity is understood in the words and concepts for creator. For this reason, there are more than four hundred diverse ways to conjugate the word for Creator in the Mi’gmaq language, which include various verbs, and transitive verbs, which clearly demonstrate different processes of creation.⁶⁹ As stated by Sable and Francis, the changeability of our language is found in the words, “*Kisu’lkw, ankweyulkw, jikeyulkw, tekweyulkw* were all words for creator.”⁷⁰ Further reflection on the deeper meanings interweaved in our language can be illustrated in the following words:

Kisu’lkw: the one who created us; he, she, it who (or that which) created us
Ankweyulkw: he, she or it who (or that which) looks after us
Jikeyulkw: he, she, it who (or that which) watches after or over us
Tekweyulkw: he, she, it who (or that which) is with us.⁷¹

Essentially, none of these words are nouns, reflecting that there are different processes of creation, and by using these words the speaker understands it as the creator.⁷² Similarly, in the interview with L’nu Elder Miig’gama’qan Bartibogue, she expressed that our language teaches us about the fluidity of our dimensions with all of creation:

Our language is dimensional. It really encompasses the physical plane and nonphysical plane. When you start to look at examples, let’s say *E’pit*, it just doesn’t mean woman. It goes beyond the physical form and the whole makeup of the female human body. That is just one example. The whole language is made up from the different dimensions. The language is a description, or a prescription of what our needs are. *Ugs’tuaqan*- ear and *L’si’ta’sit*- the bottom of our feet, this is our first place where we hear and listen. Being

⁶⁸ Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2018), 16.

⁶⁹ Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The Language of this Land, Mi’kma’ki*. 30-31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 31.

⁷² *Ibid.* 31.

barefoot or wearing moccasins activates our connection and intuition that keeps us present in the moment, being present to be able to hear, feel, and be totally aware. *L'si'ta'sit*, we look to this place for knowledge.⁷³

Our language describes and instructs our ways of being and knowing that is in balance with all of creation. Therefore, moccasins were and are important to wear, to allow the energy waves from Mother Earth to reach us, whereas, footwear made of rubber is an electric insulator that rejects these energy waves. As Miig'gama'qan Bartibogue continues in her interview she explains that:

For a long time, our Elders would say, don't wear those sneakers or anything made with rubber. As this disturbs the connection to the land. Now, western science has recently just caught up to this knowledge. It's the earth's magnetic fields. Our ancestors would say, where your moccasins or be bare foot and you will be healed by our Mother Earth. It strengthens our immune system. What happens to us, is that the energy wave from the Earth moves inside us that activates the amino acid that creates a pH net positive and negative charge that are evenly balanced, and no disease can live within us.⁷⁴

The consequences of cutting off the flow and the source of knowledge, can be seen in our societies today, where the danger is that nothing is honoured as sacred anymore.

Currently, the federal government of Canada continues to control every aspect of First Nations lives in Canada, through oppressional regimes such as colonialism and neocolonialism; these are concepts that are deeply rooted within the *Indian Act*, along with other legislations previously mentioned. In brief, neocolonialism is a concept ingrained and supported within other concepts like imperialism, globalization, and colonialism. To put it another way, colonialism within our educational system in Canada promotes assimilation into western education, while degrading and devaluing Indigenous education. As stated by the L'nu scholar, Bonita Lawrence, "To treat the Indian Act merely as a set of policies to be repealed, or even as a genocidal scheme

⁷³ Miig'gama'qan Bartibogue (L'nu Elder and speaker) in discussion with Erika Gideon Marchand, February 11, 2018.

⁷⁴ Miig'gama'qan Bartibogue (L'nu Elder and speaker) in discussion with Erika Gideon Marchand, February 11, 2018.

in which we can simply choose not to believe, belies how a classificatory system produces ways of thinking - a grammar - that embeds itself in every attempt to change it.”⁷⁵

Because of this, the continuation of the contemporary ripple of effects infused by the Indian residential schools, are the primary reasons that our Indigenous languages are disappearing and declining at rapid rates. Above all, we are revitalizing and reclaiming our languages, along with the resurgence of the “original meaning and multilayered instructions that they hold.”⁷⁶ In general, our languages are full of life, and reflect a multidimensional universe.⁷⁷ Our language teaches us about our place and sacred relationship with the universe. Alfred Metallic and Robin Cavanaugh describe the interdependency and interconnectedness of our oral traditions and worldviews with our language:

The language is the foundation of Mi’gmaq oral traditions and worldview. This has been the traditional way of transmitting knowledge since long before the arrival of newcomers: through language, children learn about their history and politics.... The language describes relations within creation; through stories Elders teach our children the values embedded in the language.⁷⁸

Therefore, it is our responsibility, as L’nu, to maintain, reclaim and ensure the transferring of our language to the generations to come. As Miig’gama’qan once said in an interview, “Right now, we are trying to convince people that we have a culture that is valuable, and that has solutions to not only our people, but to all of humanity.”⁷⁹ Thus, the next chapter will further discuss our Mi’gmaq worldview in relation to our oral traditions and language.

⁷⁵ Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview.” *Hypatia* 18, (No. 2, Indigenous Women in the Americas, Spring, 2003), 4.

⁷⁶ Sherri Mitchell. *Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2018), 97-98.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁸ Alfred Metallic and Robin Cavanaugh, “Our Creation Story and Fundamental Myths.” In *Nta’tugwaqanminen: Our Story: Evolution of the Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmaq*, ed. Gespe’gewa’gi Mi’gmawei Mawiomi (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 70.

⁷⁹ Miig’gama’qan Bartibogue (L’nu Elder and speaker) in discussion with Erika Gideon Marchand, February 11, 2018.

