

Ethnographic Explorations of the Foodways of Three Generations of Women in
Kasabonika Lake First Nation

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Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for a M.A. degree in Human Kinetics

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you to the community of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. It was of the utmost pleasure to be within your community and to share in your experiences. The moments spent with Joanna and her family are moments that will never be forgotten. They are forever etched into my collective being. Sitting, conversing and laughing with Joanna and her daughters (Collette, Karina, Gale and Felicity) in the teepee are what I will remember and ultimately miss the most. Every time I am near a campfire I am reminded of each of you. The smell of smoke brings to mind many memories. To learn from each of you was such an incredible experience.

My family has been and continues to be my most trusted support. Thank you to my mother, Corine, my sister, Carrie and my brother, Sean. I could not have done this without you. I love each of you of dearly. Your love has provided me with strength and your endless encouragement with confidence. Thank you to my dearest friend, Amanda. You always encourage me to see the positive in any situation. For that, I am very grateful. Thank you for the continued support and your lasting friendship. Thank you to Gemma, Kealey, Brendan and Edith, otherwise known as my Ottawa “family”. You all have been such a wonderful support. I am so happy that each of you has come into my life.

To my supervisor, Dr. Michael Robidoux, I cannot express simply the appreciation and respect in which I have for you. Where do I begin? First and foremost, thank you for taking me on as a volunteer research assistant. This is where I was first introduced with your work and where I realized my true passion lies. I was thrilled by every opportunity you had offered me. I have gained so much knowledge and experience through working with you and the Indigenous Health Research Group. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to

these First Nations communities to work not only as a research assistant, but to perform my own research. It was an unbelievable gift. Thank you for that. It has been a long journey and I am so pleased that you were there to lend support along the way. Your time and patience has certainly not gone unnoticed. Even through all the obstacles and the moments of pure uncertainty, you always found a way to make me laugh. Michael, I sincerely hope you know just how much I appreciate all you have done for me. Thank you a million times over.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Eileen O'Connor and Dr. Willow Scobie for your valuable insight, sustained support and most importantly for your time and patience. Thank you.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Shinjini Pal, Corliss Bean and Dr. Francois Haman. Thank you to my graduate professors; Dr. Alex Dumas, Dr. Audrey Giles, Dr. Eileen O'Connor, Dr. Stephen Stuart and Dr. Bradley Young. Thank you also to the graduate student support staff at the University of Ottawa and in particular, to Catherine Cusson-Garneau. I would also like to thank Hassan Saeed (for making classes so much more enjoyable and so very entertaining), Mélanie St-Jéan (for a truly memorable first field trip), Clara Karton (for the endless laughs and delicious meals) and thank you, finally, to Monika Gal.

Introduction

The need for research that aims to address key issues at the community level is now more important than ever. Adleson (2005) asserts that “there remains a paucity of research that is inclusive, engaged and empowering” (p. 59). The following thesis will hope to accomplish this by highlighting the lives of one family of First Nations women and the culturally significant exchanges between these three generations of women. Culturally significant exchanges, in this instance, refer to the knowledge shared among the women that pertain, largely, to local food practices of the Oji-Cree women of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. In documenting these exchanges and what these exchanges between the generations entail, the attitudes and identity of the women involved will simultaneously be explored to determine and understand its effects on the dissemination of culturally relevant information occurring in socially rich domains such as the teepee. The varying attitudes among the generations will be discussed in an attempt to understand the differences between the generations of women, especially in regards to their food preference, along with the variations with respect to the women’s participation within significant places. In pursuing this particular objective, the opportunity to explore the women’s receptivity and resistance to these cultural practices exists.

At the core of this thesis is one family of First Nations women from Kasabonika Lake First Nation. Employing a community-based approach places the experiences of these women at the forefront. This type of research also encourages the use of participatory modes of research that continues to value the incorporation of the voice and experiences of these First Nations women. Developing a local, community perspective is also of interest. It is imperative that research meets the needs of the Aboriginal community and deals specifically with challenges that they identify. Adleson (2005) believes that the use of decolonizing methodologies helps

researchers to engage in meaningful dialogue with communities, while establishing priorities to foster research that is both successful and collaborative. These principles guide the current research in terms of the chosen research methodologies and methods.

There is an insufficient amount of research that seeks to understand the culturally significant exchanges between generations of First Nations women in Canada. By prioritizing the needs of First Nations women fills yet another gap in Canadian literature. Dion Stout, Kipling, & Stout (2001) believe that:

Among those with a stake in the issues and challenges facing Aboriginal women in Canada, it has long been argued that this is a population in which policy makers and researchers show little interest. Doubly marginalized as both female and Aboriginal, these women have seldom benefited from sustained research attention that explores, in a substantive fashion, their lives, challenges and strengths, (p. 17).

These exchanges encompass not only the transmission of culturally relevant knowledge, but provide the women with opportunities to interact with each other in culturally relevant domains. Many of these cultural practices continue to flourish within the teepee. The teepee will be of particular focus within this thesis. The exchanges and interactions taking place within the teepee will also provide the opportunity to understand how around these traditional practices are shared among the women and what exactly these practices entail. Furthermore, these exchanges also foster cultural resilience within the First Nations community. Notions of cultural resilience are also enmeshed within the connection between people, place and one's conception of wellness. Although the current thesis focuses intently on the intergenerational exchanges within the teepee as well as the cultural significance of the women's foodways, it is important to highlight the tensions that come to affect the dissemination of culturally relevant activities and the food choices of the younger generations of women.

The section below will situate the health status of a contemporary First Nation community. Although significance is placed upon the biomedical, Western concept of health, it is to merely place this project within the larger framework of health research. This will be addressed within the literature review. Once a background is provided, it will become clearer as to where future research may be directed. Furthermore, this will also highlight where Western concepts of health limit the understanding of issues highly pertinent to First Nations communities. These limitations will give way to research that is grounded in community-based principles and methodologies that value the voice and experiences of First Nations people and communities.

Literature Review

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are facing vast health disparities compared to non-Aboriginal peoples. Because such inequities exist, health related concerns have become a priority among Canadian health researchers (Richmond & Ross, 2009; Adelson, 2005; Reading & Nowgessic, 2002). Much of the research in the field of Aboriginal health is derived from a bio-medical model and aims to measure rates of morbidity and mortality. Research studies driven by the biomedical model of health are abundant in the field of Aboriginal health, whereas studies focusing on social determinants of health are scarce in comparison (T.K. Young, 2003). Often, underlying health factors are neglected (Richmond & Ross, 2009; K. Wilson & T.K. Young, 2008; Wakewich & Parker, 2002), so too are particular sub-groups (Valaskakis, Dion Stout, & Guimond, 2009; K. Wilson & T.K. Young, 2008; T.K. Young, 2003; Dion Stout, Kipling, & Stout, 2001). One of these groups is Aboriginal women. This thesis highlights the lives of First Nations women by documenting the exchange between three generations of First Nations women. In addition to this, the roles or identity of these women were explored to determine its effects on the dissemination of culturally relevant information occurring in socially rich domains as the teepee.

In this literature review, an emphasis is placed on the health of First Nations women. By emphasizing research conducted with First Nations women across Canada and among various domains of health, gaps emerge that require attention. The following review will shed light on some of these areas and in particular will highlight the need for research that aims to understand the (ex)changes between generations of First Nations women occurring around traditional, land based food practices. Moreover, the review of the literature will highlight the need for research that promotes sustaining intergenerational exchange between women and for ongoing research to

indicate factors that either facilitate or hinder future exchanges between generations of First Nations women.

Aboriginal/First Nations Health

Throughout the world, and including Canada, the prevalence of chronic disease is on the rise. For Aboriginal populations, the rise of chronic disease is disproportionately higher than it is for the rest of Canadians (Sharma et al., 2007). Kuhnlein et al (2004) point out that nearly “all health status measures for every health condition are still worse for First Nations, Inuit and Métis than the overall Canadian population, with poorer conditions for education, employment and average income being key determinants” (p. 1014). Dion Stout, Kipling, and Stout (2001) state that even though “Canada is praised for affording its people one of the best qualities of life anywhere in the world, Aboriginal women and men are characterized by a health profile one would normally associate with the developing world” (p. 12). Furthermore, Dion Stout et al. assert that:

Despite public recognition of past injustices committed against Aboriginal peoples in this country, marginalization and prejudice remain very much present in the daily lives of many community members. While the effects of this marginalization may themselves manifest in any number of ways, few are more telling than statistics that place Canada’s Aboriginal population far below their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the United Nations Human Development Index. (p. 12)

The vast difference between the health of Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples can be attributed to numerous factors. One cause that is of particular interest is the health transition that has impacted the lives of Aboriginal peoples. The health transition is characterized by Young (2003; 1988) as the shift from persistent infectious diseases to chronic, non-communicable diseases like obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. In terms of obesity prevalence,

“over a third (34.3%) of First Nations adults are considered overweight, while 34.9% are obese, and 5.5% are morbidly obese” (RHS, 2011). When examining BMI by gender, “First Nations female adults are more likely to be obese (35.9% vs. 34.1%) or morbidly obese (6.8% vs. 4.3%), when compared to First Nations males” (RHS, 2011, p. 34). Almost half (49.3%) of reported diabetics have a BMI corresponding to the obese category, while 11.3 % of diabetics are considered morbidly obese (RHS, 2011). The proportion of self-reported diabetic adults (19.8%) in First Nations populations represents a 0.9% increase from the Regional Health Study (RHS) completed in 2002/03. Of those who reported diabetes, about 9.4% indicated they have type 1 and 5.8% reported gestational diabetes. Type 2 diabetes accounts for the majority of reported diabetes, with 80.8% of adult First Nations being affected (RHS, 2011). It is also important to note the demographic variations with respect to disease: “Women have a greater prevalence of diabetes than men across all age categories, contrary to the pattern observed in the general Canadian population where diabetes is more common among men” (RHS, 2011, p. 50). Furthermore, diabetes prevalence increases with age and with that the risk of developing further chronic conditions. In fact, individuals with type 2 diabetes reported a higher prevalence of morbidity across a range of diseases and conditions. Among type 2 diabetics 55 years of age and older, a number of conditions occur at double the proportion observed in the remaining population who were not diabetic. Some of these conditions include, “glaucoma (7.9% vs. 4.1%), stroke (10.5% vs. 4.9%) and heart disease (29.1% vs. 15.2%). In addition, hypertension, an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease, was reported more frequently among type 2 diabetics (66.1% vs. 40.7%)” (RHS, 2011, p. 51). These statistics are representative of the health transition in which many First Nations peoples continue to contend with. This shift may be referred to as the epidemiologic transition or health transition (Waldram, Herring, & Young,

2006; Young, 1988, 2003). The health transition is also characteristic of the “long term temporal changes in the pattern of health and disease in populations” (Waldram, et al., 2006, p. 74; Young, 1988). In addition, it is of interest to consider the chronic diseases in which some researchers have labelled, ‘diseases of modernization’ or ‘Western diseases’. Quite simply, these diseases have the “ability to serve as a ‘barometer’ of lifestyle and social change” (Waldram, et al., p. 90). This transition also points to the significant role assimilatory practices played in the dramatic lifestyle and social change of many First Nations communities. Western influences have infiltrated nearly all aspects of First Nations life. These influences continue today by producing a particular image of First Nations people. Not to discredit any one research project, but much of the research produced tends to portray First Nations communities through a particularly negative lens. Although this surely is not the intention of these research projects, as many researchers are merely just stating their findings. The truth of the matter is that many of these First Nations communities are suffering as they face poor health conditions, housing dilemmas and continued environmental deterioration. However, this is only one way to portray First Nations communities. This is simply one piece of a very intricate puzzle and as Adelson (1998) contends, “one way to rethink health is through the incorporation of cultural notions of well-being” (p. 6).

As mentioned earlier, the biomedical model of health would be relied upon to place this research within the broader domain of “health”. However in doing so, a source of these staggering health issues that many First Nations individuals and communities contend with is brought to the forefront. One of the most prominent sources that has attributed to the current health condition of many First Nations communities is the colonial legacy.

Although each First Nations community has its own history, there are similarities that exist among them. Imbedded within their collective history is the legacy of colonization. These

cultural and historical processes, however, have produced the complex, yet unique, contemporary landscape of many First Nations communities. Because of the distinctly traumatic history, dominant conceptions of health may not be entirely adequate.

Adelson (1998) contends that “health ideals are rooted in cultural norms and values that extend beyond the state of the physical body (p.6) .When you consider Adelson’s perspective, the common definition of “health”, along with its ideals, disassociate from the constraints of Western biology to produce a derivative that is more holistic, representative and more fitting with concepts of wellness. Adelson (1998) has worked extensively in the Cree community of Whapmagoostui. Through her interviews with local community members, she had discovered that “there is no word in Cree that translates back to English as health. The term that is used to express wellness is *miyupimaatisiun*, which translates to ‘living well’ or ‘being alive well’ . *Miyupimaatisiun* is a distinctly Cree concept that derives from a particular cultural and historical perspective” (p.10). When cultural and historical parameters are taken in to account, the limits of the biomedical paradigm are diminished and thus, the ability to understand “health” in a broader social setting is granted (Adelson).

In this thesis, the social determinants (namely, social support networks, social and physical environments, personal health practices, and both gender a culture) that affect one’s health or what it means to ‘be alive well’ will be on interest. For the Cree of Whapmagoostui, *miyupimaatisiun* or ‘being alive well’:

Is not thought of as something that an individual must strive to attain independent of his actions and relation to others and to the land. Someone is said to be *miyupimaatisiun* if he or she eats the right foods, keeps warm and performs the activities needed to accomplish one’s goals, whatever they may be. There is a cyclical affinity between the Cree person, hunting, the land, and food that incorporates all aspects of Cree life and, necessarily, of well-being. Protection from the cold, physical activity and eating Cree

food are the principal factors described as necessary for ‘being alive well.’ At the core of this aggregate is Cree food, or *iyiyuumiichim* – one of the fundamental requirements for *miyupimaatisiun*. (Adelson, 1998, p. 11)

For the women involved in this research, traditional foods play a vital role in the quest for wellness. Traditional foods and foodways are also at the core of this thesis. Changes in these foodways and changes in how these traditional foods are utilized and consumed are of particular interest. Highlighting these changes provides the opportunity to investigate both the concerns and considerations of the linkages between food and wellness.

First Nations Health, Nutrition & Traditional Diets

To discuss traditional food practices in contemporary First Nations community settings, it is important to first acknowledge the dramatic changes many First Nations communities and individuals have faced as a result of prolonged European imposition (Robidoux, Haman & Senta, 2009). Although Indigenous diets are diverse, one way of understanding the terms of a traditional diet is through the following definition. A “traditional Aboriginal diet is defined as one containing plant and animal foods harvested from the local environment. These traditional foods are locally called ‘bush foods’ to reflect their origin from the land” (Sharma, Cao, Gittelsohn, Ho, Ford, Rosecrans, Harris, Hanley & Zinman, 2007, p. 832; Gittelsohn, Harris, Burris, Kakegamic, Landman, Sharma, Wolever, Logan, Barnie & Zinman, 1996). In addition, Kuhnlein and Chan (2000) state that:

The term traditional food system ... embraces an understanding of the sociocultural meanings given to these foods, their acquisition, and their processing; the chemical composition of these foods; the way each food is used by age and gender groups within a selected culture (p. 596).

Of particular interest in Kuhnlein and Chan's definition is the inclusion of age and gender groups and the ways in which different subsections of the community utilize traditional foods. The current study incorporates an intergenerational approach. An emphasis will be placed on the way various age groups utilize traditional foods and also how they connect to these foods through both its procurement and preparation. Kuhnlein and Chan suggest that because "foods from the natural environment have been used as subsistence for thousands of years by Indigenous peoples living close to the land, traditional food systems hold fascinating insights into many issues of human food use and nutrition ..." (p. 597). The ways in which foods are utilized among various generations of First Nations women bears immense importance. Not only are the ways in which these foods are used among the women of interest, but so too are the activities associated with traditional, land based food use. This notion is reflected in deGonzague, Receveur, Wedell, and Kuhnlein's (1999) definition which describes traditional diets as those comprised of "all food within a particular culture [that is] available from local natural resources and culturally accepted, as well as the activities associated with procuring it" (p. 710). Furthermore, Robidoux et al. (2009) believe that "such a definition forces a consideration of the multiple facets of eating traditionally, meaning choices around food selection, acquisition, preparation, and consumption ..." (p. 17-18).

Certainly the multivariate composition of traditional, land based diets is important to comprehend; however, the factors that determine one's use of traditional, land based food cannot and should not be viewed simplistically. For First Nations peoples and communities, many factors including "variations in land use/access, health of the people, local knowledge competencies, environmental conditions and positioning within the matrix of contemporary coloniality" (Robidoux et al., 2010, p. 26) affect the ways First Nations utilize and identify with

traditional, land based food sources. Aboriginal communities across Canada continue to struggle with the effects of colonization. Symptoms of historical trauma and cultural genocide remain and continue to influence a multitude of features of First Nations life. One major effect was the dramatic transformation in lifestyle including those related to the procurement (hunting, fishing, trapping and harvesting) of traditional, land based foods and the means of preparing such foods.

The rapid change from the consumption of a cultural group's traditional foods to the adoption of a more Westernized, market food rich diet, is known as the nutrition transition (Downs, Arnold, Marshall, McCargar, Raine & Willows, 2009). Additionally, Samson and Pretty (2006) describe the nutrition transition as an "abrupt shift from consumption of wild foods to processed foods" (p. 531). This transition occurred rapidly as access to market food increased. Market foods first appeared in the diet as community members were forced to settle on their current reserve lands. Simultaneously, full time trapping and hunting became much more difficult (Robidoux, et al. 2009). It is worth referencing Kuhnlein and Receveur (1996), at length, as they contend that Indigenous peoples:

Have little opportunity to maintain traditional knowledge of available resources and technologies for processing and use. They will quickly adapt to new food patterns and will likely not transfer traditional food knowledge to the next generation. In general, the loss of traditional food systems will result in decreasing culture-specific food activities, decreasing dietary diversity for those in rural areas and in poor *economic* circumstances, and decreasing cultural morale as a result of these elements. A sedentary lifestyle is often the case, particularly if employment is undertaken, market food is purchased, and traditional hunting/gathering or farming is not practiced. (p. 434)

Robidoux et al. (2009) have highlighted the fact that "[communities struggle] to maintain its past while moving forward, adapting to modern Western lifestyles [which] is most noticeable with hunting and fishing activities that remain popular in the community but are no longer the

subsistence activities they were only 50 years earlier” (p.15). The authors continue to state that “with increasing hunting-angling costs and a reported diminished hunting [and] angling knowledge base, wild foods are no longer the primary food source for most families ...” (p.15). This is of major concern for many First Nations communities. Often, many individuals feel divided between the concepts of traditional, land based foods and market foods. Food choices made on a daily basis create either a further fissuring from the traditional food system or reinforces it. It is a choice that bears immense significance for future generations of First Nations women. Kuhnlein and Receveur (1996) state that “the documentation of traditional food systems is urgent because the knowledge of food harvesting and preparation is fast disappearing” (p. 436). They continue to assert that “substantial ethnographic detail is needed to interpret dietary change and the effect of change. For indigenous peoples, protecting traditional food systems will provide many cultural benefits” (p. 436; Mintz, 1986). In this thesis I address the need for further ethnographic investigations focusing on dietary change. These investigations also provide the opportunity to examine the exchanges between generations of First Nations women that have the potential to foster cultural resilience. Many of these culturally significant exchanges occur through the use of traditional, land based food systems. However, prior to understanding why these exchanges over traditional, land based foods are so meaningful, the current foodways of these First Nations women must be discussed as they stand within the contemporary landscape of Kasabonika Lake First Nation.

First Nations foodways have underwent considerable changes since the time of contact. Western influences which have been perpetuated through the process of colonization played a particularly crucial role. Turner and Turner (2007) believe that:

Claiming control over the territory and redefining the existing food system of First Nations peoples was vital to this process because of the strong ties between culture and land, the vast amount of cultural knowledge and cultural practices surrounding food and the social bonds that the acquisition, processing, eating and celebrating of foods provided. Colonization thus began a process of culinary acculturation that has continued to the present day. (p. 57)

The defining characteristics of First Nations food systems described by Turner and Turner above will be explored within this thesis. Although traditional foodways have altered, many First Nations people continue nourishing these foodways within their contemporary reality. With that said, there are those individuals whose attitudes have changed to appreciate a diet constituted largely by Western foods. Turner and Turner (2007) believe that as the familiarity of First Nations foods began to wane, so did their relevance and value. Thus, as the significance of these foodways steadily decreased, the knowledge of these foodways was ultimately affected. Exploring the exchanges between the three generations of women will provide a greater understanding of how the knowledge around these local food practices is shared among the women. Distinguishing the process of knowledge sharing among the women highlights their willingness to participate in activities that allow these practices to endure. According to Turner and Turner (2007), “rebuilding food security and food sovereignty through the revival of traditional food systems is a vital step in rebuilding individual and community health and recovering from the most negative socio-cultural impacts of colonialism” (pp. 58-59).

This thesis documents the foodways of three generations of women as they exist today. However, the historical underpinnings must always be appreciated and taken into consideration. The foodways practiced prior to Western influence prevail in an environment that was conditioned by a series of traumatic events designed to completely eradicate connections between one’s land, food and family. The resiliency that exists among these women is truly

amazing. How resiliency plays into concepts of health and wellness is of particular interest within this research. The same goes for the reason to focus on the women of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. Culturally significant knowledge pertaining largely to food preparation and processing is often held and sustained by women. These women are considered to be a critical element in sharing and passing on such knowledge.

First Nations Women & Health

It has been argued that the “survival of First Nations culture rests on the shoulders of mothers and daughters and their ability to raise the next generation in First Nations traditional ways” (Big Eagle & Guimond, 2009, p. 60). It is for this reason that this thesis focuses on the lives of First Nations women. Big Eagle and Guimond’s statement points also to the generational component that resonates through the current study. But prior to delving into the specific literature dealing with intergenerational approaches and First Nations women, it is important to illustrate the health of First Nations women to provide proper contextualization of the given research.

