THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This study, undertaken by me as an Indigenous researcher, explores the role of culture in the experiences and decision-making processes of six high-profile Indigenous leaders. The concept of *culture* may seem to be an innocuous subject that everyone takes for granted in artistic expression for example, but the roots of culture define the very essence of who we are as human beings. Indigenous peoples have shown that the scope and depth of cultural paradigms are much more than exhibitions of dance and drumming. Cultural values have sustained Indigenous cultures for thousands of years in a land that holds many environmental challenges. Governance structures were established by Indigenous Nations based on knowledge systems, which were in turn based on a relational understanding of the cosmos. These values and principles were interrupted with the colonial introduction of a completely new paradigm, which did not recognize the value of Indigenous constructs such as governance, nor the importance of the environment, nor even a fundamental appreciation of how we as humans fit into the relational structure of life on this earth. However, the cultural archetypes inherent in Indigenous beliefs remained deeply rooted. This dissertation sheds light on the differing worldviews integral to Indigenous philosophies on the one hand, and Western ideologies on the other. In addition, the importance of tribal customs as they relate to management and governance of Indigenous Nations is highlighted. This enquiry was undertaken using Indigenous methodologies and conversation as a method, which conforms to a pedagogical approach that is appropriate to Indigenous research. As we are in the infancy of a reconciliation process, conversation is the key pathway that will see Indigenous worldviews become recognized and acknowledged. This dissertation focusses on the importance of culture as illustrated by the First Nation leaders who participated. These leaders —three women and three men— shared their personal experiences and stories, which exemplified the depths of their cultural roots. Their narratives answered a profound question that emerged during this research, “why are we still here as Indigenous people?”

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For my wife, Roberta, I could not have undertaken or completed this without your love and support. I wish we could trade places but I don't think I could meet your high academic standard that you set many years ago. To our children, Maureen and John, Brad and Caitlin, *nia:wen kowa* for your never ending encouragement, love and support and to my grandchildren, Braedon, Emjae, Matteo and Mila, my hope is that your future as proud descendants of Mohawk and Cree peoples will give you purpose in life. My immediate family who treat me the same as always and keep me grounded is so important

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Foreword

The Haudenosaunee peoples, Kanyen'kehá:ka (Mohawk) specifically, my Ancestors, have forever been mindful and grateful to acknowledge our existence as people and careful to remember that we are only a part of a complex ecosystem that supports all living things in this world. The *Ohèn:ton Karihwatéhkwen* are ancient words that remind us of our station in life. These words are sometimes referred to as the "Words before all Else" and sometimes called the "Thanksgiving Address," but more so, it is a philosophy supporting a worldview that has supported a culture for thousands of years. In the body of this paper, there is reference to these words and in an oral tradition, the words are not absolute as any speaker may alter them slightly but the main sentiments are consistent. There is no attribution that can be provided as these words belong to a Confederacy of Nations and as mentioned, these words have survived many hundreds of years. The Mohawk language version of these words can be found in Appendix A. These words say:

> **The People**
> Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people. Now our minds are one.
>
> **The Earth Mother**
> We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our mother, we send greetings and thanks. Now our minds are one.
>
> **The Waters**
> We give thanks to all the waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms—waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water.
> Now our minds are one.

The Fish
We turn our minds to the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks.
Now our minds are one.

The Plants
Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.
Now our minds are one.

The Food Plants
With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting of thanks.
Now our minds are one.

The Medicine Herbs
Now we turn to all the Medicine herbs of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.
Now our minds are one.

The Animals
We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are honored by them when they give up their lives so we may use their bodies as food for our people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.
Now our minds are one

The Trees
We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.
Now our minds are one.

The Birds
We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds—from the smallest to the largest—we send our joyful greetings and thanks.
Now our minds are one.

The Four Winds
We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.
Now our minds are one.

The Thunderers
Now we turn to the west where our grandfathers, the Thunder Beings, live. With lightning and thundering voices, they bring with them the water that renews life. We are thankful that they keep those evil things made by *Okwiseres* underground. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers.
Now our minds are one.

The Sun
We now send greetings and thanks to our eldest Brother, the Sun. Each day without fail he travels the sky from east to west, bringing the light of a new day. He is the source of all the fires of life. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Brother, the Sun.
Now our minds are one.

Grandmother Moon
We put our minds together to give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the Moon, who lights the night-time sky. She is the leader of woman all over the world, and she governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time, and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Grandmother, the Moon.
Now our minds are one.

The Stars
We give thanks to the Stars who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them in the night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home. With our minds gathered together as one, we send greetings and thanks to the Stars.
Now our minds are one.

The Enlightened Teachers

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring teachers.

Now our minds are one.

The Creator

Now we turn our thoughts to the Creator, or Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on this Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greetings and thanks to the Creator.

Now our minds are one.

Closing Words

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Now our minds are one.

Prologue

This dissertation speaks to the differences in worldviews between Indigenous and Eurocentric cultures and references a timeframe that extends from the early contact in the 1600's to the current day. As such there are many references that speak to nomenclature that has changed over that time period.

For Instance, the term Indigenous, that is currently used in this dissertation, is used to refer to the original inhabitants of North America. Other terms that are used for this same group of people are First Nations, Inuit, and Mètis. While the term Indigenous is meant to capture the original peoples of this country, many of the original peoples prefer to have their Nation as their major point of reference, ie Mohawk, Cree, Ojibway, Dene, Blood, Mi'kmaw, Sioux and many more. Many of these words also are anglicized versions of the names that the original peoples call themselves.

In this dissertation, because of my own heritage, there is a lot of reference made to Iroquois, however, the term that is used currently is Haudenosaunee, which is an Onondaga word used to describe the Confederacy of the Six Nations. As my Nation is Mohawk the proper name the Mohawk people call themselves is Kanyen'kehá:ka; similarly, Cree people call themselves Nêhiyaw and it gets even more specific as the same cultural Nation often have a name for their specific group of people.

It is necessary to acknowledge this distinction and make a point that the names used in this work could be challenged by linguists, but in order to be less confusing to the reader, the common vernacular is used throughout this dissertation. I have also tried to use the names that would be associated with the timeframe that is being discussed or noted. The following list will hopefully provide some clarification.

The term First Nations refers to people that the government has legislated as "status Indians." Other terms that have been used for this group are;

- Indians
- North American Indians
- American Indian
- Natives
- Aboriginal
- Indigenous

It is worth repeating that most First Nations people would prefer to be referred to by their specific Nation.

Inuit and Mètis are included in the collective of 'Indigenous' and the Inuit have also been referred to as Eskimos, a term no longer used in Canada but still used in Alaska.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the beautiful little Indian children dressed in their own regalia depicted below. Indian children similar to the ones shown paid the price of a policy of social engineering and genocide euphemistically called Indian education even today. The innocence on their faces are a gift from their families and the Creator. It is unfathomable to think how the churches and state could deem these little Indian children as not worthy to be human.

Figure 1

Seven Indian Children, 1897, before entering boarding school on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota

Note. Source: Jesse H. Bratley, Library of Congress.

They had the right to be children
They had the right to play
They had a right to feel good about themselves
They had a right to be part of a family
They had the right to speak their own language
They had a right to feel the beat of a drum
They had a right to learn from their own knowledge keepers
They had a right to a future and their own culture
They had responsibilities to carry on their culture
All these were denied by a governmental policy of genocide
They are little Indian children stripped of their innocence
Never Again!

Chapter 1: Background: Personal, Cultural, and Historical

Personal Background

As a self-introduction, I am a First Nations person from the Mohawk Nation, born and raised on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory in Southern Ontario. I consider myself a lifelong learner as this research and academic pursuit comes after more than 40 years in the workforce.

I have had the privilege and the responsibility of being involved in Indigenous issues for most of my life. Growing up on an Indian reserve in a large family of nine siblings with no services such as running water and electricity until I was a teenager has shaped my life and I dare say, my interests in survival. My primary education was at an Indian day school on the reserve until Grade 9. At the beginning of secondary school, all the kids from the reserve were bussed 30 km to Belleville to a local high school. High school was the first culture shock I experienced, but only in retrospect. At the time, I did not really know how Canadians lived; I was introduced to subdivisions, television, paved driveways, and split level houses with carpets. Only then did I start to wonder why we did not have any of these things. High school was a horrible time. I did not do well academically and my expectations of myself were much higher than the grades I was achieving. I left high school after 5 years of frustration, not receiving my matriculation, and went to find a job as an ironworker on construction in the USA.

After 2 years of construction work, I did return to school as a mature student, and I thank my teachers at the local community college for instilling a longing to learn. Reg McCurdy, Dave Chabot, and Earl Naismith[1] were highly influential in this regard. However, the lessons learned

[1] Earl Naismith is the grandson of the founder of the game of basketball, James Naismith, who was born in Almonte, Ontario, and taught physical education at universities in the United States. Earl Naismith taught math and was a great teacher.

on the job site were instrumental in shaping my career. It was there where I learned to work hard, understand objectives, get things done, and value the importance of thinking and planning. My older brother, Roy, was a foreman on many of the construction sites I worked on and, although he had little formal education, while building multimillion dollar projects, he taught me more about organization and being efficient than some of the high-priced project managers I encountered later in my career.

I share this background because it was, I believe, the impetus that piqued my curiosity into why there was and is a disparity between First Nations people and organizations and mainstream Canada. As my world expanded and I became aware of how other First Nations people lived on other reserves, which was not significantly different from my upbringing, as well as witnessing more suburbs and conditions that the mainstream occupied, my thinking was evolving and setting the stage for a path I had no idea that I was destined to take. While working in the construction industry in the USA, most of the crew I was working with were in fact Mohawk and there was an epiphany moment when Dickie Oakes from Akwesasne told me, as we were leaving the construction job as it was completed, he said, “You’re a smart kid. Get your ass back to school and then come back and help our people.” I can still see his face and hear the rain on the porch roof; my instructions were crystal clear. It was not until that moment that I understood that perhaps we had responsibilities that needed to be observed and met. After completing an architectural technician’s diploma, an architectural technologist’s diploma, and then both a bachelor’s and a graduate degree, I chose to work in the federal government, believing that was a place where changes could be made.

This was another culture shock, but this time from more of an organizational perspective. Although I have no disparaging things to say about the vast majority of the people who worked

in the federal government, I quickly learned that the system or the machinery of government was not about to change, even though the language being used was always supportive of helping the Indians. After 6 months in the bowels of the Department of Indian Affairs, I secured a position in the Minister of Indian Affairs office, which produced yet another shock. This was a different world, where policy and politics were the mainstay instead of operations. However, the system remained unchangeable.

I met many Indigenous leaders while working with the Minister, which then led me to another chapter of working with Indigenous organizations and feeling a little more at home. Thanks to my education, my work history to date, and perhaps my constant desire to learn, I was elevated to senior positions within the national Indigenous organization, which allowed me to have a front row seat to a lot of political positioning and posturing of both the federal government and the Indigenous leadership of the country. This again piqued my underlying interest into the questions of why there was a difference in political positions and how we could deal with it. My work responsibilities also afforded me the opportunity to work with some of the most influential people in the Indigenous world, including those who would make indelible marks on Indigenous rights. Names such as George Manuel, Harold Cardinal, Sophie Pierre, Graydon Nicolas, Mike Mitchell, Ernie Benedict, Roy Fox, Delia Opekakew, Phil Fontaine, Stephen Kafkwi, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Ovide Mercredi, Matthew CoonCome, Fred Kelly, Georges Erasamus, Joe Norton, and many more too numerous to mention. All of these individuals afforded me the generosity of their time over the years, often to just talk to me. In addition, my wife and close friends were cerebral allies who not only shared their own knowledge but also drove my interest even more by sharing their experiences and understanding of the influences that shaped an Indigenous worldview.

This was an education richer than I could ever have imagined or purchased under any circumstances. However, even with their convictions and actions trying to serve their own people, the resistance of the system was unyielding in terms of fundamental approaches to recognizing traditional paradigms engrained in Indigenous leadership.

Purpose of the Study

I embarked on this study in an effort to quench my thirst for knowledge and understanding of the cultural paradigms and leadership issues that form the basis for Indigenous life in contemporary Canada. Having grown up on a reserve, experiencing being part of a minority, receiving a high level of education, and working at senior levels of responsibility, I questioned why there was such a difference between Western organizational and institutional structures, and why they did not work with First Nations communities and organizations? The purpose of this study was to examine the issues pertaining to the paradox that exists between Western and Indigenous epistemologies. My research was informed by historical accounts and perhaps more so by the conversations with Indigenous leaders who shared their stories and beliefs about Indigenous leadership and worldviews. During these conversations and research, an overwhelming fact was consistent throughout Indian country[2]—that culture was the most important element of their being.

The topic area of Indigenous culture is so vast and diverse, it is impossible to provide an in-depth account of all the Indigenous cultures in Canada; consequently, this research examined values, traditions, and philosophies that have some commonalities that are exhibited by those who accept the responsibility of leadership. These traits were compared to Western epistemic

[2] Indian Country is a colloquial phrase used by many First Nations peoples in both Canada and the United States to describe Indigenous peoples' homeland.

models of governance in hopes that the merits of traditional thoughts on governance and leadership would not only be acknowledged but found to have the significant meaning that could result in policies and programs that would provide some effective governance within Indigenous communities. Given the breadth and depth of my research topic —*The Impact of Culture on Indigenous Leadership* — this opening chapter includes reflections on my experiences leading to this personal introduction as an Indigenous researcher. To understand the issues that Indigenous leaders deal with, I felt it important to provide an account of the cultural and historical contexts that have shaped who we are as Indigenous peoples today.

The Problem

The relationship between the Indigenous peoples of this country and the federal government has a history rooted in the earliest days of colonialism. From the documentation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to the current days in which legislators, as well as some Indigenous leaders, are trying to change the Indian Act (1985), the philosophy underlying this legal relationship falls back to the same ideals found in 1763. Until the late 1960s, the Indigenous–government relationship was mired in a philosophy that can be described as outdated, patriarchal, controlling, and truly a hegemonic accord. There was virtually little to no acknowledgment by the federal government of the value or even existence of Indigenous governing structures. The colonial governments felt compelled and supported by their own self-serving regulations to establish themselves in a new land. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015) articulated the philosophy behind this doctrine:

> Harman Verelst, who promoted the colonization in the eighteenth century of what is now the southern coast of the United States, wrote that "this right arising from the first discovery is the first and fundamental Right of all European Nations, as to their Claim of

> Lands in North America." This Doctrine of Discovery was linked to a second idea: the lands being claimed were *terra nullius*—no man's land—and therefore open to claim… Under this doctrine, imperialists could argue that the presence of Indigenous peoples did not void the concept of *terra nullius* since the Indigenous people simply occupied, rather than owned the land. (p. 46)

This doctrine gave a self-justifying authority to the colonial powers to take the land as their own. Borrows and Rotman (2007) questioned the legal validity of this policy when he stated,

> Prior to the discussion of early Crown–Aboriginal interaction and the use of international law doctrine to justify the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples, a number of questions arise. For one, how could the doctrine of discovery be used in relation to Aboriginal lands in North America if the doctrine required the land to be terra nullius? Second, if discovery only granted the "discovering" nation the right to purchase title from the Aboriginal inhabitants, does that entail that the latter "owned" the land in their possession? If they did not "own" the lands, who did? Finally, if the law of Nations was designed to govern controversies between its member states, was it binding on Aboriginal peoples who were not members? (p. 209)

Borrows (2010) further questioned the legality of the doctrine that was utilized to justify encroachment into a land that was full of Indigenous peoples:

> There was no conquest of Indigenous peoples that extinguished their jurisdictional rights over their own affairs. There was no discovery by the Crown that would extinguish Indigenous legal jurisdiction. The Crown's claims of effective occupation and adverse possession of lands where Indigenous people still reside are not very persuasive doctrines

when they are used to undercut pre-existing and contemporary Indigenous laws. (pp. 122–123)

Where did the idea originate that a group could wander into a new land and feel they had a right to claim it as their own? The genesis of this thought can be traced to the philosophy espoused by Popes in the 14th century where the "Papal Bulls" edicts demanded that explorers who encountered lands not occupied by Christians, be claimed in the name of their own country. This was the beginning of the Doctrine of Discovery and is important to know that it was religious doctrine that supported this thought. A continuation of colonial ideology is addressed by Said (1979) in his book *Orientalism,* in which he quotes a British parliamentarian, James Balfour:

> Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a fact which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And Authority here means for "us" to deny autonomy to "it." (p. 32)

Knowledge, of course, does not mean subjugation, as academics are now exploring knowledge as a very different paradigm. Traditional Indigenous knowledge is now recognized as having value, but there is still somewhat of a misunderstanding of it as being seen as only spiritual. Traditional knowledge, language, and culture are inherently tied together in such a manner that they are in fact inseparable. This is most evident in the denotation of language.

Haque and Patrick (2015) stated, "Language policies have been used in Canada as a way to address some state concerns with national unity and control, producing forms of racial

exclusion and maintaining a white-settler nation" (p. 27). The TRC (2015) documented stories from survivors from residential schools that substantiated the restriction of the use of Indigenous languages in schools. The TRC documented testimony from students across the country who gave pointed illustrations of how the policies of language affected them and spoke of the consequences (pp. 80–84). For example, one student stated,

> The language policy disrupted families. When John Kistabish left the Amos, Quebec school, he could no longer speak Algonquin, and his parents could not speak French, the language he had been taught in school. As a result, he found it almost impossible to communicate with them about the abuse he experienced at the school. "I had tried to talk to … my parents, and, no, it did not work.…We were well anyway because I knew they were my parents, when I left residential school, but the communication wasn't there." (p. 83)

The testimony documented on these pages is heartbreaking and shows the deliberate harm that was endured by Indigenous children at the hands of Canadian policy. The TRC (2015) report chronicles a history where many of the survivors share their personal stories. The story above by John Kistabish is only one of many (see pp. 71–133).

Significance of the Study

This dissertation speaks to the roots of Indigenous issues that are being dealt with today and the continuation of the divergence of worldviews. Granted, the study focused on the worldviews of Indigenous peoples with the hopes that some explanation of the validity of knowledge and thought will provide policy makers with an understanding that approaches that have been tried for centuries did not, have not, and will not work. Indigenous peoples have a homeland and that is North America. *Tsi Kanekarahserà:ke*—the land where our people live.

Alternatively, as I have heard when someone asks what the Indigenous people called this land before settlers came—Ours!

It is only when everyone admits and understands that peaceful solutions to reconciliation between Indigenous and Western paradigmatic epistemologies are undertaken, that effective policies can be enacted. The TRC (2015) developed a strong plan to achieve this goal, and, as Senator Sinclair (as cited in Enright, 2020) stated in his CBC Radio interview on the topic of reconciliation,

> We're just now beginning to realize the difficulties of getting to the top of that mountain. Many people still see reconciliation as a problem for the government to solve, they don't see their role in this. Our response has been that reconciliation is not a spectator sport. You have to become involved. You have to be engaged. And people have not yet embraced that idea. (15:10)

Scope of the Research

People's personal paradigms are influenced by their individual experiences; as such, Western theoretical perspectives that support individuals' thoughts cannot be categorized through Indigenous worldviews. However, the categorization of Indigenous thought is more ambiguous. Kovach (2009) stated, "It is pertinent to note that Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person. How they integrate into Indigenous research frameworks is largely researcher dependent" (p. 56). Having worked with First Nations cultural and tribal epistemologies for decades, I have come to realize this ontology suggests that narrative can be a primary form of knowledge exchange. Oral tradition in Indigenous cultures has supported traditional knowledge, which is now being accepted as a paradigm emanating from Indigenous cultures. Bruner (1996) corroborated this view by asserting, "It is through our own

narratives that we principally construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it is through its narrative that a culture provides models of identity and agency to its members" (p. xiv).

The research topic evolved from observations emanating from a career spanning more than 40 years in Indigenous policy. The topic generally was Indigenous governance; however, the overall issue involved the impact of culture as a determinant of the processes of governance. Cornell and Kalt (1987) addressed both of these issues in their work on Indian economic development. Their analysis stated that one of the determinants of a successful tribal operation was that "culture matters" (Cornell & Kalt, 1987, para. 9). This remark was somewhat of a revelation, in that the sentiment, particularly from federal funders, was that building an economic development base for Indigenous communities should be void of any cultural connection. This too was the contemporary thought of numerous economists, which was in line with the thinking of government policy and indeed with many Indigenous business hopefuls. Although some Indigenous businesses were highly successful, for the most part, tribally owned businesses failed miserably. Said (1993) touched on the same issue in his studies on imperialism and made the following observation:

> What I want to examine is how the processes of Imperialism occurred beyond the level of economic laws and political and the authority of decisions, and—by predisposition, by the authority of recognizable formations, by continuing consolidation within education, literature, and the visual and musical arts—were manifested at another very significant level, that of national culture which we have tended to sanitize as a realm of unchanging intellectual monuments, free from worldly affiliations. (p. 12)

My research was poised to address the paradigms that are predominant in the First Nation's world. Beyond the legislative assaults and socioeconomic marginalization, not to

mention outright proliferation of negative and racist policies that have marked the lives of numerous generations of Indigenous peoples only to be exposed in recent years, there is something stronger and deeper that has perpetuated and sustained the Indigenous cultures of this country.

Faced with the dilemma of competing paradigms and placing my research into a neatly packaged theoretical framework was, at best, difficult. This research could have taken so many directions. Through referencing my research areas of understanding governing systems, identifying unique characteristics within cultural paradigms, and determining the impact of culture as a metric of transformative change, I sought a framework that addressed some very basic issues. Can this research be appropriately categorized? Scholars have observed academics struggling with an ontological crisis of thought—Western or Indigenous knowledge? Does Indigenous thought and ways of knowing meet the rigorous academic standards sufficient to be categorized as a unique paradigm?

However, these are reflective questions that inform the analysis of the data gathered and the general area of examination was exploring an enquiry as to why and how, after the unparalleled numbers of de-population, the institutionalization, the marginalization, the hegemonic system of laws and policies, has Indigenous culture survived?

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What has the impact of culture been on Indigenous leadership and decision making as it affects First Nations governance?

1a. How have your cultural paradigms permeated your life as a leader?

In view of the methodology, some of the questions are addressed through research and other questions are addressed through the conversations that were held with the selected participants. The following question, which supports the primary questions, was directed to the participants while examining their ascent to a leadership position:

2. What were the influences that led you to a leadership role?

In addition to the research questions, I used a list of reminders as a guide to the conversations (see Appendix B). Due to the methodology, as described in Chapter 3, the conversations were guided by the path of each conversation and the focus of the participant. However, there were six general areas that I wanted each of the participants to speak to, which included their influences, values, thoughts on leadership, observations of the differences in worldview between Indigenous and Western thought, and their families. Chapter 4 presents both abridged and verbatim accounts of the conversations held with each of the Indigenous leaders, along with summaries and emerging themes. Chapter 5 provides interpretation and analysis of the significance of those themes that emerged from the conversations as a whole.

Summary of Methodology and Methods

I chose to use Indigenous methodology in my research. I employed conversation as a method as it speaks to an Indigenous approach to research within an Indigenous environment. This is consistent with the pedagogy associated with storytelling, ceremony, and informal visits. Kovach (2009) described this method as follows:

> Conversation as a method is unlike standard structured or semi-structured interviews that place external parameters on the research participant's narrative. An open-structured conversational method shows respect for the participant's story and allows research

participants greater control over what they wish to share with the research question. (p. 124)

I chose to use the conversational approach as the primary research or data-gathering method because I have worked with the Indigenous leaders who took part in this inquiry, and I believed they would respond more openly to this approach. Due to our respective familiarity, even an unstructured interview process, I felt, would have been an inhibitor to obtaining the deep personal knowledge that I sought from these leaders. This method is founded on the relational structure found in Indigenous paradigms. The difference between Western and Indigenous worldviews is significant.

This difference is illustrated by the Iroquoian *Ohèn:ton Karihwatéhkwen,* which translates to "words before all else," which establishes the relational situation between humans along with all other living elements on earth, sea, and sky. No living thing takes precedence over the other and there needs to be balance for life to continue. This respect towards living things, being a universal Indigenous paradigm, is the foundation for the conversation and respect that is part of the discussion, which also relates to the position of the researcher and participant. My work as an Indigenous researcher is grounded in this particular worldview that guided the relationship between the individual participants and me.

At the onset of this research, I anticipated that cooperation and discussion would take place easily in a comfortable setting. The conversations were open ended, resulting in themes that needed to be addressed in anticipation of the necessary coding. Conducting a structured interview would prohibit an ease of discussion. I needed to explore personal recollections and the thought processes and motivations of the participants, which would only be available by accessing their innermost thoughts.

The data collected included participants' stories. As an Indigenous researcher, I understood that this exercise was not solely a collection of data but also a documentation of knowledge that would be shared. Knowledge is knowing; in the Indigenous worldview, Catherine Longboat (2008) described this paradigm as follows: "In the Indigenous ways of knowing, the student is tested to establish inter and intra relationships through demonstrations that acknowledge understanding and address the need for balance and harmony while practicing necessary protocols" (p. 74). This relationship is important; to this end, the relationship that has been established through years of work toward similar objectives, and in some cases within the same workplace, has been built on mutual friendship and respect. Shawn Wilson (2008) provided further support for this paradigm, stating,

> I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

Research Methods

I undertook the collection of data by organizing and meeting with the leaders in locations where they were comfortable and did not feel pressured. I spent as much time as they would allow in discussion and respected their input. However, I stipulated in a participant information letter that a typical conversation would be about two hours in length but not restricted to that time frame.

Data Collection

As a qualitative research exercise, I received data through traditional forms of research, such as books, articles, journals, and other written forms, as outlined in the literature review (see Chapter 2), including relevant and current publications. I consulted published sources when

analyzing the data in search of possible answers to the overall research question, namely, what is the Impact of culture on indigenous decision making and leadership as it affects First Nations governance?

For example, Shawn Wilson (2001) stated, “We need now to move beyond an ‘Indigenous perspective into research’ to ‘researching from an indigenous perspective’” (p. 175). I sought to explore this relational aspect further and deeper to see if, at its core, it is a fundamental characteristic of Indigenous leadership. What was even more fascinating was to anticipate hearing why leaders feel this paradigm engrained in Indigenous leadership has survived and endured throughout the assault on traditional governance principles.

Limitations and Complexities

Limitations

Limitations for this research are as follows:

1. The select number of Indigenous participants asked to contribute their experiences was a relatively small number, and their selection was guided only by the level of responsibilities they assumed by the station of their respective leadership positions.
2. This inquiry examined Indigenous culture in a generic sense as opposed to the specific cultural traits of one Indigenous Nation.
3. References to Iroquoian or Mohawk philosophies represent my bias as a Mohawk person and are not intended to attribute any philosophical attribution to any other First Nation or tribe in North America. References are to make a general point where there is a similarity in worldview.
4. The interpretation of the information provided by the participants may not reflect the importance or priority of issues that is documented in this report.

5. My bias was influenced by my own personal experiences and the reference material referred to was in some cases supporting this bias.
6. My bias is grounded in my experience, which is based on over 40 years of involvement at the national level in Indigenous policy.
7. My understanding of Western epistemologies comes from being involved in the educational system as well as intimate involvement in federal government structures.
8. As a nonfluent speaker of my own Native language, interpretation of the meaning of some of the Mohawk words referenced in this study are supported by others who are fluent in the language. In addition, my own understanding is supported by where I have chosen to work and live and how I participate in cultural events.
9. This research was an examination of culture focussed on Indigenous pedagogy.
10. The study had to conform to the university's protocols for graduate research.

Complexities

The complexities relating to this research are as follows:

1. There is some room for misinterpretation in the fact that Indigenous cultures in North America are not homogeneous or monolithic in nature whereby this study of culture studies the similarities of different Indigenous cultures and examines these similarities against generalizations of Western ideologies.
2. The individuals asked to participate and share their experiences were selected because of their senior level of experience in leadership positions, thus limiting the potential sample size to a relatively small number. The selected people also had senior experience in both Indigenous and Western governments.

3. While leaders in Western government structures could have been added as participants, the focus was to be on Indigenous cultures, thus eliminating the need for any direct input from Western leaders.
4. A potential complexity might be found in an appearance of bias based on the selection of participants in this research because of previous professional relationships I had with five of the six participants. These relationships did not involve 'power' situations. Although I knew the participants, and had engaged in informal conversations with them —which is common in Indigenous circles— there was nothing in the relationships that would affect or limit the scope of discussion. It should be noted that Nipissing University's REB approved my rationale for selection of participants.

Contextual Background

It is important to appreciate the history and the background of the elements that have led to the current day issues facing Indigenous peoples. Without this knowledge, the aphorism that was coined by Santayana in 1905 and repeated by Winston Churchill in 1948, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" is all too real. It appears that the history of the relationships or the worldview differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples had little bearing on the policies and legislation that impacted Indigenous people in a major way.

The History of Subjugation, Marginalization, and Enfranchisement

Although the first colonists were helped in many ways by the Indigenous population, the literal killer was disease. Europeans carried diseases that Indigenous peoples had no immunity to, and as a result, the Indigenous population was reduced by epic proportions. Denevan (1992) confirmed this by documenting and stating,

> The Discovery of America was followed by possibly the greatest demographic disaster in the history of the world. And unlike past population crises in Europe and Asia from epidemics, wars, and climate, where full recovery did occur, the Indian population of America recovered only slowly, partially, and in highly modified form. (p. 7)

The de-population was caused by diseases, which Borah (as cited in Denevan, 1992) documented as follows: "The major killers included smallpox, measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, bubonic plague, typhus, malaria, diphtheria, amoebic dysentery, influenza and a variety of helminthic infections" (p. 5).

The hammer that dropped formalizing Canadian policies of marginalization was undoubtedly the Indian Act of 1876. Borrows and Rotman (2007), an Indigenous law professor[3] and jurist, is one of the most prolific authors of books and articles documenting the absolute control that the Indian Act has perpetuated on Indigenous people.

The majority of books, reports, and papers written by Indigenous authors on the issue of Indigenous knowledge, colonialization and culture, and traditional governance practices will reference or comment on the legal framework, the Indian Act (1985), and the ubiquitous impact it has had on First Nations people. For instance, the scope of the impact of this act is demonstrated in the *Journal of Canadian Native Studies,* which has a specific research portal of 584 reference documents pertaining to the Indian Act. The Government of Canada recognizes the issue and, periodically, undertakes major studies to examine either sectoral or comprehensive Indigenous issues. The list of such reports is long. The Hawthorne (1966a, 1966b) report was, for all intents and purposes, a Royal Commission and provided a comprehensive examination of the

[3] Amazon has 27 titles listed for John Borrows, most of which focus on Indigenous legal issues.

socioeconomic conditions of the First Nations people in Canada; the Penner (1983) report was a parliamentary committee looking at the issue of Indigenous self-government; the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) offered another comprehensive examination of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Government of Canada; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) examined the impact of residential schools on Indigenous peoples; and the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Women and Girls (2019) was a national investigation into the reasons why Indigenous women experience a disproportionately higher rate of violence than the rest of Canadian society.

With each of these major reports, the situation on reserves across Canada changes only at a snail's pace. Why? I believe it is because the foundational structure of government based on Eurocentric philosophy does not change; that is, the omnipresent control that is required by government, which includes no recognition of traditional Indigenous governance structures, results in the difference between Indigenous and colonial worldviews remaining completely separate. The federal Auditor General's reports over the years have documented the slow change of improvement in Indigenous conditions. In a presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on February 6, 2018, the Auditor General, Michael Ferguson stated, "Based on our recent work, I am sorry to report that there still has been little improvement in federal government programs for Indigenous peoples" (para. 4). He further stated in his submission to the Senate, "When you add the results of our recent audits to this we reported on in the past, I can only describe the situation as it exists now as beyond acceptable" (Ferguson, 2018, para. 5). So why is the issue so difficult to deal with? The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) stated,

> Today the *Indian Act* is the repository of the struggle between Indian peoples and colonial and later Canadian policy makers for control of Indian peoples' destiny within

> Canada. The marks of that struggle can be seen in almost every one of its provisions. (p. 238)

A research paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance (Abele, 2007) covered a wide range of activities and authorities and spoke to the coverage that the Indian Act (1985) provides and how it impacts everyday life with respect to First Nations governance. Abele (2007) captured the content of the paper in the title, *Like an Ill-Fitting Boot: Government, Governance and Management Systems in the Contemporary Indian Act*. It appears the support for Indigenous peoples is available only under a strictly colonial paradigm.

The Roots of Colonization

The colonial government has never recognized that Indigenous peoples had laws, codes of conduct, and governing systems. When even a modicum of thought is given to the question of how did people survive for thousands of years in North America prior to European arrival, the answer has to acknowledge that a social and governing structure must have been in place. The TRC (2015) stated,

> To gain control of the land of Indigenous people, colonists negotiated treaties, waged wars of extinction, eliminated traditional land holdings practices, disrupted families, and imposed a political and spiritual order that came complete with new values and cultural practices. (p. 45)

This did not happen by accident, even though Europeans found North America by accident. The ideology held by the Europeans was fuelled by secular beliefs, and there was little hesitation to carry out wars in the name of their religious beliefs. This same ideology prevailed when settlers arrived in North America. The TRC (2015) stated,

> Numerous arguments were advanced to justify such extravagant interventions into the lands and lives of other peoples. These were largely elaborations on two basic concepts: 1) The Christian God had given the Christian Nations the right to colonize the lands they "discovered" as long as they converted the Indigenous populations: and 2) The Europeans were bringing the benefits of civilization (a concept that was intertwined with Christianity) to the "heathen." In short, it was contended that people were being colonized for their own benefit, either in this world or the next. (p. 36)

However, the first settlers were happy with the peace they had made with the Indigenous peoples. Wright (1992) noted, "Euro-Canadians do not like to be reminded that their presence in America was essentially parasitic until they grew strong enough to do without the host" (p. 121). Contrary to popular belief, Columbus did not land in North America in 1492; he actually landed in the Caribbean, and it was not until 1609 that the first colonial settlers formed a colony at Jamestown, Virginia (National Geographic), and the Dutch settlers who left Leiden in the Netherlands landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. The colonists relied on the Indigenous peoples to show them how to cope with the new environment. Shortly after their arrival, agreements of cooperation were made and consummated with gifts. The fur trade, which became lucrative for the Europeans, was an outcome of the gifting. Fredrickson and Gibb (1980) supported this account:

> The Indians' contribution to the form of the fur trade stemmed from their highly developed system of gift exchange. In the sixteenth century, the peoples of the East Coast and the Great Lakes region considered the exchange of gifts a significant part of social and political relations. (p. 14)

The practice of gifting among most Indigenous peoples in Canada remains to this day.