Ta'n Tel-nmitu'kw Wskitqamu¹ – World Views

Our Indigenous ways of knowing and being reflect our world view, which is influenced by the language we speak. Our world views are the lenses through which we conceptualize and make sense of the world. They not only influence how we view the world but also how we view our roles and responsibilities with creation and the universe. The way we view the world is embedded in beliefs that a person holds about the most important concepts of life: the creator, the cosmos, language, education, responsibilities, values, humanity, and history, and other elements of influence. Some of us are unaware of our world views, that the culture that we have been raised in has shaped the way we think about the universe. Our Indigenous knowledge systems are embedded within a world view and have developed alongside the customs, values and beliefs of the culture. It is how knowledge is understood, valued and practiced within a society, community, and Nation, that forms an interdependent bond with world views.

It is in these ways that a world view shapes the mental foundation that constructs one's basic or ultimate beliefs. This foundation then provides an understanding of what a person considers to be real, true, rational, good, valuable, and beautiful. Our Indigenous languages are interconnected and interdependent with our Indigenous world views: “language is necessary to define and maintain a world view.”² In addition, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples took note of the connections between Indigenous languages and world views that are “rooted in

¹ Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project (Halifax: July 7, 2017).

² The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication, 2016), 152.

the stories of ancestors and the environment.”³ Not only are language and world view interconnected but our oral traditions, ceremonies, and the environment are interdependent as well. Several Indigenous scholars have advocated against colonial language education in Indigenous education in Canada, in that it provides a point of entry for colonial ideologies and biased perspectives, on how we perceive our Indigenous worldviews.⁴

There is a gap between our Indigenous world views and dominant colonial world views amongst our younger generation of Lnu’g. During my research journey regarding Indigenous education and language, I have come across many of our Lnu’g who do not have much or any knowledge about our ways of knowing and being but have immense knowledge about the dominant colonial ways of knowing and being. Our Indigenous ways of being and knowing are suppressed through colonial education by “limiting our diversity of thought to imperialistic policies and practices,” within our governance, education, economy, and health that “undermine a balanced view of the world and threaten the global future.”⁵ Therefore, our liberation will be through our individual and collective actions towards the resurgence of our Indigenous or L’nu ways of being and knowing in ourselves, communities and nations. The Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson explains why our ways of being and knowing as Indigenous peoples are crucial to the flourishing of our nations:

³ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honoring the Truth, Reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication, 2016), 152.

⁴ Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009); Jeanette C. Armstrong, “Land Speaking”, In Simon J. Ortiz. *Speaking for the Generations, Native Writers on Writing*. (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1998); Marie Battiste. *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2013).

⁵ Marie Battiste. *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2013), 141-142.

We need to rebuild our culturally inherent philosophical contexts for governance, education, healthcare, and economy. We need to be able to articulate in a clear manner our visions for the future, for living as Indigenous Peoples in contemporary times. To do so, we need to engage in Indigenous processes, since according to our traditions, the processes of engagement highly influence the outcome of engagement itself.⁶

Evidently, there is a need for our community Elders and knowledge holders to transfer the knowledges and teachings, and to teach us the values, roles and responsibilities with the universe. This knowledge from the creator was given to each of us; it is embedded in our bodies, our spirit, and our minds.⁷ Simpson supports this notion by stating:

We can access this vast body of knowledge through our cultures by singing, dancing, fasting, dreaming, visioning, participating in ceremony, apprenticing with Elders, practicing our lifeways and living our knowledge, by watching, listening and reflecting in a good way. Ultimately, we access this knowledge through the quality of our relationships, and the personalized contexts we collectively create.⁸

Clearly, this puts emphasis on the interconnectedness of our relationships with all of creation, with Elders, youth, women and men which are as vital as our connections with the rivers, trees, and animals.

The L'nu world view is interdependent with our relationships with one another, which provide a crucial element to the foundation of the world view. Even though colonialism and oppression have attempted to destroy L'nu ways of being and knowing, our traditions have survived through our ancestors practicing and transferring the Mi'gmaq language and oral traditions through our individual and collective interactions with the world. The Mi'gmaq language, is one of the central ways to understand "both Lnu'g culture and its intimate

⁶ Leanne Simpson, "Dancing on our Turtle's Back, Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 17.

⁷ Gregory Cajete, et al., "Philosophy of Native Science," *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. (Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 69.

⁸ Leanne Simpson, "Dancing on our Turtle's Back, Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011), 42.

relationship with Mi'gma'gi.”⁹ In the Mi'gmaq language, our world view is known as either Ta'n *Tel-nmitu'kw Wskitqamu*¹⁰ or *Ta'n Tela'gusultigw*¹¹, depending on the context and dialect of the language, as the dialect reflects a unique world view based on the landscape. Our Mi'gmaq language is the foundational basis of our culture and our relationship with the landscape because our language is interdependent and inseparable with the landscape it comes from.¹² As noted previously, everything exists within a network of relationships and could not exist as separate entities outside those relationships.¹³ Hence, the fluidity of our language means it is always changing to adapt to the present moment. Similarly, this process is much like the ways in which soil, fungus, tree and squirrel, have a network that weaves a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking.¹⁴

In honour of our *Skite'kmujeouti*¹⁵- Ancestors (Milky Way), it is most respectful to acknowledge those who came before us: *Gisu'lgw*- Creator, *Kukumijinu*- Grandmother Moon, *Nisgam*- Grandfather Sun, *Ugs'tqamu*- Mother Earth, *Mui'n*- Bear, and *Tatapn*- North Star. Our ancestors believed the bear in the sky was their guide, by marking the changing of the seasons, because the bear constantly moves around the North Star, so we have a visual calendar in the sky. Furthermore, our oral stories and literature support this notion, illustrated in the story about

⁹ Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi'kma'ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton Univeristy Press, 2012), 26.