Recently, several scholars have produced important research that identifies the current health status of First Nations women (Wilson & Young, 2008; Young, 2003; Wakewich & Parker, 2002; Dion Stout, Kipling & Stout. 2001). In a review to determine the adequacy of research as it relates to the needs of Aboriginal people, Young (2003) discovered several shortcomings. One major limitation discovered was the under-representation of particular demographic groups like those of urban Aboriginals and Métis populations. Of particular interest, the review identified that “research has not focused enough on the unique health needs of women and children” (p. 421). He concludes by asserting that when developing research

priorities, health needs not only be considered, but also the relevance of the health issue at hand. “There will continue to be a need to strike a balance between targeted research based on an explicit planning process and curiosity driven, investigator initiated research” (Young, pp. 421-422). Certainly this is an important perspective to consider and one that resonates through many of the following writings to be discussed. As an extension of this review, Wilson and Young (2008) explore the trends in social science that prioritize areas of Aboriginal health research. Within this review, the authors express the need for future research endeavours that embrace community-based, participatory health research. The authors note that:

While it is encouraging to see the high number of studies based on primary research, there appears to be a general lack of research conducted with Aboriginal peoples. By this we mean research that is rooted in developing partnerships and building capacity among Aboriginal peoples. As this review reveals, very few studies have engaged in research that seeks to integrate social science approaches and Aboriginal values, traditions and perspectives. (p. 187)

Certainly the need for research that seeks to engage and facilitate participation of First Nations communities and peoples is warranted. Wakewich and Parker (2000) reviewed research applicable to First Nations women in Northern Ontario and discovered that the abundance of research was done on First Nations women, rather than completed by, with, or for First Nations women. Furthermore, Wakewich and Parker note that there is a lack of research that explores the cultural, social, economic and political aspects of First Nations women’s health. They concur that the dominant research paradigm involving the health of First Nations women centres on a biomedical perspective of health. They support this by highlighting the disproportionate amount of research focusing on topics, such as, diabetes, obesity, reproductive health and pregnancy, violence and addictions, rather than those that take into account the social and historical processes affecting health. This particular notion links to the previously discussed article by

Wilson and Young (2008) addressing evident gaps in Aboriginal health research aligned within the social sciences. Furthermore, Wakewich and Parker comment on the fact that many of the articles were quantitative in nature. The authors note that “while this type of data is useful in portraying a descriptive overview of patterns of health and illness, or access to health services, the absence of interpretive or meaning-centred research limits our ability to understand the context of health behaviours, practices and experiences in [First Nations] women’s ‘everyday’ lives” (p. 23).

In a review of health initiatives catered to Aboriginal women, Dion Stout, Kipling and Stout (2001) identified a number of research areas requiring sustained attention from a variety of sectors. In particular, they have acknowledged the need to foster research that addresses violence and sexual abuse, substance abuse and maternal health, health-seeking behaviours, and access to services as they pertain to the Aboriginal woman. In a similar vein, Browne and Fiske (2001) assessed mainstream health care services by analyzing the experiences of First Nations women, and more specifically, how the health care system engages with these women to ultimately validate a continued racial and gender discourse. Again, a prevailing theme throughout the review was the desire for research initiatives to meet the needs of Aboriginal women and furthermore, for research that embraces Indigenous methodologies. The authors state that “at the most fundamental level, this would involve concrete action designed to ‘indigenize’ the research process, both to make it more reflective of Aboriginal women’s own life experiences, as well as more grounded in traditional or grass-roots approaches to knowledge and learning” (p. 30).

Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture edited by Valaskakis, Dion Stout, and Guimond is one text that embraces Indigenous methodologies while simultaneously serving as an active space to promote knowledge sharing and cultural continuity

(Jacobs, 2011). In addition to the issues explored through story, demographics, history, personal narrative, philosophy and art, the text presents readers with a solid introduction to a number of contributions made by First Nation women over recent decades (Haig-Brown, 2010). The contributing authors tackle several substantial issues including those relating to historical trauma, colonialism, and gender discourse. Jacobs (2002) work makes similar assertions stating that colonialism has had a profoundly negative effect on Aboriginal communities in Canada as a whole, affecting not only Aboriginal women's relations with Aboriginal men, but has pushed many Aboriginal women to the margins of their own cultures and Canadian society as a whole. The current project will focus on women and not only the relationships they have with themselves and their culture, but the relationship they have with other women through varying generations. In doing so, an attempt to understand more about the exchanges between three generations of women and what sort of impact and influence exchanges occurring within the social sphere of the teepee may have on the cultural resilience and health of younger generations of First Nation women.

Intergenerational Studies & Indigenous/Aboriginal Women

Wesley-Esquimaux (2009) believes that at the fundamental level we must decolonize our minds. She continues to state that “we need to reach down deep, so that we can reach up higher (p. 27). And perhaps an integral part of being able to reach up higher is to place a greater emphasis on young First Nations women, their generation and the generations to follow. Research that implements an intergenerational component to gain understanding of health in First Nations communities in somewhat Canada is limited. This statement does not include the numerous works that deal with the realities of intergenerational trauma, nor does it intend to

detract from the impact of such writings. It is, however, important to comprehend the sustained effects of colonization and the influence historical trauma contributes to the exchange between generations of First Nations women. Intergenerational trauma “extends beyond the life of the individual who has experienced the brunt of colonization” (Frideres, 2008, p. 319) and as a result, it is crucial that this remain principle in further discussion. As a product of colonization, intergenerational trauma is a subject that must be handled with extreme compassion. Although this is not the focus of this particular thesis, it must however, be acknowledged as an enduring facet of Canada’s past, present and future. The transformations that occur through time are of particular interest within this thesis, hence the emphasis on an intergenerational approach. As stated earlier, the number of works that document intergenerational exchange between First Nations women, or implement an intergenerational approach for that matter, is scarce. Much of the completed writings encompass a broader geographical range as they highlight the lives of Native American women from the United States. There is, however, one work in particular, highlighting the lives of three Inuit women in Canada, which requires recognition. It, to a certain degree, parallels the current project. Each are distinct in their own right, but both look to gain a greater understanding of the intergenerational conflict and connection

Nancy Wachowich documents the lives and experiences of three Inuit women of Nunavut—a grandmother, mother and daughter—through the lure and intimacy of life histories. The transformations between each generation are documented through a series of rich, well detailed stories that ultimately highlight the shifting of lifeways. This alteration is heavily associated with the colonization of the land and its people. The life histories of these three generations of Inuit women have adapted to the rapid changes in their culture. The eldest of the women, Apphia Agalakti Awa, is able to recollect the traditional lifeways that, at one point in

time, were integral to their survival. Her memories are vivid. Her eagerness to express the significance of these stories and the knowledge enmeshed within them is a gift to both her daughter and granddaughter. Apphia's daughter, Rhoda, represents a link to both the past and present ways of life. She was raised in a period of transition. Two distinct cultures and the tensions which reside between these two cultures impacted her in various ways. The continuous push and pull was a struggle. Rhoda was brought up in a time where she still lived on the land, but at the same time, she was expected to attend school, where ultimately, Inuit children were being taught to become more *Quallnaat*. As Rhoda negotiates the landscape of modern Inuit lifestyle, she yearns to acquire the knowledge of her culture. She understands the importance of reclaiming her culture. Rhoda can also recognize the predicament that her daughter and the generations to follow may face. Sandra contends with a reality that many other young Aboriginal people face. The lure of material modernity and the dangers of substance abuse is a threat to cultural continuity. Wachowich has compiled a series of life histories that document the changing in lifeways that have significantly impacted the lives of these three women in differing ways. This is an importance piece of Canadian literature. It highlights the devastating effects of colonization but at the same time, celebrates a cultures tradition through the use of oral history.

In Living Through the Generations; Continuity and Change in Navajo Women's Lives (2007), Joanne McCloskey also looks at the effects of colonization and the effects on a culture. McCloskey investigates the changes in which Navajo women of Crownpoint, New Mexico have suffered, but who have also overcome such life course transitions to allow for the maintenance of cultural identity and tradition. She asserts that:

The incursions of Western society seen in Crownpoint tell only part of the story of Navajo women. The other part lies within resourceful individual women who act from a

position of strength as they develop cultural strategies to negotiate pathways in a bicultural world. (p. 25)

To explore the story of Navajo women in its entirety, McCloskey provides a well documented ethnography of the lives of Navajo women in Crownpoint. During her extensive time spent within in the community, McCloskey focuses largely on the changing lives of these women. In doing so, she references their familial lineage, their attitude and beliefs surrounding motherhood, and the preserved cultural strategies, traditions and identity which ground the intersecting historical, social, political and economic lines of reverberation (McCloskey). She states that “the historical forces in the form of modernization, colonialism, and capitalism form an inescapable power differential between the Navajo people and Western people to produce inequalities in lifestyle” (p. 53). She continues by asserting that “Crownpoint area women will be seen to forge a lifestyle that builds upon cultural and historical legacy of multiple influences yet manages to sustain a Navajo identity” (p. 53). McCloskey widens the breadth of intergenerational cultural translation as she narrates the lives of numerous women, and not just women from one, singular family. Although McCloskey’s diligence to capture the female Navajo experience is appreciated, one may question what is lost in casting such a wide net. For example, can the cultural intricacies and historical legacies described by McCloskey as one main contributor to the complex yet preserved Navajo identity, be thoroughly examined through such a far reaching lens? Denetdale (2009), however, implies that McCloskey’s chosen methods enable her to adequately “map the continuity of tradition” (p. 289). The difference in breadth, in this particular instance, comes down to two very similar, seemingly indistinguishable terms. McCloskey provides an understanding of how Navajo culture is translated *among* women, rather than what is translated *between* them. Although some may not immediately recognize the difference between the two concepts, the difference is significant. Providing a perspective that encapsulates the ways by

which culture is translated *among* Navajo women captures a perspective that is superficial when compared to what may be uncovered when explorations of cultural continuity and erosion that occurs *between* generations of Navajo women. Explorations occurring *between* generations of women, rather than *among* generations of women are seemingly more intimate, thus allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of cultural knowledge between generations of women. McCloskey successfully “articulates the juxtaposition of Navajo cultural change and continuity” (Dalla, 2008, p. 86), but because she has chosen to narrate the lives of numerous women who encompass three categorical generations, there is difficulty accepting the level of engagement between these “generations” and again question whether investigations *through* generations are enough?

Louise Lamphere highlights the interconnecting threads of cultural knowledge between three generations of women in a Navajo family. In her text, *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family* (2007), Lamphere investigates the vibrancy and strength of Navajo life while documenting both the areas of connect and disconnect that have come to shape the lives of Navajo women today (Lamphere, 2007). Originally, Lamphere had intended to merely narrate the life of one Navajo elder, Eva Price. Because Eva spoke so candidly about providing her children and grandchildren with the knowledge needed to maintain cultural vibrancy, Lamphere decided to extend her story to include Eva's daughter and granddaughter to accommodate the interest from Eva, and also facilitate Lamphere's research goals which included producing a “book that presented the voices of the women themselves, but placed them within the context of the larger American society ...” (p. 3).

Jennifer Denetdale (2009) simultaneously reviews Lamphere's and McCloskey's texts. Denetdale is direct when writing about the lives and cultures of Indigenous peoples, as seen here:

Both studies do indicate responses to Native peoples' sustained criticism that research and publication have been mostly another form of colonization. A prevailing response has been to present sympathetic portrayals of the people being studied and to illustrate how Native people have agency by showing the persistence of their traditional ways. (p. 291)

Both McCloskey and Lamphere adequately and sympathetically detail the persistence Indigenous women have to ensure the vibrancy of their culture remains while simultaneously highlighting areas of transformation. In detailing the areas of transformation within the lives of the Navajo women, the authors also allude to both the emerging and enduring identity of the Aboriginal women and the role identity contributes to the continuance of culture and tradition. As stated earlier, the concept of identity and its importance within the current project will be explored in detail through the use of theory.

Conclusion

Although authors like McCloskey and Lamphere make significant contributions to the field, a distinct gap remains. There is an insufficient amount of research that incorporates intergenerational approaches, especially within a Canadian context. Wachowich's piece certainly lessens the gap. However, additional research is required that explores the significance of cultural activities and those which relate to food procurement and preparation as well as the exchange of such knowledge between generations. These exchanges encompass not only the transmission of culturally relevant knowledge, but provide women with the opportunity to interact with each other and strengthen familial kinship. Qualitative writings that embrace participative modes of research allows one to delve into the complexities of such relationships but also facilitates the inquiry of points of transition, stability and discourse that are required to garner further understanding of the importance of intergenerational exchange and how this

exchange may foster cultural resilience within a First Nations community. Recently, the Regional Health Survey (2011) found that “more than 60% of First Nations adults reported ‘family values’ as a positive asset of their community, followed by ‘elders’ with more than 40%, and ‘traditional activities’ (38%)” (p. 24). When considering the strengths of First Nations communities “no other component of strength received more than a third of positive answers” (p. 24). Responses reveal the importance First Nations people place on family, the contribution of Elders and how these elements combine to facilitate the persistence of traditional activities. The proposed writing aims to address these elements, and more, by documenting the exchange between three generations of First Nations women. In addition to this, the roles or identity of these women will be explored to determine its effects on the dissemination of culturally relevant information (around the processing and preparation of traditional, land based foods) occurring in socially rich domains as the teepee. In doing so, literature that adapts intergenerational components in research gains a Canadian perspective. And, moreover, gains the voice and experiences of First Nations women.

Theory

The Aboriginal peoples of Canada have endured, and continue to endure, the unfortunate legacies of the colonial reign. The sustained violence of colonialism creates unequal power struggles that penetrate numerous avenues of the Indigenous persons' world. This influence is also seen in the realm of academia where Indigenous peoples are so often subjects of (subjected to) study. Historically, colonial influences perpetuate through the completion of research, data collection and writings that document the lives and cultures of Indigenous peoples around the world. Only recently have writings incorporated the voice and experience of Indigenous peoples. This paper aims to do just that. The proposed writing aims to address these elements, and more, by documenting the exchange between three generations of First Nations women. In addition to this, the roles or identity of these women will be explored to determine its effects on the dissemination of culturally relevant information occurring in socially rich domains as the teepee. The exchange between these women will be considered through a postcolonial lens and will be further discussed employing subaltern, hybrid theories. In addition, concepts relating to the modernity/coloniality project will be utilized to understand the culture, intersubjective relations and the knowledge production pertinent within this project (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

This chapter will begin with an overview of postcolonial theory and will then delve further into the extensions of postcolonial theory. Prior to doing so however, it is essential to provide a brief historical review to set the context for following discussion. Echoing James Frideres, Kelm (1998) describes the process of colonization as one that includes “geographical incursion, sociocultural dislocation, the establishment of external political control and economic dispossession ... and, finally, the creation of ideological formulations around race and skin colour which position the colonizers at a higher evolutionary level than the colonized” (p. xviii). Kelm

continues to note that processes of colonization are “diffuse, dialectical and subject to competing positions both from within the society of the colonizers and from the colonized” (p. xviii). It is important to grasp that colonization was a unique process for First Nations across Canada.

Although the process of colonization is nuanced it does not detract from the inherently violent and dehumanizing experience collectively endured by the First Nations peoples of Canada. The violent, and apparently justified grasp associated with colonialism continues to resonate with many of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. The correlation between oppressive colonial processes has sustained trauma but also a fixed identity of the First Nations individual. Francis (1992) points to how this image of the “Indian” was established and how it continues to persist and perpetuate through current histories:

The ‘White Way’ was superior because it challenged and conquered nature. As described by the missionaries, Natives were slaves to their environment, roaming aimlessly across the Plains in pursuit of game, worshipping gods which inhabited the wind and the trees. Because they did nothing with the resources of the land—built no cities, tilled no fields, and dug no mines—Indians *deserved* to be superseded by a civilization that recognized the potential for material progress. (p. 52)

Francis continues to note that “the Indian was being given an opportunity to join a superior civilization. Those who did not take it were doomed to ultimate extinction by their own inexplicable attachment to an inferior, obsolete way of life” (Francis, p. 53). The distorted methods of the colonizer, the forceful coercion to live superiorly, have produced and continues to reproduce a very specific identity—one whose existence is bound within culture, gender, language, power, amongst other social engagements—and is also wholly reminiscent of the colonial legacy.

Burton (1999) has emphasized the permeability of colonialism, as well as “its characteristically unfinished condition” (p. 2). In doing so, however, she does not “intend to

suggest that its operations are not also violent, repressive, and even successful in some domains” (p. 2). Rather, Burton has stated the importance of producing works that “challenge the enduring fictions of colonial modernity itself ... fixing, with absolute authority, the social and cultural conditions out of which citizens and subjects could make and remake their relationships to the state and civil society” (p. 2). It is with anticipation that this thesis will too challenge the fictions of colonial modernity. In addition, this writing will:

operate from the assumption that modern colonial regimes are never self-evidently hegemonic, but are always in process, subject to disruption and contest, and therefore never fully or finally accomplished, to such an extent that they must be conceived of as ‘unfinished business’. It also presumes that the gendered and sexualized social orders produced by such regimes are equally precarious, and hence offer unique opportunities to see the incompleteness of colonial modernities at work. (Burton, p. 1)

By situating First Nations women as the foci of the given research allows for the opportunity to analyze discourse associated with colonial modernities. Furthermore, by utilizing an intergenerational approach, the colonial modernities that have effected each of the three generations of women may be analyzed as to their changing and continuing impacts within First Nations communities. Guided by theory, this approach will foster a greater understanding of the translations through time and history that come to affect the way in which young First Nations women receive traditional knowledge and how Elders communicate and teach these traditions to younger generations. However, there are a variety of factors that affect how this knowledge is presented and received. Outlining a few crucial tenants of postcolonial theory will provide greater detail of the mitigating factors influencing knowledge exchange between the three generations of First Nations women. These factors will be discussed below. But prior to doing that, a brief outline of the theory is provided to situate its importance within this project.

Postcolonial Theory

Colonialism is a complex and multivalent paradigm and because of these varied understandings, the term “postcolonial” also tends to be rather complicated (Loomba, 2005). According to Brydon (2000), the term “postcolonial” was first employed in the 1960’s and 70’s “to designate the period following the extensive post-war decolonizations” and, in the 80’s, gained wider appropriations “associated with resisting and understanding of colonialism” (p. 1). Since then, a shift in focus has occurred. Postcolonialism has, for Young, “come to name a certain kind of interdisciplinary political, theoretical and historical academic work that sets out to serve as a transnational forum for studies grounded in the historical context of colonialism” (1998, p. 4). To elaborate upon this notion, Loomba (2005) speaks to the articulations of postcolonialism that is, its need to be situated alongside economic, social, cultural, as well as historical factors, and is therefore practiced differently in various parts of the globe. It is important to reflect upon how these factors have been reproduced within the Canadian context, and how they pertain to the identity formation of, in this instance, First Nations women. Although the commencement of “postcolonial”, its past direction, as well as its inherent multiplicity may be debated, Brydon (2000) has assured that we should, and “can identify postcolonialism as an emergent twentieth century critical practice that reached full definition in the last two decades of the twentieth century, and now promises to be remembered as one of its major movements” (p. 2). A transition that is more than welcomed: “postcolonialism matters because decolonization is far from complete and colonial mentalities, including the inequities they nurture, die hard” (Brydon, p. 2).

Extensive debates within the literature persist regarding the use of term ‘postcolonial’. Nicholls and Giles (2007) have stated that “postcolonialism signifies that colonialism has

somehow ended, when it remains all too clear that damaging remnants of the colonial rule continue to persist long after independence” (p. 60). Taking a more poignant stance, Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008) have gone so far as to state that “there is no postcolonial, only endless variation on the present (and the past)” (p. 22). These fluctuations, according to Loomba (2005), only further complicate the meaning of postcolonial. She has further stated that:

The age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once colonised peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial. And yet the term has been fiercely contested on many counts. To begin with, the prefix ‘post’ complicates matters because it implies an ‘aftermath’ in two senses—temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. (p. 7)

Although Loomba posits a very sound argument it is however, important to recognize and respect the very repercussion of colonialism. By doing so, we attempt to move beyond the uneasiness of this debate to allow for positive transitions with the literature, academia, and most importantly, for the peoples who were and are most affected by colonial oppression. Brydon (2005) has stated that “while not always agreeing that colonialism is ended, postcolonial theory attempts to create that satisfactory analysis” (p. 2). This research will attempt to offer a work that contributes to the decolonizing project.

At this point it is important that I address this notion of decolonization. Loomba (2005) has suggested that just as the colonial process has affected both the ‘metropolis’ and the ‘colony’, they too have been restructured by decolonization. She is quick to state that “this does not mean that they are postcolonial in the same way” (p. 19). Therefore, to impose a single understanding of decolonisation would in fact erase the differences within that term. In this view, there is a productive tension between the temporal and the critical dimensions of the word

postcolonial, but postcoloniality is not, as Hulme points out, simply a ‘merit badge’ that can be worn at will. Thus, the word ‘postcolonial’ is useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe. But if it is uprooted from specific locations, ‘postcoloniality’ cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination that it seeks to uncover (Loomba, p. 19).

Postcolonial theory is valuable in that it “allows for a point of reflection about the power and dominance embedded in colonial legacies through which those who have been ‘colonized’ can challenge the ‘colonizer’” (Nicholls & Giles, 2007, p. 59). From this colonial discourse analysis is derived, which according to Parry (2002), is considered to be the “precursor to the more extensive postcolonial discussion” (p. 67). To bring this particular discussion within today’s understanding of colonialism, as well as the uses of postcolonial theory Loomba situates postcolonial studies within two broad, yet overlapping contexts:

The first is the history of decolonization itself. Intellectuals and activists who fought against colonial rule, and their successors who now engage with its continuing legacy, challenged and revised dominant definitions of race, culture, language and class in the process of making their voices heard. The second context is the revolution, within ‘Western’ intellectual traditions, in thinking about some of the same issues—language and how it articulates experience, how ideologies work, how human subjectivities are formed, and what we might mean by culture. These two revolutions are sometimes counterpoised to one another, but it is impossible to understand the current debates in postcolonial studies (whether or not we approve of them) without making the connections between them. (p. 20)

The current research project will aim to bridge connections between these two significant contexts. It is insufficient to merely acknowledge the legacies of colonization. The need to critically examine the lasting effects of colonialism in contemporary societies through theories of coloniality is an important exercise. In so doing, hegemonic knowledge systems are challenged.

The intergenerational approach utilized within this project seeks to connect and contrarily unveil the divisions between generations. This approach aims to challenge methodologies that further colonize knowledge and by embracing methodologies that unearth the “philosophical conundrum of modernity/coloniality” (Mignolo, p. 450, 2007) while exposing the structures that continue to colonize not only knowledge, but the being as well (Mignolo). Furthermore, the intergenerational approach echoes the previously mentioned statement made above by Loomba; she believes that it is almost impossible to understand the current debates within postcolonial studies without making the connections between opposing dialogues. It is even more crucial to understand the connections between the three generations of First Nations women. And with that, to also understand how these connections and/or divisions produce or reproduce the colonial difference and identities perpetuated through processes of exchange. To help understand the role identity construction plays within this project, a series of concepts and theories will be employed to recognize the relationship between identity and the dissemination of culturally rich knowledge between generations of First Nations women. It will also be important to discuss how these theories, especially those which highlight the coloniality/modernity debate and concepts of hybridity, shed light on the importance identity and perhaps even the identity of the family that contribute to the ongoing exchange between generations.