Colonialism did not begin with the advent of European settlement in North America; the roots of colonialism are tied to the notions of sovereignty. However, the beliefs that instigated the colonial philosophies are tied to European history, specifically the Thirty Years' War 1618–1648, which began as a religious conflict involving a number of countries, namely Spain, England, Denmark, and France (A+E Networks, 2018). The conflict grew over time to become a harbinger of power and authority. Up until this time, the church had claimed power because of its proximity to God, but as the Thirty Years' War continued on, the conflict changed from religious differences to authority over territory. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 brought an end to the war but not the ideological separation of church and state (Croxton, 1999). During the negotiations for this treaty, sovereignty was one of the major issues and recognition of power and authority was a major area of concern. Hinsley (1999) stated,

> The idea that there is a final and absolute political authority in the political community … and no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere is the only possible approach to explaining the role of a treaty in establishing the principle of sovereignty. No piece of paper can ever establish exclusive authority in a given territory; only administrative practice can do that. (p. 275)

The Indian Act of 1876 was not only the legislative but also the administrative instrument that cemented the authority of the colonial government and hegemonic approach to impede the implementation of any Indigenous governance models. The administrative instrument that supports the Indian Act (1985) includes the detailed instructions in the Indian Act Regulations, which contain specifics on each section of the act (Imai, 2015, pp. 323–430).

Croxton (1999) provided exacting detail on the background to the Treaty of Westphalia and the struggles to exert control and power. However, the ties to religious worldviews appear to

be fundamental to the idea of a sovereign state. Sovereignty became analogous to the power and authority being exerted by the state. Sovereignty also meant that each state would have to recognize the authority of other sovereign states. Canada has yet to recognize the authority of Indigenous governments over traditional lands. A major disagreement prevails as the concept of the Crown and Crown Lands is fundamentally disputed by traditional Indigenous philosophy. Land, as seen in an Indigenous perspective, is a relational context and a singular part of the cosmos, whereas Western ideals view land as a commodity to be exploited and used as a capital gain. Borrows (2010) spoke to this when he wrote,

> Notwithstanding philosophical and judicial statements rejecting ideologies of Indigenous peoples' inferiority, the so-called European discovery of Canada continues to provide a troubling justification for the diminishment of Indigenous legal traditions. It perpetuates the myth of inferiority. The Supreme Court of Canada applied this troubling doctrine in *R v. Guerin* and wrote: "The principle of discovery which justified these [Canada's] claims gave the ultimate title in the land in a particular area to the Nation which had discovered and claimed it." (p. 16)

The Supreme Court of Canada supported the philosophy of the doctrine of discovery by conforming to the belief that "ultimate title" of the land belonged to Canada because the forbearers from Europe "discovered and claimed it."

The Resurgence and Significance of Culture as an Element of Leadership

Prior to any work on Indigenous governance, the aspect of culture becomes prominent. Why else would there be decades and centuries of resistance to a hegemonic form of government if there was not a strong cultural difference? Cornell and Kalt (n.d.), while at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, undertook a major project examining the success

factors for economic development among US tribes and Canadian First Nations, but their results are also relevant to governance. According to Cornell et al. (2004), sustainable economic development on Indigenous lands depends on, among other things, three factors:

> *Practical sovereignty* (real decision-making power in the hands of indigenous nations), *capable governing institutions* (an institutional environment that encourages tribal citizens and others to invest time, ideas, energy, and money in the nation's future), and *cultural match* (a fit between those governing institutions and indigenous political culture…). (p. 7)

As I read the many books related to Indigenous matters seeking a solution to the issues pertaining to Indigenous thought, identity, and leadership, I was taken by the continued reference and necessity to speak about their specific cultural experience and the thoughts that shaped their philosophies. Examples of this phenomenon are brought out or examined in works such as *Indigenous Poetics in Canada* edited by McLeod (2014), *Arduous Journey* edited by Ponting (1991), *Indian Country* by Valaskakis (2005), *Custer Died for your Sins* by Deloria (1972), *Peace, Power, and Righteousness* by Alfred (2009), and *This is Not a Peace Pipe* by Turner (2006). There is also *Indigenous Methodologies* by Kovach (2009), who wrote about the conundrum inherent in Indigenous policy:

> From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through Western-based policies and practices that govern research, and less explicitly through the cultural capital necessary to survive there. (p. 28)

Alfred (2009) spoke about culture in a more critical manner: "The present crisis reflects our frustration over cultural loss, anger at the mainstream's lack of respect for our rights, and

disappointment in those of our own people who have turned their backs on tradition" (p. 9). See Chapter 2 for a further delineation of documentation by Indigenous authors.

A Cultural Revolution

As with many of the revolutions in the history of the world, an Indigenous resurgence was supported by the cultural revolution of the 1960s and Indigenous identity became symbolic of transformational change. Headbands and leather-fringed vests became the uniform of revolution, appropriating a romantic stereotype of Indigenous people. Indigenous peoples, however, took a different approach. The American Indian Movement (AIM) initially advocated traditional Indigenous ways but used intimidation tactics to make their views known. AIM became a quasipolitical force modelled after the Black Panthers in the US and the romantic imagery vanished. In the US, there were violent confrontations and deaths, whereas in Canada there were threats of confrontation and renegade imagery. While working as a special assistant to the Minister of Indian Affairs at the time, my life was threatened by one of the AIM leaders from Western Canada.[4]

While this movement was in force, many of the First Nations leaders and community members simply did not concur with the tactics used by AIM and chastised any of their own who wanted to join AIM. However, their presence sparked a movement within Indigenous peoples in general that they did not have to tolerate living in an oppressive state. Perhaps there was a way to increase their standard of living without abandoning their cultural ideologies.

[4] This call was fuelled by the suicide death of an Alberta Indigenous activist, Nelson Small Legs Jr., protesting the non-compliance to the Treaties. I received a phone call at my home at 3 a.m. one night prior to a planned trip with the Minister to Alberta. We did indeed make the trip, and I met and confronted the person who called me. He did not apologize nor did he repeat his threats but did try to downplay the call.

Valaskakis (2005) provided a detailed narrative background on the history, rise, and decline of the AIM movement. As Crow Dog noted, “The American Indian Movement hit our reservation like a tornado, like a new wind blowing out of nowhere, a drumbeat from far off getting louder and louder” (p. 73; see also Valaskakis, 2005). AIM was not restricted to the US, as it had chapters and committed followers in Canada as well. A testament to its impact is the ever-present warrior flag that can be seen in almost every First Nations community (see Figure 2). The Warrior Flag was designed by Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall from Kahnawà:ke as a symbol of the unity of Indigenous People and became adopted by AIM as representing a new aggressive approach to regaining Indigenous rights (Horn-Miller, 2003).

Figure 2

The Warrior Flag

Note. Image reproduced from pictoem.com

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory may be a misnomer, as it implies that the colonial structure of governance is no longer in effect. This is not the case in the least. Of the 633 First Nations in Canada, 22 have signed self-government agreements or 3.5% of the total number of First Nations in Canada. A number of First Nations have signed partial agreements, such as the First Nations Land Management Act (1999) and the First Nations Fiscal Management Act (2005); both of these federal acts replace certain sections of the Indian Act (1985), but the Indian Act is omnipresent.

Turner (2006) defined postcolonialism as "the development of an intellectual community of Indigenous 'word warriors' capable of engaging the legal and political discourses of the state" (p. 109). The very term postcolonialism evokes a negative response. Smith (1999) supported this allegation when she wrote,

> Post-colonial discussions have also stirred some Indigenous resistance, not so much to the literary reimaging of culture as being centered in what were once conceived of as the colonial margins, but to the idea that colonialism is over, finished business. (p. 24)

The issue of self-government is a policy construct of the federal government and the lingering nomenclature of the Indigenous peoples remains as sovereignty. Indeed, there is more than a subtle difference in worldviews.

The Emergence of Rights

First Nations peoples did not become recognized as Canadians until 1960 with the passage of the Canadian Bill of Rights. Until this time, First Nations peoples were considered wards of the state and were controlled legislatively by the Indian Act passed in 1876. First Nations people had 'Indian' status as stipulated in the Indian Act but nowhere in the Indian Act does it mention that Canadian citizenship was conferred upon First Nations peoples. By negative inference, the Indian Act provided a way for Indian people to become Canadian Citizens. Ponting (1986) described the process as follows:

> The Indian Act sets for a process of enfranchisement whereby Indians could acquire full Canadian Citizenship by severing their ties to the native community. The Act also imposed the framework for a limited form of local government and for the election of chiefs and councils: "the government no doubt assumed that substitution of limited local

administration for existing tribal organizations would accelerate the assimilation process. (p. 21).

Enfranchisement

The act also provided any status person who enfranchised an allotment of 50 acres of the reserve land in their home community. Only men could enfranchise and when they did, their wives and children were also automatically enfranchised. The enfranchisement orders were in place until Bill C-31 was passed in 1985, which did away with the enfranchisement policy.

"Native" rights became an issue with the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s; however, the issue was not the right to vote, it was essentially the right to be sovereign. Many First Nations objected loudly to the policy movements by the federal government to do away with Indian rights. The federal government authored a policy paper known as the 69 White Paper, which essentially was to assimilate Indian people into the mainstream of the cultural mosaic of Canada. Harold Cardinal (1969) coined the phrase "Citizens Plus," which was also embodied in a report referred to as the Red Paper. The essence of this paper was the retention and enhancement of treaty rights and proposals to strengthen the relationship between First Nations and the federal government. Leaders like Manuel and Posluns (1974/2019) also provided the national leadership while making Indigenous rights a main platform for his policy agenda. Manuel and Posluns (1974/2019) made an analogy comparing the lives of First Nations peoples in Canada to the *Fourth World*, the title of their book.

Laws

John Borrows (2010) took umbrage with the legal system and examined the roots of where the foundational concepts of law were based. The ideology supporting the philosophy around the concept of *terra nullius* (i.e., empty land) was foundational to the many laws

instituted by the colonial governments that had deleterious effects on Indigenous nations throughout the country. The concept of Crown Land is an outcome of this philosophy and hails from the times of the sovereign Kings or Queens of Europe. The alienation of land was and is a critical blow to the undermining paradigms surrounding Indigenous worldviews regarding their relationship to the land. Borrows (2010) challenged the fundamental philosophy of the basis of Canadian laws by stating, "Notwithstanding philosophical and judicial statements rejecting ideologies of Indigenous peoples' inferiority, the so-called European discovery of Canada continues to provide a troubling justification for the diminishment of Indigenous legal traditions. It perpetuates the myth of inferiority" (p. 17). Borrows (2010) went on to cite Supreme Court decisions that hold up the position of the Crown. For example, in *R vs. Guerin* (as cited in Borrows, 2010), which took place in 1984, the Supreme Court wrote, "The principle of discovery which justified these claims gave the ultimate title in the land in a particular area to the nation which had discovered and claimed it" (p. 17). In a further case, *R vs Sparrow* (as cited in Borrows, 2010), which occurred 6 years later in 1990, the Supreme Court wrote, "There was from the outset never any doubt that sovereignty and legislative power, and indeed the underlying title, to such lands vested in the Crown" (p. 17). It is apparent that the viewpoint that precipitated the philosophy supporting the Doctrine of Discovery has not changed from the mid 1400s to the current day (see Borrows, 2010, p. 17).

To understand the impact this has had on Indigenous people, one has to acknowledge and understand the breadth of the gaps in philosophical and ontological perspectives. Although it may be an oversimplification, in general the Western worldview revolves around domination and economic growth, whereas Indigenous worldview centres on a relational outlook in which people are only a part of the cosmos. Chapter 5 provides more analysis of the differing paradigms.

Colonial governments imposed a system of governance that destroyed the culture and fundamental issues that supported an Indigenous worldview. It is now known without question that Indigenous people had governance structures that required considerable political thought. The Iroquois Confederacy was structured well before European arrival; the Indigenous Nations on the East Coast and in the Prairies also had systems of government and confederacies. The Indigenous Nations on the West Coast of Canada have traditional systems and structures that are highly evolved, which included social and economic well-being for their citizens (see Davidson & Davidson, 2018). The colonial government did not acknowledge the efficacy of these systems. Even though Benjamin Franklin witnessed and was impressed by the structure of the Iroquois Confederacy, it was not enough to overcome the deep recesses of thought that allocated the "savages" to being nothing but ignorant. Franklin wrote this on March 20, 1751, as documented in Fenton (2010),

> It would be a strange thing, if Six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming such a union, and yet it has subsisted for ages and appears indissoluble, and yet that a like union should be impractical for ten or a dozen English colonies. (p. 470)

These colonial thoughts lead only to a hegemonic approach to the relationship between the colonial government and the First Nations across the entire continent and the basis for those colonial thoughts continue to shape policies pertaining to Indigenous governance.

In a more contemporary light, the issue of nationhood of the Indigenous cultures have taken a more thoughtful place in society. Academics and governments alike have taken a renewed look at the issue. This recognition perhaps began with the Penner (1983) report, which was a special committee of the Parliament of Canada. This report was the first government

document at that level that promoted and supported the issue of self-government. The recommendation regarding self-government was startling for that period of time:

> The committee recommends that the right of Indian peoples to self-government be explicitly stated and entrenched in the Constitution of Canada. The surest way to achieve permanent and fundamental change in the relationship between Indian people and the federal government is by means of a constitutional amendment. Indian First Nation would form a distinct order of government in Canada, with their jurisdiction defined. (Penner, 1983, p. 44)

The federal government has a singular focus on how any governing body should be conducted, and here too is a paradox of worldviews. With respect to Indigenous nationhood, the federal government has taken a measured approach to recognizing any merits of an Indigenous governing body or philosophy. This becomes obvious and problematic in that First Nations in their desire to return to their tribal epistemologies must conform to the policies that have been developed by the federal government. This creates a problem and elucidates the difference between self-government and self-determination. Irlbacher-Fox (2009) informed readers, "Self-government negotiations marginalize and exclude Indigenous peoples' experience and aspirations, to the point that agreements reached do not represent a form of self-determination but rather another iteration of colonization and forced dependency" (p. 5). This started to change when the lexicon of "First Nations" became a normality.

Discussions and disagreement among the Indigenous Nations in 1980 led to a break in support for the National Indian Brotherhood because of differing views between treaty rights and Aboriginal rights. A new organization called the Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance was formed to specifically advocate for treaty rights. When it became obvious that competing organizations

were ineffective, negotiations quickly took place among the Indigenous leaders with the resulting collaboration in 1982 being the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

During the constitutional discussions of the 1980s, when Canada was promoting the constitutional narrative of "Two Founding Nations" being French and English, the vociferous objections of the Indigenous peoples stated that they were in fact a founding nation and should be recognized as such and promoted the use of the identity of First Nations. Hence the introduction of the reference to the First Nations and the nomenclature supported the revitalization of a paradigmatic shift with many Indian bands as a symbol of regaining the pride and confidence of being Indigenous.

However, as was noted, administrative change is the driver and the wheels of change moved very slowly and, in perfect bureaucratic form, studies were launched, the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) took place from 1991 to 1996; the TRC began in 2008 and released its final report in 2015; the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Women and Girls was launched in 2015 and published their final report in 2019. All three of these important investigations were centred on the relationships between the Government of Canada and Indigenous people. At the heart of all of these, the issue of culture is dominant. The TRC (2015) provides 94 calls to action, which form the basis of a reconciliation process that institutions, businesses, governments, and the public can embrace. The hope is a new and respectful relationship between Indigenous peoples and the general population and the nation-to-nation hypothesis is the outcome that is attained. This hypothesis gained considerable traction when Prime Minister Trudeau in his mandate letter to his cabinet members in 2015, stated, "It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations peoples: one that is based on the understanding that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of First Nations are a sacred

obligation that we carry forward" (para. 3). The Institute on Governance, while undertaking a series of mini conferences on the nation-to-nation relationship, stated,

> A new nation-to-nation relationship is a fundamental component of fostering reconciliation and restoring resilience to Indigenous Nations. Over the course of the past 30 years – from *Section 35* negotiations, through the Royal Commission, to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Indigenous leadership has articulated the many aspects of what the nation-to-nation relationship means. Establishing a new relationship with the Crown includes Indigenous self-government founded in self-determination, legal capacity and access to resources; the recognition of inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights, as well as the ability to exercise and implement inherent rights and responsibilities; treaty renewal and treaty implementation; fiscal arrangements and resource revenue sharing; and closing the social and economic gaps faced by Indigenous peoples. (Nickerson, 2017, p. 3)

The work of reconstituting the pedagogy of nationhood demands the revitalization of the tribal epistemic paradigms, which have been forcefully and unwillingly abandoned for decades if not centuries.

Nationhood

The concept of Nationhood is ingrained in Indigenous heritage. Almost all Indigenous people relate to their Nation instead of a generality of being Indian, Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and so forth. Borrows (2008) expounded on this, saying,

> An Indian is a creation of the European imagination and is legally inscribed on us by the federal government. There were no Indians in Canada prior to the European arrival.

> There are only Indians in contemporary terms if we let the federal government take control of our identity. (p. 9)

Mohawk, Cree, Ojibway, Dakota, Blackfoot, Haida, Gitxa'an, and Dene are only some of the Nations that make up the complexion of the first peoples occupying this land. Each of the distinct Nations have language, ceremony, customs, and territory that has sustained them for millennia. However, the Nations have been severely impacted by the colonialist structure that divided the country into provinces and implemented a governing system that allocated jurisdiction of certain elements between federal and provincial authorities. The British North America Act of 1867, Section 91(24), granted legislative authority to the Parliament of Canada for jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians" (p. 22). Section 92 allocated "Exclusive Powers of Provincial Legislatures" (p. 22), which included education and agriculture. This allocation of authority did not include provision for the maintenance of the Indigenous Nations as nations; consequently, the path for the deterioration of the socioeconomic and cultural paradigms of the Nations as nations was set.

However, from a cultural perspective, Indigenous peoples did not abandon their cultural heritage and their Nation status prevailed within their very being. Even in situations in which Nations were mixed together on reserves as a matter of geographical convenience, people still maintained their specific national identity. This is particularly evident in the southern part of Saskatchewan and parts of Manitoba.

As discussed earlier in this section, the issue of nationhood was revitalized through discussions between the relatively fledgling organization of the National Indian Brotherhood and the Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance. The resulting agreement was the formation of the AFN. It is

noteworthy as well that the AFN is an organization that did not incorporate itself through the legislative processes of Canada but operates as an institution with its own constitution.

The issue of nationhood has been complicated and compromised by the allocation of "Indian reserves," which was a construct of the federal government. With the de-population, social disintegration (see Daschuk, 2013) and outright assault on culture and language (see TRC, 2015) and intrusion of the Indian Act (1985) as the sole administrative authority to determine the activity of Indigenous peoples lives, any remnants of nationhood were severely diminished. What has not been destroyed, however, is Indigenous culture, which can be confirmed by simply attending any Pow Wow or traditional ceremony. More so, the practices and involvement of everyday people in the communities and in Indigenous organizations in urban centres are frequent and meaningful.

The problem to overcome is how the revitalization of nationhood is undertaken. The impact of colonization has been severe and left Indigenous people in a quandary on governance issues. Borrows (2008) identified the dilemma that Indigenous people must face and resolve:

> We must not be so fixated on tradition that we lose the power to evaluate its usefulness and appropriateness. We must not be so ethnocentric that we make ourselves the measure of all things. We can protect against this weakness by comparing and contrasting our traditions with other peoples' teachings to see where we fall short, or where others might benefit from what we know. We must remain open to learning from the world around us to be balanced and healthy. We must particularly guard against rejecting everything that flows from those who we regard as having harmed us. The damage we experience is real and should be fully acknowledged, but such recognition does not require us to completely

> cut ourselves off from the noble, honourable and positively productive things that other cultures have learned. (p. 9)

It is perhaps ironic that these very words could have been spoken by Indigenous leaders as they greeted the original colonists.

Alfred (2009) focused on the internal actions of Indigenous leadership but identified the issue in a more contemporary sense:

> Today, our survival depends on the emergence of new Native leaders who embody traditionalism as a personal identity and at the same time have the knowledge and skills required to bring traditional objectives forward as the basic agenda of the political and social institutions within which they work. (p. 173)

Cornell (2007) identified the work of Indigenous institutions with respect to nationhood and outlined the dilemma facing Indigenous nations:

> Native Nations today are wrestling not only with how to preserve a distinctive nationhood; not simply how to invent new programs to address a particular problem but with how to become consistent and effective problem solvers; not simply with raising living standards on Indigenous lands but how to build societies that work; not only with finding and training leaders but with how to govern and how to implement effective and culturally appropriate systems of governance. (p. 58)

These are tasks that appear to be unsolvable, particularly in the face of insufficient resources, a problem that has faced Indigenous administrations indefinitely.

Academics and institutions, other than Indigenous organizations and First Nations band offices, have also undertaken examinations of the issues pertaining to nationhood. The Institute on Governance is such an Institution and they have undertaken important work in addressing the

issues pertaining to nationhood. A summary of the work is found in the discussion paper by Nickerson (2017) and is characterized by her statement:

> A key first step in resetting the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples involves taking stock of and recognizing the legacy of colonial policies such as the *Indian Act* and the Residential School program. These policies have eroded many Indigenous nations' governance institutions and practices, left a legacy of intergenerational trauma within Indigenous communities, and threatened the survival of Indigenous languages and cultures—the basis of Indigenous identity and nationhood. Throughout the dialogue series, many Indigenous leaders echoed former Akwesasne Grand Chief Mike Mitchell's sentiments: "My language, my song, my spiritual beliefs; that is my sovereignty, that's my identity." (p. 2)

The Emerging Paradigms

The paradigms respecting Indigenous governance have shifted from resistance to revolution to education, and now to knowledge. During this shift, the constant has been the cultural protocols that define us as First Nations peoples. Security of land, language, culture, customs, ceremonies, and governance systems have been discounted and ignored by the mainstream Canadian culture and governments consistently as being a valuable asset to the Canadian mosaic. Only in the last six decades have transformational changes begun to have an impact. The trigger for this change was a seminal policy document formally presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs by President George Manuel of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB). (Indian Control of Indian Education, 1972). This policy document was supported by a general resolution of the NIB thus providing support by all First Nations in Canada. The policy document states: "In August, 1972, the General Assembly of the National Indian Brotherhood

accepted the policy in principle, subject to certain additions. The final draft was approved by the Executive Council, November, 1972. It was presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on December 21, 1972. In a letter to the President of the National Indian Brotherhood, dated February 2,1973, the Minister gave official recognition to Indian Control of Indian Education, approving its proposals and committing the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to implementing them. (Preface, p. iii). This was one of the first formal declarations that First Nations were demanding control over their own lives. While the subject was education, the underlying sentiment was the question of taking control over polices and issues that affected Indian lives. It was the beginning.

In 1983, federal Member of Parliament, Keith Penner led a parliamentary committee looking into the issue of Indian self-government and produced a report that is commonly referred to as the Penner (1983) Report. This report was the first document within the Canadian government to acknowledge the fact that Indian self-government was a phenomenon that if recognized, could make a difference in Indigenous governance and, in fact, be a positive influence in the entire country.

The importance of Penner's (1983) report was undertaken as a follow-up document to the rising organized protests and while there was resistance and demonstrations of disagreement with federal government policy positions, evidenced by historical accounts, which prompted people to become outspoken, a shift was starting to bloom with the written word. Books of resistance such as Deloria's (1972) *Custer Died for Your Sins* and Cardinal's (1969) *The Unjust Society* had a profound impact on the lives of the everyday Indian person. Up until this revolt, the lives of people living on reserves had become synonymous with the living conditions of the third world. I

recall seeing Indian housing in Whitehorse in the late 1970s that was similar to shelters I had seen in rural Mexico.

Academics including anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists began to look differently at Indigenous governments, perhaps in the same way that Jefferson and Washington looked at the Iroquoian structure of government (see Fenton, 2010). I will speculate, however, that the lenses Jefferson and Washington had used were blindly tied to a centuries-old European style. The conflict of ideas and worldviews, however, had not gone silent since the advent of the development of the American constitution, although the colonial style of government had taken a strong grip on Indigenous cultures. There were, however, some notable people who saw the unsavoury effects of colonialism as it was developing and used their station in life to advocate for Indigenous worldviews.

Pauline Johnson, a Mohawk poet and author, born in 1861 and died in 1913, was such a person and a strong advocate of Indigenous rights (see Jones & Ferris, 2017). She became a prolific author at the turn of the century and wrote numerous books based on Indigenous paradigms. Some of her more notable work included titles such as *Legends of Vancouver* (Johnson, 1922/2013) and *Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems* (Johnson, 1912/2016). Jones and Ferris (2017) commented on Johnson's activism, stating,

> Her work must not, we argue, be read within segregated "aesthetic" or "social" conceptualizations of performances produced by disciplinary silos. Rather, we would like to place these literary occasions within a broader cultural and historical spectrum that includes the Haudenosaunee and Mohawk community from which Johnson emerged, in which significant significance and value are encoded in the improvisational performance of everyday life and material culture. (pp. 125–126)

Jones and Ferris (2017) went on to describe the impact of the narrative work of Johnson describing her poetry: “They [her poems] thus reflect neither a singular and fixed trans historical Indigenous authenticity nor a capitulation to encroaching European modernity; instead, they emerge from a heritage of creatively performed polyphonic identities in progress” (p. 126). This active negotiation of identities extends back to Mohawk and Iroquoian-speaking peoples’ first engagements with the developing colonialism of the 18th century and continues arguably to the present day (Jones & Ferris, 2017).

In the contemporary sense, many Indigenous academics still deal with the negotiation for identity and acceptability for this worldview to be considered equal in the eyes of all society. However, it was not until academics started to address the research ethics that critical analyses started to emerge. At the same time, a small number of First Nations started to move in the direction of self-government. Raybould (1994) examined the concept of self-government at the Westbank First Nation in British Columbia in his doctoral dissertation and found the biggest factor of the move to self-government was the readiness of the members to be accountable to their own community instead of to the federal government. At the heart of this move to self-governance was the rejection of the omnipresent controls found in the Indian Act (1985), which promoted a colonial system that kept people in a state of dependency.

The Dilemma of Competing Paradigms

The evolution of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Colonial-based society has progressed from being hosts in a new country to being dependant on a government that overwhelmed the traditional Indigenous systems and governing structures. Many of these structures were embedded in the social and cultural fabric that had sustained these very cultures for thousands of years. The records of this movement can be seen by anthropological interest in

the late 1800s (see Medicine, 2001) to protest primarily by Indigenous authors, such as Deloria (1972), Cardinal (1969), Manuel and Posluns (1974/2019), and Alfred (2009), moving to an academic interest through works by Weaver (1981), Cornell and Kalt (n.d.), and Jorgenson (2007), followed by the emergence of Indigenous academics challenging the research protocols and methodologies. Academics such as Kovach (2009), Smith (1999), S. Wilson (2008), Longboat (2008), and Battiste (2005) to apologists such as Saul (2014) are among the list of notable authors addressing these issues. With a continuing and sustained interest in the Indigenous lifestyle, the evolution of the literature chronicles the changes in approach that defines the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the general lifestyle of contemporary Canadians.

The early critics such as Deloria (1972) made his views known without reservation, as he stated, “Power has been defined in a number of ways, and where it has not been defined, activism has been substituted for power itself. The decibel level has often passed for elucidation and voluminous sloganizing has replaced articulation of ideas” (p. 114). Although Deloria (1972) is thought of as a radical, his philosophies are totally consistent with Indigenous epistemological thought. He went on to say,

> The White Man has systematically excluded and deprived the racial minorities, so that to speak of a minority group immediately calls to mind a certain profile of the oppressed. Behind this profile stands both the victim and the oppressor and their motivations which have created the oppression and the reaction to it. If we are to understand power in its creative modern sense, we must probe the character and their attitudes to find the principle of exclusion, which has barred the groups form participation in the economic life of the nation. (p. 115)

Summary and Looking Ahead

The culture of Indigenous peoples in North America was, at one point in time, disappearing. This was assisted by legislators and a population of settlers who held very different worldviews, which resulted in marginalization and genocidal policies. The sources of the problem supporting the contrast between Indigenous and Western epistemologies are examined in this dissertation, going back to the roots and description of the philosophies held by these disparate groups. Differences of governing structures between Indigenous and Western epistemic models are examined. This research was designed to contribute to understanding the differences in these two governance systems and to identify the major influences that support the resurgence of Indigenous values and culture. These influences include:

a) the voices of Indigenous people who made the issue of Indigenous rights a matter of conversational importance and changed the paradigms within the Indigenous community,
b) the determination of some First Nations who used the judicial system to win numerous cases at the Supreme Court level in the recognition of Indigenous rights, which was monumental in changing the minds of governmental officials, and thus affecting policy,
c) the Indigenous academics who led the way by insisting in putting forward a worldview that had been silenced for decades if not centuries,
d) the plethora of everyday Indigenous peoples who valued their culture, their language, and their ceremonies over comforts that may have been afforded them simply by adopting a worldview that was foreign to them.

The next chapter provides information and analysis from literature exploring the historical issues, which illuminate the differences between the worldviews characterizing Indigenous and Eurocentric ideologies. Chapter 2 also chronicles the beginnings of Indigenous academic resistance and challenges the questions that are sometimes raised regarding the methodological approaches of Indigenous involvement in research. The parameters of the axiological approaches to Indigenous research have been changing and continue to form an emerging research stream.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the opening chapter, I explored the problems and questions related to Indigenous issues in Canada and witnessed the complexities that are rooted in history, worldviews, and Indigenous or tribal paradigms that are still evident in the relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canada as a whole. These issues led to the research questions that this investigation attempted to address. This chapter explores the paradigmatic assumptions that delve deeper into the relationships of Indigenous people and Canadians that shaped the current climate of everyday life. The strategies of inquiry are discussed regarding the compatibility with the objectives of the research program and the scope of literature on the topic of Indigenous culture as it relates to leadership and ultimately, to governance. Worldviews are explored along with an emerging state of Indigenous thought as it affects and supports tribal paradigms. Comparative analysis was undertaken to highlight the differences between Western and Indigenous epistemologies. This comparison is important to the goal of understanding why the socioeconomic conditions in most First Nations have not changed significantly despite the "support" programs put in place to assist with improving overall living conditions.

The following literature supports the view that there remain significant injustices and inequalities for Indigenous people in Canada. While previous studies suggest various approaches, such as political, legal, economic, and education, as ways to remedy the complex array of problems, there is a gap in the literature regarding the potential role of Indigenous leaders and the impact of culture on their experiences. Furthermore, the colliding worldviews of Western and Indigenous philosophies, contributes to a hegemonic approach to the relationship. My view is that because the various methods to supporting Indigenous initiatives have been based on Western epistemic approaches and values, the results have been far from successful.

These efforts cannot be successful when based on Western worldviews, because for Indigenous leaders and people, there is a fundamental fidelity to the cultural paradigms found in Indigenous cultures, which are foundational to a unique Indigenous worldview.

I begin with the literature relevant to early relationships between Indigenous people and the colonial settlers to provide some context to the foundations of the relationship. This is followed by the collection and review of mainly contemporary Indigenous scholars who are collectively putting down markers for the acknowledgement of "Indigenous research."

Literature Review Process

The issues surrounding the living conditions of Indigenous peoples in Canada has long been the subject of many government agencies and, prior to that, anthropologists who studied lifestyle and cultural practices and traditions. While the literature regarding Indigenous issues as undertaken by Indigenous researchers is relatively new by academic standards, the subject matter of studying Indigenous peoples was initiated soon after the first contact. The Jesuits wrote extensively about their experiences with the *Onkwehòn:we* (real people) they encountered in the villages along the St. Lawrence river in the early 1600s and in what is now southern Ontario (see Irwin-Gibson, 2016).

The fascination with Indigenous peoples and their governance understanding was noted by Benjamin Franklin as he worked with others contemplating the structure of the yet to be formed United States of America. Fenton (2010) noted that Franklin wrote it down on March 20, 1751, in advance of a meeting as part of a referee report to his fellow, James Parker, who appended it to a pamphlet by Archibald Kennedy, in which Kennedy suggested a confederacy of colonies. Franklin (as cited in Fenton, 2010) and previously stated on page 30, believed that the Six Nations had indeed formed a Union, which they referred to as a Confederacy, and that they

wondered if that could be a model for the formation of a governing system for the English Colonies.

While some nationalists believe this concept to be untrue, the fact is that archived letters to this effect speak differently. Fenton (2010) documented many of the letters exchanged between colonists in New England as they contemplated what would be the Revolutionary War between Great Britain and the genesis of the United States. Another seminal documentation using photography as a medium was published by Edward Curtis, a photographer and ethnologist in 1906 with chronicling "Indian" life across mainly the western states of the United States with some reference to people in the Northwest (Curtis, 1909). While this photographic account was well documented, Curtis (1909) received harsh criticism as he was accused of ethical violations by staging many of the photos in an attempt to romanticize the subjects. An article by Thackara (2016) in an art journal, recorded some of the criticism levelled mainly by Indigenous photographers. However, his massive collection of work provided an homage to some lifestyle of traditional Indigenous life in the early 1900s. While his work was undertaken in the early 1900s and the romanticism loomed large, the reality of Indigenous life was harsh and in peril. Perhaps Curtis felt that the Indigenous lifestyle was vanishing and a photographic record would be a legacy to those cultures.