¹⁰ Bernie Francis (Mi'kmaw Linguist), meeting in person about the Mi'kmaw & English language translations for thesis and project (Halifax: July 7, 2017).

¹¹ Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmawei Mawiomi. *Nta'tugwaqanminen: Our Story Evolution of the Gespe'gewa'gi Mi'gmaq*, (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 68.

¹² Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi'kma'ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton Univeristy Press, 2012), 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁴ Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding Sweetgrass Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. (Milkweed Editions Canada, 2013), 20.

¹⁵ Marie Battiste, “Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education”, *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 22 (no. 1, 1998), 17.

Muin and The Seven Bird Hunters: A Mi'kmaw Night Sky Story.¹⁶ In addition, Andrea Bear Nicholas (from a closely-related Wolastoqiyik perspective) states that, “According to most versions of the story, the hunters follow the Great Bear from Spring to Fall, but they kill her only when she stands up to face the hunters in the fall which also explains the splash of red on trees in the Fall.”¹⁷ The message in this story draws on connections between timing of activities and the behaviors of certain animals and plants. Also, the story connects the start of hunting season, which relied on the weather in figuring out migration of birds, mammals and animals.

Our ancestors believed that we are guided by *Kukumijinu*, as she provides and sustains us with the seasonal changes of life. Our Mi'gmaq language helps the guiding process of understanding and acknowledging the thirteen moon cycles. I was invited by L'nu Elders in Mi'gma'gi to be part of *Apaji-wla-matulinej*- Righting Relations (a national women-led five-year project funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation). In a ceremonial sharing circle with the Elders from the Eastern Hub of *Apaji-wla-matulinej*, I asked for their guidance, and what emerged were teachings about our language and the moon cycles in our calendar year. L'nu Elder Jane Meader indicated that she, L'nu Elder Pauline Bernard, and L'nu Elder and Linguist Bernie Francis had developed a Mi'gmaq- English calendar of the thirteen moons, which she subsequently communicated to me for use in this thesis.

The first moon is called the *Punamuiku 's*- Tomcod Moon; this is when the fishing would begin. The second moon is called *Apiknajit/Apuknajit*- Snowblinding Moon, which means that the sun's rays reflect off the snow and makes it hard to see. The third moon is known as

¹⁶ Lillian Marshall, et al. *Mui'n and the Seven Bird Hunters, a Mi'kmaw Night Sky Story* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2010).

¹⁷ Andrea Bear Nicholas, et al. *Maliseet Moon Calendar 2009- 2010* (Fredericton: St. Thomas University & Centre for Arts and Technology, 2009).

Si'ko'ku's/Siwkewiku's- Spring/Maple Sugar Moon, signifying the arrival of spring, maple syrup and sugar. The fourth moon is the *Pnatmuiku's*- Egg Laying Moon; it literally means that bird is ready to lay eggs in their newly prepared nests. *Tqoljuiku's/Sqoljuiku's*- Frog Croaking Moon is the fifth moon, when the frogs start to sing their songs. The sixth moon is referred to as *Nipniku's*- Summer Moon/Leaves Blossom Moon because it is the time when the leaves are budding and signifies the beginning of summer. The seventh moon is *Pe'skewiku's*- Shedding Moon which means this is when the birds and animals shed their old feathers, hair, fur, skin, or shell to prepare for the winter. *Kisikewiku's*- Fruit and Berry Ripening Moon is the eighth moon, signifying that the fruits and berries are ripe. The ninth moon is called *Wikumkewiku's*- Mate Calling Moon because this is when animals are calling their companions. The tenth moon is *Toqa'qewiku's*- Autumn Moon meaning the time when the leaves change colour, temperature becomes colder, and autumn begins. The eleventh moon is called *Wikewiku's*- Animal Fattening Moon is when bears and other animals gain weight to prepare for hibernation. The twelfth moon is *Keptewiku's*- Rivers Start Freezing Moon, meaning this is the time when the rivers begin to freeze. Lastly, the thirteenth moon is known as *Kesikewiku's/Kjiku's*- Winter Moon/Great Moon, this is the time of the Winter Solstice, and the days begin to become longer.¹⁸

Most Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island followed the moon cycle calendar, but not all Indigenous peoples share the same language or landscape. Therefore, the names and meanings to the moons change but the number of moons and days within that cycle are the same. Being a part of *Apaji-wla-matulinej*, I have been blessed with the opportunity to travel and meet amazing people. Of these people is Diane Maytwayashing, an Anishinabek activist who did a presentation

¹⁸ Pauline Bernard, et al. *The Moons of Mi'kma'ki- Tepknusetk Mi'kma'kik* (in the author's possession, date of publication unknown), 1-23. For more information: <http://firstnationhelp.com/ali/books.php>

on the petroforms at *Manitou Api*- Whiteshell, Manitoba, where we were able to see ancient paths of prophecy and sacred symbols. A common sacred symbol represented at the sacred site was the turtle, and those petroforms contained thirteen long top shells symbolizing our moon cycles, and twenty-eight small bottom shells representing the days within that cycle.