Drawing from Postcolonial Theorists

A commonly accepted inaugural moment in the field of postcolonial studies was the publication of Edward Said’s (1978) *Orientalism*. This piece highlighted “the extent to which ‘knowledge’ about ‘the Orient’ as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial ‘power’” (Loomba, 2005, p. 43). Said’s operational usage of

Foucauldian insight is clear. As stated earlier, Said's *Orientalism* was exemplary in the formation of colonial discourse. According to Loomba, this sort of colonial discourse analysis "makes it possible to trace connections between the visible and the hidden, the dominant and the marginalised, ideas and institutions. It allows us to see how power works through language, literature, culture and the institutions which regulate our daily lives" (p. 47). Incorporating themes of power and how they penetrate through all aspects of life, including daily living is crucial in the understanding of how power operates within the larger context of a family and furthermore, a First Nations community. The contemporary reality of a First Nation community is in constant conflict with the past, producing a unique power struggle that is certainly worth analyzing. Employing an intergenerational approach will shed light on how the various generations cope with the conflicts of reality and power struggles. Analyses as such also offer the opportunity to sketch alterations and connections from one generation to the next to gain a greater understanding of the colonial processes at play within the community today.

Orientalism has been regarded as "a powerful text that articulated the linkages between Western knowledge about third world societies and the historical processes of colonialism and imperialism that underlay them" (Krishna, 2009 p. 80). However influential or foundational, Said's *Orientalism* was not without its critics. Loomba (2005) has suggested that one of the most frequent charges against Said was the fact that he has ignored the self representations of the colonised, therefore focusing on the imposition of power, rather than the resistive forces against the colonial reign. Furthermore, claims against Said's ability to homogenize the experiences of the colonizer and the colonized remain (Loomba). Subaltern theorist, Homi Bhabha (1983) asserted that, in doing so, Said promotes a static model of colonial relations in which colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the colonizer, leaving no room for negotiation or

change (Loomba, 2005). Interestingly enough, the very intellectual forces that had propelled *Orientalism* also popularized the field of subaltern studies. Concepts introduced by Bhabha and Spivak will be used to inform analysis as well as the women's perceived identity, role and participation within the community itself and within the space of the teepee. Prior to doing so, however, a brief introduction to subaltern study is necessary.

Ranajit Guha is credited largely with the widespread use of subaltern terminology in postcolonial studies. The term "subaltern" was, however, commonly employed by Gramsci to refer to the lowermost classes (Krishna, 2009). In its original context, subaltern is representative of an inferior ranking, and has its origins within military confines. Guha, however, has equated the term with the people (Krishna). Furthermore, Guha has stressed that it refers to the "demographic difference between the total Indian population and all of those whom have described as elite" (Guha, 1988, p. 44). "Such a definition asks us to re-view colonial dichotomies; it shifts the crucial social divide from that between colonial and anticolonial to that between 'elite' and 'subaltern'" (Loomba, 2005, p. 199). According to Guha (1982), the elites were made up of the dominant groups, both foreign and Indigenous, and comprised of such individuals as officials, industrialists, and missionaries. These elites dominated the writing of Indian history and fostered colonialist elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism; a notion that too may be transferred to a Canadian context. The current writing aligns with community-based protocols for research and therefore seeks to embrace the voice of the community, in this case, the voice of the First Nations woman. Allowing the voice of the subaltern offers a counterpoint to writings of the "Other" while simultaneously challenging the 'his-stories' of the past. By embracing the voice of these women the potential exists to recover and reclaim the voice of the subaltern.

Writings that consider the colonized female have come to find a prominent place within postcolonial theory, partially due to Spivak's heavily referenced piece, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In this particular text she investigates the absence of women's voices and contributes this disparity to be emblematic of the violence of colonialism and patriarchy (Loomba, 2005). Spivak, working from a Marxian and Derridean foci offers, in this context, a politics of deconstruction. She strives to expose the contradictions and silences of hegemonic discourses, by highlighting the absences around which they occur. All the while without claiming a transcendent stance that escapes an individual's own participation within the structures of domination (Krishna, 2009). How then, can we employ this politics of deconstruction? By looking to the hegemonic discourses that pertain to identity formation, I can, perhaps shed new light as to the motivation of such particular creations of the self. If the voice of the subaltern cannot be recovered, by then what means can the subaltern "speak"? Can the subaltern speak, so to say, through the embodiment of specific identities, however authentic, or imagined, they may be?

Identity & Coloniality

Kirmayer, Brass and Tait (2000) believe that "all cultures constantly evolve and cultural and ethnic identity must be understood as inventions of contemporary people responding to their current situation" (p. 611). But for the First Nations person, the ability to evolve is a concept that treads along a set of complex intersections. The identity of First Nations is, in part, been groomed by the ongoing process of colonization. This process has created an identity, which within the eyes of their non-Aboriginal, Canadian counterpart, is not only stagnant but bound within an essentializing discourse. Kirmayer et al. state that "the resulting discourse on

Aboriginality circulates within the wider society... and creates commonly accepted social facts about ethnic identity and tradition” (p. 611). The discourse surrounding First Nations identity is one that is also heavily imagined and thoroughly romanticized.

Loomba has asserted that “if the nation is an imagined community, the imagining is profoundly gendered” (p. 180). Gender and sexuality, according to Loomba, are “central to the conceptualisation, expression and enactment of colonial relations” (p. 180). The colonial oppression has produced and reproduced a very specific Aboriginal identity, one that is also heavily gendered. “Pocahontas is the paragon Indian Princess” (Guthrie Valaskakis, 1999, p. 121); her image is one that has been continually idealized as what *the* Indian women should embody (Guthrie Valaskakis). The persistent portrayal of the Indian Princess was constructed to accommodate colonial experience, Western expansion, and national formations. Green (1975) refers to this iconographic representation as the ‘*Pocahontas Perplex*’ (Guthrie Valaskakis). Furthermore, Green (1975) has asserted that Pocahontas, as a “model for the national understanding of Indian women, her significance, is undeniable” (p. 701). If we assume that this particular representation is significant, does it connote notions of power? Or does this image lack power as it submits to the hegemonic notions of what it is to “be” an Indian woman? Francis (1992) highlights the Indian image as it struggles between the lines of fantasy and reality:

Canadians did not expect Indians to adapt to the modern world. Their only hope was to assimilate, to become White, to cease to be Indians. In this view, a modern Indian is a contradiction in terms: Whites could not imagine such a thing. Any Indian was by definition a traditional Indian, a relic of the past. The only image of the Indian presented to non-Natives was therefore an historical one. The image could not be modernized. Indians were defined in relation to the past and in contradistinction to White society. To the degree that they changed, they were perceived to become less Indian. (p 59)

Francis speaks to the historicised image of the Indian and its persistent, perhaps inescapable discourse. Here, it is of interest to consider Stuart Hall's politics of identity and its relation within the post-structural study. Hall (1990) has stated that, 'identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact . . . we should think, instead, of identity as a production, which is never complete, always in process' (p. 222). If identity is always in process, and process assumes progress, then why is it that the identities of Aboriginal women suggest otherwise? Guthrie Valaskakis (1999) has asserted that the "social imaginaries of historicised and romanticized Indian women were appropriated and propagated to accommodate the growth of immigration and industry" (p. 125). Because these images were associated with the concept of growth and were, in a sense, fashionable, situates these images within the inherent duality of such cultural representations. Here, I believe, it is of interest to consider Homi Bhabha's definition of culture:

Culture, for him, is the manifestation of the effort of the split self of the colonized to render themselves whole through aesthetic practices. Culture and aesthetic practices, then, are products of interdicted desire, and by their very nature, bound to the different and irreconcilable with domination. (Krishna, 2009, pp. 92-93)

Bhabha's ideology of culture highlights the clash between sovereignty and subjugation, of modernity and convention. What binary, then, does a First Nations female entice? How have such previously described transitions come to affect the identity of First Nations women? Perhaps, First Nations women, in particular the younger generations of women, occupy yet another space. This space is representative of the concept of 'hybridity':

According to Bhabha, hybridity is a third space that is neither one nor the other because the translation or encounter between the different cultural forms occurs in a context where both these spaces are already preoccupied. Translation, or attempted domination,

or colonialism, thus always carries with it the possibility that the ‘original’ is subverted, rendered inauthentic, and followed in form but altered in content. (Krishna, 2009, p. 95) This process of translation is one that occurs and endlessly reoccurs; where the negotiation of authority and its supposed supplicants, is simply unattainable (Krishna). Moreover, Bhabha describes the process of translation as:

The opening up of another contentious political and cultural site at the heart of colonial representation. Here the word of divine authority is deeply flawed by the assertion of the indigenous sign, and in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid ... The incalculable colonized subject ... produces an unresolvable problem of cultural difference for the very address of colonial cultural authority. (p. 33-34)

Bhabha’s concept of hybridity enables us to discover the unstable structures, reminiscent of neither the past, nor the present, which coalesce to form the basis of an individual’s identity. Bhabha’s concept provides understanding in the ways in which identity is produced and reproduced in the lives of the contemporary First Nations. Canada’s darker periods of history which were rooted in colonization forever changed the ways in which identity is negotiated. The residential school system was a vehicle designed to ‘kill the Indian in the child’ (Milloy, 1999). The level of shame and guilt superimposed on these children over their cultural identity has vastly altered the cultural identity of First Nations people today. The outright assault on the identity of First Nations peoples continues to this day. The implications are often “reflected in the endemic mental health problems of many Aboriginal communities and populations across Canada” (Kirmayer, Brass & Tait, 2000, p. 609). Clearly, the link between identity, cultural continuity and wellness is far too concrete to ignore.

For many First Nations people, the value of locally procured foods is immense and the connections between food and identity run deep. Searles (2002) has worked with the Inuit of the

Canadian Arctic to explore how the Inuit use traditional and market foods to express their person and collective identity. Searles suggests that:

For the Inuit of Nunavut, identity is both the negotiation of sameness and the accentuation of difference, and it has both macrosociological and microsocial dimensions. As a macrosociological process, identity building involves building a powerful place for Inuit culture and tradition in contemporary Canada, especially as Arctic communities like Iqaluit become dominated by Qallunaat institutions. As a microsocial process, it involves making Inuit identity personally meaningful and relevant in everyday life. This is a complicated process, and one way in which Inuit do this is through eating and sharing different kinds of foods. The classification of different foods into ethnic categories is one of the foundations of this process, as are the structuring of different meals, and the exchange of different foods, including both locally produced foods and mass-produced commodities. It is through these processes that Inuit make their everyday actions meaningful and symbolic of cultural differences. In this way, Inuit experience modernity by renewing and revitalizing tradition. (p. 73-74)

As Searles indicates, the process of negotiating ones identity in a bicultural landscape is a difficult process. He does, however, suggest that many Inuit find a sense of comfort through participating in culturally significant activities and enjoying locally procured foods. This is an important concept within this research and it will be explored among the three generations of women. The variations among the generations will highlight how women of different generations experience modernity and how culturally significant activities and foods factor within this discourse.

Conclusion

The cultural exchanges between the three generations of First Nations women are experiences worthy of theoretical scrutiny. I began this section by discussing the emergence of postcolonial theory. I feel it is important to comprehend where concepts evolve, so that we can

better understand how these theories are employed today and within this particular context. Postcolonial theory has bred complementary, albeit alternative concepts which find place within this thesis. Concepts which are enmeshed within the decolonizing project highlight tensions between the generations of women and bring further understanding to how colonial legacies continue to affect First Nations communities. The discursive relationship between the women, whether tenuous or supportive, and how these relationships effect culturally significant exchanges, benefit from the application of such theories. In doing so, relevant fields of interest will ascertain an understanding of how the dissemination of local cultural practices are affected when accommodation to the contemporary cultural landscape remains such a force.

Methodology

An ethnographical, community-based approach was employed when working with women in Kasabonika Lake First Nation. The approach facilitated the exploration and subsequent analyses of the interactions and exchange between three generations of First Nations women. The use of a community-based ethnography in conjunction with the implementation of participant observation provides a comprehensive, yet sensitive portrayal of the relationships and exchanges required to facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge between the three generations of First Nation women. Jeanne Simonelli and Lupita McClanahan (2008) neatly summarize the sentiments that have been associated with the “mainstream” research process:

Anthropologists go into the field to learn about relationships, to live in the physical and spiritual fabric of someone’s life. In the past, when the research was over, we just left, returning to our homes and lives. The months we spent away were contained in small spiral notebooks filled with scribbled thoughts and observations ... [But] we have come to realize that learning is an exchange; fieldwork is an ongoing commitment. Surrounded by familiar trappings of our own lives, we realize we have been changed by the experience, as have our partners and colleagues in the communities we seek to understand ... The legacy of this experience called fieldwork is change—both subtle and obvious—for everyone involved. Its challenge is not just to see and know other people, but to juggle a meaningful balance, learning from the reflecting pool of each other’s realities, to gain a fuller understanding of what it is to be human. (p. 121-123)

That is what this research intends to do. The current project highlights the interactions between three generations of women; interactions that have the power to foster kinship and while embracing culture in the hopes of reinforcing a sense of belonging and reclaiming an identity bound within a resurging culture. This passage also captures the tensions that reside between “traditional” methodologies, like that of ethnography, and participatory methodologies like community-based research. Adhering to a community based, ethnographic approach allowed for

the exploration of both the subtle changes and broader scale transitions. Prior to delving into the specificities of the chosen methodologies, I want to discuss qualitative research on a whole and how qualitative research may be used to describe the sociocultural context required to garner a formative understanding required to successfully influence application (Gittelsohn, et al. 1996).

Qualitative research, as Creswell (1998) has stated, is an “intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of material. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general frameworks hold qualitative research together” (p. 13). In this particular instance, the community-based, ethnographic research design, as one single thread, has the ability to create connections throughout this entire research project. The notion of connections and of course its antagonist, is a central component within this research. Creswell’s conceptualization of qualitative research is, in this regard, quite fitting. A single thread, on its own, provides little strength. But when woven together with other threads, collectively produces strength. I think back to the women of whom I had the opportunity to learn from. Although they are individually unique in their own right, when they come together as a family, an unforgettable vitality emanates. Their reliance upon each other stems from the yearning for nourishment and warmth, and ultimately, for strength. Their cohesiveness as a family and their collectiveness as a community are analogous with this woven fabric. The individual women, the families, the community, each their own thread, combine to create a harmonious, yet at times, complex and multifaceted fabric. My chosen methodology and methods will coalesce to produce a collective strength. The chosen methods will allow me to investigate and also appreciate the complex weave that makeup the lives of these First Nations women (McCloskey, 2007).

Anthropology, and in the broader instance, qualitative research have a deeply rooted history within the traditional, Western research paradigm. In its earliest stages, qualitative research was largely positivistic in manner. As Kovach (2009) states, “most prominently, ethnographical research design was employed as qualitative ‘objective’ studies of the ‘other’” (p. 27). Furthermore, ethnographies of the ‘other’ were synonymous with the typical exploitative depictions of the ‘exotic’ Indigenous culture (Kovach). Although I will be strongly aligned within traditional ethnographical approaches, I do not intend to be “typical” by any means. My methodological goal is to strike a balance between the traditional and more progressive, contemporary research approaches.

Community-Based Research

As part of the decolonizing project occurring within the “traditional”, Western research paradigm, community-based research has emerged as a means to provide not only a counterpoint to ethnocentric research approaches, but to “ensure that research with [First Nations] peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic, and useful” (Smith, 1999, p. 9). Community-based research is “a methodology found within the transformative paradigm, [that] has qualitative approaches, offering a research theory, method, and action for giving back to a community through research as praxis” (Kovach, 2009, p. 27). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) have stated that research is entering the seventh movement of qualitative research. Within this particular movement, the inclusivity of voices is a tangible effect, and one that is of importance and relevance within this particular project (Kovach, 2009). Valuing the voice and experience of First Nations women is the driving force that guides the given research.

The Centre for Community Based Research (2010) maintain that community-based research be community situated, collaborative, action oriented, and contribute to positive social change. In recent years, trends in academia have led to the incorporation of research that is performed “with” and “for” First Nations peoples, rather than research done “on” First Nations peoples (Smith, 1999). A shift within the dominant research paradigm is certainly welcomed and ultimately crucial within this particular context. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) have produced *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People* that assist institutions and researchers in conducting ethical, yet culturally sensitive research with Aboriginal peoples. This position promotes a positive shift. Within these guidelines, the CIHR (2007) have stated that “research in Aboriginal communities should give way to an understanding that Aboriginal people have an inherent right to be agents of research in contrast to mere passive subjects when the research topic involves their community or culture” (p. 19). Involvement, participation and guidance from each of these women and from the community as a whole is simply one thread contributing to the overall fabric—the general framework—of this given project.

Community-based research or participatory action research as it is often referred to, “seeks to engage people and communities in all phases of research from the conceptualization of the research problem to the dissemination of the results” (Fletcher, 2003, p. 32). In addition, community-based research “is about relationship building between diverse communities, contributing to local self-sufficiency, and recognizing the inequities that exist between people and places” (Fletcher, p. 32). It is also important to consider not only the disparities between people and places, but also the connection between people and place; connection among community and member, connection between community member and myself. Adhering to a

community-based research design, I was able to maintain the concept of community and the relationship peoples have with the community; people are intrinsic to a community and vice versa. I approached this research as an opportunity to value the women, their experience, their culture, and of course, their voice.

Equity and equality of the particular voice must also be considered as this project highlights the narratives of First Nations women. “The inclusion of a gender perspective and the participation of [First Nations] women are viewed as essential, as is the participation of children and youth when deemed appropriate by the recognized community authorities” (CIHR, 2007, p. 20). Valuing women’s knowledge is representative, extremely valid, and speaks highly to the applicability of community-based approaches within this research endeavor; each participant has the opportunity to contribute to the research paradigm that will serve to foster sustainable health benefits and knowledge translation that flow, from generation to generation.

Many of the merits of community-based research have, to a certain extent, been discussed. Its application to a given research project is a merit in and of itself. It signifies a shift away from the dominant research paradigms. The fact that community-based research is gaining prominence within the field is attributable to its overall character. What makes community-based research particularly appealing however, are its roots within decolonization and the democratization process of Western research paradigms. Within this process, research is placed “in a much larger historical, political and cultural context and examines its critical nature within those dynamics” (Smith, 1999, p. 6). Proper appreciation of these constructs is mandatory, for any community-based research project as it allows a researcher to gain understanding of the participant’s past and present realities. Community-based research is “about relationship building between diverse communities, contributing to local self-sufficiency, and recognizing the

inequities that exist between people and places” (Fletcher, 2003, p. 32). Within this particular research endeavor, relationships were forged upon mutual appreciation and understanding, as well as collective efforts that foster community development and a perhaps a greater understanding of the implication of cultural erosion through the generations of First Nations women.

It is important to understand that the “people who conduct research in areas that touch on the lands and lives of First Nations peoples should be prepared to approach their work as a small piece of a much larger effort at community development and renewal” (Fletcher, 2003, p. 55). Renewal is an interesting term to use in this particular context. The term encompasses notions of the intergenerational component providing the frame for this study while also symbolizing the departure from traditional research paradigms. As it stands, community-based research enables researchers and communities to partner so that these types of efforts—these departures—may be recognized and furthermore, social change may be encouraged within the grander narrative. Community-based research has emerged as a deliberate form of resistance to traditional research practices that have typically been perceived as colonizing tools by research participants (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). According to Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008), research processes involving First Nations peoples should be decolonizing, criticizing and demystifying, while factoring in determinants that relate to a larger historical, political, cultural, and social agenda. Within this particular research project, these tenets are not only valued and appreciated for their legitimacy, but for their inherent complexities that must be considered when working with and for First Nations communities and community members. Employing a community-based approach allowed me to obtain an enhanced, intimate understanding of the interactions between three generations of First Nations. The community-

based approach guided the way in which I also conducted my ethnography and on a further note, my participation and engagement within the community.

Ethnography

Quite simply and perhaps quite arguably, “ethnography is the interpretation of cultures” (Clifford, 1988, p. 39). Traditionally, these interpretations were made based on the experiences and data collected from participant observation. Hence, participant observation maintains a particularly intimate relationship with ethnography. I speak here largely of ethnography as well. I feel the two concepts—ethnography and participant observation—have historically been enmeshed with one another. Robidoux (2001) elaborates on this notion by stating that an “ethnography is composed of two equal parts: the observation and collection of data, and the articulation of what has been observed or collected through written discourse” (p. 10). I will discuss in detail the concept of ethnography, which served the basis for the application of participant observation within the current research.

In this endeavour, participant observation constitutes the basis of inquiry, data collection and of interaction. For Clifford (1988), quite simply, participant observation often validates an efficient ethnography. He expands further by stating that participant observation “serves as shorthand for a continuous tacking between the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of events: on the one hand grasping the sense of specific occurrences and gestures empathetically, on the other stepping back to situate these meanings in wider contexts” (p. 34). Ultimately, he concludes by saying that when “understood literally, participant observation is a paradoxical, misleading formula, but it may be taken seriously if reformulated in hermeneutic terms as a dialectic of experience and interpretation” (p. 34). Although I may not be able to avoid the very contradictory characteristic

of the insider/outsider relationship—a relationship that is oftentimes produced within research endeavours as such—I do hope to avoid any sort of “misleading formula” in which Clifford details.

As previously mentioned, Clifford (1988) speaks to the reformation of ethnography. As a result of this critique, interpretative processes became a conduit for the “philosophical model of textual ‘reading’” (p. 38). This is what Geertz (1973) refers to as textualization. “It is the process through which unwritten behaviour, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual come to be marked as corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative act” (Clifford, 1988, p. 38). Although I appreciate the assemblage of meaningful interactions, I am fearful of perhaps unravelling a thread from such a delicate weave. I am apprehensive of binding the interactions, words, and behaviours of these women in written corpus. I am fearful that my interpretations will be considered assumptions. And with that, I ponder my role in the appropriation of the truth, of one’s behaviour and action. I obviously tow a fine line, but it is one line that I do not wish to blur. This is, after all, an “unavoidable outcome of what is intrinsically an interpretive process” (Robidoux, 2001, p. 10). I do, however, find comfort in Robidoux’s perception of ethnography and that it “can be best understood as the displacement of experience, which forces ethnographers to communicate the experience as it presently exists in their mind. The result is a unique blend of the reader’s imagination, the author’s imagination, and the initial experience studied” (p. 11). So how, then, do I contribute uniquely to the imaginative blend that is ethnography?

