Zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig:

Re-activating Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin (Knowledge) for Caregiving at the End of Life

Holly M. Prince

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of PhD,

Educational Studies

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO

2024

Abstract

Indigenous peoples have long-standing cultural knowledge of caring for people who are preparing to journey to the spirit world. Settler-colonialism, however, disrupted that continuous intergenerational knowledge transfer by subjugating Indigenous communities to western healthcare systems and invalidating Indigenous caregiving and knowledge practices that have been effective for millennia. To improve more equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples' health, Indigenous peoples must lead the way forward in decolonizing caregiving practices and re-claiming their Indigenous Knowledges (IK) for caring for people at the end of life.

This decolonial and resurgent Indigenous re-search addresses how Anishinaabe *gikendaasowin* (knowledge) and caregiving practices can be re-activated and re-mobilized when caring for community members preparing to journey to the spirit world. With six Anishinaabe Elders and Knowledge Carriers from different communities, we engaged in storytelling and circle sessions to re-ignite and re-vitalize Anishinaabe *g*ikendaasowin as resurging practices in communities. Indigenous wholistic theory guided the re-search through an Anishinaabe-centred re-search paradigm situated in the principles of *mino-bimaadiziwin* (living a good life) and adherence to both community (OCAP) and university (REB) ethical protocols.

The re-search findings underscore the transformative potential of re-activating Indigenous Knowledges practices. This re-activation can empower Anishinaabe caregivers to re-member and re-claim ways of assisting community members preparing to journey to the spirit world. By challenging settler-colonial systems of healthcare, these approaches can reduce the ongoing cultural and physical harms against Indigenous peoples. This re-search also provides a

culturally- and territorially specific account of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and a community-relevant framework for pursuing equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples as they prepare to journey back to the spirit world. It amplifies the lived experiences and end-of-life practices of Anishinaabe caregivers, articulating them in ways that can benefit more Indigenous communities who aspire to re-vitalize, resurge, and apply this IK re-search to their own community needs and contexts.

Keywords: re-activation, re-mobilized, resurgence, Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, Indigenous Knowledges, Indigenous re-search, health and wellness, caregiving, dying and death, preparing for the journey

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Elders past, present and future, for they hold the knowledge, teachings, traditions and future hopes of my people. I extend this dedication to my children, Gabrielle, Arianna, and Xavier, whose futures shine brightly with promise. I hope that by documenting our stories, you will re-member, re-activate and re-mobilize your original teachings from Creator.

Acknowledgements

I once heard someone say that pursuing a PhD is not just an individual endeavour but a family affair; it truly takes a village to navigate this remarkable journey. As I reflect on my own path, I am filled with profound gratitude for the many extraordinary family members and supporters who have walked alongside me every step of the way. Their encouragement, understanding, and belief in me have been invaluable, turning this journey into a shared adventure filled with moments of joy, learning, and growth.

First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for my husband, Darren. As my partner, best friend, and confidant, you have been my steadfast support throughout it all. You have gone above and beyond to be a loving husband and father. Your encouragement, patience and belief in me made this PhD journey possible, and I am eternally grateful for your love. Miigwetch to my wonderful children, Gabrielle, Arianna and Xavier. Each day, I feel incredibly privileged to be your mother, and I am grateful beyond words that you chose me. Your laughter and love have been my motivation and joy throughout this journey.

I want to acknowledge my mom, who was the anchor of our family. She was always there to support everyone during difficult times, offer stability when things got tough, and care for those in need. I miss her every day. To my sister and bestest friend Pierrette, miigwetch for always being there for me and my children. I truly appreciate everything you do.

Miigwetch to my committee members Dr. Kathy Kortes-Miller and Dr. Andrew Allen, internal reviewer Dr. Chris Mushquash and external reviewer Dr. Kathy Absolon. Your insightful contributions and thoughtful feedback have greatly enriched my work. Miigwetch to my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Korteweg, for your steadfast support throughout this entire process.

Your mentorship has been so valued, and I appreciate your guidance throughout my journey, which helped me grow as a scholar.

Miigwetch to my academic mother, Dr Mary Lou Kelley. You have mentored and nurtured my academic soul, encouraging me to embark on the PhD path all those years ago. You believed in my potential long before I could see it myself, and I am immensely grateful for the warm welcome you extended me on the first day when I stepped into your office to talk about dying and death.

Miigwetch to the amazing team at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health at Lakehead University, especially to my friends and colleagues within the Indigenous Peoples' Health & Aging Division. Your support and commitment form the foundation of our efforts, and I deeply value and appreciate the important work you do. Your contributions make a significant difference, and I am truly grateful for your partnership and friendship.

Miigwetch to Elders Beatrice Twance-Hynes, Betty McKenna, Dorothy Keon, Jeroline Smith, Kathy MacLeod-Beaver, and Rosella Kinoshameg. Your generosity in sharing invaluable wisdom, teachings, and personal stories has been a guiding light throughout my PhD journey. Each of your unique perspectives and profound insights have deepened my work and significantly enhanced my understanding of what it means to be Anishinaabe. I am truly grateful for your contributions and their lasting impact on my academic and personal growth.

Additionally, I express my heartfelt thanks to the Seven Generations Educational Institute, The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and the SSHRC for the financial support that made my PhD journey possible. Your contributions have been pivotal in helping me achieve this significant milestone.

Contents

Chapter One: Locating Myself within this Re-search

Boozhoo, Wiiji'iwe nidishinikaas, makwa n'dodem, Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan niindoonjibaa, Thunder Bay *nindaa.* Hello, my spirit name is Wiiji'iwe, the woman who goes along or journeys with people. I am a member of the *makwa dodem* (bear clan), who are the medicine people in Anishinaabe communities.

My spirit name, Wiiji'iwe, was gifted to me by *Nimishomis* (my great-grandfather) Moses Potan Nanakonagis (also known as Nenakawinagos) through a vision I had in 2009, a year after my mother died. According to my family's teachings, not everyone is gifted an Anishinaabe name. It is a sacred and spiritual process that comes from our ancestors. Receiving a name holds great honour but also a great responsibility. It reminds you that your life is part of a larger process and that you are accountable to all your relations.

Nimishomis was one of the most influential people in my life. He was a medicine man and healer within the *Midewiwin* (Grand Medicine Society) spiritual tradition. He was a *jiisakiiwinini* (shaking tent seer) who embodied the Seven Sacred teachings. He lived off the Land, practiced his culture and traditions, and spoke Anishinaabemowin. He died before I was born, but his leadership and teachings live on in stories throughout the Poplar Point, Sand Point and Lake Nipigon areas. My uncles Ron Morrisseau and Theron McCrady make note of my grandfather's influence and legacy in their article that they co-authored with Hamilton in 1995:

> The profound reverence of many Poplar Point people for High Falls appears to derive from the influence of an extremely important figure that links many of the key families of the Band. This individual is Moses (Potan) Nenakawinagos, a noted Elder, Healer and Shaman throughout the Lake Nipigon region. He was born in 1889 and died in 1972. He

> is the grandfather of many of the current generation of Elders and leaders of the Poplar Point First Nation and was an important teacher of these men and women when they were children. Much of what is known about the spiritual significance of the High Falls area derives from traditional knowledge imparted by this important teacher. (Hamilton et al., 1995, p. 14)

I have lived most of my life in my traditional territory surrounding *Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan* (Lake Nipigon), which is not to be confused with *Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan Anishinaabek* (Lake Nipigon Ojibway First Nation), which is an Anishinaabe community in Northwestern Ontario with a land base located at Partridge Lake. I was raised in a small community called Beardmore, which is a small gold mining and forestry community in northwestern Ontario, home to the world's largest snowman. Beardmore is located 198 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, accessible via the Trans-Canada Highway. In 1996, I moved to Thunder Bay, which is on the traditional territory of Anemki Wajew, a signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. I currently live here with my husband, who is Anishinaabe from Onigaming First Nation, and our three children.

I am a registered Indian and a member of *Opwaaganisiniing*, where the pipestone comes from (Cormier, 2016). This community is an hour away from Beardmore by car travel. I feel no connection to this community as I have no experience of living there. No one in my immediate family understands this affiliation to this First Nation community, as we do not know how Nimishomis became registered there or if he ever lived there. However, my maternal grandmother, mother and I are all registered there. My great-grandparents and many of my uncles and aunts are buried in the community cemetery.

In 2015, my husband worked with Raymond Linklater, an Oji-Cree artist from Sandy Lake First Nation, Ontario, to create a painting that reflects who I am as an Anishinaabekwe (Anishinaabe woman) and my connections to *indinawemaaganidog* (all my relations). Figure 3 presents a visualization of this painting: *Nimaamaa Makwa Abinoojiin Makoonsag* (Mother Bear and Her Cubs).

Figure 3

Nimaamaa Makwa Abinoojiin Makoonsag

The painting depicts a well-known location on Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan at Poplar Lodge Park. This picturesque scene is where I feel the most grounded and connected because it is my

family's ancestral territory, where we have lived and thrived for generations since time immemorial. I remember camping here every summer with my extended family as a child. It is a place that holds great significance and memories for me. I carry this legacy by bringing my children back here every summer to camp. My three children, who follow my clan system, are painted as the *makoonsag* (bear cubs). The painting also shows my relationship with all of Creation. I am accountable for my relationships with the environment, the trees, the water, and the Land. As Anishinaabe*,* we are in a relationship with and hold sacred space for everything Mother Earth provides us.

Along the shore to the east of Poplar Lodge Park is the *Namewaminikan* (Sturgeon River), where my ancestors' sacred burial site is located. In 1992, my uncles and cousins protested the development of a dam on this burial site, and their arrest made national news. Sadly, my uncles lost the legal battle in court, the dam went through our family's sacred site, and unearthed bones were exposed a few months later.

To the west of Poplar Lodge Park is Sand Point, where my great-grandparents lived and raised their children, including my maternal grandmother. In the early 1920s, some of the people of Sand Point were displaced by flooding caused by dam construction. I do not know the year when they all left Sand Point, but they moved their families to reside in Beardmore, where my mother was born and raised by her grandparents and parents.

My mother was a beautiful and strong Anishinaabekwe. She died of cancer in 2008 at the age of sixty-four. My father is French and German, born at a railway stop in northwestern Ontario and raised in Beardmore. Genetically, I am mixed, but spiritually and culturally, I have always identified as Anishinaabe. It is what I know and how I feel. I was raised alongside my

mother’s extended family with Anishinaabe teachings, stories and the language of my people. My Anishinaabe identity is my connections to the Land surrounding Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan that I grew up on, the Elders who taught and continue to teach me, and the ever-present role that my mother's extended family plays in my life.

I am honoured to be part of a family lineage with such strong ancestors who taught spiritual traditions and knowledge. As part of these spiritual connections, I was gifted at a young age with the ability to receive visions and dreams. This gift allows me to continue receiving my ancestors' teachings and sharing them with my family and community. As a carrier of these teachings, I follow my Nimishomis' path in life to live according to *mino-bimaadiziwin* (the good life) and continue his legacy of learning and transferring Anishinaabe gikendaasowin to future generations. My Ph.D. journey and the outcomes of my re-search will acknowledge my family legacy and traditions and honour other peoples' stories.

Chapter Two: Beginning the Journey – Re-activating Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin for End of Life

Background

Indigenous peoples have long-standing Indigenous knowledge systems that teach cultural, community-based and caring practices for people who are preparing to journey to the spirit world (Anderson & Woticky, 2018; Duggleby et al., 2015; Fruch et al., 2016; Hampton et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2018). Over 150 years of settler colonialism have tried to invalidate and deny effective Indigenous Knowledge while denigrating Indigenous community-based caregiving practices. Colonialism imposes westernized knowledge systems and subjugates Indigenous communities to Eurocentric healthcare frameworks (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Anderson & Woticky, 2018; Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015; Prince et al., 2019) while perpetuating a profound sense of internalized oppression, challenges to culturally safe care, and dependence on the settler medical system for health services.

To address the inequities and lack of culturally safe care for Indigenous peoples, it is essential to challenge the structural systems imposed through colonialism and the prevailing colonial mindset that disregards Indigenous peoples' Knowledges (Prince et al., 2022). It is then crucial to develop and implement caregiving models and programs that are Indigenous-led and founded on Indigenous peoples' values, beliefs and principles. This approach aims to reduce the ongoing spiritual, cultural and physical harms against Indigenous peoples while ensuring the provision of culturally safe and equitable care.

This chapter is an introduction to the re-search by first presenting an overview of the literature to outline the objectives and goals of the IK-centred re-search and then focusing on an

explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning the re-search's major concepts, ideas, and principles. The chapter also provides an overview of the methodologies used in the re-search, focused on insights into the decolonial approach of the methods and context for the writing of the dissertation.

Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Indigenous peoples in Canada are comprised of three distinct groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Together, they represent the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population, experiencing an increase of over 40%, more than four times the growth of the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2017). Indigenous peoples have relatively poor health outcomes compared to the rest of Canadians. Life expectancy is up to 15 years shorter for Indigenous peoples as compared to other Canadians (Government of Canada, 2018.) When age-adjusted, rates of chronic and terminal illnesses are also higher amongst Indigenous peoples, including arthritis/rheumatism (25% vs. 19.1%), hypertension (20.4% vs. 16.4%), asthma (9.7% vs. 7.8%), and heart disease (7.6% vs. 5.6%) (FNIGC, 2007). Diabetes is considered an epidemic with rates more than three times higher than the non-Indigenous Canadian population, with over 80% having the Type 2 variant (FNIGC, 2012). The occurrence of chronic diseases and illnesses increases with age, with nearly half of Indigenous peoples aged 60 years or older reporting four or more chronic health conditions (FNIGC, 2012).

Indigenous peoples are dying of illnesses where they would benefit from care; however, the significant challenges in accessing equitable and culturally safe care dissuade and push them away when they are in the greatest need. Healthcare programs in Canada are designed and delivered according to Eurocentric westernized norms and settler-colonial knowledge systems.

Colonialism perpetuates systemic and structural conditions that harm and reduce the quality of life for Indigenous peoples, resulting in complex health issues and additional barriers at the end of life. To improve the quality of life of Indigenous peoples and their access to equitable, culturally safe care, oppressive settler-colonial systems must be challenged and reduced to open space for systems of care founded on Indigenous Knowledges and practices.

Introduction to the Re-search

Purpose of the Re-search

This decolonial, Indigenous re-search provides a community-relevant and culturally/territorially specific account of Anishinaabe views on caregiving, dying and death to demonstrate a resurgent model of more equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples. The lived experiences and IK end-of-life practices of Anishinaabe caregivers are articulated to be explicit so that other Indigenous peoples and communities can recognize, understand and benefit from this IK re-search. Through this re-search and re-activation of IK practices, Anishinaabe caregivers can remember and re-claim ways of assisting community members who are preparing to journey to the spirit world while challenging settler-colonial systems of health care to reduce or eliminate ongoing harms. Indigenous community-based re-search is the methodology that can identify practices of health, healing, wellness and balance based on IK or Anishinaabe gikendaasowin. This methodology focuses on stories, strengths, and resilience "to re-cover, re-cognize, re-create, re-present, and "re-search back" using our own ontological and epistemological constructs" (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 6).

Re-search Questions

This re-search's central question is how can Anishinaabe gikendaasowin (Indigenous Knowledges) be re-activated and re-mobilized as resurgent practices by Indigenous caregivers who support community members as they *zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig* (prepare to journey to the spirit world)? This re-search will also address the following re-search sub-questions:

1. How do Anishinaabe caregivers understand and describe Anishinaabe community-based knowledge and caregiving practices at the end of life?
2. What is the role of Elders in this cultural resurgence?
3. How can caregivers and Elders work together for end-of-life care in communities, according to Anishinaabe gikendaasowin?
4. How can decolonizing ways of caring for their own people at the end of life contribute to a re-birth of Indigenous Knowledges, self-determination and resurgence by Indigenous communities?

My re-search specifically uses 'activation' as a means of empowerment for Indigenous scholars to "affirm and activate the holistic paradigm of Indigenous knowledge to reveal the wealth and richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences, all of which have been systematically excluded from contemporary educational institutions and from Eurocentric knowledge systems" (Battiste, 2002, p.4).

Indigenous wholistic theory guides the re-search through an Anishinaabe-centred re-search paradigm situated in the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. My dissertation's chapters are organized by the four directions and the center where all four doorways intersect and interrelate

to Indigenous wholistic theory. Within each direction, I have embedded the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin to reflect my re-search plan.

I use storytelling and *bzindamowin* (learning by listening) as my methodology to learn, understand and honour Anishinaabe caregivers' lived stories, strengths, and capacities. Indigenous relationship building, based on relationality and *indinawemaaganidog* (all my relations), informed all re-search methods and decisions, including how I recruited participants for the re-search. I approached and invited six Elders and Knowledge Carriers with whom I have been in relationship with for over 16 years. These Elders come from six different Anishinaabe communities in northern Manitoba, northwestern Ontario, and northeastern Ontario and have been pivotal in my learning about *zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig* (preparing to journey to the spirit world). As I have worked with and been mentored by each of these Elders over many years, I asked them to continue this relationship of learning and teaching by participating in this re-search with me. They all readily agreed as this re-search embraces and honours our long-standing relationship and their impact on my personal and academic journey in end-of-life care.

I used a mixed-methods approach to my re-search supported by Kovach (2010), involving Indigenous methodologies for gathering the stories while using non-Indigenous methods for making-meaning of the stories. The Elders shared their knowledge and wisdom with me through individual storytelling sessions and a group sharing circle session. I also wrote oral and heart memory notes before and after each session with each Elder as a reflective practice to extend my learning and deepen the Anishinaabe gikendaasowin that was being transferred to me. I then conducted a thematic analysis to organize and make meaning from the stories and identify

codes. These codes were then further collapsed into themes refined based on the direction of the Elders and my re-search questions.

Decolonial Focus of the Re-search

The critical issue that my re-search addresses is the resurgence of Indigenous Knowledges (IK), such as Anishinaabe gikendaasowin for zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig (preparing to journey to the spirit world), by re-fusing, re-futing and re-placing the denigration of IK by settler-colonialism. I am committed to an agenda of decolonization in my re-search that stops harms against Indigenous peoples and dismantles systemic colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Battiste, 2013; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012). My re-search is decolonial in how it focuses on the transfer and renewal of Indigenous Knowledges and the resurgence of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin caregiving practices in Indigenous communities. I prioritize Indigenous scholars to acknowledge and amplify their theoretical contributions in strengthening IK. I also honour traditional teachings and practices by incorporating Anishinaabe concepts that are imperative for my decolonizing process. The first instance of an Anishinaabe word is italicized throughout my re-search, followed by the English interpretation. The English interpretation is not included in the remaining uses of these specific Anishinaabe terms.

Finally, I am following Absolon's (2011) emancipatory approach to Indigenous re-search, which involves hyphenating verbs beginning with "re-" to emphasize the process of re-searching or looking again for Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing:

> I now hyphenate re-search, meaning to look again. To search again from our own location and to search again using our own ways as Anishinaabek is Indigenous re-

> search. It is the process of how we come to know…As we re-search, we re-write and re-story ourselves (p.21).

As an Anishinaabe re-searcher with a circle of Elders, I will re-write and re-story our ways of coming to know end-of-life education, care and well-being in this re-search and dissertation.

Outline of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into eleven chapters. In chapter one, I locate myself within my re-search and outline my connections to family and community. Chapter two, Beginning the Journey: Re-activating Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin for End of Life, provides a brief description of the context and theoretical and methodological outlines for the re-search. Chapter three, The Impacts of Colonialism on Indigenous Health: Inequities and Barriers to Care, outlines colonialism as the cause of dis-ease for Indigenous peoples and ongoing inequitable access to often harmful or culturally unsafe health care. Chapter four, Understanding Health through Indigenous Knowledges, Spirit, and Life Journeys, describes the theory of Indigenous Knowledges, Wholistic frameworks and IK-centred teachings on caregiving, dying and death. Chapter five, Anishinaabe-Centred Re-search: Integrating Wholistic Theory and the Principles of Mino-Bimaadiziwin, describes the Anishinaabe-centred onto-epistemologies and re-search framework generated for this re-search.

The next five chapters are two-fold in their purpose: they discuss in detail the Anishinaabe theories that undergird the re-search and both shape and inform the new knowledge generation, organized according to Indigenous wholistic theory with the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin embedded within the five directions. Chapter six, Waabinong (Eastern

Doorway) – Beginning, History and Vision, details the theoretical rationale to re-affirm the need to use *Anishinaabemowin* (our original language) throughout the dissertation. It also highlights *Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan* (our connection with the Land and all of Creation), where I discuss the importance of Indigenous scholars locating themselves in their re-search and outlining their purpose for conducting this re-search. Chapter seven, Zhaawnong (Southern Doorway) – Relationships, focuses on relational accountability and ethical protocols. I honour *Nokomisag* (Grandmothers) as stewards of knowledge and introduce the six Elders who participated in my re-search. Chapter eight, Niingaabii'ong (Western Doorway) – Respect and Reason, centers on the *Anishinaabe inendamowin* (our way of thinking), where I describe my decolonizing journey within my re-search. Chapter nine, Giiwedinong (Northern Doorway) – Methods and Actions, describes my methodology, which is a braiding together of storytelling and bzindamowin. Chapter ten, *Shkode* – The Centre Fire, honours Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, where I share the stories, teachings, and wisdom of the Elders involved in my re-search. Chapter eleven, Coming Full Circle, brings the Elders' stories back to my re-search questions and evaluates my re-search according to Indigenous ethical principles.

Summary

My re-search involves storytelling with Elders from six different Anishinaabe communities in Ontario and Manitoba. Through the re-activation of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, this re-search challenges settler-colonial systems of healthcare while improving more equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples' health. Indigenous wholistic theory guides the re-search through an Anishinaabe-centred re-search paradigm situated in the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. In the next chapter, I provide background information on the significance of this

re-search, outlining colonialism as the root cause of dis-ease in Indigenous peoples and the lack of access to equitable and culturally safe care.

Chapter Three: The Impacts of Colonialism on Indigenous Health – Inequities and Challenges to Care

Indigenous peoples globally are consistently ranked lower in nearly every social determinant of health compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. This inequity results in significant health impacts, including higher rates of chronic illness and reduced life expectancy (Gracey & King, 2009; United Nations, 2016). This chapter outlines the importance of this research, discussing the persistent effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples in terms of cultural, spiritual, physical, and emotional harms. It also examines the current health status of Indigenous peoples in Canada and identifies colonialism as the root cause of these health disparities. Furthermore, the chapter explains how limited access to equitable and culturally safe healthcare for Indigenous peoples results from colonization and jurisdictional challenges.

Colonialism as the Cause of Dis-ease for Indigenous Peoples

Colonialism has been identified as the fundamental cause of health disparities and inequitable access to health services for Indigenous peoples (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Czyzewski, 2011; Reading, 2018; Richmond & Cook, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). Colonialism entails the physical and ideological domination of peoples, aiming to disconnect them from their culture and resources while establishing and enforcing external and internalized assumptions of the colonizer's supremacy (Pratt et al., 2018, p. 3).

Wilson and Yellowbird (2005) emphasize that the effects of colonialism on Indigenous communities have been profound and far-reaching, going beyond the personal experiences of individuals, significantly weakening self-determination and autonomy, as well as disrupting connections to lands, territories, and resources. By forcibly displacing Indigenous peoples from

their lands, colonialism disrupted their intimate relationship with the Land, which is fundamental to their spiritual and communal welfare (Burton et al., 2011, p.173). This disconnection resulted in an imbalance in the health and wellness of Indigenous peoples, leading to ‘dis-ease’ where "poor health is part of a complex whole reflecting a fundamental disharmony between many members of First Nation communities and their physical, social, cultural, and spiritual environments" (Hudson-Rodd, 1998, p. 56).

This dis-ease is seen in the poor health outcomes that Indigenous peoples continue to experience, as well as in the enduring issues of addiction, mental health, inter-generational trauma, family violence, poverty, and suicide within their communities. This dis-ease is growing in Indigenous communities, as evidenced by the increasing number of deaths related to opioid use. Opioid-related deaths are up to seven times higher for First Nations people in Alberta (Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre & Alberta Health, 2021) and five times higher for First Nations people in British Columbia (Lavalley et al., 2018).

Colonialism as the Foundation for Inequitable Access to Culturally Safe Healthcare

Canada sought to justify colonialism by promoting racist beliefs that depicted Indigenous peoples as genetically, culturally, and intellectually inferior (Turpel-Lafond, 2020, p. 156). These beliefs continue to uphold and perpetuate colonialism through economic, social, and political institutions in the form of structural racism (Loppie et al., 2014). Moreover, colonialism forced Indigenous peoples to assimilate into Eurocentric-Canadian culture through policies and legislation, such as the Indian Act, the reserve system, the Indian Residential School system, and the child welfare system. These colonial systems have been identified as genocidal by Indigenous leaders and activists, as they directly impact and increase violence, harm, and the

extermination of Indigenous peoples (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).

Westernized Eurocentric healthcare systems designed for Indigenous peoples were also founded on colonialism. This is evidenced by three foundational practices, demonstrating that government policy never aimed for health equity in access and outcomes for Indigenous peoples (Turpel-Lafond, 2020). First off, Indigenous people were treated as separate from Canadians through a distinct healthcare system which included federally funded 'Indian hospitals' (Turpel-Lafond, 2020). The primary purpose of these institutions was to address the concerns of white settlers regarding the spread of tuberculosis (Turpel-Lafond, 2020). These hospitals were severely underfunded and provided substandard care compared to non-Indigenous hospitals (Lux, 2016). Secondly, the healthcare system exploited Indigenous peoples by treating them as subjects for non-consensual research and experiments (Geddes, 2017; Lux, 2016; Turpel-Lafond, 2020). This unethical treatment subjected them to exploitation and harm in the name of scientific advancement. Finally, colonialism forcibly removed Indigenous healing practices and medicine and disregarded Indigenous healers and their knowledge (Hudson-Rodd, 1998). This intentional act ensured that Indigenous peoples became dependent on professional hierarchies and Westernized Eurocentric systems for healthcare.

Healthcare Delivery for Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples continue to experience a lack of equitable and culturally safe healthcare rooted in colonization. This is evidenced by jurisdictional challenges experienced by Indigenous peoples when accessing healthcare due to a lack of clarity, ownership, and accountability between federal and provincial/territorial governments regarding the responsibility

of providing healthcare to Indigenous peoples (Gouldhawke, 2021; Lavoie, 2013; Richmond & Cook, 2016). The ambiguity in the responsibility for Indigenous people's health results from three pieces of legislation.

First, the Constitution Act (1867), Section 91(4), gives the federal government exclusive legislative jurisdiction over "Indians and Lands reserved for Indians," which includes First Nations (registered and non-registered), Inuit, and Métis. However, Section 92 of the same act outlines the provincial and territorial government's responsibility for health delivery for people residing in Canada. Secondly, the Indian Act (1985), Section 73(1), includes health-related provisions for registered Indians but does not provide a clear legislative authority for a "comprehensive public health and health service regulatory framework on First Nations reserves" (Lavoie, 2013, p. 2). It also excludes Métis and Inuit and only applies to registered Indians as defined by the Government of Canada. Finally, the Canada Health Care Act (1984) outlines the federal government's responsibility for health, including administering national principles for healthcare and providing financial support to the thirteen provincial and territorial governments to deliver healthcare services through a decentralized system. However, the Act does not mention Indigenous peoples (Gouldhawke, 2021). Due to uncertainty about which level of government is responsible for healthcare services, Indigenous peoples often have to navigate a complex and fragmented system of legislation, policies, and programs to access the care they need.

The lack of clarity and accountability from the government has led to situations where both levels of government narrowly define their responsibilities for providing and paying for health services for Indigenous peoples. This has created a jurisdictional grey area that is a barrier

to healthcare provision (Lemchuk-Favel & Jock, 2004). In addition, the differing approaches to delivering health services between the federal and provincial governments create a policy gap where each level of government considers itself the payer of last resort (Chiefs of Ontario, 2013; Health Canada, 2012). This has resulted in devastating outcomes, including legal rules like Jordan's Principle. The jurisdictional "grey area" also results in challenges in accessing palliative care, including a lack of coordinated, integrated, and equitable care, difficulties with hospital discharge planning and transitioning clients through the two healthcare systems, and miscommunication between the differently funded systems of care (Fruch et al., 2016; Hampton et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2018; Koski et al., 2017).

Due to this jurisdictional ambiguity, the healthcare system designed to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples is often referred to as "Canada's 14th healthcare system" (Lavoie, 2018, p. 280). First Nations and Inuit communities (excluding Métis communities) receive health services primarily from the federal government through Indigenous Services Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB). This branch operates independently from the thirteen provincial/territorial systems of care and provides services to First Nations (reserves) and Inuit communities.

FNIHB provides several programs in the community, including clinical and client care services, community-based and public health programs, and non-insured health benefits (NIHB). In addressing the needs of people with chronic or terminal illnesses, the Home and Community Care Program is particularly relevant. This program was developed in 1999 in response to the need for community-based home care services. It is primarily provided through contribution agreements with First Nations, Inuit communities, and Territorial governments (Government of

Canada, 2019). The Home and Community Care Program provides essential home care services in the community, Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Health Canada, 2009). The program contains nine essential service elements: case management, home care nursing, personal support, and respite services. Additional supportive services, including palliative care, may be provided, depending on the communities' needs and funding availability (Government of Canada, 2019).

Unfortunately, many communities cannot offer comprehensive services for community-based end-of-life care due to limited governmental budgets. Although communities would greatly benefit from collaborative partnerships with provincially funded homecare programs, these services rarely reach Indigenous communities due to uncertainties over funding jurisdiction. Furthermore, when such partnerships exist, they are typically infrequent at best and not coordinated and integrated with the federally funded home care program.

In 2021, the Government of Canada set out to co-develop distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation to improve access to equitable healthcare for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The development of the new legislation will involve Indigenous partners and provincial and territorial governments. The process, however, still asserts this lack of accountability and jurisdictional ambiguity by indicating that both levels of government ‘share some’ responsibility in the provision of healthcare for Indigenous peoples based on sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act.

Inequitable Access to Culturally Safe Care at the End of Life

In addition to the jurisdictional ambiguity of service delivery, Indigenous peoples face additional challenges in accessing equitable and culturally safe end-of-life care (Cajax et al., 2018; Fruch et al., 2016; Hampton et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2018; Koski et al., 2017). The

current philosophies and approaches to care are not culturally safe for Indigenous peoples as they are designed and delivered according to Eurocentric norms and knowledge systems founded on cognitive imperialism and colonialist frameworks. Care for people with chronic or terminal illnesses is embedded within the philosophy of palliative care. The World Health Organization (2015) defines palliative care as an approach that:

> [i]mproves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual. (n.p.)

While the focus of palliative care is on meeting the holistic needs of individuals, it centers on addressing the physical needs through a Westernized Eurocentric lens of care. This is embedded within a healthcare system where dying is medicalized and seen as a linear, biomedical, and physical experience (Anderson & Woticky, 2018). The goal of care within Eurocentric medicine focuses on cure, with death seen as a failure by the healthcare profession within settler society (Clark, 2002; Kellehear, 1984). This contradicts Indigenous perspectives on dying and death, which emphasize the importance of the spirit. For Indigenous peoples, life and death are viewed as a spiritual journey, with death representing the fulfillment of one's purpose on earth and a return to the Creator. Palliative care programs are, therefore, not culturally safe nor reflective of Indigenous communities' values and beliefs related to caregiving, dying, and death and continue to be barriers to culturally safe and equitable healthcare. Anishinaabe Elder Albert McLeod supports this in his reflection on culturally safe health care:

> I don't think that any place will be culturally safe. It might be safer, but I don't think it will be safe because it is not designed by us, whether it is a clinical room or an emergency room. It is always a Western system. I'm culturally safe when I am at home in bed. That is when I feel safe. But the term culturally safer might be more appropriate because it shows that there has been some effort by the system to recognize some of these teachings and how they can demonstrate culture. (A. McLeod, personal communication, November 20, 2019)

In addition to culturally unsafe programs, many communities are in a fluctuating state of crisis due to traumatic deaths and suicides, which overshadow the natural dying process of expected deaths (Grinnell et al., 2011). Also, the boundary between formal and informal caregiving networks is not clearly defined, as healthcare providers are often family members (Kelley et al., 2018). This adds a unique layer to the grief experience in Indigenous communities. Lastly, the cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices fundamental to the care of people living in Indigenous communities are only starting to be documented in the literature (Cajax et al., 2017). Tragically, the number of chronic and terminal illnesses is only increasing for Indigenous peoples (First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC], 2007; FNIGC, 2012), along with the pressing need to develop culturally safe caregiving models and programs. Developing these models requires us to first understand Indigenous Knowledge and recognize how they can support the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples and contribute to models that reflect Indigenous community's values and beliefs.

Summary

This chapter examined the current health status of Indigenous peoples in Canada and situated the discussion within the structural determinants of health. It described the ongoing impact and the cultural, spiritual, physical, and emotional harms of colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples. The chapter then identified colonialism as the underlying cause of health disparities and inequitable access to culturally safe healthcare. The following chapter amplifies the existing literature on Indigenous Knowledges in the context of health and shares Indigenous teachings on the circle of life and caregiving, dying, and death practices.

Chapter Four: Understanding Health through Indigenous Knowledges and Teachings

To develop culturally safe and relevant caregiving models, programs, and services for Indigenous community members as they transition back to the spirit world, Indigenous peoples must first challenge the colonial logic and thinking that disregards Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing. This chapter describes Indigenous Knowledges in the context of health and outlines frameworks for health and healing practices. It also shares Indigenous teachings on the circle of life, caregiving, dying, and death practices.

Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing

Within Indigenous communities, the constructs of truth and knowledge and their transmission reflect a holistic and relational approach. Indigenous Knowledges focus on the interconnectedness of all aspects of the self (Lavallée, 2009) and are "holistically derived from Spirit, heart, mind, and body" (Absolon, 2011, p.31). Wilson (2001) articulates Indigenous knowledge as relational: "Shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, not just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge" (pp.176-177).

Indigenous Knowledges are transmitted through "traditional teaching, empirical observations, and revelations" (Castellano, 2000, p. 23) and translated through dreams and visions (Marsh et al., 2015). Battiste (2002) describes Indigenous pedagogy as "found in talking or sharing circles and dialogues, participant observations, experiential learning, modeling, meditation, prayer, ceremonies, or storytelling as ways of knowing and learning" (p.18). Thus,

the cultural transmission of knowledge and teachings is based on the core values of Indigenous society, organized around mutual aid, reciprocity, family, community, and culture.

Indigenous Knowledges are also transferred through our relationship with the Land. Styres (2017) capitalizes 'Land' in recognition that "Land is spiritual, emotional, and relational; Land is experiential, (re)membered, and storied... Land as a theoretical and philosophical concept, comprises storied and journeyed connections of self-in-relationship—to each other, to our places, and to all of creation—as a central model for interpretation and meaning-making" (p.27-28). Through this relationship and understanding, Indigenous peoples recognize Land as a living being fundamental to our identity. As a decolonial practice, I will also capitalize Land throughout my dissertation except when it is not capitalized in direct quotes.

Despite the continued negative impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems (Coulthard, 2014), Indigenous ways of knowing remain ever-present through blood memory (Holmes, 2000; Rheault, 1999), in the connection to language and ceremonies (Battiste, 2013; Simpson, 2014; Wilson, 2008), and the teachings of ancestors through Elders (Battiste & Youngblood, 2000; Benton-Banai, 1988; Bouchard & Martin, 2009).

Anishinaabe gikendaasowin is interconnected and interdependent. Rheault (1999) describes seven aspects of knowledges within the Anishinaabe worldview: Bzindamowin (learning from listening), Anishinaabe-kendaaswin (traditional knowledge), Manidoo-waabiwin (seeing in a spirit way), Gnawaaminjigewin (to look, to see, to witness), Eshkakimikwe-Kendaaswin (land-based knowledge), Kiimiingona manda Kendaaswin (the Original Instructions given to the Anishinaabe by Gzhe-mnidoo), and Manidoo-minjimendamowin (spirit memory). These aspects are understood to be both a whole and a singular form of knowledge.