However, the interest was an academic pursuit taken up by anthropologists; a story I heard as a young boy was that among every Indian household along with their family was the resident anthropologist. This of course was said in jest or perhaps a bit of sarcasm because I do not remember the anthropologist in our house! Perhaps as Medicine (2001), an anthropologist herself, stated, the proliferation of "anthro's" (p. 4), as she referred to the profession, has to do with the general idea that Indian people were seen as "vanishing Americans" (p. 4).

The interest in Indigenous life appeared to wane until the overall cultural revolution of the 1960s, which was antiwar and antiestablishment, pushing back against mainstream conceptions. During this time, Indigenous pride surged, in part due to the general mood in North America and, with respect to the Indigenous community in Canada, the policy positions being proffered by the federal government were taking a renewed interest in Indigenous people. Valaskakis (2005) chronicled this resurgence as she documented the political actions taking place during this time. Two seminal documents were instrumental in the proliferation in Indigenous claims for rights and place, those being the Hawthorne Report (1966a, 1966b) and the 1969 White Paper known formally as the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (Government of Canada*,* 1969), which essentially sought to eliminate Indian Status in Canada.

While the Indigenous movement was relegated to the wings of the general public, some Indigenous organizations sought to bring issues to the forefront. Frideres (1993), in his book *Native Peoples in Canada,* recounted the organizational development of Status Indians, Métis, and Inuit associations starting from the late 1800s and their transformations into the current organizations found today. Even though there was a desire to address Indigenous rights, the transition was slow. We have seen that the first major policy document, Indian Control of Indian Education, (1972) , it was over a decade before a serious response was undertaken by the federal government in the form of the Penner Report. (1983) Many First Nations organizations were initiated because of an assault on rights concomitant with the growing account of Supreme Court cases finding in favour of Indigenous issues; these organizations held a considerable amount of significance and relevance within the Canadian legal systems. Borrows and Rotman (2007) document many of the legal cases, which had a significant impact on Canadian law and policy.

The process most relevant for the foundation of this research was more reliant on current material produced by Indigenous authors. Much of the research material emanates from dissertations that have been undertaken by Indigenous scholars. Alfred (2009), Battiste (2005, 2013, Boldt (1993), Borrows and Rotman (2007), Coulthard (2014), Deloria (1972), Kovach (2009, 2010), LittleBear (2000); Smith (1999); Thomas and Boyle (1994), Valaskakis (2005), Voyageur et al. (2011, 2015), and S. Wilson (2001, 2008) are among the most prolific authors who have published books on contemporary Indigenous issues. Other significant writings from non-Indigenous authors on Indigenous issues include Weaver (1981), Milloy (1999), Ponting (1991), Jorgenson (2007), Saul (2008, 2014), and Cornell and Kalt (1987).

Journal articles from the following publications also provided a great deal of information on a range of Indigenous issues: *AlterNative, American Indian Culture and Research Journal, American Indian Law Review, American Indian Quarterly, Canadian Journal of Native Education, Cultural Survival Quarterly, Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society, International Indigenous Policy Journal, International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies, Journal of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association,* and *Native Studies Review*. Many of these journals are hosted by educational institutions.

One influential source of information from learned scholars and authors such as Dr. Stephen Cornell, the founder and former Director of the Native Nations Institute operating from Tucson, Arizona merits special note. Dr. Cornell was one of the authors of the infamous Harvard Study, which has become a standard bearer of Indigenous governance and policy (Cornell & Kalt, 1987). The Harvard Study set out three fundamental principles for development among Indigenous communities that are instrumental in good management and governance. These

principles largely paraphrased are (a) capable administration, (b) taking control of policy and operations, and (c) a cultural fit.

Another seminal contributor to specific issues who has contributed an extraordinary amount of material to the overall database is Dr. John Borrows (2010, 2019); see also Borrows & Rotman, 2007), an Indigenous scholar. With his legal and professorial background, he has become one of the most profound and influential minds that has helped shape the relationship between Canada and Indigenous people and governments.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Indigenous Thought and Language

The idea of Indigenous thought creates somewhat of a query within academic circles partly because *Indigenous thought* is considered by some to be outside the realm of academic rigour. However, the conceptual bedrock of Indigenous thought and its ways of knowing represents the unshakable foundation of tribal cultures. Western epistemologies have had a difficult time accepting Indigenous knowledge as academically sound pedagogy. Alfred (2009) described the difference, saying, “This concept [Indigenous knowledge] is clearly opposed to the individualistic, non-accountable ‘escapism’ of pure theory and strictly academic endeavour common in universities” (p. 179). Indigenous thought is embodied through Indigenous languages and Battiste (1997) spoke to this phenomenon:

> Languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences and critical to the survival of culture and political integrity of any people. Aboriginal languages provide a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge. …. Aboriginal languages are the repository of vital instructions, lessons and

guidance given to our Elders in visions, dreams and life experiences. (Indigenous Languages and Knowledge section, para. 3)

Kovach (2010) spoke to issues of language and Indigenous thought and their connection and relationship:

> Linguistic structures associated with tribal languages and the deep interconnection between language and thought cannot be extrapolated from other attributes. Indigenous epistemologies, even within the cerebral-oriented conversation of language structures and their influence on thought, cannot be relegated solely to the cognitive realm. Indigenous epistemologies assume a holistic approach that finds expression with the personal manifestations of culture. (p. 61)

Indigenous Knowledge

The revitalization of the importance of the worldview of Indigenous peoples is dependent on the knowledge and understanding of the relational concepts and philosophies held by Indigenous peoples reinforced through language. In the Mohawk language, the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen* translates loosely to "the Words before all else." The premise of this Iroquoian address is to remind us and give thanks to all the elements in nature that make up the world we live in (see Porter, 2008, pp. 8–26). This address speaks to a relational condition that people enjoy with all the other elements of living things on Earth. There is a recognition that we as humans are only a part of the ecosystems that sustain our lives. This address embodies a worldview that has grounded the cultural thought and philosophy and, in some respects, proliferated the cultural identity of the Iroquoian people. Battiste (2013) supported this concept:

> Knowledge is not secular. It is a process derived from creation, and, as such, it has a sacred purpose. It is inherent in and connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to

> human existence. Learning is viewed as a lifelong responsibility. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible for their own lives, develops their sense of relationship to others, and helps them model competent and respectful behavior. Traditions, ceremonies and daily observations are all integral parts of the learning process. They are spirit connecting processes that enable the gifts, visions and spirits to emerge in each person. (p. 161)

Kovach (2009) added to the narrative tying Indigenous knowledge to the challenges of Indigenous research: "It is difficult to define, decolonize, or compartmentalize the different aspects of knowing (science, spirit, inward knowing) within an Indigenous context –reductionist tools seem not to work here" (p. 56). She further referred to Battiste and Henderson (2000) who indicated, "Universal definitions of Indigenous knowledge, do not work well either because the knowledge, particularly the knowledge that originates from the extraordinary, is deeply personal and particular" (p. 36). This difference in the manner in which different cultures see the world, is deeply personal and seen by a very few.

Rupert Ross (2006), a former assistant Crown attorney who worked in the northern part of Ontario and grew up in the same part of the country, was profoundly affected by the dissimilarities between the Indigenous people of that region and "the rules":

> As long as the government and the agencies of this country fail to recognize that many original peoples of this country still cling to their different values and institutions, and so long as they insist that the original peoples abandon their ancestral heritage and embrace European culture, so long will penalties be unconsciously imposed upon the natives and injustices and injuries be committed. (p. xi)

The underlying philosophy appears to not have been altered since its inception in the Middle Ages in European society as evidenced by concepts such as the Doctrine of Discovery and reinforced by Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) rulings as recent as 1984. Documentation of the examples of SCC cases are addressed in Chapter 1. What will it take for an understanding to be reached that will be a true reconciliation?

The literature regarding Indigenous knowledge highlights the differing worldviews held by Indigenous and Western pedagogical approaches. The Indigenous lens speaks consistently of relational affiliation with the cosmos. Cherubini (2008) stated, "Aboriginal scholars have sought a separate intellectual niche to distinguish themselves from colonial paradigms of teaching, learning and schooling" (p. 225) and cited several academic scholars to support this (Battiste, 2002; Hill, 2000; Kawagley, 1995; Womack, 1999). Cherubini (2008) addressed the Western epistemic approach, stating, "Mainstream Eurocentric scholarship has misrepresented Aboriginal knowledge by labeling it as static and outdated. Eurocentric scholarship does not embed the principles of Aboriginal learning as a holistic and experiential process grounded in Native linguistic and cultural tradition" (p. 225). Kirkness (1999) stated that the Eurocentric pedagogy "classifies [Indigenous] knowledge into hierarchical skills and aptitudes" (p. 225). Kovach (2009) described the character of Indigenous epistemologies with words like "interactional and interrelational, broad based, whole, inclusive, animate, cyclical, fluid and spiritual. Tribal knowledge is pragmatic and ceremonial, physical and metaphysical" (p. 56). S. Wilson (2008) added to the discussion on the differences with comments on the philosophical dissimilarities:

> Knowledge [through a western lens] is seen as being individual in nature. This is vastly different from the Indigenous paradigm, where knowledge is seen belonging to the

> cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge. (p. 38)

This leads to the question, can Indigenous knowledge be quantified, categorized, and coded into a nice bundle that could be commoditized? No! Smith (1999) spoke to this as a control issue relating to the cultural foundations of indigeneity:

> While the language of imperialism and colonialism has changed, the sites of the struggle remain. The struggle for the validity of indigenous knowledges may no longer be over the *recognition* that Indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world which are unique, but over proving the authenticity of, and control over our own forms of knowledge. (p 104)

The authenticity of traditional knowledge has been greatly impacted by the forced decline of Indigenous language largely promoted through the residential school system and the hegemonic approach of all government programs. The results after a century and a half have resulted in bewilderment and social confusion as to validity of an Indigenous worldview.

S. Wilson (2008) summarized the issues relating to the contemporary understanding of Indigenous knowledge as follows:

> No longer are tribally specific or local terms such as Indian, Métis or Inuit or Native (as used in Canada) or Aborigine or Aboriginal (used in Australia) inclusive enough to encompass a growing resurgence of knowledge that encompasses the underlying systematic knowledge bases of the original peoples of the world. The term Indigenous is now used to refer to that knowledge system, which is inclusive of all. Indigenous scholars are in the process of shaping, redefining and explaining their positions. (p. 54)

The Literature that Informs the Theoretical Context Contributing to a Mixed Worldview

The following examines the academic assumptions, which informed my research in the context of the literature and oral history that helped guide my thinking.

Ontological Assumption

An ontological belief is one that provides a basis for said belief or understanding of reality. Smith (1999) described ontology as the nature of reality (p. 32). In contrast, Creswell (1998) spoke about an ontological issue involving the relationship between two or more realties (p. 76). Creswell (1998) stated, "Multiple realities exist, such as the realities of the researcher, those of the individuals being investigated, and those of the reader or audience interpreting the study" (p. 76). The ontological assumption being made in this research is that, indeed, participants in the research will have divergent views and differing perspectives on the paradigms they have encountered that have shaped their worldviews. Indeed, the cultural mores of each of the many Indigenous Nations have a rationale for their beliefs, expressed in Indigenous languages and embodied in stories, legends, songs and ceremony. S. Wilson (2008) while authoring a book on research methods, chose to infuse the methods being discussed with stories told to his children. Borrows (2019) while providing the philosophy pertaining to the Seven Grandfathers teachings (love, truth, bravery, humility, wisdom, honesty, respect) prefaces each chapter with a traditional story. When one asks an Elder for counsel, the person asking the question often finds the response in the form of a story. The theoretical assumptions that contribute to conflicting worldviews are addressed in the following.

Epistemological Assumption

An Indigenous way of knowing could be classified as an epistemological system of knowledge. S. Wilson (2008) defined epistemology as "the study of the nature of thinking or

knowing" (p. 32). The *Cambridge Dictionary* defined epistemology as "the part of philosophy that is about the study of *how* [Emphasis added] we know things" ("Epistemology," n.d., para. 4). For many years, Indigenous scholars found the pedagogy of education in Canada to be based solely on Eurocentric thought. Battiste (2005) spoke to this:

> Indigenous scholars discovered that Indigenous knowledge is far more than the binary opposite of western knowledge. As a concept, Indigenous knowledge benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory – its methodology, evidence, and conclusions – reconceptualizes the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples, and underscores the importance of their own philosophies, heritages, and educational processes. (p. 2)

The pedagogy of Indigenous knowledge is a phenomenon that is grounded in a philosophy based on a worldview that puts humans as only part of the ecosystem with specific responsibilities, as opposed to a non-Indigenous worldview in which everything in the world is a commodity to be used for economic purposes. M. Battiste (2013), a Mi'kmaw scholar, supports this Indigenous worldview as a ubiquitous concept: "Knowledge is not secular. It is a process derived from creation, and, as such, it has a sacred purpose. It is inherent in and connected to all of nature, to its creatures, and to human existence" (p. 161).

Axiological Assumption

S. Wilson (2008) defined axiology as "the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for" (p. 34). While the essence of culture is rooted in morals, the practice of cultural norms is guided by ethics. Moreover, in relation to this research, ethics is seen differently by Indigenous peoples than the Western concept of ethics. Kovach (2009) raised the issue that generally Western ideas related to ethics have more to do with liability, whereas Indigenous concepts of ethics are concerned with

relational activities. She stated, “Indigenous epistemic research conducted under Western funding or academic parameters holds a unique ethical complexity that is less about liability and more relational” (Kovach, 2009, p. 147).

Creswell (2013) provided a road map of the processes involved in ethical considerations explaining each step in detail. He also explained that ethical considerations must be observed throughout the entire research process and not just in the interview engagement (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) offered the following steps: prior to conducting the study, begin to conduct the study, collect data, analyze data, report data, and publish the study. I was amazed that within Creswell’s (2013) work, under the guise of providing ethical standards, one point was made to “avoid siding with participants” (p. 58) with the added parentheses (going native). While avoiding siding with participants is good advice, the added comment in parentheses rings of negativity toward an entire race of people, which in my mind is anything but ethical. Clandinin (2016) spoke to the importance of having ethical considerations mapped out at the beginning of an engagement and referenced others to consider a broad view of what ethical consideration means in the context of narrative inquiry (p. 37).

Methodological Assumption

Determining the methodological assumptions of this research should be an academic exercise in which one selects the framework that best fits the topic and the researcher. However, the methodology and methods for an Indigenous researcher examining Indigenous issues within an Indigenous setting presented a dilemma. That dilemma rests in the fact that Indigenous methodologies are relatively new, with some Indigenous academics documenting ways that are inherent in traditional Indigenous thought and action. Some academics have spoken to the issue of utilizing Western methodologies but decolonizing them. Battiste (2013), S. Wilson (2008),

and Kovach (2009) all spoke to some degree of decolonizing the Eurocentric paradigms that have established the standards of methodologies. A qualitative approach pairs closely to the Indigenous protocols required when researching Indigenous issues with Indigenous matters, but a quandary exists. Kovach (2009) articulated the issue when speaking about the dilemma faced by Indigenous researchers:

> I believe that there are at least two fundamental difficulties in presuming that qualitative research, a western tradition, can fully bring Indigenous methodologies under its wing. The first centers on form or more specifically, the language that holds meaning in epistemological discourse. Indigenous knowledge's have a fluidity and motion that is manifested in the distinctive structures of Indigenous languages. They resist the culturally imbued constructs of the English language, and from this perspective alone, Western research and Indigenous Inquiry can walk together only so far. (p. 30)

M. Battiste (2013) referred to Indigenous methodologies as Indigenous renaissance and further pointed out a new phraseology for researchers undertaking this component of specialist research as "Indigenist" (p. 73). This title is directed at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers who conduct research on Indigenous issues.

However, previous to this academic research initiative, there were grassroots Indigenous leaders who ignited the revolution on Indigenous rights, such as Deloria (1972), Alfred (2009), Manuel and Posluns (1974/2019), and Cardinal (1969), who were all instrumental in proliferating leadership based on cultural values as opposed to leadership grounded in policy constructs emanating from Western epistemic paradigms. Their form of leadership deviates significantly from the Western style, which is based on charisma, success in some arena other than politics, and passion, often focused on a single issue.

As I examined culture through the lens of education, governance, leadership, and decision making, theoreticians such as Bruner (1996) implied that culture is a personal identity: "It is through our own narratives that we personally construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it is through its narrative that a culture provides a model of identity and agency to its members" (p. xiv). Indigenous scholars have exhibited a different paradigm in that they all spoke of knowledge systems as a community-driven value. Kovach (2010) and S. Wilson (2008), among others, spoke to the research paradigm as an instrument of knowledge, always referring to a community rather than individual acclamation.

S. Wilson (2008) referred to the work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) who noted in the dominant and Western-based paradigms "knowledge is seen as being individual in nature" (p. 38). S. Wilson (2008) went on to declare, "This is vastly different from the Indigenous paradigm where knowledge is seen as belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge" (p. 38). The *Ohenta Karihwatehkwen,* the Iroquoian words "before all else" reinforce this concept, as it speaks to the symbiotic relationship between human beings and all living things in the world. Each verse begins with *"Akwé:kon énhska tsi entitewawe'nòn:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra"* which translates to, we will wrap our minds together as one, and ends with the words *ehtho niiohtonha'k ne onwkwa'nikon:ra*—now our minds are one.

Kovach (2010) was more specific in her description of knowledge. She wrote, "Introducing Indigenous knowledge into any other form of academic discourse (research or to a critical paradigm) must ethically include the influence of colonial relationships, thereby introducing a decolonizing perspective to a critical paradigm" (Kovach, 2010, p. 30). While making the distinction between Western and Indigenous knowledge, Kovach (2010) also tied in

the issue of colonial relationships, which is at the heart of divergent paradigms. However, the core distinction between ideologies and viewpoints is the belief that cultural paradigms are different and are inherent in Indigenous cultures. A supporting explanation of this differing lens was recently shared with me during a casual conversation. A person who runs an administrative program on a First Nation explained our place in the world saying, "We survived as a culture because we are connected to creation" (D. Ritchie, manager of Community Services, Oneida of the Thames, personal communication, January 8, 2020). This profound statement speaks to the monumental difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews, which is reflected in differing cultural paradigms.

Ethical Issues

Ethical standards were developed by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) as a method of setting standards essentially or unknowingly for non-Indigenous researchers to get information while undertaking research and "consultation" with Indigenous peoples. Stiegman and Castleden (2015) offered a journal article that addressed the development of the TCPS, Versions 1, 2 and 3, along with some insight into the necessity for the updates of the ethical standards—that being the involvement of Indigenous researchers and communities in determining what ethical guidance should apply to their respective communities. While conforming with global universities' research ethics boards (REBs), they complained that REBs should not "override or replace ethical guidelines offered by the Aboriginal peoples themselves" (Stiegman & Castleden, 2015, para. 4). They also offered harsh criticisms of REBs in not keeping up with the change in research ethics being demanded by Indigenous researchers and scholars (Stiegman & Castleden, 2015). They referred to this as a "procedural ethics" (para. 10), and they cited Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describing the

biomedical origins of research ethics "that seemed to be steeped in a positive tradition of sanitized laboratories that adhere to a scientific linear method" (para. 10).

Longboat (2008) discussed, "Ethical Space in the Intellectual Terrain" from a cultural perspective and furthered the issues raised by Stiegman and Castleden (2015). She spoke about the necessity of Indigenous people taking the lead on research from an Indigenous paradigm and the concern it causes in "colonial academia" (Longboat, 2008, p. 73).

Sinclair and Eigenbrod (2009) offered a unique perspective into ethical issues through a sector of Indigenous thought via the medium of literature. The authors spok of the struggle for acceptance by Indigenous authors as a rightful place in Canadian literature: "During the mid-1980s, most English departments were still firmly ensconced in classical and established notions of literary merit and modernist aesthetics" (Sinclair & Eigenbrod, 2009, p. 2). Sinclair and Eigenbrod provided a number of examples of Indigenous authors and expanded on the impact of their contributions to the literary world. They noted Cederstrom (as cited in Sinclair & Eigenbrod, 2009) as supporting this, since "Native Literature consists of Native authors articulating their cultural values in their own idioms" (p. 3).

Kovach (2009) dedicated an entire chapter entitled "Doing Indigenous Research in a Good Way – Ethics and Reciprocity" in her book on *Indigenous Methodologies*. She described a number of examples that did not meet ethical standards from either a tribal or a Western standard. She furthered the pedagogy by providing information on the principles, guidelines, and protocols associated with an ethical approach to research. She further described ethics as methodology (Kovach, 2009).

Methods of Indigenous Research

Kovach (2009) informed researchers of a number of methods by which Indigenous knowledge is transferred or used by Indigenous people:

> Recognition of inward knowing flows naturally if one is coming from a tribal epistemic positioning. Methods for this form of knowing are varied. As mentioned by Absolon, the methods of engaging with this knowledge can emerge through fasts, ceremonies, and dreams, as well through walks in nature, or silence. (p. 127)

Storytelling

One of the attendant pedagogies of Indigenous transfer of knowledge is storytelling and the inherent value that is shared in the issue of listening. The importance of stories is discussed further in Chapter 3. Hearing and listening are very different matters.

Story is consistent with the oral method of teaching in most Indigenous cultures. Stories provide the context for the foundation of Indigenous ideology and when combined with an Indigenous language, the meanings take on a value that is inherently Indigenous. Kovach (2009) included words from her own Indigenous language scattered throughout her work. In addition, she stated,

> Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are born of connections within the world, and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us to our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations. (Kovach, 2009, p. 94)

From an ontological perspective, Archibald et al. (2019) spoke to this relationality saying, “Through intellectual and spiritual journeys into story practices we are drawn deeper into the Indigenous way of being” (p. 12).

Although stories have routinely been passed down through oral tradition, some of our Elders have recorded stories providing legacy documents. Porter (2008), a Mohawk Bear Clan Elder and widely known and respected in the Haudenosaunee confederacy, has undertaken such a task. His book is called *Iroquois Teachings* but the methods are stories. Institutions such as the North American Indian Travelling College located on the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory have also undertaken the documentation and publication of numerous stories. One such publication is called *Legends of Our Nations* (Garrow, 1984).

Almost all Indigenous Nations have a creation story, which belies the colonial thought that Indigenous people were lacking the metaphysical ability to navigate an intellectual road. A commonality among these philosophies is the relationality with the cosmos. Stories also serve an important function in the proliferation of cultural paradigms. Kovach (2009) supported this as she reported, “Story as methodology is decolonizing research. Stories of resistance inspire generations about the strength of the culture” (p. 103).

Conversation

Conversation goes beyond storytelling, yarning, or remembering. I see conversation as a process inherent to Indigenous peoples that draws upon the ability to simply talk to each other in “truths.” Truth is the relational accountability to the cosmos, as S. Wilson (2001) would state, and with a denial or a lack of acknowledgement of this truth, our world will cease.

While this may include stories, conversation is the exchange of the interpretation of a philosophical paradigm or epistemological approach for a culturally laden worldview.

Conversation is a decolonizing methodology. Ceremony speaks to truth, story speaks to truth, and sharing circles speak to truth. So many of the cultural protocols have a spiritual connotation that requires truthful narrative exchange that appears to be unbreakable and it is difficult to imagine a ceremony being anything but sincere and truthful. This was supported by Longboat (2008), who stated, "The conversational method aligns with an Indigenous worldview that honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition" (p. 42).

As the pedagogy of Indigenous nations was based on oral traditions, each Nation created some mechanism that ensured the sustainability of their culture. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy developed a very sophisticated structure that is denoted in the *Kayenera'kò:wa* or the Great Law. Implicit in this structure was a highly structured system of what we would now consider policy construction. The medium for reaching agreements on issues was conversation. Porter (2008) identified in detail the elements of the *Kayenera'kò:wa* (pp. 289–317). It is also important to note that the *Kayenera'kò:wa* is a living document and still revered and practised today. Similarly, the Indigenous Nations on the west coast developed sophisticated social structures and expressed these with symbols, ceremony and dance that remain to this day and are still practised. Wilson-Raybould (2019) shared the importance of ceremony with a personal glimpse of her culture and its importance to her being (p. 5). The Indigenous peoples of the Prairies understood the cycles of life and how to survive sustainably (as did the Indigenous peoples in the eastern part of what is now Canada.) Daschuk (2013) spoke to the cultural and governance structures of the Indigenous peoples in Western Canada and the destructive social policies that affected the tribal sense of being prior to colonization efforts.

In all these different Nations, the instrument that supported sustainability was language. Kovach (2009) reinforced the importance of language saying, “Language matters because it holds within it a peoples’ worldview. Language is a primary concern in preserving Indigenous philosophies, and it is something that must be thought through within research epistemologies” (p. 59).

Ceremony

Within Indigenous cultural protocol, ceremony is both institutional and personal. S. Wilson (2008) wrote about research as ceremony from a methodological perspective, Davidson (2018) discussed learning through ceremony as they addressed a West Coast cultural tradition, the potlatch, as pedagogy. Ceremony oftentimes involves medicines that are normally administered by an Elder, but some medicines like tobacco, sage or sweetgrass are used by individuals for their personal use.

Oral narrative or stories complemented the symbols that were created by different tribal entities: the tree of peace, the two row wampum, totems, West Coast symbols, and Blackfoot symbols.

Governance Theory

Governance can best be described as the institution or structure upon which the rules or norms of a group are founded. Indigenous governing structures have been influenced heavily by the imposition of the Indian Act (1985). This legislative intrusion gave rise to the decline of language, culture, ceremony, and self-worth, as evidenced by the lingering statistics of socioeconomic decline of Indigenous peoples over the years. Perhaps an example is best taken from the Penner Report (Penner, 1983), in which the following poem is attributed to a

presentation made by the Mayo Indian Band from the Yukon and is stated on its own page just before the introduction to the report that was made to the Parliament of Canada:

> I sit
> on a
> man's back
> choking him
> and making
> him carry
> me and yet assure myself and
> others that I am sorry for him
> and wish to lighten his load by
> all possible means – except by
> getting off his back. (p. 2)

The federal government has coined many of their own versions of Indigenous governance ranging from community self-government to Aboriginal self-government, First Nations self-government, and nation to nation, but the premise has not changed dramatically. The negotiations for effective governance rest on principles established through policy set out by the federal government. There are some areas of exclusion that the federal government view as nonnegotiable — items such as reclamation of land (with the exception of Crown land.) Borrows (2010) took offense to the fundamental philosophy that supports the right of the Crown to make such policy. Borrows (2010) stated,

> The court's insult to the pre-contact nature of Indigenous societies was further entrenched in the leading case [at the time] on Indigenous rights, R vs *Sparrow*, in which the Court wrote "there was from the outset never any doubt that the sovereignty and legislative power, and indeed the underlying title, to such lands [was] vested in the Crown. (p. 17)

The Indigenous worldview centres on the concept of sovereignty, which is advocated on a continual basis by some First Nations who exercise their sovereignty on a daily basis by referring to themselves as "unceded territory." One prime example is the First Nation of Wiikwemkoong (n.d.), when Googled, their website proudly stated, "Wiikwemkoong, Unceded

Territory" (para. 1). This declaration is becoming more frequent in Indian country and speaks to the fact that First Nations are expressing their feeling of being a sovereign entity and breaking away from colonial rule. Some call this a process of decolonization.

Much of the research relating to Indigenous governance speaks to the aspect of "Indian control" or decolonization. Many scholars address this subject matter. Kovach (2009) spoke to decolonizing as a foundational method addressing Indigenous research; Smith (1999) discussed decolonizing along with other scholars (Alfred, 2009; Archibald et al., 2019; Battiste, 1997, 2013; Coulthard, 2014; Kovach, 2010; Memmi, 1965; S. Wilson, 2008), who all spoke to the necessity of Indigenous research undertaking its methods in a manner that suits Indigenous paradigms and protocols.

Leadership Theory

Jorgenson (2007) summarized leadership simply by stating that in Indigenous communities it is a "call to action" (p. 313). Breaking away from the colonial regime that has been perpetrated is something that academically, First Nations people have been articulating and protesting against for decades; however, implementation is something quite different. Hargrove (1989) described leadership as "transformative; it creates new missions, alters norms, and reinterprets ideas that lie at the heart of an organization" (p. 66). A transformation in thought is perhaps not as big an issue as many people think. Within the cultural paradigms of most First Nations cultures lies a philosophical framework that can allay the fear of change. Alfred (2009) informs us that Native or Indigenous leadership is

> not so much a matter of positing rules, features, and criteria, it is more a matter of advocating an approach to politics combining innovation and flexibility with a core

commitment to uphold the basic values of respect, tolerance, harmony and autonomy. (p. 174)

With colonial powers being legislated in 1873 through the Indian Act, combined with the displacement of lands, assault on languages through residential schools and the unfathomable reduction of demographic numbers of Indigenous peoples over three centuries, this hegemonic displacement of traditional governance has left Indigenous governance in a quandary. The challenge of today's Indigenous governance models are that the colonial structures are omnipresent but still not compatible with Indigenous worldviews.

Analysis and Critique of the Literature

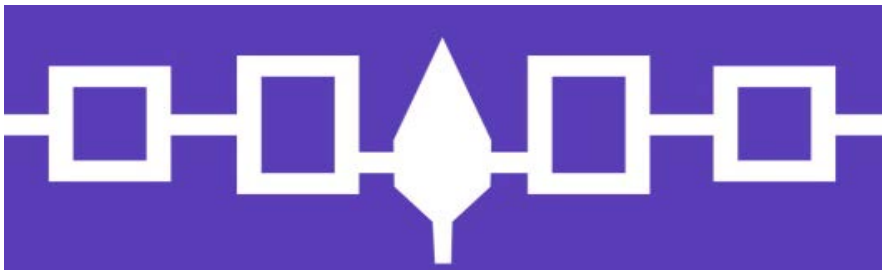
Research on Indigenous epistemology has lacked input from Indigenous researchers until recently. Creswell (1998) did not address Indigenous methodology except in one pejorative comment. In speaking about analyzing data, his comments were to "avoid siding with participants going Native" (p. 59; see also Creswell, 2013). Clandinin (2007) has included one chapter in the book titled *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry,* which is in essence a case study on storytelling from an Indigenous perspective.

However, there is a growing amount of discussion on the merits of Indigenous research that has been undertaken by Indigenous researchers and academics. The issue at hand is that it is difficult to provide a critique of the material. Indigenous protocol teaches individuals to not be critical. Elder Evelyn Steinhauer, from Saddle Lake Alberta (as cited in S. Wilson, 2008) spoke to this as she discussed respect: "Respect means you listen intently to other's ideas, that you do not insist your idea prevails. By listening intently, you show honour and kindness, consider the well-being of others and treat others with kindness and courtesy" (p. 58).

In the traditional Iroquoian governance structure, the system was comprehensive, instructive, and reflected the pedagogical philosophy of each of the nations as part of the Confederacy. The Iroquois Confederacy (Haudenosaunee) was originally composed of five Nations, being the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. The symbol of the Confederacy, still today, is a reminder of the presence of these Nations and is seen in flags and other mediums as a graphic symbol (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Symbol of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy



Note. Haudenosaunee Wampum Belt, Image found at www.mohawktowpath.org

The Tuscarora Nation joined the confederacy in 1764,[5] centuries after the founding of the original Iroquois Confederacy. Today, the Iroquois Confederacy is known also as the Six Nations. From the traditional governing structure, each clan family within each Nation has a Royá:ner (Chief) who is put in place by the authority of the Clan Mothers. Each Royá:ner holds a name, which is bestowed upon the individual along with the responsibility to govern. The Constitution of the Five Nations (Kayenera'kò:wa – the Great Law) stipulates the conduct that is to be observed. For the Mohawk Nation, the Kayenera'kò:wa states;

[5] There is controversy surrounding the date of the Tuscarora joining the Iroquois Confederacy. Within the oral tradition, a recognized date is in the early 1720's as the Tuscarora were pushed out of the Carolinas.

> The Council of the Mohawk shall be divided into three parties as follows; Tekarihoken, Ayonhwahthah and Shadekariwade are the first party; Sharenhoweneh, Deyoenhegwenh and Oghrenghrehgowah are the second party, and Dehennakrineh, Aghstawenserthah and Shoskoharowaneh are the third party. The third party are to listen only to the discussion of the first and second parties and if an error is made or the proceeding is irregular they are to call attention to it, and when the case is right and properly decided by the two parties they shall confirm the decision of the two parties and refer the case to the Seneca Lords for their decision. (Parker, 1916, p. 31)

This passage illustrated that the responsibility of some of the governing body was to only listen and correct procedural errors.

Consistent with S. Wilson (2008), I find myself unworthy, intellectually and pedagogically, to provide a critique of the work undertaken by Indigenous academic scholars who have surfaced and addressed the issue and veracity of Indigenous research. I feel much the same as S. Wilson (2008) who stated,

> Critiquing others' work does not fit well within my cultural framework because it does not follow the Indigenous axiology of relational accountability. Criticizing or judging would imply that I know more about someone else's work and the relationships that went into it than they do themselves. (p. 43).

However, the gaps in the literature are exposed by omission regarding the etiologies and ontologies of Indigenous cultures.

While there is emerging literature regarding Indigenous research, perhaps the only criticism that I can offer is that there is not enough. The literature undertaken by Indigenous authors has a central theme, which is the importance of language and culture. However, there is

no succinct definition of culture. While it must be acknowledged that Indigenous Nations ceremony and tribal protocol differs with each Nation, there appears to be enough similarity with respect to the philosophy through a relational lens that the values are analogous (see Littlebear, 2000). The worldview of Indigenous people is shaped by a strong understanding of the relational accountability and relationship with the cosmos (see S. Wilson, 2008). There is a wide gap of understanding between the Western and Indigenous epistemic values. There is a strongly entrenched hegemonic structure that has affected the social and economic well-being of Indigenous peoples.