Because I do assert alliance with community-based research it is, therefore, of interest to explore the emergent modes of ethnographic authority. Clifford (1988) highlights these modes to align within postcolonial ethnographic representations that also maintain a discursive and

polyphonic tone. Moreover, one that embraces a critical perspective which ultimately fosters the metamorphosis of “traditional” ethnographies to those which seek to engage the participants to produce a body of knowledge for and with, rather than on, the *other*. By actively engaging participants within the ethnographic process, and vice versa, I am hopeful that the voices of the First Nations women involved permeate the pages to follow. I realize that in doing so I invite further reinterpretation but that I, more importantly, produce a writing that is intended not only for the “general reader” but for the women I am working with and for the larger First Nations community (Clifford). It is essential to fragment of monological authority, as Clifford states, “that ethnographies no longer address a single general type of reader. The multiplication of possible readings reflects the fact that ‘ethnographic’ consciousness can no longer be seen as a monopoly of certain Western cultures and social classes” (p. 52). As alluded to earlier, I welcome interpretation and the possibility of multiple readings of this very text. It is, simply, an inescapable facet when presenting an ethnography. And as Robidoux (2001) states:

The ethnography does not speak for its subjects of study, but contributes to an existing, imperfect, human dialogue. In contrast to an attempt to achieve closure, ethnography opens itself up to debate, contradiction, consent, and potential conflict. Therefore, the indeterminacy of ethnography is actually its strength: its contested meanings generate further dialogue, and in its imperfection and contradiction it is as close as possible to being an ‘accurate’ reflection of what is being studied. (p. 11)

But can we not obtain a more “accurate” picture? Can the subjects of study have a voice within the ethnography? A question, I am sure, that has plagued many anthropologists and ethnographers alike. However, Clifford notes that “current ethnographic writings are seeking new ways to represent adequately the authority of the informant” (p. 45). This sentiment spurs Clifford’s discussion on the emerging modes of writing ethnographies (Clifford). He speaks to the notion of plural authorship in which he does consider a sort of utopian ideal, but does assert

the existing signs of progress within the respective domain. Clifford states that “anthropologists will increasingly have to share their texts, and sometimes their title pages, with those [I]ndigenous collaborators for whom the term *informants* is no longer adequate, if it ever was” (p. 51). Perhaps by making this very simple distinction a more “accurate” picture may be obtained.

Indigenous Methodologies

A way in which researchers obtain an accurate picture of the realities of contemporary First Nations life is to function from a position that incorporates the values Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies may offer. There exists a need to complete research that is both relevant and useful (Kovach, 2005). A solution to this may be found through the use of Indigenous methodologies.

Emancipatory methodologies were introduced as a direct insult to the Western, positivistic tradition of research that held captive the knowledge of Indigenous communities and people for far too long. Kovach (2005) states that “the overwhelming presence of positivism in knowledge production, coupled with emerging questions about the exploitative nature of research, created the opportunity to challenge the established research paradigm” (p. 22). A research mode that has developed from this shift was participatory research. “The critical, collective and participatory principles of participatory research has made it a popular methodology for many Indigenous projects in Canada” (Kovach, p. 23). However, Kovach, along with other Indigenous researchers have made distinctions on who is permitted to use such methodologies. These researchers (Kovach, 2009, 2005; Martin & Mirraboopa 2002; Atkinson 2001; Weber-Pillwax, 1999) believe that Indigenous methodologies best be used by those who

are Indigenous themselves. I tend to agree with these researchers. Indigenous methodologies stem from Indigenous epistemologies. To describe Indigenous epistemologies, I believe it is worthwhile to reference Kovach (2005) in great deal:

[Indigenous epistemologies] include a way of knowing that is fluid (Little Bear, 2000) and experiential, derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation... It is a knowledge that is both intuitive and quiet. Indigenous ways of knowing arise from interrelationships with the human world, the spirit, the inanimate entities of the ecosystem (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Indigenous ways of knowing encompass the spirit of collectivity, reciprocity and respect (Wilson, 2001)... Indigenous ways of knowing are organic with an emphasis on reciprocity and humour. These ways of knowing are both cerebral and heartfelt. (p. 27-28)

As a non-Indigenous researcher who does not obtain the indigenous ways of knowing that are core to the epistemology and methodology of such research, I have difficulty in employing an Indigenous methodology. There are however, Indigenous researchers who believe that Indigenous methodologies may be relevant and quite useful to those non-Indigenous researchers. Wilson (2007) describes a paradigm that may be used “by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets” (p. 193). Wilson refers to the idea of an *Indigenist* paradigm, rather than an *Indigenous* paradigm. This particular paradigm “should not be claimed to belong only to people of ‘Aboriginal’ heritage” (pp. 193-194). Wilson asserts that as long as an Indigenist paradigm is employed, Indigenous knowledge will be produced. He continues to state that:

This knowledge cannot be advanced from a mainstream paradigm. That would simply be mainstream knowledge about Indigenous peoples or topics ... It is then the choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy, or world view that makes research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher. (p. 194)

Although I appreciate both the perspective of Wilson (2007) and Kovach (2005) I feel that it is most appropriate that within my research, that I allow my methodologies to be shaped and

guided by Indigenous methodologies and the core principles that render them so valuable.

Kovach (2005) outlines three key themes of Indigenous methodologies. One of these themes is what she describes as “the relational”:

It honours the cultural value of relationships, it emphasizes people’s ability to shape and change their own destiny, and it is respectful. By relationship, I mean a sincere, authentic investment in the community; the ability to take time to visit with people from the community (whether or not they are research participants); the ability to be humble about the goals; and conversations at the start about who owns the research, its use and purpose. (p. 30)

The current project documents the relationships between three generations of First Nations women. The relational theme that encompasses an Indigenous methodology truly resonates with not only myself, but finds precedence within this project as it values respect through the building of relationships. Kovach (2005) concludes, stating that, “research, like life, is about relationships” (p. 30). I could not agree with her more.

Conclusion

By using participant observation in combination with an ethnographic approach, I will obtain a greater understanding of the discourses at play and of the ways in which traditional knowledge around food preparation is transferred from one generation of First Nations women to another. Maintaining ideals associated with community-based research will produce research that engages First Nations peoples yet seeks to reform mainstream research practices.

Methods

The current study is an extension of research completed by the Indigenous Health Research Group in Kasabonika Lake First Nation and Wapekeka First Nation. The research conducted by the group focuses largely on the benefits, risks and viability of traditional, land based diets in remote northern First Nations communities. This study focuses on Kasabonika Lake First Nation. Kasabonika Lake First Nation is a remote, northern community located approximately 575 km north of Thunder Bay. The registered population of Kasabonika Lake as of June 2012 is 1,027. Of those included in the registered population, 959 (487 males and 472 females) live on the reserve. Kasabonika Lake is accessible year-round by air. During the winter months the communities are accessible by a winter-road constructed over the snow and ice. The main languages spoken are Oji-Cree and English.

I have had the opportunity to participate in research related activities in Kasabonika Lake First Nation for a total of five months. I spent approximately two and a half months in Kasabonika Lake First Nation in the spring of 2010. During that time I played a role in collecting data for the Indigenous Health Research Group at the University of Ottawa. I collected data (through the implementation of surveys) which pertained to issues around food selection (of both market foods and off the land foods), food security and the means of acquiring traditional, land based foods. Another component of the field trip was to develop a community garden initiative to introduce a sustainable resource that provided community members with access to higher quality and affordable produce. Working with the community members to develop gardening initiatives within the First Nation provided the opportunity to work more closely with community members which in turn facilitated a greater sense of the types of programs and initiatives that would be most successful during future engagements with the community.

During this first trip it was essential that previously forged partnerships be maintained and that new relationships were developed. The time spent in the community provided me with the opportunity to gain experience as a research assistant but to build connections within the community and in particular with one family. Pseudonyms are being used to maintain participant anonymity. Participants were willing to use their real names, but ethics protocol for this larger study requires that participants remain anonymous. I spent a majority of time with this family and at the family's teepee belonging to Joanna, the matriarch of the family. One of Joanna's daughters, Colette, aided in participant recruitment for data collection and played a key role in the implementation of the community gardening initiative. She also helped my colleague and I organize a community feast at her family's teepee. Because of her involvement in the community and the interest she had in the Indigenous Health Research Group's program initiatives, we quickly became close. During one of the many visits I had with Colette and her family, Colette had mentioned some of the young women in the community did not partake in the activities within the teepee because 'they don't want to smell like smoke, they don't want to smell like their *kookum*', which is grandmother in Oji-Cree. I was certainly intrigued by this sentiment and wanted to explore this discourse in more detail.

To complete the data collection for this thesis, I travelled back to Kasabonika Lake First Nation for approximately one and half months in the summer of 2011. During this time, I conducted ethnographic, community-based fieldwork. I spent a significant amount of time participating and engaging with Joanna and her family to document the intergenerational exchanges around traditional, land based food preparation. Most of my days consisted of spending time with the family in their teepee. The time spent in Kasabonika Lake in the previous year allowed me to establish connections. As mentioned above, I became quite comfortable with

one particular family. Seeing as though the family had already been participants in the community-based programming initiatives of the Indigenous Health Research Group, they gained a certain level of comfort with myself and welcomed me to return to pursue research specific to this thesis project. The family of women include three generations of First Nation women; Joanna, four of her daughters (Colette, Karina, Gale, and Felicity) and then three of their daughters (Delia, Josie and Hannah). Beyond the family, there were also a few women that frequented the teepee. Two of these women were Joanna's younger sisters. The other woman was Collette, Karina, Gale and Felicity's Aunt Charlotte. These three women can be grouped into the first generation and ranged in age from 60 and above. The second generation was composed of Collette, Gale, Karina and Felicity. Their ages range from 35 to 50. Finally, the third generation of women range in ages from seven to 25. The women composing the third generation are Delia (Collette's daughter), Josie (Karina's daughter), Amelia and Hannah (Felicity's daughters) and Charlotte's granddaughter, Danica. Other women ranging in age—extended family and friends—would also spend time in the committee on an irregular basis. Depending on the type of event, there could be anywhere from 5 people to upwards of 40 people who would come and go from the teepee. On an average day there was a core group of nine women. This group consisted of Joanna, her two sisters, Charlotte, Collette, Karina, Gale, Felicity and Hannah.

The current research highlights the lives of First Nations women by documenting the culturally relevant exchanges between these women. In addition to this, the roles and attitudes of these women will be explored to determine their effect on the dissemination of culturally relevant information occurring in socially rich domains as the teepee. To explore and to fully appreciate the complexities of these relationships and experiences, a community-based

ethnography complemented by participant observation and informal, semi-structured interviews was implemented.

Participant Observation

Implementing research with participant observation as its foundation allows for active engagement in the daily activities and events entrenched within and around the teepee. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believe that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (p.92). Because participant observation facilitates learning through exposure or involvement in the day to day activities of the study group, I am able to gain a better understanding of the complex intersections embedded within the contemporary reality of these First Nations women. Participant observation will allow me to observe how traditional knowledge—largely the knowledge involved in the procurement and preparation of traditional, land based foods—is transferred from one generation to the next. My understanding will be further heightened by participating and actively learning from these women, simply observing the variety of activities taking place within and around the teepee, and using everyday conversation as an interview technique (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

With participant observation, I envision moving along a continuum between, largely, active participation and moderate participation as outlined by Spradley (1980). I mention moderate participation simply because there will be some instances where I may not be able to actively participate in the setting based on a variety of reasons. I anticipate that there will be instances where it would more beneficial if I merely observe rather than participate. When the opportunity permits I will actively engage with these women to facilitate my learning process

and to, more importantly, develop my comprehension of the discourses which facilitate the continuation of or lend to the erosion of cultural based activities and traditional knowledge through the generations. My participation, whether it be active or moderately active, will be gauged and reflexively monitored based on the level of comfort in the particular situation and from the community members themselves (DeWalt & DeWalt). The more engaged I become, however, the more this process will allow me to experience reality as the participants do (Marshall, et al., 1999). Although a 'sense' of reality may be obtained through participant observation, there are parts of the larger picture that may be lost, or neglected; this notion is a common challenge in the application of participation observation (Marshall, et al.). To mitigate such challenges I plan to exercise attentive listening skills and provide diligent, yet descriptive field notes. There are several other factors that may prove to limit full participation among the study group. Language will undoubtedly pose as a barrier especially when wanting to communicate with the Elders who may not be comfortable speaking English or who simply cannot speak English. In this instance, I enlisted the help one of the daughters to help translate imperative conversations within the teepee. Of course, I must be aware of what may be lost during translation and that, again, is another limitation that I will need to deal with appropriately. However, when participant observation is combined with interviews and narratives, the ability to attach meaning to the everyday activities and practices of the community members becomes much more feasible (Marshall, et al.). To echo Bernard (2006), I do not want to give the impression that the data collected from participant observation is completely accurate, nor can I expect to fully obtain the whole picture. Bernard continues by stating that "lots of things can clobber the accuracy of directly observed behaviour. [Furthermore,] observers may be biased by their own expectations of what they are looking for or by expectations about the behaviour of

women, men or any other ethnic group” (p. 435). Throughout the entire research process, I tried to maintain a balance between the degree of participation and amount of observation in the hopes that I could obtain the most accurate picture possible.

In carrying out this research I must reveal my biases to the reader and also identify limitations or barriers. The level of emotion I bring to this particular project is one barrier that I could foresee myself struggling with and one that would also hinder acquiring a completely objective picture would be. I was aware that I must not my emotion influence my writings in a manner that, of course, would be detrimental to the overall process. I mention this only because I withhold a strong passion for the research, for the people and the community I worked with and for. With that said, I took a cautionary stance in regards to my emotions. Benjamin Paul (1953) has noted that “[p]articipation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity” (p. 69). Paul describes neatly a position in which I contended while working within the community and while engaging with the women involved in this research. Barbara Tedlock (1991), however, has argued that “exploring the dynamic tension between participation and observation is critically important” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 24). She asserts that personal accounts should complement the data of anthropology. These details encompass an approach in which she terms narrative ethnography. “Narrative ethnography combines the approach of writing a standard monograph about the people being studied (the Other) with an ethnographic memoir centering on the anthropologist (the Self)” (Tedlock, 1991, p. 69). An account in which Tedlock advocates because it contributes to demystifying just how anthropologists have dealt with the degree of participation and with their emotional involvement (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). I certainly appreciate Tedlock’s conceptualization. However, I was left with a number of

questions. How much do I involve myself, my voice and my experiences? If I include too much of the Self, I fear that I may tip the scales in a direction that I do not wish to go. The current research aims to celebrate the voice and experience of the First Nations women, and if I cloud those with my own voice and experience, am I not just moving backward by creating a project centered merely on the Other? Placing precedence on the experiences and voice of these women allows me to provide a narrative of these women's lives. Narratives as such allow the women to reflect upon their own past experiences as valuable teaching moments that indicate notions of resiliency and cultural continuity. Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips and Williamson (2011) believe that:

These collective forms of narrative serve not only to help people make sense of their experience and construct a valued identity but also ensure the continuity and vitality of a community or a people. Narrative speaks directly to the ruptures of cultural continuity that occurred with the systematic suppression and dismantling of Indigenous ways of life that resulted in a profound sense of dislocation and despair. Narrative resilience therefore has a communal or collective dimension, maintained by the circulation of stories invested with cultural power and authority, which the individual and groups can use to articulate and assert their identity, affirm core values and attitudes needed to face challenges, and generate creative solutions to new predicaments. (p. 86)

Many of the experiences I shared with the women occurred within the space of the teepee. What I observed here was the potential of this space and its ability to foster vibrant cultures through the sharing of stories, narratives and tales; all which have a particular meaning and teaching imbedded within them. Kirmayer, et al., (2011) also believe that "a focus on narratives helps capture some of the individual variation in strategies of resilience" (p. 86). Since the variations among the generations of women are explored this notion bears particular relevance. The authors continue, asserting that "forms of resilience may vary by a person's age, sex, education, and life history, and change over time with transformations of identity and community. There may be

culturally distinctive strategies of resilience that reflect the specific histories, environments, and lifeways of Indigenous peoples” (p. 86). In participating in the daily lives of these women, I will be able to highlight the strategies utilized to ensure that individuals, communities and culture remain vibrant and resilient.

Conclusion

An ethnographic approach coupled with participant observation and informal interviews will shed light on the exchanges between three generations of First Nations women; exchanges relating largely to those around land based, traditional knowledge occurring in and around the teepee. The rapport I built with the community and several key members in previous field trips to the community aided with participation observation and the overall data collection process. The relationships I have fostered in the community also allowed me to become more enmeshed within the cultural setting providing me with a greater understanding of the study topic, the discourses involved and the intersections that lend to the tenuous relationship that situates local histories and knowledge within contemporary First Nations cultures.

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Thesis Articles

Running head: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEEPEE

The Significance of the Teepee as a Cite for Cultural Knowledge
Exchange among Three Generations of Women in Kasabonika Lake
First Nation

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Running head: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEEPEE

Abstract

Many First Nations communities in Canada face an array of health disparities. The high burden of disease can be attributed to numerous and complex factors involving social, political, and historical processes. Oftentimes, these factors are not always discussed, as attention is placed upon the physical determinants of health. There is a need for research that focuses on the importance of both social and cultural determinants of health, and more so in this instance, the wellness of this First Nation. This paper explores exchanges occurring within the space of the teepee and the culturally relevant activities shared between three generations of First Nations women as a form of cultural transmission and identity formation. Four months of ethnographic fieldwork centers on activities relating to land based food procurement, preparation and sharing. The culturally relevant space of the teepee poses a significant benefit to these women and for the reclamation and maintenance of their culture. A postcolonial, subaltern lens is applied to facilitate understanding of historical influences, and consideration is made for the changing contemporary landscape of First Nations communities. Through community-based participation the experience and voice of these women is brought to the forefront.

Introduction

James Waldram (1997) has argued that health in Aboriginal populations requires both physical (that is, the removal of disease) and symbolic (which refers to a balance between the individual, society, and the spiritual realm) healing. Waldram states that symbolic healing is dependent upon “the use, interpretation, negotiation, and manipulation of cultural symbols as central to the process of healing” (Waldram, 1997, p. 71; Wilson, 2003). For the women central to this research, the teepee represents a space where connections to their culture and the land remain vibrant. Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips and Williamson (2011) believe that “communities exist in an ecological balance with their surrounding environment” (p. 89). This notion is strongly rooted in the concept of health and place. Wilson (2003) states that “[First Nations] have conceptions of place that differ from our own. The land represents more than just a physical or symbolic location of healing. It represents the complex intersection of culture, identity and health as manifested in their daily geographies” (p. 91). There resides a series of intersections not only within the land, but among the generations of women as well. The Elders come together within the space of teepee to strengthen their culture, maintain their relationship with the land and to take part in activities that are both culturally and socially significant. The youngest of generations, however, maintain an attitude that may potentially hinder the traditional knowledge and connection to culture future generations of First Nations women have. This article will highlight the significance of the teepee. It is a space where these women gather to maintain or reclaim a sense of their culture. The intergenerational exchanges within the teepee are what make this space so valuable as these interactions have a tremendous bearing on the overall wellness of these women.

Methodological Implications

The current study is an extension of research completed by the Indigenous Health Research Group (IHRG) in Kasabonika Lake First Nation and Wapekeka First Nation. The research conducted by the group focuses largely on the benefits, risks and viability of traditional, land based diets in northern First Nations communities in Ontario. This particular study centres on Kasabonika Lake First Nation. A community-based approach to research was upheld through the entire research process. The research establishes a strong foundation with ethnographic, participant centred methods.

Community Profile

Kasabonika Lake First Nation is a remote, northern community located approximately 615 km north of Thunder Bay. Kasabonika Lake First Nation is an Oji-Cree community. The main languages spoken are Oji-Cree and English. It is located within the boundaries of the territory described by the 1929 and 1930 adhesion to the James Bay Treaty of 1905. The James Bay Treaty is most commonly referred to as Treaty 9 or the Grand Council Treaty 9. In the late 1970's, the Treaty 9 First Nations re-organized to form the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN). NAN is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within northern Ontario with the total population of membership (on and off reserve) estimated around 45,000 people. These communities are grouped by Tribal Council (Windigo First Nations Council, Wabun Tribal Council, Shibogama First Nations Council, Mushkegowuk Council, Matawa First Nations, Keewaytinook Okimakanak, and Independent First Nations Alliance) according to region. NAN encompasses James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario's portion of Treaty No. 5. Its total land-mass covers two-thirds of the province of Ontario spanning 210,000 square

miles (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, 2013). Kasabonika Lake First Nation consists of more than 26,000 acres of land, surrounded by water. Kasabonika Lake First Nation moved to its present location in 1962 and achieved full reserve status on Jan. 13, 1976. The community was originally located five kilometres down the Asheweig River. Until then, it had been considered a satellite community of the Big Trout Lake band (Sagatay, 2009).

The registered population of Kasabonika Lake as of August 2013 is 1,072. Of those included in the registered population, 998 (501 males and 497 females) live on the reserve (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC], 2013). Kasabonika Lake is accessible year-round by air. During the winter months the communities are accessible by a winter road constructed over the snow and ice. Much of the food brought into the community is either flown in or trucked in during the winter months. Hence, the community bears an immense cost of living. There are three private, family owned stores within the community. The Northern Store, operating under the North West Company, is the community's main staple for their daily shopping needs.

The community also houses a school. Programs are offered from junior kindergarten to high school. There is a pride that the community offers a full high school program and a sense that keeping students in the community for their entire high school program helps in retaining language and cultural practices and in maintaining connectivity to the family and community. With that being said, there are ongoing challenges in relation to the current education system. There is also a special education program, a day care centre, and an arena (Mamow Shawaygikaywin, 2009). The community offers various health care services. Many of the services are offered through the Emily Anderson Memorial Nursing Station.

Ethical Considerations

In recent years, trends in academia have led to the incorporation of research that is performed “with” and “for” First Nations peoples, rather than research done “on” First Nations peoples (Smith, 1999). A shift within the dominant research paradigm is certainly welcomed. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) have produced *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People* that assist institutions and researchers in conducting ethical, yet culturally sensitive research with Aboriginal peoples. Within these guidelines, CIHR (2007) has stated that “research in Aboriginal communities should give way to an understanding that Aboriginal people have an inherent right to be agents of research in contrast to mere passive subjects when the research topic involves their community or culture” (p. 19). Previous research within Kasabonika Lake First Nation has fostered relationships built on respect and appreciation. The community members are equal partners and together we work to provide solutions that foster cultural resiliency through community-based programming. The programs intend to foster meaningful exchanges among generations of First Nations women by highlighting the importance of spaces such as the teepee and the benefits of traditional, off the land foods. Research that values this “relationship-building process will result in shared power, equitable resourcing and mutual understanding, and will help the research proceed in a manner that is culturally sensitive, relevant, respectful, responsive, equitable and reciprocal with regard to the benefits shared between the research parties and the [First Nations] community” (p. 19). The current research will adhere to such guidelines so that all parties involved maintain their respect and value.

Pseudonyms are being used to maintain participant anonymity. Participants were willing to use their real names, but ethics protocol requires that participants remain anonymous. The

research was conducted according to research protocols established in the initial planning phases for the larger research program with the Shibogama First Nation Tribal Council, Kasabonika Lake First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils and the University of Ottawa. All research activities underwent full ethics review and were approved by the Research Ethics Boards at the University of Ottawa.