In her re-search, McGuire (2013) builds upon some of these aspects and explores how knowledge relates to Anishinaabe ongoing resilience by using storytelling as a culturally specific re-search method. She outlines seven conceptual themes foundational for Anishinaabe understanding, ontology, and epistemology, which include:

1. The land and relationships to the land are foundational. Eshkakimikwe Giikeedaasiwin – Relational understandings and this is land-based knowledge.
2. The relationship between land, spirit, and the Anishinaabe - Kiimiingona manda Giikeedaasiwin are part of the original instructions given to the Anishinaabe.
3. There are multiple realities accessible by physical and spiritual means. Manidoo Waabiwin – seeing in a spirit way and Kiimiingona manda Giikeedaasiwin are part of the original instructions given to the Anishinaabe are evident.
4. There are cycles of life, and the land is sustaining to people. Muskiki Aki means medicine land, which provides life.
5. Anishinaabe values of responsibility and obligation are recognized. Gnawaaminjigewin is the responsibility to look, to see, to witness.
6. There is a need to maintain and continue relationships in the world. Bzindamowin is learning by listening and the relational practice of a good life, mino-bimaadiziwin.
7. Anishinaabe values relating to transformation, renewal, reciprocity, and sharing to maintain life. Manitou Minjimendamowin means spirit memory, teachings on how to live life, and bzindamowin, that is learning by listening, is reflected. (McGuire, 2013, p. 218)

McGuire's conceptual themes reflected in Anishinaabe gikendaasowin are particularly relevant to me because they are based on teachings and stories from my traditional territory

surrounding Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan. McGuire's father, Patrick McGuire Sr., and my mother's first cousin, Norval Morrisseau [renowned Woodland artist], told the stories. The teachings and stories that Norval shares in his art come from Nimishomis (my great-grandfather).

In her reflections, McGuire (2013) describes that "the stories by McGuire Sr. and Morrisseau illustrate aspects of an Anishinaabe worldview leading to an awareness of how an understanding of Indigenous knowledge(s) can contribute to a renewal of knowledge in Anishinaabe society and to ideas of Indigenous resilience" (p. 220). She further asserts that "the Anishinaabe relational worldview is a practiced experience based one. Knowledge is not separate from everyday life; it is practiced in life and interconnected with all other aspects" (McGuire, 2013, p.221).

Anishinaabe gikendaasowin is also centered on kiimiingona manda kendaaswin, the Original Instructions given to the Anishinaabe by Gizhe-manidoo (Rheault, 1999). The teachings, also known as the Seven Sacred Teachings, encompass beliefs and values in mino-bimaadiziwin and convey that people are in constant states of learning. They guide and direct how Anishinaabe people lead their lives, how they interact and care for one another, and how to live a life in balance. Benton-Banai (1988) describes the teachings as follows: "To cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM, to know peace is to know LOVE, to honor all of the Creation is to have RESPECT, BRAVERY is to face a foe with integrity, HONESTY in facing a situation is to be brave, HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation, and TRUTH is to know all of these things" (uppercase in original, p. 64).

Within my re-search, Anishinaabe gikendaasowin positions me as a lifelong learner. This is described by Chartrand (2012), who acknowledges that "Anishinaabe ways of teaching and

learning help the learner to see themselves holistically, which gives them an opportunity to choose to be fully present: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually" (p.157). Furthermore, learning is relational "bound by understanding all our relations. This relationship starts by understanding ourselves first as being, as learners" (Chartrand, 2012, p.158).

Within my re-search, I approach my work with humility. I do not situate myself as an expert but rather as someone who continues to learn about my culture, language, and identity and decolonize my thinking and being daily. I have embedded Rheault's (1999) and McGuire's (2013) reflections on Anishinaabe gikendaasowin within my re-search and learning. These teachings are reflected in my review of literature, scholars, methodology, and theoretical framework, which I use throughout my re-search. I also incorporate spirit in my work and acknowledge the relationship with the Land that grounds my decisions.

Indigenous Wholistic Frameworks of Health and Healing Practices

Indigenous Knowledges are a valuable source of wisdom and guidance for health and healing practices, rooted in fundamental principles and wholistic frameworks. The National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (2014) developed the Indigenous Wellness Framework to ground the teachings from various First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures relating to culture, health, wellness, and balance. Although many Indigenous teachings across Canada, including the Medicine Wheel, have influenced the development of this Indigenous Wellness Framework, no directions (North, South, East, West) are attached as their meanings and teachings differ across the country.

The Indigenous Wellness Framework sees well-being as a balance of the spirit, emotion, mind, and body. These aspects of our being are interrelated and dependent on each other. The

framework describes that each area contributes to a specific outcome: spiritual wellness creates hope and is facilitated when we are connected to beliefs, identity, and values; emotional wellness creates a sense of belonging and is facilitated through attitude, relationships, and connections to community and family; mental wellness creates meaning and is facilitated through intuition, understanding, and rationale; and physical wellness creates purpose and is expressed through wholeness, a way of being and doing. The framework also notes that connection and balance are needed at the individual, family, and community levels.

Within Anishinaabe teachings, the Medicine Wheel also provides foundational teachings that remind us to live our lives in balance in the world and within ourselves. Within the Four Directions Teachings project (2006-2012), Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat describes that the Medicine Wheel comprises many teachings within each direction, all beginning from the East. In her reflections, she outlines the Seven Sacred Directions found in the Medicine Wheel, which includes the Four Sacred Directions, marked by yellow, red, black, and white. Additionally, the upper realm is represented by Father Sky in blue, while Mother Earth represents the lower realm in green. Finally, the self, the spirit that experiences this physical world, is represented by purple and located at the wheel's center.

Indigenous Teachings on the Journey of the Spirit to the Physical World

Indigenous peoples have deeply rooted, ongoing community-based knowledges and practices for caring for people who are preparing to journey to the spirit world (Anderson & Woticky, 2018; Duggleby et al., 2015; Fruch et al., 2016; Hampton et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2018). These practices are grounded in knowledge and teachings rooted in culture. Within

Indigenous communities, the teachings are reflected in the Circle, symbolizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life and representing wholeness and balance.

The Spirit is the center of Indigenous ways of knowing. The Spirit is at the center of life and works in relationship to the body and mind (Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, 2020). Our spirits are on a journey beginning before we are born, where they sit with the Creator and negotiate our journey to earth. Elder Pauline Shirt (2010) describes this as follows:

> Before our spirit enters the womb of our mother, we go on a spiritual journey. In the spirit world, we sit with the seven grandfathers and the Creator. If we want to take the journey into the physical world, we must first ask permission from the Creator to go on this physical journey. If the Creator grants us this request, we then have to learn what our purpose will be on this physical journey, then we must choose our parents. We choose who is to be our mother and father based on what our purpose is. We select a mother and a father who will be able to assist us in fulfilling this life's purpose. The Creator brings them together. (pp. 15-16)

During this sacred time, Beardy (2022) states that each spirit is given several gifts and medicines, including their Spirit name, clan and colours, skills and talents, and free will, essential in shaping a person's identity and purpose in life. At this time, we are given our language to understand these ways of thinking and being. These all become a part of our sacred bundle and provide us with the tools to fulfill our purpose (Shirt, 2010). During this negotiation, we also discuss fated occurrences that will occur to help us live our chosen lives (Beardy, 2022).

The spirit then transitions throughout the Seven Stages of Life, another teaching embedded within the Medicine Wheel. Understanding the stages of life helps prepare Indigenous

peoples for the end of life as the continuum of spirit and knowledge-making journeying back to the Creator. Elder Pitawanakwat (2006-2012) describes the Seven Stages of Life as the following: The first stage of life is the Good Life, from birth to seven years old. It is considered a good life because the child is provided with everything they need from their family and community, including love, support, and guidance. The spirit then moves to the Fast Life when the child prepares for their journey into puberty. Here, they engage in ceremony and fast and enter the men's circle for boys and the women's circle for girls. The Wandering Stage is when people go around to find their teacher and experience things in life. They also begin to question the world around them. The Stages of Truth is looking at oneself through introspection, recognizing our gifts and being honest with ourselves. The Planning Stage is when Anishinaabe evaluates all the information and develops a plan to accomplish their goals. The Doing Stage is utilizing everything you have learned and living your life. The Elder Stage is when you are inducted into the Elder's circle and take on the responsibility to teach the young ones.

Indigenous Teachings on the Journey of the Spirit Back to Creator

As Anishinaabe people journey through these Seven Stages of Life, we constantly learn, evolve, and connect to the commitments made to the Creator when our spirit entered our human form (Best Start Resource Centre, p.9). We understand that once we fulfill our purpose or understanding with the Creator, our spirits return to the Creator. As such, Indigenous peoples recognize dying as a spiritual process (Anderson & Woticky, 2018; Duggleby et al., 2015; Obrien et al., 2013). It is a natural part of the life cycle and is understood as a transition back to the spiritual world and to the Creator. It is a time to pass on knowledge, stories, and teachings. Elder Rosella Kinoshameg from Wikwemikong First Nation describes life and death as follows:

> Life is a circle, an earth walk, a pathway followed throughout life, striving for completeness and wholeness in growing and developing spiritually. A person's earth walk is a journey and learning about life. When completed at whatever age, a person returns to the Creator and to that place of understanding and wisdom. Dying is an important part of completing the Circle. It is life's journey coming to completion and the fulfillment of our purpose. In death, the body dies. The Spirit does not die but goes to the spirit world, to a place of understanding and wisdom, returning to the Creator. With each death, there is a rebirth. With each death, there is a re-learning of ceremonies, rituals, and viewing life in a holistic manner. It is the satisfaction of something good, a new kind of understanding, a new capacity for living, and a more profound wisdom about the meaning of life. (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

As the spirit transitions back to the Creator, it is recognized as a significant social event for the community. Family and community members come together to provide care and support, as kinship and connections to all my relations are the foundation of their culture. They ensure that ceremonial and community-based practices occur so that the person's spirit is at peace and is ready to transition to the next life (Duggleby et al., 2015, p.20). These practices are integral to Indigenous culture and are designed to honour the person's life and legacy.

It is worth noting that when Indigenous people near the end of their lives, their connections to family and community may become even more valuable than access to specialty services (Caxaj et al., 2017). They find comfort and strength in their family, community, culture, language, and ceremonies. Connection to the Land is also crucial when they are dying (McGrath, 2007; Obrien et al. et al., 2013) as it has a spiritual and relational significance that is foundational

to Indigenous ways of knowing, values, and beliefs. The Land is not just a physical place but a part of their identity, and it represents a connection to their ancestors and traditions. For these reasons, Indigenous peoples may choose to remain in the community even if it means not being able to access specialty health care services.

There is a growing movement by Indigenous people to develop community-based and culturally informed programs in the community to care for people who are at the end of life and support that spirit's journey back to Creator (Fruch et al., 2016; Hampton et al., 2010; Hordyk et al., 2017; Kelley et al., 2018; Koski et al., 2017). These programs would provide Indigenous caregivers with culturally and contextually relevant education and training. They would also offer more options for people at the end of life, including the choice to remain in the community to receive care. To do so, however, Indigenous peoples must re-connect, re-educate, and re-vitalize Indigenous caregiving practices and re-claim cultural processes and community-based knowledge related to end-of-life care. Re-search by Fruch et al. (2016) supports the need for this in the following statement:

> Traditionally, our birth was announced to the universe when our mothers went into nature, and our birth fluid seeped into the earth, and we were named and celebrated. Now, as we make our journey back to the Creator, we have lost that acceptance, and we struggle with the natural order. Our community is telling us that we need to regain our acceptance of death and dying, and we need to help each other through this transition and provide supportive care as is done at birth. (p. 3)

Summary

This chapter reviewed the existing literature on Indigenous Knowledges in the context of health. It aimed to create space to understand Indigenous teachings on the circle of life and caregiving, dying, and death practices. This chapter intended to embrace Indigenous Knowledges, recognizing that this form of knowledge has been missing from healthcare literature and program development. The next five chapters outline how I approach my re-search, the theoretical foundation on which my re-search is based, and the methodology that guides my re-search.

Chapter Five: Anishinaabe-Centred Re-search – Integrating Wholistic Theory and the Principles of Mino-Bimaadiziwin

My re-search focuses on wholistic understandings of health, caregiving, dying and death through Anishinaabe ways of knowing, being and doing. To reflect this wholistic approach, my re-search plan will also reflect a wholistic paradigm situated in the interconnectedness and interdependence of theory, methodology, and ethics in the knowledge of the past, present, and future. This relational approach to re-search is supported by McGregor et al. (2018), who built upon Donald's (2012) Indigenous métissage. I provide a foundation for Indigenous re-search in this chapter of my dissertation. I then describe Indigenous wholistic theory and the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. Lastly, I explain how these concepts combine to create a framework for my Anishinaabe-centred re-search paradigm that guides my re-search.

Indigenous re-search embraces Indigenous philosophy, peoples, and concerns; Indigenous re-searchers conduct it, and it benefits Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2010). Wilson (2008) describes Indigenous re-search as an engagement with ceremony and that the purpose of any ceremony is to "build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research that we do as Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world" (Wilson, 2008, p. 11). Rigney (1999), an Australian Aboriginal educator and scholar, further outlines Indigenous re-search as having three fundamental and interrelated principles: "resistance as the emancipatory imperative; political integrity; and privileging Indigenous voices" (p.116). McGregor (2018) defines Anishinaabe re-search as a "form of reclaiming our stories and knowledge through personal transformation while in the pursuit of knowledge" (p.1).

According to Wilson (2001), an Indigenous paradigm emphasizes that knowledge is relational and comprises four aspects: ontology refers to what one believes is real in the world, epistemology involves how one thinks about that reality, methodology concerns how one can use one's way of thinking to gain more knowledge about one's reality, and axiology is related to a set of ethics and morals. I have reflected on these concepts and have created my own Anishinaabe paradigm for enlivening Indigenous knowledge systems as decolonial, resurgent re-search.

Indigenous Wholistic Theory

My re-search is guided by Indigenous wholistic theory, developed by Dr. Kathleen Absolon (2019), an Anishinaabe scholar in the field of Indigenous Social Work. Indigenous wholistic theory is multi-layered, looking to the past, present, and future. It embraces a relational approach to the individual, family, and community. Indigenous wholistic theory is grounded in Land-based and cultural teachings. It recognizes that Indigenous knowledge is ancestral and based on philosophical values, beliefs, and teachings that continually guide people. Lastly, Indigenous wholistic theory has a decolonial focus that requires a foundation of Indigenous and anti-colonial knowledge to "tackle colonial constructs while asserting the power and role of Indigenous knowledge" (Absolon, 2019, p. 27).

Absolon (2019) describes this framework as embracing a wholistic approach that incorporates the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. The framework comprises four directions that connect to spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical elements. In the center is the Self and Center, where all four doorways intersect and interrelate. Within each direction, Absolon describes the foundational teachings that guide wholistic knowledge.

Indigenous wholistic theory begins with Waabinong (Eastern doorway). According to the Medicine Wheel teachings, we begin in the eastern direction, which is the direction of birth and re-birth. We acknowledge that the sun rises in the east, marking a new day, which emphasizes Spirit and vision. This direction also acknowledges new life, where the spirit journeys from the spirit world into the physical or human world. Absolon (2019) describes several foundational elements of Waabinong as the following:

> Beginning and rebirth; inclusion and respectful acknowledgement of Spirit; spirituality is connected to healing; establish your location and position yourself within your practice, as such; acknowledge your genealogy of knowledge; recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, and knowledge; understand that Indigenous peoples have a cultural history that predates colonization; identity: understand the diversity within families, individuals, and communities; and develop a knowledge set about the history of colonization and the mechanisms of oppression. (Absolon, 2019, p.30)

Zhaawnong (Southern doorway) focuses on emotions that honours relationships, community, and heart. Absolon (2019) describes the foundational elements of Zhaawnong as the following:

> Calls for renewal at relational levels; attends to relationships; integrates understandings of diverse relationships; understands kinship systems as moving beyond genetics; identifies community strengths and resources; collaborates with the community to foster healing relationships; utilizes methods that support healthy relationship building; acknowledges the role and contribution of Elders and protocols; and contextualizes issues

> within a socio-political analysis of social problems facing Indigenous peoples today. (Absolon, 2019, p. 32)

Niingaabii'ong (Western doorway) addresses the mental aspect of self and acknowledges the ancestors and Indigenous Knowledges. Absolon (2019) describes the foundational elements of Niingaabii'ong as the following:

> Recognizes ancestors, ancestral knowledge, and power; acknowledges the mental aspects and power of knowledge; asserts and respects Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing; applies a critical analysis and knowledge of the political contexts of practice; develops critiques of the mechanisms of colonialism and engages in critical literacy and critical education with Indigenous communities; is anti-colonial in practice and works to counter colonial ideologies; and acknowledges the ancestors and cycles of life and death. (Absolon, 2019, p. 35)

Giiwedinong (Northern Doorway) is the physical aspect that combines all three other directions in healing and action (Absolon, 2019). Absolon (2019) describes the foundational elements of Giiwedinong as the following:

> Recognizes the healing in being and doing; calls for action and movement; acknowledges the collective work; addresses methodologies of practice from Indigenous frameworks such as sharing or teaching circles, ceremonies, use of nature, and process-oriented action; healing as a restoration of balance using tools such as the Medicine Wheel; the diversity within Indigenous contexts; and encourages a socio-economic analysis of contemporary conditions. (Absolon, 2019, p. 37)

The last direction is the Self and Center Shkode (Fire). Absolon (2019) describes the Centre as where all directions intersect and is the space for balance and harmony in our lives and our connections with others. The Centre is the interdependence and interconnection of all four doorways, teachings and elements.

Seven Principles of Mino-Bimaadiziwin

In this re-search, I acknowledge my responsibility as an Anishinaabe to not only conduct ethical and relational re-search that empowers Anishinaabe and improves their quality of life but also re-search that re-vitalizes and re-mobilizes Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and supports my community in re-claiming caregiving practices. My rationale for conducting this re-search and my re-search protocol are both about enacting mino-bimaadiziwin. Mino-bimaadiziwin is an important foundational teaching for Anishinaabe. Vukelich (2017) breaks the word down to *mino* – in complete peace and balance with all of our relations, without conflict and contradictions, *bim* – along in a continuum and *aadizi* – to live in a certain way. Together, Vukelich (2020) describes *mino bimaadizi* as:

> A way, a verb, it is how you act…it is a living, breathing, acting verb. I want to lead a good life. And if I can do that, it won't just be good for me, I will also be able to positively affect all of my relatives, because if I am all of my relatives, and all of my relatives are me, if I radically and profoundly change myself...then I can positively affect the whole world. (n.p.)

Elder Jim Dumont (2021) emphasizes the teachings of mino bimaadiziwin as bringing us back to our original teachings:

> Us as Indigenous Peoples, if we go back to our original way of thinking, we're culturally obliged to have in our interests the good life for all of our relations and all of our relatives. It's all of the animal world, the plant world, the Earth herself, all of the waters which is her lifeblood and what joins us all together is that we depend on that water for life. (n.p.)

In developing a further understanding of mino-bimaadiziwin, I embrace the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin outlined by the Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.). These principles provide a direction on how to live and learn as Anishinaabe and include *Anishinaabemowin* (our original language), *gidakiiminaan* (our connection with the Land and all of Creation), *Anishinaabe enawendawin* (our way of relating to Spirit), *Anishinaabe inendamowin* (our way of thinking), *Anishinaabe izhichigewin* (our way of doing), *Anishinaabe gikendaasowin* (our knowledge and ways of knowing), and *Anishinaabe inaadiziwin* (our original behaviour, values, and way of living.) The Seven Generations Educational Institute encourages others to use these in any activity, including re-search, which helps us to re-claim who we are as Anishinaabe. As such, I have included these as principles to guide my re-search.

Weaving Together Knowledge – My Anishinaabe-centred Re-search Framework

Within my re-search, I have woven Indigenous wholistic theory with the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin to form my Anishinaabe-centred re-search framework. While developed within Indigenous social work to transform theory into practice, Indigenous wholistic theory is applied to my re-search because of its healing and decolonial focus. My re-search aims to re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, health and healing, and caregiving practices and views on death and dying through a decolonial and resurging approach. Indigenous wholistic theory can,

therefore, provide a framework to guide my actions as a re-searcher and serve as a theoretical foundation for my re-search.

Focusing on mino-bimaadiziwin in Indigenous re-search is not new (Chiblow, 2021; Debassige, 2021; Rheault, 1999). Debassige (2010) explains that Indigenous scholars living and enacting it in their daily lives will automatically embed it as part of their re-search. Therefore, centering on the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin and making them explicit in my re-search seemed appropriate.

Figure 2 illustrates my Anishinaabe-centred re-search framework, which integrates Indigenous wholistic theory with the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. I have chosen to use various shades of purple in this diagram as purple is a healing colour in Anishinaabe communities. As my re-search intends to heal from the harms of colonization through the re-activation of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, I wanted to ensure that the development of my framework also reflected a healing lens.

The next five chapters of my dissertation are organized in the four directions of Indigenous wholistic theory and the center section where all four doorways intersect and interrelate. Chapter six of my dissertation begins with Waabinong, the spiritual realm. This chapter recognizes the legitimacy of Anishinaabe epistemologies and knowledge. Throughout my re-search, I explain how I use Anishinaabemowin, our original language, to articulate foundational teachings and process my thoughts. I then discuss the importance of Indigenous scholars locating themselves in their re-search and outlining their purpose for conducting this re-search.

Figure 2

Anishinaabe-Centred Re-search Framework

In chapter seven, I move to Zhaawnong, the emotional realm, where I outline Anishinaabe enawendiwin, our way of relating. I describe the importance of relational accountability and adherence to ethical protocols to foster authentic and respectful relationships with the community. Lastly, I honour the Elders whose stories are shared in this dissertation.

In chapter eight, I situate my re-search within Niingaabii'ong, the mental realm where I honour Indigenous Knowledges and knowledge production. I describe Anishinaabe inendamowin, our way of thinking, to embrace Anishinaabe Knowledges and ways of knowing. I then introduce Biskaabiiyang as a decolonization approach in my re-search.

In chapter nine, I move to Giiwedinong, where I operationalize all the directions to the doorway. I describe Anishinaabe izhichigewin, our way of doing. I then present my Anishinaabe-centred methodology, which weaves storytelling and bzindamowin together.

In chapter ten, I move to the Center Shkode, where all directions intersect. I honour Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, our knowledge and ways of knowing. I share the stories, teachings, and wisdom of the Elders involved in my re-search. I also recognize Anishinaabe inaadiziwin, our original behaviour, values, and way of living. I discuss how we can re-activate and resurge our Anishinaabe gikendaasowin into healing and action by decolonizing our ways of caring for our own people at the end of life.

In chapter eleven, Coming Full Circle, I bring the Elders' stories back to my re-search questions. I provide reflections on the teachings learned. I then evaluate my re-search according to Indigenous ethical principles.

Summary

This chapter presented my methodological framework, which weaves Indigenous wholistic theory with the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. The visual model also outlined the principles within the five sections and connected them with my re-search plan. The next chapter starts with the first direction of the framework, Waabinong (Eastern Doorway), which articulates the importance of Anishinaabemowin and the importance of Indigenous scholars locating themselves in the work.

Chapter Six: Waabinong (Eastern Doorway) – Beginning, History and Vision

Within the four-directional Circle, the wholistic framework begins with Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway. Absolon (2019) describes Waabinong as centering on Spirit, beginnings, and history. She outlines that the key teachings within Waabinong reflect establishing identity and location and recognizing Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies. Absolon further articulates that this direction requires acknowledging the genealogy of knowledge through understanding the past and present to envision the future.

In this chapter of my dissertation, I recognize the legitimacy of Anishinaabe epistemologies and knowledge by honouring Anishinaabemowin, our original language. I explain how I use Anishinaabemowin throughout my re-search to articulate foundational teachings and process my thoughts, which is imperative for my decolonizing process. I also describe the importance of Indigenous scholars locating themselves with their re-search through enacting Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan, our connection with the Land and all of Creation.

Principle 1: Anishinaabemowin – Our Original Language

The first foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin described in my dissertation is recognizing and respecting Anishinaabemowin. According to the Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.), Anishinaabemowin is "our original way of speaking, which allows us to process and express our thoughts. It is our way of communicating with Creation, with Spirit, and with one another" (p.5). In my re-search, I strive to honour the traditional teachings and practices by incorporating Anishinaabe words and concepts that are imperative for my decolonizing process.

Recently, I received a teaching from Elton Beardy on the sacredness and significance of Anishinaabemowin. He said that re-claiming our language involves more than just memorizing

words. It requires understanding the root sections of words and appreciating how they were put together to truly value and appreciate the spirit of the word. For instance, Beardy used the Seven Sacred Teachings as an example. He explained that if we display the Seven Sacred teachings for others to see and understand, Anishinaabemowin would be like the table on which those teachings sit. Anishinaabemowin is the foundation of understanding our teachings. Anishinaabemowin is essential to our identity as Anishinaabe and our perception of the world.

Learning from Beardy's teaching, I understand that my few words cannot fully exemplify the importance of language. However, incorporating Anishinaabemowin in my writing is a purposeful step in re-claiming my language, which was taken away from my family due to colonialism and the residential school system. To write in Anishinaabemowin, I learned from the Elders, used Anishinaabemowin dictionaries, and actively sought terminology and descriptions. This process has allowed me to engage in language revitalization.

In formulating my dissertation title, I honoured the teachings of Elder Rosella Kinoshameg from Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation Territory, who has been my Elder, Nokomis, teacher and mentor to me in my work for over 16 years in journeying alongside people at the end of life. She explained that *zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig* is a significant and sacred time in people's lives as they prepare to return to the Creator, which involves many sacred teachings. My understanding of these teachings is incorporated into this re-search through the planning and design and my reflections during the discussion chapter.

Principle 2: Anishinaabe Gidakiiminaan – Our Connection and Relationships

The second foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin described in my dissertation is Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan. According to the Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.)

Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan refers to "our connection and relationship to the Land and all of Creation. It is the experience of knowing and understanding the relationships that exist throughout Creation, and understanding your role and responsibility in this relationship" (pg. 11). In this chapter, I explain the teaching of *indinawemaaganidog*, translated as all my relations. I then describe how I enacted gidakiiminaan by locating myself within my re-search and describing my rationale for conducting this re-search.

***Indinawemaaganidog* – All My Relations**

The Anishinaabe teaching of indinawemaaganidog is the principle of living harmonious lives based on a relationality of respect and accountability. All my relations has also been described in the following manner:

> All that is created consciously cares about the harmony and well-being of life; all things are regarded as persons and as relatives. Personhood not only applies to human persons. Plants, trees, animals, rocks, and visible and unseen forces of nature are also considered *persons*. Because they are persons, they have the range and qualities of personhood that are commonly attributed in Western ideology exclusively to human persons. Once this is accepted, it elevates the prevailing view of other-than-human beings to a higher quality of being and moves the nature of relationship to an all-inclusive ethical level. We are all related to one another as persons, and are responsible for maintaining good and harmonious relationships within the extended family of persons. (Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, 2020, p.8)

The teaching that we are all related and responsible to one another is an important concept for Indigenous scholars when conducting re-search. It highlights the importance of

locating themselves within their re-search work (Absolon, 2011; Absolon & Willett, 2004; Debassige, 2010; Graveline, 2000; Kovach, 2009). In Chapter One, I began by introducing myself in Anishinaabemowin, a sacred practice to honour the teachings of my ancestors and my Nimishomis, who gave me my spirit name. I also located myself within my family, community and nation, which shows accountability and authenticity and weaves my personal story with my academic voice (Wilson, 2008). Kovach (2009) describes this Indigenous process of first locating ourselves as "intuitive, launched immediately through the protocol of introductions. It shows respect to the ancestors and allows the community to locate us" (p. 110). Absolon (2008) describes locating oneself in re-search as critically important for “[t]ruth is assured when you weave yourself into the story because your family and community know your truth and you are responsible for your work and what you write, so writing yourself into your story addresses truth” (p. 82).

My Rationale for Conducting this Re-search

According to McGregor (2018), Anishinaabe re-search involves more than revitalizing re-search practices. It aims to understand the reasons behind such practices, including why Indigenous scholars conduct re-search. Absolon (2022) explains that Indigenous scholars engage in re-search for several reasons:

- To re-enact respectful research in our searches with our own people;
- To empower and emancipate ourselves in order to regain our humanity, restore balance with Creation and ultimately live a good life;

- To advance, support, strengthen, revitalize and restore Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, which create Indigenous methodology choices for Indigenous researchers as viable in all re-search contexts, and
- To fulfill family and community obligations when specific requests are presented; the search then becomes a way of giving back and making concrete contributions (pp.177-178.)

Throughout this learning journey, I recognize gidakiiminaan in understanding my own role and responsibility in my relationship with Creation. I also acknowledge that the reasons for engaging in my re-search come from a personal experience which was the catalyst for my re-search. My re-search also focuses on re-activating and re-mobilizing Anishinaabe gikendaasowin to re-store Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

In 2002, my friend Darryl was diagnosed with cancer. I was with him during his illness until he journeyed back home to the spirit world. His family was from Treaty #3 and Nishnawbe Aski Nation territories. Darryl was living in Thunder Bay and pursuing an undergraduate degree in engineering. As his friend and a young person myself, I believed that it was inconceivable that 24-year-olds could die from cancer.

It was during my time with Darryl and his family at the local hospital in Thunder Bay and then at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto that I witnessed firsthand the conventional western procedures and medicines, which I presumed would cure my friend of this devastating disease. During this time, I never heard the words death, dying, terminal, end of life or palliative. I can still vividly remember the last time I saw Darryl. He was sitting up in his hospital bed, eating popsicles. I hugged him before I left and told him I would see him soon. I was sure that he was

getting better and would soon return home. Two days after I returned to Thunder Bay, I received the devastating news in a phone call from his parents that Darryl had passed away.

I was so confused by the whole experience that it became a very challenging time in my own life. I had had many previous experiences caring for sick people and had previously witnessed death and dying with the loss of family members. However, these experiences differed because they involved older people and did not involve sustained time in hospitals or intimate contact with doctors and healthcare professionals. The experience opened my eyes to the extreme gaps and barriers to culturally relevant healthcare for Indigenous peoples. Darryl's family's philosophy on life and death, their meaningful interactions with the Spirit world, the use of traditional healers and medicine, and the need for large extended family members present all pointed to a severe disconnect between their Indigenous ways of knowing with the approach of the westernized medical system. I witnessed an Indigenous family's experience that did not belong in this system of care.

This experience was also different because I was mature enough to understand that what I witnessed was the fragile balance of living while actively dying. I also recognized the significant event of being invited into my friend's sacred space to be a part of his journey as he transitioned to the spirit world. These were two things that I do not feel I was prepared for, which made this experience so difficult. In response to this inner turmoil, my Nimishomis came to me in a vision to tell me that "Creator has put you on this path. You may not understand what this means right now, but someday, it will all make sense to you. It will become meaningful."

The experience of journeying with my friend challenged my values, beliefs and direction in life. It was the catalyst that moved me from working in addictions and mental health to

navigating, studying, and re-searching westernized health systems to improve the care of Indigenous peoples at the end of life. In 2003, a year after Darryl passed, I entered my Master's in Social Work. Given my own experience with his death, I felt compelled and called to action to learn more about the challenges to equitable access in healthcare settings to then improve policies, programs, and services for better care and support for Indigenous peoples at the end of life. I shifted my focus from addictions and mental health to palliative and end-of-life care. I also changed from clinical social work to macro social work practice, focusing on re-search and policy to address the systemic issues that still underserve or harm Indigenous peoples.

My MSW project, *Palliative Care in First Nations Communities: An Examination of the Perspectives and Experiences of Aboriginal Elders and the Educational Needs of their Community Caregivers,* explored two First Nations communities' values and beliefs related to death and dying, access to palliative care resources, and challenges and supports to providing care. This project provided the foundation for working with many Indigenous peoples, communities, organizations, and nations. I worked within colonial systems of care and governments. I also played the role of a navigator and facilitator between Indigenous ways of knowing and westernized Eurocentric worldviews. I have been a part of many successes and amazing things and faced many challenges and ongoing struggles.

I chose to do a Ph.D. in Education at Lakehead University for several reasons. After my mentor and partner in the re-search, Dr. Mary Lou Kelley retired in 2016, I knew I would need to attain a Ph.D. to further my re-search agenda and build upon a robust and successful 13-year program of re-search. As my previous re-search utilized participatory re-search approaches and community capacity development, I recognized the importance of education as a critical feature

of change. Since 2005, I have worked at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH) at Lakehead University, developing culturally relevant palliative care educational initiatives for Indigenous communities. Applying to the Ph.D. in Education program appeared to be a natural next step because my re-search focuses on culturally relevant end-of-life care education with Indigenous peoples.

Summary

This chapter described the first direction of Indigenous wholistic theory and introduced Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway. Within this direction, I embedded two of the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin: honouring Anishinaabemowin, our original language and enacting Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan, our connection with the Land and all of Creation. These sections described how I use Anishinaabemowin throughout my re-search to articulate foundational teachings and process my thoughts and how I locate myself within the re-search. The next chapter describes Zhaawnong, the Southern doorway. Here, I outline Anishinaabe enawendiwin, which describes my ethical protocols and introduces the Elders, whose stories are shared throughout my dissertation.

Chapter Seven: Zhaawnong (Southern Doorway) – Relationships

Within the four-directional circle, the wholistic framework moves to Zhaawnong, the Southern doorway. Absolon (2019) describes that Zhaawnong centers on relationships and the community. She outlines that the foundational teachings of the Zhaawnong address issues of relationships, protocols, accountability, reciprocity, and community. She also acknowledges the role and contribution of Elders and Knowledge Carriers. Absolon further articulates that the Southern Doorway seeks to understand issues' social and relational contexts while identifying community strengths and capacities to pursue healing.

In this chapter of my dissertation, I center on Anishinaabe enawendiwin, our way of relating to Spirit, each other, and all of Creation. I describe the importance of relational accountability and adherence to ethical protocols to foster authentic and respectful relationships with the community. I then introduce the Elders, whom I have had the privilege of learning from and walking alongside for many years.

Principle 3: Anishinaabe Enawendiwin – Our Original Way of Relating

A third foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin described in my dissertation is Anishinaabe enawendiwin. According to the Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.), it refers to "our way of relating to Spirit, to each other and to all of Creation. It is an all inclusive relationship that honours the interconnectedness of all our relations, and recognizes and honours the human place and responsibility within the family of Creation" (pg. 10). In this chapter of my dissertation; I describe my commitment to engage in relational accountability in my re-search. I emphasize the importance of following Anishinaabe and Indigenous ethical protocols and actions Absolon, 2001; Castellano, 2004; Smith, 2019.) According to McGregor (2018), Anishinaabe

ethical re-search protocols highlight the importance of honouring and respecting those who have shaped and contributed to our knowledge. As such, I follow these Anishinaabe protocols by introducing the *Nokomisag* (grandmothers), with whom I have had the privilege to learn from and walk alongside for over 16 years. Their stories are the core of the knowledge I share in this re-search and provide the onto-epistemologies for the re-activation and resurgence of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caregiving, healing, and dying and death.

Engaging in Relational Accountability

In enacting Anishinaabe enawendiwin in my re-search, I commit to relational accountability that holds me accountable for my shared culture, stories, history, and lifelong relationships. Wilson (2001) established the concept of relational accountability in re-search to stress the importance of forming respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples. He describes this as the following:

> As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgements of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. (p. 177)

When Indigenous scholars conduct re-search within Indigenous communities, they are considered to be insiders in Indigenous communities. They are, therefore, held to a higher standard when doing Indigenous re-search to ensure it is done ethically and in a good way. As Indigenous scholars, we must recognize and address the inherent violence of settler-colonialism, particularly its aim to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and settler replacement of Indigenous peoples when conducting re-search in the academy (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck &

Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Cormier & Ray, 2018). There is, therefore, an expectation that the creation of knowledge can have an emancipatory and decolonial effect in that re-search "upholds the pedagogical, political, moral, and ethical principles that resist oppression and contribute to strategies that reposition research to reflect the unique knowledge, beliefs, and values of Indigenous communities" (Martin, 2012, p.30).

As an Anishinaabe re-searcher, I must focus on how I go about gathering, creating, and examining knowledge, as the process is just as important as the outcome. Indigenous re-searchers, therefore, need to explore their own experiences utilizing reflexivity and self-location to provide a deeper understanding of the re-search process (Kovach, 2010). Absolon and Willet (2004) add that reflexivity in re-search is a healing process whereby the "idea of 're-membering' as a research process facilitates a full reconnection. Reconnecting is also healing to our recovery process. Recovering stories, experiences, teaching, tradition and connection…" (p.13). Grounding re-search in Indigenous knowledge through a community-based approach focuses on the "rewriting and rerighting" of Indigenous people's location within history and society (Smith, 1999, p.28). My re-search is only whole or wholistic when it honours the values and beliefs of communities and embraces Indigenous people's traditions, protocols, and worldviews.

Ethical Protocols

My decolonial re-search seeks to challenge and address the harms perpetuated by the settler-colonial healthcare system. In doing so, I acknowledge cultural safety's impact on providing quality care by addressing power dynamics in relationships while centering on patients' rights (Papps & Ramsden, 1996). Cultural safety results in an environment where people feel safe receiving care (First Nations Health Authority, 2016, p. 5). Ensuring that my

ethical protocols are not only institutionally compliant but also self-determining and IK-focused, adhering to Indigenous ethical values and guidelines founded on Indigenous Knowledges is critical in my re-search.