Summary and Looking Ahead

Up until the late 1960s, most of the research conducted about Indigenous peoples was undertaken by non-Indigenous people. Most of those with an interest in Indigenous peoples were academics, anthropologists, or ethnologists but the most determined were the Christian missionaries who felt a pontifical need to administer to Indigenous people. All of these factions approached the relationship from a Eurocentric basis and thereby contributed greatly to the erosion of cultural protocols and paradigms. Daschuk (2013) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) have both documented in great detail the impact of the "Church."

Much of the literature spoke about culture, but rarely was the term defined, which has resulted in a gap of understanding. Empirical evidence for 300 years would indicate that Western epistemology has been dominant and unwavering in its application to policy, laws, and research methodology. Longboat (2008) stated, "Differences in world view, culture, and language between Aboriginal and Colonial parties to those accords have contributed to misunderstandings and discord in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people" (p. 72).

However, the last thing I want to imply is that there could be a systematic guide that gives a step-by-step guide to building a successful relationship with Indigenous people. First of all, it wouldn't work. Secondly, the metrics that would make a difference are intangibles such as respect, trust, and sincerity. These attributes are the hallmarks of much work that has been undertaken by distinguished institutions and commissions such as the Penner Report (Penner, 1983), the RCAP (1996), the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (1998–2014), Anaya (2012) *United Nations Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), and the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) report. At the heart of each of these reports are recommendations to policymakers and assertions of Indigenous peoples that the Indigenous population is a relevant part of Canadian society and the unique aspect of this sector of society needs to be acknowledged and allowed to contribute in a manner that is consistent with their tribal epistemologies.

Indigenous academics and researchers are building this bridge and identifying the pedagogical pathway that will illustrate that there is a unique and ubiquitous "Indigenous Way," and that way is key to finding our rightful place in Canadian society. It would be derelict not to consider the work of the courts that supported Indigenous claims for recognition of rights and access to lands over the years starting in 1973 with the Calder Case (*Calder v. Attorney General of British Columbia,* 1973) and continuing to the present day with the Tsilhqot'in case (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia,* 2014). Borrows (2010) has undertaken a plethora of analyses from a legal perspective on identification of the barriers of legal and policy impairments that inhibit positive social and economic movement.

My hope is to further the narrative that will address some of the gaps in the research and literature as identified in this chapter. The essence of cultural axiology needs to be more established in a foundational manner, expressing how it has an impact on the revitalization of the Indigenous Nations, and how Indigenous leadership plays a key role in this renewal process. With an acknowledgement and understanding that differing worldviews are not only a reality but a necessary part of humanity, perhaps the traditional and foundational paradigms that supported Indigenous cultures for thousands of years will retake their prominent place in contemporary society.

The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods that were utilized in this research. Having an Indigenous researcher undertaking an Indigenous topic utilizing the voices of Indigenous leaders is a relatively new path, thus creating some issues in the Eurocentric method of undertaking contemporary research. My hope is that this research will add to the collection of material supporting the validity of Indigenous research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the roots of Indigenous thought and culture, which affect the experiences and decisions that Indigenous leaders make. Most studies, as reviewed in Chapter 2, make general statements that language or ceremony are the foundations of culture, and while this is often true, this study attempted to look deeper into the reasons why Indigenous culture has such a profound impact on First Nations people. Culture is the glue or perhaps the elixir that has been deeply rooted in the lives of Indigenous people.

The inquiry has a theme directed at the impact of culture on Indigenous leadership and the question that addresses that theme is as follows: Why are we still here as Indigenous people after the 500 years of demographic decline (see Thornton, 1987), marginalization, institutionalization, overt racism, and legislative denial of rights and opportunities? Subsequent areas of inquiry address the processes that include Indigenous thought and knowledge as well as cultural traditions that have led some to assume leadership positions.

As readers move through past research that has been undertaken, as reviewed in Chapter 2, they see that there has been a plethora of issues that Indigenous peoples have been subjected to, from the declination of population to overt marginalization and institutionalization. The overall questions, given the historical situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada, are: *why are Indigenous people still here as a culturally significant group and why do we cling so tightly to our respective cultures?* In probing these fundamental areas of inquiry, a number of supporting questions become apparent. What influences were in place to support the cultural retention and revitalization? What are the major differences between the Western epistemic style and Indigenous styles of leadership?

Having chosen to focus my research on the impact of Indigenous culture on Indigenous leadership, and based on the fact that this research would be exploratory in nature, I decided that a qualitative research approach was appropriate, but it would have to be one that would also honour Indigenous values. Therefore, I used a qualitative Indigenous methodology, using 'conversation' as my central method. I will now elaborate.

Research Methodology

Creswell (1998, 2013) wrote extensively on the methodological approaches to qualitative research. Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem" (p. 15). S. Wilson (2008), in his writings specific to Indigenous methodology, spoke to the issue in a far more colloquial manner: "Methodology refers to the theory of how knowledge is gained or in other words, the science of finding things out" (p. 34). Kovach (2009) raised an issue that plagues the fundamental approach that Indigenous researchers face in utilizing "traditional academic" methodological approaches. She remarked, "Introducing Indigenous knowledges into any form of academic discourse (research or otherwise) must ethically include the influence of colonial relationships, thereby introducing a decolonizing perspective to a critical paradigm" (Kovach, 2009, p. 30).

Research Approach

While a constructivist paradigm, or even a phenomenological discourse (see Creswell, 1998, pp. 51–55), appears to be specific to the applied research, a more Indigenous approach validates the relational paradigms found in tribal epistemologies and ontology. Kovach (2010) supported this with her description of a conversational method of research:

> As Indigenous methodologies (and its methods) are relatively recent to western research methodological discourse, presenting ideas herein is meant to contribute to a critically reflective participatory dialogue of what it means to bring old knowledges as Indigenous into places that are new to them as academic research. (Kovach, 2010, p. 41)

Hence, the approach I utilized is founded in conversation. This approach is based on the oral traditions and the fundamental axiology found in tribal paradigms. Repeating a definition stated in Chapter 2, conversation as a methodology reaches far beyond storytelling, remembering, and ceremony; it is a process inherent in Indigenous peoples that draws upon the ability to simply talk to each other in "truths." While this may include stories and legends, these elements are sustained by philosophical tribal paradigms through a culturally laden worldview

Research Questions

The research questions, given the methodology I utilized, called for a paradigmatic approach. While most standard academic pursuits utilizing a selected methodology provide a roadmap for answers to a specific inquiry, an Indigenous inquiry following Indigenous protocols has a different path. As an example of the difference between a Western-oriented approach and an Indigenous approach, Creswell (1998) offered a formula whereby a central question is followed by subquestions (p. 99). However, within the implicit contemplation of the method proposed lies a rigidity of thought; the construction of the questions may lead to a foregone conclusion. While the issue of a central question is of course valid, the determination of questions to follow appear to dictate a predetermined outcome. In Indigenous inquiry, the questions follow an Indigenous paradigmatic approach that is based on conversation (Kovach, 2010). While it appears to mirror the Western approach outlined by Creswell (1998), the questions become more personal, which Kovach (2010) described as a "research approach [that]

flows from an Indigenous belief system that has at its core a relational understanding and accountability to the world" (p. 42). This belief system leads the conversation and resulting questions and subquestions, or supporting, follow-up questions *that flow from the conversations*

With this Indigenous context in mind, my overarching research "question" was: What are the roots of Indigenous thought and culture that influence the decisions that Indigenous leaders make? This initial question is asked with the following theme in mind: How are we still here as Indigenous people after the 500 years of demographic decline, marginalization, institutionalization, overt racism, and legislative denial of rights and opportunities? The path I followed, through conversation, began with those questions; however, the questions were approached and explored and were consistent with an Indigenous philosophical approach. Kovach (2010) supported this notion by stating, "Indigenous methodologies are a paradigmatic approach based upon an Indigenous philosophical positioning or epistemology" (p. 40).

Looking Through Traditional Doors

I approached this research as a qualitative researcher utilizing an Indigenous methodology because the research topic was directed at Indigenous thought. To utilize Western epistemic principles would not have done justice to the knowledge and information that has been honed in Indigenous knowledge for centuries. As Kovach (2010) explained, "Tribal knowledge is pragmatic and ceremonial, physical and metaphysical. Indigenous cultures have sophisticated and complex cultural practices to access that which comes from both the ordinary and the extraordinary" (p. 56). The lens through which I, as an Indigenous researcher, view the world differs primarily because of the axiology of the environment that has shaped my views. Iroquoian philosophy speaks to a holistic and relational view of life along with a highly structured set of rules for governance, as stipulated in the Iroquoian *Kayenera'kò:wa* (The Great

Law). Grounded in the cultural sensors hidden deep in the roots of my culture, my early education from growing up on an Indian reserve at Tyendinaga set the foundation for my worldview. S. Wilson (2008) clearly enunciated a similar paradigm:

> It is important to recognize that the epistemology includes the entire systems of knowledge and relationships. These relationships are with the cosmos around us, as well as with concepts. Thus, they include interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental and spiritual relationships and relationships with ideas. Indigenous epistemology is our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualties and our places in the cosmos. Indigenous epistemology is our systems of knowledge in their context, or in relationship. (p. 74)

Why Indigenous Methodology: An Ancient But Newfound Approach?

The topic addressing cultural impact on leadership and effective governance within First Nations can be found in how problems are identified. There are many metrics used in Western standards to measure socioeconomic progress, and when these metrics are applied to Indigenous peoples, they are pretty ineffective. Very little improvement has been made in First Nation socioeconomic conditions over the past four decades, and much of the substantiation for this comes from Auditor General reports.[6] The Office of the Auditor General of Canada's report of June 2011 specifically stated,

> The three federal organizations [Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada Mortgage and Housing, and Health Canada] have made repeated commitments to action. Nevertheless, we found that those commitments and subsequent actions have often not resulted in

[6] See https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1338471861166/1454964057806 for a list of Auditor General reports on First Nation issues.

> improvements. In some cases, conditions have worsened since our earlier audits: the education gap has widened, the shortage of adequate housing on reserves has become more acute, and administrative reporting requirements have become more onerous. (Chapter 4, Section 4.89, para. 1)

This speaks to the premise that First Nations people must be involved in the solution to issues facing them in their respective territories. Herein lies an ethical issue in how to properly address and assess information. In recent years, attention has been given to the ethics involved in non-Indigenous researchers obtaining information from First Nations people. Standards were established with little consideration that Indigenous people might be the researchers themselves. Given that most research was undertaken by observation or secondary research, it became imperative to have some ethical guidelines. Protocols for different tribal groups in different parts of the country differ. Most Indigenous groups do not take offence if there is an error in protocol or understanding—if a fundamental modicum of respect is shown, then there usually is no issue.

For proper protocol to be observed, one has to acknowledge and understand that customs differ. For instance, some Indigenous people open a gathering with a prescribed prayer, others may use a song, and some call upon an Elder, while others look to a volunteer. There is no one right way. Some expect a gift of tobacco, while others do not. S. Wilson (2008), in his work titled *Research is Ceremony,* dedicated an entire chapter to the research journey, in which he described many Indigenous research protocols (pp. 22–39).

Methodology

Indigenous methodology was the primary approach for my research as it encompasses the axiology found in relational processes within the Indigenous community. As a First Nations researcher undertaking an Indigenous topic with Indigenous participants, the relational process

could not form a more perfect circle. When undertaking research, the methodologies of Indigenous peoples differ from the Western epistemic approach in fundamental ways. The ontology of Indigenous methodologies is primarily based on Indigenous thought and knowledge. Western thought emanates from the notion that knowledge is individual in nature (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 38), whereas Indigenous knowledge includes descriptors such as "interactional and interrelation, broad based, whole, inclusive, animate, cyclical, fluid and spiritual" (Kovach, 2010, p. 56). The Iroquois paradigm that people are simply part of the universe and share the Earth with all other living organisms is found in the *Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen – Words Before All Else*.[7]

Kovach (2010) spoke of a research framework in which a decolonization paradigm supports the difference between Western and Indigenous thought: "An Indigenous research framework acts as a nest, encompassing the range of qualities influencing the process and content of the research journey" (p. 42). Kovach (2010) further recognized the challenge that Indigenous people face while undertaking Indigenous-based research: "While it is an attempt to consider Indigenous ways of knowing within Indigenous research, methodologically speaking this definition of Indigenous research is problematic. When Indigenous researchers utilize Indigenous methods, there is always a tribal epistemic positioning in operation" (p. 42).

Undertaking research that delves into issues of leadership will test not only the ethical boundaries, but also the strength of Indigenous security of self: "Because so much of Indigenous ways of knowing is internal, personal, and experiential, creating one standardized externalized

[7] Oral and traditional knowledge.

framework for Indigenous research is nearly impossible and inevitably heartbreaking for Indigenous people" (Kovach, 2010, p. 43).

I believe the challenge for my research was reduced because of the professional relationship that had developed between me and the leaders agreeing to participate in the research. My underpinning of Indigenous methodology is compatible with my position as a qualitative researcher, one who thinks and operates from a constructivist paradigm. This is also a suitable fit with narrative inquiry, which is an approach that made sense for my research, given that my inquiry involved engaging in and interpreting conversations with a variety of Indigenous leaders. Indigenous methodology is based on narrative discourse, which is appropriate because the pedagogy of Indigenous thought is founded through oral dissemination. LittleBear (2000) supported this by stating, "There is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally" (p. 79). Finally, Indigenous methodologies were well suited to an underpinning of constructivism and are in harmony with my evolving worldview as a First Nations person and as a researcher.

Another primary aspect of Indigenous methodology is the issue of ethical understanding. Knowledge is the foundation for ethical beliefs and it is this axiological understanding or worldview held by Indigenous peoples that differs vastly from Western epistemic worldviews. The relational aspect of life, all life in our ecosystem, informs the philosophical tenets of the Indigenous worldview. This becomes a critical difference factor when analyzing the competing paradigms. Western rationale values short-term, economic aspiration and measured growth, whereas Indigenous thought values long-term notions, sustainability, and stability.

Indigenous worldviews have similarities that reflect a relational aspect to all of creation. As S. Wilson (2001) stated, "We need to move beyond an 'Indigenous perspective in research' to

‘researching from an Indigenous paradigm” (p. 175). The axiology from an Indigenous talking perspective considers a paradigmatic approach that informs an Indigenous methodology. S. Wilson (2001) further defines an Indigenous methodology as “talking about relational accountability” (p. 176).

Kovach (2010) spoke of Indigenous methodologies as being “guided by tribal epistemologies, and tribal knowledge is not Western knowledge. Knowledge is neither acultural nor apolitical” (p. 30). A salient feature found in most Indigenous philosophies is that of respect. Alfred (2009) spoke to this fact: “The sources of guiding beacons of Indigenous governance remain the traditional teachings. While Specific techniques are unique to each nation, there is a basic commonality in their essential message of respect” (pp. 168–169).

S. Wilson (2008) spoke to the issue of respect with a reference to a Cree Elder from the Saddle Lake reserve in Northern Alberta:

> Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect or *kihceyihtowin* is a basic law of life. Respect regulates how we treat Mother Earth, the plants, the animals, and our brothers and sisters of all races.… Respect means you listen intently to others’ ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently, you show honour, consider the well-being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy (E. Steinhauer, 2001, p. 86). (p. 58)

Research Methods

Indigenous gatherings include talking circles (mostly used as a healing process), storytelling, focus groups, conversation, and formal ceremony, which includes songs (oral history). Herein lies an issue that required further exploration and analysis. The attempt to

"decolonize" methodologies by inserting Indigenous methods into Western methodologies is a perilous trap that is, first, difficult to recognize and, second, difficult to remain consistent with any specific paradigm. S. Wilson (2008) addressed this issue in his work:

> Some Indigenous scholars may attempt to "decolonize" methodologies and turn them into something that can be useful in Indigenous research. This is an attempt to insert an Indigenous perspective into one of the major paradigms. It is my belief that this will not be very effective, as it is hard to remove the underlying epistemology and ontology upon which the paradigms are built. (p. 39)

This conundrum is one that faces Indigenous leaders on an ongoing basis. My research fundamentally examined the ontology of Indigenous leaders as they navigated change in their world. Part of my research analyzed their respective cultural paradigms, which in turn influenced their principles and thought processes. S. Wilson (2008) stated,

> In an Indigenous ontology, there may be multiple realities, as in the constructivist research paradigm. The difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is "out there" or external, reality is in the relationship that one has with the truth. (p. 73)

The axiology of getting into the deep recesses of how Indigenous leaders gained their knowledge was an important part of my research. I was guided by the following questions: Is culture a foundational reality and is there a marked difference in the way Indigenous leaders think? Do the Indigenous leaders feel that ethics is more than respect?

Indigenous Methods: Conversation

Consistent with the cultural protocols, the primary data collection method utilized was conversation, which Kovach (2010) described as follows:

> Conversation as a method is unlike standard structured or semi-structured interviews that place external parameters on the research participant's narrative. An open-structured conversational method shows respect for the participant's story and allows research participants greater control over what they wish to share with the research question. (p. 124)

The primary research or data gathering method used was a conversational approach. As I had worked previously with the Indigenous leaders who took part in this inquiry and due to our familiarity, even an unstructured interview process, I felt, would have been an inhibitor to obtaining the deep personal knowledge that I was seeking from these leaders. I anticipated that cooperation and discussion would take place easily in a comfortable setting. For the purposes of this study, I used Kovach's (2010) concept of conversation as open-ended, interactive, extended talking sessions, which may appear to be everyday conversations, but goes beyond storytelling, telling tales, or remembering. Conversation in this research context is a process that is inherent with Indigenous peoples and it draws upon the ability to simply talk to each other in 'truths'. While this may include stories and legends, which most often are articulated in an Indigenous language, it is primarily an exchange of the interpretation of a philosophical paradigm or epistemological approach on a culturally laden worldview.

While conversations were open ended, there were themes that emerged in anticipation of the necessary coding. Conducting a structured interview would have prohibited an ease of discussion. I needed to explore personal recollections and the thought processes and motivations of the participants, which will only be available by accessing their innermost thoughts.

Through the conversational approach, some supporting or guiding questions emerged regarding leadership, which I sought to explore with participants:

1. What were their influences; did they experience an epiphany? If so, what was it and when did that happen?
2. What type of guidance did they receive? What were their stories of how they rose to leadership?
3. How did their connectivity play a role and how, as individuals in leadership positions, were they able to remain grounded?
4. What were their most difficult challenges and how did they deal with the issues that faced them.?
5. What were their support systems and how did they help or hinder them?
6. What are their views of transformational leadership?

Depending on the conversation, not all of these questions were explored with each of the participants. The issue of Indigenous thought was central to the research and learning the extent and similarities among the Indigenous leaders was an important factor in determining if Indigenous thought was a cultural metric.

Critical theory, as Kovach (2010) noted, has "created space within western science for representation, voice, and a multicity of truths, the essentialism of Western thought pervading research has not been fully challenged in the academy" (p. 28). From a critical theory perspective, the conversation may lead to other "multiplicity of truths" (Kovach, 2010, p. 28) not anticipated in these preliminary themes, which in fact acted as a guide to the impending tasks of coding and analyzing the data. These potential forays were acknowledged and analyzed along with other data.

Research Design

The research design for this study utilized a qualitative approach and, as Creswell (1998) outlined, a three-phase approach to undertaking a qualitative research program. The three phases Creswell (1998) outlined are (a) a general approach to the study, (b) identification of some issues that are problematic for the researcher; and (c) the actual format for a qualitative study varies considerably from the traditional forms of research (p. 18). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) spoke to the importance of the researcher having a personal interest in the subject to be researched (p. 74). Creswell (1998) spoke to the issue of knowledge and the importance of knowledge in relation to the subject matter:

> Knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal up-close way; and knowledge evolves, emerges, and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied. (p. 19)

Project Approval

The project approval process had been established by the REB of Nipissing University and the issue of Indigenous methodology with conversation as a method was, I believe, a unique request at the time. As S. Wilson (2001) stated, "Researching from an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 175) adds an element to the normal research processes that does not have the academic history utilized by non-Indigenous researchers. The issue of an Indigenous researcher undertaking research on an Indigenous issue with Indigenous participants has been documented as a problem by a number of prominent Indigenous academics such as S. Wilson (2001, 2008), Kovach (2010), Alfred (2009), Smith (1999). The language mostly used by these and many others is "decolonization," which when interpreted speaks to the issue of research being

undertaken by Indigenous researchers. Absolon (2011) provides a descriptor of the realities of Indigenous research stating, " When First Nations create research methods that are in accordance within their own priorities, philosophies and traditions, they are using Indigenous methodologies and research practices. Voyeurism, outside interpretation, objectification of culture and reductionist analysis become non issues when the research is owned and controlled by respectful Aboriginal researchers" (p. 20). S. Wilson (2001) supported this in his statement about 'researching from an indigenous perspective. " (p. 175). It was important to examine the relational aspect needs to see if, at its core, Indigenous thought was a fundamental characteristic of Indigenous *leadership*. As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, the issues identified by the REB application were in fact not an issue and the explanations provided by me, as the researcher, were sufficient to allow the application to be approved. The research submission was officially made on July 31, 2018, and initial approval from the REB was received on October 1, 2018, with an expiry date of October 1, 2019. The Office of Research Studies (ORS) approval was received on September 27, 2018. A renewal request was required by the Research Ethics Board and the project renewal was approved on November 21, 2020. REB file # 101862. The new expiry date became October 1, 2021.

Site Selection

I intentionally asked participants where and when they would like to meet. In every case, the conversations were undertaken in compliance with the participant's convenience taken into consideration. Some conversations were in offices, some in hotel rooms, others in coffee shops, and, in one case, in an art studio (which was unbelievably amazing). The final conversation was held through electronic medium via Zoom because of Covid pandemic restrictions. In most cases, but not all, the participant and I enjoyed a meal or a coffee/tea together after our

conversation. This was not surprising as a sharing of food or a meal is a cultural trait that most Indigenous cultures ascribe to. In every case, the hospitality and friendship and sincerity of conversation were deep and heartfelt. Also in every case, friendly conversation was held both before and after the "formal" part of the conversation.

All of the conversations conducted with the participants, with what would be considered Iroquoian protocol, were completed with friendship and respect. I was welcomed by everyone and some even went out of their way to meet and participate. I am grateful to each of the generous people who gave their time to meet and assist me in this journey.

Participant Selection

Indigenous leaders have had to struggle over the years to try to make sense of a governance system that has been imposed and feeds itself instead of undertaking services that result in marked improvement of conditions in the Indigenous world. This confusion was articulated by a Crow Tribe medicine woman Pretty Shield (as cited in Lear, 2006), when she was reported to say, "I am trying to live a life I do not understand" (p. 56).

With responsibilities that at best seem impossible to meet, the people elected to the position of National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations willingly accept the role. Their overall responsibility perhaps personifies the gap in expectations by governments and the Indigenous peoples. Governments view the National Chief as a spokesperson for all First Nations people in Canada and, as a result, solicits the opinion and agreement on policy, advice, and implementation procedures. In contrast, the Indigenous peoples view the National Chief as a Chief Advocate with limited authority, strongly maintaining that they, the Chiefs of the individual communities, are the only ones who have the authority to speak on behalf of their respective constituents. Ironically, the Chiefs of the communities who maintain this position are

constructs of the overbearing system of governance (i.e., the Indian Act, 1985) that has in effect diluted the Nation status, which feeds the conflicting paradigms of governance. Other Indigenous leaders who have served in senior positions in both the western epistemic models and Indigenous models of governance have faced similar conflicting issues.

This conundrum puts the National Chief and most Indigenous leaders in a position of trying to be all things to all people, which of course, is an impossible task. It also asks the leaders to have one foot in each world, and this dilemma goes to the heart of my research. I looked for examples of how the leaders were confused with what they saw going on, particularly with government. From my experience, I observed Indigenous leaders withdrawing to a comfort level that can best be described as a personal cultural retreat, which was necessary to reinvigorate and ground themselves. With this in mind, the selection of a few leaders who have been placed in this position by their peers and have undertaken the highest level of responsibility within the First Nations world, were the candidates I approached to be interviewed. National Chiefs who conduct themselves in a similar manner to provincial premiers were identified as candidates for participation, Indigenous women who held high public office, and people who were entrenched in cultural existence but also involved in the public eye and hold national and international profiles were solicited. I was able to secure conversations with two former National Chiefs, three Indigenous women who held very high profile public offices, and two individuals who were lifelong advocates in cultural activities. While it is important to solicit the views of those who have experienced many years of interaction, I was also fortunate and honoured to include the participation of an AFN Regional Chief who happens to be a millennial.

This provided a unique insight into the research issues. Conversations were conducted with each of the participants in accordance with the protocols established by the REB. In

addition, my research led me to reach out and have discussions with Indigenous academics, Elders, and business people in various First Nations communities. Although these discussions were not formalized, they did alter my direction and provided some insight into the scope and utility of the research I was undertaking.

Getting the right people to participate in this research was a key function in data collection, but insights and opinions based on experience that supports the necessity of the research was critical. Creswell (1998) supported this as he spoke about qualitative research: "An important step in the process is to find the people or places to study and gain access and establish rapport so that the participants will provide good data" (p. 110).

Due to any perception of undue bias, it should be noted that I have had professional relationships with all but one of the participants because of their respective positions and my work experience. When acting as the CEO of the Assembly of First Nations, I was in contact with most of the leaders whom I eventually asked to participate in this research. Similarly, when I was working as a Ministerial assistant for the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, I had contact with most of the participants, some not as leaders but as workers in different Indigenous organizations before they assumed a leadership position.

Within Indigenous cultures, "power" related to titles or position is virtually nonexistent. This relational attitude, as mentioned, is found in almost every Indigenous culture and expresses itself in the manner in which Indigenous people treat each other. The various languages support this principle, for example, in the Mohawk language, *Ongwehonwe*, is a term that refers to ourselves as Indigenous people and the literal translation is "real people". The Ojibway people call themselves *Anishnawbe* which means the same thing; and the Cree people call themselves

Nehiyaw. The language supports the philosophy of equality amongst people and extends itself to all living things thus supporting a relational worldview.

There is no ongoing personal or professional relationship between any of the participants and myself, nor is there any carry over relationships that would contribute to a power imbalance. In addition, in keeping with the Indigenous relational paradigm, the shared experiences that I have had with the participants puts me in a relational context that is a positive. Trust has already been built and this will be exhibited by the simple fact of the participants' agreement to support and participate in this research. This shared history is an important factor, which will leads to a personal and rich sharing of stories and experiences. The fact that I have a prior relationship with these leaders enriched the stories and knowledge coming from the participants. It must also be noted that the final conversation was with a Vice Chief with whom I had no prior relationship other than a quick introduction in a lobby at a national conference. Please note that Nipissing University's REB approved my explanation for participant selection.

The phenomenon of a cultural retreat can happen with anyone in any level of Indigenous leadership; however, it is most amplified with Indigenous leaders at the highest level of responsibility and accordingly, these are the leaders I pursued to participate in my research. I was able to secure meeting times and places with Dr. Ovide Mercredi, former National Chief, and Kluane Adamek, a Regional Chief of the AFN for the Yukon Territory. With culture as a central connecting piece in my research, I also spoke to a preeminent Indigenous artist, Robert Davidson, who is largely responsible for reviving the Haida culture at Haida Gwaii. His entire life and career have been devoted to cultural expression and revival. His contribution spoke to the importance of culture and added some clarity on the meaning of culture. Another leader of many years was former Grand Chief Mike Mitchell of the Akwesasne Mohawk community. He

held the position of Grand Chief for over 20 years and was a Faith Keeper in the Longhouse. He now serves as an Elder for the Assembly of First Nations.

A friend and colleague expressed a concern that there was a gender misalignment in my participants, and after some reflection, even though I had already received REB approval on my methodology, I sought out two very high profile women who agreed to participate. Among the ones I sought out was a Chief from a community located in the interior of British Columbia. This Chief, Sophie Pierre, was involved in the Council of her home community for 30 years of which 25 of these years were as Chief. She was appointed to undertake the Chief Treaty Commissioners role in British Columbia, a role that sought out conclusions to land claim issues. Having worked at the community level for most of her career and then in a highly regulated position such as the Treaty Land Commissioner, she experienced the work environment of both Indigenous and western epistemologies. Another woman leader who agreed to participate was Jody Wilson-Raybould. Having served as a regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations as well as a federal cabinet minister gave her intimate insight into the differences between governing systems. In fact, I did ask another woman leader, Kluane Adamek who is currently a vice chief of the Assembly of First Nations and as a millennial, also represents a different generation that the others already selected. It is serendipity that the leaders who participated provided gender parity. For all of the participants, my everlasting gratefulness is extended and my debt to each cannot be expressed in suitable ways.

As an Indigenous researcher, I am guided by an inner voice that compels me to seek the wisdom of Elders and to comply with the protocols that an Indigenous person must observe. To this end, I sought the guidance and wisdom of an esteemed Elder, Fred Kelly, whom I have looked to for guidance for many years. Fred has experience in both worlds, as a senior official

with the Department of Indian Affairs for a relatively short period of time, and also a pipe carrier in the Midewin, the Sacred Law of the Anishinaabeg and a Keeper and Practitioner of the Sacred Law.

I asked these people to take part in this inquiry not only because of their leadership experience but also because of their analytical capabilities. This selection of individuals was a small but an important sample of leadership, which can be classified as critical case sampling (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) defined the purpose of this approach as it "permits logical generalizations and maximum application of information to other cases" (p. 119).

Due to my work history, and as a first step in seeking participants for this research, I held an informal discussion with most of these individuals to determine if they could or would agree to participate in this research. One potential participant did decline, expressing a busy schedule, and two others who did agree initially were unable to find an agreeable time to meet. I made a secondary follow-up request either by phone or email with those who agreed to establish a time and date to meet. I then made formal requests for participation with the necessary protocols forwarded to each of the participants as agreed upon by the protocol established by Nipissing University. I sent a participant information letter in advance of meeting to each of the participants, and, while some were not returned prior to the discussion, a participant information letter was provided to each participant prior to the conversation, and participants were given the opportunity to read over the contents and then sign, which they did. None of the participants questioned any aspect of the participant information letter.

Data Collection

The central areas of investigation in my research encompass culture, leadership, and decision making. The issues addressed and explored have been described throughout this

chapter. However, the method of collecting data was unconventional in terms of standard academic protocols. The approach was based on a more recent phenomenon in which an Indigenous researcher is undertaking information on an Indigenous subject with Indigenous participants. As Kovach (2010) noted, “This means that this particular research approach flows from an Indigenous belief system that has at its core a relational understanding and accountability to the world” (p. 42). Another Indigenous academic, S. Wilson (2001) stated, “We need now to move beyond an “Indigenous perspective into research” to “researching from an indigenous perspective” (p. 176). I explored this relational aspect further and deeper to see if, at its core, there is a fundamental characteristic of Indigenous leadership that is uniquely Indigenous. The central research issue of cultural survival was even more fascinating to hear why Indigenous leaders felt this paradigm was ingrained into Indigenous leadership regardless of the assault on traditional Indigenous governance principles.

I examined whether there was a power associated with Indigenous leadership that is derived from cultural prerogatives. Was there an intersection of relational and western concepts of knowledge that is necessary to survive in the modern world? Are there consequences? Does Indigenous culture manifest an archetypal feature that has been smoldering beneath the exterior waiting for the right time in history to resurface?

Indigenous culture appears to be mythological or romanticized to the point where even some Indigenous people buy into the mythologies that have been perpetrated by novelists or by policymakers who have misinterpreted certain mores within a community. In an anecdotal mode and as an example, my son Brad, in his musing to become a stand-up comedian, addressed a notion that many people (including governments) —and in fact many Indigenous people— feel that we have no concept of private property: “Those who believe that Indian people don’t believe

in private property have never dated an Indian woman." This, of course, is in jest, and the issue with property is a much more fundamental issue dealing with worldviews and relational mindsets. Exploring the importance of culture as a principle of Indigenous leadership and governance was a central area of examination.

Examination of the differences between the initiations into leadership indicates a marked difference. Within many Indigenous cultures, potential leaders are selected at a young age and groomed to be leaders as opposed to the Western epistemic model in which leaders emerge much later in life and often with little mentoring regarding what leadership involves. This research involved the examination of the influences the leaders experienced to become leaders. During the interview conversations, the impact and influence of culture surfaced as paramount in participants' responses. Of most interest was the fact that all the participants felt a calling to do so. Also of note, while most participants were well educated by western standards and had options to move into the mainstream Canadian world, they chose to work in the Indigenous arena.

While some meetings and discussions amongst Indigenous leaders are quite formal and prescribed, advice sought and given to leaders is very much the opposite. In most Indigenous cultures in which leaders seek counsel, it is usually undertaken in a very quiet and private manner. Whether it is a local leader or a National Indigenous leader, the similarities for counsel are much the same. This leads to the manner in which data were gathered from select Indigenous leaders. Throughout the years, I have been fortunate to be able to work with and call upon numerous Indigenous leaders. My procedure was to meet with the selected leaders at meetings, conferences or other gathering places, talk to them about my dissertation and invite them to

participate. If they agreed, my next step was to follow up with them by phone or email to arrange a time and place.

The data collected were, in essence, the participants' stories. As an Indigenous researcher, I understood that this exercise was not just a collection of data but also a documentation of knowledge to be shared. Knowledge is knowing, and, in the Indigenous worldview, Longboat (2008) described this paradigm as "in the Indigenous ways of knowing, the student is tested to establish inter and intra relationships through demonstrations that acknowledge understanding and address the need for balance and harmony while practicing necessary protocols" (p. 76). In conversations with my Elder advisor, he stated people accept experience as knowledge and through the practice of experience it becomes consolidated into knowledge.