The interconnectiveness¹⁹ between humans and their environment forms the space in which Indigenous knowledge is created alongside our broader relationships and the reciprocity that requires us humans to be in tuned with our bodies, emotion, spirit and minds. The significance of language to Indigenous peoples is immeasurable, and literally so in the colonial language, in the sense that it cannot be meaningfully defined because of the linguistic limitations of English. To put it another way, there are valuable elements that lay the foundation of our world views that are embedded in *L'nu Tli'suti*. For instance, L'nu Elder Murdena Marshall from Eskasoni, notes that *elitasualtulti'k*,²⁰ is a concept expressing the interconnectiveness²¹ of all our relations. However, this is more than just a word or concept. It is also a guide for ways of knowing and being with creation. This is the theory and practice of how knowledge is earned and transferred. This allows for the process described by (among other scholars) Ashlee C. Wilcox:

Thinking with ecological affect teaches that the intactness of the whole (human and other-than-human) is essential to understanding and working with the situation holistically, rather than separating a complex system into discrete components or approaches. And perhaps by attending to affects and emotions, we can begin to discover and work towards other approaches to understanding, interacting, and connecting with other-than-human bodies “through a renewed attentiveness to this perceptual dimension that underlies all our logics through a rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us.”²²

¹⁹ Cheryl Bartlet, et al. “Mi'kmaq Night Sky Stories; Patterns of Interconnectiveness, Vitality and Nourishment,” *CAPJournal* (No. 9 October 2010), 14 – 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 14 – 17.

²² Ashlee C. Wilcox, et al., “The Land enriches the soul: On climatic and environmental change, affect, and emotional health and well-being in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Canada”. *Emotion, Space and Society* 6 (2013), 22-23;

This interconnectedness that Willcox and Abram define can also be understood in the L’nu concept, *M’st No’gmaq*. This roughly translates to “all my relations” but encompasses both living and non-living relations. These are vital values interconnected with relationships and teachings between family, knowledge holders, and the environment. The teachings are constantly interweaving through our Indigenous languages and oral traditions, and from these experiences, the knowledge evolves to remain relevant as environments change. It is through the practice of our teachings that theory, lesson and skill are interconnected, embodied and continuously engaging with the all elements of self (Mind, body, and spirit)- to form an overall praxis. Particularly from an Indigenous perspective, our relationships rely on reciprocity, respect and honor and we learn this through our lived experiences. This notion of praxis is a thought-inspired action that is interdependent on action and informed thought.²³ This concept is at the center of Indigenous philosophical and theoretical frameworks in teaching one another how to live in balance on Turtle Island, and Mother Earth. Our ancestors’ knowledge about not just talking the talk but in balance with it is walking the walk (praxis), which is an important methodology to learning and changing the social construct in society for the well-being of all creation.

For Indigenous peoples to liberate ourselves, our communities and our nations, it is necessary to advance the acts of reclaiming of and resurgence of oral traditions, languages, world views, knowledges, customs, and ceremonies. In our language, there is a word that speaks of the importance of theory and practice; the L’nu Elder Albert Marshall, states that *I’I’oqoptmu’k-* is

Adram David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perceptions and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 69.

²³ Joseph G. Ramsey., “Introducing Scholactivism: Reflections on Transforming Praxis in and beyond the Classroom,” *Works and Days 65/66,67/68 Vol. 33&34*, (2016-2017), 10.

to learn and to do what you have learned.²⁴ Additionally, the land and the water are among our many teachers, along with our animals and plants, such as salmon, edible roots, berries, deer, moose, bear, turtle, wolf, coyote, eagles, hawk and owl. All are major partners in our lifeways, offering their teachings and gifts. The resurgence of our embedded connections to all of creation will be accomplished, when we understand how our lives are shared for personal, social, and health benefits in balance, and when unbalanced, we are all affected. An Indigenous Elder said that, “It is land that holds all knowledge of life & death and is a constant teacher.”²⁵ Our environment is speaking to us, for “our ancestors survived and thrived by listening to its teachings—to its language—and then reinventing human words to retell its stories to our succeeding generations.”²⁶

However, all the teachings and connections are broken when we are forced to assimilate into the dominant educational system in Canada. Additionally, the current education system on and off-reserve in Canada continues to oppress and ignore Indigenous pedagogy, world views, and languages. The suppression of our Indigenous ways of knowing and being are notably found and portrayed in public schooling, and this has only increased the dropout, suicide, drug and violence abuse rates among Indigenous peoples in Canada.²⁷ As L’nu scholar Marie Battiste states it in her book, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*:

After more than a century of public schooling among Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the most serious problems lies not only in the failure of public schools to liberate the human potential among Aboriginal peoples, but also their limiting diversity of thought to

²⁴ Albert Marshall and Dr. Cheryl Barlett, “Storytelling and Dancing: Valuing our Relationships and Actions” (presentation, Indigenizing the Academy: Envisioning How to Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Recommendations for Post-Secondary Education in Canada, Membertou, NS, May 3-4, 2018).

²⁵ Jeanette C. Armstrong, “Land Speaking”, In Simon J. Ortiz. *Speaking for the Generations, Native Writers on Writing*. (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), 176.

²⁶ Ibid. 176.

²⁷ Andrea Bear Nicholas, “Linguistic Decline and the Educational Gap: A Single Solution is Possible in the Education of Indigenous Peoples” (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, March 2009), 7.

cognitive imperialistic policies and practices. These continue to deny Aboriginal peoples access to and participation in government policies. They deny the use and development of their own worldviews and though the suppression of Indigenous languages and cultures in schools, and confine education to Western methodologies and approaches which undermine a balanced view of the world and threaten the global future.²⁸

There is a problem at large with the educational system, not just for Indigenous students but also for society at large. Those who feel unable to contribute to society often become destructive of that society or simply just become invisible, and this happens when one's identity is lost or denied. Therefore, we need to transfer our oral traditions, Indigenous languages and world views to our children, who are our future. This generation of Indigenous youth are going back to their roots, our community members and Elders need to guide and teach them about our traditions as L'nu.