Ethnography

The current project is grounded upon ethnographic approaches and complementary methods that when employed appropriately, obtain a greater understanding of the contemporary reality of First Nations. Ethnographies study the processes and meanings within a cultural system. Employing an ethnographic approach will allow me to detail the significance the teepee bears and its ability to provide a space for these women to connect with each other and their culture. Ethnographies are valued within the research process as it permits the researcher to produce knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement (Clifford & Marcus, 1986 and Clifford, 1988). The given nature of the ethnography allows the researcher to become immersed in the community by participating in the practices and experiences associated with larger cultural and social practices (Johnson, 2011). Ethnographies, when combined with the appropriate methods, provide a holistic perspective of the study focus. Most often accompanied by varying iterative investigative methods (that is, participant observation, an interview technique or a combination of both) ethnographies have the ability obtain an in-depth understanding and analysis. Within this particular study, participant observation (along with informal, conversational interviews) was utilized to engage meaningfully with the study group.

Participant Observation

Using participant observation as a foundation for research provides a platform for active engagement in the daily activities and events entrenched within and around the teepee. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believe that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (p.92). Participant observation facilitates learning through exposure or involvement in the day to day activities of the study group. From the beginning stages of the research it was important that the data collected reflected the actual experiences and daily lives of these three generations of First Nations women. Much of my time spent in the community was actually spent in Joanna's teepee. Participant observation allowed me to observe how traditional knowledge—largely the knowledge involved in the procurement and preparation of traditional, land based foods—is transferred from one generation to the next. These activities in coordination with the peak harvesting season provided numerous opportunities to actively participate within the teepee. In general, I went to the teepee just before noon and left the teepee around six or seven in the evening. I repeated this pattern daily for the six weeks that I was in the community. Although not every day shared the same pattern, spending time at the teepee and with the family remained the same. Through participant observation, I was able to discover the differing attitudes between the generations that both contributes to and potentially hinders the transfer of culturally relevant knowledge within this culturally significant space of the teepee. These relationships are critical for the transmission of culturally relevant knowledge that has and continues to impact the people participating in these cultural practices.

Historical Background of First Nations in Northern Ontario

To begin to appreciate the complexity of the contemporary reality of First Nations communities, it is critical that the dramatic changes these communities faced be appropriately detailed. Many First Nations communities continue to contend with the truly devastating legacies of Western intervention and colonization. First Nations communities underwent transformations which affected all aspects of life. In northern Ontario specifically, people were forced to abandon semi-nomadic lifestyles and exist within permanent, government assigned settlements. Constructed settlements drastically changed the ways in which people lived, consumed foods and socialized. These changes in settlement patterns, dwelling, material culture and foodways altered ways in which First Nations people negotiated the land and compromised their relative autonomy prior to Euro-Canadian contact. However, prior to delving into the specificities of how the colonization transformed First Peoples living in this region, it is of benefit to provide a brief historical background that highlights the effects of European contact on the First Nations of Northern Ontario.

European Contact with First Nations through the Fur Trade

The northern part of Ontario, where Kasabonika Lake First Nation is located, was a resource region that held tremendous importance for fur trading companies (first the Northwest Company, and later Hudson Bay Company) by the mid 18th Century. As traders exhausted fur bearing mammals along James Bay, there was a growing need to penetrate the northern Ontario interior, forcing trade to move northwest. French settlers were establishing a greater presence within the northern parts of Ontario, while British settlers were gaining notoriety through the organization of trading posts in affiliation with the Hudson's Bay Company (AADNC, 2011).

Structured trading posts provided European settlers with a space to interact with First Nations peoples through the trade of goods. Early established posts, such as Fort Albany (in Ontario) and York Factory (in Manitoba), became central trade networks with Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Crees peoples living in this area. In exchange for a variety of goods and materials, the First Nations traded vast amounts of animal furs (beaver was of particular interest) from the northern interior. As the fur trade grew more lucrative, First Nations hunters and guides became liaisons between the Company and other First Nations groups within the area. Because of the HBC's monopoly over almost all trade within the areas of Hudson Bay, this trade relationship proved profitable for both parties (AADNC, 2011). However, this mutually beneficial relationship was a fleeting one at best (Robidoux, et al., 2009; Bishop, 1970).

This long history of trade, commerce and competition brought about major changes for the First Nations populations of the northern boreal forest. Above all, the European desire for fur radically transformed Indigenous economies. Rather than small-scale hunting for furs, First Nations were dedicating more and more time and resources to the seemingly endless European demand for animal pelts. A transition from mere subsistence hunting to a system more representative of commercial exploitation took place. To continue capitalizing on the trade, hunting patterns shifted towards the further north to the HBC posts. In doing so, however, many of the First Nations bands of the far north would soon be left to face the effects of declining animals species (in particular, moose and beaver) decline due to over hunting. As Pal, et al. (2013) states, “the impact was devastating, as it not only eradicated critical dietary and material needs, but ultimately transformed a way of life” (p. 8). The First Nations people of northern Ontario turned to alternate wild food sources and also came to depend on European goods and

materials (Robidoux, et al., 2010; AADNC, 2011; Bishop, 1970). Furthermore, extension of the fur trade further and further north amplified contact with First Nations and traders and settlers.

Treaty Signing & Treaty Adhesion

To accommodate the population influx of settlers, much of the lands belonging to First Nations were being surrendered to provide opportunity to those looking to settle and to continue agricultural ventures as they once did. As settlers demanded more and more property, colonial representatives were pressured to give access to the lands belonging to First Nations. And so began the long history of treaty making within Canada. Treaty-making in Upper Canada (as Ontario was known between 1791 and 1841), as described by Long (2010) was characterized by three features: compensation or payment for land through a cash annuity; verbal assurances of hunting, fishing and occupancy rights in the unsettled areas; and reserve lands for the First Nations' exclusive use and for the government's "civilization programme" (p. 25). Pressure from settlers grew heavy with colonial administrators and by the 1830's even more territory was handed over for settlement purposes. Eventually, only pockets of First Nations lands remained in Upper Canada. This particular condition, along with unfavourable and inadequate reserve plots, perpetuated the gradual loss of traditional hunting grounds. First Nations became dispossessed people among their own country (AADNC, 2011).

As settlement lands in the southern parts of Ontario filled, attention turned to the most northern areas of Ontario. Because this portion of Ontario proved to be rich in resources, the Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior treaties of the 1850's were negotiated with the First Nations peoples who inhabited the area. These treaties, unlike any previously negotiated treaties, would act as a template for the Post-Confederation Numbered Treaties (AADNC, 2011).

Between 1871 and 1921, the Crown negotiated 11 new agreements covering Northern Ontario, the Prairies and the Mackenzie River up to the Arctic. As in the Robinson Treaties, these Numbered Treaties set aside reserve lands for First Nations and granted them annuities and the continued right to hunt and fish on unoccupied Crown lands in exchange for Aboriginal title. However, First Nations signatories had their own reasons to enter into treaties with the Crown. First Nations leaders were looking to the Crown for assistance in a time of change and catastrophe in their communities. Facing disease epidemics and famine, First Nations leaders wanted help from the government to provide care for their people. Quite simply, the First Nations wanted assistance (through annuities, supplies, such as farming equipment and ammunition, as well as the continued rights to hunt) in adapting to severe food shortages due to overhunting/trapping, a rapidly changing economy and landscape. First Nations also wanted to establish an educational system that would help the future generations of First Nations. By the time of treaty formation in northern Ontario, the relationship of reciprocity between the Crown and the First Nations was virtually eradicated. Long (2010) describes the shift within this particular relationship:

If the Ojibwe and Cree in what is now far northern Ontario expected ... the respectful reciprocity of their fur trade treaty relationship to continue after their territories were acquired by Canada in 1870, they were not so much mistaken as misled ... Decades after treaty-signing, they would learn that Canada had no such intention. Canada ... would betray Indigenous expectations in far northern Ontario, as it already had among their Great Lakes neighbours. The middle ground would shrink and virtually disappear, its long-established and mutually understood system of exchange unilaterally abrogated by settler governments. Indigenous peoples might still expect to be treated as respected allies in a negotiated and balanced coexistence, but their former partners had moved on to a new paradigm of control and marginalization. The continent's original inhabitants would no longer be

considered partners. They would eventually be treated as alien and exotic “others.” Canadians would try to push them aside and impose a neocolonial relationship upon them (p. 23).

And push they did. As Euro-Canadian contact intensified so too were the changes with which First Nations needed to contend. Many First Nations continue to feel the overpowering and onerous influence of Western ways in almost every facet of life.

The Sustained Effects of Colonization on First Nations Lifeways

Many First Nations continue to struggle with the effects of the colonizing mission that swept across these communities with such force. First Nations communities were forced into a state of dependency through a series of assimilatory strategies that were designed to destroy the essence of First Nations culture. In the section to follow I will highlight a few of these transitions and will discuss in greater detail, the impact they have, and continue to have on family structure, housing and foodways.

As the colonial process was established it began to impact every facet of First Nations culture. It is of interest to note Emberley’s position on the transformation of the Aboriginal family in relation to colonization:

The family would become the most important social apparatus through which to import various technologies of surveillance to further colonial governance during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries; thus the discourse on the family is an important locus from which to trace the cultural materialist practices of colonization. Such practices included residential schooling, foster parenting and child welfare policies, environmental conservation, and management of territorial lands (Emberley, 2001, p. 61).

The changes associated with the colonial reign altered traditional housing formations which, ultimately, created fissures or disconnects within First Nations culture and its intimate underpinnings of the First Nations family.

Prior to European contact, the teepee was the primary dwelling for many First Nations people throughout Canada. Today, community members reside in houses or housing complexes, rather than in teepees. As previously alluded, this change in accommodation bred and perpetuated numerous changes in the lives of the First Nations people. Many First Nations families and peoples, including the peoples of Kasabonika Lake (and other Oji-Cree communities of northern Ontario) were largely nomadic. Because these communities were dependent upon the land (for food, housing, housing materials, materials for clothing, transportation, etc.) many First Nations travelled in conjuncture with the seasons. Each change in season significantly impacted the ways these First Nations negotiated the land. Sieciechowicz (1986) outlines the seasonal activities of peoples from Kasabonika Lake First Nation. She documented that in the early fall, that certain familial groups would move to their trapping grounds. As the harsher winter months arrived more groups would either “gather at the juncture of a couple of trapping grounds or travel to a trading post community” (p. 192). Sieciechowicz states that by late February only a few family groups or family members would regroup to continue trapping and hunting efforts so long as it was not economically detrimental. As spring arose “camps would be established along rivers or lakes where trout or whitefish could be netted” (p. 192). And by summer, many of the same familial groups that gathered at the winter camps reconnected at some of the larger lakes around Kasabonika.

It is important to note that these seasonal patterns were not static; they were considered to be dynamic and in constant flux with the environment. If required, the composition of these

social groups altered depending on the activity and time of year. For example, when large game (like moose) was plentiful, some hunting groups would not feel the need to attend to trap lines until the spring (Sieciechowicz). Living in accordance with the seasons allowed residents of Kasabonika Lake to procure the off the land foods they needed for survival; food that proved to be extremely dense nutritionally. Furthermore, this provided the First Nations with the opportunity to gather materials in which to build their housing structures, and within this region of Ontario, the teepee was the main source of protection from the elements. As Robidoux, et al. (2010) state, “the disruption of staple food and material resources made life in the northwestern interior extremely harsh, giving way to socioeconomic transformations and new relations of dependency” (p. 16). However, as colonizing efforts proceeded without regard, the immeasurable impact to First Nations communities had really only just begun. Seemingly, the first target was the land belonging to First Nations. And with that, the way First Nations utilized the land began to alter. As such, so did their lifeways and their foodways.

The history of colonization in Canada includes, but is certainly not limited to, the forced settlement of many First Nations. The dramatic shift in lifestyle created numerous challenges for those First Nations affected. Off the land living was ultimately replaced with sedentary lifestyles. Sieciechowicz (1986) noted that in the last 20 years (from approximately the 1960’s to the date of her referenced publication), communal and or co-residential living spaces were replaced with fixed housing and, more importantly, fixed communities. The process of sedentarization took effect as the signing of Treaty Nine (including its adhesions) significantly decreased the First Nations nomadic lifestyle. Communities were stabilized as population movement decreased. More notably, settlement was further facilitated by the presence of schools, nursing stations and cooperative stores (Sieciechowiz). Robidoux et al., (2010) completed research in the Sandy Lake

First Nation (a First Nation with comparable realities, landscape and culture to Kasabonika Lake First Nation) to discuss the importance of traditional, off the land foods within the community and, moreover, within the culture. They have stated that:

The creation of the store had immeasurable impacts on local lifeways, in particular hunting and gathering subsistence practices. For the first time in their history, people in Sandy Lake were not totally reliant on hunting and gathering for survival and increasingly turned to the store for daily sustenance. Instead of living out on tracts of land hunting and trapping during harvest months, families resided in permanent structures, typically log houses, in the Sandy Lake settlement year-round. Hunting and trapping did still occur but within an emerging modern socioeconomic climate that has given shape to Sandy Lake community existence today. (p. 17)

The people of Kasabonika Lake underwent similar transformation and have continued to adapt as gradual stages of European intervention were implemented. Kelm (1998) asserts that the conditions of life for First Nations people were fundamentally altered by the process of colonization. She continues by stating that:

Missionary influence changes Native housing styles, encouraging smaller structures that were meant to house only the nuclear family. These new structures were, however, often too small and poorly ventilated, and thus were described as constituting major health risks for their inhabitants. [Meanwhile] Native people were increasingly confined to reserve lands, which, with population growth and simultaneous reserve land cut-offs, became overcrowded and were clearly insufficient for the needs of the people. (p. 55)

By limiting First Nations to smaller parcels of land, communities became tied to the government imposed reserve system. Prior to these housing changes, generations of people living amongst each other within the teepee. This sort of living structure promoted familial kinships and vast opportunities to share in each other's experiences. They did not limit the experience by catering merely to the nuclear family. Instead, these traditional lifeways provided the younger generations with opportunities to be immersed within the teepee and all that occurred within the

teepee. The children and youth were continually exposed to their culture. The Western concept of housing implemented across many First Nations reserves gave rise to a host of new challenges.

To start there is the issue of inadequate housing and peoples living in homes which were initially designed for a single family. Due to housing shortages, overcrowding has become a serious issue with extended families living under one roof (Assembly of First Nations, 2012; Robson, 2008; Monk, 2006). In some instances there can be up to 10 people living in a two bedroom home. In Kasabonika, many of the homes are in desperate need of repair. A report prepared by the Kasabonika Lake Housing Authority (2008) indicated that there are approximately 190 houses in the community, 77 of which are considered “adequate”. The Housing Authority has determined that 16 homes need to be replaced and 97 need renovations, more than half of which are considered major. In fact, some people were forced to live in tarp tents in 2007 because of a lack of accommodation. In 2009, there are approximately 50 people on a waiting list for new housing. Clearly, housing in Kasabonika Lake First Nation is a critical issue (Mamow Shawaygikaywin, 2009), as is the case with many other remote, Northern First Nations communities.

During the fieldwork for this project I was able to learn about how one family is contending with the limited and inadequate housing and how they attempt to mesh concepts of intergenerational living, culture and kinship with the hopes of fostering community strength and cultural resilience. Integral within this family’s effort to maintain and reinforce their culture is the space of the teepee. The role of the teepee has greatly changed through history. The teepee was once the main shelter for many Oji-Cree First Nations of Northern Ontario. Today the teepee

functions much differently. It maintains its primary function of shelter, but it also provides the women involved in this research, with a space to connect with one another and their culture.

The Teepee Today: The Significance of Space and People

Through previous research in Kasabonika Lake First Nation, I recognized the opportunity to further explore the correlations between the relationships fostered within the space of the teepee and how these concepts may relate to a greater sense of wellbeing. However, the complex relationships that exist between the generations of women must not be overlooked. To examine interrelationships between the family, I employed a community-based ethnographic approach centred upon participant observation. Participant observation allowed me to further develop connections made with the family while also providing the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the complexities involved. At the core of this project are three generations of First Nation women: Joanna, four of her daughters (Colette, Karina, Gale, and Felicity) and three of their daughters (Delia, Josie and Hannah). The current research will highlight the lives of these First Nations women by documenting exchanges between three generations. These exchanges include information shared through the dissemination of traditional knowledge around foods and the sharing of life experiences through stories and conversations. Of the greatest significance is the site where these exchanges occur. The teepee is the site that provides not only the structure for this study, but structure for this group of women as well.

The teepee has the ability to encapsulate a sense of belonging as well as a sense of being (Adelson, 2000). Cultural identities are solidified as the teepee reinforces connections to the land. These concepts intersect to produce a strengthened source of wellbeing. The relationships and connections between these women flourish as the space of the teepee cultivates connections

to a rich, yet complex history. Although the teepee remains a significant feature in the lives of many First Nations peoples and families alike, the teepee does not function as it once did.

However, that is not to say that it is no longer a crucial element in the equation that welds the connection between people and place. I would argue that the teepee, for all that it symbolizes, is just as important today as it was years ago.

The teepee is a visual, cultural symbol that represents the intersecting lines of culture, place and people. The teepee as a material and symbolic form is representative of the enduring First Nations culture. Long, slender logs support the teepee's base, which is then further supported by a foundation of wooden boards. This also serves as a form of protection. The thin tree logs weave together at the top of the teepee. Each log leans against the other and when combined together forms a strong connection. The teepee takes shape once the logs have been secured and the structure is covered with either canvas or a plastic tarp. All elements of the teepee unite to provide a source of protection that embodies the significant intersections found between people, place and culture. One of the most dominant elements of the teepee is its association with traditional, land based foods and the preparation these foods involve. The teepee is still the preferred site to prepare the traditional, land based foods that have been procured by hunters in the community. Joanna, her sisters and Charlotte, along with other Elders within the community, will gather at her teepee to clean and prepare these foods. It is important to note that in this particular instance, the term Elder refers to a person who may be recognized as a teacher and a mentor. In addition, this person is typically an authority on the histories of the community and culture (St-Jéan, 2013). As the Elders prepare foods, Colette and Felicity tend to the fire. You can hear Hannah and her brother running around outside. Playing games and occasionally popping in the teepee to see what their grandmother and mother are busy doing. The teepee is

never short on visitors or laughter for that matter. The teepee provides a space for these women to unite, to share in each other's experiences and to reminisce over a series of stories. During peak harvesting times, Joanna, her sisters and friends may be found sitting around the fire in the teepee. The fire is located in the centre of the teepee. Rocks surround the fire resembling a fire pit. The rocks, however, also act as supports for grilling racks. The smoke from the fire bellows out through the wooden logs at the top of the teepee. The logs that were once pale in colour (during construction, logs are stripped bare of their bark) are now stained black from years of smoke. Four wooden logs are placed around the rocks. These acts as supports for the poles the women use to dry and smoke fish. A few chairs, stools and benches line the perimeter of the teepee. A small cabinet stores dry goods, like flour, for making bannock. Pots and pans hang from hooks near the base of teepee. A couple bottom portions of steel, 45 gallon barrels rest against the sides of the teepee. The 45 gallon barrels are fashioned for use in making pemmican. A rain barrel sits just inside the door of the teepee. The barrel is filled with drinking water when needed. A stack of firewood sits on the other side of the opening. The Elders will get the younger children to help gather fire wood and stack it in the teepee so there is never a shortage. The women break from their activities to have a cup of room temperature tea and a piece of freshly made bannock. The Elders continue preparing the animals. They work with tremendous proficiency. As the women work, they share stories. Both laughter and smoke hang in the air. The teepee is an integral space for the older generations of women to maintain their sense of culture. It is a space where Colette, Karina, Gale and Felicity strengthen their culture by continuing to learn from their mother and aunts. For the youngest generations, the teepee represents a space of possibility and opportunity through the reclamation of culture. The younger

generations exemplify promise for a future where First Nations tradition, lifeways and foodways thrive. However, for that to occur, barriers that impact youth directly need to be addressed.

The continued fight for cultural reclamation has taken shape through the formation of community-based, grassroots initiatives. For instance, in Kasabonika Lake First Nation, the community implements programs to foster intergenerational exchanges in order to combat cultural erosion. Joanna and her family accomplish this by making concerted efforts to engage with each other within the space of the teepee. However, not unlike many other cultures, younger generations are not always as receptive to the teachings of the older generations. This notion was reflected in the sentiments expressed by the younger generations, especially those women who are in their late teens and early twenties. What encouraged me to develop a further understanding of the intergenerational exchanges taking place within the teepee were the discourses occurring within this group of women, as well as within the larger community.

The impetus behind the current research is a discourse, rather an attitude that, too many within the community may not be considered significant to the degree to which it initiates future areas of research. However, in this instance, the discursive sentiment expressed by the women did just that. During my first visit to Kasabonika Lake First Nation I had been sitting and chatting with Colette and her family in the teepee. Colette had to leave to make it to the store before closing. I had gone with her as she had offered me a ride back to where I was staying. I was not in need of anything in the store, so I stayed in the truck while Colette rushed in before closing. She came back to the truck smiling and began to laugh as she got in. I was obviously curious and asked what had her laughing. Colette said that as she had walked passed other community members in the store—as she made her way up and down the aisles—a few people

had made comments to her. They said, laughing, “You smell like a teepee!” Colette responded to those comments with a laugh. She brushed it off as if it were simply a joke. Granted, there were laughs. However, I was curious if this sentiment represented more than a simple joke. I asked Colette more about this sentiment expressed by some of her fellow community members in semi-formal interview with her. In this conversation, Colette confirmed that this sentiment was thought to be more humorous than harmful. She went on to say that, “the young people are growing up in an environment where they live in a house, with all the conveniences right there...” (Colette, 2011). She reflects upon the changes between the generations, and moreover, the changes between her and her daughter. In essence, Colette described the changes between the generations and in particular notes the changes in housing. The younger generations no longer have the same access to the traditional lifeways as did their parents (in some cases) or their grandparents. Although Colette left the community to attend residential school, she still has vivid memories of the time spent within the teepee, continually learning from her mother, aunts and grandmother. Many of the younger people, and in this instance, the young women do not have that opportunity.

Although many of the other women that I spoke with do not feel that this attitude is negative in any sense, I contend that this discourse is interpreted differently by the younger generations of women, and when interpreted negatively, it can impact their participation within the teepee and with their Elders. While in the teepee, Colette and I were casually talking and these attitudes came up again. She had mentioned that the younger women in the community do not necessarily spend time within the teepee because ‘they don’t want to smell like smoke.’ She said that ‘they don’t want to smell like their *kookum*’ (which is grandmother in Oji-Cree). The issue of generational divide or tension is not specific to First Nations peoples, but it is worthy of

consideration here because of the historical context of cultural oppression, and contemporary context of cultural perseverance. The smell of smoke is heavily associated with a cultural history that has been disparaged by Western forces, and an expression of indifference by younger people in the community conjures a doubling effect of disparagement and even shame. There is no question that life for First Nations has changed drastically even over the last 60 years. The lure of modern, Western lifestyle practices entice all North American youth and thus it is no surprise it resonates with many First Nations youth as well. Preoccupation with television, social media and video games replace time that was once spent around the teepee learning and sharing stories, or time spent out on the land. Now there seems to be even more reasons not to enter the space of the teepee. For some younger women in this study, the smell of smoke suggests that they are not *yet* interested in these types of cultural activities as they are not aligned with the more modern world they share.