The relationships that have been nurtured are important and, to this end, the relationship with Indigenous leaders has been established through years of work towards similar objectives. Those objectives include the restoration of Indigenous rights and their rightful place in the Canadian mosaic. In some cases, the relationships were built through a shared workplace, which have resulted in friendship and respect. S. Wilson (2008) provided further support for this paradigm:

> I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable *to all my relations*. (p. 177)

"All of my relations," does not refer to the physical relationship to other people; rather, in this context, it refers to a relationship to the cosmology of all living things. For example, as I watch the Bay of Quinte, which is 20 metres from my house, I can see and witness that this body of

water has a spirit that is as unique as any personality. It is far from an inanimate body because it houses and sustains life while showing tremendous emotion. Years ago, my dad showed me how to predict the weather by watching the water in the bay.

I undertook the collection of data by organizing and meeting with the leaders in locations where they were comfortable and would not feel pressured. I spent as much time as they allowed in discussion and respected their input. Other than casual sessions at conferences or meetings, there was no formal follow up requested either by the participant or by me, as the researcher. That is, there were no second formal conversations held with respect to this research. However, there was follow up with each of the participants in conformity with the processes set out in the participant information letter. I sent the transcripts of the conversations to each of the participants along with a summary provided to them from the handwritten notes that I had taken during the conversations. The participant then reviewed these notes and returned comments. Not all participants returned comments, but those who did agreed to have their names included and quotes attributed to themselves. For this, a hearty appreciation is given. *Nyawen'kò:wa*.

With participants' prior agreement, I recorded discussions and I asked them for their agreement regarding their willingness to participate in this discussion in accordance with the participant information letter. Following the discussion, I transcribed the recordings and sent them to participants for their review (i.e., member checking). I asked them to sign off on the transcription and further offered a choice to be anonymous or quoted on any particular statement. Most agreed to be open and not anonymous, and I informed them that, as a further review of their involvement, they were offered the opportunity to evaluate the actual words that were to be used in the final dissertation. Although this was a lengthy process, it ensured the commitment of their respective thoughts and involvement. This is the process employed by the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission with regard to the testimony they received from thousands of residential school survivors.[8] This process was built on respect and consideration of the participants' willingness to share their experiences.

As previously stated, I met participants in various locations, some in a coffee shop, in a hotel room, in an office, in a studio, in a restaurant; the location was entirely up to the participant. The geographic locations ranged from Ottawa to Vancouver. It was important to have the participants determine the location of the meeting, as it would always be on their ground and that it provided a comfort level for them. All conversations, save one, took place in face-to-face settings, with one conversation held via Zoom technology, also face-to-face but through an electronic medium.

Data Analysis

The data from the conversations with the participants were collected through recordings via mobile recorders and then transcribed into hard copies. I read each of the transcriptions carefully to ensure the meanings were not lost partly because almost all the participants used some words in their own language, which could not be accurately transcribed. In reading the transcripts, I looked for patterns and themes by making notes in the margins and then following up by noting the frequency of any particular theme. No specific software was utilized as the themes were, to some degree, only implied by the guiding questions because of the information and options for participation contained in the participant information letter.

[8] This process was verbally passed on to me during a personal discussion with Senator Murray Sinclair on another topic other than this dissertation.

Coding

Creswell (2013) described coding as a process that "involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code" (p. 184). Gläser and Laudel (2013) discussed a similar process:

> The … idea of coding is that the texts containing the raw data are indexed. Codes—keywords, phrases, mnemonics, or numbers—that signal the occurrence of specific information are assigned to segments of the text. In the list of codes, each code is linked to all segments to which the code has been assigned. (Section 4.2, para. 1)

Gläser and Laudel went on to state,

> The function of codes is to indicate what is talked about in a segment of text. Codes thus support the retrieval of text segments, which in turn can be used to group them according to thematic aspects of the data they contain. (Section 4.2, para. 3)

As a matter of organizing the material, I utilized an open-ended coding process, which resulted in primary areas of interest. Gläser and Laudel (2013) described the process of open coding as developing codes while reading the texts. Subcategories emanating from the open coding are generally referred to as axial coding. Gläser and Laudel supported this process through the following statement:

> During axial coding, the categories and concepts that have been developed during the open coding are integrated and empirically generalized by organizing them into a "coding paradigm" that links phenomenon to causal conditions, context of the investigated phenomenon, additional intervening conditions, action and interactional strategies, and consequences. (Section 4.2, para. 7)

Data were then triangulated with desk research to ensure support of varying perspectives to specific themes or concepts of Indigenous leadership and decision making. I transcribed each of the recorded conversations and filed the written transcriptions in a binder. For each of the transcriptions, I developed a summary document listing the salient points. During this process, I made notes in the margins of the subject matter that would contribute to the main themes or subcategories.

Coding Framework

Following an initial review of collected data from both the research and conversations, I developed a coding framework with identification of code words or initials, which in turn addressed the research questions. Figure 4 outlines the framework I developed for the open coding component. As most of the data could be described as story, the beginning of the framework starts with the word "story."

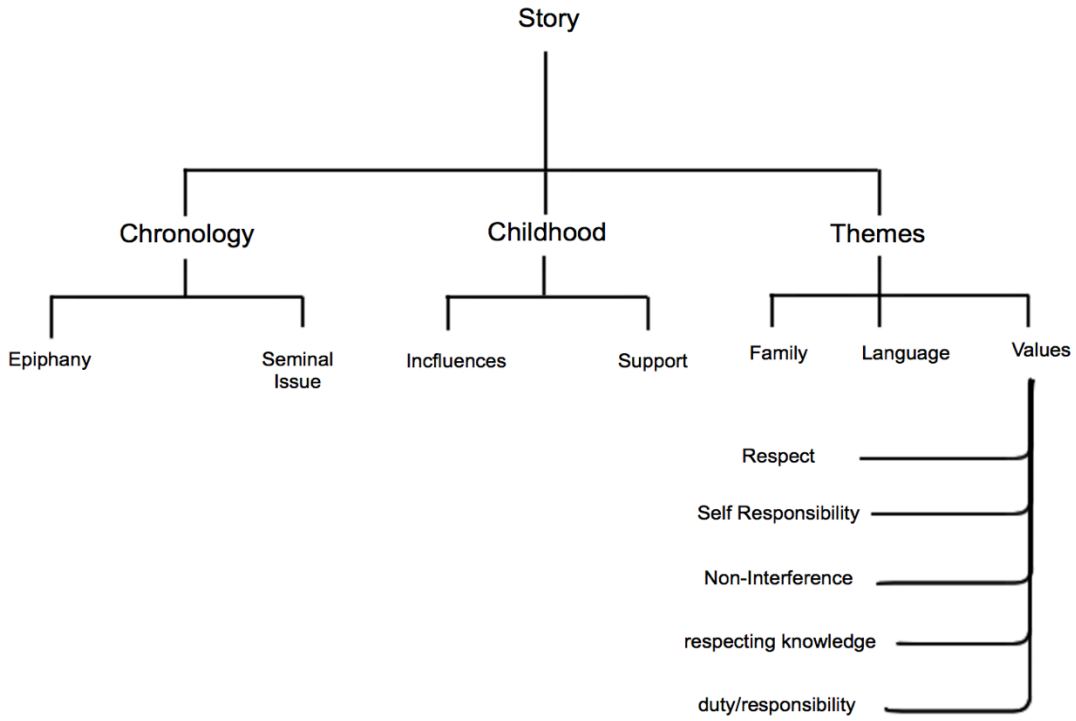
I took counsel from Creswell (2013), as he suggested research parameters that would be used to develop themes. He provided the following framework:

- Information that researchers expect to find before the study
- Surprising information that researchers did not expect to find; and
- Information that is conceptually interesting or unusual to researchers (and potentially participants and audiences). (p. 186)

Each one of the code segments in the framework tree shown above are divided into subcategories in Chapter 4 in compliance with the research parameters outlined by Creswell (2013).

Figure 4

The Coding Framework Developed for the Open Coding Component of the Research Process



The central areas of investigation in my research encompassed culture, leadership, and decision making. The analysis included, firstly, identification and interpretation of patterns within the areas of investigation listed previously in this chapter.

I examined whether there was power associated with Indigenous leadership that is derived from cultural prerogatives. Was there an intersection of relational and western concepts of knowledge that is necessary to survive in the modern world? Are there consequences?

Storing Data

As a qualitative research exercise, I gathered data through traditional forms of research (i.e., books, articles, journals, and other written forms), but, more importantly, I obtained data through conversations with Indigenous leaders who agreed to participate in this research. These conversations were recorded; however, on one occasion, because of the location of the meeting,

organized at the convenience of the participant, one recording resulted in indecipherable output largely because of crowd noise. I did take notes of the highlights during the conversation, and I shared these summary notes with the participant. In another situation, the technology simply failed and there was no discernible recording. However, I did take summary notes during the conversation and, once again, I shared these summary notes with the participant. In two cases, the participants had also published books that contained much of the same information as was spoken about during our conversations, and the participants were happy to have those books referred to and cited.

All data has been stored in a secure location in my home office on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. The recordings will be kept for a minimum of 5 years as well as the full transcriptions. Material put on a flash drive, whether it is a Microsoft Word document or an audio file, has been password protected.

Ethical Considerations

Do no harm is the standard mantra of ethical consideration. Josselson (2007) provided a viewpoint on the scope of ethical consideration. She stated, "Interpersonal ethics demand responsibility to the dignity, privacy, and well-being of those who are studied, and these often conflict with the scholarly obligation to accuracy, authenticity, and interpretation" (Josselson, 2007, p. 538). This conflict is evidenced in my worldview and exacerbated by the differing lenses of other academic researchers. For ethical considerations, I followed a process documented by Stiegmen and Castleden (2010):

> Ethical Standards of conduct in research undertaken at Canadian Universities involving humans has been guided by three federal research agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

> (NSERC), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (or TCPS for short) since 1998. (Abstract section, para. 1)

These standards did not meet or adequately address the issues facing Indigenous peoples and thus a revision was made, in consultation with an Indigenous community engagement process, which resulted in adding Chapter 9 in 2010. This new standard is referred to as TCPS2, which has three guiding principles: respect, concern for welfare, and justice (CIHR et al., 2018; see also Stiegman & Castleden, 2015).

Respect is a fundamental characteristic found in the cultural protocols of most Indigenous cultures and is embedded in ceremony. Alfred (2009) confirmed this when he stated, "While specific techniques are unique to each Nation, there is a basic commonality in their essential message of respect" (p. 169). Turner (2006) described the depth of the value of respect in Iroquoian traditional culture:

> The notion of respect goes to the core of Iroquoian religious thought; but in a political context, respecting another person's intrinsic value means that you recognize that they have a right to speak their mind and to choose for themselves how to act in the world. (p. 49)

This value is still held by many Iroquoian leaders and can be witnessed by observing that most will not interrupt a conversation. It can be surmised that this trait was misunderstood when agreements in trade and politics were being made (and still are), as silence by the Indigenous side was mistaken for compliance or, more seriously, as capitulation.

On research involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, the TCPS2 (CIHR et al., 2018) stated the following:

> Research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-Aboriginal researchers. The approaches used have not generally reflected Aboriginal worldviews, and the research has not necessarily benefited Aboriginal peoples or communities. As a result, Aboriginal people continue to regard research, particularly research originating outside their communities, with a certain misapprehension of mistrust. (p. 109)

The cultural philosophy of some Indigenous Nations have established specific elements that encompass ethics and form the basis of their worldview, such as the founding principles that for the Iroquois, relationships were built on: peace, friendship, and respect.[9]

The Iroquois utilize symbolic physical items to represent an idea or philosophy. The Silver Covenant Chain is one such symbol. On June 24, 1755, Sir William Johnson, who was the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs in colonial New York, offered the following regarding the Covenant Chain as documented by Fredrikson and Gibb (1980):

> Upon our first acquaintance, we shook hands, and finding that we should be useful to each one another, entered into a covenant of Brotherly love and mutual friendship. And tho' we were at first only tied together by a Rope [referring to ships], yet lest this Rope should grow Rotten and break, we tied ourselves together by an iron Chain – lest time and accident might rust and destroy this chain of iron, we afterwards made one of Silver; the strength and brightness of which would be subject to no decay. The ends of this Silver chain we fixt to the immovable mountains, and this is so firm in a manner, that the hands of no mortal Enemy might be able to remove it. All this my Brethren you know to be the

[9] Oral history/traditional knowledge.

> Truth; you know also that this Covenant Chain of love and friendship was the dread and envy of all your enemies and ours, that by keeping it bright and unbroken, we have never split in anger one drop of each other's blood to this day. You well know also that from the beginning to this time we have almost every year strengthened and brightened this Covenant Chain in the most public and solemn manner. (p. 15)

Iroquoian leaders to this day, speak of the necessity of polishing the Covenant Chain.

Other Indigenous Nations such as the Anishinabek had similar principles referred to as the Seven Grandfathers teachings, which are wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth.

The basis of my inquiry as an Indigenous (Mohawk) researcher with the experience I carry called into question the applicability and necessity of learning the proper ethical approaches to fellow Indigenous people. I fully agree that the necessary protocols and overtures must be observed and respected. It is understood that the different Indigenous Nations have different customs with respect to ethical considerations. Most Nations use tobacco as a protocol offering when initiating a meeting or request; however, this is not universal amongst Indigenous peoples.

Respect is the common theme that crosses all cultures, and without respect, there will be no collectible data nor stories that draw on the traditional knowledge of the participants. Respect must also be shown through the acknowledgment of appropriate protocols and continue throughout conversations, ensuring that any subject matter proceeds without being pressured or challenged.

In order to meet the unspoken criteria regarding respect, trust must be felt and evident amongst the participants. Without a strong element of trust, the conversations will not be fruitful.

While conducting this inquiry, I had no doubt that this element had already been bridged because of the working relationships that had been developed over the years with the participants who agreed to contribute to this research.

Each participant voluntarily elected to participate in this research. I offered participants the option to have their participation anonymized or to agree to be cited. I asked permission to make a voice recording of the conversation and they were welcome to decline. If the participant agreed to a voice recording, they were provided with all transcripts of the recorded conversation for review and asked to provide a written agreement that the transcripts accurately reflected the conversation. If they agreed to be cited, the quotation and its use in context were provided for agreement. Participants had the ability to decline or to have their statement anonymized.

Participants had the right to ask any questions to clarify anything that they were unsure of. They had the right to refuse to participate in any aspect of the conversation without explanation and the right to end the conversation at any time. They had the right to withdraw any part or the entire conversation. Had they requested any withdrawal, the transcripts and recording would have been destroyed; however, none of the participants requested this. All data collected from the conversations has been stored on a flash drive and encrypted to ensure data security for the respondents. The flash drive will be stored for 5 years, accessible only to my supervisor and me.

Limitations

The limitation to this study may be seen as providing generalizable statements that could be associated with leaders in any governance situation. However, as I will outline in Chapter 4, the worldviews and the spirituality that is so fundamental to how Indigenous leaders undertake their respective responsibilities, represents a distinctness that is undeniably ubiquitous. We will

also see a tremendous similarity in tribal paradigms and ontologies. The sample size may also be seen as a limitation in that a relatively small number of people participated in the conversations. However, if compared to the numbers of First Nations people who have occupied this level of responsibility, the sample size is quite significant. For instance, there have been only eight National Chiefs and I spoke informally to four about participating in my research quest, and engaged in conversations with two consistent with the participant information letter. There have been only two First Nations women holding federal government Cabinet positions, I was able to converse with one. There are two First Nations women having held the title of Land Commissioner, I engaged in conversation with one. It may appear that my relationship of working with leaders I have had previous professional relationships would add a level of bias, but my view is that this relationship has not only given me opportunity to be able to call and meet with these leaders but converse with them on a different level than others may be able to do.

Summary and Looking Ahead

This chapter reviewed and rationalized the methodology selected to conduct this research and the methods employed to collect and gather data. In this chapter, I provided insight into the methodological challenges facing an Indigenous researcher examining issues related to unique Indigenous paradigmatic concerns. I offered my rationale for participant selection with a summary of their involvement in the research. All participants who agreed to become involved in this project were Indigenous and ranged from all parts of the country. The study utilized an Indigenous methodology with conversation as a method emanating from a tribal epistemology of oral tradition found in Indigenous paradigms. The primary research issues complemented the literature in that the participants were asked to provide personal accounts and viewpoints relating

to the issues of leadership and governance. I analyzed the data collected through open and axial coding and triangulated with research information gleaned from the literature research. Ethical considerations were paramount in engaging in the conversations, which were supported by considerable literature on the issue of ethics as it related to the overall ontological structures of leadership and governance being examined.

Chapter 4 will present the data (stories) collected in the current study and will organize that data into specific themes that emerged from the stories collected.

Chapter 4: Findings: The Participants and Their Views

The Process

Given the experience that I have accumulated working with Indigenous leaders over the past 40 years, the process of undertaking this research and calling upon people that I have worked with was something that was appropriate. My work experience often required me to call upon leaders and talk to them about issues of the day or their views on particular subjects; therefore, calling on them to participate in this research was neither out of the ordinary nor a cold call. An explanation was provided to the participants about the scope of the research being undertaken and the protocols required by the University's REB. The approved participant information letter was sent to the participants by email. Some participants signed and returned the required documents right away and others signed them when I met with them. It was explained that they would also receive a copy of the narrative once it was in the format that would be included in the final dissertation. Participants were also given the opportunity to edit, or completely reject it at that point. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask that their contribution be anonymized.

As outlined in the methodology in Chapter 3, although I had some specific questions, the conversations were more unstructured as there were themes I was exploring. In many cases, the participants spoke of their experiences in stories. The following are abridged versions of the conversations. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information for each of the participants, and narratives of the six conversations with the participants, organized around some of the themes as they emerged. Chapter 5 will provide further analysis of the collective conversations and the key themes that emerged. You will note that each conversation did not follow a structured question-and-answer format; rather, they followed along the way natural

conversations unfold. Each discussion took over an hour, sometimes two, sometimes three, but always with a great deal of respect offered to each of the participants.

There was in each case, some informal conversation that took place outside the formality required by the University, sometimes before the recordings began and sometimes after. In one case (the encounter with Sophie Pierre) the whole process occurred over an entire day.

In keeping with my own cultural protocols, each of the participants was given a decorated pouch containing some medicines and tobacco at the beginning of each conversation. The following discussions have been edited to exhibit approximately the same length of narrative; however, the context follows the conversations as it unfolded.

The abridged discussions are presented in chronological order.

Ovide Mercredi

> *"In order to maintain a cohesive community, you can't start interfering in every chance you get because you'll disrupt the harmony in the community."*

Ovide Mercredi is a former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations who held that office from 1991–1997. He grew up in a small town in central Manitoba near the Grand Rapids reserve, attended primary and secondary school in that area and was trained to be a lawyer. His rise to political office was unlike others in that he did not hold political offices in other organizations, although he worked in First Nations organizations in a technical capacity and as advisor to other Indigenous leaders.

Ovide was raised by his parents speaking Cree as his first language. They did not live on the reserve—which was located across the river from where they lived, but he had relatives who lived on the reserve. To Ovide, that mattered little as he recalled, "We grew up in Cree community, a Cree culture." He recalled that he did not learn English until he was about 6 years old:

So, [we] grew up with a sense of belonging, to know it's not just the nuclear family but the entire community. So, [we] were part of the community that was divided by … the river, the Saskatchewan River. And I lived on one shore of it and my uncle who was a chief and his family lived on the other shore. So, but we were essentially all one people and so that idea of respecting people is an important value and one I think that influenced my thinking about relationships later on.

There were many lessons that supported a shared value system and Ovide recalled one of those lessons:

Growing up too, we were taught this idea of noninterference, you know, what people now called minding your own business, right? But really simply, it was more than just minding our own business. It's also about this belief that you don't really – it's really none of your business to interfere with another human being. I remember traveling one time with my uncle John, who's the chief of Grand Rapids at that time. And he was asked to go look into a situation of family abuse in fact one of his counselors was responsible for the abuse of his mother, of his wife. And so, the value of noninterference was not absolute. You have the power and the responsibility to intervene and the chief had that power, the responsibility to make sure that the man did not hurt his family.

Family

Ovide grew up in a very traditional home life, speaking Cree until he went to school at the age of 6 years. One of the values that was very prevalent was the idea of respect:

This whole idea of respecting people like in particular showing respect to your parents and to the Elders in the community. And knowing that you have a relationship with most of them in a form of not just blood relationship but kinship. You know, I guess there were

> remnants of a clan system without being called that anymore, but like uncles and aunts and all that and older people being referred to as a Kokum or Moshum.

The entire community supported the sense of belonging "not just the nuclear family but the whole community."

His father taught him that he was responsible for his own behaviour and that he was self-responsible:

> I think that's an important understanding about my power as a person, like as an individual person, that I can either be kind or unkind, but I have the power to do it, right? So, the idea [of self-responsibility] was an important value or a very important concept to learn early in my life.

This was related to the lesson mentioned above about noninterference: "It's about this belief that it's really none of your business to interfere with another human being, right?" Ovide explained this concept a bit further, saying, "The foundation of maintaining harmony in a community… In order to maintain a cohesive community, you can't start interfering in every chance you get because you'll disrupt the harmony in the community."

This was a fundamental value that struck Ovide as a marked difference in worldviews between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. He poignantly stated, "later in my life, I could see that the way the white man does things is that he likes to interfere but he does it by making laws to justify the interference." He used the issue of child welfare as an example where Indigenous children were taken from their family homes because the community did not have a formal law that stipulated how children were to be raised and cared for, whereas the nonIndigenous community did have a law for this purpose.

Language

Many of the concepts that Ovide spoke about were embodied in the Cree language, which was spoken as a mother tongue by the entire community. He stated that because of the extent of the use of the language that he never had a sense of being a minority and thus did not develop any sense of inferiority of being a minority in Canada.

Leadership

Ovide's thoughts on leadership in part emanate from the perceptions he experienced as a child. He stated, "It was that knowledge that leadership was not associated with an elected position." I asked him about recollections of when he first thought that he was in fact a leader. He recalled an instance that occurred after he had been elected National Chief. A public school teacher called him just to touch base but also to tell him that he recalled that even as a boy, Ovide showed qualities of leadership. Ovide also said that in hindsight, that may have been true but growing up and he did not realize that, but because of that phone call, it gave him courage and confidence that he could be a leader. I asked him when he started thinking of himself as a leader. His response was surprising. He admitted that one of his impediments in school was his fear of public speaking. This I found strange because Ovide is one of the most gifted public speakers I have heard.

Community Influence

Growing up in a community as opposed to a nuclear family had a major influence on Ovide. He stated that growing up in a community like Grand Rapids, the whole idea was doing things together (this is called teamwork today). Things could be done as a group or as an individual. Using the analogy of trapping, he shared that having a trap line was analogous to an individual enterprise in that there was work and responsibility that was necessary. These were all

valuable lessons being learned in everyday life that influenced his thinking as he assumed a leadership role.

Civics Training

The major source of learning about civics and social responsibilities came not from law school and a formalized structure but from the women and particularly the mothers in the community when he was growing up.

> I think social responsibilities, because they'd get together every week where they would be making moccasins and other clothing like the beaded jacket I had that I wear a lot. And there may have been one or two other women involved in doing the beadwork. So, as young kids, we would witness all the women come together and while they're doing that, they're discussing the community you know, the issue is important to them. And then, so, we would learn something about, I guess, civic matters from them, about the role of women to take care of the needs of the community while the men are out there hunting, fishing or trapping, getting the mush or the fish to look after the family.

Conflicts in Indigenous Thought

Law school was somewhat of a test in that some of the classes such as personal property law was like a mystery, because growing up in a communal setting, there was no concept of personal property. However, other subjects like administrative law had resonance because of the concepts of due process and natural justice:

> Because in our community, you did not make false claims or allegations against anyone, right? Because you have to be honest…. If you boil it down to its basic rule, it is about being honest and not abusing your power, right? So all these things about administration, I could relate to that because somehow that was part of my foundation, you know, in

Grand Rapids growing up with this idea to like adjust to the way people are and go for truth as opposed to allegation.

Dealing with Conflict

Ovide was the National Chief at the time of the debate on the Charlottetown Accord and received considerable pushback. Looking back at his teachings as he was growing up, dreams were important and had meaning. He relayed a story about how a dream affected his actions with respect to the First Nations' positioning on the Charlottetown Accord.

So the dream is this. I'm actually sitting in a building, sitting on a bench made of marble. And all around me is a floor made of marble. And on the left side and the right side of me and beside me are these pillars, made of – these round pillars made a marble, like a Roman pillar or a Greek pillar, right, from Western society. And then in front of me is the same thing, these pillars. And then behind me are the rivers and the mountains and then forests, you know, I get this impression that's where [we are at this moment in time]. And then ahead of me is also the future like the outside, like outside.

And then on this way, like this colour, that colour of marble, steps going up to like an altar. And nothing is on the altar, but it's – but there's something there that I'm supposed to avoid, okay? So, out of the – ahead of me comes this woman, out of the front, you know, ahead of me and the pillars. And the person walking towards me is my mother. And I'm sitting here and the left to me is an Indigenous woman sitting beside me. And my mother comes this way, walks towards me, and then taps me on the shoulder and says to me, that's where we came from pointing to where she's going and that's where we have to go, pointing from where she came, right?

> So, I took that to mean, we have to pass through society. We have to pass through Canadian society. We can't stop here, right? But we need something. So, that's what I thought while the constitution, that's what – you know, that's why I'm sitting on a bench. We need this place called constitutional recognition. And we need this space. And we need this resolve to have the strength to pass through, right? That was the idea.

This dream happened before he was elected National Chief but influenced his approach in his capacity as the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. I recall that the major disagreement with the Accord was that the local leaders did not have enough time to consult with their respective people. Ovide explained his discussion with the detractors this way; imagine Charlottetown as a constitutional blanket. And we're just wrapping ourselves in that blanket. And when we're strong enough, we will unwrap that blanket. But our responsibility is to become strong again as a people, right? That was the vision for Charlottetown. And that was a dream that gave rise to that idea." The dream was to be involved at a constitutional level with the other governments in Canada and secure a stronger and rightful place for First Nations and their respective forms of governance.

Indigenous Thought

Ovide saw the Charlottetown Accord as the beginning of a restoration period to get the Indigenous governments back in place and again, the lessons learned from childhood played a major role in his thinking. He said that his mother explained to him that there are other people in the country and his mother would say they are different. "It did not mean they were better or worse, but they were different." He said the word *pakan* in Cree describes the concept of being different. Ovide also stated that this concept had a profound effect on his political outlook in that people had the human right to be different. The issue of being a distinct society solely for one

aspect of the population was not compatible with the understanding that everyone has a right to be *pakan*.

> Our value was, you know, we respect Ojibwa to be different, that Dakota to be different, just like we respect the Cree, ourselves as Cree to be different. And it does mean that – and when you add the value of noninterference to the idea, no nation can interfere with the other.

During negotiations with the federal and provincial governments, Ovide stated emphatically that this concept was fundamental to First Nations identity and could not be surrendered.

Mysticism

The reference to the dream was seen as supernatural or mystical. Most Indigenous cultures have a strong relational connection with mysticism that is supported by respective stories or legends. Ovide described these not as stories or legends but teachings. He relayed a story that his mother told him about an old man who was mean, lived alone and abused animals —particularly rabbits that he had hunted and caught. He would torture them and when his time to depart this world, he died a slow and agonizing death and in the end, he actually looked like a rabbit. The story was to make sure that you respect the animals. But other instances had a much greater impact when he had Elders tell him that Charlottetown was not going to be successful but that his real contribution was to make Canadians understand the reality of First Nations people and that there was a different worldview.

Another event that was significant was when Ovide encountered an elderly couple while he was campaigning for National Chief. He said the couple made a beeline to him and said, “There are things you need to know.” He agreed to meet them after campaigning but then could not find them. He went back to the location of the event the next day to try to find them and

described them to the Chief who could not place them at all. Ovide felt there was a message being relayed to him that he did not acknowledge properly. He also said because of that he made it a policy never to walk away from an Elder but always give them time. Ovide also felt that even with the brief interaction with the older couple, that there was something he should have listened to and keeps wondering if the course of history may have changed if he had listened. He concluded that there are unseen forces that can help us. Ovide's words below on stories and legends support an Indigenous worldview that has sustained the languages and cultures. The difference is subtle but the consequences are significant.

> *We grew up with stories that we heard from our Elders, you know, where we learned about the value of sharing, right, to share. But also about the value of being honest. And the teacher when it comes to transparency were our leaders because [our leaders] did that already. Our Elders taught us the legends, but we don't call them legends. We call them the ancient stories in our language. Academic anthropologists call them legends, but they were teachings.*
>
> Ovide Mercredi

Robert Davidson, OC

> *"We have thoughts, our culture wasn't made of crazy individuals, there was a solid foundation of thinkers that created our culture; we have been tucked in a corner, not taken seriously."*

Robert Davidson is a renowned Haida artist who hails from the community of Old Masset in Haida Gwaii. He is a master carver of totem poles and masks and has created a unique style based on the traditional artwork of his Ancestors. He is internationally known for his meticulous work and has been credited for being a central figure for a cultural revival in Haida art and culture. He lives and works from his studio on the Semiahmoo Reserve in Southern British Columbia. I had the privilege of talking with him in his studio on the reserve.

As a token of respect, Robert was offered a tobacco pouch and a string of white wampum beads. We initially spoke of the issue of respect that is shown among Indigenous cultures and the protocols that accompany this, much like a mini ceremony.

Robert's father was a fisherman and he collected scrap pieces of wood and brought them home. Robert recalled, "My Dad kept bugging me to start carving." He was 13 years old at the time. He learned from his dad and grandfather and other family members who encouraged him and would let him know if something was wrong or needed to be fixed. He also expressed that only some of these people in Masset were silver engravers, and they were only part time as they made a living as fishermen or carpenters. His father was very clear with him that "you have to earn your own keep, that's the way." His teacher wanted to bring him to Seattle to the World's Fair to exhibit his work and talent but it would cost him $200 [in 1962]. Robert recalls the story when he was 16 years old; "my teacher invited me down to the World's Fair happening in Seattle. He invited me down for couple of weeks and I feared my dad, you know, I really feared him but I worked up the courage to ask for permission. And I build up my courage, I said, my teacher invited me to come to Vancouver for a couple of weeks. And he said, "Well, you have to earn your own way."

I was 16 and so I carried on carving and whatever means I could raise the money or whether it was earning, even collecting beer bottles on the streets or babysitting and a week before coming to Vancouver, I had $170.00 and like there's so much magic in the world. I was walking the street between the two villages, new Massett and old Massett and the owner of the Canary stopped and said, "Would you like to work for couple of days?" At that time I was getting paid $15 bucks a day so I made my $200.

At the age of 18 years in 1965, Robert moved to Vancouver to finish high school and he had to earn his own keep; carving was the means to do this. While living with a family in the city, he was set up to demonstrate carving at the Eaton's store and people would buy his work. He brought some argillite from Masset to work on and sell. He recounted that one of the incidences that impacted him the most was when a potential buyer told him he needed to work

on the argillite piece he was trying to sell. Robert said the potential purchaser told him the work was too rough. He said he wished he had kept track of this person because it was a lesson to help him present a first class job. The person did return and purchase the piece he worked on. It was undoubtedly a life changing realization that worked its way into the creation of a world-class artist.

Cultural Influences

Robert remembered that there was no art at home or even in the community when he was growing up but there was an old book that influenced him; it had images of old totems and pieces of artwork. While living in Vancouver to finish high school, he went to the museums to look at the old Haida totem poles. He was smitten and when he returned home, he looked for remnants of any of these cultural symbols. The images were mainly crests that came from family related symbols. These symbols were used in a commercial sense with the [bent] boxes that were being made and became a source of revenue for people along the BC coast. He said although they were different dimensions, there was a magic proportion. He saw and learned of the ovoid and U shapes in the carvings and the totems unique to the Haida and "once mastered, that's the magic, that is what draws you in." He also states that "the artform is very much like poetry". And he urges people to learn about this artform.

A significant time in the village of Old Massett happened in 1969 when a new totem pole was erected. Robert and his brother Reg carved the pole, which took over a year. He proudly stated that he did not realize how important the ceremony was for pole raising. The preparations for a pole raising prompted the old people in the village to come together at his grandparents' house and talk about stories from way back on how to raise a pole properly. "Those old people all spoke in Haida." He told me that the oldest person in those meetings was 90 years old. After

the pole was raised, he recalled, “I did not realize the impact [of raising a totem pole] until about 10 years later. It took that long for me to absorb what happened.”

Cultural Revival and Indigenous Thought

Community members have remarked how important this event was as there had not been any totems raised in 100 years. The ceremony marked the beginning of a cultural revival. “We are in the infancy of regaining our culture.” Cultural revival also means that Indigenous thought is a compact that is congruous to an Indigenous worldview. When Robert was asked whether he thought culture has permeated Indigenous thought in terms of how First Nations govern themselves, he replied very strongly, saying, “I think the more knowledge we have about our own history, we have a stronger foundation to work in both worlds.” He went on to speak about ceremonies that are important among west coast Indigenous peoples (i.e., potlatches), and said they provide confidence in people.

> It’s so amazing because we’ve been in a corner for so long, they [western society] don’t realize we have minds. You know, we have thoughts, our culture wasn’t made of crazy individuals, there was a solid foundation of thinkers that created our culture, we have been tucked in a corner, not taken seriously.

Reconciliation

> When asked about thoughts on reconciliation, Robert felt it was a two way thing and it is our responsibility to educate the colonists that we do have a say in determining our life. The residential schools were there to shut us up and actually kill us. I equate it to *Gogeet* who is like our supernatural Wildman; my grandfather said the *Gogeet* is a person whose spirit is too strong to die and I like to think of people who have survived this incredible onslaught are in that category of *Gogeet*. Reconciliation has to be a two-way

dialogue where the western thinking people need to feel it's important for them to want to learn our history.