As far back as I can recall I was about seven years old when the L'nu Elder, Theresa Wilmot re-awoke my spirit through re-connecting and practicing ceremony, song and dance in my life. This experience continues to influence my path, along with other ceremonies that I have been in to heal my disconnection from my spirit. For a long time, I was lost and discouraged for the fact that I no longer spoke Mi'gmaq fluently, then being "diagnosed" with Attention Deficit Hyper Disorder (ADHD), all while trying to learn French and English, and the western education. ADHD is when the brain operations, the executive functioning skills, are not "normal" in areas such as attention, concentration, memory, motivation and effort, learning from mistakes, impulsivity, hyperactivity, organization, and social skills. The experience of being a youth who was forcefully diagnosed and medicated because of my diverse ways of being and knowing, has impacted my life and continues to do so, both in positive and in negative ways.

²⁸ Marie Battiste. *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2013), 141-142.

Consequently, these experiences created numerous problems in all aspects of my life, by being pulled in every direction and constantly being told who to be. Some of these problems only came to effect later in life, problems that I later realized stem from oppression and colonialism. At the time, I did not know these external forces had such a heavy impact in my life, but that came to an end when I began to honour and respect myself, and our ancestors, as they were so wise that English words could not encompass the wisdom they had. Our ancestors practiced ceremony in their everyday lives because they knew of the power within ceremony to heal. My own individual experience indicates, when looked at more generally, that healing our communities will take baby steps in all directions, will take patience and perseverance, but the positive results will ultimately bring healing and ensure the well-being of our people.

Our world views are considered sacred, holistic and a lifelong responsibility. For our Indigenous nations to heal, a holistic and relational approach to changes in education, social, political, economic and health structures and institutions will be needed. As we continue to reclaim our L'nu ways knowing and being, light is beginning to shine in our communities. We need to honour ourselves, and all of creation by inspiring our people to be proud of where they came from, who they are and where they are going. This is an effective way to liberate our Indigenous communities, and to continue to resist ongoing forms of colonialism and oppression within and outside our communities. It is through maintaining our own vision that we can revitalize and reclaim who we are as L'nu, by reconnecting with our spirit.

Indigenous people have stories about being here, on Turtle Island, forever. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous nations already had a well-established constitution and creation stories; they lived by this code with the cosmos. According to Edward Chamberlin, "Other than constitutions, there are no stories more fraught with conflict than creation stories,

especially since many societies believe two or more; and there are no stories that invite us to dismiss them quite as quickly.”²⁹ These creation stories have instructions on how to live with the universe in balance.

Creation stories tell us about how we came to be as humans, as peoples from diverse cultures from around the world. They explain the connectiveness of our responsibility and relationship in co-operation with all creation. It is through this understanding between us humans and our universe that is embodied in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), or Indigenous Knowledge (IK), or Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK).³⁰ Although there are many definitions of Indigenous Knowledge, the broad concept is eloquently described by the Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete, as “the accumulated body of knowledge of the remaining Indigenous groups in the world which represent a body of ancient thought, experience and action that must be honoured and preserved as a vital storehouse of environmental wisdom.”³¹ As well the Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. and the Anishinabek scholar Deborah McGregor convey a powerful message to us, that we must maintain our relationship with creation, as a foundational responsibility in our lives as individuals and communities.³² Even the environmentalist, activist, and scientist, David Suzuki, in 2001 advocated for people to understand Indigenous Knowledge: “My experience with Aboriginal people convinced me... of the power and relevance of their knowledge and world view in a time of imminent global ecocatastrophe.”³³

²⁹ Edward J. Chamberlin. *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004), 27.

³⁰ Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle,” *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3&4, Summer & Fall 2004, 386.

³¹ Gregory Cajete. *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (Skyland: Kivaki Press, 1994), 78.

³² Vine Deloria Jr., “Traditional Technology,” in *Spirit and Reason* (Golden: Fulcrum, 1999), 131; Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle,” *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3&4, (Summer & Fall 2004), 391.

³³ David Suzuki, “A Personal Foreword: The Value of Native Ecologies,” in *Wisdom of the Elders* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2001), xxxv.

Indigenous Knowledge is the foundational world view for everyday life including governance, education, family, economy, health and culture.³⁴ It is through our ancestors and our future, where IK originates.³⁵ The process of learning and understanding IK is through Elders and youth learning from one another, creating a circle of constant flux of Indigenous wisdom. To emphasize that Indigenous Elders are the foundation of IK, Deborah McGregor notes that, “The most visible representation of Indigenous Knowledge is the recognition and presence of Elders within all aspects of daily life.”³⁶ It is important to understand that the education of Indigenous Knowledge does not only engage the intellect, but it also “engages the mind, spirit and body, and it considers all in its exploration.”³⁷ With attention to spirit, a common notion with Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, is spirituality. Comparatively, the Niitsitapi- Blackfoot scholar, Leroy Little Bear, explains the foundational basis and the paradigms of Indigenous Knowledge using the philosophical framework of science. He explains that when you look at the foundational basis which creates Native thought it consist of four main elements:

The Native paradigm, but here I am speaking from a Blackfoot point of view, but I know that it is very similar with other First Nations. In Blackfoot, the foundational base is what we refer to as constant flux. In other words, without stating it because its embodied in our minds. Another part of the paradigm really is about energy waves. There is a little bit of a difference between Western and Native thought because in Western physics, we try to talk about everything in terms of matter. In Quantum physics they talk about subtonic particles, and so on. Whereas, in Blackfoot for instance, everything is about energy waves, and we can go so far to say that when we examine these energy waves, really, they are spirit. A third part of it, is that everything is animate, and in Blackfoot, there is no such thing as inanimate. A fourth part of the paradigm, of course, is the notion of

³⁴ David Newhouse, introduction to *Aboriginal Knowledge for Economic Development*, eds. David Newhouse, Jeff Orr, and the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), xx; Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle,” *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3&4, (Summer & Fall 2004), 389.