I use the word ‘yet’ because of the complexities of identity formation, which are especially pronounced in First Nations cultures. Gone (2006) believes that Indigenous identities in North America is a process of active intentional construction. This process involves “individual agency and both local and wider social influences. For this reason, Aboriginal identity cannot be approached as a single construct; rather, it varies depending on how people draw on cultural meanings and practices to make sense of their own experiences” (Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau & Issac, 2009, p. 85). Kirmayer, et al., (2009) state further that there needs to be “a shift away from an essentialized view of cultural identity toward recognition of the negotiated nature of identity as self-fashioning” (p. 85). The authors go on to note that “identity is embodied through lived experienced and narrated in specific social contexts, both of which depend on the nature of community” (p. 85). The youth in Kasabonika Lake First Nation

narrate different versions of themselves in accordance with changes in the social context, which are manifested through their cultural traditions represented in their families, friends and communities (Kirmayer, Sehdev, Whitley, Dandeneau & Issac, 2009). This of course goes back to the idea that identity is negotiated by processing influences from family, friends, and media. Intersects of history and politics predominate this process as well. In this study, these complexities were evident as younger women often expressed disinterest in activities around the tepee yet clearly valued their parents and grandparents and the work that they did on a daily basis. Negotiating these factors among the contemporary landscape “may give rise to mixed or hybrid identities, with new values, attitudes and activities” (Sissons, 2005). Brass argues that “this diversity may also create tensions and contradictions that individuals must negotiate to maintain a sense of personal coherence, clarity and comfort with their identity” (Brass, 2008). For some of the older women, these tensions were evident in that they feel the space of the teepee offers youth the support needed to obtain a sense of stability in their lives. By not embracing these traditions there is the fear of not only losing aspects of their culture, but that younger women will not find comfort in the strong cultural identity that has made their people strong throughout history.

Results & Discussion

Within Aboriginal frameworks, Kirmayer, et al. believes that “Elders must cooperate with youth to transmit philosophies, knowledge and principles within Aboriginal culture. Youth have the important role of making the transmitted culture workable in the contemporary economic, political and social environment” (p. 78). The shared responsibility of each generation is a fundamental notion. From this study it is apparent that patterns of learning occur within a

continuum and culturally significant exchanges among the generations reinforce this pattern. The colonial legacy cultivates patterns of re-learning as Western influences continually effect daily geographies of the First Nations. What has remained relatively stable are the connections between land and people. As asserted by Kirmayer, et al., “the understanding that land and culture are inextricably bound together is important for maintaining cultural continuity in Aboriginal communities” (p. 83). Processes of colonization carried with them strategies to erode the histories and geographies that often provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities (Kirmayer, et al.) Hence, efforts made to re-establish expressions of Indigenous identity that connect land, language, spiritual and cultural practices of First Nations people are vital to the revitalization of Indigenous communities (Kirmayer, et al.). Many Aboriginal people in Canada understand that the connections between identity, health and well-being are intimately connected to their own relationship with the land (Panelli & Tipa, 2007). Kirmayer, Boothroyd, Tanner, Adelson, Robinson and Oblin (2003) completed extensive ethnographic research with the Cree peoples of James Bay. Their research was complemented through the analysis of data from the Cree Health Survey in Quebec. Through that analysis, the authors found that spending time in hunting camps on the land was associated with less psychological distress (Kirmayer et al., 2003). The ethnographic components of their research found that community members frequently mentioned the psychological benefits of bush, or off-the-land activities. These activities often involve “contact with nature, spiritual relations with animals, consumption of valued foods, and participation in traditional activities” (Kirmayer, et al, 2009, p. 82). Time spent on the land was “reported to increase family solidarity and social support, cultural identity and physical strength” (Kirmayer, et al, 2009, p. 82).

The ability to foster these relationships with the land is not universal, as they “vary within a community by gender, age, and other individual and social characteristics” (Kirmayer, et al., 2009, p. 82). Recognizing that variations exist among age groups and individual/social characteristics is crucial to understanding the varied participation of these three generations of First Nations women in Kasabonika Lake First Nation. The older generations of women have discovered the strength one can obtain from solidifying connections between themselves, the land and the culturally significant activities within the teepee. The lack of participation among the young women does not indicate resistance to traditional lifeways. Efforts made by the older generations of women certainly do not go unnoticed by these young women. The older generations of women believe that by promoting these culturally significant activities, as well as the importance of the teepee, that familial and community resilience is advocated. These women assert that these sorts of activities can never start too early. This was evident among their interactions with Joanna’s youngest grandchildren as well as her great-grandchildren. Kirmayer, et al. (2009) support this when they write:

Building resilience may involve preventive measures that occur early in development. This can include support for parents and families with young children or early adolescents. Interventions that encourage positive parenting and intergenerational exchange within families are likely to foster community resiliency. This is especially the case given that the residential school system fragmented families and disrupted intergenerational relationships. Programs and services geared to the well-being of Aboriginal communities therefore must facilitate the importance of sharing and cooperation between generations. (p. 99)

Exploring the exchanges between the women has portrayed a family that is far more connected than they are disjointed. Through fragmented periods of history, this family has continued to find significance among these intergenerational exchanges. These traditional practices offer an

“indigenist” alternative to mainstream health interventions and so participation affirms cultural identity (Kirmayer, et al., 2009; Walters & Simoni, 2002). However, the most compelling outcome of these exchanges and cultural practices, are their ability to foster cultural resiliency and wellness among the women.

It was clear from the beginning of this research that the teepee held special influence in the community and furthermore, plays an important role for many women. The teepee provides a space that promotes rich social interaction and experiences that connote a sense of wellbeing. What was most striking about this space is what it encapsulated. The teepee is representative of social engagement through practice (in this instance, the practice being traditional food preparation) and the strengthening of familial connections and friendships. It is a space that allows the women to gather, to share in each other’s lives and experiences. It is a space that provides a connection to the past; a space where cultural resiliency and wellness is fostered. Laws and Radford (1998) argue that by “conceptualizing places as social relations and practices, the link between place, identity and health becomes explicit. They assert that places are loci of social relations and practices that operate among different people. These social relations shape both the experience of place and an individual’s sense of self, which are both central to health” (Wilson, 2003, p. 90). As research within the community progressed, the interconnections between place, the people and wellness became that more evident.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the “survival of First Nations culture rests on the shoulders of mothers and daughters and their ability to raise the next generation in First Nations traditional ways” (Big Eagle & Guimond, 2009, p. 60). From this research is clear that the women at the centre of this research exemplify this sentiment not only within their family, but within the community as well. The women have made continued efforts to reclaim culture through social engagements taking place within the space of the teepee. The time within the teepee provides the family the opportunity to strengthen familial kinship while simultaneously participating in culturally relevant activities. When the younger generations of women were present there were concerted efforts made to involve the youth and children. They were given chores and tasks that kept them engaged and provided them with a role that strengthens their cultural identity.

Although the youngest generations of daughters seemed eager to participate and learn, it was evident that the influences of modern contemporary culture are impacting some of the younger women’s involvement in these practices. Although modern distractions like use of the television and internet may pose as a distraction for some of the younger generations, perhaps this preoccupation can be viewed in a more positive fashion. There is no doubt that time spent on the computer detracts from time spent on the land. However, opportunities that utilize the younger generation’s knowledge of social media may help them to network with other youth in similar situations or locate program initiatives/networks that they personally connect with.

Kirmayer, et al., 2009) assert that:

Media and forms of communication exert a strong influence on individual and community identity. The internet allows individuals or groups to find others with whom they can form “virtual communities.” For people living in both urban and remote communities, this sense of belonging may buffer the effects of being marginalized in

their local communities. Internet forums and websites can help bring people together and be used to efficiently advertise and announce relevant events and activities. As such, the internet can allow people to connect within their own community and also to people outside their community. (p. 100)

The younger generation's knowledge of the internet may also help to reduce information gaps among the generations of women by introducing each of them with vast knowledge exchange opportunities either within the community or among other First Nations communities. It is a matter of utilizing each other's strengths and knowledge to benefit the family and community as a whole. By recognizing the younger generations strengths and their fit within these intergenerational exchanges allows these young women to build capacity, efficacy and self confidence.

Capturing the significance of the teepee sheds a unique perspective on the intersecting lines between place, people and wellness. For these women, the teepee is a place where they gather to maintain connections between themselves and their culture. To further strengthen the women's connection with each other and their culture, opportunities that unite the generations of women should continue to be implemented within the community as part of their daily geography. More importantly, opportunities that celebrate the individual women's strengths must be incorporated within these exchanges. Wilson (2003) believes that, "to move forward research conducted within the framework of therapeutic landscapes must make room for the exploration of the links between health and place as manifested in the daily lives and geographies of individuals (p. 91). Although this is an important distinction, these opportunities also need to be implemented on a larger scale so that the more of the community can benefit from these culturally relevant exchanges. In doing so, these women of Kasabonika Lake First Nation can

look to reclaim a part of history that represents the enduring strength and resilience of these people and their rich culture.

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WOMEN

Conversations between Three Generations of First Nations Women
around Local Foodways in Kasabonika Lake First Nation

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Abstract

The foodways of First Nations communities and peoples have been altered through systemized efforts of colonization. The traditional food practices of First Nations communities were effectively reduced in part from the creation of stores (with its influx of market foods) and through the limiting land plots of the reserve system. The current research seeks to understand the dietary choices and changes among three generations of First Nations women. The research takes place in a remote First Nation community in Northern Ontario. The differing food practices among the three generations of women highlight the alterations in which history has fostered. The decrease in the consumption of traditional, land based foods, as well as the practices around those foods (procurement, preparation, social engagement, etc.) have altered the choice young people and in this instance, young women make between market foods and traditional, land based foods. Exploring the preference and taste for these foods altered through history highlights the effects colonization has had on First Nations foodways.

Introduction

At the heart of this article are three generations of First Nation women. These women are members of the Kasabonika Lake First Nation; a remote, northern First Nation in Ontario. This article describes their connection with food. In this instance, food refers to a combination of traditional, land based foods and market foods. Each food category bears a certain discourse. That discourse is produced and reproduced through the food choices made by these individuals. This article will demonstrate that food is not simply a biological choice (Mintz, 1996); rather, food is bound within a multifaceted web of social and cultural meanings. The complex system surrounding food includes the social interactions which bind people through the engagement of activities associated with food (Flinn, 1988; Richards, 1932). Culture ultimately refers to a system of beliefs, values and ideas associated with the First Nations livelihood. “These social and cultural aspects of food enter into choices people make about what foods to produce, consume, and distribute. One frequent choice is between traditional and [market] foods” (Flinn, 1988, p. 19). Choosing between traditional, land based foods and market foods is a choice that affects First Nations in a variety of ways. Most prominently, food choices impact their health and wellbeing. This shift to a group of foods that are significantly less nutritious has caused disease rates to soar within northern First Nations populations (Pal, et al. 2013; Sharma, et al. 2007; Young, et al. 2000). First Nations communities across Canada are experiencing a number of health problems more acutely as well as at a higher prevalence than the general Canadian population. In particular, the rates of diabetes and other weight related disease affect a staggering amount of First Nations people. For example, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is three to five times higher (Dyck et al. 2010; Green et al. 2003; Young et al. 2000) but in this specific subarctic region (the Sioux Lookout area) of Canada these numbers have seen an

increase of 45% over the last 10 years (Fox et al. 1994). Although these are important considerations when working with First Nations communities, notions of wellness and cultural resiliency better reflect these women and their exchanges within the teepee. Cattell, Dines, Gelser and Curtis (2008) describe well-being as a multi-dimensional of positive health which can manifest in physical, mental and/or social forms. The authors assert the importance of associations between well-being and space. Of particular relevance within the current research is the capacity of spaces such as the teepee and its ability to enhance well-being through the provision of belonging and cultural identity (Panelli & Tipa, 2009). Spaces like the teepee are especially significant as they increase access to land based foods.

The focus of this article is on three generations of First Nations women and their everyday experiences with traditional, land based foods. The objective of utilizing an ethnographic approach is to provide a highly descriptive piece that reflects the rich interactions among the generations of women. The ethnography is complemented by participant observation and semi-structured/informal interviewing, I documented local food practices to provide understanding to the meanings generated through the performance of local foodways and through the social interactions between three generations of women. In so doing, I am able to offer insight on the importance of local foodways and how they contribute to personal and community identity. Jones (2007) believes that food choice and meanings are influenced by numerous factors, including culture. This will be an important factor to consider, especially within this context. Although this article focuses on First Nations culture, it is almost impossible to not account for the Western culture that has infiltrated many First Nations communities. In addition, Jones states that “while ethnic identity often has a bearing on symbols and consumption patterns, it exists in conjunction with other identities, some of which predominate in one or another

context” (p. 162). Insight will be giving regarding the tensions that exist in maintaining these food practices within a society increasingly influenced by modern Western lifestyles. Market foods, in particular, and the attitudes associated with eating “globally” have come to affect the taste or preference for local, land based foods, especially among younger generations. Despite Western influence, local culture, as it relates to food thrives in the Kasabonika Lake First Nation remains a critical part of community life.

Methodological Implications

The current study is an extension of research completed by the Indigenous Health Research Group (IHRG) in Kasabonika Lake First Nation and Wapekeka First Nation. The research conducted by the group focuses largely on the benefits, risks and viability of traditional, land-based diets in northern First Nations communities in Ontario. This particular study centres on Kasabonika Lake First Nation. A community-based approach to research was upheld through the entire research process. The research establishes a strong foundation with ethnographic, participant centred methods.

Community Profile

Kasabonika Lake First Nation is a remote, northern community located approximately 615 km north of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Kasabonika Lake First Nation is an Oji-Cree community. The main languages spoken are Oji-Cree and English. It is located within the boundaries of the territory described by the 1929 and 1930 adhesion to the James Bay Treaty of 1905. Kasabonika Lake First Nation consists of more than 26,000 acres of land, surrounded by water. Kasabonika Lake First Nation moved to its present location in 1962 and achieved full reserve status on Jan.

13, 1976. The community was originally located five kilometres down the Asheweig River. Until then, it had been considered a satellite community of the Big Trout Lake band (Sagatay, 2009).

The registered population of Kasabonika Lake as of August 2013 is 1,072. Of those included in the registered population, 998 (501 males and 497 females) live on the reserve (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC], 2013). Kasabonika Lake is accessible year-round by air. During the winter months the communities are accessible by a winter road constructed over the snow and ice. Much of the food brought into the community is either flown in or trucked in during the winter months. Hence, the community bears an immense cost of living. There are three private, family owned stores within the community. The Northern Store, operating under the North West Company, is the community's main staple for their daily shopping needs.

The community also houses a school. Programs are offered from junior kindergarten to high school. Unlike many other smaller First Nations in this region, Kasabonika is fortunate to have a school that covers both elementary and secondary school grades, which means their children are not required to leave the community to attend high school in more urban centres like Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay. Not only does this mean children do not have to leave their families and communities at a young age, it also helps in retaining language and cultural practices. In addition to the elementary and secondary school, there is also a special education program, a day care centre, and an arena (Mamow Shawaygikaywin, 2009). The community offers various health care services. Many of the services are offered through the Emily Anderson Memorial Nursing Station.

Ethical Considerations

In recent years, trends in academia have led to the incorporation of research that is performed “with” and “for” First Nations peoples, rather than research done “on” First Nations peoples (Smith, 1999). A shift within the dominant research paradigm is certainly welcomed. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) have produced *Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People* that assist institutions and researchers in conducting ethical, yet culturally sensitive research with Aboriginal peoples; a position that promotes this positive shift. Within these guidelines, the CIHR (2007) have stated that “research in Aboriginal communities should give way to an understanding that Aboriginal people have an inherent right to be agents of research in contrast to mere passive subjects when the research topic involves their community or culture” (CIHR, p. 19). Previous research within Kasabonika Lake First Nation has fostered relationships built on respect and appreciation. Research that values this “relationship-building process will result in shared power, equitable resourcing and mutual understanding, and will help the research proceed in a manner that is culturally sensitive, relevant, respectful, responsive, equitable and reciprocal with regard to the benefits shared between the research parties and the [First Nations] community” (CIHR, p. 19). The current research was guided by these principles and strives to ensure that all parties are respected and valued throughout all stages of research.

Pseudonyms are being used to maintain participant anonymity. Participants were willing to use their real names, but ethics protocol requires that participants remain anonymous. The research was conducted according to research protocols established in the initial planning phases for the larger research program with the Shibogama First Nation Tribal Council, Kasabonika Lake First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils and the University of Ottawa. All research

activities underwent full ethics review and were approved by the Research Ethics Boards at the University of Ottawa.

Ethnography

The current project is grounded upon ethnographic approaches and complementary methods that when used appropriately, obtain a greater understanding of the contemporary reality of First Nations. Ethnographies study the processes and meanings within a cultural system. Ethnographies are valued within the research process as it permits the researcher to produce knowledge from an intense, intersubjective engagement (Clifford & Marcus, 1986 and Clifford, 1988). The given nature of the ethnography allows the researcher to become immersed in the community by participating in the practices and experiences associated with larger cultural and social practices (Johnson, 2011). Most often accompanied by varying iterative investigative methods (that is, participant observation, an interview technique or a combination of both) ethnographic research enables researchers to engage in daily life practices to gain firsthand awareness of what life is like in the particular cultural context. Within this particular study, participant observation (along with informal, conversational interviews) was utilized to engage meaningfully with the study group. Gittelsohn, et al. (1996) believe that it is important to “explore topics in-depth using multiple, open ended data gathering techniques” (p. 369) and that ethnographic research has the ability to effectively contextualize the topic under consideration. Gittelsohn, et al. (1996) believe that “changes in food gathering and hunting patterns have had social repercussions due to meaning attached food and foodways” (p. 367). Tracing the social networks around First Nations foodways allows for a greater understanding of the meaning these traditional, land based food hold, or in some cases, used to hold. An ethnographic approach, in combination with participant observation will enhance understanding of the meanings around

traditional, land based foods and the activities associated with them. Additionally, by looking at food preference and its association with taste and palatability, further insight on the colonization of local foodways is gained.

Participant Observation

Using participant observation as a foundation for research provides a platform for active engagement in the daily activities and events centred on culturally relevant food practices. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believe that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (p.92). Participant observation facilitates learning through exposure or involvement in the day to day activities of the study group. During the beginning of the research, more time was spent simply observing, but as I became more comfortable and the women became more comfortable with me, I became much more active in my participation. I took advantage of my time spent with these women to really learn from them. The women were so eager to teach me and I was willing to learn as much as I can. During my six weeks within the community, I practically spent every day at Joanna's teepee. On most days, I went to the teepee for noon and then left around six or seven in the evening. This was a general pattern, not every day was exactly the same. The amount of time spent at the teepee was dependent on the procurement/processing activities needing to be completed. I also spent a considerable amount of time at the teepee because it provided a space to observe the food choices of these women. In most instances, casual meals or feasts occurring within the teepee offered a variety of foods, with a combination of traditional, land based foods and market foods. Much of the traditional foods that had been procured were processed here.

Because much of the processing occurred within the teepee, this space also provided a snapshot of who most likely held the traditional knowledge to prepare these foods for consumption. In this instance, having knowledge of how to process these animals fosters a greater connection to their food, and in turn, their culture. Because the teepee is an ideal space for gatherings over food, it makes it an ideal location to observe the food choices of these women.

Semi-Structured/Conversational Interviews

When necessary, semi-structured or conversational style interviews were employed to garner further understanding of the discourses relating to food choice among the generations of women. Much of these interviews took place within the teepee. These interviews were essentially conversations which occurred in and around the teepee, or at the homes or offices of these women. These interviews should be considered, rather, as purposeful conversation. While these conversations were aligned within the research requirements, they also fostered relationships between the women and me. In one instance, I was in the teepee with Colette. We were chatting about Colette's experiences growing up and the transitions she faced. Colette grew up on the land. But with settlement, her life quickly changed. She explained this information to me through an intimate and emotional story. Sharing these stories is what has made this research so rewarding. Wilson (2001) reflects upon story as method within research. He suggests that story is congruent with the relational dynamic of an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2010). Wilson believes that when you consider the relationship that evolves between sharing story and listening, "it becomes a strong relationship" (Wilson, 2001, p.178). Kovach (2010) describes the benefits of implementing what she refers to as the conversational method. This method stems from what other researchers (Thomas, 2005; Bishop, 1999; Absolon & Willett, 2004) often refer to as storytelling, yarning, talk story, re-storying, or re-remembering. The conversational method

consists of “gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core” (Kovach, 2010, p. 40). Many of the interactions between these women often consist of some form of storytelling. The stories were engaging, knowledgeable and reminiscent all at the same time. Colette said to me on a number of occasions, “there are a lot of teachings in our stories” (2011). Keeping these interviews focused on conversation and connection was extremely important to me. Although the objectives of these interviews were to gain a better understanding of the discourses at play, these “interviews” show their value in the relationships they fostered. The chosen methods helped to foster the relationship needed to understand the three generations, the similarities and differentness among them, as well as the roles of the women that lend to their cultural identity.

Profile of the Three Generations of Women

The three generations are each unique in their own way but also united through mutual values of kinship, compassion and consideration for one another. I became close with each of these women but built a special friendship with one of the women in particular, Collette. I would like to provide a brief description of the family. This will help to categorize the three generations of women. There are certainly similarities between the three generations; however, of interest too are the differences between them. Composing the first generation of women is Jeannette, her two sisters and the daughter’s Aunt Charlotte. These were the women of the first generation who were most present within the teepee. The first generation of women was in the age range 60 and above. Joanna is an Elder who holds great esteem within the community. The term Elder, in this instance, refers to a person who is well respected in the community. In the Kasabonika Lake First

Nation, age is not always a defining characteristic. An Elder is a person who may be recognized as a teacher and a mentor. This person is typically an authority on the histories of the community and culture (St-Jéan, 2013). Joanna is certainly this type of person, and especially so within her family. Joanne is quiet and relatively shy in front of people who she is not acquainted with. Most of my time spent in the teepee was time spent with Joanna along with her daughters, granddaughters and extended family members. There were times spent in the teepee where I would simply sit back and watch Joanna. Her skill processing the land-based foods is impressive. Joanna and Collette would take the time to teach me these skills. But the speed at which Joanna cleaned and filleted fish made it difficult to catch every turn of the knife. Joanna and the other Elders that frequented the teepee possessed a similar set of skills. These women also completed the tasks with extreme efficiency. The women who represent the first generation are similar in the sense that they are living well by doing what they know best. This ultimately refers to their continued participation in culturally relevant activities, their celebration of local foodways and their roles as critical knowledge bearers.