When asked if he sees a change in receptivity to the idea of reconciliation, he responded in the positive but again referred to it as being in its infancy. He spoke of responsibilities of people to teach and provide information to those teachers who want to teach about native culture. For example, he goes to schools to talk to students about the culture at some teachers' requests.

Cultural Resurgence

With reference to the First Nations public, I asked why were some were hungry to be embraced by cultural support and to others, it was not important. He felt there was a void and it was the role of an artist to fill that void.

> You know it's kind of ironic that another name for alcohol is spirit. The Christians want to fill us with their spirituality and they had no idea that we had our spirituality and that we had our understanding of the cosmos. So, now, we are moving beyond Christianity. Our songs and ceremonies are now filling the void.

Spirituality

Robert said he thinks it is a human condition to connect with a higher power and singing our songs "did it for me" to make that connection. He shared a story:

> As part of a dance group called the Rainbow Creek Dancers, we brought back many dances. One of them is the Salmon Dance. When I used to fish for home use, I would mentally thank the trees, mentally thank the river and thank the salmon for the abundance. I had the idea of creating a Salmon mask and creating a Salmon ceremony so we created this dance. I thought it was something new. And one Elder said, wow, I

haven't seen that dance for a long time. So to me, it was an expression of gratitude to do that dance.

This raised an issue with respect to an innate cultural knowledge that something like that dance that was developed and thought to be a new dance, which was in fact an old one. Robert was asked how this could be explained. He responded,

> I think we are all connected to that cosmic memory. I use the imagery of we are all connected to that ancient valley by a thread and very much like the old pipe carvers in Masset. They are connecting. When we come together in a feast or Potlatch, all those threads are creating a thick rope because each one of us has something to add to that pool of knowledge. Like when the Elders came together and shared stories that created the foundation of the totem and the ceremony around the totem raising ceremony.

Ceremony, culture, and tradition are the major elements in Robert's life and livelihood. He lives it every day and has a studio full of work that is in different stages of completion. There was one piece that he had in a separate room that he carved to commemorate the Murdered and Missing Women. I asked if he had a commission to do it and he said no, it was just something that he needed to do. Although his early childhood was not steeped in cultural activity, his passion as an adult is to promote the strength of his culture and share it with people of all races as a matter of reconciliation. His humility, gifts, and talent are certainly worthy of the recognition he has gained as a world class artist. Robert's words below provide just a glimpse into the one of the art forms and the importance of the forms that are carved into totems, masks, and boxes.

> *Yeah, they [art pieces in a historical book] all are crest-related and they are historical documents. It's the only visual language we have. We worked hard, we didn't have a written language but these images would – they would tell the story, for example, the [Bent] boxes for example, they became very highly stylized. They were very abstract and*

I'm sure there's different reasons for that but one idea I have is that it became a trade item. So, in one of the documentation about the Bent boxes, he [Bill Reid] said that the box designs that the name he gave it was, it's good enough for him to and achieve up and down the coast. So, to me, you know they would go to the mainland and trade with mainland people and the new owner would give it the name. And now this box has this name.

Robert Davidson

Sophie Pierre, OC, OBC

"Leadership is having the confidence of the people in an individual; that they have what it takes to be a person that is going to provide guidance so that the community continues to exist."

Sophie Pierre is an accomplished person with an impressive background of achievements. She hails from the St. Mary's Indian Band known as ?aq'am of the Ktunaxa Nation near the city of Cranbrook, British Columbia where she served on Council for 30 years, —26 of those years as Chief. She also served as the chairperson of the First Nations Finance Authority, president of the St. Eugene Mission Holdings Ltd, and cochair of the International Advisory Committee to the Indigenous Nations Institute for Leadership, Management and Policy of the University of Arizona. She also served as Chief Commissioner of the BC treaty Commission for 6 years ending in 2015. She received the Order of Canada in 2016, the Order of British Columbia in 2002, and received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 2003. She has also received two honorary Doctorates in Laws. She continues to be involved with her family and community in community projects. I had the honour and privilege to meet Sophie in her community and at the renovated residential school where it was her vision to turn the residential school, which she attended as a child, into a five-star hotel (see Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5

This Statue Stands in the Garden in Front of the St. Eugene's Mission Resort as a Reminder that it was the Children who Inhabited the School

Note. Photo Credit: Daniel Brant August 2019

Figure 6

An Aerial View of the Resort Which Includes the Hotel, a Golf Club, a Banquet Facility and Storage Facilities

Note. Taken November 2020 St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino – Google Maps

Leadership

Sophie was asked about the beginnings of her leadership and what influenced her to become a leader. She attributed her knowledge to the fact that she was an only child and as a child, she grew up with her parents and grandparents. She recalled listening to them telling stories about people and about the reservation, reserve lands, how they ended up where they are now and how reserve lands used to be compared to the present day. She attributed this conversation as being instrumental in how decisions were being made. The fact that people sat and talked about things was the main ingredient: "Any major decision that was being made by our people required people to sit and talk." She noted decisions were made by consensus and recalled her stepfather giving her a definition of consensus after she had become Chief. He said, "All it really means is that you sit around and you chew on something that everybody can swallow without choking." This was a great lesson that stayed with her throughout her career.

Although her tutelage was with the Elders in the community, she never thought of herself as a leader and did not realize that she was in fact being groomed for leadership. "I know that I used to hear the stories about people talking about the reservation, the reserve lands, how we ended up where we are in terms of the reserve lands compared to the lands we used to use." Among these discussions, which were all in the Ktuxana language, was a recollection as to when the governance changed on the reserve, from a traditional form and sense of governance to a system imposed by the Indian Agent. She recalled her Grandfather talking about that when the Indian Agent told her Grandfather, who was Chief at the time: "He told him that our ways were no longer acceptable, that there had to be an election.… You know what, you're living in a democracy. And so everybody gets to put an X on someone's name." Sophie's response was

> That's not democracy. That is simply picking out the most popular kid in school. That's a way of manipulating really how you determine leadership in your community because leadership in your community, it's not a popularity contest, which is really what, you know, voting for someone is.

This connection with classic hegemony impacted her views on leadership as she stated,

> Leadership is having the confidence of the people in an individual; that they have what it takes to be a person that is going to provide guidance so that community continues to exist. And yes, of course, it can be argued well, that's, you know, that's really what you're doing when you're voting. But that's not how the Canadian system works now because you may get 30% of the people actually vote.

Even as she attended residential school for 9 years, she stated that the foundation that she received from birth to 6 years old was based on cultural values along with the language and that was strong enough that it was not taken over by the effects of residential school.

Language

Sophie is fluent in her own language having grown up with the Ktuxana language being spoken as the first language in her home. She also learned English and consequently at a very young age, she recalled taking her Grandmother to Cranbrook, the closest town, where her Grandmother would go door to door to sell her beadwork. Sophie, at 5 years of age, would act as her translator and negotiator. She recalled with some delight, that she would not take a lesser offer from potential purchasers. Little did she know that this was an education for much larger negotiations she would become involved in later in life.

When she was in residential school, she recalled that for the children who were unable to speak English, it was a real problem. In addition, it was not only the nuns and priests but other

students who could speak English who were mean and unkind to these students. She witnessed cruelty but also kindness and compassion from other students who were willing to help.

Knowledge of Indigenous language becomes critical when Nations are reconstituting their governing documents:

> One of the things that we've had to re-learn ourselves is that when we were taking our governing documents like our constitution and putting them into Ktunaxa, it's not a matter of taking an English word and translating it into Ktunaxa or vice versa. That doesn't work. You have to have the concept. What is it that you are wanting to say? And then it's that concept. And it's so – it's not a match word for them, it's not at all. I mean, you have to be thinking about it, like when we talk about laws, if I can use that as an example.

The example of laws became an important pedagogical lesson that relates directly to Indigenous thought and illustrations of the differences in worldviews.

> Law is – the most important law in not the law that is written or thought of by human beings. It is the laws that understand and carry on with the rules of what we call natural law. So, it's the law that says that you never take more than you need. You know, you don't strip a mountain in order to get access to coal so you can make a lot of money. That's the opposite of what we call law. But yet, it would be very much protected. That activity is protected by Canadian law. So is that what you were getting with that kind of thinking?

Cultural Pedagogy

Understanding there is a difference in worldview between Western and Indigenous epistemologies is an important factor when navigating the differences and successes in a

contemporary world. Sophie was well aware that these differences emanate from a cultural perspective. Nevertheless, she was also predictive in what needed to be done. She stated,

> Cultural knowledge has to continue to adapt to, you know, the cultural knowledge that was given to me in the 50s and 60s that has had to go through and be interpreted in a way that is going to give me direction, so that I can help others and pass on that information in 2019. So, I guess it's a way of talking about how our people have to adapt. But you don't adapt in a way that you have to give up, that you totally abandon what are the foundational values that make you who you are.

The foundation of these cultural values are the keys to our sustainability.

This conversation led to a question of cultural survival and sustainability. Sophie's response was more than a statement; it was a declaration of confidence, security, and sustainability culled from the values she had been given from birth. She said,

> It doesn't matter whatever any government law is passed. If you were born Ktuxana, you're going to die Ktuxana. That's all there is to it. And another Ktuxana cannot take that away from you. That is something you have. So, you have that as, then it becomes a responsibility. Well what does that mean? What does it mean to be Ktuxana? So, you have a responsibility to find out and to ensure that it carries on so that your grandchildren will know that they are Ktuxana and why they are Ktuxana.

Governing Structures

As mentioned earlier, the federal government imposed the Indian Act in Ktuxana in 1933 and that imposition was profound. "It destroyed a lot of our people while it is trying to destroy our language and culture but it did not destroy the roots of it." The fundamental values are embedded in the language and Sophie was emphatic in saying, "Governing structures are based

entirely on your language and your cultural values. And those are best explained when you're using your own language." The ties between governance, language, and culture are inseparable.

She explained that when she became Chief, the governance systems under the Indian Act (1985) were well ensconced into the management and operation of the reserve. She explained that because of the education system, and the fact that the relationship with Western ideologies were relatively new, 150 years in British Columbia as opposed to 500 years of contact in Eastern Canada, it was easier to take advantage of the Indian Act and the policies of the federal government when they started to turn things over to First Nations. They started to take over everything they could. This evolved quickly into rebuilding their Nation. They accepted responsibility to take over areas such as education, child and family services, taxation, land management, land codes, and administrative systems. She also stated, "As we were doing that, we're slowly turning it around and bringing back our own fundamental values." The main purpose for doing this was to ensure their own future, so they could ensure that their families would continue to be Ktuxana.

She also acknowledged that they have to be confident in what they were doing. "You have to have enough confidence in what you're doing to be able to review it and say, maybe this isn't quite right." When asked if there was a political divide in the community that was caused by the Indian Act (1985), she responded by saying,

> I think that the governance, the nation rebuilding that we've been doing has been so steeped and ensuring that we're bringing forward that we are rebuilding on Ktuxana cultural values, language and knowledge competencies. That's what we are working on.

Politics

Sophie started out working as the band secretary and lived through the revolution that is chronicled in Chapter 2. Because there were no historic treaties in British Columbia, she felt the First Nations leadership had an opportunity to rebuild their nations from the ground up. She became involved with the Kootenay-Okanagan District Council, which evolved into the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council, and eventually was transformed into the Ktunaxa Nation.

Sophie acknowledged the transformative work that was undertaken by the First Nation leaders in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. People like Joe Mathias, George Manuel, and Bill Wilson.

> You know through those times in the 70s and 80s, we were doing constitutional talks and then it brought us into the 90s. And then, I've really worried that we really have not done our own duty in passing that forward because I don't know what's going on with leadership these days.

I asked if she were to write a biography of a leader, who would it be and without hesitation, she responded that it would be Joe Mathias. I asked why? She replied,

> Because he had a way of being very inclusive of people. He had a way of his thought process, like it was phenomenal. He, whatever situation he was in, he was able to bring forward and have an example from either a teaching from his grandfather or something Aristotle said, you know, like it was just – he had a gift. And it just could relate perfectly. And it explained to people why we needed to do things a certain way. And people would say, oh yeah, you're right. Okay, let's do it. He just had that gift. And maybe I haven't been looking very far. I haven't crossed paths with anybody else that has that different gift. And we lost our way too soon.

She described the qualities of a Squamish leader and Joe was every bit of what she described.

Cultural Endurance and Responsibility

Continuing on the conversation on the question of endurance of Indigenous culture, led to the issue of responsibility and I asked if she thought First Nations had a responsibility to teach Canadians some issues of sustainability or should First Nations hold those ideals as internal philosophies. She responded,

> I think that we have always been teaching. It's just that Canadians have not acknowledged it. And they have tried to do everything to destroy, you know, that's what we have been teaching –what has been taught to them all along. And most enlightened people are recognizing that cultural knowledge now.

Indigenous Knowledge

We spoke briefly about environmental issues and the fact that Indigenous knowledge has shown itself to be consistent with issues that environmentalists have been most recently raising. Making decisions on Indian lands are made with Indigenous values in mind, which comes from the inherent knowledge that has been passed down. She also stated that in some respects, some of the traditional knowledge has been lost but the roots of it are strong enough that the resulting decisions are still compliant with the original traditional knowledge.

Vision and Leadership

Vision is important but Sophie warned against being too far ahead of the people. She again reinforced the importance of recognizing the values held by the Nation. "If they can't see you anymore, they will get their own leader." With respect to whether Indigenous people were ready in general to take on more responsibility, she stated,

Our people were ready 50 years ago, our people were ready 100 years ago, our people are always ready. It's whether or not we as the people who are in leadership positions are actually paying attention. The idea that our people are not ready, where does that come from? That comes from western thinking. Tell our people have always been ready. That's not the thing that I always hear. We have a lot of healing to do. Well you don't stop living, heal, and then carry on life. Healing is part of life; healing is part of being ready.

Finally, Sophie said the following:

> *Just because we are so ingrained in that right now, we're not ingrained yet, but we're so involved in that discussion right now because we are rewriting our constitution. And so we're, talking about, like laws from the Canadian sense. You know, there's a court that makes a decision, and then that government that writes the laws, based on all the various arguments. And everything is so meant to meet a certain expectation. There's a certain definition of what law is.*
>
> *You take law and we try to explain it on the benefit side. Law is – the most important law is not law that is written or thought of by human beings. It is laws that understand and carry on with the rules of what we call natural law. So, it's the law that says that you never take more than you need. You know, you don't strip a mountain in order to get access coal so you can make a lot of money. That's opposite of what we call law. But yet, it would be very much protected. That activity is protected by Canadian law.*
>
> *I think that it's really difficult not to recognize always that that you are in two worlds and that you have to continue to exist in two worlds, because today's reality is that's what you're living in. But then there's also certain things that you know. You just know that it's either right or wrong. And you know that you have to be able to continue to pass on what was given to you as your cultural knowledge passed that on.*
>
> *Knowing that, that cultural knowledge has to continue to adapt to, you know, the cultural knowledge that was given to me in the 50s and 60s that has had to go through and be interpreted in a way that it's going to give me direction, so that I can help others and pass on that information in 2019. So, I guess it's a way of talking about how our people continue to have to adapt. But you don't adapt in a way that you give up that you totally abandon what are the foundational values that make you who you are.*
>
> *Like for us what I mean, yes, and what I mean by that is, you take the concept of natural law and it does not compare to law in the sense of what we have now in Canada directly, but it does connect indirectly. Because you know that people are recognizing that the fact that they have done so much damage to the world, to the earth that it is creating climate change which then is going to affect the way that we live. That's what we were taught*

right from the beginning, that you do not destroy the habitat of the animals and expect that you're going to continue to live because you depend on them. They don't depend on you.

There isn't an animal that depends on a human to exist, except maybe my old dog. But that's not really what we're talking about here. But, you know, like, in the way that that life is created, I mean, yes, we're the bottom of the rung and yet we continue to mess up our own house.

Sophie Pierre

Jody Wilson-Raybould[10]

"If you don't tell the truth, your culture dies."

Jody Wilson-Raybould became a household name in 2019-2020 and for good reason. She hails from the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk/Laich-Kwil-Tach people who are part of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation in British Columbia and has been involved in Indigenous issues since childhood. She graduated from UBC law school in Vancouver in 1999 and worked as a Crown Prosecutor in British Columbia. She was elected as a federal member of parliament in 2015 and quickly was appointed Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, the first Indigenous person to hold that important post. Jody has always been a strong advocate of Indigenous rights and served as the BC regional vice chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 2009 to 2015. She resigned from the federal cabinet in February 2019 and was reelected as an independent member of parliament in October 2019.

[10] **Note to reader:** During my conversation with Jody, I found out later that day that my technology failed and the recording did not happen. I did however take notes. Therefore this article has a feature which none of the other records of conversations contain. That is, I referenced her (2019) book *From Where I Stand* in places that supported my written notes. The readers will find page references in some places and quotations in others. The quotations are from my notes and the citations are from her book.

Childhood

In an excerpt from the National Film Board documentary titled, *Dancing Around the Table* (Bulbulian, 1987), the context that frames the atmosphere that Jody grew up in has been captured. Jody's father, Bill Wilson, was a principal spokesperson at the 1983 Aboriginal Constitutional Conferences, which is where this exchange took place.

> In a now infamous exchange, Kwakwaka'wakw lawyer and lead negotiator Bill Wilson states that he has two children who want to become lawyers and prime minister. When he says that they are Indigenous women, the male audience bursts into laughter, and Trudeau replies, "Tell them I'll stick around until they're ready." Over 30 years later, Bill Wilson's daughter, Jody Wilson-Raybould, became Canada's first Indigenous Minister of Justice and Attorney General in the Government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. (Bulbian, 1987, 25:30)

As a child, Jody watched her Dad as he was involved in the 1983 constitutional discussions and one cannot help but think that this early impression influenced her profoundly. Although she states that her Dad had expectations that his kids could do anything they wanted to do in life. She was raised to take on leadership roles and states "However, I had never thought of becoming a Member of Parliament, let alone the Prime Minister". [As her dad suggested]. Family was always involved and was important to her as she was raised by both her immediate family and by her grandparents.

Another thing that was important to Jody and was perhaps an epiphany moment, was when she received her traditional name at a Potlatch at Gilford Island when she was 5 years old. Also with an amazing turn of serendipity, I was at that potlatch and it was one of the most incredible events I have ever had the privilege to witness. The name that was given to her was

Puglaas, an Eagle Clan name, which means "a woman born to noble people." Wilson-Raybould (2019) stated, "In my culture, holding the name Puglaas, like other names, comes with clear expectations, responsibilities, and accountabilities. Today, this is the work of helping to carry forward, in an ever-changing world, our communitarian teachings—in which everyone has a role to play, creating a society where our people, and all peoples, can live together in patterns of harmony and unity, while upholding, celebrating, and respecting the distinctiveness of diverse peoples and the beauty, strength, and knowledge they bring to our human family" (p. 6). She continued to attend potlatches and still does, and stated, "We had an obligation to be involved in our community."

During the ceremony at the potlatch, everyone had a role and hers was to provide guidance. She described her role further:

> In our system [in the Big House] I am a Hiligaxste' (a role always held by women) One of my jobs is to lead my Hamatsa, the Chief, into the Big House. This role can be translated as one who "corrects the Chief's path". We show them the way – a metaphor for life. (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 5)

The potlatch is our system of governance which includes teaching our value systems such as inclusion and respect for the land and people.

Values

There is no question that inherent values are the goal posts for Jody which are found in the cultural paradigms of her Nation. She spoke of respect and that values are derived from ceremony. She stated that community is an important function and it is important to be surrounded by the same values. She was always taught to tell the truth and stated very strongly

that “If you don’t tell the truth, your culture dies.” She wrote, “We are expected to tell the truth and to speak up” (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 214). Everyone has a role, she counselled:

> We all have a role to play in ultimately improving the quality of life in our communities – each role is equally important and is critical to ensuring that society functions as it should. Always speak the truth, be guided by principles and integrity – it will never steer you wrong. (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 221)

Gender Issues

Gender acknowledgement plays an important role in who Jody is and what she believes in and this belief comes straight out of the traditional teachings. She stated, “My society, in important ways, is a matrilineal one. This means that descent is traced and property is inherited through the female line” (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 5). “It is true that everyone has a role to play. I would say that for us… traditionally… through my grandmother, aunties… we were never really conscious of gender perse… we just had clarity as to our respective roles and responsibilities… there was a necessary balance between men and women, between clans/tribes… The Indian Act disrupted this balance.”

It is perhaps ironic that she has strong views on how women were treated under government legislation (and then became the Attorney General of Canada). She lays the outdated, patriarchal and uber-controlling issues directly at the feet of the Indian Act (1985) and stated,

> The Indian Act in turning Indigenous social and political systems on their head, often shifting the balance of power between men and women. For example, the Indian Act system does not acknowledge matrilineal heritage. By eradicating hereditary leadership

> structures, the Act abolished the central role of women in many of our Tribes in raising, teaching, guiding, and regulating Chiefs. (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 216)

She sees women as the communicators and the doers in taking the lead in communities:

> It is women who are often in the forefront of advancing the process of true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples which means confronting and ending the legacy of colonialism in Canada and replacing it with a future built on Indigenous self-determination, including self-government, through a rights based and principled approach, which must include legislation and major policy shifts across government.… Women are truly driving the needed governance and program reform to get beyond the Indian Act and other colonial institutions. (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 217)

In a conversation, I had with Senator Murray Sinclair, I asked him about his emotional health and how he survived the long hard job of dealing with the testimony during the consultation phase of the Truth and Reconciliation commission. He responded that it was reaching into the depths of his culture that kept him going, and further added that it was the women who were the ones who should be recognized as the keepers of the culture.

Governance

Jody is stalwart in recognizing that Indigenous governance is different from Indigenous governing structures. A marked difference that she observed about Western governance was that Christianity played a large part in the governing systems. She also made an indictment of sorts saying that truth is lacking in the broader population. She stated, " I would say that 'truth' is something that is not upheld in federal politics as it is im my culture. The governing structures/ways –politics – among Indigenous peoples is very different than non-Indigenous political realities. It is true that everyone has a role to play. I would say that for

us…traditionally…through my grandmother, aunties…we were never really conscious of gender parse … we just had clarity as to our respective roles and responsibilities…there was necessary balance between men and women, between clans/tribes. The Indian Act disrupted this balance. “ Truth is a value that was instilled very early in her life through the teachings in the longhouse and with her family.

As previously noted, Jody believes that if you do not tell the truth, your culture dies. Calling on her participation in the Big House and the ceremonies made her think about structure, roles, and responsibilities. She stated, “We all have a role to play in ultimately improving the quality of life in our communities—each role is equally important and is critical to ensuring that society functions as it should” (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 221). She stated further that the different worldviews are hard to reconcile because Indigenous people have a different outlook on life but we understand who we are. She observed that our community is highly diverse and that gives her pause to reflect on worldviews of other people and other communities.

Indigenous governance functions much more by consensus and it has been shown that this way of making decisions has withstood the test of time. She stated through consensus people make better decisions. All of us in this country need to use some lessons from the Indigenous community to affect issues like environment and climate change. She noted as well that the Indigenous community has no real partisanship. She stated profoundly, “There needs to be transformative change in the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the other governments. Non-Indigenous governments could learn a lot from Indigenous knowledge, legal orders and ways of being… Indigenous peoples/nations need to rebuild—to be self-determining, including self-governing. And we need partners.”

Cultural Survival

A question asked of each of participant was, "Why are we still here as Indigenous peoples?" Jody responded by saying, " that as a people, we are resilient and we understand who we are as people. We recognize the interconnected and integrated nature of humanity…all things are connected. I was raised and expected to play leadership roles. In my teachings, playing such roles is not about choice. It is about the responsibilities that one carries. In my people's worldview—like Indigenous peoples everywhere—we understand everyone has roles to play and responsibilities to fulfill. We all have value. We are all important. And it is by everyone playing their roles, and fulfilling their responsibilities, that we thrive and progress individually and collectively. In this worldview there is also a recognition of how we are all fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. Everyone must play their roles to maintain the balance that allows us to continue to move forward."

Language is important too because it reinforces concepts that cannot be translated. We understand that our way of being has to change with the passage of time, we have to enhance a new reality which will be based on a relationship with other governments. In order to accomplish this, we will need to get rid of some of the structures that presently exist, the Indian Act (1985) being the prime candidate. Elders will play an important role but we have to understand that some Elders are real and others are not.

Being raised in a traditional governance system and then to an extremely senior position in a western government, the question was asked about balance, to which she responded that it was a handful of people who kept her grounded, her friends, her sister, her parents, and more broadly, her community. Her community meaning her traditional community and the traditional governing systems. When asked how she resolves important issues, she stated that her worldview

has led her to be in a position she is in and she has to accept the challenges that come with the responsibility of the office. She was clear and stated that protocols establish systems and restated that we have to move onto a different paradigm particularly on land-based issues. Hegemony is not the way. Truth has been a principle always fulfilled by Jody as she explained in presentation to a federal Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice on February 28, 2019.

> *My understanding of the rule of law has also been shaped by my experiences as an Indigenous person and as an Indigenous leader. The history of Crown-Indigenous relations in this country includes a history of the rule of law not being respected. Indeed, one of the main reasons for the urgent need for justice and reconciliation today is that, in the history of our country, we have not always upheld foundational values such as the rule of law in relations to Indigenous Peoples. And I have seen the negative impacts for freedom, equality and a just society this can have first-hand.*
>
> *So when I pledged to serve Canadians as your Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I came to it with a deeply ingrained commitment to the rule of law and the importance of acting independently of partisan, political and narrow interests in all matters. When we do not do that, I firmly believe and know we do worse as a society.*
>
> *I will conclude by saying this: I was taught to always be careful what you say because you cannot take it back. I was taught to always hold true to your core values and principles and to act with integrity. These are the teachings of my parents, my grandparents and my community.*
> *I come from a long line of matriarchs and I'm a truth teller, in accordance with the laws and traditions of our Big House.*
>
> *This is who I am and this is who I always will be.*
>
> Jody Wilson-Raybould

Mike Mitchell

> *"My kids are going to grow up knowing fully well who they are. Nation, develop the nation mind, the nation spirit so that's the bar I set out there right now."*

Mike Mitchell served as the Grand Chief of the Mohawks of Akwesasne for over 30 years but was raised in the longhouse in the traditional teachings of the Mohawk Nation government. Prior to being a leader in his homeland of Akwesasne, he worked as a director of an Indian Film Crew for the National Film Board. During his tenure as Grand Chief of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, he took many initiatives to regain control back from Ottawa and the

provinces into the hands of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, including elections, conservation, environment, justice, policing, membership, and education. He was also instrumental in gaining authority over the waterways in the St. Lawrence River as it passed through the traditional territory of the Akwesasne Mohawks. He retired from politics in 2015 but has been called on by the Assembly of First Nations to provide them with guidance as a resident Elder, a title that he bristles at a bit.

Childhood

Mike Kanentakeron was raised in part by his grandparents on St Regis Island, which is a small island across from the village of St. Regis, Québec and east of Cornwall Island, Ontario, the largest island district for the population of Akwesasne. His grandparents had no modern day services on that Island and no modern highway transportation other than a horse and buggy. His grandfather had a small farm with about 20 head of cattle so they had a very humble standard of living. His grandfather used to drink perhaps a little too much when he was young, then but at one time, a friend of his grandfather invited him to a ceremony at the longhouse and he decided to go. After more trips to the longhouse, he decided to give up drinking and go back to his traditional beliefs. Mike's grandfather's family at that time were RC church going people so his grandfather going to the longhouse created a bit of a rift in the family. However, Mike found;

> That it was the ultimate experience for him to attend Longhouse ceremonies. Everything was said in the Mohawk language. The ceremonies and traditional songs had given [him] his peace of mind that he decided to for more, after that he was convinced that if he kept going but he had to give up drinking and stay away from people who did so, it changed his life forever.

His grandfather was very explicit that he wanted Mike to be raised in the longhouse traditions instead of the teachings of the Christian Church. His sister though, did not think that was right and secretly took Mike to have him baptized. His grandfather having given specific instructions that this should not ever happen took Mike towards the Longhouse teachings even more. The result was that Mike was brought to the Longhouse ceremonies from a very early age.

" Most family because they did not have a whole lot back when they went to the Longhouse, would bring their own wood and food for the duration of the ceremony. Because there are wood stoves at both ends on the Longhouse, it would be enough to heat the Longhouse. These are things that I remember as a child so after supper, my grandfather would go over what took place from the day of ceremony. He tried to explain what songs were sung as well as their meaning. I could tell even when I was just a child the immense pride that he had in being a traditional Mohawk man so I kind of grew into that mold of the way he was. I always looked forward to attending our ceremonies at the longhouse especially for Midwinter Ceremonies which would take place in January or February depending on the moon cycle.

At midwinter Ceremonies, the medicines would be renewed, starting with the *stirring of* the ashes when renewal songs are sung, during that week children will get their names, thanksgiving songs are sung every all week. So when it's all over, you kind of live off that good feeling of the closeness of family that carries into the spring when Maple Sap ceremony comes along followed by the planting of the three sisters, corn beans and squash then strawberry ceremony, all ceremonies celebrate the gift of life, as the seasons change, Mother Nature will tell us when to prepare for next ceremony. Our ceremonies of the year are known as the Four Sacred Ceremonies. When I turned sixteen, I became a faith keeper in the Longhouse which meant that I

now had the responsibility to speak about the ceremony that will take place on that day, what songs that will be sung," and very important, give speeches related to the ceremony of the day.

Language

During these very early years, everything in Akwesasne family life was in Mohawk, Mike didn't know any English until he went to school and the introduction to school was traumatic because all students got needles from doctors and nurses, other times they had dentists that pulled out your teeth so Mike thought this was what school was all about. During the first month, Mike got tired of being hurt by these people so he stole a boat and went back to his grandfather's farm on St. Regis Island. Later in the week, his parents came and got him and explained to him that he had to go back to school.

Adding to this trauma was the fact that he didn't speak any English and some of the teachers were very strict which made some his memories of school very bitter and scary at times. Although 99% of the students were from Akwesasne and spoke mostly Mohawk, the instruction was all in English. He could remember only one teacher who took the time to help them learn English that gave him the confidence he needed to stay in school.

Teachings

An important part of his education came from being in the longhouse and expressing an interest in the ceremonies, songs and dances but an equal amount of education came from listening to his grandfather and his friends telling stories and about the activities that were going to happen in the longhouse. Mike stated,

> When you enter the Longhouse whether it is for a meeting or ceremony, they start with an opening or thanksgiving. We call it Ohenta Karihwatehkwen *or* the words that comes before all else and in that they offer thanksgiving from mother earth, it starts from there,

> waters, land, trees, animals, birds, winds, grandmother moon, grandfather sun beyond the heavens to ultimately to the creator. Everything dispatched to it and in each part reserves where you attribute all the parts of creation that have to be acknowledged and that sets a tempo. That sets the peaceful mind. It clears the mind so that at the end, you say whatever has to be done or said today we will do it in a clear mind and say things in a good way, respectful of each other. Not just to each other, but we have to have respect for the land that we walk on. Everything that is part of creation we have to hold it in highest esteem. That is the pattern for the meeting that you are going to have. It is all based on respect and honour.

Politics

It seemed a strange departure to become involved in an elected position and I asked about the main differences he saw between the way the elected council ran and the traditional council at the longhouse. He responded by recounting what it was like:

> The council had no power because everything you decided to do, you also had to send to Ottawa. Any law that you pass, they call a by-law but you had to send it to Ottawa. They would look it over and they decide whether they're going to allow you to make that law. Most times they would refuse it, send it back to you. So eventually I found out there's really nothing you could do as a council as a government of sorts to truly reflect the wishes of your community because it was dominated by Indian affairs at every level and they would refer it over to justice. They would review it, send it back to you, and unless it benefited them in some way so it was kind of the opposite of everything that I had learned.

Mike's entry into politics was reluctant, because he did not agree with the manner of control that the government had over the territory. In addition, the elected chief, who had been there for 16 years, was unwilling to be replaced. Even after being voted out, the former chief refused to leave. The dispute was settled in an old fashion pugilistic way. Mike served as Grand Chief for another 30 years.

The ideology that Mike brought to the elected council was one that reflected the values and traditions of the Mohawk people and not the federal government. Mike reflected on that time saying:

> To change the mindset and there were some rough times, I got beat up in the office that I occupied. I would go to work and once I get to the American side because I got to get to the American side to get back into the Quebec side of Akwesasne, they would wait for me and push my car in a ditch, punch me up. Sometimes I could get to work, sometimes I couldn't. It was a rough introduction and the Elders would say you got to try to last. You can't quit on this so they had this image that with their support we were going to turn around the type of attitude that existed back there and I did get a lot of support and every time there was an election, I would say one more term.

The Past and the Future

I asked Mike the question that was posed to most of the participants: *Why have Ongwehon:we survived?* He replied at length:

> Like a small spark that I referred to as a spirit. The indigenous spirit in us, so many of our people carried that into residential school and it survived and it came home and even though they came home without pride of language, culture, identity, they still survived and relearned it and or had a tragic ending to it because all what was taken from them.

Now [the teachers] they thought they were educating them or turning them into good Christians but what they were taking from them was a spirit of Ongwehon:we. And so of all things thrown at us it's what we have reclaimed. We're now at a time where our young people are seeing that. There's a reclamation now of culture, language, tradition whereas the generation before us were at a time where-- time period where people accepted it's better to try to be white people and not have anything to do with our traditions, our ceremonial knowledge, our sacred songs, the ceremonies, ceremonial knowledge or anything that reflects our culture and that was enforced through the church.

It [assimilation] was enforced through residential school. It was reinforced to the Indian Act in position on us. Even the Mounties enforced all the laws that were stacked against us so we were forced to change at most times. So having said all that the ones that went through that and become aware and acknowledge themselves who they were. Even the education system they said why your people were savages. You're tagged the poor settlers. Everything was reversed in terms of storytelling in history. We were always the bad guys. The *heathens,* the pagans, the savages' etcetera, etcetera. That mindset regulates you down. You think less of yourself. You come home from residential school you think even less of yourself as Ongwehon:we or as Indigenous people so I think surviving that we're in a period of reclaiming who we're and rebuilding our nation.