³⁵ Deborah McGregor, “Coming Full Circle,” *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3&4, (Summer & Fall 2004), 405.

³⁶ David Newhouse, introduction to *Aboriginal Knowledge for Economic Development*, eds. David Newhouse, Jeff Orr, and the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), xxii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

relationships, everything is related. So, if you look at things from a flux point of view, imagine a spider web in motion, you begin to see everything is related.³⁸

Furthermore, this way of living and being is ancient to Indigenous peoples and is understood to be a gift from the Creator, as a code to live by with all of creation. In our language, this concept is embedded in the word *elitasualtulti'k*, is the notion where all living and non-living entities are always connected and interdependent on one another. In other words, everything is everything. Our legends, our stories, songs, dances and ceremony, remind us of our connection to the universe is related to how this knowledge is gained is the as important as the knowledge itself. Thus, as the one cannot exist without the other, everything is everything in the web of life.

Songs and dances are essential teachings from our Indigenous world views. There are many definitions for the term dance by diverse cultures around the world. For the us, our ancestors understood dance as a way of the body expressing itself outward into the physical realm. In the book, *The Language of the Land, Mi'kma'ki*, authors Trudy Sable and Bernie Francis describe dance in greater depth; “Although the Mi'kmaq has their own set of dance movements unique to their culture, the essence of Mi'gmaq dance, like the language and the stories, was a means to mediate among various forces at play in the world and bring them into a knowable or visible relationship for those gathered.”³⁹ Similarly, our songs portray a deep and meaningful understanding of the amount of respect in the relationships between us and all of creation. The Mi'gmaq Honour Song is an example of reciprocity and relationality, in honoring and giving thanks for all of creation.

³⁸ Leroy Little Bear, Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science: Dr. Leroy Little Bear (2015; British Columbia: BanffEvents, 2015), YouTube Video.

³⁹ Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi'kma'ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton Univeristy Press, 2012), 80.

The serpent dance that Sable and Francis describe in their book has intrigued my curiosity about the connection between the serpent legends and the serpent dance. There are many legends which have been turned into songs and dances; this is done to give thanks to those living entities that have shaped our world.⁴⁰ In other words, our ancestors offered their gratitude by dancing and reflecting the teachings of the of the serpent. Sable and Francis explain the important teachings within the dance that is expressed: “This dance is yet another teaching of respect for the powers at play, some of which can kill you, such as picking the wrong medicine. It also teaches of the seasons, the directions, the stars, the nature of reptiles, the bird that leads on to the medicine and values respect and care needed in collecting plants.”⁴¹ For this reason, I think it is important to know our medicines and dances through our language, as they would help facilitate these teachings, thus, further strengthening our people. Furthermore, Sable and Francis mention that the serpent is said to live beneath the earth or water, and its horns, one red and one yellow, were used for personal power particularly by *puoninaq*- a medicine person, also known as a shaman, who has supernatural powers.⁴²

This reminds me of a story my father used to tell me, who learned it from his mother, who learned it from her mother, about a lake up the woods called Dead Man’s Lake in Listuguj. The story goes, that there were serpents who lived in that lake. After reading the book, *Stories from the Six Worlds Micmac Legends* by Ruth Whitehead, I noticed the connection between the story that was told by my family and the Mi’gmaq legends depicted in her book. In chapter one,

⁴⁰ Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi’kma’ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton Univeristy Press, 2012), 80.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴² Bernie Francis and Trudy Sable. *The language of this land, Mi’kma’ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton Univeristy Press, 2012), 87; Ruth Whitehead. *Stories From the Six Worlds Micmac Legends* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 1988), 4.

Whitehead states, “As stories hold many levels of meaning, the cosmos holds many levels of existence: The World Beneath the Earth, The World Beneath the Water, Earth World, Ghost World, the World Above the Sky. These are the six worlds of the People which their legends depict.”⁴³ Could it be true that these ancient stories of serpents living beneath Dead Man’s Lake actually come from “the World beneath the Water” or “the World beneath the Earth”?

Alternatively, this could just be a fictional legend. In the first world, our ancestors believed that the water and its beings have a world of their own, “These worlds also contain beings in animal forms not found in modern bestiaries, such as the Horned Serpent Persons, the Jipijka’maq.”⁴⁴

The notion that there are six worlds or dimensions, each consisting of unique living entities reflects that, “Mountains are alive, and lakes, and the icebergs floating on the seas. Strange features within the landscape are Persons thought of with affection or honoured with gifts. Boulders and cliffs are sometimes revealed in stories as Shape-Changers who choose those forms when they wish to hide or to rest.”⁴⁵ It is through oral tradition that myths and legends guide us to where we can start to understand the connectedness of all living beings in the universe. The author of the book, *Mi’kmaq Landscapes: From Animism to Sacred Ecology*, Anne-Christine Hornborg believes that to interpret the cosmology implied by the tales requires attention to the cultural logic and cosmology of the Mi’gmaq.⁴⁶ This means that each living entity or being has this “Power,” also known to our people as spirit. Our spirit is what gives our

⁴³ Ruth Whitehead. *Stories From the Six Worlds Micmac Legends* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 1988), 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ Anne-Christine Hornborg. *Mi’kmaq Landscapes From Animism to Sacred Ecology* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 30.

bodies life. Mi'gmaq cosmology can be found in the cycles of seasonal changes and moon cycles, were the work of an essence, or "Power."⁴⁷

There is an ancient concept in our L'nu language that means restoring our connections, rights and responsibilities with our environment, which is *netukulimk*.⁴⁸ It was not until after centuries of colonial oppression and assimilation, the infringement of treaty entitlements, and the resistance of our ancestors, that this concept of *netukulimk* resurfaced. Today, our people continue to practice the concept of *netukulimk* as the fundamental source on the responsibilities of stewardship and governance with creation. Our L'nu language guides our world view, as stated by Russell Barsh:

Netukulimk is the process of supplying one's self or making a living from the land and netukulimkewe'l refers to the applicable rules or standards. Interestingly, the closet homophone is nutqw-(insufficiency) rather than pukw-(abundance); thus, Netukulimk sounds more like "avoiding not having enough" than like obtaining plenty. The Mi'gmaq were gathering to avoid not having enough and not so much as having plenty. The etymological root meaning of "ntuk" would mean to the Mi'gmaq the provisions needed for the continuation of one's well-being.⁴⁹

Similarly, L'nu linguist Bernie Francis has stated that the concept of *netukulimk* roughly translates to "To seek well-being", the concept becomes more complex in that it has "evolved to incorporate economic development including 'gathering' berries, shellfish, medicines and hunting that also include the modern day concept of knowledge and money and we must remind ourselves that our gifts come from the Creator (the land, water and their resources) are sacred

⁴⁷ Anne-Christine Hornborg. *Mi'kmaq Landscapes From Animism to Sacred Ecology* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 32.

⁴⁸ Kerry Prosper et al., "Returning to Netukulimk," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 2, no. 4 (October 2011): 1.

⁴⁹ Russel Lawrence Barsh, "Netukulimk Past and Present: Mi'gmaq Ethics and the Atlantic Fishery," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 1; Kerry Prosper et al., "Returning to Netukulimk," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 2, no. 4 (October 2011): 12.

gifts.”⁵⁰ Comparatively, L’nu Elder Albert Marshall’s notion of sustainability, as embodied within our L’nu language, is *netukulimk*:

You can take the gift that the creator has given you, without compromising the ecological integrity of the area in which this gift has been taken from. To me, this is the essence of what that word implies *netukulimk*, you are recognizing that the substances that you need, also is physical and spiritual just like I am, I am not the superior being.⁵¹

Not until recent times has the concept of *netukulimk* been transferred into written documents; our ancestors never had to do so, because that concept was embedded in the L’nu worldview. As summarized by L’nu Elder Kerry Prosper, “Once an unspoken concept of moral and spiritual guidance, *netukulimk* is now spoken and written into a document setting out the hunting guidelines framing Mi’kmaq practice and intentions.”⁵² This illustrates the strength and resiliency our oral histories have survive, which is interdependent on the survival of our L’nu language and will ultimately be the source of our thriving.

In the times before European contact, Elders from coast to coast received visions of the future and encoded within their visions was the prediction that during this era we are currently in, we would come to a cross roads, one road leading to materialism and destruction, while the other would be filled with love and peace. The opening of the Eastern Door prophecy, as indicated above in the context of oral tradition, may be taken in part as an individual aspiration, but at the same time it also poses a collective choice between love and peace, or of materialism and destruction. As Indigenous peoples, with our distinctive world view, it is our responsibility as caretakers of our lands and waters, to maintain, reclaim, and revitalize our intimate connection

⁵⁰ Kerry Prosper et al., “Returning to Netukulimk,” *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 2, no. 4 (October 2011): 12.

⁵¹ Albert Marshall, NETUKULIMK (UINR), (2010; Sydney: Unama’ki Institute of Natural Resources, March 5, 2010), YouTube Video.

⁵² Kerry Prosper et al., “Returning to Netukulimk,” *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 2, no. 4 (October 2011): 13.

and relationship. Thus, it is our responsibility to educate others on the values of Indigenous wisdom and knowledge, and ways of knowing and being with one another. This will not be an easy path, as we are still healing from our past. Through learning from our past, however, we know our present, and we can build a good life for the generations yet to come. What will your legacy be?

Ap Na Multoqst - I will see you all again - Conclusion

I speak my truth because it sets me free from fear-based illusions. Seeking the truth has guided my healing journey, which embodies the unspoken gratitude for our ancestors. I am the vision of my ancestors, the generation that opens the Eastern Door Prophecy. As can be seen throughout histories unravelling of the prophecies by our ancestors long ago, and foreseen in today's era, it is up to us to envision our future for the generations yet to come.

Colonialism and oppression are the root cause of the problems our Indigenous peoples are facing today, which is directly interconnected with other issues that we and other human beings face: climate change crises, epidemics of poverty, high school dropout and suicide rates, alcoholism and drug addictions. As can be seen throughout history, without the process of knowledge transmission, Indigenous people can more easily assimilate into colonial knowledges and ideologies, leaving little or no room for Indigenous ways of knowing or being. The colonial/western educational system in Canada is in the forefront in creating and perpetuating ignorance and misunderstandings about Indigenous treaties, history, culture, and Nations. If we were raised with the truth, do you think we would be divided as living beings, and as humans destroying Mother Earth, or do you think that we would come together to help protect the life that sustains us?

Colonialism is not solely a historical problem. It continues to enforce the over exploitation of nature leading almost to the point of no return, by allowing the colonizers to convince us to stop believing in ourselves. Yet, nothing is more sacred than life, and we are all continuously interdependent with all of creation. An energy shift is needed to bring about healing, both individually and collectively to restore balance with our communities, Mother Earth with the cosmos and with all life. The spirit is a vital aspect of our well-being, because when this is

compromised or unbalanced, it causes our people to struggle in finding their identity, and their need to belong. Thus, our liberation will be through believing in our spirit, as it will guide us in the right direction. Accordingly, it is essential to revitalize, reclaim and maintain our L'nu ways of knowing and being, in the 21st century, and to reawaken our spiritual relationship with the lands and waters because the most important energy derives from the natural world.