However, that is not to say that this generation has not had to contend with challenges. Women who are part of this generation quite possibly had to face the most difficult situation in having to lose their children to the residential school system. The motivation behind this generation's passion to carry on these significant cultural practices is clear. At one point, the possibility of completely losing one's cultural identity was all too real. Now, this generation is taking every step possible to ensure that younger generations have the opportunity to share their knowledge of these cultural practices. From my time spent with the family, it is clear that Joanna has taught her children well.

Joanna's four daughters, Collette, Karina, Gale and Felicity largely compose the second generation of women. This group of women range in ages from 35 to 50. Collette is the eldest daughter. She left the community to attend residential school. She returned after school and lived in and out of the community before settling down back home in Kasabonika Lake First Nation. She lives with her daughter Denise and her young son, along with Collette's son. She works in the community. Collette's job connects her with the community as she often organizes workshops, afternoons for crafting, activities in association with holidays (Canada Day or Aboriginal Day) or events around traditional foods. Collette is extremely social, warm and open. She always makes sure that people from the community feel welcomed to join in on the festivities that occur at her mother's teepee. She will often make announcements over the radio or through the walkie-talkies inviting community members to the teepee to share in the foods prepared by her and her family. Her sociable nature joins her family with the rest of the community and in doing so, fosters collective cultural resiliency.

Karina is the second eldest daughter. She works in the band office. Her husband is a prominent hunter within the community. Because of her husband's status, Karina organizes food sharing initiatives within the community, as well as among her family. Karina has a job at the band office. When she is not working she cares for her children, along with one of her granddaughters. Karina, along with her sisters, is concerned with nurturing her family's connection with their culture. Aside from her job at the band office, Karina also worked with the IHRG as a community coordinator, hence her interest in such food sharing initiatives. She always ensured that the community, her family and her mother in particular, have a steady supply of traditional, land-based foods. I always thought that Karina filled the role of a "provider" quite well, but not just when it came to supplies or locally procured foods. When

speaking with the family at the onset of the research project Karina was keen on partaking in the research initiatives. She saw the value in capturing her and her family's life as a way to move knowledge across generations and communities and provide opportunities for youth to engage with their culture.

During my time spent with the family, Gale, the second youngest daughter of Joanna, was out of the community to take care of her daughter who was in the hospital giving birth. From the time I did spend with Gale I came to know her as women who is very family-centered and who has a great sense of humour.

Felicity is the youngest of the four daughters. Her attributes and manor remind me of her mother. They are both a little more reserved, shy perhaps. Flora is a stay at home mom. She has four children under the age of 13. Flora is very connected to her family's culture. The three other daughters are of course very connected with their culture as well. Perhaps it is that Felicity always seemed to be by her mother's side that I say that. Perhaps it is the fact that Felicity has always been a part of the community, as she has not spent significant periods away from Kasabonika Lake First Nation. Because of this, Felicity is extremely knowledgeable of her family's culture and of the culturally relevant activities associated the local foodways. Although I spent a lot of time with Collette when in the teepee, Flora, however, was the one person that I often looked to as a guide. At the beginning stages of my participant observation, I watched how she interacted with her mom and the other Elders in the teepee. She was also so helpful and I certainly wanted to behave in a similar manner. Felicity's daughter Hannah, who is the spitting image of her, is just as helpful. I have seen her on numerous occasions, running in and out of the teepee with a single log for the fire. Felicity is a remarkably nurturing mother, daughter and sister.

Each daughter has a unique role within the family. However, that is not to say that these roles conflict with each other, rather, their roles act in conjunction with the other. There is a harmony among Joanna and her daughters. I believe that this harmony stems in part from their passion to reclaim and revitalize cultural practices. The four daughters, who comprise the second generation in this instance, represent those who are reclaiming their culture. These women all spent time away from the community during their youth and missed out on significant opportunities for learning. Although they maintain a strong sense of their traditional knowledge, I often heard the women say, 'I am still learning', or 'one day I will be able to learn how to make pemmican like my mom'. Like the first generation of women, this group is also motivated to provide younger generations with opportunities to engage with their culture, their family and essentially, the land. In some instances, the second generation of women act as a liaison between the first and third generation, as a language barrier between the Elders and those of the youngest generation sometimes prevents effective communication. This is not the case within this family, however, instances were observed within the field that did support this.

Although you can sense the affinity between each of the women, their connection with each other is further nourished through time spent within the teepee. That sense of harmony is somewhat tested as the youngest generation of women tend to show resistance towards traditional foodways or particular cultural practices.

The third generation of women, the youngest generation, range in ages from seven to 25. Certainly the most varied in age. Composing this generation are Delia (Collette's daughter), Josie (Karina's daughter), Amelia and Hannah (Felicity's daughters) and Charlotte's granddaughter, Danica. With generations one and two, there are some similar characteristics or experiences that somewhat define the generation. However, the third generation is less static. I

believe that this may stem from the fact that this generation grapples with two cultures simultaneously and perhaps, less effectively than generations one and two. Youth across all cultures are moving steadily away from any traditional lifeways that may have been introduced. Youth dedicate much more time and energy to activities that may not necessarily reflect their cultural background. In Kasabonika Lake First Nation, the youth spend time engaging with social media platforms, television or video games, and depending on their age, spend time raising their very own children. This is the case for both Delia and Josie, who both have young sons of their own. Western influences infiltrate the lives of the youth, possibly motivating their choices. The various preoccupations that influence choices around food and opportunities to engage within the teepee will be discussed in further detail in subsequent sections.

The Effects of Sustained Colonial Presence on the Traditional Diet of First Nations of Northern Ontario

There are a variety of factors that affect people's food choices. For First Nations peoples these factors must be understood within the context of rapid dietary change brought about by Western colonization and the shift from a predominantly local land based diet to one that draws on Western store bought foods. In this section I will focus on these changes and how they have impacted local foodways in the Kasabonika First Nation.

The history of colonization in Canada includes, but is certainly not limited to, the forced settlement of many First Nations. The dramatic shift in lifestyle created numerous challenges. During this shift, living off the land was ultimately replaced with sedentary lifestyles. Through a process of Treaty signing, the once semi-nomadic peoples in this region of northwestern Ontario were gradually forced to live in permanent settlements and take up more Western based lifestyles. The introduction of a permanent store was critical in this transformation, where people

once needed to get on the land to acquire their food, to suddenly having food sources readily available year round in the store. This process forever changed the foodways of the First Nations in the Northern parts of Ontario. Robidoux et al., (2010) completed research in the Sandy Lake First Nation (a First Nation with comparable realities, landscape and culture to Kasabonika Lake First Nation) that highlighted the importance of traditional, off the land foods within the community and within the culture. They stated that:

The creation of the store had immeasurable impacts on local lifeways, in particular hunting and gathering subsistence practices. For the first time in their history, people in Sandy Lake were not totally reliant on hunting and gathering for survival and increasingly turned to the store for daily sustenance. (p. 17)

A very similar sentiment may be said of that of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. The community has significantly altered since the time of contact and has continued to modify as gradual stages of European intervention were implemented. These transitions grossly affected not only food procurement practices, but the types of foods people ate, which has had deleterious effects on the health of people in this region.

The rapid change from the consumption of a cultural group's traditional foods to the adoption of a Westernized, market food rich diet, is known as the nutrition transition (Downs, Arnold, Marshall, McCargar, Raine & Willows, 2009). Additionally, Samson and Pretty (2006) describe the nutrition transition as an "abrupt shift from consumption of wild foods to processed foods" (p. 531). This transition of delocalization occurred rapidly as access to market food increased. The implementation of the store created a dichotomy with regards to food choices. For the first time, First Nations were given a choice. The dichotomy places food into a series of categories; traditional/modern, First Nations/"whiteman", healthy/unhealthy, etc. Many First

Nations negotiate this dichotomous food relationship daily. It is a choice that influences health and one's cultural identity:

In the grocery store, the rows upon rows of tinned foods, the all-too-often wilted and blemished fruits and vegetables, the sweets and processed foods – all exorbitantly priced and all 'whiteman's food' – are reminders of another, more immediate and material imposition. These 'whiteman's foods', while admittedly eaten in quantity by many people, are at the same time understood to directly affect the constitution of the Cree person. These foods, in other words, are symbolically polluting and weakening. (Adleson, 1998, p. 15)

A number of complex factors combine to allow market foods to dominate the food choice of many First Nations people. Although it may not always be the preferred choice, it at times is the easiest choice. Quite simply, market foods have gained such popularity because they are convenient and typically require less time to prepare. Perhaps, the matter of convenience and availability makes this food choice a much more viable one. As Adelson (2000) contends, "canned and prepared foods have become something of a routine necessity" (p. 102). Through her research in a Cree First Nation in Northern Quebec, Adelson documents the importance of Cree food as part of a triad that fosters wellness within this population. Adelson believes that one very significant distinction between traditional, land based foods and market foods has been lost. She states that, "over the generations, however, and with the melding of Christian doctrine and Cree beliefs, the question has come to revolve less around the origin of belief or practice and more around the incongruity between food's availability and its value" (p. 103). She suggests that the vast availability of market foods alters the value and significance of traditional Cree foods.

What Adelson describes above is evident also in the Kasabonika Lake First Nation as evidenced during one occasion where I was working in a teepee with Joanna, Felicity and

Colette, when Colette's son had come to visit. Joanna and Felicity were preparing pemmican, while Colette and I were plucking geese. Her son had come in and asked his mom, 'what's for dinner?' Colette looked around the teepee. There was an abundance of traditional, land based foods available that were available for him to eat. He responded, by saying that he wanted something quick. Colette reminded him that there was macaroni and cheese in the cupboard. The conversation between Colette and her son occurred at a very interesting moment in that the pemmican was almost completed. Joanna sat on the ground with a couch cushion beneath her. Her long skirt draped over the cushion, almost covering it completely. She sat close to the fire. The pemmican was placed in the pan (the bottom portion of a steel, 45 gallon drum) and Joanna continued to stir it over the fire. Pemmican takes days and days to make. It requires an immense amount of time, effort and patience. First a large quantity of prepared fish (that is, fish that has already been dried for at least a day) is placed on racks above the fire. It is then smoked for hours. Once the fish has been smoked the skin and bones are removed. The fish is broken down in to smaller, more manageable pieces so that it can be flaked and picked through for bones. Once complete it may be served with blueberries or with fish oil. The fact that the son had come into the teepee in search of a 'quick meal' as his grandmother and aunt were finishing one of the most laborious and highly nutritious meals points to the shift in food choices for many younger people in the community.

This shift from locally procured foods to a diet that is increasingly dependent upon market foods is a transition that has progressed over many years and one that can be attributed to various complex intersections. One of the most influential factors is the intercultural engagements between First Nations and European settlers. Interactions between the two cultural groups perpetuated changes among the foodways of the First Nations people. The growing

dependence upon market based diets may be linked to a change in taste for traditional, land based foods, especially among the younger generations of First Nations. Mosley (2004) investigates the changing foodways of the Senegal peoples under the colonial rule of the French. The people of Senegal and the First Nations people of Canada share a similar history in that they were subjected to prolonged oppression at the hands of a colonial other. Their lifeways were altered vastly through a series of assimilatory practices used to devastate their culture. The residential school system effectively degraded First Nations culture by exploiting children. The people of Senegal also face a similar history. Younger generations were methodically dissuaded from their cultural heritage by the French 'assimilationist' style of education (Mosley, 2004, Cusack, 2000 and Le Brun, 1979). Mosley (2004) continues to assert that:

These children were essentially taught that speaking their native tongue and savoring their native activities and foods was both wrong and subject to punishment. These began as difficult lessons to digest. But eventually, further removed from the shock of cultural and economic disempowerment experienced by their ancestors and elders, consuming bread and other French foods did not connote nearly the same level of betrayal to cultural identity in the conscience of these young generations. For elders, watching their young progeny evolve in their tastes was painful. As youth break from tradition, especially when it is to give deference to the food of the colonizer, any existing generation gap becomes increasingly agitated (p. 55).

As previously discussed, abandoning First Nations foodways in favour of a diet in conjunction with contemporary, Western foodways/lifeways has produced and continues to reproduce tensions within and among the generations. The “agitated” generation gap is concerning as it has the potential to perpetuate the loss of traditional foodways/lifeways. Mosely (2004) believes that “when a group's foodways are threatened, the older generations [cling] to their foodways tightly, wavering only negligibly to [Western] encroachment” (p. 54). Negligibly may not correctly characterize the food choices of the older women who are part of this research as contemporary

realities do not allow even the older generations to consume a diet that is based principally on locally procured foods. It simply is not feasible. A number of factors including associated financial burden, the presence of skilled hunters and the time required impact the availability of land-based foods (Pal, Haman & Robidoux, 2013). With that being said, through conversation and participation with the older generations of women, it is certainly their preference and a choice that also solidifies connections with their culture. Heldke (2003) has stated that "colonized cultures often have adhered to their own food practices as one important symbolic way to resist colonial incursion... resources may be in the possession of the colonized, but if they are able to prepare familiar foods ... then people still control their own cultural life on at least some levels" (p. 10). This may be representative within each of the generations. However, it is important to understand that their food choice and the power in which it signifies stems from very different places. Mosley (2004) has described taste as salvation. Food choice has the "ability to liberate oneself even when under the rule of a cultural Other. Accentuated through ritual, familiar tastes have the power of transport. To wake up on a day of cultural celebration and consume a symbolic meal is to revert, even if only temporarily, to a realm of cultural autonomy" (p. 61). Although the older generations of women seem to make food choices that will help connect them to their past lifeways, it seems evident that they continue to make these food choices as a way to promote their continued significance and place within the lives of the younger generations of women. By choosing locally procured foods over market foods re-establishes their cultural significance.

Although many of the Elders are aware of the nutritional and cultural benefits of traditional, land based foods, many youth are either unaware or unconcerned with these benefits. Prior to contact, Aboriginal diets and consumption patterns arose from complex and holistic food

systems. These traditional foodways provided health benefits far beyond nutrition. However, in terms of nutrition, information suggests that traditional diets are able to supply a healthier pattern of fats and a greater amount of vitamins and minerals than Aboriginal peoples' current consumption patterns. Not only are traditional foods valued from cultural, spiritual and health perspectives, but the activities involved in their procurement and distribution allow for the practice of cultural values such as sharing and cooperation (Willows, 2005). For the women of Kasabonika Lake First Nations, local food practices offer the opportunity for meaningful intergenerational exchange.

Many youth (across all cultural realities, not just First Nations) seek convenience meals more frequently. The store offers a variety of foods that not only peaks their curiosity, but in most cases fulfills their desires for alternate food choices (Adelson, 2000). In response, there are families who are deliberately attempting to retain more traditional diets and to instill positive associations to land based foods and their procurement/preparation practices to their children. These families often act as community resources and knowledge bearers who share their traditional foodways with their families and other families in the community. Joanna and her family have taken an active role in the community preparing traditional foods and sharing them in a variety of settings throughout the year. Although there are numerous, complex intersections that affect food choice within a First Nations perspective, the role colonization played is of particular interest. Reflecting upon the colonization of taste or palate will offer interesting insight when considering the food choice of the younger women within the family.

Food Choice and Intergenerational Engagement within the Teepee

Over the course of the fieldwork for this project I had the opportunity to participate in many forms of food practices, some within the privacy of people's homes/teepees, or in more public domains. Food is an important part of any cultural celebration in the community and for people like Joanna, it offers opportunities to actively participate in community events. For her, participation primarily means contributing to the preparation and distribution of traditional foods. In some cases Joanna would host community feasts, openly inviting people to engage in food preparation activities held in and around the teepee. On other occasions, she actively participated in public events making sure that traditional foods are a key part of the menu. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to participate in many feasts, most notably the one that took place to celebrate Mother's Day. However, there were several others that were held in accordance with Traditional Food Week. In this particular article, the Mother's Day feast will be the primary focus of analysis, but I include observations from feasts held throughout the Traditional Food Week to provide further descriptive details of these local foodways, social engagements as well as the food choices among these generations.

Observing Food Choice and Preference during Community Feasts

Besides memorial feasts and community cookouts, the Mother's Day feast is one of the largest in the community. The feast often takes place at Joanna's teepee (it used to take place in the community recreation centre, but as a result of the Northern Store burning down the year previous, the Recreation Centre was turned into a makeshift Northern Store). All members of the community are welcome. Colette said that, "when we have our family gatherings we just cook lots of traditional foods and then invite the community to come visit us and have a meal.

That's how we share our food" (2011). Her family's eagerness to share their food is an expression of their sociability and further reinforces the connection between food and meaningful social engagement. Engaging with the women while preparing foods for the Mother's Day feast provided an opportunity to observe the food choices among the generations of women.

I arrived at the teepee early. The preparations for the Mother's Day feast were in full swing and I knew there would be plenty of opportunities to lend a helping hand. As I made my way up to the teepee I could hear the laughter erupting from the teepee. The smoke was funnelling from the top of the teepee. It was a good sign that plenty of food preparation was already underway. I entered to find a number of pots on the fire and many people present. Joanna and her sisters were there, along with Karina and Gale. I asked Gale what I could do to help. She handed me a knife and a bowl of moose meat. I started cutting up the moose meat for a stew. Joanna and the other Elders were working together on a variety of other dishes. I should note that in this particular instance, the term Elder refers to a person who may be recognized as a teacher and a mentor. This person is typically an authority on the histories of the community and culture (St-Jéan, 2013). Typically, when feasts are held within the community, the Elder women are responsible for the processing and preparation of the traditional food items. Days prior to a feast, traditional food items (depending on the season, these items may vary from fish, beaver, moose, duck, goose, etc.) are brought to the teepee by hunters. These hunters are usually male, family members of Joanna. Joanna, her sisters and friends within the community work hard to process the food items. Despite the hard work, the time together also affords the women with an opportunity for important social engagement which has clear value to everyone involved. Having spent many hours in the teepee with these women, specifically when animals were processed and

prepared, I could sense the intimacy that was shared during these interactions. These interactions were not just about the processing of food items, they afford the opportunity to engage with each other in a culturally relevant space and in meaningful ways. Culture is fortified in a variety of ways, but within this community it is often tied to traditional foodways. While the older or more experienced women process the food items, younger generations of women frequent the teepee. Although their roles differ the opportunity for meaningful engagement does not change. Simply being within the teepee offers rich experiences and opportunities for the transfer of traditional knowledge. The Elder women seize these opportunities to teach the younger generations the knowledge required to prepare traditional, land based meals. The fact that this particular feast was a Mother's Day celebration, it held even greater significance as mothers, daughters and granddaughters worked collectively in making the event possible.

To make the feast a successful one, the women coordinated many different types of food processing and food preparation tasks in making an array of dishes. Much of this preparation was completed days in advance as some dishes require a significant amount of preparation time. For example, a large amount of geese was brought to Joanna's teepee days before the Mother's Day Feast. The men had dropped off close to 50 geese at the teepee. The geese were piled up on to a table outside while some were brought into the teepee. The weather was favourable so many of us prepared the geese outside. A fire was started outside. We had garbage bags to place the discarded feathers. Joanna and her sister sat by the fire. Colette, Felicity and I sat on a picnic table, where we each had a goose in our laps ready to pluck its feathers. The women all worked extremely efficiently. They would often clean at least three geese before I could finish one. Felicity showed me how to cut off the goose's wings. Once the feathers were cleaned, the women hold the goose over a fire to burn off any of the excess feathers or down. The goose is

waved over the flames for a few moments and then rubbed with your hand (protected by a glove or oven mitt) to remove any fragments of feathers, quills, or down. Once the geese are cleaned, the geese are ready to be butchered. The geese are sectioned into larger pieces if the goose is being smoked, or broken down into smaller pieces if being fried or used in a stew. The women are very proficient with this task as well. Because there was such a large quantity of geese brought to Joanna's teepee, a class of grade six students had come to join in the activities. The students helped the women clean the geese. There were some students who looked very comfortable cleaning and preparing the geese, while others seemed less unaware, perhaps less knowledgeable about how to prepare traditional, land based foods. One of the young girls displayed much skill and knowledge with respect to the animals and of the traditional foods. She showed the rest of her classmates how to butcher the geese. She made sure to show her classmates how to remove and sufficiently clean the gizzards. As she carefully prepared the geese there was a certain pride in her actions and her classmates watched intently as she went to work. Her skill and knowledge was evidence of the significance her family places on traditional, land based foods and the activities associated with its procurement and preparation. Her grandmother, Charlotte can often be found participating in the activities in and around the teepee. Her bannock is some of the best in the community. She always ensures there is plenty of bannock, especially on special occasions like that of the Mother's Day feast.

The Colonization of Taste and its Effects on Food Choice

Graesch, Bernard, and Noah's (2010) approach to the study of foodways is of particular relevance in this instance. The authors believe that the "evidence of food choices and practices can be used to demonstrate pre- to postcolonial era continuities in native lifeways, [and that] the varying circumstances of intercultural interaction may compel different decision making

processes” (p. 215). The decisions and food choices of the younger generations of women highlight the areas of continuity; however, these food choices also represent a departure from First Nations foodways. The gradual departure from First Nations foodways is all that more concerning considering the significance these foods hold both culturally and socially. Taking the contemporary reality of First Nations communities into account, Graesch, et al. (2010) believe that “food may be employed in colonial settings as a marker of identity, a covert or explicit symbol of resistance, or a means of signaling affiliation...” (p. 215). The acts or variations of them are performed by the women, either consciously or subconsciously, and vary depending on the age of the woman. It is clear that the older women employ First Nations foodways (and the social engagements associated so strongly with such foodways) to signal their affiliation and dedication to First Nations foodways. On the other hand, there are some younger women who make food choices that would affirm their preoccupation with contemporary foodways. The food choices made by the younger generations of women, in combination with their (ex)changes within the space of the teepee, demonstrate the colonization of taste. Continuing to utilize the observations made from the Mother’s Day feast, the differing food choices among the generations of women will highlight the effect colonization had on the First Nations foodways and thus, the impact on the preference and palate for these locally procured foods.

The women’s preparation for the Mother’s Day Feast proved fruitful. There was goose stew, boiled goose, moose stew, bannock, potatoes and a variety of other non-traditional foods, like hot-dogs and macaroni and cheese. There were also dishes that blur the lines between traditional and modern, or foods that represent a hybrid cuisine. Bannock (bread composed largely of flour that is either baked or fried) is one of the most recognizable and culturally

profound foods that represent the hybridization of cultures. There are other instances when contemporary foodstuffs are combined with traditional, land based foods. For example, when a goose or duck stew is prepared, chicken noodle soup packets are often added. Although the dish incorporates Western, processed foods, the stew is still considered “traditional”. The same may be said with the preparation of bannock. Dishes that combine both traditional and market foods are very popular among each of the generations. These dishes provide a sense of familiarity in that they combine First Nations tradition (which provides a sense of comfort to the older generations) while simultaneously incorporating ingredients that make these foods more palatable for younger generations.