The Anishinaabe-centred re-search paradigm that I am theorizing and following includes observing Indigenous control of re-search by adhering to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) throughout all the stages and processes of the re-search. These principles were developed and sanctioned by the First Nations Information Governance Committee and the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (FNIGC, 2014). As a set of guidelines, they ensure that Indigenous self-determination is paramount in my re-search and that the control and possession of the re-search remain at the forefront and center of my ethical processes. These are the foundation for my re-search and guide my interactions with the Elders, the meaning-making process from the stories, and my plans to disseminate my re-search findings.

In addition, I am centering my protocols on Indigenous re-search guidelines that respect Indigenous Knowledge, values, and beliefs and strengthen collaboration in re-search. These protocols are exhibited through the values and ethical considerations of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991), relationships (Restoule, 2008; Styres & Zinga, 2013; Wilson, 2008), and representation (Tessaro et al., 2018). I argue that these values and ethical considerations should be actively discussed with Indigenous re-search participants and then embedded into academic re-search protocols involving Indigenous communities, such as those outlined in Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada, which is a framework for the ethical conduct of re-search

involving Indigenous peoples supported by Canada's three federal research agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC, 2014; CIHR, 2006). The 6 R's of re-search will be described later, and I will use them to review my re-search.

I actively and continuously demonstrated my respect for the Elders I invited into this re-search circle by inviting them to speak freely in safe spaces, story-tell, and contribute to the re-search process. I demonstrated reciprocity and responsibility in my relationships with each of the Elders, ensuring their safety by obtaining informed consent. As my re-search has a decolonizing agenda, I acknowledge that my re-search privileges Indigenous Knowledges and approaches to conducting re-search, including cultural ways and the use of medicines. Therefore, I used two processes of obtaining consent – offering tobacco as a culturally relevant way of obtaining consent and using information letters and consent forms. In my re-search, these two processes were not mutually exclusive.

I always offer asemaa (tobacco) to any Elder when I request their guidance and participation in my re-search to demonstrate genuine respect for their wisdom and story. Some scholars argue that presenting participants with tobacco bundles may replace the need for a written informed consent process (Davidson et al., 2006; Rutan, 2004). Leading with tobacco first is a cultural protocol well-established and supported by Indigenous communities within Indigenous re-search and in Indigenous methodologies. Wilson and Restoule (2010) assert that if this long-established and culturally accepted protocol for obtaining consent is followed, it indicates a mutual agreement between the participant and the re-searcher. This agreement emphasizes that both parties are responsible for ensuring that the process is conducted with

respect. I emphasized to participants that even if they accept the offering of asemaa, they can refuse to answer any questions and stop participating in the re-search.

Following the offering of asemaa and before any interviews, I read out the prepared script to provide legally required information to participants (See Appendix A1: Oral Script to Provide Information) and, more importantly, to start and maintain ongoing active consent (See Appendix B1: Oral Script for Ongoing Active Consent). The oral scripts outlined what Elders should expect from the university's or institutional ethical process, such as the expectations of the re-searcher and the rights of the participants, risks and potential benefits, information on the collection and storage of their stories and who would have access to them and information on the dissemination of the stories. As I also planned on conducting a sharing circle, the oral scripts also included a section on participating in the sharing circle. Lastly, I emailed formal information letters (See Appendix A2: Formal Information Letter) and formal consent forms (See Appendix B2: Formal Consent Form) to all Elders for their records. If they choose, they could also sign the forms and return them to me, which they all did.

Respect and safety also included ensuring the confidentiality of participants in a way that is acceptable to them. As this re-search is founded on personal stories and meaning-making, I gave the Elders the option to either use their names in the re-search or remain anonymous. All Elders chose to use their names and identify their communities. I sent the Elders a copy of all the transcribed stories for their review and approval before engaging in a meaning-making process.

Nokomisag as Stewards of Knowledge

My re-search is grounded in my knowledge and experiences as Anishinaabe. As part of these teachings, I recognize the importance of Elders as stewards of Indigenous Knowledges.

Elders are important in transmitting knowledge, teachings, and stories within Indigenous communities. Elders are those people who live the teachings and traditions of the people and are recognized by the community for their wisdom and ability to help (Stiegelbauer, 1996). There are many different Indigenous community-based definitions of an Elder. I specifically utilize the definition below, written by two of my uncles, Ron Morrisseau and Theron McCrady, in describing the Elder status of their grandfather and my Nimishomis:

> Respect for an Elder is a social value that is carefully nurtured in the young. The authority of an Elder is a sort of moral influence. They are the repositories of sacred knowledge and the collective wisdom of a people, and are entrusted with transmitting it to succeeding generations. This traditional knowledge can involve medicinal knowledge, sacred ritual, allegorical stories of important culture heroes, and the collective history of the band and its neighbours. The basis of an Elder's moral authority rests upon the demonstrated wisdom of the individual. Elders are not omnipotent, nor are all elderly people considered to be Elders in the sociopolitical sense. In recognition of this, and mindful of the considerable influence that his or her words carry, the ideal Elder is unlikely to make hasty, rash or doctrinaire decisions. (Hamilton, Morrisseau, & McCrady, 1995, pp. 6-7)

Archibald (2008a) adds that through teachings passed down from Elders and Knowledge Carriers, there is an expectation for personal meaning-making and accountability whereby "Elders will not explicate the term's meaning because they assume that you know or feel that you ought to know what they mean. If you do not know what they mean, then there is an expectation that you will take responsibility for finding out" (p.90).

Colonialism had a detrimental impact on the recognition of Indigenous Knowledges and the vital role of Elders as stewards of knowledge. Iwama et al. (2009) share that the “Bonds between youth and Elders – those who hold and live according to traditional ways of knowing – have weakened to the point that youth not only lack traditional knowledge but doubt its worth” (p. 7). As a result, a disconnect between generations resulted in a loss of knowledge, traditions and ways of life. This includes transmitting knowledge and practices in caring for people as they prepare to journey to the spirit world. Through my re-search, I intended to listen and learn from Elders' stories, strengths, and resilience to re-activate and re-mobilize caregiving practices.

Indigenous relationship building was used to recruit participants for this re-search based on the concepts of relationality and indinawemaaganidog. This re-search embraced the long-standing relationships that influenced my personal and academic journey in end of life. These relationships span 16+ years of working for, with, and alongside participants. As such, the selection criteria for inclusion were:

1) Elders, who provide or have provided care to people preparing for their journey and

2) individuals who influence my personal and academic journey in end-of-life care.

As I conduct my re-search, I value my relationships with these Elders. Their guidance has helped me create a path forward. In my journey, I invited six Elders to participate based on their impact on my learning in end-of-life care and their capacity to provide richly textured information about end-of-life knowledge and practices based on their teachings and experiences. These individuals come from Anishinaabe communities in northern Manitoba, northwestern Ontario and northeastern Ontario.

In addition to being some of the most influential mentors, teachers, and cultural guides I have had, I am fortunate to recognize them as *Nokomisag* (my Grandmothers). Nokomisag are highly revered in Anishinaabe communities and culture as they are connected to *Nokomis Giizis,* Grandmother Moon, our first grandmother. Nokomis Giizis oversees all forms of female existence and manages the cleaning cycle of moon time or women's menstrual cycle. She observes the planet's waters and controls the tides of Mother Earth. In the same way that Nokomis Giizis plays a crucial role in safeguarding and managing water, women are honoured as water bearers who can nurture new life on Mother Earth. Women have immense knowledge because they have been "gifted—we are all-knowing, the creators and makers of life, the seed carriers of the children of the Earth" (Schaefer, 2006, p. 134).

As Nokomisag, these six women carry the teachings of their families, communities, and nations. They have a tremendous amount of knowledge, have cared for many sick people in their communities, and have helped them along their journey back to the spirit world. Some have worked as nurses and social workers in westernized Eurocentric health and social care systems and have played a pivotal role in transforming the national healthcare landscape in Canada, specifically in end-of-life care for Indigenous peoples. They are highly respected, strong leaders in their communities and have the vision to improve and enhance the care provided to community members. Some of the Nokomisag are acquainted with each other as they have been involved in previous projects, are members of the same Elders Advisory Committees for various provincial and national organizations, or have had the same mentors. I want to begin by honouring the Nokomisag who shared their stories with me and the relationships we have established over the years, bringing us to this place of learning.

Beatrice Twance-Hynes, White Horse Spirit Woman, Big Eagle Woman

Beatrice Twance-Hynes is an Anishinaabekwe from Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation. Her spirit names are White Horse Spirit Woman and Big Eagle Woman. Her dad was from the *waawaakeshi dodem* (deer clan), and her mother was from the *makwa dodem* (bear clan.) Beatrice follows her mother's clan, the makwa dodem. Beatrice met her husband when she was twenty, and they have been together for 46 years. They have two children and two grandchildren.

Beatrice attended day school in Pic River and later attended high school in Marathon. In the seventies, she attended university for the Native Teachers' Education Program (NTEP). Beatrice is a Cultural Manager at Dilico Anishinaabek Family [Health] Care and an Elder in Residence at Lakehead University. She also supports Hospice Northwest, a volunteer visiting palliative care program, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within northern Ontario.

Beatrice is a traditional women's dancer who makes her own regalia. She is also a Grandmother pipe carrier, a sacred circle facilitator, and a medicine harvester. She teaches on the Medicine Wheel, the Sacred Medicines, the Seven Sacred Grandfathers, and the hand drum. Beatrice is also a songwriter, singer, and drummer. In 2018, she recorded a CD entitled "Indian Chief's Daughter," which features a song she wrote about her father 46 years ago.

I first met Beatrice in 1997, when I was a student completing my college placement in the long-term care program at Dilico Anishinaabek Family Care. We gathered at the old ski lodge on Anemki Wajew, where Beatrice led the opening circle for our group. Coming from a religious family-despite my grandfather being a medicine man-I had rarely experienced Indigenous teachings. I vividly remember the smudging ceremony Beatrice conducted and the profound

impact it had on me; it ignited a desire to learn more about these teachings. Beatrice influenced my life long before I began working with her in delivering palliative care education. When I told Beatrice this during our storytelling session, she said, “When you are saying that, I could just feel it. I feel like the spirit went through me, and you know, and I think I’ve been guided. I've been guided by my ancestors to do what I need to do. And I pray I still have a long time to do what I need to do here.”

Since 2020, Beatrice has supported the Indigenous Peoples’ Health & Aging (IPHA) Division at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH) at Lakehead University as an Elder. I lead this division, which focuses on health equity initiatives for Indigenous peoples across Canada, focusing on providing palliative care education for front-line workers in Indigenous communities.

Betty McKenna

Betty McKenna is an Anishinaabekwe born in Opaswayuk (The Pas). Her family's reserve is Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, which is located in Treaty 4 territory. She currently lives in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and is a mother to three children. Betty is deeply committed to Indigenous health and education and revitalizing Indigenous languages, ceremonies, and traditions. She speaks her language and is a ceremonialist, pipe, sweat lodge, and drum maker. Additionally, she has extensive knowledge of gathering traditional medicines, which her grandmother passed down to her.

Betty lectures at the First Nations University of Canada and Luther College in Regina. She participates in many research projects concerning culturally safe care for Indigenous people and families. Betty is the author of several peer-reviewed publications and the editor of the book

“Listening to The Beat of Our Drum.” Furthermore, she holds positions as an Elder with the Canadian Virtual Hospice, CAAN, the First Nations and Métis Education at the Regina Public School Board, Mackenzie Art Gallery, and RESOLVE (Research and Education to End Violence and Abuse). Throughout her life, she has been widely recognized for her outstanding work and has received numerous awards. These include the Queen's Gold Medal and the Queen's Silver Medal, the Excellence in Health Award, the Wakamow Valley Award of Distinction for Conservation of Prairie Plants, and the Sovereign's Award for Volunteers. She is also on the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan’s Prayer Breakfast Committee. When asked who she was, Elder Betty said:

> Well, I'm moose meat and blueberries. You're looking at it, and it's because that's what my body was made up of when I was being created by my parents. That's what they ate the most was moose meat and blueberries, and that's what I am. So that, from that, you can gather strength and blueberries are very strong, and so are our moose.

I met Elder Betty in 2012 in Regina, Saskatchewan. We were part of a research project that looked at supporting Indigenous peoples on their journey back to the spirit world. Since then, Elder Betty and I have worked on the Canadian Virtual Hospice’s LivingMyCulture.ca project, “Indigenous Voices: Stories of Serious Illness and Grief.” We have collaborated on several webinars for this project, including Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Sharing on Serious Illness Planning and Indigenous Voices: Traditional Practices and Ceremonies at End of Life.

Dorothy Keon

Dorothy Keon is Anishinaabekwe from Nipissing First Nation. She is of the Turtle Clan, which comes from her matriarchal lineage of the Mathias-Commanda family. She also has Irish,

French Canadian and Algonquin heritage from the Ottawa Valley, Ontario. She currently resides in Elliot Lake. Dorothy is a wife to a kind and loving husband, a mother to two sons, and a grandmother to one grandson.

Dorothy has a college social worker diploma from Loyalist College and a Bachelor of Indian Social Work degree from the University of Regina since the early 90's. Dorothy has worked with First Nations communities between Sudbury and White River, Ontario, focusing on trauma and unemployment. She has integrated her Anishinaabe teachings into her role as a "helper," providing mainstream and traditional counselling and teachings. Throughout her work journey, she received guidance from Elders and helped establish Elders' councils to address the community's needs. She collaborates with Serpent River First Nation to provide monthly teachings on the Medicine Wheel life teachings.

Dorothy learned traditional teachings from her mother's family, including her great-aunts and uncles. Her mother grew up on a trap line in northern Quebec. During her storytelling sessions, Dorothy recognized the teachings she received throughout her life and wanted to ensure that these individuals were honoured and credited for the teachings that were shared. She indicated the following:

> I want to make sure the credit goes to the FNTI-First Nations Technical Institute and my mentor, Diane Hill. There were many other teachers instrumental in my learning and development working at FNTI at that time too. Joanne Bell worked with me as a counsellor, and she put me on fasts. Wendy Thomas was another of my counsellors. You see, FNTI not only taught the classes that provided me with the credentials, the staff were also available for counselling students, one-on-one and in group settings. They ran

> circles. This is a unique way of teaching, not only the mind was groomed, but the heart and spirit. Actually, that's how the mind is able to learn and relearn, meaning to understand in a different way. Neuroplasticity.

I met Dorothy through my friend and colleague Joanna Meawasige Vautour, an Anishinaabekwe from Serpent River First Nation. Joanna is a Palliative Care Education Facilitator for the IPHA Division I lead. She introduced me to Dorothy in 2020 when I was searching for Elders to help deliver palliative care education for Indigenous communities in Ontario. Since 2021, Dorothy has worked as an Elder with the IPHA Division at CERAH, providing palliative care education for front-line workers in Indigenous communities.

Jeroline Smith, Shoshonikah

Jeroline Smith is an Anishinaabekwe from Peguis First Nation in Treaty One territory. Her spirit name is Shoshonikah, goose woman who sometimes leads. She is from the wolf clan. She has three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

Jeroline started working in healthcare in the 1960s as a healthcare aid and later as a Licence Practical Nurse. She received her BScN and worked in home care, with a particular interest in palliative care and end-of-life care. Jeroline was key in establishing the First Nations Home and Community Care Program in Canada in the late 1990s. She was the Home and Community Care Coordinator and nurse for Peguis First Nation. She also served as the representative for Manitoba at the First Nations Home Care Partner table.

Jeroline received much of her spiritual training in medicines from Matootoo Lake Lodge under the direction of Carl and Kathy Bird. She considers herself a helper. She is an Elder for the

Advisory Circle for the Canadian Virtual Hospice and Manitoba Hospice Palliative Care Association.

I met Jeroline in 2009 when the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association invited me to participate in a national Indigenous Project Advisory Committee to develop a training manual on palliative care for First Nations Home Support Workers. As our relationship developed, I saw Jeroline as a mentor and a trailblazer. In 2009, Peguis First Nation joined our research team at Lakehead University on a 5-year CIHR-funded project, "Improving End-of-Life Care in First Nations Communities" (EOLFN). I worked closely with Jeroline for many years, visiting and learning about her community and doing community-based research. Since 2017, Jeroline has worked as an Elder with the IPHA Division at CERAH, providing palliative care education for front-line workers in Indigenous communities.

Kathy MacLeod-Beaver, Semaa kwe

Kathy MacLeod-Beaver is an Anishinaabekwe and a member of the Mississauga of Rice Lake Alderville First Nation. Her spirit name is "Semaa kwe" (tobacco woman). She is from the makwa dodem (bear clan). Kathy is a proud wife, a mother to two daughters, and a Nokomis to two granddaughters.

Kathy has a Social Services diploma from Fleming College, a Native Community Counselling and Development diploma from Mohawk College, and a Bachelor of Social Work from Ryerson and F.N.T.I. Her career path has included being a Community Health Representative in her community for 17 years and an Aboriginal Mental Health Worker for Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre for six years. She is an Indigenous Navigator with the Central East Regional Cancer Program at Lakeridge Health Oshawa.

Kathy likes to refer to herself as a "helper" who tries to walk in a good way. Kathy's passion is creating culturally safe, equitable access for Indigenous peoples to access the services needed on their journey. Colonization prevented her from growing up with the language and cultural health practices, but she has been learning Anishinaabemowin through songs since 1991. Her original teacher was Lily baa (Osawamik), and she has also received teachings from numerous other Elders, including Elizabeth Osawamik and Melody Crowe. Kathy shared that she has always been looked after by Gzheminiidoo (Great Spirit). Her journey is guided by the spirit of her Ancestors and their medicine for mino bimaadiziwin ("the good life").

I met Kathy through Joanna Meawasige Vautour. Joanna introduced me to Kathy when I was looking for Elders to support the delivery of palliative care education for Indigenous communities in Ontario. Since 2020, Kathy has worked as an Elder with the IPHA Division at CERAH, providing palliative care education for front-line workers in Indigenous communities.

Rosella Kinoshameg, Nandowe-kwe

Rosella Kinoshameg is an Odawa/Anishinaabekwe from Wikwemikong Unceded Territory. She is known as "Healing Woman" from the Benishenh doodem (bird clan) Makwaa dinaadimag (bear helper). She has been married to her husband for 55 years and has five children, seven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. She was the youngest of ten children, with two younger ones adopted. Rosella's grandmother was a midwife, looking after the babies being born. Today, Rosella looks after those born into the spiritual world.

Rosella graduated from Marymount School of Nursing, Sudbury, in 1968 and obtained her BScN from the University of Ottawa in 1977. In November 1996, the University of Toronto's Regis College honoured her with a Doctorate of Sacred Letters, Honoris Causa. She

has worked with the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada as a board member, vice president, and president.

Rosella blends her Catholic faith and Indigenous traditions and is a spiritual leader to the First Nations communities on Manitoulin Island. She was also the co-chair of the Guadalupe Circle in Canada, a Catholic coalition of Indigenous people and members of the Catholic Church who are engaging in renewing and fostering relationships between the church and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. She has special interests in First Nations spirituality, traditional teachings, care of the dying, and palliative care. She was the Chair of the Aboriginal Issues Group, Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) for many years.

I met Rosella in 2009 when the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association invited me to participate in a national Indigenous Project Advisory Committee to develop a training manual on palliative care for First Nations Home Support Workers. Since then, I have remained close to Rosella and have continued to learn from her, embracing her teachings and knowledge about caregiving, dying, and death. Since 2020, Rosella has worked as an Elder with the IPHA Division at CERAH, providing palliative care education for front-line workers in Indigenous communities.

Summary

This chapter described the second direction of Indigenous wholistic theory. It introduced Zhaawnong, the Southern doorway. Within this direction, I embedded the third principle of mino-bimaadiziwin, Anishinaabe enawendiwin, our way of relating to Spirit, each other, and all of Creation. This chapter described the importance of relational accountability and adherence to ethical protocols to foster authentic and respectful relationships with the community. I also

introduce the Elders, whose stories provide a foundation for the re-activation and resurgence of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caregiving, dying and death. The next chapter describes Niingaabii'ong, the Western Doorway, where I introduce biskaabiiyang as a decolonization approach to re-search.

Chapter Eight: Niingaabii'ong (Western Doorway) – Respect and Reason

Within the four-directional circle, the wholistic framework moves to Niingaabii'ong, the Western doorway. Absolon (2019) describes that Niingaabii'ong centers on the Spirit of the ancestors and the importance of Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Knowledges production. She outlines that the focus of the Niingaabii'ong is on the assertion and respect for Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing as a means of healing, resurgence and decolonization. Absolon (2019) shares that a "recognition of the ancestors implies an acknowledgement of the cycles of life and death as natural life cycles" (p.34).

In this chapter of my dissertation, I describe *Anishinaabe inendamowin,* our way of thinking, to embrace Anishinaabe Knowledges and ways of knowing. I introduce biskaabiiyang as a decolonization approach to re-search. I then describe how I challenged the mechanisms of colonialism by embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing within my re-search.

Principle 4: Anishinaabe Inendamowin – Our Way of Thinking

A fourth foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin outlined in my dissertation is Anishinaabe inendamowin. The Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.) articulates this principle as "our way of thinking, our way of perceiving and of formulating thought, resonating from our Anishinaabe beliefs and foundational truths" (pg. 7). Within my re-search, I describe the need to decolonize my way of being, thinking, and doing in my approaches to re-search to re-claim Anishinaabe gikendaasowin. This decolonial approach is essential in my re-search, which aims to re-claim and re-activate Indigenous Knowledges that have been denigrated as a result of settler-colonialism. Decolonization is necessary to address these ongoing harms and dismantle the systems perpetuating colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Battiste, 2013; Coulthard,

2014; Simpson, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012). According to Wilson and Yellow Bird (2012), decolonization is defined as:

> The meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. Decolonization is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation. (p.3)

My re-search prioritizes Indigenous scholars and acknowledges and amplifies their contributions to the community and the academy, including honouring Indigenous Knowledges, theory, methodology, and re-search practices. As stated in my introduction, I also follow Absolon's (2011) emancipatory approach of hyphenating verbs beginning with "re-" to emphasize the process of looking again through Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. This emphasis on looking again through an Indigenous paradigm is supported by Archibald et al. (2019), who articulates it as "to re-cover, re-cognize, re-create, re-present, and "research back" using our own ontological and epistemological constructs" (p. 6).

Biskaabiiyang – Decolonizing my Learning Journey

In decolonizing my re-search, I embrace *biskaabiiyang*, which has been described by Geniusz (2009) as one decolonization approach to re-search that "… begins with the Anishinaabe researcher, who must look at his or her own life and how he or she has been personally colonized in order to conduct research from the standpoint of Anishinaabe-inaadiziwin" (p.12.) Geniusz (2009) continues explaining that rather than taking an objective stance to re-search, this approach acknowledges the re-searchers' relationship to the things that he or she is researching. By approaching my re-search through biskaabiiyang, I share a small

glimpse into my decolonizing journey. In doing so, I acknowledge my role in my re-search as an active storyteller and learner in the re-activation of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin for health and wellness, caregiving, dying and death.

When I reflect on the impact that colonialism has had on my life, my generation, and my community, my mind is immediately taken to the horrific events of the Indian Residential School system. My great-grandmother, grandfather and many of my uncles were forced to attend residential school. They were removed from their Land and placed in schools far away from their community, where they experienced horrific abuse. As a result of this colonial genocidal policy, our language was forcibly removed, and knowledge of our traditions and ceremonies was replaced with Christian religion.

Nokomis (my great-grandmother) embraced Christianity as a result of her experiences in the residential school system. She was a devout Catholic who attended church several times a week. She met Nimishomis and raised a family together, believing that all the ceremonies he performed were the work of the devil. My mother, raised by her grandparents, understood both ways of life and walked in both worlds. The impact of colonization, however, was prominent in the household. Nokomis insisted that the children were raised as Catholics. As such, traditional medicines, songs, and ceremonies were performed by my Nimishomis and other relatives with constant disapproval from Nokomis. This is the world I grew up in. I recall hearing the most amazing, fantastic stories of Nimishomis, his healing work, the ceremonies he performed, and the beautiful songs he would play on his drum. At the same time, these teachings and stories were demonized and kept quiet or minimized in order to maintain the dominance of Catholicism and a colonized mind, which influenced us all.

As my mother told me, Nimishomis would talk about how we needed to learn to live in the white man's world. I never had the opportunity to sit down with him to ask him what he meant by this, as he died before I was born. I was angry that he would have said this, considering he lived a traditional life with and on the Land. In reflecting on this direction given by Nimishomis, I believed I was being told to conform and assimilate to westernized society and to forget my Anishinaabe identity.

In my younger years, Nimishomis' teaching created much confusion for me as I tried to understand who I was and my path in life. I knew that I did not belong to the white man's world because when I tried to conform, I did not feel accepted. I did not understand the rules or have the same history or cultural connections. I also could not see myself in academia because there was nothing there reflecting my life and who I was, nor was there anyone who looked like me.

I attended high school in Geraldton, a community an hour away from Beardmore. I was the only Indigenous student in my academic classes. All my peers were white, with many having well-educated parents holding professional roles in the community. All my high school teachers were white except for the only Indigenous adult in the entire high school, who was the guidance counsellor hired to support the Indigenous students. I felt out of place when I was the only student leaving my academic classes for Indigenous assemblies. I also remember the anger I felt during history lessons when the curriculum would exalt Canada's glorious creation as confederation, never acknowledging or discussing colonization and the systematic attempts to eradicate or enact genocide against my people. I quickly learned and recognized how deep and entrenched white privilege or power was in my education and that I was not supposed to possess any of it.

I attended college as one of the few people in my family to ever attain a postsecondary education. I went to college due to the deep wisdom and guidance I received from Elder Diane Grant from Long Lake #58 First Nation. She told me that our people were suffering as a result of colonization and that I could make a difference for us in this white-dominated world through more postsecondary education. She made me believe that my knowledge was valued and that my culture was strong enough to handle more (colonial) education.

In college, I met Dr. Richard Lyons, a well-respected Elder from our territory. He spoke to a group of us, Indigenous young people, about the residential school system and the intergenerational trauma that continues to impact our identity as a nation today. Although none of us in the room had ever experienced residential schools firsthand, many of us expressed internal turmoil about the choices our parents made to continue to follow Christianity. It created confusion for us as we were raised within religions that were responsible for these institutions.

I started to see the connection with how I felt about education. This experience made me realize the enormous impact that settler colonialism had on my life. As soon as I entered the westernized school system, I began to see the world through a colonized mind. Battiste (2013) describes this as "…feeling the tensions created by a Eurocentric education system that has taught them to distrust their Indigenous knowledge systems, their elders' wisdom and their inner learning spirit" (p. 24). I recognize that this was my experience for most of my life. All those years of growing up and attending K-12 schooling, I had to dance in two worlds to keep my Anishinaabe identity hidden while excelling in a westernized knowledge system as dictated by the education system. This double identity in school created feelings of shame and confusion because I thought I was selling out my identity of who I was as Anishinaabekwe.

Through his teachings, Elder Lyons shared that we, as Anishinaabe, can relearn who we are to heal and re-claim our lives. In this teaching, Elder Lyons made a profound statement that stays with me to this day, “Anishinaabe is who you are… while religion is something that you choose to do" (R. Lyons, personal communication, 1997). I realized that I will always be Anishinaabe; this will never change. It is inherent in who I am, how I live, and my connection to the Land and my ancestors. Attending church, choosing to follow a religion, or excelling in post-secondary education does not make me any less Anishinaabe. It does not define or take away from my blood memory, my connections to my ancestors or the truth in my heart, soul, and body. After reflecting on Elder Lyons' teachings, things became clearer in my head and heart. I began to understand the meaning when he said, "Reconcile our lives and learn to heal." It was a call to action for Indigenous people to recognize this condition—the settler-Indigenous divide—and reconcile this dual, two-worldview reality in order to learn to move forward.

I responded to this call to action when I became interested in re-search during my master’s in social work. Re-search has always been present in Indigenous communities. Historically, it was to “seek, counsel and consult; to learn about medicines, plants and animals; to scout and scan the land; to educate and pass on knowledge; and to inquire into cosmology” (Absolon & Willett, 2004, p.7). Smith (1999) states that as a direct result of unethical and colonial practices, research became “one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p.1). However, Indigenous scholars are now re-claiming re-search to benefit their communities through Indigenous-focused and led re-search agendas.

During my master's, I read a seminar article on Aboriginal Ethics by Mohawk scholar Castellano (2004). She quoted an Elder who was part of a forum on the Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples who said, “If we [Indigenous peoples] have been researched to death…maybe it’s time we started researching ourselves back to life” (p. 98). This teaching was a call to action for me to become involved in re-search to ensure that our voices were heard and respected and that the process of knowledge creation was done in a culturally relevant and respectful way. I connected with Castellano’s guiding principles of ethics in the context of worldviews, respect, and self-determination of Indigenous people. I wanted to engage in re-search that was culturally and community-relevant and meaningful. Re-search provided me with a means to understand and explore complex healthcare systems in the hope of aspiring for meaningful change at a policy level.

During my Ph.D., I had the opportunity to unpack the power and privilege of creating and recognizing knowledge embedded in societal institutions, including academia and to recognize that my critical voice and story as an Anishinaabekwe were missing from texts in school. I knew that the version of Canadian history that we were taught in school was not accurate because I never saw my reality or understanding as an Indigenous person within the text. I never heard my voice or the voice of Indigenous people within the curriculum.

My Ph.D. gave me the opportunity to listen to and learn from Indigenous scholars and leaders in the fields of Indigenous education, decolonial and resurgent re-search and community-based re-search. I realized this was the experience I should have had my whole life in academia. These are the people that should have been leading my educational journey. These are the luminaries I would have gravitated towards against the ocean of white during my formative educational years. This is why decolonization is needed to contend with these issues and re-

empower Indigenous communities (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Battiste, 2013; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

As I progressed through my PhD, I realized that most of my previous work was from a westernized or Eurocentric approach to caregiving at the end of life. I started with palliative care and saw how I could mold and shape it to be more culturally safe-r and appropriate for communities' experiences. Reflecting back, I experienced tensions within this work from multiple theoretical, epistemological and personal points. It regularly felt as though I was navigating two clashing worlds: on the one hand, I could see each re-search situation through the lens of a colonized, Eurocentric mind; however, in my heart, I wanted to embrace Indigenous culture and teachings and use these Indigenous Knowledge principles and constructs as the driving force for change. These tensions highlight my experiences as an Anishinaabe, educated in a westernized school system with English as the only language and Eurocentric knowledge as cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2013) or the colonized education that impacts my life journey and how I view the world. I have now moved away from westernized knowledge, theories, and methodologies to create a decolonial and resurgent space for re-search.

Reflecting on my journey, I now see that the Creator had a different plan. During my friend's illness, I could never have imagined the impact that this experience would have on my academic journey and career and my own story of caring for my mother at the end of life. As I learn more about Nimishomis' teachings, I understand that my personal story is interconnected with my academic journey and cannot be separated. Together, they are my driving force and direct my purpose in life, mino bimaadiziwin. I continue to do this work because it is important and valued. It makes my life meaningful.

Summary

This chapter of my dissertation outlines Niingaabii'ong, the Western Doorway. Within this direction, I embedded Anishinaabe inendamowin, our way of thinking, to embrace Anishinaabe Knowledges and ways of knowing. I introduced biskaabiiyang as a decolonization approach to re-search and shared how I challenged colonialism by embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing within my re-search. The next chapter describes Giiwedinong, the Northern doorway. Here, I outline Anishinaabe izhichigewin, which describes my methodology.

Chapter Nine: Giiwedinong (Northern Doorway) – Methods and Action

Within the four-directional circle, the wholistic framework moves to Giiwedinong, the Northern doorway. Absolon (2019) states that Giiwedinong focuses on collective action in the pursuit of healing and embraces Indigenous methods of practice, including protocols, circles and ceremonies. She then describes that when the other three directions are in place, "the teachings of the Northern doorway are operationalized, and it is with a consciousness of all the doorways that action occurs in a conscious and healing way" (Absolon, 2019, p.35).

In this chapter of my dissertation, I operationalize all the directions of the doorways and describe Anishinaabe izhichigewin, our way of doing. I outline my methodological framework that guides the re-search process. My methodology represents an interconnectedness and interdependence within Anishinaabe concepts. It is a weaving of storytelling and bzindamowin (learning by listening) as a decolonizing methodology to activate Anishinaabe Knowledge and create space for Anishinaabe ways of knowing. I outline the purpose of the re-search, the questions to be explored and how the stories will be honoured.

Principle 5: Anishinaabe Izhichigewin – Our Way of Doing

A fifth foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin outlined in my dissertation is Anishinaabe izhichigewin. The Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.) articulates this principle as “our Anishinaabe way of doing things. It is our way of taking action with the life skills we need as Anishinaabe to live effectively in the world and contribute to building the quality of living and quality of community” (pg. 7). In re-search, Anishinaabe izhichigewin can represent our methodology and methods and how as Anishinaabe re-searchers, we go about understanding our re-search processes in a wholistic way. Kovach (2009) describes Indigenous

methodologies as "holistic, receptive and relational, collective and grounded in reciprocity to the community and includes Indigenous methods, including storytelling" (p.53). Within my re-search, I reflected on the methodologies that would be meaningful to the re-search process and the participants. I also wanted to situate my methodology within an Anishinaabe learning and transmitting knowledge framework.

Spiritual Knowledge that Guided the Development of My Methodology

In Chapter Four, I described Indigenous Knowledge and ways of knowing and reflected on how our knowledge is wholistically derived from Spirit, heart, mind, and body (Absolon, 2011). From a Spiritual understanding, it is transmitted through teachings from the ancestors and translated through dreams and visions. Understanding this concept is crucial in discussing the development of my methodology.

The acknowledgment of Spirit and the wholistic approach to knowledge creation and transmission is evident in the development of my methodology. In 2020-2021, I spent the year trying to keep my head above water, responding to the daily changing needs of the pandemic, and keeping my family healthy and safe. I had three children at home and was homeschooling them full-time. I also worked part-time and was learning to function entirely from a home office. My Ph.D. seemed the furthest thing from my mind. While I waited out the pandemic, I realized that life would not return to its previous state before March 2020 and that I needed to reconsider and change my methodological approach.

I completed the first draft of my re-search proposal in the spring of 2021. My methodology included inviting six Indigenous Elders from Anishinaabe, Cree, Dene, Haudenosaunee and Mi'kmaq Nations to participate face-to-face in my re-search. I worked

alongside and learned mostly in person from these Elders for several years. However, as I worked to finalize my re-search proposal, I intuited that something would not work according to this re-search plan, and writing the proposal became confusing and burdensome. I began to doubt myself and feel overwhelmed with the need to do the re-search but unsure how. I knew that I needed to go home, back to the Land, to ground myself to get clarity and seek help from my ancestors.

I returned to my traditional territory surrounding Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan in July 2021. I typically go home every summer to camp, but I had not returned since winter 2020 because of COVID-19. When I sat down at camp to finalize my Ph.D. proposal, the more I tried to write, the more confusing the methodology became because it felt like something was missing or I was going in the wrong direction. In my heart, I knew that I needed to take a step back to get some clarity. I took a break from writing and went down to the water to clear my head. I took my son, who was five years old at the time, for a walk down the beach. During our walk, my son came across an eagle feather buried in the wet sand. He was so proud, and I was proud of him for being gifted something so special. However, when we took it back to camp, we saw how damaged and frail the feather was after being in the wet sand for so long. It made me sad to see something so majestic in such poor condition.

I went to sleep and dreamt about my son's first eagle feather, which was so fragile. In my dream, I was given the teaching behind the fragile feather, which related to my confusion about my methodology. When I woke, I understood that the eagle feather and its condition was a teaching for me, not my son. In my dream, I understood that the feather represented our Anishinaabe gikendaasowin damaged due to colonization and that if I did not learn about my

own knowledge as an Anishinaabe, it would not be there for my son or the next generation. Incorporating knowledge received in my dreams from my ancestors and Creator clarified the purpose of my re-search and motivated me to return to the teachings. It also directed me to focus not on all Indigenous peoples' Knowledges but on Anishinabek gikendaasowin and teachings first.

Weaving My Methodology Together – Storytelling and Bzindamowin

My methodology acknowledges and incorporates Anishinaabe wholistic cultural perspectives and experiences to create a more comprehensive understanding of the world. It demonstrates the utmost reverence for Anishinaabe cultural practices and recognizes the social, historical, and political contexts that shape our identity (Martin and Mirraboopa, 2003.) My methodology also seeks to create a more inclusive and diverse approach to re-search that values and privileges Anishinaabe gikendasowin, including recognizing Spirit and the ancestors.