So that's why a lot of our young people now are taking a different look at themselves and say I want it back. I wonder who I am. I want it back to be Ongwehon:we again. I know we have three *survival* schools in Akwesasne. We started out in the 70s with Akwesasne Freedom School which is still going and quite strongly. There's an awareness and even the elected side you would think our nation, the Longhouse is always

going to be there carrying Ongwehon:we spirit, cultural, and ceremony and etcetera but there are two others. The tribal elected system has become very aware of culture and preservation of language, importance of it. As the elected side on the Canadian side with more accounts of Akwesasne. So we're coming into different times; we're ready to give it up.

We're in a process of saying we're not only taking it back but we want to strengthen who we are with the knowledge and we have better appreciation of who we are than ever before. I always quote Justin Trudeau's father, Pierre. The first constitutional meeting they had the whole process it did not get the support to have any sign into the constitutional or even the ability to have it acknowledged and when it was all over said and done, Prime minister Trudeau, Pierre Trudeau said and I remember him saying, "We could not enshrine your rights into constitution as a constitutional right, indigenous or aboriginal right, right to self- government, etcetera. However, not to worry less than a generation from now you'll cease to exist anyway." And when he was pressured to explain why he would say that, he said that because you'll no longer speak your language. You'll have no knowledge of your ceremonies or anything of your culture, you will have become one of us with this legislature, envisioned rights, out of existence. You will be full-fledged Canadians.

I tell that to our young people. Now you see you remember what he said. I want to use it as a reverse strategy to make people think. I mean we can let them. We can surrender our language and culture, ceremonies, etcetera, respect for it or we can say we're not surrendering. My kids are going to grow up knowing fully well who they are.

Nation, develop the nation mind, the nation spirit so that's the bar I set out there right now.

There is no question that because of the cultural teachings and the commitment to his culture, that the governance structures Mike envisaged and how he presented himself as a leader served as a model for other First Nation peoples. Even though his early days were fraught with personal conflict and sometimes harm, he persevered because he was asked to do so by the people he respected. His dedication to his cultural tenants can only be respected and applauded. Moreover, he shows no sign of slowing down even though he is now called an Elder. Mike speaks to the importance of language in the development of a leader.

> *All my training came from the others' knowledge. The different ones I would speak to at a very young age, which probably had to do with developing into leadership abilities later in life. The confidence that you get from being a speaker leads into when you speak English it carries with you and your responsibilities as a leader given that cultural background and knowledge of language, it turns you into a strong-minded person later on in life.*
>
> Mike Mitchell

Kluane Adamek

> *"We are still here because of that strength of connection, spirituality, culture, language and an ability to connect with those who have come before."*

Kluane Adamek represents a new generation of Indigenous leaders as she takes a major role in the political arena as a regional Vice Chief of the Yukon territory. She comes from a diverse background with Tligit, Southern Tutchone, German, and Irish origins. She is a citizen of the Kluane First Nation and belongs to the *Dakl'aweidi (Killerwhale) Clan.* She is university educated, holding a master's degree in business administration, is highly involved in Indigenous youth issues and has served as an advisor to National Chief Shawn Atleo (along with participation on other boards with concerns in northern Canada). She led and founded *Our*

Voices, a collective of northern Indigenous emerging leaders. Due to the 2020 pandemic, this conversation was carried out via Zoom.

Background

Kluane was acutely aware of her role and responsibilities as a leader in the Yukon and gender issues that are attached to a matrilineal culture. She expressed gratitude to her grandmother and other matriarchs of her *Dakl'aweidi* clan, the Killer Whale clan for the teachings. With respect to her role, she stated, "You're representing your entire clan and your entire Nation. The leadership of respect and compassion has always been really important to me." Her background from one Indigenous parent and one non-Indigenous parent played an important role in shaping her worldview. Growing up as a child in a southern urban situation and then moving to the Yukon as a young adult offered her different perspectives. She credits her grandmother telling her about the way she grew up: "This is so important because you can see both worlds." She spoke of a common issue held in many First Nations communities that people are ostracized to some extent if they did not grow up on the rez. "In the Yukon, I find it's very different. It's very much about leadership, it's about who you are and how you show up for community. And that's always been something that my family has always instilled."

Influences

It is interesting that among the major influences leading to Kluane's involvement in the Indigenous sector was attendance at an Aboriginal Healing Foundation event dealing with residential schools—an event her mother took her to. She was also impressed when hearing Phil Fontaine. She stated,

> He shared his story and it was so powerful and you could feel the energy of the Elders, the deep, raw, emotional energy and at the same time this sense of resilience and

compassion. And so I thought, Wow, that's amazing. And they're still here, right? Like my grandmother is still here, my great uncles are still here and they're still living. Like this is incredible. So, that propelled me to get more involved.

Her involvement at university also sparked her interests in that she was finding other Indigenous students "who were just like me … there's so many more of us that have the same story." This was important because attending public school in a non-Indigenous community, she recalled that they did not learn about Indigenous peoples.

Other people that influenced her were internationally known world leaders such as Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Michelle Obama. These influences may have been factors in the educational challenges she encountered while attending university. Those challenges in large part resulted from her not only being a woman but an Indigenous woman and observations of these high profile women were undoubtedly influential and supportive of her moving into a leadership role.

Culture Shock

As a product of both western and Indigenous worlds, she experienced culture shock twice, one for each world. She recalled her grandmother in the Yukon going hunting and telling the kids to get in the back of a pickup truck and her memory was, "Oh my God, this is crazy" or having her 5- and 6-year-old cousins teach her how to properly skin a muskrat. On the other side, when at university, she would hear from non-Indigenous students who were unaware of an Indigenous worldview with different rights and her response was, "Well, this is what you need to understand."

Stories

Stories are related to the concept of land and the connection to the land. She observed that interconnectivity is hard for people to understand. She felt frustration when asked to prove scientifically something that legends have spoken of for years, if not centuries. “From an Indigenous worldview, our Elders would say, you just don’t ask those questions. You just listen. And that’s how it is.” A story that she uses to help people understand their resiliency and where we are going is a traditional story of the migration pattern of her clan who came from the coast to the internal part of the Yukon. She recounted the story:

> In the southern part of the Yukon there was a great flood. And it was two Elders that were part of the clan, they came to this great glacier and they were paddling and they were wondering, “Do we go over it? Do we go under it? What do we do?” And the clan was deliberating and it was the two matriarchs who said, “We’re going to go and we’re going to try to go through it. We see there’s an opening, we’re going to try it.” And there’s a song about the process of them pushing their canoes out and then there’s a song from when they reached the other side. And so I often describe how that story represents so much about clan governance discussions. The Elders say, “We’re going to go.” That’s what’s happening. Everyone responds, listens, understands that. The women go. They get to the other side. There’s a song about it. So, that song we still sing, which is really special. And this whole concept of the glacier, right, being this like insurmountable feat and they were able to make it through because they had the support and strength of their clan. They had songs through the process.
>
> And that this glacier can represent in so many ways the challenges that we’re dealing with now, like missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls,

> intergenerational impacts of residential schools, substance abuse, over representation in the justice system, etc. And so I love that story because it often helps disarm, I would say, from a Western colonial perspective that the stories, the ways of knowing and being are so important from an indigenous worldview and that has a lot of value actually in this time and space we're in. So, those were my influencers.

Stories are important and Kluane shared; "when it comes to the stories, it was actually going to Carleton [University] and getting that fire that I would say gets lit when you're in spaces and places of challenging and learning and connecting with other indigenous students who were just like me, right? Who were like, "Oh my God, I get you. That's my story too." I was like, "Yes, there's so many more of us that have the same story.

Survival of the Culture

When asked how the culture has survived, Kluane responded in a couple of ways. First was a pragmatic response that had to do with the climate and with the ability to plan and be strategic within a community to ensure that everyone was safe.

> Our people have been through every single possible feat that you would think would eliminate a people, but we are still here. I really do believe in my whole heart that it has much to do with the connection to the land and to the creator and our Ancestors.

She was asked about why cultural survival seems to be inherent in Indigenous people and she responded with a number of responses but her initial reply was, "How could it not be?" She then spoke about the role of language in cultural survival.

Language

Although not a fluent speaker of her native language, Kluane noted,

> The language and the culture and the pride in little kids when they drum, it's like the most beautiful thing ever. And that continues to be something we have to look to because it connects us to who we are.… I hear our speakers talk about how important the language is and the way in which you view the world through language is so different, it is language and culture that continue to be those pieces that build us up.

Kluane noted that the Arctic Council did a report on the issue of suicides and the research showed that the connection to language and culture supported people having a sense of purpose which in turn increased their confidence and self-esteem to the point where the rate of suicides were going down.

Leadership

Kluane was quite certain of the things that were important to her and described these as the stories, the connection to the land, ceremonies, language, and song. She stated that these are the things that keep her grounded. She observed that there is a difference between leaders and politicians and "that is something we have got to address." She recognized, "A lot of [Indigenous] people are super colonial in the way they talk, act, think, especially when it comes to working with women." Harkening back to the stories is something that she says keeps her grounded.

She was asked why a lot of First Nations are reluctant to take control or make transformational change and specifically undertake a movement toward self-government. She responded, "A lot of communities live in fear and it is easy to say no to change or the risk of taking control." However, she pointed to a resurgence "especially of young people that are becoming armed in knowledge and teachings that are going to be the ones to say, "We've got to do something different." I asked about the cultural resurgence and to the issue of blood memory,

is there any validity to blood memory or is there something in the DNA that can be suppressed for generations and then resurface? She responded,

> I think that equates so strongly with the fact that our Ancestors are 100% always there. And that whole concept of connection and spirituality and how important that is as part of our culture. Like when we do potlatch, we bring out items and they're so old. And they're not items, they're clan items, so they're owned by the clan. They're not owned by any individual. And instead of saying we're going to bring these items and show you, and they're so old, you actually place them on somebody and say, this is so and so speaking through you. Really powerful.
>
> And that concept of asking for support and I would say when you see like the little kids dance that may not really know or who've never really learned how to dance, but they can just dance right? Those pieces of who we are have been passed on for so long that how could it not be linked to blood memory or connection or being guided by on the periphery in terms of belief? For me, it's my clan, right? The Ancestors that are guiding me.
>
> And it might not be that, you know, and I know people who would say, "Oh, blood memory does that mean you can just like wake up one day and speak your language?" You know, like those kinds of naysayers. No. But to know that I needed to go down this particular path that I needed to see that art that I needed to take the time to do that. Those are the things that I think when we talk about your earlier question about resiliency and how we are still here, is that we actually aren't alone. We are supported despite all of the hard and the atrocities, what could be and should be considered to be a Holocaust or the genocide of our peoples, that we are still here because of that strength of

connection, spirituality, culture, language and an ability to connect with those who have come before. So, I always feel supported. We all do the little things we do to get ourselves ready to go into the arena so to speak. But those are the things and those are the gifts I think that we have that others may not. And that's why we're still here.

One of the most powerful observations that can be made about Kluane's views, was a reinforcement of the idea that culture is the driving force behind survival. Even though she was raised in a southern Canadian town, her tribal roots were compelling enough to take her back to her cultural foundations. The things that were important to her were all things steeped in cultural activities. Her grandmother's teachings, watching the children enjoying a drumming group, and feeling a strong sense of pride after participating in ceremony. I was not certain that a person of a different, younger generation would have different views, but Kluane as a leader reinforced all the things that the other participants had experienced and described. A common thread can be found in the conviction that cultural prerogatives not only affect governance issues but also are foundational to the very existence and survival of Indigenous people. Indigenous knowledge is the magic that grounds Kluane as she states:

> *It's been so interesting to have to continue to provide data and statistics and information to our non-indigenous brothers and sisters to understand the things that we already know. But that would be, I think for me, it has always been about the stories and the connection to land, ceremonies, language and song. Those are the four things that when I feel truly grounded those things are part of my life and those teachings that I take with me to the arena of the work.*
>
> Kluane Adamek

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

The impact of the participants' narratives was found in not only what they said, but also in the manner in which they communicated. Although the process may have seemed at times to be similar to a standard question-and-answer interview, there were differences in the ways the

participants responded and in the depth of insight in the conversations. An Indigenous methodology has a feature that is sometimes referred to as a relational connection, or as having attributions to the cosmos. Some of the participants I have known for many years and for others, we were meeting virtually for the first time. However, I was treated with the same attitude and given the same respect by all. There were no conversations that seemed to be rushed or undertaken with even a modicum of inconvenience; in fact, it was I who had to close the conversations because I had informed each of them through the participant information letter that I would take only an hour or a bit more of their time. In most cases, the conversations took at least 2 hours not including the before and after parts of the conversation.

The next chapter provides further interpretation and a deeper analysis of the common themes that emerged from the participants' stories and experiences. Chapter 5 explores these themes in the context of the participants' worldviews and ontological beliefs.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Ontological Beliefs Shared by Indigenous Leaders

As outlined in Chapter 3, although I had areas of inquiry to pursue, the conversations were unstructured. In many cases, the participants spoke of their experiences in stories. Although there were certain themes or topics that I wanted to explore with these leaders, the conversations were fluid and guided by their responses to some initial questions. The conversations, much like a river finding its own path, were purposeful and supported this method of inquiry. Table 1 provides an overview of the major themes that emerged from my conversations with participants. While this table does not reflect the entirety of the conversations, it does illustrate the main issues and concerns these leaders spoke about. Some major themes emerged from the conversations, which included influences, language, traditional ceremonies, cultural imperatives, governance and reconciliation, educational imperatives, impact of western society, teachings, politics, and survival. Subthemes that emerged and are explored in this chapter include childhood experiences, leadership, ceremonies, traditional knowledge, stories as pedagogy, and spirituality.

The Participants and their Worldviews

The leaders who agreed to participate in this research have been profiled in Chapter 4, each with their own rich history of involvement in Indigenous issues, represent a wide variety of experiences and involvement in a range of cultural livelihoods. The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 were the basis of the conversations:

1. What has the impact of culture been on Indigenous leadership and decision making as it affects First Nations governance?

1a. How have your cultural paradigms permeated your life as a leader?

2. What were the influences that led you to a leadership role?

As a result of the desk research followed by the conversations with the Indigenous leaders, one overarching question evolved: Given the issues that Indigenous people have endured over the centuries, why are we still here as Indigenous people? This was asked of most of the participants and their responses were strikingly similar. I asked this question near the end of our meetings and participants' answers wove into the conversation in response to their priorities. The underpinnings of their responses were based on their observances of their own worldviews.

The chief similarity I found was based upon the participants' worldviews, which acknowledged the relational connection with nature. The issue of survival arose more than once. The worldview that the participants had in common expressed the conviction that without the respect and understanding that our existence is tied to the coexistence of other natural life on the Earth, we cannot survive. An eloquent response that articulates this belief came from a private conversation with a First Nations woman who responded, "We have survived because we are closer to creation" (D. Ritchie Oneida Nation, personal communication, January 8, 2020).

Figure 7 illustrates the major themes that emerged from the conversations and research on the impact that culture of Indigenous leadership. The graphic figure also illustrates that there is no hierarchy.

Figure 7

Major Themes Emerging from the Impact of Culture on Indigenous Leadership

Table 1 displays the major themes specific to the participants relating to their overarching worldview. It must also be understood that there could have been check marks in each box for all of the topics listed; as such, the check marks indicate the major areas of priority that each participant referred to during our conversations.

Table 1

The Major Themes of the Participants During Conversations

Influences	Sophie	Mike	Robert	Ovide	Jody	Kluane
Childhood Experiences	✓	✓		✓	✓	
- Leadership		✓		✓	✓	
- Language	✓	✓		✓		
- Ceremonies		✓	✓		✓	✓
Cultural Imperatives						
- Traditional Knowledge & Values		✓	✓	✓	✓	
- Stories as Pedagogy				✓		✓
- Spirituality			✓			✓
Educational Imperatives		✓		✓	✓	
Impact of Western Society	✓		✓			
Teachings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elders		✓		✓		✓
Politics		✓			✓	
Governance and Reconciliation	✓		✓		✓	
Survival	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Influences

Childhood Experiences

A common theme relayed by the leaders was the timing of the awareness that they had leadership capabilities—this often occurred at a very early age. In addition, for each participant, their early consciousness of leadership was tied to traditions and culture. Grand Chief Mike Mitchell recounted being asked as a young boy to take part in the traditional ceremonies and, in fact, be counted on to recite them. In the oral tradition, faith keepers of the Iroquois longhouse are required to know the language and be able to recall the ceremonial recitations. Ms. Jody Wilson-Raybould told a story of her father taking her and her sister to the longhouse to be

involved in traditional ceremonies—a trip they would make often, from a young age. These ceremonies and her understanding of responsibilities provided a basis for the ethics by which she has conducted her life. Robert Davidson, the renowned artist, recalled the urgings of his father to become involved in reproducing the traditional art forms of the West Coast people. He along with his brother, were encouraged by their father and relatives in their community that they needed to be responsible for themselves. Ovide Mercredi, a former National Chief, grew up speaking the Cree language while living next to a reserve in the central part of Manitoba. Ovide was part of the wider community tied together through the Cree language. Kluane Adamek spoke nostalgically of her visits as a young girl with her grandparents in the Yukon and the education she received hearing their stories, witnessing a different way of life, and being instructed in traditional ways.

Sophie Pierre had a significantly different experience as she attended residential school from the age of 5 years. The school was located on her reserve and, while it was physically very close to her family, she was not allowed to return home. In fact, she told me years ago that when she was a little girl, she remembered standing on a box looking out a window of the residential school and seeing her family but not being allowed to join them. In spite of this separation, her cultural identity remained deeply rooted, as outlined by her narrative in Chapter 4.

All of these individuals, leaders in their own fields, noted that their childhood experiences shaped their lives and formed their resolve to accept leadership responsibilities. It is important to acknowledge that for almost all there was a cultural imperative for them to be involved in some aspect of their respective tribal paradigms, and, in every case, there were older people who recognized their potential and urged them to carry on. While none of them was

schooled in management or leadership per se, their cultural involvement did in fact become the school.

Leadership

Leadership in the First Nations communities is not about being elected; rather, it is about being recognized and, in a more formal sense, being asked by those who hold the cultural authority to do the asking. In many First Nations, leadership is hereditary; however, this is not in the Western sense of hereditary monarchs. Jody specifically acknowledged the hereditary structure of her lineage as matrilineal. Mike noted that the clan system is an important part of the structure of leadership. Sophie and Kluane spoke of the importance of the clan mothers as having leadership roles. Their role was described as having unique responsibilities to set a directional compass for the conduct of the members of their clan and tribe. While there may seem to be an ecumenical sense to this form of leadership role, it is one that has been embraced and carried out for centuries within many Indigenous cultures.

Traditional Indigenous leaders are recognized usually at an early age and then they are mentored to assume the responsibilities of leadership. This is in contrast to leadership in the general Canadian sense where political leadership is attained normally as a second career, after people have obtained some type of professional qualification. Sophie was exceptionally young when she was a negotiator for her grandmother; this was the foundation for a lifetime of leadership. Mike was also very young when he was recognized as a *Ronterontanonnha* (faith keeper) and took up this challenge at the urging and support of his grandfather and then many people within the longhouse. After he was urged to run for the elected Chief, he recalled that he faced a tremendous amount of hostility both mentally and physically. His car was vandalized, he personally was attacked and beaten, not by the people from the longhouse, but by people who

were in a position of power before he was elected Chief. Mike stated that it was the Elders from the longhouse that asked him to remain and change the systems of governance. This direction stayed with him throughout his political career.

Ovide and Sophie both explained that they did not think they were being groomed for leadership but both expressed that other people saw leadership qualities in them at a young age. Sophie explained that the stories she heard from her parents and their peers as a young girl formed the foundation for her ideologies that helped her with the senior management and political positions she worked in. Ovide felt he was raised in a normal manner with other children but after he had been elected National Chief, a past teacher called him and explained that he did exhibit leadership qualities even as a child growing up. Ovide attributed his value system to listening to the Elders and learning traditional ways, along with his peers in Grand Rapids, Manitoba.

Language

All the participants made comments regarding the use of their own language with references to either ceremony or other cultural construct. Some made it central to their own ideologies, where others used the language as a matter of fact. There were three of the participants who had very similar experiences, where their own language was their mother tongue and they did not learn English until they went to school. This fact was instrumental in forming ideas, opinions, and, in some cases, policy parameters. For example, Ovide recalled his mother telling him, in Cree that some people are different and there is nothing wrong or judgmental about people being different, it is just a recognition. This concept, which Ovide called *pakan* informed his understanding and his position on human rights. Some people, tribes,

and nations are different, and we should simply accept that they are different or have a different worldview.

Similarly, Jody spoke of the responsibilities of the functions within the longhouse where names were assigned to those who carried those responsibilities. These names of course are embedded in their language. In her book *From Where I Stand* (Wilson-Raybould 2019), Jody described this situation:

> My grandmother—Pugladee—ensured that both my sister and I knew our culture, our values, the laws of our Big House, and how to conduct oneself as a leader. We continue to learn. In our system, I am a Hiligaxste—a role always held by women. One of my jobs is to lead my Hamatsa, the Chief into the Big House. This role can be translated as one that "corrects the Chiefs path." We show them the way, a metaphor for life and, in the Potlatch, symbolized in our rituals where, symbolically, the power of the Hamatsa is 'tamed' and he is ready to be Chief. (p. 214)

Language has shaped Mike Mitchell into being a leader. He acquired the title of Faithkeeper or *Kaie:ri Niiorihwa:ke Ronatarihonte*[11]; the faith keeper is required to know the language, the ceremonies, and the culture. He is responsible to be the keeper of this knowledge and to share it with others. Mike has practised this for a lifetime. The Mohawk language is more specific than English; for instance, the language has different words for the functions related to responsibilities. The words describe what they do, *Tewehtahkwen Rati'nikònrare* (They Watch Over the Beliefs), whereas the title is *Ronterontanonnha* (They Guard the Tree[12]). The symbol of

[11] The ones who look after the four sacred ceremonies

[12] The 'Tree' is a metaphor for the sub-chief who supports or assists the Royaner.

the Haudenosaunee is a great White Pine Tree and represents a commitment to peace. The branches represent the protection of the nations, the roots represent peace and strength; the weapons are buried so there is no hostility among nations; and an eagle, a leader of winged animals, sits atop the tree to watch for danger and warn the people of the Haudenosaunee (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Tree of Peace

Note. Image reproduced from article by Carter (2004) found at www.turtletrack.org

These references to language are supported by academics who have stressed the importance of Indigenous languages as being closely tied to the Indigenous worldview and the relationship to cultural identity. Kovach (2010) explained,

> Given the role of language in shaping thought and culture, conflict between Indigenous and Western research approaches (and its involvement in knowledge construction) rests deeply within languages and the matter of dualist thought patterns. In tribal epistemologies and Indigenous research frameworks, one must first assert the interrelationship between Indigenous language structure and worldview, and then given the manner in which colonialism has interfered with this dynamic. Given this history and interruption, it is no wonder that Indigenous thought tends to dance around the sharp edges of the language binaries that define Western methodologies. (p. 59)

Since Language and culture together form the foundation of Indigenous culture and thought, the assault of colonialism on language was considered to be an instrument supporting the ideology of "racial superiority" (Greyeyes, 1995, p. 6). Haque and Patrick (2015) stated,

> Indigenous languages were intimately tied to traditional knowledge and spirituality; this was, in particular, because they were the medium through which oral traditions and the "historic continuity" of Indigenous people were transmitted and treaties and other historical events related to the land were interpreted. (p. 36)

The examples cited here are just a glimpse into the issues that have plagued Indigenous people for generations, and which fuelled studies such as the RCAP (1996), the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (1998), and the TRC (2015). Each of these federally funded studies spoke to the assault and eradication of culture and language, but to the Indigenous people, the words are hollow until there is an earnest recognition of the value of Indigenous thought and the inclusion of Indigenous culture as an important component of the Canadian identity. Undertaking another study is hardly the path to effective reconciliation. First Nations cultures have survived through the population decline, residential schools, introduction of disease, an assault on languages, and

an ideology of racial superiority—and the ideologies, worldviews, or tribal paradigms held closely by Indigenous peoples are the very reason for this survival. The principles rest on a relational underpinning to nature as the very essence of the worldview held by most Indigenous people. Elder F. Kelly (personal communication, February 20, 2020) stated, "Government is designed to govern where Indigenous people are designed to survive."

Ceremonies

For the leaders with whom I was communicating, participation in cultural activities such as ceremony, dance, and community projects were not only an imperative for them personally, but activities undertaken with an understanding that there was meaning and a personal satisfaction gained from the involvement. Mike Mitchell spoke of the high he experienced after a ceremony, as did Robert Davidson following a potlatch. Kluane Adamek also spoke of the personal satisfaction of participating in cultural events and of the dance group she was in. Jody Wilson-Raybould felt it was a necessity and cultural obligation to continue to be involved in cultural ceremonies.

Language and traditional ceremonies are closely intertwined. During the conversations, Ovide Mercredi and Mike Mitchell made strong comments regarding the fact that their Indigenous language was their first language and the fact that they had to learn an additional language (English) as a matter of course. They also felt deeply that their language was important to them from a cultural perspective. Sophie Pierre, on the other hand, was and is a speaker in her own language, having grown up with the language and was a translator at 5 years of age for her grandmother selling goods to non-Indigenous people. With respect to the language, in our conversations she stated,

> Yes, when you talk about language, definitely, definitely, they're different [between Indigenous and Western thought]. And one of the things that we've had to re-learn ourselves is that when we are taking our governing documents like our constitution and putting them into Ktunaxa, it's not a matter of taking an English word and translating it into Ktunaxa or vice versa. That doesn't work. You have to have the concept. What is it that you're wanting to say? And then, it's that concept.

Each of the participants expressed a concern or an interest in their respective Indigenous language and mostly tied it to their ceremonies. Robert Davidson, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Kluane Adamek all referenced ceremonies along with the traditional names of the ceremonies and responsibilities of the people conducting the ceremonies. The responsibilities are enshrined in the ceremony, as Jody explained of her involvement: "During the ceremony at the potlatch, everyone had a role and hers was to be a facilitator" (Wilson-Raybould, 2019, p. 5). (See also p.133 of this paper for a detailed description of her role).

The ceremony taught value systems such as inclusion and respect for the land and people. There is no question or doubt that language is a critical aspect of the pedagogy for Indigenous worldview and values. From the participants whose first language was an Indigenous language to those who embraced the cultural imperatives without the benefit of having their native language as their first, even an imperfect knowledge of the language has been shown to have a profound effect on their worldviews. Remarkably, these worldviews have a level of consistency that place themselves as humans in a relational aspect within the cosmos we live in. Another consistency that needs to be acknowledged is the humility with which each of the participants spoke and displayed during our conversations. There was no lauding of the celebrity that had been achieved. As an example, I asked Jody if her family and peers treated her differently after her

successes in politics. Her response was “No, I’m just Jody.” From a personal perspective, coming from a large family where I am the only one who has attended university, I know the exact feeling and in fact depend on my family to keep me grounded. My family does not think more or less of me for my academic and career undertakings and that same feeling was reflected in all of the conversations.

Cultural Imperatives

Traditional Knowledge and Values

Each of the participants called upon their respective cultural mores and values to support their livelihood and all of them used their specific skills and training to support their ongoing commitment to cultivating cultural values. The participants were highly accomplished; for instance, Ovide was a practising lawyer, Kluane has an MBA, Robert is an internationally known artist and recognized as an icon in the arts world, Mike was a Chief of his community for over 30 years and sits on International boards of academic institutions, Jody is a lawyer and the most accomplished Indigenous person to reach high levels within the federal government, and Sophie was the Chief of her community for over 30 years. With these credentials, each and all of them could have been consumed by the government or corporate world to undertake a career within these areas of activity. However, they have all dedicated their lives to supporting Indigenous issues. The similarity among them with respect to traditional knowledge can be found in their views on the cultural epistemologies expressed by Elders and knowledge keepers. Jody was explicit in saying that the ceremony in the longhouse was where the values were instilled, and her grandmother held the responsibility to make sure she and her sister were aware of these values. Mike had much the same experience with respect to learning from the ceremony in the longhouse. Both people had this pedagogical experience while they were growing up. While the

culture that Ovide grew up in did not have the same structure as a longhouse, the language and the traditions closely related to hunting and fishing meant that a lot of time was spent with Elders. Ovide attributed this to his understanding of traditional knowledge. During our conversation, he referred to learning from his mother as she told him stories that always had a meaning as well as taking lessons from the meaning of certain concepts in the Cree language.

With respect to traditional knowledge, Jody explained that there were concepts in Indigenous pedagogies that do not translate well. Sophie also explained that the language did not translate word for word and thus, miscommunication could be expected.

Robert and Kluane explained that they were not fluent speakers, but both acknowledged the importance of language as it was the basis of traditional knowledge. In addition, in their young adult lives, both had the encouragement of some knowledge keepers to show them a path, which included traditional knowledge. Most Elders do not undertake a prescriptive path when asked about a problem or issue.

There is, unfortunately, a dark history in Canada regarding the cultural practices of Indigenous peoples. Spradley (1969) chronicled the life of James Sewid, OC, a Kwakiutl Indian from NorthWestern British Columbia who was also a successful fisherman (see also Sewid, 1995). His story provides insight into the conflicts between Indigenous and Western ways of dealing with life. On the very first page, Spradley wrote,

> Many small tribal societies have become disorganized under the impact of Western contact.… Culture contact has often been accompanied by the breakdown of the extended family, excessive drinking, nativistic movements, anomie, population decline, and the individual failure to adapt to culture change. (p. 1)

This was written in the late 1960s! It has been well documented that the potlatch, a ceremony found in the Indigenous peoples of the West Coast, was an important part of the social structure and a major vehicle for the redistribution of wealth among the Indigenous peoples of the West Coast. Anti-potlatch legislation was passed in 1884 as an amendment to the Indian Act (1876) and not repealed until 1951 (Davidson, 2018, p. 27). Sarah Davidson spoke of a very personal story her father, Robert, shared with her regarding the impact of the laws that were enacted (see Figure 9). Davidson and Davidson (2018) wrote,

> In 2000, my father carved a totem pole which he named "We were Once Silenced." I remember the first time I saw it in his studio; it was unlike any pole I had ever seen before. I felt compelled to witness the anguish on the faces of the humans who emerged from the cedar. There are faces on the top and bottom that share a single mouth and tongue. The tongue covers the mouth of the humans who are being swallowed by the single mouth. The agony on the human faces is unmistakable, and their pain can be understood regardless of the viewer's ancestry or understanding of Haida art. When I asked my father about the pole, he explained that the faces behind the tongue are male and female who share the same mouth. He went on to describe that the tongue is a colonial vehicle that muted us through laws that were designed to eliminate us. These attempts to eliminate us took many forms; the Potlatch ban, Indian Agents, and residential schools were only a few of the ways that were used. (p. 26)

Figure 9

Totem Pole – "We Were Once Silenced"

Note. From *Potlatch as Pedagogy* (p. 26), by Davidson and Davidson (2018).

Cultural change was precipitated by the colonization and the demands for resources that were essential to fuel the Western models of economies. Startling examples of the dissimilarity in worldviews was evidenced in the Prairie Provinces, where Daschuk (2013) provided shocking documentation of the demise of a cultural way of life by the Indigenous people living in the Prairies:

> Neither side was prepared for the suddenness and the finality of the collapse of the [buffalo] herds in the late 1870s. The region wide famine that ensued and the inability of the authorities to provide adequate food relief sparked the widespread emergence of tuberculosis among immune-compromised communities. By the turn of the 1880s, dominion officials tailored their response to the famine to further their own agenda of development in the west by subjugating the malnourished and increasingly sick indigenous population. (p. 100)

The First Nations leaders were acutely aware of the impending transformation that was looming, and during treaty negotiations, they negotiated for medical aid and famine relief.

Alexander Morris accepted those conditions on behalf of Canada assuring the Cree that "they would not die like dogs." Within 2 years of that promise, the bison were gone. Their disappearance ended a way of life that had endured for 10,000 years (Daschuk, 2013, p. 183). The destruction of the social structure of this Indigenous group suffered the same consequences described by Spradley (1969).

The two previous examples were specific to certain parts of the country but the overarching policies were nationwide. This policy of cultural eradication was, without a doubt, a heinous construct that resulted in massive intergenerational trauma. The vehicle of this policy that was most prolific in its implementation was the residential school system. Greyeyes (1995) stated, "Indian residential schools cannot be examined as a misguided social phenomenon … it was an experiment in social engineering" (p. 5). Besides the obvious horrific acts of tearing children as young as 4 years old away from their parents and families, the policy of forcing young Indigenous children to speak a different language is unspeakable. Milloy (as cited in Haque & Patrick, 2015) addressed this by documenting,

> [Residential Schools] established in the 1870s this system served the assimilationist agenda of eradicating Indigenous language and instilling by the use of Indigenous children of "civilizing" English and French languages in order to bring them into the "circle of civilization. (Milloy 1999, xx). (p. 29)

The emotions involved in the government use of children to force their policy of assimilation and the children's resistance, is captured in the plaque that is in front of the St. Eugene's Mission residential school on the St. Mary's reserve in Southern British Columbia. This is the very school that Sophie Pierre attended as a child, and during our conversation, Sophie expressed mixed feelings about the school. She acknowledged that it was harsh and

difficult for some children, especially those who could not speak English when they entered the school, but she did express the feelings that were shared by the community at the time, that the school was there to provide an education. The sentiment that education is a critical necessity is still felt within the First Nations world; however, it is universally clear that the residential school system had a different objective. The school on the St. Mary's reserve has been turned into a five-star resort on the St. Mary's reserve but the reminders of its original purpose are still evident as illustrated by the plaque that is erected in the front of the now St. Eugene's resort (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

This Plaque is Mounted in Front of the St. Eugene's Mission Residential School Now the St. Eugene's Resort

Note. Photo Credit – Daniel Brant

Stories as Pedagogy

Stories are an important method of transmitting traditional Indigenous knowledge. All the participants that I had conversations with had a story to tell. Some were based on personal experience, such as Robert Davidson, who spoke about creating a cultural dance, and Ovide

Mercredi who recounted how his thoughts about the strategy for a position on the Charlottetown Accord came about through a dream-story. Kluane Adamek recounted a traditional story (about going through a glacier) that is documented in Chapter 4. Kovach (2009) spoke to the importance of stories from a pedagogical perspective: "Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral traditions, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal into gaining insight into a phenomenon" (p. 94). But the methods of sharing stories are changing in the age of social media. Youth today are more likely to have a smartphone than to take the time to visit with an Elder and listen. A number of different Elders whom I have spoken with over the years have commented on a similar concern.