At this particular event, the food choices of the Elders and of the younger generations differed to a certain degree. Overall, most of the women who came to the teepee were delighted by the variety and access to such traditional foods. However, there was one young female whose food choices were notable. She was in her early twenties. She entered the teepee. She brushed the smoke from the air around her face, as her eyes winced. She grabbed a plate and began making her way around the fire, opening pot after pot. She took the lid off the pot of the goose stew and quickly returned the lid to the pot. She did this with each of the pots. She finally settled upon hot dogs and macaroni and cheese, along with a piece of bannock. I was intrigued and questions quickly filled my head. Perhaps the foods were not familiar to her. Perhaps she did not always have access to these traditional, land-based foods and felt more comfortable making choices that she was more familiar with. Without wishing to offend or to appear judgemental about the food choices the person was making, I followed up by speaking privately to Colette who I had grown quite close to; to ask her what she thought might influence such food choices. Colette (2011) said that this person, like many other young people in the community, “are not

familiar with the traditional foods because their families, often times, do not have the same access to these foods in comparison to other families.” She continued by saying that this occurs because “families are limited by the amount of time and rising costs associated with hunting, trapping and fishing” (Colette, 2011). This is a formidable barrier that exists for many First Nations communities. These barriers require attention so that First Nation communities have sufficient access as to meet nutritional needs, as well as needs that fulfill a portion of one’s cultural identity. She then concluded by saying that this is exactly why her and her family put on these sorts of feasts, so that community members are provided the opportunity to have traditional foods as part of their diet. This young women’s food choice, in comparison to women older than her, was notably different. Many of the people who entered the teepee grasped this opportunity to consume traditional, land based foods.

As the commotion around the teepee settled, only Joanna, her daughters and one of her youngest granddaughters, Hannah remained in the teepee. Colette had a plate of goose meat on her lap. With her hands, she gently tore the meat from the bones of the goose. Colette said to me, “I’m going to eat this like we used to” (2011). She reached over and grabbed a soup can that had goose fat in it. She took a few tablespoons of the reserved goose fat and drizzled it over the goose meat. I joined her, fixing a plate similar to hers. Very little of the animal is ever wasted. For instance, Joanna’s daughter Gale reserves the feet of the geese as somewhat of a delicacy. At another feast at Joanna’s teepee, I remember Gale sitting around the fire with a bowl of prepared geese feet in her lap. She sat and nibbled away at the small amount of edible skin on the feet. Another example of using the animal, fowl, or fish in its entirety is through the preparation of what some members of the community refer to as, “fish gut salad”. When cleaning and preparing the fish (usually Suckerfish or Whitefish) the innards of the fish (air sacs, fish roe, intestines,

etc.) are reserved. They are usually fried with oil and served as is. Many of the older generations of women are familiar with the assortment of animal tissue (i.e, organs and intestinal tissue) and know how to prepare them in a variety of ways. This was clearly evident among Joanna and her four daughters. However, I recall a moment in the teepee with Colette and her daughter, Delia. I was speaking with Colette about pemmican when Delia asked, ‘What’s pemmican?’ I will admit I was quite surprised by this question, especially, considering that pemmican is something her grandmother is known and revered for in the community. Joanna expressed on numerous occasions her desire for the younger generations to continue to learn and partake in culturally significant practices around traditional, land based foods. Although Joanna and her family are extremely supportive and encourage the younger generations to partake in such exchanges, some of the younger people are not receptive to what is being offered. The dismissal of these locally procured foods demonstrates the effects colonization has had on the palate and preference for traditional First Nations culinary practices. In this context it is important to note that “taste is simultaneously a thread of commonality and a measure of distinction” (Mosley, 2004, p. 50). This could not be more apparent especially when documenting the variations in food preference between the generations of women.

Results & Discussion

For the older generations of women, it is clear that the preference for certain foods (in this instance traditional, land based foods), along with its associated practices indicate their collective desire to remain connected with their culture. The younger generations of women demonstrate a measure of distinction through their food choices. By choosing contemporary, market foods over those foods that have been locally procured, the influences of Western cultural practices are evident, yet it is also evident that younger generations are expressing their

autonomy by choosing contemporary market foods over the foods of their parents and grandparents:

On a basic level, [taste] is one of several sensory abilities that we share with others worldwide. On a more complex level, it is a tool by which we are able to identify preferences and detestations, hence distinguishing ourselves from others. By understanding taste we can gain insight into the specific foodways and culture of a given group of people. Further examining taste, how it endures rigidly or conforms malleably in the face of new social stimuli, we can learn much about the social interactions of groups. (Mosley, 2004, p. 50)

Documenting the differing food choice among the generations of women highlights the social significance of these interactions occurring around food and how each generation experiences these interactions. The experiences and the associated foodways vary among the generations. The older generations of women cherish and celebrate their traditional foodways. This is evident in the amounts and variety of locally procured foods they consume, but also in how much time they dedicate to the practices around the procurement and processing of these local foods. For the older generations of women, their everyday celebration of land based foods is their way of recovering traditional foodways by regaining cultural strength and individual and community well-being (Turner & Turner, 2007). Joanna and her daughters understand it as their responsibility to preserve and revitalize their traditional foodways so that the younger generations of women can reap the various benefits associated with locally procured foods. However, when examining these interactions and the limited presence of the younger generations of highlight areas that may be addressed at the family and community level. The social stimuli of the younger generations of women must be considered when observing what influences their food choice, as well as their choice to engage in the activities occurring within the teepee. While understanding the motivations of the younger generations are considered essential, it is also

important to thoroughly consider the pre- and postcolonial contexts to further understand the “mutable and varied meanings of food, as well as its role in the negotiation of changing identities and social relationships” (Graesch, et al. 2010, p. 234).

Turner and Turner (2007) assert that, “despite the heavy losses and injustices endured through the colonial era, many Indigenous peoples today are more interested in looking forward, in renewing their connections with their lands and cultural heritage, and look to [recover] their traditional foods” (p. 65). In doing so, First Nations peoples solidify their cultural identity, increase wellness and make advances towards fostering resilient communities. Adlson (1998) believes that “Cree food, *iyiyuumiichim*, is a fundamental and necessary basis for ‘being alive well’. ‘Being alive well’ is thus linked to a land-based heritage, as the land and the animals are as central to ‘being alive well’ as the state of one’s own physical and social well-being” (p.13).

She continues by suggesting that:

Food production and consumption are fundamental elements in the articulation of a distinct Cree identity. In the same way, *miyupimaatisiun* [‘being alive well’] is linked not only to procuring and eating Cree food and to ‘traditional’ Cree practices but also to a sense of identity in the contemporary context. ‘Being alive well’ is inextricable from Cree ideology and is thus imbued with significance in the broader context of contemporary Cree life. (p. 13)

What I have described above are the many instances where women in Kasabonika carry out these traditional foodways within their own contemporary landscape and what these practices entail.

Their ability to carry out these practices daily highlights the women’s ability to maintain ancestral practices in a contemporary context. When food practices are shared among the women, acts of cultural continuity are produced and reproduced. When older women share their knowledge and experiences with the younger generations it expresses their desire to foster cultural cohesion. This process also reiterates the importance of implementing initiatives that are

community-based as these practices are part of a sustainable and autonomous process born out of traditional Aboriginal perspectives.

Conclusion

The changing foodways of these First Nations women bear an immense impact on the cultural resilience of these women and for their community. These foodways were at one point vilified. From the perspective of Europeans, these foodways were deemed uncivil and through a process of colonization and industrialization, First Nations foodways were, and continue to a certain extent, to be replaced with foods and practices accorded with modern, Western lifestyles. The colonial relationship that has come to affect the foodways of the First Nations combines a complex set of intersections. Although the relationship was seen at times as mutually beneficial, the relationship undoubtedly severed connection to land, ultimately altering the First Nations foodways. This, in turn, allowed the admission of “other”, more acceptable foodways. Mosley (2004) believes that:

This is especially the case in a colonial relationship in which the dominant people hold in esteem their own foodways, dismissing alternatives as unsuitable. To question not just the aesthetics, but also the edibility of the Other's diet, is to question the legitimacy of its foodways, its culture, and its civilization. In this instance, the cultural aversion (rational or irrational) is largely the basis on which the dominant group marginalizes the Other. To eat (or not eat) a particular food is to be considered primitive. To be considered primitive is to be marginalized, often through ridicule and forced change. Applying its own system of preferences to this unfamiliar environment, the colonial power hones in on taste to force changes upon foodways. (p. 52)

The role of taste in the changing foodways of these First Nations women is in important consideration. It is one that upon observation seems to effect the younger generations more directly. On that note, it is important to recognize that foodways and foodstuffs may change position over time (Mosley, 2004).

If, with increased familiarity, it is deemed that a once unfamiliar food item is actually pleasing to the taste, it may gain gradual acceptance. Then, as barriers erode and psychology changes, the Other may come to accept the colonizer's foodways free of scrutiny precisely because they are different and, in some cases, lend to easier preparation and consumption. (Mosley, 2004, p. 53)

Arguably, market foods do require much less preparation when compared to those foods that have been locally procured. The preparation of pemmican was described earlier and nothing about its preparation connotes ease. It would seem that the youth in the community have accepted these market foods, not only for their convenience but for their perceived cost. Examples like this highlight the effects of sustained colonial presence within First Nations communities and how they have been translated over time and history to continue altering the local food practices of the community members of Kasabonika Lake First Nation.

These land based food practices persist in many First Nations communities and it is clear from this research the significance these practices and foods carry today. I feel particularly grateful to have participated in and observed these culturally relevant activities. My participation in these specific acts designed to transfer knowledge and reinforce culture highlighted the older generation's willingness and desire to share their foodways as they experience them. Experiencing these practices allowed me to gain a greater understanding of how this knowledge around local foodways is shared. Many of the women taught me as they would teach their own children the importance of these practices. From this, I was able to appreciate the significance of these exchanges and of these local foodways. Experiences like these demonstrate the powerful acts that foster cultural continuity through these women's land-based food practices and foodways.

Elders like Joanna and Charlotte, as well as Joanna's daughters (Colette, Karina, Gale and Felicity) actively participate with the functions occurring in the teepee and continue those practices within their daily living. It is important that these women carry out these foodways within their daily lives as a means of relaying their significance to their children. Although market foods are more consistently available throughout the year (Pal, Haman, & Robidoux, 2013) and access to these market foods is a far more efficient process, continued efforts need to be made to celebrate the significance of traditional, land-based foods. This provides the opportunity for the community to come together to work towards a common desire that is already expressed by many of the community members themselves. Joanna's family works effectively towards providing opportunities for community members to nourish themselves with locally procured foods among the numerous feasts held at Joanna's teepee. Pal, et al., believe that "making traditional foods more accessible to all community members would enable individuals to make healthier food choices and also promote the persistence of an important aspect of First Nations culture" (p.148).

These women have felt the impacts of colonization and its effects on their local food practices. They are making concerted efforts to support these foodways so that they continue for generations to come. However, with that said, there are tensions that reside among the generations that may implicate the transmission of these foodways. Although younger women do participate in activities concerning traditional, land based foods, attitudes persists that affects not only their participation but their connection with their culture. When younger generations of women do not partake in these food practices, it challenges cultural continuity by increasing gaps of knowledge among the generations. As such, community-based initiatives that increase access

to traditional, land based foods must be supported at the community level. Simultaneously, initiatives that foster intergenerational exchanges around local foodways require further support. Initiatives focusing on these exchanges between generations of women will prevent the erosion of culturally significant food practices. Developing initiatives that foster these foodways will solidify their significance among the younger generations of women.

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Thesis Conclusion

From the beginning stages of this research, I intended to highlight the daily lives of three generations of First Nations women. The purpose of this was to illustrate their connection with one another and their connection with their culture. Through involvement in culturally significant exchanges occurring within the space of the teepee, these women continue to nourish their familial kinship, strengthen the knowledge of future generations and foster individual and community wellness. Adhering to community-based approaches and learning from the experiences and conversations derived from participant observation, I was able to obtain a greater understanding of the exchanges between the three generations of women, the significance of the teepee and their local foodways.

In essence, this thesis documented the culturally significant exchanges between three generations of First Nations women from Kasabonika Lake First Nation. The three generations of women, although all unique in their own way, exhibit trends that are distinctly similar within each respective generation. The first generation of women (Joanna, her sisters and Charlotte) are deeply enmeshed within their cultural traditions. Collette, Karina, Gale and Felicity, the women comprising the second generation are revisiting their cultural roots. Many of the women who are in this second generation had left the community at a young age to attend residential school. As their mother grows older, their desire to learn from her only strengthens. The third generation of women varies greatly. The youngest one in this generation, Hannah (7 years old) is fascinated watching her mother and grandmother in the teepee. Of course, her time in the teepee is interspersed with running around outside and jumping on the trampoline. However, she shows interest in helping out around the teepee, whether it is carrying in fire wood (one small log at a

time) or helping to pick out the small fish bones from the pemmican. The older women in the third generation (Josie and Delia) were very sporadic in their attendance. I did see these women observing their mother's and grandmother, but rarely did I see them participate. There could be numerous reasons as to why this is occurring. First, the young women's participation could have been impacted by my presence. Or perhaps they were preoccupied with other matters during those times I had spent in the teepee. My own interaction with these women was limited because focus was placed upon the traditional practices in which generation one and two were more centrally involved. These experiences allowed me to explore the women's receptivity and resistance towards these culturally significant practices and exchanges. What is certain is that learning more from this younger generation would be valuable in understanding the complexities of traditional cultural practices within the influence of modern Western influences. With that said, utilizing a generational approach did, however, allow me to document the unique experiences of each generation.

Most of my ethnography and participant observation took place within the teepee. The teepee is an extremely meaningful site for these women. The space of the teepee elicits connection to the women's culture which attributes to the overall wellness of these women and their community. I wanted to share these women's experiences that demonstrate the culturally significant activities (largely those around the procurement and subsequent processing traditional, land based foods) and exchanges (the sharing of knowledge through teachable moments and stories) that occur among the three generations of women. I hoped that in sharing these experiences that the voices of the women could be celebrated.

The impetus of this research was the sentiment around the smell of smoke from the teepee. In conversation with Collette, she has mentioned to me that the young women do not like to smell like smoke, as it is a smell that is so very associated with their kookum (grandmother). I immediately began to wonder what implication this discourse had on the younger generation's willingness to participate within in the space of the teepee. Although this was the motivation behind the current research project, there were other stories and conversations that emerged from this research that also deserved further attention. These stories focus on the significance of traditional, land based foods and the space of the teepee.

This research positions the lives of these First Nations women from Kasabonika Lake First Nation at the centre. I set out to document intergenerational exchanges between these women in order to gain a greater understanding of how culturally significant knowledge is shared within the community. Traditionally, First Nations women took responsibility for the processing of many of the locally procured foods. Much of the knowledge exchanged among the women pertains to these skills. My visits within the community took place during peak harvesting months. With that being said, large quantities of locally procured foods were available, which meant that the women were highly focused on the processing of these foods. This rich period in harvesting offers many opportunities to present the younger generations with teachable moments. Children and youth were brought to Joanna's teepee as part of their cultural education to take part in the cleaning and processing of geese and ducks. There were a few children who looked comfortable completing these tasks, while others seemed more unfamiliar with such tasks. In Kasabonika Lake First Nation, teachers are encouraged to bring students to engage in opportunities such as these to demonstrate the centrality of traditional foodways in everyday life. By seeing students in these setting, I was able to observe firsthand the varying levels of

receptivity and resistance among the younger generations. Some of the younger generations were extremely receptive to these cultural practices and took advantage of the opportunities granted to them. There were others, however, who seemed more detached and while not opposed to what was going, were certainly less involved in what was taking place.

Adelson (2000) asserts that ‘being alive well’ is strengthened through the practice of traditional, locally procured foods. The implementation of reserve systems in coordination with the introduction of Westernized stores, have impacted the foodways of many First Nations communities. Kasabonika Lake First Nation is of no exception. Within the current research, the changing foodways of First Nations women demonstrate the complex intersections that have come to shape the current relationship these women have with food, as well as with their culture. Food is an integral notion within this research. Through food people are able to connect people and which was observed on a day-to-day basis with these women. In this instance, however, traditional, land based foods demarcate connections among the generations of women and to their culture. Observing the differences in food choice among the generations allows the transitions through history and time to be appreciated, but to also understand how these women, especially the younger generations of women, experience coloniality.

The experience of each generation proves significant and the opportunity to provide a voice for these women remains. Mosley (2004) suggests there is an “absence of documented sentiment from the earliest generation of the colonized” (p. 61) from Indigenous studies literature, he asserts that “it is this generation, most abruptly subjugated and most unexpectedly introduced to new foodways, whose voice has been most permanently muted by the precision and duration of colonialism” (p. 61). I believe that this current research begins to fill this void. I would also suggest that the findings from this research demonstrate how important the voices of

the older generations are in ensuring the transmission of culture. Through conversation with the older generations of women (Joanna, along with her sisters and Charlotte) it was evident that these women are the most vocal of their history and experiences. These older women, on several occasions, have voiced their concern over the participation, or lack thereof, from the younger generations of women. Although there remains a paucity of participation from the younger generations of women, the foodways, culturally significant exchanges and relationships between these women remain resilient. It is important to remember that each of these women negotiate, cope and experience coloniality in their own unique way. For the older generations of women, the lure of modernity is less influential. But that is not to say that these women no longer need to contend with the politics and power of coloniality. The younger generations of women are coping with far more challenges in having to negotiate their bicultural landscape. Western influences (social media, television, video games, etc.) and the effects of globalization infiltrate all aspects of their lives. As previously stated, youth of all cultures and societies generally move away from the traditions of their parents and grandparents. However, in the context of Aboriginal communities across Canada, the situation is unique due to the overwhelming and devastating colonial legacy. Efforts made by the Canadian government were designed to eradicate the Aboriginal culture to ultimately assimilate Aboriginal people within the civilized, Eurocentric society. Both generations one and two recognize the need to share culturally significant knowledge with their granddaughter and daughters. Their willingness to share their experiences is customary to their role as women and their role as critical knowledge bearers. Many fear, however, that if these culturally relevant activities are not passed on practices will diminish resulting in a loss of culture and, for many, a loss of identity and sense of wellbeing. Documenting the experiences and exchanges among these women suggest that these culturally

significant practices around traditional, land based foods are still very much alive. This vibrancy was most often observed in the space of the teepee.

The culturally significant space of the teepee is an integral piece in the women's maintenance and reclamation of culture. Important deductions may be made when the connections between place and wellness are considered. Wilson (2003) suggests that "current research overlooks the complex ways in which the link between health and place is manifested simultaneously in physical, symbolic, spiritual, cultural and neocolonial relationships to the land on a daily basis" (p. 91). Although health is not the overriding theme within this research, there are important health implications in this thesis. By exploring cultural spaces and traditions, in particular those pertaining to local foodways, it is evident how women are able to celebrate in each other's knowledge and history. The social engagements between the women in the space of the teepee provide an important site for cultural exchange and knowledge sharing. Integral to these culturally and socially significant exchanges is the presence of traditional, locally procured foods.

Documenting these exchanges through the intimate process of participant observation, provided a greater understanding of the cultural significance the space of the teepee and the meaningful exchanges held within this space. However, this research has also highlighted the variations among the generations. These variations are imperative to address as they have the potential to impact cultural resiliency among the future generations of women. As mentioned earlier, the younger generations of women possess a set attitude that guides their motivations and participation within the teepee. Guiding their motivation, again, are their preoccupation with Western influences and lifestyles. Another factor that quite possibly effects the young women's

participation within the teepee is what initiated the current research, that being the smell of smoke. Again, further research is required to help understand their perceived barriers to participation within the teepee. Within a similar vein, further efforts are required that considers the identity of the younger generations and how they negotiate past/present, local/global perspectives while locating their own place within the modern colonial imaginary.

Within the space of the teepee, however, cultural identities among the older generations of women are at their strongest and most vibrant. Here, the potential also exists to foster strong cultural identities among the young generations of women, while also strengthening individual and collective resiliency. Kirmayer, et al. (2011) assert that notions of “resilience are grounded in cultural values that have persisted despite historical adversity or have emerged out of the renewal of Indigenous identities” (p. 88). With each generation, it is important to consider the contemporary context that contributes to cultural identity revitalization or renewal. Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips & Williamson (2011) believe that:

The renewal of identity also involves revisioning collective history in ways that valorize Indigenous identity. Rather than seeing themselves portrayed as more or less noble savages in popular media, or as vulnerable people who were simply duped and dispossessed of their lands and autonomy, this critical history appreciates the scale and scope of the challenges faced by Indigenous people and sees their persistence despite great odds as clear evidence of individual and collective resilience. (p. 89)

In order for these women to maintain or foster their cultural identity, a sense of pride and worth must be attached to this process of identity formation. From working with these women, the teepee is a space that can do just that.

The teepee brings these women together in a space that is both a physical and symbolic tie to their cultural history. Opportunities within the teepee brings generations of women together directly strengthens familial kinships and friendships by providing a space for rich social

engagement. What makes these social engagements so significant is the fact that they occur over the sharing of traditional, land based foods, stories/conversations and, of course, plenty of laughter.

Exploring the culturally significant exchanges among the three generations of First Nations women, highlighted the women's ability to remain vibrant and resilient despite sustained colonial presence. The three generations of women strengthen the bonds they have among themselves within the significant space of the teepee. Resiliency is further cemented through the practice of culturally relevant activities, those pertaining to the procurement and processing of traditional, land based foods, and through the exchange of knowledge around these practices. I consider myself very privileged to have embarked on a research project that seeks to share the voice and experience of the women of Kasabonika Lake First Nation. Through documenting the relationships of these women I cannot help to think of the relationships that I have made with each of these women. To learn and to share in the experiences of these women was truly life changing. Although I encountered some challenges, the time spent with these women are moments that provided a sense of comfort in those difficult situations. I relished each opportunity I had to learn and engage with these women. I am grateful for the time they spent to teach me their foodways and to share with me their stories. It is with great pride that I was thought of as their "little sister". It is a sentiment that I hold close to my heart until this very day. Through the intimate process of participant observation I obtained a sense of how important familial relationships are to these women. I sincerely appreciate their willingness to care for me, to feed me and to engage with me. My exchanges with the older generations of women were quite similar to the exchanges they had with their own children and grandchildren. I felt the genuine desire these women have in carrying their traditional lifeways and foodways forward to

the younger generations of women. Having experienced these exchanges first hand and furthermore, witnessing the exchanges among the women themselves, I am comforted that these culturally relevant practices and spaces will remain a vital source in the reclamation and maintenance of cultural vibrancy.