For this re-search, I will activate Anishinaabe teachings within storytelling methodology. Many Indigenous scholars support storytelling in Indigenous re-search (Archibald, 2008a; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012). Storytelling is a culturally relevant approach within Anishinaabe communities to teaching, learning, understanding, and transmitting knowledge. It continues to be a vital component of Anishinaabe culture today. I could not imagine using another methodology when deciding on my methodology and how I wanted to engage and learn traditional knowledge about caregiving, dying and death.

Storytelling centers on building relationships and fostering connections within the community. It is a powerful way of transmitting knowledge passed down for generations.

Through storytelling, there is an understanding that two or more participants are engaged in this process – the storyteller and the person receiving the teachings. Rheault (1999) describes this as:

> On the one side, the cultural story is told by a human being. This person is in a position whereby other people are willing to spend time with that person. This is the human aspect of the cultural narrative: the relationship between listener and cultural storyteller - engaged visually, orally and intellectually. (pg. 77)

As such, I embrace the teachings of bzindamowin (learning by listening). Bzindamowin is a way of "coming to knowledge that develops from hearing cultural stories. This knowledge is acquired through exposure to cultural stories since they have within them implicit lessons and directives for living a good life" (Rheault, 1999, p. 76). Bzindamowin was integral to this re-search as I recognize there are many cultural beliefs and teachings about talking about dying and death. These teachings are sacred and sometimes can only be shared during ceremony, which speaks to the spiritual aspect of our storytelling sessions.

I incorporate these teachings through listening with all of my senses. It is about actively listening to another person's experience to respond to their needs. Through an Anishinaabe lens, Elder Rosella Kinoshameg, in her reflections on caring at the end of life, shares that listening involves:

> Your eyes, your ears and your heart. So, with your eyes, you observe, you look around and see what needs to be done…you use your ears to listen to the one who is dying, what are they saying…with your heart, you listen to the other people that are there, the family, are they hurting? If they are hurting, you spend time with them, you give them the comfort that they need or explain the process of dying. (n.d.)

Listening in a deeply reflective way is an important aspect of the storytelling process. Being invited into a sacred space with the Elders, I have received many teachings. These teachings are not only heard by my ears but also are felt in my heart. They are imprinted in me and awaken my spirit. This is highlighted by Wagamese (2016) in his discussion with Old Woman:

> When you listen, you become aware. That's for your head. When you hear, you awaken. That's for your heart. When you feel, it becomes part of you. That's for your spirit…it's so you learn to listen with your whole being. That's how you learn" (p. 113).

Rheault (1999) describes another important understanding of storytelling. It is the recognition that stories have spirits. He describes this in his definition of story within Anishinaabemowin:

> [f]ound in the meaning of the Anishinaabe word for a cultural story: aadizookaan. Aadizookaan is considered a non-human person, i.e., the spirit of the story. This added dimension to the meaning of the aadizookaan and the aadizookaan's ability to pass on knowledge directly allows a greater degree of knowledge acquisition. The aadizookaan speaks to the listener through the voice of the human cultural storyteller. (pg.79)

Within this context, I use storytelling and bzindamowin to learn, understand and honour Anishinaabe caregivers' lived stories, strengths, and capacities. Storytelling is appropriate to my re-search as it "seeks to rectify the damage and reclaim our ability to story-talk, story-listen, story-learn and story-teach" (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 7), which is the purpose of my re-search. Storytelling also connects with my Anishinaabe teachings. Anishinaabe recognize stories as

sacred gifts from Creator that provide opportunities for healing, the transmission of knowledge and learning.

This methodology was used to support and give insights back to these caregivers and their communities. I intended to identify the need for wholistic care in achieving balance, honouring people's connections and relationships with family members, community members, and care providers, and focusing on wellness through physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and intergenerational healing.

Storytelling Methods

Storytelling involved one-on-one open-ended sessions with Elders over Zoom, a web-based platform. These storytelling sessions provided space for Elders to describe their life stories and experiences through their own cultural perspectives on providing care to community members at the end of life. Each session was between one to three hours long. The number of storytelling sessions was Elder driven, resulting in one Elder scheduling a second session for a total of seven. A list of open-ended prompts that relate to the purpose and aims of the re-search was used to stimulate discussions; however, the focus of these sessions was more of a conversation rather than focusing on directed questions (See Appendix C: Interview Prompts). Elders were also presented with the option to include additional or supplemental sources of personal artifacts to enhance their stories. These sources could include the following: video clips or photographs of meaningful locations, medicines, artwork, poems or letters.

Following the individual storytelling sessions, the Elders were invited to participate in a sharing circle (Lavallée, 2009), also known as a learning circle (Nabigon et al.,1999). This was three hours in length and done via Zoom. A list of open-ended prompts that relate to the purpose

and aims of the re-search was used to stimulate discussions (See Appendix D: Sharing Circle Prompts). The circle is a culturally relevant method within Indigenous communities to come together to share stories. It allows participants to collectively reflect on experiences with the purpose of healing and meaning-making. Nabigon et al. (1999) state that "Each participant participates for their own healing. Each person has autonomy in how much they will disclose" (p. 126) and that there is an "etiquette of honesty; the past is past, and one cannot do anything to change it; however, one can learn from it. There is a sense of reality orientation and grounding in the here and now" (p.127).

The circle provided the Elders with the space to reconnect with one another, share their experiences in providing care and some of the cultural values and beliefs relating to death and dying and make meaning from the stories shared. Through this collective process, the intention was to create a safe, sacred space whereby Elders could collectively work together to decolonize their thinking and develop strategies to share this information back to their own communities. The circle was, therefore, a type of social movement for self-organizing communities and Nations in stimulating Indigenous Knowledges and practices for caring at the end of life.

Throughout the storytelling sessions, I wrote "oral and heart memory" notes before and after re-search sessions (Archibald, 2008b, p. 12). Archibald introduces the concept of "oral and heart memory notes," which she describes as similar to Holmes's (2000) concept of blood memory and heart knowledge in her re-search with Hawaiian Elders. Blood memory has also been described by Rheault (1999) as “Minidoo-minjimendamowin: Spirit memory/blood memory. Stitched into your spirit. The knowledge that enters this world when one's spirit fuses with the physical body. Spirit identity (p. xxv).” Writing these heart memory notes was a deeply

reflective and personal practice to document my thoughts, feelings, connections, and themes to the re-search events that highlighted the relational approach. Ongoing journaling also occurred during the storytelling session, during the transcription process, and throughout the meaning-making process.

Meaning-Making

To make meaning from the stories, I used a mixed-methods approach to re-search supported by Kovach (2010), which involves Indigenous methodologies for gathering stories while using non-Indigenous methods for making meaning from them. I conducted a thematic analysis to organize and analyze the stories and identify patterns of themes within them. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the six steps of thematic analysis as 1) familiarizing yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report (p.87).

Each storytelling session and the sharing circle were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Elders were then invited to review the transcripts, approve them, and make any changes to their stories before making meaning from them. When they were approved, I listened to each audio file again to familiarize myself with the stories. I then created a chart to organize the stories into themes/key messages, quotes, and reflections on heart memory notes.

In Indigenizing this process and reflecting on my relational approach to this re-search, I read my "oral and heart memory" notes written before and after storytelling sessions (Archibald, 2008b, p. 12). This was an important part of understanding the stories as it centred on how I made meaning from the stories and my reflections and understanding of the teachings that were provided to me by the Elders. Archibald (2008a) describes this as our responsibility in receiving

teachings in that Elders expect us to take responsibility for learning, personal meaning-making, and accountability. I copied the notes into the chart and reflected on them throughout the meaning-making process.

The entire transcript was copied into the "Quotes" section of the chart. I reviewed the text line by line, highlighting important text and quotes throughout, as well as text that significantly impacted me. Based on my knowledge, experience, and relationship with the Elder, I selected parts that provided important teachings and learnings. I added some initial ideas and codes in the "Themes/Key Messages" column of the chart. These codes were then collapsed into themes that might be relevant to my re-search questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes were then further refined based on the direction of the Elders. See Figure 4 for my meaning-making chart and an example of how the stories were organized.

Figure 4

Meaning-Making Chart

Themes/Key Messages	Storytelling	Heart Memory Notes / Reflections
Impact of colonization – loss of cultural teachings and ceremony Engaging in Critical Thinking	I have seen evidence where historical trauma has had an impact on our cultural ceremonies. Jim Dumont, an Anishinaabe Elder, said that when you are struggling with a question about doing something in a good way, ask yourself, "What would Creator do in this situation?" So, some things I have pondered, "When someone who struggles with addiction all their life and wants to attend a ceremony if a person identifies as Two-Spirit and does not want to wear a skirt to a ceremony, in	The Elder talked about how she is taking a good hard look at some of these teachings that we follow and really reflecting on them. One of the things that she talked about was the teaching about wearing a skirt and ceremony. In particular around the full moon ceremony or during sweats. I have heard this before where some younger generations of

	the pandemic doing ceremonies virtually are situations where I find this helpful. When I think about Creator and Indigenous practices, we have to have that critical thinking. Residential school experience has had on cultural teachings ceremonies? Where did that teaching originate? It's not about agreeing or disagreeing it's about doing things in a good way, with love.	Indigenous peoples are questioning whether or not that was inherently one of our teachings or if that was something brought to us through colonization. It was an aha moment because she questioned this.

Guided by my re-search questions, the themes also looked for patterned responses and meaning in the stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Five main themes emerged from the stories, including our collective responsibility in this cultural resurgence, Anishinaabe perspectives on health and wellness, Anishinaabe perspectives on illness and disease, re-awakening cultural and community-based knowledge and teachings, and re-connecting with Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about the circle of life.

Throughout the process, I engaged in my own spiritual and cultural practices to honour Indigenous ways of making meaning from the knowledge shared. These practices included being on the Land and connecting with my ancestors through my dreams. A part of this was re-learning my own ceremonial processes, which helped me throughout my Ph.D. Journey. I practiced offering tobacco, held my medicines during times of reflection, and sat barefoot on the Land. Lastly, to practice relational accountability, I continually engaged with Elders through the meaning-making process to ensure the authenticity of the Elder's voices and that their stories were respectfully expressed.

Summary

This chapter introduced Giiwedinong, the Northern doorway. Within this direction, I embedded Anishinaabe izhichigewin, our way of doing. This described my methodology and methods and how I made meaning from the stories. The next chapter moves to the final direction of Indigenous wholistic theory, Shkode—the Centre Fire. I honour Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, our knowledge, and my ways of knowing and sharing the stories and teachings of the Elders in my re-search.

Chapter Ten: Shkode – The Centre Fire

Within the four-directional circle, the wholistic framework moves to the Shkode, the Centre fire. Absolon (2019) describes the Centre as where all directions intersect and is the space for balance and harmony in our lives and our connections with others. The Centre focuses on the interdependence and interconnection of all four doorways, teachings, and elements.

In this chapter of my dissertation, I honour Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, our knowledge and ways of knowing. I share the stories, teachings, and wisdom of the Elders involved in my re-search. As the Centre is the interdependence and interconnectedness of all four doorways and teachings, I recognize Anishinaabe inaadiziwin, our original behaviour, values, and way of living. I discuss how we can re-activate and resurge our Anishinaabe gikendaasowin into action by healing from the ongoing trauma of colonization and decolonizing our ways of caring for our own people at the end of life. This can contribute to a re-birth of Indigenous Knowledges, self-determination, and resurgence by Indigenous communities.

Principle 6: Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin – Our Knowledge and Ways of Knowing

In Shkode, I reflect on a sixth foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin - Anishinaabe gikendaasowin - our knowledge and way of knowing. The Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.) describes that this principle speaks to the "body of knowledge that informs us of our origins, our way of life, our way of being, and our worldview" (pg. 8). In this chapter, I honour Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing and outline how re-activating this knowledge can help us better care for people as they journey back to the spirit world.

Throughout the storytelling sessions, several key themes emerged. First, we acknowledged our collective responsibility in this cultural resurgence. We recognized the

devastating impact that colonization has had on Anishinaabe and the ongoing harm we continue to experience as a result. Additionally, we discussed how the key to healing and living our lives according to the principle of mino-bimaadiziwin (living a good life) lies within our culture and teachings. The Elders emphasized the importance of re-claiming our teachings regarding death and dying, as these teachings help us prepare for and navigate the Western doorway on our final journey.

Our Collective Responsibility in this Cultural Resurgence

So, what Lily taught me was to remember. She would just hand me stuff and told me to do it. And so that's what I tried to do when I'm facilitating Full Moon Ceremonies…I just hand people responsibility. Can you carry the smudge around? Can you hold the berries? Can you get the water? Because that's how I learned…But it was done in a good way, you know…So that's what I try to do now. And some of the women and men that I tried to get to do that, they are like, oh, I don't know how to do that. And I go, it doesn't matter, your spirit will remember (Elder Kathy MacLeod-Beaver, February 25, 2022, transcript).

As part of my efforts to re-activate, re-mobilize and resurge Anishinaabe gikendaasowin in caring for those preparing to journey back to the spirit world, I engaged in storytelling sessions with six Anishinaabe Elders. During these storytelling sessions, the Elders shared their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom with me. They brought many insights that added to my current knowledge about caregiving, dying, and death through an Anishinaabe lens. These teachings also created a space to challenge my values, beliefs, and teachings, some deeply embedded due to colonization.

To re-claim and re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caring for those journeying to the spirit world, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of the spirit world in this cultural resurgence and the need to re-connect with our belief that we are always connected to and guided by the Creator and our ancestors. In addition, we must embrace the teachings of our Elders, who are the stewards of our knowledge, and the ceremonies and cultural teachings they pass on to us to help foster this connection. Lastly, we must transfer these teachings to future generations and engage communities to embrace their collective knowledge and experience.

The Role of the Spirit World

During the storytelling sessions, the Elders discussed our profound spiritual connection with the Creator in this cultural resurgence. They explained that the Creator's presence is loving, welcoming, and accepting. This love, they described, is nurturing, coming from an old place, deep in its understanding. The Elders also shared that we can establish a direct connection with the Creator through ceremonies and the offering of tobacco. Elder Kathy shared her belief that our culture holds the wisdom for leading a good life, as we were once a healthy and thriving people. She added that Creator is there to help us regain that health and prosperity: “It's the work of Creator, and that's what the Elders told me. They say those ceremonies take their own energy on, depending on who's there. It's not you doing work. It's, it's the work of the Spirit.”

The Elders also spoke of the important role of our ancestors in supporting us during the cultural resurgence. The ancestors provide comfort to us in understanding our connection to creation and the spirit world. Elder Dorothy provided further understanding of this when discussing the role of the ancestors in preparing to journey back to the spirit world:

> When we commence our journey to the spirit world, our ancestors accompany us. To give that feeling of comfort. I think, because it's our tendency to linger, the more you fight it, the longer you're holding it off. I guess it's for a person just to know to let go and surrender to a greater life because this is a very tiny, little life; we're very small. We don't live as long as a tree…I think that's the role of the ancestors. They will come to people to help them and give them that solace that you know there's a bigger life there (within the spirit world) than what's here.

Engaging with our ancestors and embracing these teachings is of utmost importance, as they are essential to our healing and overall well-being. Elder Kathy highlighted that these teachings are rich with wisdom and insight, offering profound solutions that can guide us on our journey toward healing and personal growth:

> Ceremonies left behind by our Ancestors were a way to restore that loss. Often, people describe ceremonies as a feeling of coming home. That's why I love circles. Because I'll sit in a circle, I could spend one-on-one time with some of my clients. But when they sit in a circle, I see a different person completely when they were in the circle.

Elder Kathy believes that the ancestors will be with us during the cultural resurgence and will guide us in re-claiming these teachings and ceremonies. This was the direction Elder Kathy received when she started facilitating sharing circles in her work. She was nervous at first as she was not an Elder. So, she spoke with an Elder, who was pleased that younger generations were sharing the knowledge they had learned. The Elder said that this is how the knowledge remains for future generations. She advised Kathy to start the circles with ceremony and from the heart

and that the ancestors would guide her. Elder Kathy wanted to create opportunities to offer something to others that helped her in her healing journey.

The Role of Elders

To understand ceremonies. To offer that tobacco if they want to learn, you know. Elders are always there, willing to share; if you offer that tobacco, they respect it and will share. Yeah, it's a part of who we are, of who we were prior to contact (Elder Beatrice Twance-Hynes, February 22, 2022, transcript).

As we re-claim and re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, it is important to recognize the crucial role of Elders in our cultural resurgence. The Elders expressed that it is their responsibility to pass on the knowledge to the next generation, and they firmly believe that this knowledge should not be kept to themselves but shared so that there is a legacy in the teachings that can be passed on to future generations. As Elder Beatrice explained, this is a part of Elder's purpose on earth: to speak with the Creator and the ancestors, to learn from mentors and to share the knowledge received with others so that the next generation of young people can benefit from it.

Elder Dorothy emphasized that we can build capacity within our communities by forming relationships with and teaching young people. Elder Kathy added to this by highlighting that:

> There's no school for learning how to Indigenize your practice…there's no university, college, program, or course that teaches you how to walk this journey with the teachings of our Elders and ancestors…It's life experience. It's going, it's going out there. And it's living your life and being open and listening…We [the Elders] just share what we know and carry from what we learn.

The Elders shared their stories of how they acquired their knowledge and teachings. They learned from their grandparents and other Elders, both from within and outside their communities. The Elders emphasized the importance of learning by listening to stories and observing practices and ceremonies. Elder Beatrice mentioned that she learned a lot from attending workshops and conferences and listening to Elders speak. She also highlighted the significance of attending powwows, where Elders share their teachings. Elder Kathy shared her experience of learning by observation:

> I just watched what they did. And I thought, well, you know what, that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to start with an opening prayer, a song, and we're going to have food, and we're going to pass this helper around, whether it's a grandfather or eagle feather, and we're just going to let people share, and it's, it's not going to be me doing anything, it's going to be the Creator, it's going to be the spirit world that's going to help.

Elder Kathy shared a beautiful story about several Elders whose teachings had a significant impact on her life:

> I started attending sweat lodge ceremonies. I went on my first fast with Lily Bourgeois at the Petroglyphs. I began learning songs. The songs helped me learn the language and nurtured my spirit. Lily would answer all my questions and provide me with many opportunities to attend and learn about ceremonies. She often put me to work, showing me how to gather medicines and what was needed to prepare for ceremonies. She was a great teacher.

Following this, Elder Kathy was introduced to Elders at Curve Lake, where she attended her first Sunrise ceremony. This experience was particularly significant as she could share it with her mother and daughter.

Elder Betty shared that a part of her knowledge of medicines came from one of her grandmothers:

> I had one grandmother who said she was a forager. She just ate, and she showed us all the plants and everything, so that's why I teach plant biology what I learned from her, like the carrots and onions. And a lot of people can only identify them when they're in flower, but maybe that's not the best time to pick them. You know? So, you got to be able to identify them without a flower, and so, I learned a lot from her and my other grandmother.

Offering tobacco is an important protocol to connect with the Elders. Tobacco should be offered when asking an Elder to share their knowledge, perform a ceremony, or give insight. Elder Rosella shared a teaching she received from an Elder when she was a young nurse:

> When I went back to my community, I worked in the nursing home. I had gone out and collected some herbs. At an activity for the residents, I made two kinds of tea. And, I was looking after a woman, she was 92. I asked her which tea she would like and she chose one kind. And she said, “So where did you find this?” I told her [where I found it] and said, “There's not much of it [the herb] there.” She said it because people are forgetting to offer their tobacco. So, I learned the importance of tobacco from this 92-year-old woman.

Elder Kathy also shared a story of offering tobacco to an Elder who profoundly impacted her community. In sharing the story, Elder Kathy recalled the genuineness and kindness displayed by the Elder:

> So, I went over to him [the Elder] …I had tobacco in my hand. I said I don't know if you'd ever come to my community, but we need help there. Like, there's a lot of us who don't know stuff. And I'm trying my best to bring in Elders. But you would be amazing if you would ever come here.

Before she finished her request, he immediately agreed to help and supported them for many years through traditional medicine clinics and home and hospital visits for end-of-life patients.

The Role of Children

We come into this world and we should be living our lives thinking we are somebody's ancestor. We've got to live like an ancestor. We're not living for our parents, were not living for our grandparents or for our ancestors; we are living to be somebody else's ancestor. Be the best darn ancestor you can be. Take your responsibilities seriously (Elder Betty McKenna, February 23, 2022, transcript).

The Elders emphasized that children have a significant role in re-claiming and re-activating Anishinaabe gikendaasowin. This includes being teachers and learners in knowledge, ceremonies, and practices. Elder Jeroline pointed out that much of this knowledge was lost due to the residential schools and the erosion of parenting skills. This resulted in generations of people not passing down the teachings about the transition back to the spirit world. Therefore, to re-claim and re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, we must transfer these teachings to future generations.

Children possess profound wisdom from which we can learn as they have a strong connection with the Creator. They have only recently left Creator's side, so they have not

forgotten their original teachings. Elder Kathy reinforced this when she shared a story of her mother's funeral and of how her three-year-old granddaughter came into a ceremony knowing exactly what to do:

> [a]nd all the shakers and drums are like, I had my stuff out there. And she [her granddaughter] comes along and starts grabbing the shakers and handing them out to everyone in the circle. She already knows what to do as she's connected to her spirit.

Elder Rosella shared an experience highlighting the spiritual connection between children and the Creator during her father's funeral. She recounted how her oldest daughter, who was only three years old at the time, climbed up on a chair to look at her grandfather in the casket during the home wake. After observing him for a while, the little girl said, "Now he can walk," jumped off the chair, and went out to play. Rosella's father had previously had an amputation, which left him without one leg and wheelchair-bound, so the little girl's comment showed a profound spiritual insight beyond her years.

Elder Jeroline stressed the importance of passing on these teachings to children, as they contribute to the community's well-being and respect the circle of life teachings. According to her, it is an honour to have children present during someone's transition to the spirit world, as it enhances the spiritual experience and allows them to feel the love surrounding the event. Educating children about these traditions also prepares them to support their loved ones as they journey back to the spirit world.

Role of Community

...First Nations are starting to do more in regard to their sovereignty and developing those band laws, and they call it inaakonigewin, those laws (Elder Beatrice Twance-Hynes, February 18, 2022, transcript).

The Elders emphasized how important it is for us to re-claim our communities' collective knowledge and experience. They spoke about the need to heal from the impacts of colonization and move forward on a path of balance and healing to regain our collective spirit and soul. Elder Beatrice shared an example of when her community decided to re-claim their traditional name based on the Land. She said:

> It's taking back those identities. Like even our community…we were called Pic 50. What is this Pic 50? That's, that's a number that was given to us to, you know, the reserves and stuff…Within the past few years, First Nations are starting to do more in regard to their sovereignty and developing those band laws, and they call it inaakonigewin, those laws. We've taken back our traditional name, which is Biigtigong, where the river erodes. And that came from our ancestors, and that's taking back a part of who we were.

This cultural resurgence was also evident in the stories shared by the Elders. They recognized the resiliency of communities in regaining their ceremonies. Elder Kathy shared how her community worked together to re-learn their traditions and re-claim their teachings. They started full moon ceremonies, learned to make regalia and dance in different styles and held their first powwow. They also organized monthly drum socials, allowing families to learn about their culture together. Furthermore, they invited Elders from other communities and created an

environment where they could learn their language. They also built their first sweat lodge by the Health Centre and held their first powwow.

Anishinaabe Perspectives on Health and Wellness

There are three lifelines that we follow when we think of who we are now. It's the lifeline of Mother Earth, which is the creation story. The lifeline of our people, which starts at the creation story and brings us up to now and within the lifeline of our people, includes "the break from our way" when the white man started coming and taking over in the 1400s. And right away, our way of life would never be the same…The third lifeline is our personal story. Each of us can ask: How has my life developed? Who helped in my development? Am I following the path set out for me? How has the lifeline of Mother Earth and that of my ancestors molded me? So, Medicine Wheel teachings are always bringing us to those three lifelines and understanding who we are because of those lifelines. We know who we are now because of what happened in those lifelines (Elder Dorothy Keon, February 22, 2022, transcript).

As part of my efforts to re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin in caring for those preparing to journey back to the spirit world, I engaged in storytelling sessions with the Elders to gain insight into their views on health and wellness. Through these discussions, I understood that health and wellness are about balancing the body, mind, and spirit. It is about being in relationship with one another and having a sense of belonging and connection with those around us. The Elders emphasized the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin, which is foundational to Anishinabe culture and teaches us to nurture the teachings of the Medicine Wheel to achieve and maintain good health. Lastly, they highlighted the importance of the Seven Sacred teachings as guiding principles for living a healthy and balanced life.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin

The Elders all agreed that to achieve health and wellness; we must understand the teachings of mino-bimaadiziwin, or living that good life. Elder Beatrice explained that mino-bimaadiziwin means, "Life is bimaadiziwin, and mino is good, so, a good life." As Anishinaabe, we have all been given the gift of mino bimaadiziwin and must live our lives and make choices to support this.

For Elder Beatrice, health and wellness are synonymous with living a good life. She noted that Anishinaabe people have always thrived in difficult conditions because they focused on living a fulfilling life. Elder Kathy pointed out that many people struggle to live mino-bimaadiziwin because people tend to prioritize physical and mental health, often overlooking their emotional and spiritual well-being.

The Elders explained that the Medicine Wheel and Seven Sacred Teachings are fundamental teachings that guide Anishinaabe people in living them. They added that we must learn about and live these teachings to accept our responsibilities to the best of our abilities. Returning to our teachings is the first step in seeking mino-bimaadiziwin.

Medicine Wheel Teachings

The Medicine Wheel teachings hold great significance in understanding our journey on earth and the interdependence of everything, including our ancestors and future generations. All the Elders spoke about the importance of reflecting on the Medicine Wheel teachings, which are diverse and complex and require people to create space to learn and nurture these to be healthy and balanced. The number four, known as the Creator's number, holds particular significance in

the Medicine Wheel as it encompasses a person's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components and the four seasons, sacred medicines, elements, and other teachings.

The Medicine Wheel teaches us that everything within the circle is interconnected and dependent on each other, providing us with guidance and direction. This interconnectedness and interdependence are seen in our relationships with Creator and others, including the relationships with the animals. Elder Rosella shared the following teaching, which spoke of the significance of the animals and the teachings that they offer:

> We have the animals, the eagle, who flies the highest and sees the farthest of our lives. We have the mouse to teach ourselves humility. We have the turtle, who teaches us about introspection, going within, to find out who you are, where you came from, why you're here, and where you're going, and how you're going to get there. And then we have the strong animals in the North who teach us about being providers, either for our families or for the communities that we service.

Anishinaabe utilize the Medicine Wheel teachings to understand the path forward to achieve mino-bimaadiziwin. According to Elder Beatrice, to live a healthy life, one must maintain balance in the four aspects of being "spiritual and what we believe in, the emotional and how we feel, the physical and what we do and how we keep active, and the mental and how we think." The Elders emphasized that the spirit is central to the Anishinaabe worldview and is interconnected with the body and mind. Therefore, they placed great importance on nurturing and maintaining a healthy spirit. Another teaching of the Medicine Wheel given by Elder Kathy was that everyone is equal: "No one is behind or in front of one another, no one is above or below, but we all have gifts to share in this journey with each other to help on our life journey."

Seven Sacred Teachings

The Elders reflected on the importance of living the Seven Sacred Teachings, including respect, humility, bravery, honesty, truth, wisdom, and love. These are guiding principles necessary for living a healthy and balanced life. The Elders emphasized that although many people did not grow up with the traditional teachings, those fundamental teachings were modelled to us by our parents and grandparents and were ingrained in their daily lives through actions such as offering tobacco when picking berries and birch bark and going on the boat on the water. These experiences taught us how to live by the Seven Sacred Teachings. Elder Rosella shared, "It's about living those teachings that we were given, not just knowing what they are, what those words are, and to accept our responsibilities to the best of our ability."

During her storytelling session, Elder Rosella emphasized the importance of appreciating the knowledge we gain and treasuring *nibwakawin* (wisdom) we acquire. Within Anishinaabe culture, traditional storytelling is a rich teaching source that provides opportunities to learn and obtain knowledge. The stories of Nanabush, for example, teach people about good and evil and help them make decisions. While some people may view Nanabush as a trickster, Elder Rosella clarified that he was primarily a teacher who used stories to demonstrate different choices and their consequences. Ultimately, it's up to each person to decide what is good or bad and how they can learn and grow from their experiences. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of using this knowledge to assist others rather than keeping it solely for oneself.

While exploring Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, Elder Dorothy emphasized the importance of giving and receiving unconditional love. She explained that Anishinaabe are a loving people. As such, when they offer help to others, there are no conditions attached to it, just as Creator

who welcomes everyone with unconditional love. She shared a teaching she received from Jim Dumont about when the universe was being created. He told her, “There's a doorway into that universe…that doorway is closed to no one…Creator accepts everybody.” Elder Dorothy explained that these fundamental teachings about unconditional love and acceptance, including the importance of loving yourself, are embedded within our most sacred stories as Anishinaabe people.

Elder Dorothy also shared an enlightening story about the importance of engaging in respectful learning and relationships with others. She recounted the Haudenosaunee Creation story, which beautifully illustrates their beliefs about the world's formation on the back of a turtle. Though different from the Anishinaabe Creation story she was taught, Elder Dorothy shared that by learning about other people's values, beliefs, and teachings and creating space to honour their knowledge, we can build better and more respectful relationships. Elder Betty added that valuing others is crucial. She emphasized that every person we encounter is a gift that gives us something valuable. Whether it’s a lesson to learn or something to offer to them, we should also appreciate and respect others.

The Elders emphasized the value of humility and fulfilling our promises to Creator. Elder Betty explained that in following the teachings of humility, we must start living up to our responsibilities to hold one another up and holding up humanity without making judgments or thinking we are elevated above someone else. She described it as the following:

> When we sat with the Creator, we promised the Creator that we would walk in a good way on Mother Earth, and it's to elevate one another, and what we're not elevating is status. We're elevating the very essence of who we are, our very soul and or our spirit, to

> get back to the great spirit…We all come from that Creator. Everybody is a spark off that Creator, and that Creator then takes that spark back.

The Elders emphasize the importance of acknowledging that our knowledge is derived from the wisdom of our ancestors and Elders before us. It comes from standing on the shoulders of others. Recognizing this is a way of embracing humility. Elder Beatrice shared how she learned from Elders, attending workshops and conferences, participating in ceremonies, and attending powwows where Elders shared teachings. Elder Betty recounted how she learned land-based knowledge from her grandmothers, who would share their wisdom during ceremonies. Elder Kathy received a valuable teaching from an Elder on seeking out people who live the teaching of humility:

> True Elders are not the ones standing at the front of the room, standing on the side on the street corners telling everyone I'm an Elder. Proclaiming their gift and saying this is what I know. I was to be careful about those ones, the Elder said.

This reminded me of the stories my mother would tell me about Nimishomis. He would sit on the steps of his house singing traditional songs while banging on an old pot. He didn't have a hide drum. He was not performative. He did it for himself and to nurture his own spirit and the spirits of his grandchildren. Through this story, Nimishomis showed my mom the teaching of humility.

Anishinaabe Perspectives on Illness and Disease

The intergenerational harm created by colonization can make it challenging to fulfill our purpose in life, especially when we are born into families that have grown up in pain instead of

beauty. That pain can influence our lives and make it more difficult to fulfill the contract we made (Elder Dorothy Keon, February 22, 2022, transcript).

From an Anishinaabe perspective, illness and disease are caused by being unbalanced and disconnected from one another. This prevents us from fulfilling our life's purpose. Elder Rosella emphasized that we became unbalanced and disconnected by experiencing many losses due to colonization, and "people became wounded, and they were hurting; they became silent. We had no voice anyways; we were suppressed." This created trauma and anger and damaged our spirits, preventing us from fulfilling our life's purpose. This trauma and anger were internalized, which caused people to turn to harmful behaviours. Elder Dorothy describes this as our spirits being broken:

> Before I started learning about what it was to be native, what it was to be colonialized, what it was to be put on reservations, you know, and children were taken away. I just thought that we were alcoholics because our body was not used to alcohol. So we had less resistance to it. But now I understand that it's the result of, you know, those times that our spirits were broken. That things, our traditional ways, were taken away from us, and we weren't allowed to live the life that you know the Creator put us here to live.

When the anger is turned inward, it stays within our bodies and minds, which is when people become sick. Elder Rosella shared that the high rates of diabetes within the Indigenous population can be attributed to our "inability to process the sweetness of life," meaning that we are not able to enjoy life because of unresolved trauma. Elder Kathy provided another example of how disease can manifest into physical illnesses: "I remember when I had my gallbladder

taken out, an older relative told me that gallbladder disease can come from carrying anger and not letting it go."

To re-claim Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and heal from this trauma, the Elders emphasized that we must first understand and recognize how colonization has affected us so that we can move forward together in a good way. Through the Elder's storytelling sessions, several themes emerged regarding the impact of colonization on the health and wellness of Anishinaabe people, which affects our ability to provide care to people who are sick. One of the most predominant experiences shared was the negative impact of residential schools. Other identified themes include significant losses such as the loss of our place within creation, the erasure of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin, the loss of a land-based way of life and the loss of women's role and place in the community. Additionally, the Elders spoke of the loss of language, cultural teachings, ceremonies, and teachings regarding dying and death. These losses have resulted in intergenerational trauma and shame that continue to affect Anishinaabe people today. The Elders shared their knowledge, stories, and experiences of colonization, creating a space for others to learn from and develop strategies to move forward in re-claiming and re-activating Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caregiving at the end of life.

The Impact of Residential Schools

When discussing colonization, one of the main systems in place to assimilate Indigenous under the Indian Act was the Indian residential schools. These institutions were not designed to educate children but rather to remove children from the influence of their families and communities and to "kill the Indian in the child." Elder Rosella described the purpose and intent of residential school as the following:

> So, they made residential schools, where these children were supposed to be civilized, and they would take them by boat, no life jackets, all filled with children, and they would take them to the residential school. So, the children were separated from their parents, without their consent, they were sent to these residential schools. It was not to educate them. But primarily to break their link to their cultural language and identity. They were stripped of their belongings. You know, they wore whatever from home, and those would be taken away and given something else to wear. If their hair were long, it would be cut; they were forbidden to speak their own language.

These institutions of structural violence and harm negatively impacted the people who attended them as well as created intergenerational trauma that continues within families today. Some children who were forced to attend were as young as three. Elder Jeroline recalled her aunt's experience of attending residential school: "There was an old truck bus…my one aunt she was only three, and her mother died. She had no choice but to go to residential school, so she was there all her life."

Elder Rosella shared her experiences of residential school and its impact on her and her relationship with her family.

> Like I said, I was forbidden to speak my language when I got there, and it took me a whole year to learn English. So, people lost their language and their culture. And they never spoke about their culture once we got to the school. There's a loss of parenting and decision-making skills. The children lived in fear, loneliness, and lack of affection…When we went to residential school, all my older brothers and sisters went, and so I was never that close to any of them. I didn't really know them…There were two

> older sisters that were at residential school before I went, but there was a big, big basement. I don't know how wide it is. Later when I went there, that building was so small. The basement had these like pillars down the center that created an invisible wall, and we couldn't cross that to the other side. That's where the older girls were. We were on this side. We could see our sisters, but we couldn't talk to them. We couldn't exchange anything. I guess that's why we were never close.

Elder Jeroline sees the effect of intergenerational trauma within her community and describes the impact as “ever-present and still haunting.” In particular, she talked about the negative impact that residential schools had on parenting. In her reflections, Elder Jeroline said that it wasn’t until awareness and knowledge of residential schools started to come out that she understood the impact it had on her mother and how she parented. Elder Jeroline received support from her aunts and through sharing circles where she could talk about it. Elder Rosella also talked about how residential schools impacted people's ability to show love. She said:

> The most important thing I think that we lost in that was parenting, to show love. Because we couldn't show love. My sisters were on the other side of the room. We couldn't cross that invisible line to go and talk to them or to get a hug if we needed a hug.

Intergenerational Trauma and Shame

The experience and ongoing impact of colonization have resulted in intergenerational trauma and unresolved grief. These losses were internalized, and people became wounded. Elder Rosella describes the harm when “Anger was expressed internally and sometimes outwardly, and people turned toward alcohol, drugs, soul pain, and suicide.” This created internalized oppression and created harm in relationships. This was noted in Elder Dorothy’s story of animosity between

her mother and uncle and anger directed toward her mother because she never attended residential school.

> When my uncle, after they were old and they were out of residential school and all of that, whenever he would be drinking, he'd always be blaming my mother, “Oh, you never had to go to residential school.” He would be very cruel to her because she didn't have to suffer like them. He suffered. It's funny, but she (my mother) suffered too because she didn't go to residential school. My mother always felt ashamed, believing she was stupid because she did not get a formal education as her siblings did.