Our current situation regarding Indigenous language resurgence in Canada, is intricately linked on the one hand within the rise of Indigenous-led actions towards reclaiming, revitalizing and maintaining our language, but also on the other hand with the outcome of the Indigenous Languages Act, if it is created in a good way and with a good heart. Since our language is at the core of our self-expression and identity, it is the heart that guides our families, communities, and our nation. I have a niece who loves to speak our language fluently and is proud of where she comes from, and where she is, and knows where she is going. My niece is currently enrolled in Mi'gmaq Immersion Grade 4 but may not be able to continue in Mi'gmaq Immersion Grade 5 next year if a Mi'gmaq Immersion teacher is not hired by then. The lack of fluent speakers with teaching degrees is a persistent problem faced in Indigenous communities, when revitalizing our languages through immersion. Another widespread problem is lack of funding for Indigenous language immersion programs or schools.

It has been made clear, our L'nu nation needs to continue our nation building and self-governance through the sacred guiding principles, values and morals of our ancestors. We must learn how to live with one another in a peaceful co-existence in accordance with and in honour of our treaties and ancestors. Let us reclaim our roles and responsibilities to create a nurturing and empowering environment for the generations to come by revitalizing our L'nu ways of knowing and being at the heart of our communities.

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Appendix

Definitions:

Colonialism – “The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.”¹

Neocolonialism – the characteristics of neocolonialism described as, “the deliberate and continued survival of the colonial system in independent African states, by turning these states into victims of political, mental, economic, social, military and technical forms of domination carried out through indirect and subtle means that did not include direct violence.”² Similarly, there are strong connections between colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa and Canada. As the Mi’gmaq scholar, Bonita Lawrence stated, “To treat the Indian Act merely as a set of policies to be repealed, or even as a genocidal scheme in which we can simply choose not to believe, belies how a classificatory system produces ways of thinking-a grammar-that embeds itself in every attempt to change it.”³

Poem:

John Trudell – Look at Us

At times they were kind, they were polite in their sophistication, smiling but never too loudly acting in a civilized manner an illusion of gentleness always fighting to get their way. while the people see, the people know, the people wait, the people say the closing of your doors will never shut use out, the closing of your doors can only shut you in.

We know the predator, we see them feed on us, we are aware to starve the beast is our destiny. At times they were kind, they were polite, but never honest.

¹ Oxford Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 2018. Web. Accessed on June 20, 2018.

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/colonialism>

² Ibid.

³ Lawrence, Bonita. “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview.” *Hypatia*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Indigenous Women in the Americas, Spring, 2003, 4.

We see your tech no logical society devour you before your very eyes we hear your anguished cries exalting greed through progress while you seek material advances the sound of flowers dying carry messages through the wind trying to tell you about balance and your safety;

But your minds are chained to your machines and the strings dangling from your puppeteer's hands turning you, twisting you into forms and confusions beyond your control;

Your mind for a job your mind for a T.V., your mind for a hair dryer your mind for consumption.

With your atom bombs your material bombs your drug bombs your racial bombs your class bombs your sexist bombs your ageist bombs;

Devastating your natural shelters making you homeless on earth chasing you into illusions fooling you, making you pretend you can run away from the ravishing of your spirit;

While the sound of flowers dying carry messages through the wind trying to tell you about balance and your safety.

Trying to isolate us in a dimension called loneliness leading us into the trap believe in their power but not in ourselves piling us with guilt always taking the blame greed chasing out the balance trying to isolate us in a dimension called loneliness;

economic deities seizing power through illusions created armies are justified class systems are democracy god listens to warmongers prayers tyranny is here, divide and conquer trying to isolate us in a dimension called loneliness;

greed a parent insecurity the happiness companion genocide conceived in sophistication tech no logic material civilization a rationalization replacing a way to live trying to isolate us in a dimension called loneliness;

To god we hope you don't mind but we would like to talk to you; there are some things we need to straighten out, it's about these Christians they claim to be from your nation but man you should see the things they do all the time blaming it on you: manifest destiny, genocide, maximized profit, sterilization, raping the earth, lying taking more than they need in all the forms of the greed. we ask them why, they say it's god's will.

Damn god they make it so hard. Remember Jesus? Would you send him back to them, tell them how to kill him, rather they should listen stop abusing his name and yours

We do not mean to be disrespectful, but you know how it is, our people have their own ways we never even heard of you until not long ago, your representatives spoke magnificent things of you which we were willing to believe, but from the way they acted we know we and you were being deceived.

We do not mean you and your Christian children any bad, but you all came to take all we had we have not seen you, but we have heard so much it is time for you to decide what life is worth we already remember but maybe you forgot.

Look at us, look at us, we are of Earth and Water

Look at them, it is the same
Look at us, we are suffering all these years
Look at them, they are connected.
Look at us, we are in pain
Look at them, surprised at our anger
Look at us, we are struggling to survive
Look at them, expecting sorrow be benign
Look at us, we were the ones called pagan
Look at them, on their arrival
Look at us, we are called subversive
Look at them, descending from name callers
Look at us, we wept sadly in the long dark
Look at them, hiding in tech no logic light
Look at us, we buried the generations
Look at them, inventing the body count
Look at us, we are older than America
Look at them, chasing a fountain of youth
Look at us, we are embracing Earth
Look at them, clutching today
Look at us, we are living in the generations
Look at them, existing in jobs and debts
Look at us, we have escaped many times
Look at them, they cannot remember
Look at us, we are healing
Look at them, their medicine is patented
Look at us, we are trying
Look at them, what are they doing
Look at us, we are children of Earth

Look at them, who are they?⁴

⁴ Trudell, directed by Heather Rae (2005; United States: Independent Lens series on PBS, 2007), DVD.