Elder Rosella spoke about how the residential school created shame within her family. She shared some memories and reflections of her sister:

> [She] didn't come home very often, never taught the language to her children, and when my parents went to visit her, she would tell them to come after dark. I guess she didn't want people to know who her parents were. She wouldn't have anything to do with culture too.

As a result of these losses, Anishinaabe continue to feel shame for not knowing their cultural traditions, which continues to be witnessed throughout the generations. Elder Kathy shared her understanding of shame and trauma from colonization and, as a result, is cautious and intentional when supporting Indigenous peoples in the cancer centre:

> When I talk to them about cultural practices, I'm very careful about that. Because there's shame in not knowing your culture. I remember carrying that myself when I was younger…I was ashamed that I didn't, you know, know ceremonies or practices or language, which was a big one. No, but and that we didn't have powwow in my

> community. We didn't have gatherings like that, and I went to other communities for that. And I remember feeling shamed or less than as an Indigenous person. So, I'm really careful how I bring that up.

Loss of Understanding of Our Place Within Creation

The Elders stressed the importance of our relationship with the Creator and understanding the Creation story. This fundamental belief anchors our lives and instills a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning. The detrimental impact of colonization on our perception of our place in Creation and our capacity to fulfill our contract with Creator is imperative in framing the harms of colonization. Elder Dorothy explained how colonization has impacted our understanding of our role as Anishinaabe within the Creation story, resulting in harm to the interconnectedness and interdependence of all creation:

> It's not only what we lost in terms of our way of life but what we lost in terms of our appreciation of who we are as the red people that the Creator placed on Turtle Island. It was understood that we were put on Turtle Island as guests here, sharing with all others in creation. This Land was not given to us; we were given to the Land. This place, Turtle Island, is a place to live, a place to share a way of life in respect and in honouring all within creation. We, not all of us, but a lot of us, have lost that understanding of the sacredness of life and the sacredness in all of life. And being within all of life, in one context, is how we see ourselves as part of creation.

Erasure of Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin

The Elders shared how colonization, which was rooted in racism, created traumatic, oppressive, and unsafe systems for Indigenous peoples. Racism played a significant role in

determining whose knowledge was valued and whose was not. In the Canadian educational system, there was a purposeful disregard for Indigenous Knowledges. Elder Beatrice reflected on her time in school. She was not taught her native language; instead, she was taught in English. She was not taught about Indigenous spiritual or cultural practices; however, Catechism was a significant part of the curriculum. They learned subjects such as math, English, and history, but all of the history was focused on non-Indigenous people through a lens that described Indigenous peoples as less than. Elder Kathy shared her experiences within the school system as negative and traumatic:

> My education experiences up until this point were traumatic. I was not taught anything positive about Indigenous people in school, only negative. The racism I experienced I know now I turned that inward. In high school, I remember feeling so low. I once told my mom I wish I didn't have the last name Beaver, and I wish I weren't Indian.

Within the healthcare system, racism is not only experienced by people accessing care but also by Indigenous healthcare providers working within the system. Elder Rosella shared her early experience of being a nurse in her community. She felt the need to protect her clients who used traditional medicine from the discrimination they faced within the healthcare system.

> …When I was working in the clinic, the older people used to come, and they wouldn't be able to tell the doctor something, so they would tell me in the language, and then I would translate it to tell the doctor, and that's what I used to do. They came to trust me. Sometimes, I wouldn't tell the doctor everything. I filtered it. If it had anything to do with traditional medicine, I didn't always tell the doctor that because I didn't know where he

was at with traditional medicine. It wasn't until I got to trust the doctor. Then I would tell him.

Elder Kathy described her earlier experiences working in health care and the racism that she experiences as a healthcare provider:

> We talk about culturally safe pathways for people so that the next person coming in isn't going to be treated, mistreated, or not going to, but it's still happening. You know, it's still happening. I witnessed it as a frontline worker. I get treated not so well. Sometimes, you know, people don't show me the respect. And here I am trying to help people show the patient and family respect when sometimes I'm not even getting it.

Erasure of Anishinaabemowin

Elder Rosella spoke about her residential school experience and how this language disruption was the intentional and primary means to assimilate Anishinaabe people into Eurocentric Westernized Canadian culture. She shared her story of what it was like to attend residential school at the age of eight:

> I had to wait for my younger sister to turn six; I was two years older than her. My parents kept me home, and then the two of us went together. I think I was eight, close to nine when I started school. I didn't speak a word of English. When we went, we just spoke in our language. While we were there, we couldn't speak our language. We used to play at the far end of the playfield. That's where we could speak, and nobody would hear us speak our language…We always found ways to speak…Well, we came home at Christmas and Easter and things like that and on long weekends, we were able to speak the language.

After spending four years at the residential school, where she was forced to speak English, Rosella shared that when she would come home to Wikwemikong, she recalled how children used to laugh at them because they spoke English.

For Elders Jeroline and Beatrice, who did not attend residential school, the impact of the loss of language and the shame that was instilled in their parents. As a result, they did not learn the language. Elder Beatrice shared that she is not fluent. When she was younger, she could understand her parents because they spoke both English and Ojibwe in the same sentence. However, learning the language was not enforced in the household. Elder Jeroline shared a similar experience:

> Some will talk about the residential schools, and some will not. My mom would not talk to us. She wouldn't talk her language if we were around. She would chase us out of the house if somebody came to visit her and they were talking the language. We weren't allowed to be there.

The loss of language causes challenges for community members who are supporting people in preparing to journey back to the spirit world. As the Elders experienced, it is not uncommon for people to revert to their original language given to them by the Creator. As the language was never passed down in many families because of residential school, some families and caregivers struggle to understand the people they are caring for and need help with translation.

Loss of Land and Way of Life

Colonization forcibly removed people from their traditional territories and way of life, causing them to abandon their nomadic, land-based, and land-dependent way of life. Elder

Jeroline described the dire consequences of when the Treaty that was signed in her territory. It forced people to leave their territory and travel on the Trail of Tears. She shared the following story:

> They were supposed to be going to the Trail of Tears to Norway House. And now where Peguis is, how some of them, you know, got tired and stopped there…Yes, when they lost their Land, and they were supposed to be going to Norway House. And a lot of them got as far as Peguis and where it is now. And that's where they stayed. The Trail of Tears is the walk from North here to where Peguis is now. It was like there were no roads; there wasn't anything. Just bush and a lot of muskegs… so it was called the Trail of Tears. Leaving there, you know, the beautiful Land here by the river and everything to go there.

In addition to the loss of Land, the Elders also shared how colonization significantly impacted their land-based way of living, which had a ripple effect on how the community functioned. Elder Dorothy explained how people began to lose their role and place within the community and how men started altering their lifestyle, including hunting and trapping, to earn money instead of living a community life. Elder Beatrice discussed colonization's impact on people's diets, affecting their health and well-being. She describes it as the following:

> You know, like sugar, that processed flour, salt, all that that pasta. You know? Our people didn't have that in their life. They followed what was natural. You know. They hunted, they fished…They had to be there when the fish, you know when the fish was there, or go hunting…So, yeah, they lived a good life. They were healthy. They weren't obese like a lot of our people are today. You know they ate good food. We ate those natural foods.

Loss of Women's Role and Place in Community

The Elders emphasized the crucial role of women in Anishinaabe communities. Before colonization, women held an equal position in the community, with men and women having a balance in roles that were considered complementary to ensure the community's success. Women were respected and held in high regard as the givers of life and carriers of water. However, colonization imposed a patriarchal value-based system on Anishinaabe, which had a detrimental impact on women.

Many communities had matrilineal societies, with roles, inheritance, and power passed down through the mother's lineage. As Elder Beatrice explained, this impacted the clan systems within Anishinaabe communities:

> I think most follow the father's clan. My mentor, Freda MacDonald, she followed her mother's clan as well. And when I went to a shaking tent ceremony, the Elders let me know who my clan was. You know, prior to contact, women had a lot of influence in the community, but as the contact, women were considered Second Class.

She further discussed enfranchisement and how Indigenous women lost entitlement to registration because of their marriage to a non-Indigenous man. Elder Beatrice shared how this policy impacted her choice not to marry her husband for the first ten years because she was scared that her children would not be status as indicated in the following quote:

> We lived together for ten years before I got married because I didn't want to lose my Indian status. You know, at that time, there was discrimination against women who married non-Indigenous men. I would have lost my rights, but then after that, legislation was passed in 1985.

Loss and Fear of Cultural Teachings and Ceremonies

Colonization impacted the knowledge, understanding and practice of traditional ceremonies and rituals. Growing up in Bigtigoong, Elder Beatrice never saw any cultural practices except hunting, fishing, crafting, and sewing. Ceremonies were not practiced in her community and only started occurring when she was in her 20s. Elder Rosella shared that many people continued practicing their ceremonies and traditions in Wikwemikong but did so secretly, as many practices were banned and against the law. She shared that:

> People took them underground and hid them. They didn't talk about it; they did the ceremonies, and that I know. I remember seeing my father doing the ceremonies. And we never said anything to anybody about what was going on. It's only now that I'm speaking about it.

Practicing ceremonies in secret was something that her father also did. Elder Rosella shared a story of how her dad and the men within her community would come together in the shadow of the darkness:

> I still wonder why all these men would come like at night. We would peek down the stairs without getting caught. If we were, we were told to go to bed, go to bed. What they were doing was they were having pipe ceremonies. Whenever there was a storm, my dad would sit outside. He'd smoke his pipe. My mother offered tobacco and put it in the fire. Those kinds of things we observed. He did a smudging ceremony with my brothers. One time, we caught them doing that. We weren't supposed to see that. When we went to residential school, we were told not to say anything about anything. So, we never did.

I connected with what the Elders were sharing on a very personal level. I was raised in a non-Indigenous community and in a family where performing rituals and practises was considered taboo. Nokomis, who was a devout Catholic, literally thought that everything Nimishomis did was the work of the devil and would forbid the transfer of this knowledge to the children and grandchildren.

Loss of Teachings Regarding Dying and Death

Before settler contact, there were teachings and acceptance about how our spirit would journey through the path and stages of life. Once our purpose in life was fulfilled, we understood that we would prepare to journey back to the spirit world. In listening to the Elders and hearing about the ongoing harms of colonization, it became clear that colonization has impacted not only our ability to speak our language and transfer our knowledge and ceremonies but also something so sacred as our death and dying processes. It has affected our family's ability to be together, to love one another, and to support people who are dying.

The experience within residential schools impacted this acceptance and how children viewed death and dying. Elder Rosella shared how residential school made her fearful of death:

> When I went to residential school, like hearing all the horror stories and everything that everybody shared, somehow, I became afraid of death. Even though I was eight years old when my grandmother died, I remember we went to the house, but we had to go back to residential school because it was like Easter weekend, and we couldn't stay home for the funeral. With the stories shared by other kids, I became afraid of death. Even when I went to nursing school, and somebody died, I couldn't go in the room and give them a bath by

> myself; I had to take somebody with me. My dad died in 1973, and when he died, all my fear was gone. He took my fear away from me. After that, I wasn't afraid of death.

Elder Jeroline shared that her mother's experiences within residential schools impacted the way her mother processed dying and death. She describes that there were no services or funerals at residential schools and all of the ceremonies and rituals regarding dying and death that Indigenous children knew about were forbidden. As a result, her mother never learned how to process dying and death. This, in turn, impacted Elder Jeroline's understanding and experiences with death as she was not allowed to attend funerals in her community.

People's previous experiences with the residential school also impact decisions and choices at the end of life, including people's fear of leaving the community for care. Elder Jeroline spoke of her experiences working with Elders at homecare. She shared that the fear of leaving the community for care is reflected in many people's experiences of being forcibly removed as children to attend residential school. This impacts people's decisions and their willingness to access and seek care. She describes it as the following:

> A lot of the Elders, to go way to hospitals, even in the north, for Elders to leave the community that haunts them. They don't want to leave the community cause they might not come back. And that's still there. It's still very hard. That's what they want to be home. That's why a lot of them, you know, don't say they're sick because they might be taken away.

Re-awakening Cultural and Community-based Knowledge and Teachings

I've always believed our culture and our history contain knowledge, and I still believe this for a fact today…No one taught me that when I was 28, but I knew it in my heart. And there's a reason

for that because Creator. You know, when we talk about loss of culture, loss of language, one of my Elders from Curve Lake told me you've never lost it. It's still here you've just got to reawaken it. Which is what you're doing…I love that word, reawakening. Because for me, that's my life, going back in and going within (Elder Kathy MacLeod-Beaver, February 25, 2022, transcript).

The Elders acknowledged the devastating impact that colonization has on the Anishinaabe people and the ongoing harm that we continue to experience as a result. They believe that the key to healing ourselves lies within our culture and teachings. They indicated that our culture has always possessed the knowledge for living a good life based on the work of the Creator. There is an appreciation that the Creator guides us through life and gives us the "old wisdom to understand this new way of life," as stated by Elder Rosella. The Elders emphasized the importance of being connected to Anishinaabe cultural and community-based knowledge and teachings, as they are essential for leading a good life.

Re-claiming Our Creation Story

To re-claim Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about our culture, the Elders emphasized that we must first re-claim our creation stories, which are the foundation of who we are as Anishinaabe. These stories give us an understanding of our identity as Anishinaabe people and our origins. The creation stories also guide us on how to re-connect with Creator and our traditional ways of knowing.

During the storytelling session, the Elders shared two creation stories: one about how the earth was created and the other about an individual's own creation or birth story. Absolon (2022) differentiates these teachings using a large "C" in the Creation story when discussing how the Anishinaabe were created. She uses a small "c" for the creation story to describe a person's

journey from the spirit world into a physical body. The “C” and “c” will be used throughout my dissertation. In the next chapter on re-connecting with Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about the circle of life, I will share the teachings about the creation story.

The Creation story highlights common themes, such as the teachings of Grandmother Moon, Mother Earth, our ancestors, and our connections to all my relations. The Elders shared that we must also learn and enact the teachings of our traditional practices and ceremonies and honour our traditional medicines, which can aid in healing and restoring loss. Elder Dorothy shared her understanding of the Anishinaabe Creation story as told to her by Elder Jim Dumont. She describes it as the following:

> The Creation story talks about how the universe was created. It tells us that the four colours of man were created last after the plants and animals were placed on this earth. It tells us that humans were created as a special wanting by the Creator for companionship; the Creator wanted to have a way for his thoughts to bounce back. Just imagine yourself alone in the world, but who do you have to talk to? Who do you have to bounce your ideas off of? Who do you have to be in a relationship? So, the Creator really was looking for a way he could relate to when he created the earth, and there are stories about how he did that. And then his final creation was man; he created humans in four colours…And the red man was the last one to leave the side of the Creator…The others, the other three colours of man, were happy to go into the world and make their way, but the red man was reluctant to leave the side of the Creator. They wanted to stay with the Creator, they didn't want to leave. Red man journeyed to earth three times but kept coming back, and the fourth time, the Creator said, you're going to go and make your life, but I will never

> close the way back to my side. You will always have a path back, and that path back is within the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. So, if you can follow the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, you'll have a direct line to me. And when Jim Dumont told us that story, he said that it doesn't mean anything less of the other colours; that they left right away, they were happy to go and follow their journey, what the Creator has set out for them, but just that our people were reluctant, and so that's one of the promises that the Creator gave to us. And so, then, when we started learning the Medicine Wheel teachings and the importance of them, the most important reason why we know them and learn them and live by them is to keep that line to the Creator open.

The Creation story holds important teachings about Grandmother Moon. According to Elder Dorothy, these teachings describe the story of the first woman who came to earth. When the time came for her to return to the spirit world, the woman was torn between her desire to return to the Creator and her love for her children. She did not want to leave them behind. Instead of leaving, she chose to live in the sky world as Grandmother Moon, where she could be with both worlds. Elder Dorothy shared that this is why we hold Grandmother Moon in high regard and have a monthly ceremony for her. She guides all the aspects of womanhood and the love that a mother has for their child. Every part of our planet and the cosmos has a story that outlines its creation and holds important teachings. These stories may vary depending on where people live, but what matters is that these teachings are relevant and help guide them to live a good life.

The Creation story also explains how Mother Earth was created and why we need to honour and respect her. Elder Betty shared that we could show our respect by being mindful of how we interact with Mother Earth and caring for her. She advises to do the following:

> To walk with a padded foot like a bear or a bobcat or a lynx. You know, simply because of the topsoil, that's the new babies…All the new growth is coming next. So those are, they haven't been born, yet you walk softly on those babies. They're coming out. And so, you know the babies, have a lot of energy. You do energy healing.

Elder Betty also recommends sitting directly on the ground and placing your food on it to connect with Mother Earth and receive her healing energy. She described this healing energy in a beautiful story about a young woman who gave birth while blueberry picking. By keeping her feet on the ground, the young woman was able to harness Mother Earth's energy to bring her child into this world.

The Elders explained that understanding the Creation story helps us comprehend how these elements can assist us in our healing and recognize that Creator gave us the knowledge to heal ourselves through teachings and culture. This includes the understanding that Land is medicine and that healing can come from being on the land and connection to Mother Earth. Elder Beatrice shared the significance of being close to Mother Earth in ceremony and feeling a deep connection to the Land while drumming:

> You feel that connection, you know, that grounding for Mother Earth and if you go to sing by the river and that connection to that water cause it's an element of life and even to go to a sweat lodge ceremony because you're sitting right on the ground. It just feels so good.

Elder Jeroline highlighted that being on the Land also provides us with opportunities for connecting and engaging in traditional ceremonies and practices:

> And being together with others, like maybe building a lodge together, or praying together and ceremony. And I remember when I'm in fasting, then after the fast and then coming home and going to sit outside and just still feeling that and then how good it feels… it is so restful and you feel so good. You know, we're out there, we offer our tobacco, and we laugh and talk, and we have such a wonderful time, and it really refreshes you…there's nothing like going out on the Land, and your spirit is just lifted.

The Elders emphasized the importance of being on the Land in one's traditional territories, especially when someone is sick and preparing to journey back to the spirit world. They believe that being on the Land is when your spirit is whole, living the life it was meant to live. Elder Kathy shared a story about a patient undergoing treatment for their illness and said that it was important that they still go to their annual hunting camp. The patient noted how good it felt to be on the Land; it was like medicine for them. Elder Dorothy spoke about her uncle and the importance of his trapline and shared that when he was older, he would reminisce about his time on the trapline and how being in the woods made him feel healthy, strong, and alive.

> My cousin told me once he said, “You know, I remember taking Uncle John to where he got onto the trap line, you know where (the location).” So, he dropped him off at the end of the woods and said, “Uncle John walked down that trail, and all he had was this backpack and his rifle, and he was going to live there for the winter.” And that's all he brought with him; he was very self-sufficient.

The Creation story also contains important teachings about the significance of water. According to the Elders, water is life and one of the four elements which sustain our bodies and help heal our spirits. Elder Betty explained the importance of water in the following:

> To shed those salty tears is a gift as well. When the world was created, we were given that gift of salt water for healing and the gift of fresh water for life. From water comes life, but also, we need that salt water we can't live without. It protects Turtle Island on either side. And so that's how important those tears are to a person going. And whether it's a case of a person being sad or that what happens is the community is grieving for itself that, that's a part of grieving that's what the tears being shed for.

In addition to providing us with life and healing, water teaches us how to live. Elder Betty compared our spirits to water:

> We need to be like water. Water can get where it's gonna go. It'll go over, around or under, but it will go where it wants to go...our spirit has a mission…you gotta let that spirit be like water. Accomplish what it has to do. It'll go under, over around, but it'll accomplish what it has to do…There are many, many things that will make you have to, your spirit will be sent back because it has to finish the mission right.

The Creation story teaches us that every living being has a spirit, including animals, water, trees, plants, and Land. We are all interconnected and interdependent on one another, which is why we hold everything in creation with such reverence. The Elders explain that this is understood as "all my relations," meaning that we are all related because we come from the same mother. However, Elder Kathy pointed out that, as human beings, we have lost this ability because of the way we live our lives. Unlike us, she stated that the animals and plants still follow

their original instructions. This was reinforced to her at an AIDS conference, where an Elder shared that the healing answer to AIDS is going to come from the animal world.

Enacting Traditional Practices and Ceremonies

The Elder's stories emphasized the importance of re-learning and re-activating Anishinaabe Knowledge through enacting traditional practices and ceremonies our Ancestors left behind. These practices can aid in healing, restore loss, and allow people to connect with each other and their culture. By doing so, we can re-connect with our emotions and spirit. Elder Kathy shared a powerful experience where she witnessed a man she was working with sing a song he remembered growing up:

> [he said] I don't normally sing, but this is a song I remember hearing. And he started beating on the table. And he was singing the song, and I got emotional because I had never heard him sing before. He could barely get through that song because it was something that was sung to him when he was younger. And he was having trouble singing it because it was such an emotional song.

During our discussion, the Elders highlighted the significance of learning about the protocols of ceremonial work. They emphasized the importance and relevance of circles in ceremony work, where everyone is equal, has a voice, and a way to connect with spirit. Elder Kathy shared:

> When they come to the Circle, they go, oh my gosh, I can't even explain what this is like, phenomenal, like what I'm feeling. But it's the power of your Spirit connecting to the medicines, connecting to the spirit of this medicine, and the spirit of the original teachings that were left behind for us. That's why I love Circles. Because I'll sit in a

> Circle, I could spend one-on-one time with some of my clients. But when they sit in a Circle, I see a different person completely when they were in the Circle.

The Elders also expressed the importance of protocols in guiding the timing of ceremonies. Elder Betty explained that she had always been told that sweat lodge ceremonies should not be held during the winter, as Mother Earth is considered asleep and should not be disturbed. Instead, one should seek the guidance of Grandmother Moon, as she's always awake.

Elder Kathy shared that preparing oneself mentally, spiritually, and physically is important before participating in ceremonies. She recounted the teachings given to her by an Elder on the teaching of the pipe and to never pick up the pipe when you are angry. The Elder told her, “If you are feeling that, ask the spirit world to ignore the unconscious thoughts. He said that when we are trying to create positive energy and change, there will always be that opposite force present.”

There are also specific protocols that determine who can participate in particular ceremonies. Elder Beatrice shared her experience of participating in a fasting ceremony:

> The next year, we went fasting with Freda. Freda said, you know, women do not have to really go fasting. And women shouldn't go without water. Because that's a part of who we are as women, were those water carriers. So, she said, we shouldn't go without water. So, we went on what she called a woman's fast, where we were able to drink water. We had our tents separate from each other. So, we could take that time to be alone, pray, and do what we had to do. But we also got together as women to share, to smudge. We even built a sweat lodge together, you know. So, we had a sweat before we started fasting…It was so nice to have Freda there. I would hear her because if I were in my tent, doing what

> I was doing, and I would hear her singing, and she would be singing some of the Ojibwe hymns, which is so nice, you know, so nice to listen, listen to it. And to learn some of those hymns from her as well, when to use my drums to sing those hymns.

Sprit names are important in ceremonial work as they are a form of medicine. At the beginning of each storytelling session, some Elders shared their spirit or Anishinaabe names and described how they received them at birth or through ceremony. Elder Beatrice shared her experience of receiving her name and her colours as follows:

> I got my colours when I got my spirit name. And my spirit name was given to me by an Elder from my community. She asked me did you dream about any colours? So, I told her about my dream. You know, when I was first gifted with the feather, I must have been in my 20s, and it was from Chief Roy Michano, and he gifted a lot of us with feathers at that time. And at that time, I sort of felt like I didn't earn, earn it. And so, must have been thinking about this and stuff like that. And one time, I had a dream. And in my dream, I was putting on my regalia to go to the powwow, and my feather was there. And after I got dressed, took my feather, then I went walking down the road to the powwow, and I came upon this woman who was sitting on the ground. And she also had a white buckskin on, and she saw my feather. She said, can I look at your feather...She told me my colours are yellow, red, black, and white. [She said] Put those colours on there with the feather. Then I went to the powwow grounds, and I could see an Elder standing in each of the four directions. And I went to the Elder in the East. And I didn't have to tell him why I was there. He saw my feather and said, you’re not to give that feather away. But you could share with others.

Elder Kathy shared her journey in receiving her spirit name from Elder Lily and the teachings that she received as well. She said:

> My spirit name is what defines the way I've been walking my journey. Semaa kwe (tobacco) is that medicine that goes first, Semaa kwe, you know, it's that medicine that goes first before everything else…. And I'm so grateful for that name. And they say that that's our medicine. That's what Lily said, sound that name every chance you get, she said.

The Elders discussed the significance of traditional and sacred songs in our ceremonies. These songs are sometimes passed down to us by our Elders, while other times, they may come to us through ceremonies and dreams. However, due to colonization, many of our practices regarding drumming and singing were banned, leading to a disconnection from this practice. The Elders shared that many never saw drumming or singing in their communities and only re-connected with this practice in adulthood. Elder Beatrice shared about hearing the drum for the first time at the age of 17 when Elder Richard Lyons visited her community:

> I remember walking up those steps at the community hall, and I could hear. I looked in, and I could see their big drum there. And I could see the dancers, and I was just in all in awe. Like, I could just feel that spirit already drew me because I thought we had lost things like that, you know, because, like I said, I never saw that in my community before. And I was so happy, so happy. My spirit was so happy. So, that would have been my first connection with the drum when I was 17.

Elder Beatrice then shared her first drumming experience. She recounted how she was on Mount McKay when she saw a group of women gathering by a tree. As they began to drum,

Elder Beatrice was in awe. She wanted to drum with them so badly, so she approached them and joined.

Once we learn the teachings about the songs and drumming, the Elders shared ways to bring these teachings to life and use them to help people. Elder Kathy recounted her experience of making her first drum and being invited to a sweat by an Elder. When she arrived, the Elder asked her where her drum was, and she said it was at home. The Elder advised her that:

> Drums like to be together. They like to visit. She said they have a spirit…you don't have to know how to sing. You don't have to know the song. You don't, even if you know one line of that song, sing that one line over and over again. In the spirit world, Creator doesn't care. Like they don't care what you sound like. They don't. You don't have to get it right all the time. But if it's coming from this place, this good place here that you can't go wrong.

Drumming and singing are important aspects of health and healing and are medicine for those who are sick. Elder Kathy shared her experience in supporting a family during an illness:

> So, I went back, and his two daughters were there. And I brought a few drums and shakers. And he [the man who was sick] actually took one of the shakers and his two daughters; they both drummed with me, and we did a smudge ceremony. He was appreciative. And when we were drumming, I didn't look at him. Like I always close my eyes when I'm singing. And I'm praying, too, at the same time. They were all crying when we were done. His daughter said to me afterwards, thanks so much. I knew that really helped because he was crying while you were singing.

During ceremony work, the Elders shared a practice of using sacred items like the Eagle feather. This sacred item is used in many ceremonies to carry our prayers to Creator. Another sacred item used in ceremony was stones. Elder Betty works extensively with stones and shared some teachings on particular stones. She said that amethyst is used in healing, both mentally and emotionally, as well as spiritually. It also helps a person's immune system. She suggested that if you bless them during a full moon in February and give them to people who need them, they can carry them around or sleep with them; they will have good dreams and sleep. Elder Betty also spoke about Thunderbird stones, formed from lighting that hits the water and ploughs the bottom of lakes or rivers. The mud at the bottom of the water rolls into stones that cannot be broken. These stones carry much energy and are helpful for healing, especially for people who are grieving. Holding the stone or placing it under their bed when they are sleeping helps them. The stone can be rejuvenated by running it under running water, and it regenerates itself. Elder Betty shared that Thunderbird stones are one of the strongest healing stones; you can find them all along the water where lightning hits.

Honouring Our Traditional Medicine

Throughout the Elder's stories, they emphasized the importance of re-connecting with traditional healing practices and medicines that were forcibly removed from communities and replaced with Westernized medicine. Elder Jeroline shared her experience learning about medicines by participating in a medicine camp at Matootoo Lake. She is now a helper in teaching others who want to learn and is not only passing knowledge to the younger generation but also the feeling of calmness that engaging in ceremony can bring to a person:

> We do medicine camp and also fasting, putting the fasters out. We do that, and we go out on the Land picking medicine, and she [Kathy Bird] teaches a four-year medicine program. So, I'm involved with, with that. Go out for a week at a time for the teaching and help with that and again going out on the Land with the new students picking medicine here.

When I was in Peguis, Elder Jeroline took me to the medicine camp. I felt the same belonging and completeness as when Elder Jeroline first experienced it. Kathy Bird was an amazing host. She brought me inside her home to see where they harvested and prepared the medicines. I recall that feeling of being in that room with those medicines, almost like I had a vision and this was to come. I remember thinking of Nimishomis then and wanted to explore that further because my grandfather was a traditional healer.

The Elders shared their experiences of using traditional medicine. Elder Beatrice mentioned that someone with a cold will use cedar and bear grease. She shared that she recently went to a traditional healer to get some seven-needle medicine for the lasting effects of COVID. She noted in her community that people are starting to use traditional medicine more and are learning about it. In her home community, an Elder named Raphael Moses does a lot of gathering and sharing of those medicines.

The use of traditional medicine is particularly important when helping and supporting people. All the Elders spoke about using traditional medicine in smudging ceremonies. Elder Beatrice shared the significance of smudging and the medicines used in it. She explained that:

> Smudging is a cleansing ceremony. Cleansing that space, that aura that we carry. Cleansing and purification ceremony. It could use all the medicines, or some people will

> just use sage, to sage your rooms, that negative energy. We use that sweetgrass; it promotes that positive energy. Tobacco is added. It's that giving thanks. Cedar are protection medicines.

Elder Jeroline shared that she prays and offers tobacco before she goes anywhere and that it helps her group herself and stay balanced when working with people who are sick. Similarly, Elder Kathy described how smudging and using her tobacco helps ground her and keep her in balance when working with patients. She prays to Creator just before she goes to see somebody and says, "I don't know what it is that they need help with. But I know you do. And just, you know, show me how to be a helper, a good helper."

Elder Kathy helps people in hospitals with medicines and guides them through ceremonies. She explains the purpose of these medicines and how a medicine bundle, which she offers to people, can help them during times of fear or nervousness, especially when their family is not present. Elder Kathy believes holding the bundle and speaking from the heart to Creator, even if done silently, can provide comfort. The bundle contains the four sacred medicines and healing stones created by artist Randy Knott from Curve Lake. These stones are grandfathers who have been around for ages and possess wisdom and energy that can be shared. Holding onto the stone can help release negative energy or provide the energy needed to overcome obstacles. Tobacco can also be provided for prayer and healing during illness as part of the ceremony.

During a discussion about supporting people who are very sick, Elder Kathy mentioned the use of Bear Medicine. She shared a powerful story about how Bear Medicine helped someone she was supporting at the end of life. Elder Kathy asked the person if they had any medicine at home, specifically Bear Medicine. The person replied that they had run out of it.

Elder Kathy promised to get some and told her to rub it on their chest every night before bed. The medicine also contained bear root. Elder Kathy shared:

> So that when she passed away, her family was with her, one sister was with her, and she said to me that…she was using that bear medicine right up till that night, she said, you know, and it really helped her, Like it really put her at ease, and provided her a sense of calmness. And I just said to her, I'm really glad to hear that because, you know, that's, you know, that's her spirit connecting to the spirit of that medicine.

These ceremonies and practices are important to Anishinaabe health and healing. The use of traditional medicines is an essential part of these practices and aids in healing our body, spirit, mind, and the spaces we hold. Although Westernized medicine is valued for treating many physical illnesses, there are differences in approaches between traditional and Westernized medicine. Elder Kathy described these differences as the following:

> Traditional medicine works and gets rid of things in the body, so they don't have time to stay there and make you sick. That's what traditional medicine is, how it works. And Western medicine is used to treat symptoms. But, what I like about traditional medicine is that like whenever I go see a healer, they never focus on the symptoms I am having. They focus on what you know and have a conversation with you about what is going on with you from mind, body, spirit, and emotional perspectives. They would ask you all those questions…The spirit of health is having a sense of belonging and needing a connection to all that is around you.

Re-connecting with Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin about the Circle of Life

Most people will say "nigiiwe" go home…I'm going home and she died that night, that evening. Going home. And a lot of people say that. You know, sometimes when they're in the hospital, they say I want to go home. People think they want to leave the hospital and go to their home. But the meaning is that I want to go back to the spirit world (Elder Rosella Kinoshameg, March 1, 2022, transcript).

According to the Anishinaabe perspective, dying and death are seen as a journey of spirit moving throughout life. Elder Dorothy describes that the "Creator promised a well-trodden path back to his or her side in the spirit world. This path back to the spirit world is found by following the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. They are our guide." Elder Rosella explains that as we transition through these stages, we understand that life is a circular journey known as our Earth walk. Once this circle is completed and we have fulfilled our purpose on earth, regardless of age, it is time to return to the Creator from whom we originated, back to *Gaagige Minawaanigozigiwining* – the Land of everlasting happiness, also called *Manitowaning* - home of the Great Spirit or den of the Great Spirit. When we die, our spirit and body separate: our body returns to Mother Earth, and the spirit returns to the Creator. This return to a place of understanding and wisdom is the foundation of our traditional health philosophy and way of life. Elder Rosella explains that completing the circle means:

> Creator nurtures us spiritually and in all the ways to make this a beautiful and inviting experience. So, in journeying with the dying, you know, as people are approaching death, we say they're completing their circle. They have completed what they have been sent here to do.

During the storytelling sessions, the Elders emphasized the significance of understanding the teachings regarding dying and death. These teachings help us prepare and navigate the Western doorway on our final journey. By embracing these teachings, we can overcome any fear of dying and death and instead view it as a sacred part of our life's journey. While sharing these stories, it was important to note that many teachings are unique to families and communities, and beliefs may vary. The Elders emphasized that all teachings are true, and our responsibility is to learn and understand our own story. Finally, the Elders concluded that the final act of re-connecting with Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about the Circle of life is to re-claim our collective responsibility in caring for people who were sick to ensure that the person is prepared to journey back to the spirit world.

The Balance Between Life and Death

The Elders emphasized the importance of living in balance and harmony during the storytelling sessions. They explained that this balance is crucial in preparing to journey to the spirit world. The Elders also shared that to understand Anishinaabe beliefs about death, we must first learn Anishinaabe beliefs about life as told through the creation story. These beliefs are interconnected - you cannot have one without the other. The teachings within the creation story establish the foundation for how we live our lives and the way and timing of our death.

In the beginning, we are all spirits bestowed with *waanizhijigeyaanh*—free will by the Creator to shape our own path in life. Elder Beatrice explained that we were in the lodge with the seven grandfathers and the Creator. As part of our contemplation about coming to and becoming part of this planet, we made a contract with the Creator regarding our purpose on earth. During

this introspection, the Creator asked us to choose our life's path and to include four commitments to this world as part of our contract.

The first commitment we make is to choose our parents. According to Elder Rosella, we choose to either teach our parents something or learn something from them. This choice is meant to prepare us for our return to the spirit world. This teaching can be particularly comforting for those who have experienced miscarriages, as shared by Elder Dorothy:

> When we look at even a child that hasn't been born, a child who hasn't grown in the mother's womb long enough to be born, there's still a reason why that little spirit left the spirit world and became impregnated in that woman's womb. There was still something, you know, a reason why she or he brought themselves into that family.

I received the teaching about the first commitment from an Elder after the birth of my second child, who was born with Down syndrome. Knowing that she chose my husband and me as her parents comforted me. It also empowered me to make the best choices for her as a parent.

The second commitment we make is to choose the circumstances of our birth and life. The Elders explained that when we are sitting with the Creator, we have the freedom to pick out everything about our lives, including our health, where we will stop along the way, and where we will end up. Elder Betty describes this in the following:

> Well, when you're sitting with the Creator, the Creator asks you to pick out your life. So, you pick everything out. Your health is picked out, and it's up to you. The Creator just sits with you and views you as you sort through everything, and you say, I'll do this. And you take a look here at the line you're going into, the family you're going into, and you sometimes you will pick something because you don't want that family member to have

> it. And so, you'll take it instead. So, you'll say, I can weather this better than that person could. And so, you do it. And so, you pick where you're going to go. Where you're going to, what path you'll take, where you'll stop, where you'll get off, where you'll take a break, or where you will go around the mountain instead of over the mountain, and you know, so sometimes you'll have family members who have a real struggle, but you don't because you've got around you know.

Learning this teaching was significant for me in reflecting on my mother's journey with cancer. During my mother's illness, I questioned why this was happening to her and why she was diagnosed with cancer. I questioned Creator, and much of my anger was directed toward this. When I received this teaching during the storytelling sessions with the Elders, it reframed my mother's journey. It comforted me and gave me a different understanding of my mother's deep love for me, understanding that she may have taken this upon so that her children would not have to.

The third commitment we make to Creator is how long we need to fulfill our purpose. Normally, when we think of fulfilling our purpose here on earth, we associate it with a long life and someone older. However, sometimes, our purpose here on earth can be fulfilled in a very short time. As Elder Beatrice shared:

> So, when we come here and we're living this life, sometimes we could fulfill our purpose soon. And even a young child who has who passes on, that child had an impact on those who had touched his or her life, you know, and in that so that would serve part of the purpose also.

Elder Dorothy added that fulfilling our contracts and purpose here on earth could take hours or hundreds of years. She elaborated that when we make this contract to come to this earth, it may not be as a human being. Depending on how long it will take to fulfill our purpose here on earth, Elder Dorothy shared that we may choose to come as an animal, mountain, or tree:

> You know, what we need to learn goes deeper. You know we're not the only thing on this planet. We have an ego that thinks that we are, but we're not. Someone could want to come to this earth and would need 1000 years to learn and to develop into what they want. And they talk about, you know, the trees, the huge trees that live on parts of Turtle Island that have lived for 1000 years in the same ground. They've never moved; they seen life all around them, and they supported life. They're learning. Whatever knowledge they need to gather takes that long. And when their death finally comes from whatever reason, they're bringing you know that spiritual understanding to the rest of whoever lives on this planet.

When people cannot fulfill their purpose here on earth or if they die too early because of an accident or suicide, they may need to come back as someone else or in another form to fulfill their contract. Elder Betty shared that, at times, people will remember aspects of their previous life. She told a story where her son, who was only two years old, used to get frustrated when he could not do certain things and would say, “What happened to my big hands?” This upset Elder Betty’s mother as the boy seemed to remember a past life where he had big hands.

The last commitment we make with Creator is around the circumstances of our death. According to Elder Dorothy, understanding this teaching helps us accept an individual’s life and death circumstances and helps with the grieving process. It makes us realize that this is what the

person designed. She explained that we all must return to the spirit world and that "our existence here on this earth is a time…it's got a start and an end date…To me, it's not about the drama of dying. It is not as dramatic as the way that we hold on to life now, but it's about how we live our life, fulfill our commitments to the Creator. Living and dying are part of our life's path."

Elder Betty shared that after finalizing all the commitments in your contract with the Creator, you confirm that this is what you want to do. She described this as the following:

> Creator then slaps you on the back, and you are born, and that's why you cry out because the last thing the Creator said to us is 'this is the date, the time, the event that you will come back to me.' And when we are born, we forget this conversation and spend the rest of our lives worried about when we will die and if it will hurt. Only the Creator knows when we will die.

Maintaining a balance between life and death is crucial for a community's survival. According to Elder Betty, the passing of someone creates space for a new person to come in. This allows the community to expand, as "when one goes, there may be two taken its place and maybe four taken, you've made room." Elder Betty emphasized the interconnectedness of individuals as part of the community and our collective responsibility to our ancestors' past and future.

The Journey Back to Spirt World

During the discussion, Elder Jeroline, Rosella, and Betty recounted their experiences of journeying to the spirit world and being sent back because it was not their time. They all agreed that it is impossible to describe the beauty and peacefulness of that place, which left them in awe and joy. The colours, sounds and music there are beyond description. They emphasized that the

experience was not painful and that each person is accepted without any requirements or expectations. The order and rules we have in this world do not apply there. While your physical body remains on Earth, the spirit joins the other beautiful spirits on the other side in this peaceful and accepting place. Elder Betty described this acceptance as follows:

> We were made by the Creator, body and spirit. The Creator has accepted you at that moment. When it's put your spirit into your body, that's total acceptance of who you are and what you are. So, you're not barred from going back to the Creator. And we're absorbed by the Creator with total love and acceptance.

The testimonies of the Elders serve as a valuable guide for those beginning a similar journey. They reassure people of the joy that awaits them, emphasizing that their ancestors are eagerly awaiting their arrival. Additionally, Elders can convey this message to family members, helping them to better understand the transition.

The Elders shared their insights about the journey back to the spirit world, which takes four days. This period gives the spirit time to complete any outstanding tasks required for transitioning into the spirit world, such as making amends, visiting loved ones, and retrieving lost belongings, such as body parts. Elder Beatrice noted that “the spirit travels westward, and each day, the spirit empties a bundle from a pack sack to make amends to those they may have hurt.’’ The Elders further described that on the fourth day, the spirit travels and is guided by a spirit fire, which acts as a beacon.

During this journey, the ancestors are present and guiding them, but the spirit cannot see them until the final day. Elder Dorothy talked about these exchanges as a way for our ancestors to share their love and healing with us:

> Our ancestors have travelled this path many times. They are called back to our world from time to time to guide and help us. We meet with our ancestors along our journey from this world to the spirit world, and our exchanges with them are harmonious and healing. This is because we are meeting spirit to spirit, not as humans, with all our human weaknesses, human ways of hurting one another, our human mind and bark. When we meet – spirit to spirit – we meet on spirit terms, which are grounded by love. A kind of love that few are able to feel as a human. How could we not heal each other when such love is shared?

Elder Beatrice shared that the spirit then travels with the ancestors across the lake or up the mountain to the spirit world, and that is when they meet again. She described that this is why the phrase 'baamaapii' is used. It means, "We will see you later; we will meet again after completing our purpose here on Earth." Elder Beatrice said this is when we would sing the travelling song "Giwaabamin, we'll see you again." Elder Jeroline shared that the Western doorway is opened with the drum on the day that person is buried. Once they are buried and you leave that cemetery, she said you should not look back and not say the person's name for a year so that you do not call them back.

During a funeral, Elder Beatrice explained why some people believe it is inappropriate for children to be present. She recalled hearing a teaching that bringing young children near a deceased body could make their spirit vulnerable and potentially be taken by the person who has passed. This same teaching has been shared with me by other Elders in Treaty #3, who caution that young children and pregnant women could be particularly at risk during the four-day

mourning period. To protect them from the spirit, charcoal could be applied to their forehead to blur their faces, making it more difficult for the spirit to see them.

Ensuring that the Spirit is Prepared to Make the Journey

The transition back to the spirit world involves ensuring that the person is prepared and that their spirit is ready to make the journey. According to the Elders, ceremony was given to us by the Creator and provides a clear path back to the Creator. Thus, it is crucial for the Anishinaabe to re-claim the teachings, ceremonies, and practices that should be observed at the end of life, so that family and community can offer help and support to someone as they transition back to the spirit world.

Helping someone during their four-day journey back to the spirit world involves creating a four-day bundle corresponding to their journey's four levels and days. Elder Rosella shared this invaluable teaching during her storytelling session, which was unfamiliar to some of the other Elders:

> We assist them on their own journey with a bundle that we prepare. So, it's a little wooden bowl, with a wooden spoon, we put some tobacco in there enough for four days, we put four matches in there, four sticks, and four fruit because they need to stop and eat for four days, as they're travelling back. So, they need to offer tobacco. They need to make that little sacred fire, so that's why you have the little wooden stick. One for each day. So, I've prepared those for some people. Other people do their own.

Along with the items in this bundle, Elder Jeroline added that the teachings she received from a medicine woman included a needle, a piece of thread, and cloth.

The Elders emphasized the significance of the sacred fire, which is needed to help the spirit return to the spirit world. The sacred fire is also utilized in smudging ceremonies where the smudge is brought from the fire and used to cleanse everyone in the room, including the person who has died. Family and community always tend to the sacred fire, which is considered a great honour. Elder Beatrice shared the following about the sacred fire:

> It allows the community to come together to, to share stories about the person who is deceased…to laugh, to cry, to put those food offerings in the sacred fire, to put that sacred tobacco in the fire as well. It allows our pipes to be lit, the drums to be sounded, and those songs to be sung.

According to Elder Jeroline, if someone has not received their spirit name or colours, a ceremony can be performed before their death to meet this need. Another ceremony involves covering the person with a blanket, which comforts the individual and their family. Elder Betty explained that the person would wear the blanket for a week or two before their death. Once the person passes, the blanket would then be distributed amongst the family. The family can take the pieces, put their offering down, and hang it in an area of special significance, leaving it there for a year.

As individuals prepare for their journey, singing, drumming, and chanting play a significant role. Elder Kathy shared a touching experience while vigilling at a relative's bedside. She decided to sing to the person, knowing they were going to the spirit world. As she sang, the family joined in as well. When she opened her eyes, she saw that the person was moving their hand to the beat of the drum. They sang together, and one of the attendees offered a song that came to them during their sunrise ceremony for the individual. They shared food and did a

prayer circle until the person passed away in the middle of the night. The individual's family called Elder Kathy the next day to let me know he had passed and to thank her for what she had done.

The shaker holds great significance in Anishinaabe ceremonies as the shaker was the first sound heard during Creation. According to Elder Rosella, the shaker also plays a significant role in birth and death. The shaker sound brings you to earthly life and carries you to the spirit world. The shaker's sound is the first sound heard during the creation of a new life. She explained that when a baby is in the mother's womb, the baby hears her heartbeat. This is the same rhythmic sound heard when using a shaker. Similarly, when a person is dying, their body may produce their own rattle-like sound. Towards the end of life, many people experience a build-up of respiratory secretions, which sounds like a gurgling noise. This has been described in palliative care as the "death rattle." Elder Rosella explains that the body will make its own shaker sound to guide a person back to the spirit world. This teaching can be very comforting to families, as it reminds them that the body and spirit know what to do during the dying process and that they have their own way of doing ceremony as they transition from earthly life to the spirit world.

Ceremonies and Burial Practices

The Elders shared many practices that occur when a person is preparing for their journey back to the spirit world. These practices support the individual's transition and bring comfort to the family. As the individual is dying, the room and the person are smudged, and the bed is turned so that the feet are facing towards the west, symbolizing that journey of going back to the western doorway. If the person is dying in the hospital, a candle may be lit in place of a sacred fire. After the person dies, the windows are open so that the spirit can leave after they pass. The

Elder or spiritual guide will smudge the family along with the room, and the candle's flame may then be used to light the sacred fire. The family then accompanies the body to the funeral home.

To prepare the body for a traditional burial, the family will perform a cedar bath ceremony which involves cleansing the body with cedar water. Elder Rosella advises people to keep some of the cedar water to wash their hands after they do the cedar bath and to reserve some for the pallbearers. The person is then dressed in traditional clothing, including a new pair of moccasins. Elder Rosella shared that in her community, they dress them in clothes that are befitting the work that they did, and the moccasins must have a hole in the heel to signify that the person has walked on this earth. Elder Betty adds that the moccasins are important because they will be needed for the person's journey and that some people will rub bear grease on their feet and then put their moccasins on.

When the body returns to the home or community, Elder Beatrice shared that they would bring the body in one door for the funeral and then take it out another door to the cemetery to symbolize the person's journey. Cedar is used throughout the funeral process. Elder Rosella shared that a cedar wreath may be hung on the door when the body is returned to the community or home. Cedar may also be used in the backdrop of the casket, inside the casket, covering it, or on the floor surrounding it. During the burial, people would bring four cedar trees and line them up in the back of the casket.

The Elders also spoke about the importance of the star blanket, which is sometimes made in the person's colours and is worn by the person or placed over the coffin. Elder Kathy shared her experience with this:

> We had ceremony when she [Lily] passed, all of our communities gathered. Lily always wanted a star blanket. So that's what we did. For four days, we all sewed a piece of her star blanket quilt. It was nice to see the blanket on her casket at the funeral, as it brought comfort at a time of loss. The comfort of knowing we will always be connected and giving back to her what she gave to us. So, it was the women in Hiawatha who said let's make her star blanket.

The funeral is an all-day event where food is brought and smudged, and a feast is held. A plate of food is offered to the fire to be sent to be the person on their journey. Prayers will be held in the language with music throughout. Tobacco is also used throughout the ceremony and may be placed in the fingers of the person who has died or made into tobacco ties that can be placed in the fire or hung on a tree. This is not a sad service; it is meant to honour the person. As Elder Jeroline shared the following experience of funeral protocols in her community:

> Everybody gets up and talks. The drum group, you know, they play, and it's just so uplifting, and you talk about the person's past, about the life and, you know, it's all stories and good things, and it'll go they can go on all day. And they have, they can have food there, and there's a big meal after, too. And for the actual burial, it's the men who dig the hole. And if it's, you know, in the summer and they put the casket in, and then they cover it with shovels and the women finish, the top with whatever decorations or flowers whatever we want to put on. And it's all done, you know, with great respect for your loved one…Then we go back, prayers are said, and the feast is held. And that's after that. Then, after the tobacco ties are all burned in the fire, it goes out.

Elder Betty shared some of the protocols she has participated in in her area. She described that when it is time for the person to be placed into Mother Earth, the following occurs:

> They will have horses ride out, they'll have riders riding out, and the horses will ride to the west. As soon as they get to the cemetery, they'll just take off, the horses will just go running with the people on them…You can put things in there [the coffin] with them that's meaningful to you. Some people will put all the sacred medicines in. And you have to have it interned and covered totally before the sun sets.

Following the burial, various ceremonies and practices are observed for days or months. Elder Rosella shared a tradition in her community where the family observes a period of staying quiet for ten days, followed by a small feast. After a year, they have another feast and hold a giveaway ceremony. The giveaway ceremony can happen either before the person dies or after the ten days. Elder Betty shared similar protocols in her community where people do not return to the cemetery for at least two weeks. Additionally, all the person's pictures are taken down for a year. After the year, a feast is held in remembrance of them, and a decoration day is held where the family goes to the cemetery and places flowers on the graves. Elder Beatrice noted that even though the deceased is no longer physically present, they remain with us spiritually. As such, it is customary to offer spirit dishes long after the person dies. These dishes contain food and other items to express gratitude and respect towards them and maintain a connection with the spiritual realm.

Elder Betty explained how these burial practices have changed significantly from the old ways. When describing how burials were conducted a long time ago, she shared the following:

> Burials were not a thing like what you do nowadays. He [the Elder] said they weren't done that way. They were put up on a, like a, like a big, what would you call it? I want to say table, but that's not it. When he said, some people even tied them into trees. In the crux of the trees, you know, with the trees. Tied them up there, and they would leave them, and then they would do their calling ceremony to call the spirits to come. And spirits can come in the form of animals, you know. They can take the shape of animals. And they would, the animals then do, they have a feast actually. They feast on the body. And then they would return at the end of the year, and they would then inter the bones what was left in the ground. But they weren't buried that, first. And so now they do the feast thing. That's part of that whole thing. They've changed how it was done. So, they because they can't do that anymore, they can't put them up, so they've had to change, and now they wrap them in a blanket, and sometimes they put men in star blankets. And then inter them in the ground, like the Europeans did.

Connection to the Spirit World

After someone dies, one of the core beliefs that the Elders shared is how close we are to the spirit world. Elder Kathy shared that the spirit world is all around us and that whenever we need them, they're waiting for us to ask for that help. All we need to do is to hold our tobacco and ask for help. She shared a beautiful story from an Elder about the connections we have with one another:

> On my last visit with him [the Elder] about a year before he went to the Spirit World, I used that time to tell him how much he did for our community, my family and me. I told him I loved him like a dad and a grandfather. I was emotional because he helped me so

> much. I am from the Bear Clan, and so was he. He gave me a teaching about how bears can communicate with each other while they are far away from each other. As a people, we have this gift to communicate when we are not together. I told him I believed that, too. A year later, I got a call from a good friend to tell me he went to the Spirit World. I had a good cry, got my drum out to honour him, and put semaa down for his journey back home. When I looked back at our last visit, it provided me great comfort to know that he is still with me and I can always talk to him.

In addition to feeling their presence, there is the belief that we can connect with our loved ones in the dream world. This is evident in Elder Kathy's story that she shared about her connections to her ancestors in her dreams:

> I've always believed that the spirit world is right there. Because I've always been told that I've had dreams, so many dreams about people that have passed away. And sometimes we're in ceremony together. Sometimes, we're just sitting there, and they're beside me. I said, and so, sometimes they share those kinds of stories at the fire. You know, when I go to the sacred fire, if I offer a song or whatever, I'm often asked to come and sing at the fire.

Grief and Healing Through Loss

The topic of grief was discussed by the Elders, who felt that if people understood the teachings about creation and death, they would be more prepared and understanding of the dying process. They said it is a beautiful teaching to understand that a person has completed their life journey and is going to the spirit world to be with their ancestors and that they will always be with us, and we can pray to them whenever we want. They also shared that accepting death

means we are letting the person pass on peacefully. Lastly, understanding our grieving process with the teachings of the creation story helps to support us in accepting death. Elder Kathy shared a very personal experience she had with this when her infant son died and the teaching she received from her grandmother:

> You know, Daniel had, his journey was meant to be the way it was supposed to be. And Creator chose you to bring him into this world and to bring him this far. And she goes, and you, you taught him so much in that nine months, you had nine months with him. And you taught him everything, and you, he chose you, the baby chose you because he knew that you would look after him. You wouldn't believe that just completely changed me like I just, I walked out of there just feeling like not guilty anymore.

The Elders emphasized the importance of experiencing our grief and seeking ways to heal. Elder Rosella shared the following story describing the use of sacred medicine to help in the grieving process:

> We had this one, a young woman whose husband died very suddenly. She seemed to be okay then but when she got to wake, then she broke, completely broke down. There were three of us. I was kind of just directing what needs to be done, the smudging and with the cedar water brushing her down and make cedar tea and give it to her at least two times a day for ten days. So that's about the cedar tea.

Elder Beatrice shared her experience of going through the grieving process after her father passed and how sacred circles helped her:

> And after he passed, we never spoke about him. We never spoke. I don't know why it, whether it was this my family or, or whether that's the way it was. It was so hard, too. So,

> I carry that pain inside me for a long, long time. Wasn't until maybe it was 30-something when I learned about Sacred Circle facilitation and using that eagle feather, and then I shared that pain that I was carrying in. Oh my god, those tears were just coming in, and then I had to learn to forgive myself in.

Circles can also help in the grieving process even before the person dies. Elder Kathy has done circles with families to create space for people to say what they need to before some passes:

> I'll pass the feather around, or I'll say is anybody want to say anything before we close off here, and I never talked about we're going to do this, because then people will get nervous. So, I wanted it to be very natural. So, I'll just see if anybody wants to say anything before we close off. And usually, the patient will speak first. And they'll tell everybody what they're thinking of and how much they love everybody, and then that makes the family want to talk to them back to them. It's really beautiful.

Role of Family and Community in Caregiving

In Anishinaabe culture, interdependence and interconnectedness are woven throughout the Creation story, the Medicine Wheel teachings, and the concept of all my relations. Throughout the storytelling sessions, the Elders reflected on these foundational teachings and spoke about kinship and our collective responsibility to care for one another. Elder Dorothy shared that this is seen in the concept of family, which extends beyond bloodlines, and that no matter what, they do not turn their back on each other. The Elders also expressed that a part of it was everyone’s responsibility to care for people who were sick and to ensure that the person was prepared to journey back to the spirit world.

The Elders began by sharing their experiences of caring for family members who were sick. All the Elders described their role as "being a helper." Elder Kathy explained that the foundation of being a helper in the community is the ability to develop and maintain relationships and create opportunities to come together and learn from one another. For Elder Jeroline, being a helper growing up helped to prepare her to become a nurse, supporting community members through her involvement with Home and Community Care. She described her earlier experiences as the following:

> I grew up with the Elders on the Land and was taught lots there, too. And it seemed if something was needed, I was there, and I was helping. And if somebody was sick, I was there, and I was helping. So, all my life, it's always been helping and caregiving. Not knowing my true walk of life till later.

Elder Kathy also described the spiritual aspect of helping. When journeying alongside a person, Spirit work requires us to be fully present with our mind, body, spirit and emotion. According to Elder Kathy, our role in this work is to serve as a vessel for spirit to do its work. We must acknowledge that our job is to walk with the person only as far as the Western doorway and then allow the spirit world to take over. We risk getting burnt out if we try to take on too much. One of Elder Kathy's colleagues reminded her of this and emphasized that we should be careful when supporting someone's journey, as Spirit work is the hardest work there is, and we should not attempt to take on what the spirit world can do. Elder Kathy is mindful of this now and always says a little prayer to the spirit world, asking for guidance and direction. She shared one of her practices in preparing herself to do this work:

> So that's why I carry medicine, and I try to smudge myself as much as I can before I go see somebody, but I always do my tobacco. And I always say to the Creator, just before I go see somebody, I don't know what it is that they need help with. But I know you do. And just, you know, show me how to be a helper, a good helper.

When speaking about the role of family and community in caregiving, the Elders did not differentiate between the two. They felt that the concept of family included community and that no boundary separated the two. Elder Jeroline shared this reflection, saying, “Everybody's related because there's such togetherness. The whole community pulls together in helping the family, helping that loved one.”

This is particularly evident when people are preparing to journey back to the spirit world, and the community comes together to keep vigil at the bedside. As Elder Beatrice recounted the experience of when her mother was sick in the hospital and getting ready to journey back to the spirit world:

> One thing I noticed like when I went to the hospital. Lots of people in the room, you know. They're coming to say, ‘See you, see you again.’ You know, and so that was good. And it was so nice to have my mom say, ‘Ah, I'm happy to see you,’ you know.

Elder Jeroline also shared what happens in Peguis when someone is sick. The entire community comes together to support the person and their family. It is during these times that the concept of kinship is witnessed:

> They talk, they laugh, and they joke. You know, and music is on, and they may have the fire going outside to go and offer your tobacco. Have tea and visit. There's always lots of food if somebody is hungry, you know, everything is looked after. They might have a big

> tent set up outside…there's always a place for them, and the doors are open, and the rest of the community, if you want to have a rest, come to my place. Have a rest. Yeah, it's not, you know, they don't just sit there and, they talk and they laugh. And they talk to the person that is passing. They sit, and they talk to them and let them know what is going around, you know what's happening. Yeah. And if they are coherent, you can see the smile and the brightness in the face. Yeah. And I feel it makes it so much easier for passing.

The Elders spoke extensively about the important role that family and community have in ensuring that the person's spiritual and emotional needs are met so that they are prepared to transition to the next life. This includes planning for ceremonies and services, offering prayers, and supporting one another through grieving. Elder Kathy shared her experience in caring for an Elder in the hospital. She was there to support the Elder emotionally and spiritually through ceremony:

> There's a lady that was in the hospital. She was a mentor of mine throughout my life, an Elder, a Knowledge Keeper. And I remember seeing her about four or five days before she died. And all that time, she was, you know, she was very open about how she was feeling. But that day, when I walked in, she said, I'm really afraid. And so, she goes, can you stay extra long today, because I really need, I don't want to be alone. So, we went back to her room. And we talked about traditional teachings around this time of life, like, and she was a very big believer in where she was going and what was gonna happen. But she said, I'm still afraid, even though, and so we did ceremony together.

Elder Betty described that an important focus of supporting someone spiritually and emotionally is ensuring the success of that person's spirit:

> They need to put their energies towards what is best for that person. And what's best for that person is the success of that person's spirit, what their spiritual journey, whether that means it's to be over now, or it's to be extended, or it's to leave gently…So, it's to put your prayers and energy into letting the change be accepted, let the change be gentle, and let the change not harm anyone.

The Elders talked about the importance of supporting one another emotionally through illness, loss, and grief, which is of particular importance when someone is sick and getting ready to transition to the next world. Elder Beatrice shared that families need to support one another as well as the person who is dying so that they are ready to go back to the spirit world. She describes how this is needed so that people have the space to express some of their regrets and ask for forgiveness. Elder Kathy shared:

> I've heard about people who are dying, that when somebody's dying, the family is missing that person. So, there's a big family missing that person, but when that person is going, they're losing everybody. So, the family is losing one person, but the person dying is losing everybody around them and everything and is constantly reminded of that.

Elder Kathy then shared her own experiences of when her mother died and the teachings she received from a healer who told her the following:

> You can't go around grief…you got to just go through it…it's not going to all happen at once. You'll be going along good in your life, and then it's going to hit you again. She

said, just stay with it. Don't walk away from it. She said that's the most important thing about grief. And that it's a very natural thing.

A part of this grieving process is being able to prepare your family. Elder Jeroline shares her own experience in preparing her family:

> I've had, I feel I've had a good, good, walk in life, and all the teachings I have learned. All the help I've gotten from others. And from the Elders too and having the laughter in your life. Having that respect for those around you and having love, not holding resentment, you know, letting go.

Elder Kathy shared her experiences with how her grandfather prepared her when he was sick:

> My grandfather, when he was close to death, he said, I've lived a good life, he said and I'm going to be dying in the next couple of days. I told your grandmother because she wanted to know, but you've been coming in so much to see me. I thought I'd let you know, too. And I was sad, but he made me laugh… and he goes, don't cry. He goes, Don't. Don't be sad. He said, because you know where I'm going, I'm going to this beautiful place. I can hardly wait, to you know, I'm going to the spirit world, and it's a beautiful place. And he said it's going to be my next adventure. This is not the end.

The Elders spoke about how the community mobilizes its strengths and capacities to look after one of its members. Elder Rosella described this as the concept of kinship innate in the community. When people are sick and dying, they do not have to be told what to do. To support this, Elder Rosella read an excerpt from a book by Wilfred Pelletier from Wikwemikong, "Childhood in an Indian Village," published in 1969.

> That our community was very highly structured. That there wasn't anything that could happen, that somebody could almost immediately, in some way, solve whatever problem arose without any given signals or the appearance of any communication whatsoever. The most complex social action used to happen. If somebody died in that community, nobody ever said we should dig a grave. The grave was dug. The box was made. Everything was set up. The one who baked pies, baked pies. Everyone did something in that community. And if you tried to find out who organized it, you couldn't.

Elder Jeroline shared her experiences of how the community comes together to provide care and how the leadership supports this process.

> As I said before, making meals, getting them, you know, whatever they need, whatever they want. You know, not only the community but Chief and Council are there too. You know, to get somebody home. They can't get them into the house, so you know they'll redo the deck, take the deck apart, you know, make the door opening bigger. There's so much that they do. It's just automatic. It seems like they know what to do. Women will come in; they'll clean the house…They want food off the Land, deer meat, moose meat; somebody will put the call out, and it's there. They have community freezers where all they have, all that food, so, if somebody is in need, it's there, they take it out. It's all shared. Yeah, so, you know, that makes a big difference in that feeling of, when you say, being home, you are home, your loved ones are looking after you. They're around you.

Elder Jeroline talked about her experiences as a nurse within homecare and relying on the community to support the caregiving experience:

> To get what we needed and the equipment and all that, we held two community Bingos, and the community really supported us, and out of that, we've got, you know, the electric bed and the special mattresses, everything we needed to keep one client at home…And it was amazing. You know, having the whole community step in and help you, you know, with the end-of-life care and deaths.

She went on to share a particularly impactful story about one of the first community members she was able to support in the community:

> I know one of the first ones I took home; we had no way to get them home from that. We have a hospital in Hudson, Percy Moore. We had no way to get them home because who can afford to pay an ambulance to get them home, and you know they can't ride in the car anything they're too sick. So, we made it through that. We found a class five driver at the fire hall, and they have a care home in Peguis, so we borrowed their big wheelchair van, got a family member, and we went to the hospital, got their loved one, and we took them home. And I remember him saying, 'Oh, we're the west road. I'm just about home.' And they had a long driveway, beautiful trees…I got him home, and that was the whole community put together in that. Yeah, to get him home so he could be at home, and it was just wonderful. And we had everything set up already, and the band and everything set up and care was, you know, arranged with the family, and he did stay at home right till the very end. You know, he had visitors, lots of visitors. But just that acknowledgement in the smile on the face that they were home, and they were, you know, not in the hospital anymore…It was very good, and to be able, it was an honour to work with that family, to work with him. And it really opened the doors to the

> community that ‘hey, we can do this.’ You know, and it's been done so it gave hope to a lot of other Elders too, that they could be at home, they didn't have to be in the hospital. So that doorway opened again, that they get to stay at home.

The community also advocates for culturally safer care and pathways within the Westernized Eurocentric healthcare system. Within communities, there is a blending of traditional and western medicine. The Elders highlighted the need to respect all values and beliefs that community members had and to take the best of both ways and incorporate them into the care of people. Within Peguis First Nation, Elder Jeroline spoke about how people can access this wholistic caregiving model:

> You can access the traditional lodge through the health center, and then we also have another lodge, the sun lodge…they're a younger group, and they have a beautiful sun lodge, and they have, you know, ceremonies and different things and they've been learning all about the traditional medicines too.

Culturally safe-r pathways also include working with outside resources and educating non-Indigenous peoples about the needs, cultural protocols, and community-based healing practices. Some of the Elders were involved in providing education to local hospitals and staff on cultural protocols, as shared by Elder Jeroline:

> There's certain things, you know, if they maybe they have a prayer cloth pin to them, you don't touch that, or they have their medicine pouch, you know, around their neck, you don't touch that at all, but you know that's there's and this you know it's a lot of respect for their ways. And that hasn't been taught outside. Really, so in, you know, in the

hospitals, we go in at lunchtime while everybody's having lunch, so you know, present for 10 or 15 minutes.

Principle 7: Anishinaabe Inaadiziwin – Our Behaviours, Values and Ways of Living

The seventh foundational principle of mino-bimaadiziwin described in my dissertation is Anishinaabe inaadiziwin. According to the Seven Generations Educational Institute (n.d.), it refers to "our behaviours, our values and our way of living our life and being Anishinaabe in the fullest sense" (p. 5.). They explain that it is about bringing together and activating the body, mind and spirit.

This section concludes with the final four themes from the Elders, which integrates all the teachings and creates a balance across all the doorways. The Elders expressed that to re-claim and re-activate the teachings that have been shared, we must focus on healing at the individual, community, and nation levels. Imperative to this resurgence is the need to re-learn and re-claim our language. Additionally, we must remain adaptable in our approach to learning from these teachings in order to grow and improve. Lastly, we should think critically about what we have been taught, challenging certain assumptions, knowledge, values, and beliefs that may have been imposed onto us through colonization.

Healing from Colonial Trauma

Healing from the ongoing trauma of colonization is essential. It is important to create a safe space where individuals can pursue their own healing. Elder Dorothy highlighted the need to learn traditional ways of living and healing, rather than the colonial methods that have been imposed. This approach can significantly change one's self-perception and sense of identity.

Elder Dorothy shared “The Tree Teaching,” which was taught to her by Diane Hill, Dorothy’s teacher at the First Nation Technical Institute. This teaching describes our healing path:

> It is said that when the Creator looks down upon us, we human beings are not distinguishable from our older siblings, the trees. If you could imagine what that looks like, imagine looking down from above. A tree grows by extending circles. Each year marks the growth by a circle. And so, when you look down, there’s a centre circle, then a larger circle, a larger circle until you see many circles. And depending on the age of the tree. And the tree is protected by its bark. So, you have all these circles. And then the exterior of the tree is its bark. And when the Creator looks down on us human beings, we look the same as a tree. We have different circles, and we have a bark. At the very centre is spirit. Our true nature. The spirit that we have when we are born in this world will remain with us for the entirety of our earth walk. It will never leave us. We are born into this world with gifts bestowed on us from the spirit world. They are designed to guide and help us. Words to describe spirit are presence, joy, compassion, value, our true pure nature. Surrounding our Spirit and close in makeup of the spirit is the heart. Our heart has the capacity to feel, to love, to show kindness and to radiate goodness. Our heart is the conduit that conveys our love from Spirit. Words to describe our heart are truth, peace, joy, compassion, and value. These are the qualities of a good heart. The next ring surrounding our heart is our mind. Our mind is the place where our thoughts dwell. Words to describe our mind are strong, willful, thinking, planning, questioning and strategist. These qualities act as protectors – to our heart and spirit. Qualities of the mind grow as we mature. One quality of a mature mind is discernment. The ability to judge

well. The mind takes a leadership role, and it can translate life's experiences and feelings from the heart to wisdom. A quality that our mind possesses is its ability to assess, reassess and make changes when necessary. Our brain has the ability to change the chemistry of our body. Circling out and encompassing the spirit, heart, and mind is our body. It holds our humanness. It is the exterior part of us that performs the actions of life. Our body is visible and tangible and can feel the physical sensations of the world around us. Our body enjoys the feelings of the sun and wind on our skin, tastes the flavours of food, the sweetness of maple syrup. It enjoys physical activities and good health. Our body is made of mostly of water, and water acts as the conduit for thoughts and emotions to feel life. And then, encasing all of our four parts, we have a bark as well. And that protective layer of the tree, which is our bark, it protects our body, and it is our way of being with ourselves in the world. It holds the values we show the world. It could be described as your personality. Who you are. Ideally, we project the values of bravery, respect, truth, honesty, humility, wisdom and love. And so, if our bark grows healthy, our bark is protective as well as porous. It allows the goodness and the love from the universe to penetrate into us through our body, in our mind, in our heart, into our spirit. And it also allows the love that we hold to leave us and extend out into all the creation. If our bark grows gnarled and thick, the nurturing growth cannot penetrate through and is trapped within us. Our spirit is trapped within us. The love that we hold is trapped within us. So, healing involves rebalancing all the circles within our body and the protective layer. And how do we do that? We take a good look at it. We look at our personality. We look at our thoughts. We look at our beliefs. We look at how and what made them up. Did it consist

> of anger or fear or pain or shame that made it impenetrable? Or does it have qualities of kindness and passion, which can be the conductors that bring the love from us, the love of the universe outside of our nature? And this is where we start our healing. By learning about ourselves. And when we learn about our protective bark, we're starting the journey to learn about ourselves. And each step along our healing path helps our spirit to grow, showing us our purpose in our gifts.

Elder Kathy shared her experience at Mohawk College, where she was enrolled in the Native Community Care Counselling and Development course. This course was founded on Indigenous Knowledge and was taught mostly by Indigenous teachers and Elders. During this time, she formed lifelong healthy relationships with friends, got connected to her culture and identity and participated in healing circles. She describes the healing circles as intense and incredibly valuable:

> At every Circle, there's always something to work on, something to let go of something that you carry around that's not yours to carry. Diane [Hill]was an amazing facilitator and helper. Diane taught us about historical trauma experienced by Indigenous people. She taught us about traditional medicines and ceremonies.

Elder Kathy also shared her personal experience of attending the course. It was the first time she had heard the drum, and it touched her so deeply that she cried tears of joy. The course also helped her understand why she had not grown up with her language or culture. As a result, she could heal from the shame she had been carrying. Her experience taught her that by looking within herself and acknowledging what she was carrying, she could get rid of the stuff that was not hers to carry. She mentioned that this was the most challenging part of the healing journey,

but it was crucial to let go of the pain. Whenever she heard the drum or saw someone light up a smudge, she would cry tears of joy, which was a beautiful experience.

Re-Learning and Re-Claiming Anishinaabemowin

As we move towards this cultural resurgence in re-claiming our identity, teachings, practices and models of caregiving, we must also place the re-learning and re-claiming our language as imperative. During the storytelling sessions with Elder Rosella, she spoke about the significance of language. Despite attending residential school, Elder Rosella preserved her fluency in her native language due to her close relationship with her sister, who also attended the school and spoke the language at home. Towards the end of the storytelling session, Elder Rosella emphasized the importance of knowing one's language when caring for those preparing to journey to the spirit work, as they tend to revert to their native language during that time. This highlights the value of language in preserving one's culture and identity.

Being Adaptable in Our Approach to Learning

The Elders stressed the importance of being adaptable in our approach to learning from the teachings to grow and improve. They attribute their survival and success as Anishinaabe to their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is evident in the impact that COVID-19 has on the way people conduct ceremonies and prayers and interact with families. The use and support of technology and innovation have changed these practices.

Elder Betty shared that there have been times when she had to do things that she would have never thought she would have to do. For example, she used to always do her pipe ceremonies outside, but now she has adapted and does them online, using Zoom. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, when many people were dying and unable to be with their

families, Elder Kathy adapted to the situation and found new ways to share her teachings. She started offering medicine bundles that people could hold onto, sang and played the drum to people over the phone, and provided recorded versions of the songs she typically taught in person, along with the lyrics via email. This allowed people to continue learning from her, even if they could not be physically present. Another important development during the pandemic was the emergence of virtual smudges, where Elders performed and explained the ceremony online through Zoom.

During their discussions, several Elders shared their knowledge about the concept of 'two-eyed seeing,' developed by Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall. According to their insights, two-eyed seeing is the harmonious blending of Indigenous and western perspectives and combining traditional spiritual practices with Christianity. Elder Rosella has practiced this duality in various aspects of her life, primarily as a health practitioner using Indigenous and western medicine and as a woman of Christian faith and Indigenous teachings. Elder Rosella shared many experiences of how she combines traditional spiritual practices with religion: “You just put them together, they just flow…I tell people it's not the devil. It's that spiritual part that is important to know.” She said that bringing these perspectives together can make the experience more meaningful and lead to a “deeper understanding by using the old wisdom to understand this new way.”

Elder Rosella recalled an incident where she had to perform the closing ceremony for someone who had passed away. She combined traditional spiritual practices with Christianity by doing the prayer herself and then having a traditional man do the final closing ceremony. She also had a bowl where people could come up and take some tobacco and pray. She saw many

families earnestly praying together. Once they were done praying, they put the tobacco back in the bowl, which was later taken to the cemetery. When the body was brought to the cemetery, the priest and the deacon said the prayers. After the prayers, Rosella instructed the people with the shakers to sing their songs. Combining traditional and Christian practices created a harmonious and meaningful ceremony.

Engaging in Critical Thinking

The Elders also emphasized the need to think critically about what we have been taught and to challenge certain assumptions, knowledge, values, and beliefs that may have been imposed onto us through colonization. In challenging this colonial logic, we can focus on cultural knowledge and practices and heal ourselves in a different way. Elder Dorothy reminds us that we have the power to change how we see ourselves in this world despite what has happened to us:

> There is another way, and you know the thing is that it's available to them if they want it. But even the traditional counselling and the inner child work and understanding each one of us from the perspective of how we were raised. That can change because it's only perspective. You know you can't change what happened to a person, but you can change how you understand yourself to be who you are in this world because of what happened.

Elder Kathy emphasized the significance of critical thinking in Indigenous practices. She posed several thought-provoking questions, such as how to handle situations where someone struggling with addiction wants to participate in a ceremony or when a person identifying as 2-Spirit does not want to wear a skirt to a ceremony. She also questioned how we can adapt during the pandemic when ceremonies must be done virtually and what impact the residential school

had on our cultural teachings and ceremonies. In these situations, critical thinking is essential to ensure that we are doing things in a good way, with love and honouring cultural teachings.

Shkode, the Centre, is interdependent and interconnected across all four doorways, teachings, and elements. I wanted to conclude this chapter on Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and Anishinaabe inaadiziwin with some final words shared by Elder Kathy. Her reflections are beautiful. They speak to the heart, mind and body of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and provide a space for reflecting on balance and harmony in our lives and our connections with all our of relations.

This learning experience taught me important lessons:

You can't help others if you can't help yourself.

You can't give what you don't have to give.

The answers to things we are looking to get better are within us.

That connection to spirit and culture will guide us.

The importance of mind, body, and spirit for health.

The medicines we need will come to us if we ask with our tobacco.

Love is healing.

If we look after Mother Earth she will look after us.

What goes around comes around, it doesn't have to be negative.

Our ancestors are always close by and watch over us.

The importance of relationships with all living things.

That rocks are grandfathers.

Water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth.

Everything in this universe has a purpose and instructions from the Creator.

Everything is a living spirit just like us.

(Elder Kathy MacLeod-Beaver, February 25, 2022, transcript).

Summary

This chapter described the last direction of Indigenous wholistic theory and introduced Shkode, the Centre Fire. Within this direction, I embedded two of the principles of mino-bimaadiziwin: honouring Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and enacting Anishinaabe inaadiziwin. These sections share the stories, teachings, and wisdom of the Elders involved in my re-search and describe how we can re-activate and resurge our Anishinaabe gikendaasowin into healing and action. Chapter Eleven brings the Elders' stories back to my re-search questions. It provides my reflections on the teachings learned and then frames the discussion in Indigenous ethical principles.

Chapter Eleven – Coming Full Circle

This Indigenous re-search expresses my deep commitment to preserving invaluable Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and passing it on to future generations. In outlining a process for Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, Simpson (2008) reflects that the most important task we must commit to and act upon as Anishinaabe is ensuring that our ancestral knowledge is taught to the next generations. She articulates the first step as follows:

> So, the first things we must recover is our own Indigenous ways of knowing, our own Indigenous ways of protecting, sharing, and transmitting knowledge, our own Indigenous intellectual traditions. And we must begin to practise and to live those traditions on our own terms. Recentering the revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) within the knowledge systems themselves provides the only appropriate context for building an Indigenous resurgence (Simpson, 2008, p.74).

This re-search explores how Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and caregiving practices are re-activated, re-mobilized, and resurged when caring for community members preparing to journey to the spirit world. This re-search provides Anishinaabe Elders with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and re-connect, re-educate, and re-vitalize their community's Anishinaabe knowledge of health and well-being, dying and death, along with resilient caregiving networks. The lived experiences and end-of-life practices of Anishinaabe caregivers were explicitly articulated in the re-search, making them accessible and understandable to other Indigenous peoples and communities. By conducting this Indigenous Knowledge re-search, other communities will benefit from recognizing, understanding, and applying these practices in their

own contexts. This will empower them to build stronger, more resilient, compassionate caregiving networks.

In Shkode, the Centre Fire, the Elders provided insightful teachings on re-claiming and re-activating Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caring for those journeying to the spirit world. They emphasized that this cultural resurgence is a collective responsibility that involves the spirit world, individuals, and communities. The Elders also described the teachings that need to be re-claimed and re-activated, which include our Anishinaabe ways of understanding health and wellness and recognizing colonization as the cause of illness and disease in our communities. They strongly believe that the key to healing and living our lives by mino-bimaadiziwin lies within our culture and teachings. The Elders shared cultural and community-based knowledge and teachings on dying and death. Lastly, they emphasized that re-claiming and re-activating their teachings requires healing, re-learning our language, adaptability, and cultivating critical thinking to challenge assumptions imposed on us through colonization.

The discussion section of my dissertation has two main objectives. Firstly, I aim to interpret and make meaning from the teachings of the Elders related to my re-search questions. Specifically, I focus on Anishinaabe caregivers' understanding and description of Anishinaabe community-based knowledge and caregiving practices at the end of life. I will also highlight the crucial role of Elders in the cultural resurgence of the re-clamation and re-activation of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin at the end of life. Furthermore, the section will outline how caregivers and Elders can collaborate together to provide end-of-life care. Lastly, the section will explore how decolonizing ways of caring can lead to a re-birth of Indigenous Knowledge, self-determination, and resurgence. Secondly, I will reflect on my dissertation and assess it through

the lens of Indigenous ethical principles. I will describe the 6 R's of re-search and use them to evaluate my re-search.

Reflecting on My Re-search Questions

How do Anishinaabe caregivers understand and describe Anishinaabe community-based knowledge and caregiving practices at the end of life?

The Anishinaabek perspective on health and wellness is based on maintaining a balance of the spirit, emotion, mind, and body. According to Elder Jim Dumont of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (2014), wellness centers on "one's connection to language, land, beings of Creation, and ancestry, supported by a caring family and environment" (p. 2). Throughout the storytelling sessions, the Elders describe health as balancing the body, mind, and spirit. It is about being in relationship with one another and having a sense of belonging and connection with those around us.

Through these discussions, I understood that health and wellness are not simply about the absence of illness or disease. Instead, the Elders believe that *aakoziwin* or sickness within our communities and nations is caused by the ongoing impact of colonization. This has resulted in an imbalance and disconnection that prevents us from fulfilling our life's purpose.

It has been well documented in the literature that Indigenous peoples experience poor health outcomes, lower life expectancy, and increased burden of disease to be addressed at the end of life compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Dr. James Makokis, a Nehiyô (Plains Cree) Two-Spirit family physician, offered a poignant insight into this issue during a keynote at a recent anti-Indigenous racism conference. He stated that when filling out death certificates for Indigenous peoples, the most accurate cause of death to list on these forms is colonization. This

statement underscores the fundamental reason behind poor health and ongoing harm faced by Indigenous peoples.

Within Indigenous communities, healthcare programs that support people at the end of life are founded on Eurocentric westernized knowledge. Much of our cultural and community-based knowledge around supporting people who are journeying back to the spirit world has been forcibly forgotten and removed because of colonization. Consequently, our cultural and community-based knowledge has been invalidated, leaving us with a deep sense of internalized oppression and dependence on Westernized medical systems for care. As a result, these healthcare programs are not culturally relevant to Indigenous peoples and create challenges to culturally safe and equitable healthcare.

Before settler contact, Indigenous people had a deep understanding and appreciation of the journey of the human spirit through the various stages of life. They believe that once our purpose is fulfilled, it is time to prepare to journey back to the spirit world. According to Elder Dorothy, “The Creator promised a well-trodden path back to his/her side in the spirit world. This path back to the spirit world is found by following the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. They are our guide.” However, the ongoing harm caused by colonization has not only impacted the transfer of Indigenous Knowledges, languages and ceremonies but also impacted something so sacred as our understandings and teachings on caregiving, dying and death.

This re-search provides Anishinaabe community-based knowledge of health and wellness, illness and disease, caregiving practice and end-of-life teachings. The Elders generously shared their knowledge, wisdom and teachings of “*nigiiwe,”* which means to go home. This concept of returning to a place of understanding and wisdom is the basis of our

traditional health philosophy and way of life. These teachings help us prepare and navigate the Western doorway on our final journey.

The Elders also explained that to understand Anishinaabe's beliefs about death, we must first learn about life as described in the creation stories. According to Simpson (2011), the creation story is crucial since it is the theoretical framework and ontological context for seeing and interpreting all other stories and teachings. The Elders further explained that understanding the creation stories helps us comprehend how these elements can assist us in our healing journey and recognize that the Creator gave us the knowledge to heal ourselves through teachings and culture. This includes acknowledging that Land is medicine and that healing can come from being on the Land and connecting with Mother Earth.

According to Elder Dorothy, understanding this teaching helps us accept an individual's life and death circumstances and helps with the grieving process. It helps us realize that this is what the person designed for themselves. Elder Rosella provided some insights into this:

> Creator nurtures us spiritually and in all the ways to make this a beautiful and inviting experience. So, in journeying with the dying, you know, as people are approaching death, we say they're completing their circle. They have completed what they have been sent here to do.

The Elders' teachings about the creation story have been among the most significant and impactful teachings I have ever received. For the past 20 years, I have been working in palliative care, focusing on improving the care for Indigenous peoples as they prepare to journey to the spirit world. While I was so focused on the dying part of life, I could not see the need for balance

across the circle of life. The Elders explained that birth and death are interconnected -- you cannot have one without the other.

Learning about the need to re-claim our creation stories has helped me connect with my purpose here on earth and the commitments I made with Creator. In her teachings on how the spirit journeys into the physical body, Elder Betty said, “Sometimes you will pick something because you don't want that family member to have it. And so, you'll take it instead. So, you'll say, I can weather this better than that person could. And so, you do it.” This is what Beardy (2022) describes as fated occurrences. By understanding and incorporating this teaching into my life, I was able to process my mother’s death from colon cancer. The Elders also explained that by embracing these teachings, we can prepare and navigate the Western doorway on our final journey. We can overcome any fear of dying and death and instead view it as a sacred part of our life's journey.

Anishinaabe believe that preparing for the transition back to the spirit world is crucial. This involves making sure that the person is ready and their spirit is strong enough to make that journey. According to the teachings of the Elders, ceremony was gifted to us by the Creator to provide a clear path back to the Creator. Therefore, it is essential for Anishinaabe to re-learn and embrace the teachings, ceremonies and practices that need to be followed at the end of life. This way, family and community can assist and support someone through their journey back to the spirit world. Doing so helps the family and community to offer support and comfort to the person transitioning back to the spirit world. The Elders also shared that the spirit world is very close to us. In previous teachings, the Elders described the distance between these two worlds as thin as a leaf and as shear as a curtain.

The Elders expressed that during the discussion about grief, people would be better prepared and understand the dying process if they understood the teachings about creation and death. According to them, the teachings are beautiful and comforting because they help us comprehend that a person has finished their life journey and is now embarking on a new journey in the spirit world to be with their ancestors. This means that they will always be with us, and we can pray to them whenever we want. The Elders also shared that accepting death means letting the person pass on peacefully. Lastly, understanding our grieving process with the teachings of the creation story helps to support us in accepting death.

What is the role of Elders in this cultural resurgence?

According to Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat, who was part of the Four Directions Teachings project (2006-2012), the Elder Stage is the last of the Seven Stages of Life. During this stage, Elders are responsible for passing on their wisdom, knowledge, and life experiences to the next generations. They are respected and honoured for their invaluable contribution to the cultural resurgence of Indigenous Knowledges at the end of life. They have journeyed through life's stages and come full circle (Best Start Resource, 2010). This makes them critical in the cultural resurgence of Indigenous Knowledges at the end of life.

To re-claim and re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin about caring for those journeying to the spirit world, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of the spirit world in this cultural resurgence. Additionally, we must honour the teachings of our Elders, who are the carriers of our knowledge. The ceremonies and cultural teachings they impart to us help foster this connection. Lastly, we must transfer these teachings to future generations and encourage communities to embrace their collective knowledge and experience.

According to Elder Beatrice, Elders are entrusted with receiving teachings from the Creator and ancestors through ceremonies. They learn from others and then pass on their knowledge to future generations. This view is supported by Hamilton et al. (1995), who describe Elders as "repositories of sacred knowledge and the collective wisdom of a people" (pp. 6-7.) Elders are considered to be the bridge between the past and present and provide a vision for future generations (Best Start Resource, 2010.) They are spiritual teachers, mentors and guides who help us in navigating our spiritual purpose here on earth.

The Elders' stories teach important knowledge, traditions, and wisdom about the circle of life and how to support people as they journey back to the spirit world. These stories also offer a pathway toward decolonization that can help heal our communities. The Elders stress the importance of establishing relationships with young people. They encouraged people to connect with the Elders in their communities and learn about the teachings and protocols, particularly their creation stories. To do so, we must know the proper protocols for asking for this knowledge and recognize our role in learning by listening and observing practices and ceremonies.

In this cultural resurgence, the role of Elders is to share their teachings and mentor other Elders who may not know these teachings due to colonization or the forced removal of Anishinaabe practices, teachings, and ceremonies. During the sharing circle session with the Elders, this was evident as they shared their knowledge with each other openly and willingly. In addition to what they were teaching me, they were also teaching each other. They were open and willing to share the knowledge given to them to benefit the other Elders in the group and, in turn, their communities and networks. For instance, when Elder Rosella shared the teaching of the four-day bundle that needs to be prepared when someone is on their journey back to the spirit

world, some of the Elders were not familiar with it. They appreciated this teaching from Rosella and began to incorporate it into their cumulative knowledge bundle, which Winona Stevenson (2000) describes as the knowledge one earns over time from family and community.

How can caregivers and Elders work together for end-of-life care in communities, according to Anishinaabe Knowledge?

In Anishinaabe culture, the values of interdependence and interconnectedness are deeply ingrained in their beliefs. These values are reflected in the Creation story, the Medicine Wheel teachings, and the concept of "all my relations." During the storytelling sessions, the Elders emphasized the importance of these values, highlighting the concept of kinship and shared responsibility to care for each other.

Elder Dorothy explained that the principle of caring for one another extends beyond bloodlines to include the wider community. The Elders did not distinguish between family and community when discussing caregiving, viewing them as inseparable. This was especially evident when someone was nearing the end of their life, as the community gathered to offer support and keep vigil by the individual's bedside.

The Elders discussed how the family and community leverage their strengths and abilities to care for a member in need, fulfilling their essential role in meeting that person's emotional and spiritual requirements during their transition into the next life. This care involves offering prayers, supporting one another through grief, and planning ceremonies and services. According to the Elders, ceremony was given to us by the Creator and provides a direct path back to the Creator. Therefore, it is crucial for the Anishinaabe to re-claim and re-learn the teachings,

ceremonies, and practices that need to be followed at the end of life. Doing so enables families and communities to support individuals on their journey back to the spirit world.

Elder Kathy emphasized the spiritual aspect of helping. When journeying alongside a person, Spirit work requires us to be fully present with our mind, body, spirit and emotion. According to Elder Kathy, our role in this work is to serve as a conduit for the spirit to carry out its work. We must recognize that our responsibility is to walk with the person only as far as the Western doorway and then allow the spirit world to take over. Elder Betty added that the ultimate objective of providing emotional and spiritual support is to ensure the success of the person's spirit:

> They need to put their energies towards what is best for that person. And what's best for that person is the success of that person's spirit, what their spiritual journey, whether that means it's to be over now, or it's to be extended, or it's to leave gently…So, it's to put your prayers and energy into letting the change be accepted, let the change be gentle, and let the change not harm anyone.

The Elders concluded by stating that caregivers and Elders must also work together to advocate for culturally safer care and pathways within the westernized Eurocentric healthcare system. Communities blend traditional and Western medicine, and respecting all community members' values and beliefs is essential. The Elders emphasized the importance of incorporating the best of both ways into people's care.

This re-search presents a community-focused strategy for achieving equitable outcomes for Indigenous peoples by restoring Anishinaabe Knowledge and caregiving practices. This restoration supports community members in preparing for their journey to the spirit world,

challenges colonial healthcare systems, and reduces the harm currently experienced by Indigenous peoples when seeking care.

How can decolonizing ways of caring for their own people at the end of life contribute to a re-birth of Indigenous Knowledges, self-determination and resurgence by Indigenous communities?

Nishnaabekwe scholar Simpson (2008) asserts that "Indigenous Knowledge is critical for resurgence," and through this, we will begin to "combat colonialism, to decolonize, and to re-Indigenize" (p. 75). Absolon (2022) also explains, "Everything that makes us Indigenous as individuals and as nations resides in our knowledge systems. For Indigenist thinkers, this is where we will find the answers to combat colonialism, to decolonize, and to re-Indigenize" (p. 75). According to Absolon (2022), combatting colonialism involves recognizing that "colonial erasure has taken its toll, resulting in gargantuan chasms of life knowledge. Colonial violence and genocide have eradicated Indigenous Peoples, our knowledge and our life gifts in Creation…Our erasure has detrimentally influenced re-searching – so much so that people doubt their own dreams and visions" (p. 95.)

To combat colonialism and improve the health outcomes and end-of-life care of Indigenous peoples, we must acknowledge colonization's role in making and keeping Indigenous peoples sick. This is supported by Jardine and Lines (n.d.), who argue that:

> Addressing Indigenous health inequities requires focusing on changing underlying structural determinants rather than just addressing symptomatic effects, and needs to be done using a strength-based perspective that celebrates positive determinants such as

> connection to the land, relationships and communities. (Social and Structural Determinants of Indigenous Health, para. 1)

By naming and addressing colonization, we can shift the care that Indigenous peoples receive at the end of life towards equitable and culturally relevant approaches to care by recognizing the importance of Indigenous Knowledges, revitalizing healthy caregiving networks and mobilizing local capacities through community-based and community-led processes and initiatives.

This re-search emphasizes the Elders' recognition that Anishinaabe culture possesses the wisdom necessary for decolonizing our approaches to caring at the end of life and re-Indigenizing Knowledges. The Elders affirm that the Creator guides us through our journey and provides us with "old wisdom to understand this new way of life," as Elder Rosella notes. Elder Kathy emphasized that our knowledge has never been lost: "It's still here. You just need to reawaken it." This notion reflects courage, one of the Seven Sacred Teachings as articulated by Bouchard and Martin (2009):

> To do what is right is not easy. It takes courage. It takes courage to heal that which is not well within you before being reborn. Become healer. Become Makwa.
>
> Just as courage sleeps in Makwa through long winter months, it is dormant within you. It need only be awakened.
>
> *Gaawiin wendasinoon gagwe-gwayakochigewin. zoongide'ewin. Nawaj zoongide'ewin ji-noojimoomagak iwe gaa-onji-minoayaasiwan jibwaa- aanji nitaawigiiyan.*
>
> *Noojimo'iwen. Daabishkoo Makwa.*

Giizhiibaangwashiiyang daabishkoo Makwa izhin ningo-biboon. Gaagigi ishkaagoyan. Andawendaagod goshkozimakad. (p. 18)

The Elders' teachings offer valuable insights into healing and well-being. In Shkode, these teachings are brought together to illustrate the essential steps required to re-claim and re-activate Anishinaabe gikendaasowin. To re-store our collective spirits and identities, we must adopt a flexible approach to re-learning and critically examine the assumptions put forth by colonization. By doing so, we can move forward toward balance and healing.

In Corntassal's (2012) Re-envisioning Resurgence: Indigenous Pathways to Decolonization and Sustainable Self-Determination, he poses the question, "How will your ancestors and future generations recognize you as Indigenous?" (p. 88). He explains that the process of decolonization and resurgence for Indigenous communities starts with re-envisioning and practicing everyday acts of resurgence to challenge colonialism. We must decolonize our approaches to caring for our people at the end of life and re-claim and re-activate our cultural and community-based practices and ongoing Indigenous Knowledges (IK) for caring for community members preparing to journey to the spirit world. By doing so, we can address the need to develop caregiving models and programs reflective of Indigenous communities' values and beliefs.

The Indigenous resurgence we are currently witnessing is a powerful movement that involves a fundamental shift in how we think about healing and wellness. Rather than viewing these concepts as purely physical, we are re-claiming our identities as spiritual beings and connecting our lives and deaths to our purpose on earth. As Elder Betty wisely teaches, we

should live our lives with the understanding that we are somebody's ancestors and strive to embody the wisdom and values that will inspire future generations.

During the storytelling session, one of the critical topics discussed was the need to re-claim our language. According to Simpson (2008), it is essential to teach children our language in a way that "preserves the complexity of our highest philosophical debates: (p.74). Simpson describes the importance of teaching children our language: "They have told us repeatedly that our children must understand their languages, not in a tourist sort of way, but in a way that preserves the complexity of our highest philosophical debates" (p. 74).

The Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (2020) describes the importance of language within our culture:

> Language is the voice of the culture and therefore the true and most expressive means to transfer the original way of life and way of being in the world. Culture is the expression, the lifeways, and the spiritual, psychological, social, and material practice of the Indigenous worldview. Our native languages are a sacred gift from the Creator. So, language is more than just a way of communicating.

To understand the teachings, philosophy, and history behind our language, it is important to delve into its etymology. In 2022, Elton Beardy shared a beautiful teaching with me. He explained that our teachings are embedded within our language and that we can gain powerful insights into our culture by breaking down the parts of the words. When discussing dying and death, he explained that in Anishinaabemowin, the translation for death and dying is "a way of Spirit becoming breath." He breaks down the word as the following:

Ni = Spirit Within

Bo = Breath

Win = A Way of

Nibowin - A Way of the Spirit Becoming Breath

Spirit becoming breath recognizes the teachings that the Elders provided in these storytelling sessions. These teachings relate to our creation story, about when we were spirits first and decided to come to earth as human beings. Our spirits entered our physical form. The Elders described that when we die, our physical bodies return to the earth where they came from, and our spirits journey back to the spirit world, where they become breath once again.

While language re-vitalization has been identified as a crucial component in the re-clamation of Indigenous Knowledges within the literature, it is interesting to note that it was not a focus within many of the storytelling sessions. Out of the six Elders who participated, only two were fluent in their language, which is a testament to the damage caused by the residential school system. Even the Elders who never attended residential schools spoke about how these institutions had a negative impact on their family's language and cultural traditions.

Reviewing my Re-search through the 6 R's of Indigenous Re-search

The 6 R's of Indigenous research include respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991), relationships (Restoule, 2008; Styres & Zinga, 2013; Wilson, 2008), and representation (Tessaro et al., 2018). These are foundational values within Indigenous families, communities, and kinship systems. These 6 R's are also essential in Indigenous re-search to ensure ethical and safe practices prioritizing relationality. In my section on ethical protocols, I argued that these ethical values and considerations should be embedded into academic re-search protocols involving Indigenous communities. My re-search is based on the

Anishinaabe-centered re-search framework, which combines Indigenous wholistic theory with the seven principles of mino-bimaadiziwin. This framework is built on the interconnectedness and interdependence of the 6 R's. In this chapter, I will discuss my Anishinaabe-centered re-search framework through the lens of the 6 R's.

Relationships

The first ethical principle I will review is relationships which is the foundational principle for respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Without relationships, none of the other principles would be possible. Relationships are reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and built on trust. They require work and attention to develop and sustain strong partnerships. This is true for authentic, respectful, and meaningful relationships that exist between re-searchers and participants. Harris and Wasilewski (2004) describe relationships as "kinship obligations" (p. 492).

In Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway, I honour the use of Anishinaabemowin in my dissertation and Anishinaabe gidakiiminaan. This is where I locate myself in the re-search and explain my reasons for conducting it. I focus on relationships when I place myself in my relationships with indinawemaaganidog, all my relations. By doing so, I acknowledge my connections to my ancestors, both past, present, and future, which influenced how I built connections with the Nokomisag. My friendship with Darryl and his dying experience was also the catalyst for my work in end-of-life care. Without that relationship, I might not have shifted my focus from addiction and mental health to palliative care.

In Zhaawnong, the Southern Doorway is focused on relationships. In my re-search, I acknowledged the significance of relational accountability and following ethical protocols. My

re-search is founded on relationality and indinawemaaganidog. It embraces the long-standing relationships influencing my personal and academic journey at the end of life. Some of these relationships span over 16 years, during which I have learned from and alongside Nokomisag. These relationships have been built on trust, respect and love and have been fostered by mentorship and kinship. After I shared the first draft of my re-search with Elder Rosella, she told me that she usually declines participation in re-search projects, but because of our long-standing relationship and her trust in me, she agreed to participate in my re-search.

In Niingaabii-ong, the Western Doorway, my journey toward decolonization is rooted in my relationships, experiences, and connections with my family, community, and nation. This process involves reflecting on the creation of my own knowledge and examining the relationships I have with my ancestors. To decolonize my thinking, I must understand my present situation to determine where I want to go. This includes engaging in critical self-reflective practice and acknowledging how these relationships influence my worldview. For instance, I am constantly unlearning the colonial beliefs that my Nokomis upheld and striving to understand how this narrative continues to affect my ability to embrace and re-claim my spiritual practices. Even though I never met my Nokomis, as she passed away before I was born, my relationship with her still has a profound impact on me and my re-search.

In Giiwedinong, the Northern Doorway, the concept of relationship goes beyond the physical world. As explained in my methodology, my connection with my ancestors and the spiritual realm influenced my choice of methodology. My methodology also focuses on building relationships with Elders through storytelling. This exchange of knowledge is a reciprocal gift.

The recognition of Spirit and a wholistic approach to knowledge creation and transmission is apparent in the development of my methodology.

Lastly, with Shkode, the Centre Fire, relationships are imperative for understanding and making meaning from the Elders' stories. In this exchange of knowledge, I also reflect on my own learnings. Understanding the principle of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin is about understanding that it is not only about Knowledge but how knowledge is transmitted, which involves being in a relationship with others as a learner. Anishinaabe inaadiziwin also centers on relationships as it is reflective of the way we live our lives as Anishinaabe. This includes the critical role of Elders in the transmission of teachings and language and the importance of transferring this knowledge to children.

Respect

Respect is about recognizing and honouring Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. LaVallie (n.d.) further describes respect in re-search as "holding a belief that together, we are co-creating new knowledge. Together, we are sharing ourselves, making connections, and using all ways of knowing to move something forward. Respect is therefore shown first by holding the belief that we *are* relationship" (para. 4) This ensures that the re-searcher and participant are in equal space to one another and respect one another's knowledge, experience, and contributions. It also ensures that the relationship is mutually empowering (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 12)

In Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway, respect is reflected in my decision to honour and re-claim the traditional teachings and practices by incorporating Anishinaabe words and concepts into my dissertation. I also demonstrated respect for Elder Rosella and Anishinaabemowin by

utilizing the teaching of zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig in the title of my dissertation. Lastly, I showed respect for my family and the genealogy of my knowledge when I located myself in my work. The principle of Indinawemaaganidog emphasizes living harmoniously based on respect and accountability.

In Zhaawnong, the Southern Doorway, respect was embedded in honouring the Nokomisag. They are stewards of such powerful, ancestral knowledge, and I wanted to ensure that they felt appreciated and valued. To show respect, I followed the cultural protocol of offering tobacco first, which is well-established and supported by Indigenous communities. Additionally, I gave them a gift as a token of my gratitude for their knowledge, wisdom, and time.

Niingaabii'ong, the Western Doorway, centers on respect and reason. The focus of the Niingaabii'ong is on the assertion and respect for Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing as a means of healing, resurgence, and decolonization. In my dissertation, I shared my personal journey towards decolonizing, which included my experiences with Anishinaabe inendamowin. I expressed my respect for those who have led the way, taught me, provided a nurturing environment, and challenged me to grow in my education. I am grateful to the individuals who supported me throughout my academic journey, without whom I could not have completed my dissertation.

In Giiwedinong, the Northern Doorway, respect was an integral part of my methodology. Respect was embedded within the centering of my methodology on Anishinaabe cultural practices, which recognized storytelling as a culturally relevant approach to teaching, learning, understanding, and transmitting knowledge among Anishinaabe. By honouring the voices of the

Elders and their teachings, bzindamowin provided me with the space to acknowledge the sacredness of the cultural beliefs and teachings about talking about dying and death that were shared.

In Shkode, the Centre Fire, I honoured Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and inaadiziwin by presenting the stories, teachings, and wisdom of the Elders involved in my re-search. When writing my results section, I was very intentional in how I presented the Elders' stories. I wanted to ensure that their stories and experiences were handled with the utmost respect. They were also provided with the opportunity to review and revise them.

Relevance

Maintaining relevance in Indigenous re-search is essential to ensure that the re-search is meaningful and beneficial to the Indigenous peoples. It is crucial to ensure that re-search aligns with the needs and expectations of Indigenous communities (Cull et al., 2014). This is achieved by developing genuine and respectful relationships with re-search participants. In Indigenous re-search, the community should initiate the request for re-search, and re-searchers must be willing to adjust their approach and direction based on community input.

In Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway, I frame the relevance of this re-search within my own experiences as an Anishinaabekwe and in my negative interactions with the westernized healthcare system. The re-search is relevant and important to me and has become my life’s work. When I am in community, teaching Indigenous healthcare providers how to support people at the end of life, I see how needed these teachings are in helping to empower and decolonize these harmful systems of care. The requests for ongoing education and support come from communities.

In Zhaawnong, the Southern Doorway, the re-search is relevant to the Nokomisag who participated in my re-search. They have a tremendous amount of knowledge, have cared for many sick people in their communities, and have helped them along their journey back to the spirit world. This re-search is relevant to them as some have worked as nurses and social workers in westernized Eurocentric health and social care systems and have played a pivotal role in transforming the national healthcare landscape in Canada, specifically in end-of-life care for Indigenous peoples. Many of them had started this work long before I engaged in re-search with them. They are highly respected, strong leaders in their communities and have the vision to improve and enhance the care provided to community members.

In Niingaabii'ong, the Western Doorway, I center on the Anishinaabe inendamowin, describing my decolonizing journey within my re-search. This unlearning of colonial logic has helped me ensure that the choices that I made throughout my re-search are appropriate and relevant. In Giiwedinong, the Northern Doorway, I have chosen a methodology that aligns with my Anishinaabe-centered re-search framework. This has helped me develop a re-search approach that is respectful of Anishinaabe culture and values and relevant to communities.

In Shkode, the Centre Fire, I have focused on ensuring that my re-search respects the needs and expectations of the Nokomisag. I have taken great care to develop genuine and respectful relationships with them which has helped me build trust and rapport with their communities and has helped me better understand their perspectives. I argue that my re-search contributes to the understanding of Indigenous Knowledge and caregiving practices for supporting someone preparing to journey to the spirit world. It also provides a framework for

other communities aspiring to do similar re-search. These outcomes can support communities that are looking at ways to enhance their capacity to care for people who are dying.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is based on equitable relationships emphasizing the continuous sharing of knowledge between two people. It involves recognizing that every person owns their own knowledge and that this knowledge is shared within the relationship. Harris and Wasilewski (2004) describe reciprocity as a "cyclical obligation" (p. 493). Furthermore, re-search must benefit both the re-searcher and the participants, forming a mutually beneficial relationship.

In Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway, reciprocity is enacted in the gifting of Anishinaabemowin from the Elders and the teachings embedded within the understanding of our responsibility to the language. Reciprocity is reflected in how I locate myself within my re-search and hold myself accountable to my family, community, and nation. I honour the Land and my territory surrounding Animbiigo-Zaaga'igan in telling the story of where I come from and in the teachings of my uncles.

In Zhaawnong, the Southern Doorway, reciprocity is central to relational accountability and ethical protocols. It is understood that this “cyclical obligation” can have an emancipatory and decolonial effect. Reciprocity was enacted in zhaawnong by ensuring ethical protocols were in place to protect both the participants and the re-searcher, clearly outlining the mutual benefits of the re-search. These ethical protocols also outlined how the stories and teachings would be disseminated to create social change.

In Niingaabii’ong, the Western Doorway, I center on the Anishinaabe inendamowin, describing my decolonizing journey within my re-search. Reciprocity speaks to the critical self-

reflective practices that I went through in understanding my own journey. I shared this process and journey with my participants in the storytelling sessions to articulate the exchange of knowledge.

In Giiwedinong, the Northern Doorway, storytelling and bzindamowin (learning by listening) reciprocity was enacted during the gifting and receiving of stories. Anishinaabe recognizes stories as sacred gifts from Creator that provide opportunities for healing, the transmission of knowledge and learning. This methodology of knowledge sharing was not one-sided. There were conversations between the participants and the re-searcher which provided space to enhance our understandings and learnings and to bring the learnings into our knowledge bundles. In Shkode, the Centre Fire, the themes, stories shared, and the wisdom of the Elders created a space for healing with the group and provided opportunities for other Indigenous peoples to benefit from it.

Responsibility

Responsibility is our accountability to others, referred to as "our community obligation" (Harris & Wasilewski, 2004, p. 492). In re-search, both the re-searcher and participant share a responsibility to uphold Indigenous Knowledges, the way of knowing, being and doing (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). By doing so, we recognize our responsibility to our communities and kinship system, ensuring that the work is carried out ethically and in a good way. LaVallie (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of responsibility by stating that "When one believes that we are all connected, that we are relationship (not in relationship, but as relationship) then there is an ownership of ensuring what is done is respectful, relevant, and reciprocal."

In Waabinong, the Eastern Doorway, responsibility is not only enacted in my decolonial process of including Anishinaabemowin within my dissertation but also in my commitment to continue my learning journey of re-claiming my language. In doing so, I acknowledge my responsibility to consult with my Elders and to create the intention to focus on language resurgence. I also answered the call to learn more about the challenges and barriers to equitable access in healthcare settings to then improve policies, programs, and services for better care and support to Indigenous peoples at the end of life.

In Zhaawnong, the Southern Doorway, I focus on Anishinaabe enawendiwin, our way of relating. This centers on relational accountability and ethical protocols. In enacting Anishinaabe enawendiwin in my re-search, I committed to relational accountability that holds me accountable for my shared culture, stories, history, and lifelong relationships and to recognize and address the harms of colonialism. In ensuring ethical responsibility in the re-search process, the Elders were informed that they would have the opportunity to review and approve their transcripts and that they also have a choice to use a pseudonym.

In Niingaabii'ong, the Western Doorway, Absolon (2011) describes this direction as focusing on asserting and respecting Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing as a means of healing, resurgence, and decolonization. I created space for re-search that prioritizes Indigenous scholars and acknowledges and amplifies their contributions to the community and the academy, including honouring Indigenous Knowledges, theory, methodology, and re-search practices. I also describe my own decolonizing journey, which is important in my responsibility to conduct re-search from the standpoint of Anishinaabe inaadiziwin.

In Giiwedinong, the Northern Doorway, I centered on Anishinaabe izhichigewin, where I described my responsibility in the collective action for the pursuit of healing and to embrace Indigenous methods of practice, including protocols, circles, and ceremonies. I reflected on the methodologies that would be meaningful to the re-search process and the participants and how I situated my methodology within an Anishinaabe knowledge framework to then learn and transmit more Anishinaabe knowledge. In Giiwedinong, I was also accountable for spirit knowledge and responding to the directions of the ancestors when developing my methodology. In Shkode, the Centre Fire, I honoured Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and inaadiziwin to be responsible for the knowledge that was gifted to me and accountable for moving it forward in this cultural resurgence.

Representation

Representation ensures that the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples are heard, respected and correctly reflected in academic re-search. Representation also involves creating a space where the diversity of knowledge and expertise within Indigenous communities is valued, acknowledged, and integrated into the re-search process. As Indigenous scholars increasingly conduct re-search from their own onto-epistemological perspectives, representation becomes crucial in decolonizing the re-search process. It creates a platform for recognizing Indigenous peoples' unique social, historical, and cultural contexts while fostering the development of re-search grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, which differ significantly from Western paradigms.

Representation was evident throughout this decolonial and resurging Indigenous re-search. It was reflected in my decision to amplify Indigenous scholars and Indigenous

Knowledges throughout my literature review, on the focus of Indigenous re-search methodologies and creating an Anishinaabe-centred re-search framework, to the selection and implementation of a methodology congruent with Anishinaabe ways of knowing, learning, and understanding. Representation was also evident in relational accountability and indinawemaaganidog used to select my participants and the Nokomisag who shared their knowledge. Moreover, the structure of how I organized my dissertation according to the directions of Indigenous wholistic theory was consistent with representing Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Moving Forward with this Re-search

This re-search provides a culturally and territorially specific account of Anishinaabe gikendaasowin and a community-relevant framework for pursuing equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples as they prepare to journey back to the spirit world. It lays the foundation for other Indigenous communities who aspire to revitalize their own knowledges for caregiving at the end of life by answering Absolon's (2019) call to action for Indigenous people:

> Remember and reconnect with wholistic knowledges, pick up our bundles and activate them again. Picking up our bundles means to relearn, re-claim, pick up, and own the teachings and practices that emanate from wholistic theory and knowledge. It means to live and practice *minobimaadsiwin* (a good life) (p. 23.)

I have identified several next steps for this re-search, particularly its potential impact on education, policy and re-search that would benefit other Indigenous peoples. I currently lead the Indigenous Peoples' Health & Aging (IPHA) Division at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The IPHA division has two

main objectives: to collaborate with Indigenous peoples to lead culturally relevant re-search and education in health and aging and to create space to amplify Indigenous peoples' voices through knowledge translation and program development.

Since 2017, I have been managing government contracts through CERAH. My role involves developing collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities to conduct culturally- and contextually-relevant re-search and knowledge translation. One of the key focus areas of these partnerships has been education for healthcare providers, family members, and community members. This has been recognized as essential for building and sustaining successful end-of-life care programs in Indigenous communities across Canada. In response to this need, several culturally relevant curricula were developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples to enhance their capacity to provide care in their communities for people with chronic illnesses and those who are at the end of their lives.

My Anishinaabe-centred framework, methodology, and re-search outcomes have already influenced the content and the delivery of culturally safe-r palliative care education curricula. These curricula have been designed by the IPHA division and are delivered across Canada to Indigenous communities interested in improving their capacity to care for people at the end of life. As the lead educator and facilitator trainer for these curricula, I have had the opportunity to share the teachings I have learned from the Elders with participants as examples of teachings that can be re-claimed and re-activated in supporting people as they journey back to the spirit world. Moreover, I encourage participants to return to their Elders and learn their own nations' and communities' Knowledges, teachings, and practices for the end of life.

Through my re-search, I have gained insights that will aid in the future development of culturally relevant tools and resources that will benefit Indigenous communities across Canada. This experience has also motivated me to focus future educational opportunities on Indigenous Knowledges. In 2024-2025, the IPHA division will deliver special topic webinars presented through an Indigenous lens, honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. Elders, Knowledge Carriers, Indigenous scholars, and healthcare providers from across Canada will receive invitations to attend.

This re-search has the potential to inform policy changes and directions. As part of my work on a national level, I collaborate with government organizations such as Indigenous Services Canada, Health Canada, Canadian Virtual Hospice, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, and Healthcare Excellence Canada. My re-search has given me further knowledge and guidance from Elders to create space for amplifying Indigenous voices at these national tables. It has further reinforced the work that I do and given me a platform to challenge colonial systems of care to create culturally safe-r and equitable care for Indigenous peoples.

There are also opportunities to use the knowledge gained from this re-search to support and conduct similar re-search with other Indigenous communities. As part of my role with the Canadian Virtual Hospice, I work with a national Elders and Knowledge Carrier's Circle that represents First Nations, Métis, and Inuit nations across Canada. As part of my dissemination plan, I would like to present my re-search to the group and seek their advice on how they would like to proceed with future research into resurging Indigenous Knowledges, caregiving, grief and loss and dying and death.

Locating Myself – My Concluding Thoughts

This re-search aimed to make the lived experiences and Indigenous Knowledges about end-of-life practices of Anishinaabe caregivers explicit and articulate them so that other Indigenous peoples and communities can recognize, understand, and benefit from this Indigenous Knowledges re-search. This re-search provided Elders with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and re-connect, re-educate, and re-vitalize their community's Anishinaabe knowledge of health and well-being practices, along with resilient caregiving networks.

Decolonizing our ways of caring for our own people at the end of life can contribute to a re-birth of Indigenous Knowledges, self-determination, and resurgence by Indigenous communities. By healing from colonial trauma, we acknowledge and honour our long-standing cultural and community-based knowledge in caring for community members preparing to journey back to the spirit world. We can unlearn colonial thinking that disregards Anishinaabe gikendaasowin regarding health, caregiving, dying, and death. In order to decolonize our thinking and practices, we also need to re-claim models of care based on Anishinaabe values, principles, and worldviews. Embracing Anishinaabe concepts regarding health and wellness is essential, and it is important to support Indigenous health systems necessary for this resurgence.

Archibald (2019) states that Indigenous community-based re-search is the method to identify meaningful solutions to health, healing, wellness, and balance based on IK-and their stories, strengths, and resilience "to re-cover, re-cognize, re-create, re-present, and "re-search back" using our own ontological and epistemological constructs" (p. 6). Through storytelling and meaning-making of end of life, this re-search was the first step in healing while helping to decolonize Anishinaabe's ways of thinking about care at the end of life. It re-storied caregiving

practices as daily acts of resurgence when "commitments are made to reclaim and restore cultural practices that have been neglected and/or disrupted" (Corntassel, 2012, p.89). By using Indigenous wholistic theory as the theoretical underpinning of the re-search, it sought to "Indigenize our thoughts and actions into active healing processes that simultaneously decolonize and Indigenize" (Absolon, 2019, p. 23). This activation of Indigenous knowledge, health and healing, caregiving practices and views on death and dying are the foundation for my re-search.

I want to end by locating myself one final time in my re-search. In the summer of 2022, immediately following the storytelling sessions, two close family members were diagnosed with two different types of cancers. This was earth-shattering news for me because not only were they diagnosed ten days apart, but these two individuals were raised alongside me like a brother and sister. Reflecting on my final re-search question, I can personally attest to the power re-claiming and re-activating our Indigenous Knowledge can have on Indigenous communities' healing, resurgence and self-determination. The teachings from the Elders comforted me during this experience and came at a time when my family and I needed them the most. By learning about the creation story, our commitments to the Creator, and the life cycle teachings, I could understand what was happening in our family. I could then share these teachings with other members of my family, which I hope comforted them.

I reflect on the spiritual knowledge that was given to me in a vision by Nimishomis back in 2003 when I was entering my Master's in Social Work back in 2003 "Creator has put you on this path. You may not understand what that means right now, but someday, this will all make sense. It will become meaningful to you" (Nanakonagis, Vision Communication, 2003). I now

understand that my path in life was already decided with Creator long before I came into this world and that Creator gave me the gifts of strength, resiliency, and determination to live a good life and fulfill my purpose. These gifts prepared me to go through the loss of my friend, my mother, and my cousin, who ended up dying as a result of his cancer. In their work on the Seven Sacred teachings, Bouchard and Martin (2009) describe this as the teaching of wisdom:

> By watching and listening you can learn everything you need to know.
>
> Knowledge can be learned.
>
> Wisdom must be lived.
>
> *Giishpin naanaagidawaabiyan miinawaa bizindaman mii'omaa ge-onjigikendaman gakina gegoo.*
>
> *Gikendamowin daagikendaagwad.*
>
> *Nibwaakaawin inaadizin*. (p.21)

References

Absolon, K. (2008). *Kaandossiwin, this is how we come to know! Indigenous graduate research in the academy: Worldviews and methodologies*. [Doctoral dissertation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.]

Absolon, K. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*. Fernwood Publishing.

Absolon, K. (2019). Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, *14*(1), 22-42. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view?370

Absolon, K. E. (2022). *Kaandossiwin: how we come to know: Indigenous re-search methodologies*. Fernwood Publishing.

Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2004). Aboriginal research: Berry picking and hunting in the 21st century. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 1*(1), 5-17. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/issue/view/2

Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre and Alberta Health. (June 2021). Alberta Opioid Response Surveillance Report: First Nations People in Alberta, pp. 3–4.

Alfred, T., & Corntassel, J. (2005). Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism. *Government and Opposition*, *40*(4), 597-614. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00166.x

Allan, B., & Smylie, J. (2015). *First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. The Wellesley Institute.

Anderson, M., & Woticky, G. (2018). The end of life is an auspicious opportunity for healing: Decolonizing death and dying for urban Indigenous people. *International Journal of*

International Journal of Indigenous Health, 13(2), 48-60. https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v13i2.32062

Archibald, J. (2008a). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit.* University of British Columbia Press.

Archibald, J. (2008b). An Indigenous Storywork methodology. In J.G. Knowles, & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues.* Sage Publications.

Archibald, J., Lee-Morgan, J., & De Santolo, J. (2019). *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology.* Zed Books Ltd.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations.* Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* Purich Publishing Limited.

Battiste, M., & Youngblood, J. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Purich Publishing.

Beardy, E. (2022, October 4). *Journey to the Spirit World: Indigenous Approaches to Caregiving for those Who are Seriously Ill. [PowerPoint slides].* Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health. https://cerah.lakeheadu.ca/knowledge-translation/education-archives/

Benton-Banai, E. (1988). *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway*. University of Minnesota Press.

Best Start Resource Centre (2010). *A child becomes strong: Journeying through each stage of the life cycle.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Bouchard, D., & Martin, J. (2009). *Seven Sacred Teachings: Niizhwaaswi gagiikwewin.* More Than Words Publishers.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Burton, L.M., Kemp, S.P., Leung, M., Matthews, S.A., & Takeuchi, D.T. (2011). *Communities, neighborhoods, and health: Expanding the boundaries of place*. Springer.

Cajax, C.S., Schill, K., & Janke, R. (2017). Priorities and challenges for a palliative approach to care for rural Indigenous populations: A scoping review. *Health and Social Care in the Community, 00*, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12469

Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). (2006). *CIHR guidelines for health research involving Aboriginal Peoples*.

Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and Social Sciences, & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). (2014). *Tri-Council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving human*s. http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/

Castellano, M.B. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In G. Sefa Dei, B. Hall, & D. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts: Multiple reading of our world* (pp. 21-36). University of Toronto Press.

Castellano, M.B. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health,1*(1), 98–114.

Chartrand, R. (2012). Anishinaabe pedagogy. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 35*(1), 144-162.

Chiefs of Ontario (2013). *A Guide for First Nations in Ontario: Navigating the Non-Insured Health Benefits & Ontario Health Programs Benefits.* http://www.chiefs-ofontario.org/sites/default/files/files/NIHB%20Guide%20Condensed%20Jan%2031%202013.pdf

Chiblow, S. (2021). An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring Humanity's Relationship to N'bi (Water). *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20.* https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211058017

Clark, D. (2002). Between hope and acceptance: the medicalisation of dying. *British Medical Journal, 324*(7342)*,* 905-907.

Constitution Act, 1867, 30 & 31 Victoria, c. 3. (U.K.). https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-1.html

Cormier, P. N. (2016). *Kinoo'amaadawaad megwaa doodamawaad—they are learning with each other while they are doing: The Indigenous living peace methodology* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Manitoba. https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/handle/1993/31999

Cormier, P. & Ray, L. (2018). A tale of two drums: Kinoo'amaadawaad megwaa doodamawaad – 'They are learning with each other while they are doing.' In McGregor, D., Restoule, J.P., & Johnston, R (Eds.), *Indigenous Research: Theories, Practices, and Relationships* (pp. 112-125). Canadian Scholars' Press.

Corntassel, J. (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1*, 86-101.

Coulthard, G. (2014). *Red skin white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Cull I., Hancock R. L. A., McKeown S., Pigeon M., & Vedan A. (2014). *Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff, Student Services, and Advisors.* Victoria, BC: BC Campus.

Czyzewski, K. (2011). Colonialism as a broader social determinant of health. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal, 2*(1), 1-14. http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol2/iss1/5

Davidson, C. M., Brown, M., & Moffitt, P. (2006). Student researchers negotiating consent in northern Aboriginal communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(2), 1–10. https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index

Debassige, B. (2010). Re-conceptualizing Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life) as research methodology: A spirit-centered way in Anishinaabe research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 33*(1), 11-28.

Donald, D. (2012). Indigenous métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 25*(5), 533-555. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2011.554449

Duggleby, W., Kuchera, S., MacLeod, R., Holyoke, P., Scott, T., Holtslander, L., Letendre, A., Moeke-Maxwell, T., Burhansstipanov, L., & Chamber, T. (2015). Indigenous people's experiences at the end of life. *Palliative Supportive Care, 13*(6), 1721-1733. https://doi: 10.1017/S147895151500070X

Dumont, J. (November 19, 2021). *After the fourth prophecy - Finding a way back to traditional ways.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxE7OgeMhEE

First Nations Health Authority. (2016). *Creating a climate for change: cultural safety and humility in health services delivery for First Nations and Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia*. [Online] https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/cultural-humility

First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC]. (2007). *First Nations regional longitudinal health survey (RHS) 2002/2003: Results for adults, youth and children living in First Nations communities*. First Nations Centre.

First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC]. (2012). *First Nations regional health survey (RHS) 2008/10: National report on adults, youth and children living in First Nations communities*. First Nations Centre. http://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS) 2008-10 - National Report.pdf

First Nations Information Governance Centre [FNIGC]. (2014). *Ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP™): The path to First Nations information governance. May 2014.* The First Nations Information Governance Centre. http://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/ocap_path_to_fn_information_governance_en_final . Pdf.

Four Directions Teaching. (2006-2012). *Ojibwe/Powawatomi (Anishinabe teaching).* https://fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/ojibwe.html

Fruch, V., Monture, L., Prince, H., & Kelley, M.L. (2016). Coming home to die: Six Nations of the Grand River Territory develops community-based palliative care. *International*

Journal of Indigenous Health Research, 11(1), 50-74. https://doi: 10.18357/ijih111201615303

Geddes, G. (2017). *Medicine unbundled: A journey through the minefields of Aboriginal healthcare*. Heritage House.

Geniusz, W. (2009). Our knowledge is not primitive: Decolonizing Anishinaabe botanical teachings.

Gouldhawke, M. (2021). *The Failure of Federal Indigenous Healthcare Policy in Canada.* Yellowhead Institute, 4 February 2021, https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2021/02/04/the-failure-of-federal-indigenous-healthcare-policy-in-canada/

Government of Canada. (2018). Improving health outcomes. https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2018/01/improving_healthoutcomes.html

Government of Canada. (2019). *Evaluation of the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Program*. https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568295261442/1568295302724.

Government of Canada. (2021). *Co-developing distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation.* https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1611843547229/1611844047055

Gracey, M. & King, M. (2009). Indigenous health. Part 1. Determinants and disease patterns. *Lancet, 374*, 65-75.

Graveline, F. J. (2000). Circle as methodology: Enacting an Aboriginal paradigm. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 13*(4), 361-370.

Grinnell, T., Prince, H., & Kelley, M.L. (2011). *Palliative care in First Nations communities: Perspectives, experiences and educational needs of medical interpreters*. Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health, Lakehead University.

Hamilton, S., Morrisseau, R., & McCrady, T. (1995). New solitudes: Conflicting world views in the context of contemporary resources development. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology, 19,* 3-18.

Hampton, M., Baydala, A., Bourassa, C., McKay-McNabb, K., Placsko, C., Goodwill, K., McKenna, B., McNabb, P., & Boekelder, R. (2010). Completing the circle: Elders speak about end-of-life care with Aboriginal families in Canada. *Journal of Palliative Care, 26*(1), 6–14. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/10.1177/082585971002600103

Harris L.D. & Wasilewski, J. (2004). Indigeneity, an alternative worldview: Four R's (relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, redistribution) vs. two P's (power and profit). Sharing the journey towards conscious evolution. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science: The Official Journals of the International Federation for Systems Research 21*(5): 489-503.

Health Canada. (2009). *Summative evaluation of the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care.* http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniahspnia/ pubs/services/fnihcc-psdmcpni/index-eng.php

Health Canada. (2012). *Your health benefits: A guide for First Nations to access non-insured Health Benefits.* http://fnhda.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/nihb_handbook.pdf

Holmes, L. (2000). Heart knowledge, blood memory, and the voice of the land: Implications of research among Hawaiian elders. In G. Dei, J.S. & B. L. Hall (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts* (pp. 37-53). University of Toronto Press.

Hordyk, S.R., Macdonald, M.E., & Brassard, P. (2017). End-of-life care in Nunavik, Quebec: Inuit experiences, current realities, and ways forward. *Journal of Palliative Medicine, 20*(6), 647-655.

Hudson-Rodd, N. (1998). Nineteenth century Canada: Indigenous place of dis-ease. *Health & Place, 4*(1), 55-66. https://doi: 10.1016/s1353-8292(97)00027-0

Indian Act, RSC 1985, c I-5. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/

Iwama, M., Marshal, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). Two-Eyed Seeing and the language of healing in community-based research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *32*(2), 3-23.

Jardine, C. & Lines, L. (n.d.) *Northern and Indigenous Health and Healthcare.* University of Saskatchewan, https://openpress.usask.ca/northernhealthcare/chapter/chapter-11-social-and-structural-determinants-of-indigenous-health/

Kellehear, A. (1984). Are we a 'death denying' society? A sociological review. *Social Science and Medicine, 18*(9), 713-723.

Kelley, M.L., Prince, H., Nadin, S., Brazil, K., Crow, M., Hanson, G., Maki, L., Monture, L., Musquash, C., O'Brien, V., & Smith, J. (2018). Developing palliative care programs in Indigenous communities using participatory action research: A Canadian application of the public health approach to palliative care. *Annals of Palliative Medicine, 7*(Suppl 2), S52-S72. https://doi: 10.21037/apm.2018.03.06

Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First Nations and higher education: The four R's—Respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 1-15.

Koski, J., Kelley, M.L., Nadin, S., Crow, M., Prince, H., Wiersma, E., & Mushquash, C. (2017). An analysis of journey mapping to create a palliative care pathway in a Canadian First Nations community: Implications for service integration and policy development. *Palliative Care: Research and Treatment*, *10*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1178224217719441

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Kovach, M. (2010). Conversational method in Indigenous research. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 5*(1), 40-48.

LaVallie, C. (n.d.). *First Nations and Métis Research in Saskatchewan: 5 R's of Indigenous Research.* Saskatchewan.

Lavallée, L. (2009). Practical application of an Indigenous research framework and two qualitative Indigenous research methods: Sharing circles and Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 21-40.

Lavalley, J., Kastor, S., Valleriani, J., & McNeil, R. (2018). Reconciliation and Canada's overdose crisis: responding to the needs of Indigenous Peoples. *Cmaj, 190*(50), E1466-E1467.)

Lavoie, J. (2013). Policy silences: Why Canada needs a National First Nations, Inuit and Métis health policy. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, *72*, 22690. https://doi.org/10.3402/ijch.v72i0.22690

Lavoie, J. (2018). Medicare and the care of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. *Health Economics, Policy and Law, 13*(3-4), 280-298. doi:10.1017/S1744133117000391

Lemchuck-Favel, L., & Jock, R. (2004). Aboriginal health systems in Canada: Nine case studies. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, *1*(1), 28-51.

Loppie, Reading, C., & de Leeuw, S. (2014). *Indigenous experiences with racism and its impacts*. National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health.

Lux, M. K. (2016). *Separate beds: A history of Indian Hospitals in Canada*, *1920s-1980s*. University of Toronto Press. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442663114

MacDonald, C., & Steenbeek, A. (2015). The impact of colonization and western assimilation on health and wellbeing of Canadian Aboriginal people. *International Journal of Regional and Local History, 10*(1), 32-46. https://doi.org/10.1179/2051453015Z.00000000023

Marsh, T. N., Cote-Meek, S., Toulouse, P., Najavits, L.M., & Young, N.L. (2015). The application of two-eyed seeing decolonizing methodology in qualitative and quantitative research for the treatment of intergenerational trauma and substance use disorders. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1–13. DOI: 10.1177/1609406915618046

Martin, D. H. (2012). Two-eyed seeing: A framework for understanding Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to Indigenous health research. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research Archive, 44*(2), 21-42. https://cjnr.archive.mcgill.ca/article/viewFile/2348/2342

Martin, K., & Mirraboopa, B. (2003). Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for indigenous and indigenist re-search. *Journal of Australian studies, 27*(76), 203-214.

McGrath, P. (2007). Aboriginal cultural practices on caring for the deceased person: Findings and recommendations. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, *13*(9), 418-425. https://doi: 10.12968/ijpn.2007.13.9.27389

McGregor, H., Madden, B., Higgins, M., & Ostertag, J. (2018). Braiding designs for decolonizing research methodologies: Theory, practice, ethics. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology, 9*(2), 1-21.

McGuire, P. D. (2013). *Anishinaabe Giikeedaasiwin – Indigenous knowledge: An exploration of resilience*. [Doctoral thesis], University of Saskatchewan. https://ecommons.usask.ca/handle/10388/ETD-2013-09-1212

Nabigon, H., Hagey, R., Webster, S., & Mackay, R. (1999). The learning circle as a research method: The trickster and windigo in research. *Native Social Work Journal, 2*(1), 113-137.

National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation. (2014). *Honouring Our Strengths: Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment Reference Guide*. National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation, Honouring Our Strengths: Indigenous Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment Project - University of Saskatchewan.

O'Brien, A. P., Bloomer, M. J., McGrath, P., Clarke, K., Martin, T., Lock, M., ... & O'Connor, M. (2013). Considering Aboriginal palliative care models: the challenges for mainstream services. *Rural and Remote Health*, *13*(2), 1-10.

Papps, E. and Ramsden, I. (1996.) Cultural safety in nursing: the New Zealand experience. *International Journal in Quality Health Care, 8*, 491-497.

Pratt, Y. P., Louis, D. W., Hanson, A. J., & Ottmann, J. (2018). Indigenous education and decolonization. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.* *h*ttp://education.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-240?print. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.240

Prince, H., Kortes-Miller, K., Stajduhar, K. I., & Marshall, D. (2022). Public health palliative care, equity-oriented care, and structural vulnerability. *Oxford Textbook of Public Health Palliative Care,* 197-208.

Prince, H., Nadin, S., Crow, M., Maki, L., Monture, L., Smith, J., & Kelley, M.L. (2019). "If you understand you cope better with it": The role of education in building palliative care capacity in four First Nations communities in Canada. *BMC Public Health*, *19*, 768. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6983-y.

Reading, C. (2018). Structural determinants of Aboriginal peoples' health. In M. Greenwood, S. de Leeux, & N.M. Lindsay (Ed.), *Determinants of Indigenous peoples' health in Canada: Beyond the social.* Canadian Scholars' Press.

Restoule, J. P. (2008, November). The five R's of Indigenous research: Relationship, respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity. In Workshop presented at the Wise Practices II: Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Research and Capacity Building Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Rheault, D. (1999). *Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin - The way of a good life – An examination of Anishinaabe philosophy, ethics and traditional knowledge.* Debwewin Press.

Richmond, C., & Cook, C. (2016). Creating conditions for Canadian Aboriginal health equity: the promise of healthy public policy. *Public Health Reviews, 37*(2), 1-16. DOI 10.1186/s40985-016-0016-5

Rigney, L. I. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodologies and its principles. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *14*(2), 109-121. https://doi: 10.2307/1409555

Ruttan, L. (2004). Exploring ethical principles in the context of research relationships. *Pimatisiwin*, *2*(1), 11-28.

Schaefer C. (2006). *Grandmothers counsel the world*. Shambhala Publications.

Seven Generations Education Institute. (n.d.) *Anishinaabe mino bimaadiziwin: Principles for Anishinaabe education.* https://www.renaud.ca/public/Aboriginal/Mino-Bimaadizwin-Principles-for-Education.pdf

Simpson, L. (2008). Our elder brothers: The lifeblood of resurgence. In L. Simpson (Ed.), *Lighting the Eighth Fire* (pp. 73-88). Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Simpson, L. (2011). *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. Winnipeg, MB, Canada: Arbeiter Ring Pub.

Simpson, L. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society, 3*(3), 1-25. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Statistics Canada. (2011). *Population projections by Aboriginal identity in Canada, 2006 to 2031.* http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-552-x/91-552-x2011001-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2017). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census.* https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.pdf?st=UqfkDHq1

Stevenson, W. L. A. (2000). *Decolonizing tribal histories.* [Doctoral Dissertation]. University of California, Berkeley.

Stiegelbauer, S.M. (1996). What is an Elder? What do Elders do?: First Nations Elders as teaching in culture-based urban organizations. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XVI, 1,* 37-66.

Styres S., & Zinga D. (2013). The community-first land-centred theoretical framework: bringing a 'good mind' to Indigenous Education Research?. *Canadian Journal of Education, 36(2), 284-313.*

Tessaro, D., Restoule, J. P., Gaviria, P., Flessa, J., Lindeman, C., & Scully-Stewart, C. (2018). The five r's for Indigenizing online learning: A case study of the First Nations schools' principals course. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 40*(1).

Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. (2020). *Indigenous wellness framework reference guide*. National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation. https://www.thunderbirdpf.org/IWF

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC]. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of curriculum theorizing, 29*(1).

Tuck, E., & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1(*1), 1-40.

Turpel-Lafond, M. E. (2020). *In plain sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in B.C. health care*. https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Summary-Report.pdf

United Nations. (2016). *State of the world's Indigenous peoples: Indigenous peoples' access to health services*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations. [Online] https://doi.org/10.18356/7914b045-en

Vukelich, J. (2017, July 2). *Ojibwe Word of the Day Mino-bimaadizi - S/he leads a good life*. [video attached]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/jamesvukelichkaagegaabaw/videos/1564284476926712

Vukelich, J. (2020, March 4). *Ojibwe Word of the Day Mino-bimaadizi - S/he leads a good life.* [video attached]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/james.vukelich.7/videos/10224727232343814

Wagamese, R. (2016). *Embers: One Ojibway's meditations*. D & M Publishers.

Wilson, D., & Resoutle, J.P. (2010). Tobacco ties: The relationship of the sacred to research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education; 33*(1), 29-45.

Wilson, S. (2001). What is an Indigenous research methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25*(2), 175-179.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.

Wilson, W. A. & Yellow Bird, M. (Eds). (2005). *For Indigenous eyes only: A decolonization handbook.* School of American Research Press.

World Health Organization. (2015). *WHO definition of palliative care.* http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/

Appendices

Appendix A1: Oral Script to Provide Information

(This information will be communicated orally and then will be emailed as a formal written letter that will be presented on Lakehead University Letterhead)

Oral script [following protocols of gifting tobacco]

Boozhoo, Aniin ---[name of participant],

As you know I am a PhD researcher in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. My supervisor in the Faculty of Education is Dr. Lisa Korteweg. Over the past 17 years, I have been working to improve the end of life care for Indigenous peoples by providing palliative care education and developing palliative care programs and teams. My PhD research is now taking a different focus by embracing Anishinaabe Knowledge, culture and teachings and using them as the driving force for change. In particular, my research looks at exploring how Anishinaabe Knowledge and health practices are re-activated, re-mobilized and resurged when caring for community members who are preparing to journey to the spirit world. My hope is that by understanding and learning about Anishinaabe peoples' views on death, dying and caregiving models through individual interviews and sharing circles, my research will help to create more equitable and positive health and end of life outcomes for Indigenous peoples based on our own knowledge, values and beliefs.

I am inviting you to participate in this research for two reasons. The first is because I know of your extensive knowledge and experience in providing care to people at end of life in your community. Secondly, because you have had such an impact on my life and learning in end of life care and I truly value your knowledge, experiences and teachings. I want you to know that

your participation in this research is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw from the study at any time. When we do the storytelling sessions, you can decline to answer any questions. The interviews and sharing circles will be video-recorded through Zoom. This way, I can be fully present to your story and not have to take notes. When we begin, however, I will always ask for your verbal consent to make sure that it is okay to do so. At any time, you may ask for the recording to be paused if you want to share sacred knowledge or wisdom that should not be included in my research and I will respect that.

It is not anticipated that there are any risks to your safety by participating in this research, however, given that the topic of the research involves the issue of death and dying, I recognize that the nature of this research topic and some interview prompts may be of a sensitive and personal nature and trigger an emotional reaction. I can offer assistance with providing support services and counselling resources which I will send to you in the email.

The information that you provide will remain confidential and securely stored on a password protected laptop for a minimum of five years. For the research, you can decide whether or not you would like to use your real name. If you want to remain anonymous, I will ask you to select a fictious or fake name. When we get together in the sharing circle, I cannot guarantee confidentiality due to the group format. However, all participants will be encouraged to respect the privacy of individuals taking part in the group.

I will be presenting the findings from this study at conferences and in academic journals so that others may learn from it. As a participant in this study, I will provide you with a transcript of your sessions so that you can review it and approve it. Also, I will continue to check with you and ask you for ongoing consent to ensure that I am representing your knowledge accurately and

respectfully. At the end of the research, you can also request a summary of the research findings.

Following this, I will also be sending you all of this information in an email. The email will include a two-page formal information letter that will include a list of support services and counselling resources, along with all the contact information for myself, my supervisor and Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board in case you have any questions about the ethics of the project. I will also include a formal written consent form. If you would like, you can either fill it in and send it back, or just keep it for your records.

Miigwetch.

Appendix A2: Formal Information Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study titled "Zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig: Re-activating Anishinaabe *Gikendaasowin (Knowledge)* for Caregiving at the End of Life." This research project is being conducted by Ph.D. research student Holly Prince, Lakehead University, supervised by Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how Anishinaabe Knowledge and health practices are re-activated, re-mobilized and resurged when caring for community members who are preparing to journey to the spirit world. This research intends to provide a community specific account of Anishinaabe peoples' views on death, dying and caregiving models in pursuit of equitable and positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

You are being invited to participate because of your experience in providing care to people at end of life in your community along with your ongoing relationship to myself. Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw from the study at any time. During data collection, you may decline to answer any questions. Interviews and sharing circles will be video-recorded to conduct more detail, accurate analysis, however at the beginning of each session, participants will be asked for verbal consent. At any time, you may ask for the recording to be paused if you want to share sacred knowledge or wisdom that should not be included in the PhD research and that will be respected.

It is not anticipated that there are any risks to your safety by participating in this research, however, given that the topic of the research involves the issue of death and dying, I recognize

that the nature of this research topic and some interview prompts may be of a sensitive and personal nature and trigger an emotional reaction. Should you have difficulty and require support processing these emotions, I can offer assistance with providing support services and counselling resources (see the list attached).

The information that you provide will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for five years. Participants will be provided with the option to either use their names in the study or remain anonymous. If they choose to remain anonymous, participants will be asked to select a pseudonym. Confidentiality of the sharing circle participants cannot be fully guaranteed due to the group format. However, all participants will be encouraged to respect the privacy of individuals taking part in the group.

The findings from this study will be presented at conferences and/or published in academic journals so that others may learn from it. As a participant in this study, you will be provided with member checking document at the point of initial data analysis. In addition, you will be asked to provide ongoing consent of the representation of your knowledge. You may also request a summary of the research findings upon completion of the study.

If you have any questions concerning the ongoing research process, please feel free to contact me at any time by email: hprince@lakeheadu.ca. If you have any concerns about the overall PhD research study, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University by e-mail at lkortewe@lakeheadu.ca. If you have any questions about the ethics of the project, you can contact the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board Manager, Ms. Susan Wright, at (807) 343-8934.

With respect,

Holly Prince, MSW, Ph.D. Student Researcher

Lakehead University

Support Services and Counselling Resources

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

Service languages: Ojibway, Cree, Inuktut, English, French

Provides 24/7 culturally grounded assessment, referrals, support in times of crisis, and suicide intervention.

1-855-242-3310

MMIW Crisis Line

Service languages: English, French

Provides 24/7 support to family, friends and community members who are being impacted by the loss of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman, girl or Two-spirit person.

1-844-413-6649

NWAC Elder Support Line | Canada-Wide

Available Monday-Friday 9AM-11AM EST & 1PM-3PM EST

Call 888-664-7808

Talk 4 Healing

Service languages: Ojibway, Oji-Cree, Cree, English, French

Provides 24/7 culturally sensitive counselling, advice and support to Indigenous women.

1-855-554-4325

Online service at www.talk4healing.com

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society

1-800-721-0066

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation - Residential School 24-hour Crisis Line

1-866-925-4419

Appendix B1: Oral Script for Ongoing Active Consent

Now that I have reviewed what you can expect from the research and data collection, I am going to ask if you if you consent to participate in my research. If you have any questions about anything I am asking you, please let me know we can talk about it.

1. Do you understand that your participation is completely voluntary and that you may refuse to participate in any part of the study, withdraw from the study at any time, or decline to answer any questions during the interview or focus group by simply letting me know?
2. Do you consent to having the interviews video-recorded? If at any time you want to share sacred knowledge or wisdom that should not be included in the PhD research, do you understand that you can just let me know and I will pause the recording?
3. Do you understand that all information will be kept strictly confidential and will be securely stored in a password protected laptop for a minimum of five years?
4. Do you understand that the findings of the research will be prepared for publication at professional conferences and journals?
5. For this research, do you want to use your real name or remain anonymous in the published results?
    a. (If you want to remain anonymous, what name would you like me to use in the research?)
6. Do you understand that I cannot guarantee your confidentiality in the sharing circle due to the group format, however, I will encourage all participants to respect the privacy of individuals taking part in the group?

7. It is not anticipated that you will experience physical or psychological harm. Should you experience any distress, do you understand that I will assist you to access the help that you need?
8. Lastly, do you know that you can request a summary of the research findings upon completion of the study by contacting myself through the email that I have provide you?

Miigwetch.

Appendix B2: Formal Consent Form

(Formal document Presented on Lakehead University Letterhead, sent by email for the participant's records)

My signature on this sheet indicates that I agree to participate in a study titled "Zhiitaa-ook waa-ni onj-kiijig: Re-activating Anishinaabe *Gikendaasowin (Knowledge)* for Caregiving at the End of Life." This research project is being conducted by Ph.D. research student Holly Prince, Lakehead University, supervised by Dr. Lisa Korteweg, Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

My consent to participate is made under the following conditions:

1. That I have read and understood the 2-page Information Sheet.
2. My participation is completely voluntary. I may refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw from the study at any time simply by notifying the researcher. I may also decline answer any questions during the interview or focus group.
3. I understand that interviews and sharing circles will be video-recorded. At the beginning of each session, I will be asked for verbal consent. At any time, I may ask for the recording to be paused if I want to share sacred knowledge or wisdom that should not be included in the PhD research and that will be respected.
4. All information will be kept strictly confidential and will be securely stored in a password protected laptop for a minimum of five years.
5. In this research, I will be provided with the option to either use my name in the study or remain anonymous. If I choose to remain anonymous, I will be asked to select a pseudonym.

6. Confidentiality of the sharing circle participants cannot be fully guaranteed due to the group format. However, all participants will be encouraged to respect the privacy of individuals taking part in the group.
7. The findings of the research will be prepared for publication at professional conferences and journals. No individual participants will be identified in published results without their explicit consent.
8. It is not anticipated that I will experience physical or psychological harm. Should I experience any distress, the researcher will assist me to access the help that I need.
9. I may request a summary of the research findings upon completion of the study by contacting Holly Prince, Lakehead University at hprince@lakeheadu.ca

Name: (Print) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Appendix C: Interview Prompts

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. From your perspective, what is the meaning of health and illness? How would you say that in your language? (if you know)
    a. How has colonization impacted this understanding?
3. Is talking about death and dying acceptable in your community?
    a. If yes, what are some of those teachings, beliefs and values surrounding death and dying in your community? Are they any ceremonies, ritual or spiritual or religious practices that community members want when they were sick? How would you describe talking about death and dying in your community? How would you say that in your language? (if you know)
    b. If no, what role do think colonization has played in this?
4. What has been your experience in caring for people at end of life?
    a. How did you meet peoples' physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs?
    b. How did you incorporate Anishinaabe Knowledge, practices and teachings into this care?
5. What do you feel is the role of the community and family members when someone is sick?
6. What are some of the positive aspects in caring for community members? How did you deal with the tough times?
7. Have you ever heard of or experienced people who want to connect back with the Land at end of life? What about connecting back with language or traditional teachings and practices?

Appendix D: Sharing Circle Prompts

1. Can you share with the group, some of your experiences in caring for people at the end of life?
2. What are some of the beliefs and values surrounding death and dying in your community? Are they any ceremonies, ritual or spiritual or religious practices that community members want when they were sick?
3. Have you ever heard of or experienced people who want to connect back with the Land at end of life? What about connecting back with language?
4. From your perspective, what is Indigenous Knowledge?
5. In what ways can Anishinaabe Knowledge enhance caring/programs/systems for people at end of life?
6. How has colonization impacted Anishinaabe ways in caring for people at end of life?
7. What are some ways, strategies or process to reclaim our Anishinaabe Knowledge in caring for people at end of life