Traditional Indigenous stories impart underlying messages that serve us in many ways. As Kovach (2009) stated, "The oral rendition of personal narrative or formal teaching story is a portal for holistic epistemology" (p. 96). Kluane Adamek, during our conversation, recounted such a story that she had heard often. In Chapter 4, Kluane told a story that has become legendary in the Yukon about how the Ancestors dealt with an unsurmountable challenge. They simply faced the issue and went through it. The philosophies embodied in this legend have been captured and cherished in ceremony. As Elder Fred Kelly remarked, "What anthropologist call legends, we call teaching" (F. Kelly, personal conversation October 20, 2020).

Spirituality

The issue of spirituality was broached by Robert, Ovide, and Kluane in terms that were connected with stories and teachings. There was a recognition that within the Indigenous culture, there was some spirit or even some mysticism that was not found in mainstream society. A reference to a cosmic force was used as a descriptor in one conversation and another made a

direct reference to the fact that traditional people believed in mysticism. This is an outlook that has maintained some credibility in today's Indigenous worldview; for example, when talking about death, many Indigenous people refer to this as leaving this Earth and returning to the spirit world. This thought transcends words and is imbued in the thought and belief system of most Indigenous people.

The Western ideologies of spirituality revolve mainly around organized religion. S. Wilson (2008) provided a delineation between spirituality and religion and stated,

> Perhaps it is important that I make a distinction here between spirituality and religion. Cascio (1998) discusses spirituality as something that is personal or individual. I would take this one step further and say that spirituality is one's internal sense of connection to the universe. This may include one's personal connection to a higher being or humanity, or the environment. (p. 90)

I would take this phenomenon even further to advocate that within the Indigenous world, there are some things that cannot be explained. Robert Davidson shared such a story, and it is described in full in Chapter 4. Essentially, Robert made reference to a mystical event that he could not explain—a dance he thought he created was in fact an old dance that had been seen by some elderly people.

During the conversation with Robert Davidson about his "new" Salmon Dance, I asked him how he would explain the Elder's comment that he had not seen that dance for a long time. His response was that he believed we are connected to a cosmos and there are things that we cannot explain. He stated,

> It's a human condition to connect with a higher power. And singing our songs did it for me and finding ways to express through the song and dance.… I think we all are

> connected to that cosmic memory. I like to use the imagery of we're all connected to that ancient Valley by a thread and very much like the pipe carvers I named in Masset. They are connecting. They're maintaining a connection of the art. When we come together in a feast or Potlatch, all those threads are creating a thick rope because each one of us has something to add to that pool of knowledge. Like when the Elders came together and shared stories that created the foundation of the totem and the ceremony around the totem raising ceremony.

Ovide Mercredi shared a story that has historical significance related to the Charlottetown Accord. I asked about a major issue that he faced with respect to Charlottetown, as I wished to know how he dealt with the push back he received from his own constituency. His response was intriguing as he related it and the strategy came to him in a dream. As we have seen from Ovide's recounting of the dream that informed his strategy with respect to First Nations involvement in the Charlottetown Accord, he felt, similar to the legend that Kluane spoke of, it was necessary to go straight through the issue and that issue was constitutional reform that included First Nations peoples.

The similarity between the dream that inspired the National Chief's strategy in Charlottetown and the story that Kluane Adamek told about going through the iceberg on their journey is more than remarkable. The most significant part of this observation is that Ovide and Kluane to my knowledge have not met. There is a mystical connection that supports the Indigenous worldview that is relational and that we are connected in some mysterious way to the cosmos. Western ideology needs verification, whereas Indigenous ideology requires acceptance, faith, and truth.

In many Indigenous cultures, there are ceremonies that are not open to public scrutiny; the Medicine Mask society of the Iroquois, the Midewiwin of the Anishinaabeg peoples, the First Nations prairie people have aspects of the Sun Dance that are restricted, the desert people of the southern part of the United States have such ceremonies as well, and when I asked a close friend from the southwest if they did have restricted ceremonies, the only response was, "Yes we do," but he offered no explanation of what the ceremony covers.

Ovide Mercredi stated that there is a difference between religion and spirituality, and, of course, his comments can be supported by the ontology of Indigenous cultures. While undertaking my research, the word cosmos has been used numerous times. Baptiste (2013) speaks to the issue of how this relationality is impacted through Indigenous knowledge:

> Shared relationships are interconnected and not separable, collectively developed and constituted, in which each person is a contributor applying their individual idiosyncrasies to the whole, as well as holding to the collective ideals of the group to which they either maintain or change over time. This collective repository of knowledge also is the basis of defining appropriate behaviours within the context which derives from the knowledge system. This knowledge system is an internalized law of philosophy, customs, values, beliefs and morals which is understood broadly in terms of culture. (p.121)

First Nations artists have a profound role to play in protecting culture. The imagery always tells a story and even though the lines and graphics are pleasing, the perpetuation of cultural significance is even more important. Here too, there are widely divergent and uniquely Indigenous styles ranging from the West Coast designs from masters such as Bill Reid, Douglas Cranmer, and of course Robert Davidson, to impressionists like Allen Sapp who created a distinct style recalling traditional Cree life on the prairies to the now claimed woodland style,

which Norval Morrisseau and Daphne Odjig made famous. Woodland artwork features more floral design and spiritual messages. The artwork has become embraced by Indigenous peoples as a symbol of reconstitution. One has only to look at the logos and letterhead of Indigenous businesses, organizations, and institutions to find further evidence of the cultural themes symbolized in their visual images.

Educational Imperatives

Indigenous people, particularly in the generations from the early 1900s, urged the young people to go to school and get a good education. This theme surfaced repeatedly in discussions with participants and is reflected in my own personal experience. It seems somewhat difficult to understand why this generation would be so adamant that schooling was so important, considering the impact of residential schools. It is equally difficult to comprehend why people would give up their children, although not without a fight. The TRC (2015) report documented the resistance that parents undertook when they realized that the residential schools were not providing the type of education they felt was appropriate (pp. 114–121).

The impact of the church was paramount in the proliferation of residential schools, and it was seen by the policymakers in the federal government as an instrument to assimilate Indigenous children into the mainstream of the body politic in Canada. We have evidence of the position of the federal government in the early 1900s as stated by Duncan Campbell Scott:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem.… Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill. (National Archives of Canada, 1920, para. 2–3)

At this same time, First Nations people were not allowed to vote, not allowed to leave their reserves, not allowed to engage in activities that called upon their individual talents, and not even allowed to gather in public places in groups of more than three. In some cases, First Nations individuals who received permission to leave their reserve were required to wear a metal bracelet announcing they were a "Free Indian." Figure 11 shows a number of these bracelets.

Figure 11

Free Indian Bracelets depicting an Indian Agent's Desk Displayed in the Duck Lake Saskatchewan Museum

Note. Photo Credit Daniel Brant

In addition to the other restrictions, First Nations people were not allowed to retain legal counsel. This effectively placed First Nations people under the conditions of a police state, with police officers enforcing these policies. K. Wilson (n.d.) has documented some of the more egregious violations of humanity directed at First Nations people. The state of discrimination was such that First Nations people could not serve in the armed forces, get a college or university degree, become an ordained minister, or become a professional such as a doctor or a lawyer. The primary responsibility for education was handed over to the church from the government through

the establishment of residential schools. Greyeyes (1995) documented the state of Indian education:

> The thrust behind Indian education became somewhat clearer in 1857 with the passage of the Gradual Civilization Act, followed closely by the Gradual Enfranchisement Act in 1869. Civilizing Indians through a Christian education now signaled the prospect of solving the "Indian problem" through a process known as enfranchisement. Enfranchisement stripped Indian people of their legal status as "Indians." By giving itself the power to decide who was an Indian person, the government had come full circle in applying its racist beliefs to Indian people. (p. 45)

Given the horrific nature of these schools and the damages they have created, which has persisted over the generations, one wonders how and why they were tolerated for so long, as they were in existence from 1872 to 1996. There was a thought held by many First Nation parents that an education would be good for their children and residential schools would be tolerated because they felt it would be best in the long run. One of the principles of the Haudenosaunee was that decisions should be made for the seventh generation. Accordingly, if parents were of this mind, there was a thought that there could possibly be a good outcome eventually. There was not.

Of the leaders whom I had conversations with, Kluane, Ovide, and Jody were the only ones who had university degrees; interestingly, none spoke of their formal education as being a motivator for them to become a leader. In fact, Ovide spoke of his education as a learning experience but that he had difficulties with many of the legal concepts that taught in the law classes that he attended. The observations he made at that time led him to see and understand there were differences in the structural systems of governance between Euro-Western and Indigenous paradigms. Kluane recalled becoming a student of history at Trent University, where

she studied the experiences and work of some of the early leaders who are referenced in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Rather than speaking about her formal academic education, Jody spoke more about the teachings from the longhouse as the teacher of values and principles.

Mike Mitchell too relied on his education through the longhouse to shape his career as a leader. As he recounted in Chapter 4, Mike stated quite emphatically that he had a very bad introduction to school—so bad, in fact, that he ran away to stay with his grandfather on an island in the St. Lawrence River. He said sports were the only thing that kept him in school as long as he did. The responsibilities undertaken at the longhouse demanded that he become an orator, which was key to becoming a leader in his community before coming to national prominence. Robert Davidson had to leave his community to attend high school in Vancouver, and his interests in carvings and cultural artifacts were visits to the museums to look at the historic totems and other pieces of work undertaken by his artisan predecessors.

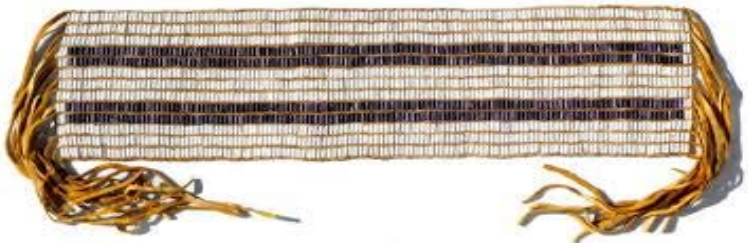
The conclusion I am left with after the discussions with the participants was that the education they received through their cultural roots was far more important to them than any education they received or could have received in formal institutions. Language played a major role in shaping their values and each of them acknowledged that their respective tribal language was an important part of their culture. More important were the values that were instilled in each of them. These values shaped their ideologies and policies as they grew into various areas of governance responsibilities. Each of them had to balance the issues of modern-day governance with their traditional values. In my estimation, the traditional values played a far deeper role in their actions and activities than capitulation to Western policies and ideologies.

Impact of Western Society

Western society invaded North America through colonization, and it hit the Americas like a winter storm. Ovide Mercredi spoke of the Cree value of noninterference, which was embedded in the cultural paradigms of the Cree people. It was simply culturally inappropriate to interfere in the lifestyle of the colonists. Mike Mitchell spoke of the *Guswenta* or the Two Row Wampum (see Figure 12) that was created as a symbol to signify that when the colonists arrived and were not leaving; the colonists and the Haudenosaunee would travel two paths and not cross over, respect each other, and live peacefully together. There is no Iroquoian word for hegemony.

Figure 12

The Two Row Wampum



The Two Row Wampum Belt: An Akwesasne tradition, www.wampumchronicles.com

The difference in worldviews was apparent from the beginning and was understood by the Indigenous peoples. The Indian Act (1985), which was legislation enacted by the Canadian government on April 12, 1876, was imposed only days after the Confederation Act of April 1, 1876. Therefore, the Indian Act is one of the very first acts of the Canadian parliament after confederation. The act was a consolidation of a number of British governmental policies operating under the British North America Act (1867). The enforcement of the Indian Act supported policies making it illegal for children not to attend residential schools. This assault on the culture was compounded by the insertion of a form of governance that was not in any way shape or form consistent with Indigenous forms of governance. Colonists assumed that there was

no form of governance in any of the Indigenous nations. At the risk of repetition, it is inconceivable to believe that at least some of the more educated among the colonists could not see that there was some form of governance. As noted in Chapter 1, Franklin and Jefferson did in fact see the effectiveness of a style of governance that they had not seen, then promptly appropriated the concept to be included in their own version of a constitution.

Teachings

Indigenous teachings come in many forms—stories, legends, songs, dances, ceremony, art, and mentorship. The celebrated jurist, John Borrows (2019) acknowledged these teachings in his book entitled *Law's Indigenous Ethics,* which tells stories based on the seven grandmother and grandfather teachings of the Anishinaabe peoples. These seven teachings are based on love, truth, bravery, humility, wisdom, honesty, and respect (Borrows, 2019, p. 3). Each of the participants I spoke with had a story to share: Ovide about Charlottetown, Robert about the salmon dance, Mike about his first days at school, Sophie about her grandfather, Jody about the Potlatch, and Kluane's traditional legend. All of these stories were animated; I could almost hear the drums and witness the quiet discussions around a dinner table.

The epistemology of Indigenous teaching and learning takes a different form when a cultural imperative is involved. This type of teaching and learning thrives today, and, as expressed by Sophie, the roots are deep, which serve to sustain the culture, no matter how long the culture has been submerged.

Elders

It is common belief that all Elders are knowledge keepers of the Indigenous culture. While it is true that most Indigenous cultures have Elders who provide ethical and spiritual

lessons and guidance, colonization has wreaked havoc on this perception. Most Indigenous cultures show a great deal of respect for Elders and most are wise with the experience they have gained over the years. Sophie Pierre warned about some who may be advertising themselves as Elders when they are not. Even some First Nations people believe they are Elders simply because of their age. This, I feel, is one of the most egregious impacts of colonization.

Elders are the real knowledge keepers—guardians of the knowledge of the language, culture, and protocols used in tribal protocols. Elders do not have to be old. The perception that Elders are all old people results from the impact of colonization and has far-reaching social consequences in most of the First Nations communities today. Similarly, Elders can be any gender, while common perception mostly depicts Elders as old men. In the Iroquoian traditional governing structure, the role of faith keeper was a formal institutional role undertaken by someone who was selected by the clan mothers and accepted by the people in general to fulfill that role. The duty of the faith keeper was to know the language, the ceremonies, the songs, and dances. It was neither a political position nor a religious one, but a function that was an integral part of the society; it was there to ensure the proliferation and sustainability of the culture. Faith keepers (*Kaie:ri Niiorihwake*) and knowledge keepers have different roles from those of Elders. Mike Mitchell made reference to this as he was a faith keeper and he was given instruction by Elders when he first entered politics and was having a difficult time adjusting to the responsibilities expected of him as Chief. The Elders made him persist in his role as Chief.

Politics

Strangely enough, politics was not explicitly a major discussion point with the participants. Although Ovide was a National Chief and his entire job was political, the conversations with him centered around values and culture. Kluane's conversation went in the

same direction. Mike focused on the teachings of the *Kaienere Kowa* in the longhouse and his challenges on becoming involved in politics. Jody spoke mostly about the principles that influenced her and those coming from her cultural teachings. Even as the most senior Indigenous person who held a federal governmental position, her main points of discussion were centred on cultural values. She spoke of how these values influenced her and referenced her book *From Where I Stand* (Wilson-Raybould, 2019), explaining where these influences are weaved into policy proposals she championed as the Attorney General.

Governance and Reconciliation

The TRC was a federally appointed examination dealing with the impacts, effects, and mitigation measures stemming from the conduct and operation of Indian residential schools. The TRC (2015) defined reconciliation as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respect and relationships. A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change" (p. 16).

The majority of participants spoke more about the importance of culture to them and to the people they represented. There was little discussion about building relationships with non-Indigenous people. One exception was Robert Davidson, who was always happy to go to a school upon an invitation and speak to students. I did not get any sense or indication that there was any objection to building those relationships, but the conversations never went that way. As stated, the focus was more internally directed.

During the conversations undertaken as part of this research, the issue of governance was almost exclusively tied to language or the relational context imbuing Indigenous worldviews. Kovach (2009) spoke to research ethics as a construct of governance, methods, and community

relevance (p. 19). Although governance is widely mistaken as management, the foundations of governance lie firmly in the protocols and paradigms of the cultural norms of the Nation. Each of the participants referenced these cultural norms or values as being a core function. Some of the participants expressed the fact that values were instilled by their Elders. Sophie Pierre, Ovide Mercredi, and Mike Mitchell shared similar beginnings in that their traditional language was the major vessel that established the basis of their values. For Jody, as a child, it was ceremony to a large degree. For Kluane and Robert, while ceremony became a highly important aspect of their lives, it rose out of a longing to recognize the importance of their respective cultures.

There has been considerable work undertaken by academics speaking to governance. Alfred (2009) proposed there are four basic objectives that could be achieved: (a) structural reform, which is a return to traditional forms of governance; (b) reintegration of native languages, which make the use of native language more prominent and a top priority; (c) economic self-sufficiency, which increases the land base and take economic control; and (d) nation-to-nation relations with the state, which assert the right for nations to govern their own land base and people (p. 172). Miriam Jorgensen (2007), one of the principal researchers of the Harvard Study, has dedicated an entire book, *Rebuilding Native Nations,* on the strategies for governance and development.

Herein lies a dilemma that is being dealt with every day by First Nations people and administrations. The imposition of Western forms of governance through the Indian Act (1985) has been imposed in martial or militaristic terms for approximately 150 years. The consequences have been enormous. Societies and civilizations have been ruined and driven to the edge of extinction. There was no recognition that governing structures of the First Nations had merit with the principles, protocols, and values that were the key ingredients for not only survival but

environmental and ecological sustainability in a land that is so different from where the settlers originated. Many First Nations—and it is important to identify that *Nations* were in place, not communities that today call themselves independent Nations—had some system of governance. There were strict rules of leadership that were recognized by the Nation, there was territory with known boundaries, there were societal paradigms that set out the mores and lifestyle of the members of each respective Nation, and there were systems that ensured the sustainability of these systems.

These were all common traits from the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of the Atlantic in the east to the Nations located in the west bordering on the Pacific; Nations like the Haida, the Nisga'a, Gitxsan, and Wet'suwet'en. There were and are many distinct Nations between these, with each Nation bound together by language and protocol. Like other neighbouring Nations in the world, life was not always easy or compatible and disputes were inevitable. However, other things were established like trading between Nations (Irwin-Gibson, 2016, p. 19) and treaties to share the land and resources. The Dish with One Spoon was one such a treaty that was consummated amongst the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg, and the Mississaugas. It is also noteworthy that this treaty was made between Indigenous Nations circa 1142 and ratified at the Treaty of Montreal in 1701 without the benefit of government policies or oversight. When the terms of this treaty were agreed to, the covenant was marked by a wampum belt. The Wampum illustrated in Figure 13 marks the Dish With One Spoon treaty – *Sewatokwas'shera'*t Belt –Great Law of Peace (Currie, R.F. 2020., Respect, Trust, Treaties and Reconciliation, Circles for Reconciliation.)

Figure 13

The Sewatokwas'shera Wampum Belt

Note. From *Respect, trust, treaties and reconciliation* by Currie, R. F. (2020) , Circles for Reconciliation (https://circlesforreconciliation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Respect-Trust-Treaties-Reconciliation.pdf).

With the reconciliation agenda being ubiquitous in not only government but now reaching into the private sector, it seems like the time has come that Indigenous culture and perhaps some of the governance principles that have been dismissed for hundreds of years, is finally being seen as having some value. Robert Davidson spoke of reconciliation: "Reconciliation is a two way dialogue where the Western thinking people need to feel it's important for them to want to learn our history." With her view on reconciliation, Wilson-Raybould (2019) wrote,

> I know in my heart that the voices and actions of those that openly speak out against reconciliation—whether our voices or those of other Canadians—will fade away into the obscurity of history, replaced by the realized vision of an improved quality of life for our peoples with thriving and practicing cultures in a stronger Canada. (p. 41)

Although Indigenous peoples generally recognize that there have been grave injustices perpetrated on Indigenous peoples for generation after generation, there is still a sense of optimism and hope that Indigenous culture will be fully recognized for the richness it can provide to the cultural mosaic in which we live.

Survival

How have Indigenous cultures survived considering the legislative attacks, the genocidal policies embedded in the residential schools, the overwhelming Canadian participation in the

1960s scoop, and the hegemonic approach to languages to remain a keystone to supporting a self-sustaining governing system? Most of the responses I received replying to that question referenced the relational aspect with the land and environment. The worldview of Indigenous peoples differs from the Western worldview. It is this unique worldview that has sustained the culture, often at the expense of what most would consider essential services. The depths of the egregious actions supported by government policy is astounding. Daschuk (2013) chronicled some of the horrific actions in his book *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the loss of Aboriginal Life*.

Throughout the discussions undertaken with the participants, even though there was an intimate understanding of this history, there was no animosity. All of the conversations dealt with the positive aspects of culture they enjoyed. Robert and Kluane both spoke of how they felt after a ceremony and Mike relayed the story that his father felt good and different after being in the longhouse. The Indigenous value of noninterference as expressed by Ovide is still strong and evident in the way the leaders I spoke with conduct themselves. Jody made a profound reference to survival when she stated in our conversation, "If you don't tell the truth, your culture dies." The word *truth* was mentioned numerous times during conversations with participants, and indeed the title of the transformational exercise, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, relies on people sharing and telling what are true accounts of their experiences.

While there have been numerous commissions, reports, and court cases, the TRC (2015) report has added considerably to the consolidation of recommendations made by the litany of commissions since the 1950s. It is clear that the reconciliation process has had more of a major impact on Western ideology than it has on Indigenous philosophy. Western institutions have started to see the value in cultural worldviews, but it is also evident that there is no end game in

sight. In a CBC radio interview on July 31, 2020, the primary author of the TRC, Senator Murray Sinclair, was sceptical of the implementation of the recommendations to actually make change. Senator Sinclair (as cited in Enright, 2020) stated, “People often respond to them [calls to action] saying those are great, those are true, we are going to do them, we really believe in them but then, we see nothing, we see very little action” (14:50).

The only thing that is clear is that, given the fact that Indigenous cultures have survived to date, Indigenous cultures will continue to survive. The question remains, how much of a change can the cultural paradigms endure before they lose the original philosophy?

This question lingered in the subtext at the time of my conversations with the participants. It did not often arise naturally or explicitly. Participants who commented on the issue of reconciliation were Robert Davidson and Jody Wilson-Raybould, as discussed in Chapter 4. Their comments expressed hope for a positive outcome to the processes involved in reconciliation.

Summary and Looking Ahead

The leaders whom I conversed with were gracious, humble, and thoughtful in giving me their time and their innermost thoughts about what they considered to be important to them as Indigenous leaders. There were prime examples of a different worldview held between Indigenous leadership and Western leadership. This difference perhaps was heightened by the fact that each one of them had to walk between two worlds, which in itself was a challenge. All of the participants and other leaders whom I have had the privilege of speaking with have accepted this challenge with grace and resolve. I saw from our conversations that this resolve comes from a very deep and strong foundation of values, protocols, and a strong feeling of being

compelled to respect the culture. This has never been more eloquently shaped in cultural values as the cosmology of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch.

Culture and the strength of the foundations of culture became prominent themes in all my conversations with participants, which supports the premise that the axiological roots of Indigenous cultures are strong enough to sustain many future generations. Looking back, this chapter has chronicled some similarities between the distinct and separate Indigenous cultures that the participants come from and described some elements such as the spirituality and mysticism that are profoundly Indigenous. There are commonalities, as Alfred (2009) supported, "What's fundamental about being Indigenous, and is common among us, is the relation to the land—Indigenous people have a long association with the land we are occupying" (p. 136). The stories that were shared with me were as personal as they were powerful. Collectively, upon reflection, the participants answered the question that I asked about how First Nations people, including myself, have survived as a culture. They responded with incredible insight, sharing their knowledge in a humble and quiet manner. There was no talk of revolution or deep-seated anger, only a contentment with their own culture and a peacefulness and self-confidence that each has inherited.

Looking forward, the next chapter presents a summary of the entire body of research followed by conclusions and recommendations. Personal commentary on what this has meant to my journey is also included.

Chapter 6: Continuing the Conversation: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to undertake a research project that, based on a lifetime of experience with Indigenous leaders, would explore the foundational reasons for the decisions being made by Indigenous leaders. In Chapter 1, I stated that the purpose of this research was to understand more clearly the cultural paradigms and leadership issues that form the basis of Indigenous life in Indigenous Canada. While I had selected a small number of participants for this research, their contributions were rich and truly informative. The key findings from their participation were derived from data captured in recordings and notes responding to the original research questions. In this chapter, I will summarize the major findings gleaned from the conversations with the esteemed Indigenous leaders who agreed to contribute to this research. Furthermore, I will offer some observations and implications of the research findings and suggest some real-world recommendations that could add to the reconciliation processes that have been emerging in the country today.

This research and its contents are not about blame; this is about reality and truth. The social and governance structures of Indigenous peoples have been systematically attacked, marginalized, institutionalized, and then neglected; children were often the pawns. But Indigenous cultures have survived, and like the action and all the actions of the past, the people, the *Ongwehon:we*, the *Nêhiyaw*, and all the other First Nations will survive and perhaps even lead the way to a new path of survival as human beings. As mentioned in Chapter 1, everyone talks about culture but it is never clearly defined. For First Nations people, culture has been the sustaining force that has supported the continuation of deep seated beliefs. Medicine (2001) states, “the prohibition of Native Languages was aimed at the very matrix of the expressiveness of culture: language, (vernacular and ritual), music, song, dance, art, and other emotion laden

aspects such as religion" (p. 23). Kovach (2009) brings another element forward with respect to culture; she writes, "Indigenous people globally understand the connection to the land, which has sustained Indigenous peoples, and the cultural identity bound to it" (p. 158). Connection to the land and environment is a relational aspect that helps define the cultural paradigm. Smith (1999) adds more elements to this paradigm, "In addition to this literature, there are stories, values, practices and ways of knowing which continue to inform Indigenous pedagogies. In international meetings and networks of Indigenous peoples, oracy, debate, formal speech making, structured silences and other conventions which shape oral traditions remain the most important way of developing trust, sharing information, strategies, advice contacts and ideas" (pp. 14-15). Culture is all of these and in our contemporary world, these characteristics can be subtle but as evidenced by the stories described by today's First Nation leaders in chapter 4, these traits are still demonstrated and continue to support and strengthen the culture.

This dissertation is organized into six chapters and follows a generally prescribed template for doctoral dissertations. This research is based on my background experiences, academic research, observations, discussions, and above all, conversations with First Nation leaders who cumulatively have what amounts to centuries of experience and who have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to working with and for First Nation peoples. As a departure from the normal graduate student undertaking of primary and secondary research, I draw upon a long history and experience spanning over 40 years working directly with First Nation leaders, some of whom have participated in this inquiry project.

Summary by Research Question

My research questions were stated in Chapter 1. Here I offer summary statements recalling the most impactful responses to each of the questions.

Question 1: What Has the Impact of Culture Been on Indigenous Leadership and Decision Making as it Affects First Nations Governance?

The research has revealed that the cultural foundations of Indigenous peoples are so deeply rooted, it is difficult to imagine a paradigm in which Indigenous leaders do not fall back onto their traditional values. In many cases, Indigenous leaders—past and present—had many of their cultural traits taken away from them; this included language and ceremony, leaving generations of First Nations people in a cultural no-man's land. However, the residual seeds of the culture are so deep; it took generations for them to spawn a regrowth. All of the participants in this study confirmed this view.

Colonialism has imposed a new paradigm onto the governing systems of most First Nations but for the most part, the tribal values have survived. Oftentimes, at major national conferences, I heard leader after leader state they had to consult their community when faced with agreeing to a new policy or program. This reticence was not because they were incapable of making a decision; rather, it was a deeply embedded value of community, a cultural characteristic that is synonymous with an Indigenous worldview. Each of the narratives related by the six leaders in this research reinforced this worldview.

The majority of the conversations and discussions with participants focused on internal validation of cultural traits. Amongst the common and consistent Indigenous traits are optimism, trust, and patience. Alfred (2009) summed up the question of collaboration when he wrote,

> We tolerate people having a different structure, a different way of doing things, because it's their own business. I think we recognize each other's right to self-determination. Sometimes even internally within our own caucuses, we forget about that and we have to be reminded. (p. 135)

This concept was validated by Ovide's commentary when he spoke about *pakan*, an understanding that some people are different (see Ovide's remarks in Chapter 4). Perhaps a coming together of Indigenous and Western worldviews will be a corollary of the existing hegemonic system.

Question 1a: How Have your Cultural Paradigms Permeated your life as a Leader?

The expression of Indigenous rights emanates directly from cultural paradigms. The acknowledgment of those rights has been a long time coming, but institutions such as the United Nations (2018) enshrined the rights of Indigenous peoples in a declaration; the Supreme Court of Canada provided judgments in seminal cases such as *Delagamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997) and *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* (2014) supporting elements that act as the corner piece of a jigsaw puzzle. Cultural paradigms have not permeated Indigenous rights, they never left! Again, the six leaders reflected this throughout their conversations with me.

Question 2: What were the influences that led you to a leadership role?

The major influence of the participants' conversations clearly came from childhood experiences and family support. A direct link from these experiences to leadership style was informed by the traditional language and tribal ceremony. In most cases, the participants stated they did not feel, at the time when they were children, that they were being groomed for leadership, but upon reflection, it was the social structure and the cultural paradigms that led them to accepting positions and responsibilities of leadership. Each of the participants clearly stated who influenced them and who served as a model or mentor. Not one of the participants indicated that formal education or involvement with an educational institution contributed to their position as a leader.

Every participant spoke to the theme that Indigenous knowledge is embedded in the language. Indigenous languages are the soul of tribal cultures. For participants whose mother tongue was an Indigenous language, it was clear that this was a primary feature of their identity, and for those whose mother tongue was not an Indigenous language, there was a recognition and realization of the importance and a reverence attached to their Indigenous language. This is true for me as an Indigenous person as well.

Through observation of the many years attending Indigenous gatherings and conferences, it is particularly difficult to try to make a definitive statement that Indigenous people conduct themselves in an Indigenous way. Nevertheless, we do. The differences are sometimes subtle and sometimes overt. For instance, there are differences in the manner in which people are dressed. I am always surprised going to a non-Indigenous conference that men are usually dressed in a suit and tie, with the women dressed in business attire, whereas at an Indigenous conference, the dress is far more casual. At a non-Indigenous conference, there is chatter, at an Indigenous conference, there is a lot of chatter combined with laughter.

So are Indigenous people less serious about major political issues? The answer is unequivocally *no.* In fact, this research indicates the struggle for rights is a battle that has been going on intensely for more than a century. The battlegrounds have changed from open insurgency to court challenges. This is all now supported by academic documentation.

From an Iroquoian perspective, Fenton (2010) quoting the Peacemaker (the founder of the Iroquois Confederacy) stated, “Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgment in their minds and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation” (p. 37). This approach speaks volumes about a cultural paradigm that was espoused in the 1200s (the founding of the Iroquois

Confederacy[13]) and has been retained as a mannerism. This mannerism was and is sometimes confused for either complacency or agreement.

Summary of the Results and Significance

I believe it is always important to examine the foundation of any policy, ideology, ontological belief, or worldview. To this end, this research began with a documentation of the critical issues that have impacted the legislative and policy frameworks and have been detrimental to the social and economic structures of First Nations in North America. This foundational research could be viewed as a window into the rationale supporting the ideals and philosophies behind colonialism. During the research, the issue of colonialism was ubiquitous, from academic authors (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Smith, 1999), journal articles (e.g., Cornell, 2015; Longboat, 2008), participant engagement, general conversations, and above all, the recorded conversations with the participants, who are all Indigenous leaders. The issue of colonialism and the struggles that have resulted have been central to the ongoing socioeconomic condition of Indigenous peoples. The TRC (2015) commented on the significance of this type of approach:

> Too many Canadians know little or nothing about the deep historical roots of these conflicts. The lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and for Canada as a whole. In government circles, it makes for poor public policy decisions. In the public realm, it reinforces racist attitudes and fuels civic distrust between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. (p. 8)

[13] Within the oral tradition, knowledge holders express the formation date of the Confederacy as being over 2,000 years old.

The roots of colonialism are centuries old and are embedded in the philosophies of the church. These roots can also be directly traced to ideologies contributing to policies of the modern era, which have added to much of the malaise that First Nations experience on an everyday basis. An example of this is of course the residential school tragedy that directly affected the lives of many thousands of Indigenous children and caused collateral damage to entire social structures of Indigenous tribal systems. Intergenerational trauma is still being felt. Despite these atrocities, the roots of the cultures of many First Nations, although damaged, have remained intact. Ceremonies, stories, and ideologies have remained true to their axiological standards. There is no question that the centuries have impacted issues like language; for example, I have heard people refer to some traditional terms as "ancient" words that are not used or have not been heard in a long time. Mike Mitchell made reference to this when talking about ceremony in the longhouse. Other Mohawk linguists that I have spoken with over the years have stated a similar phenomenon.

During this research, the extent of the "problem" is addressed but often in a tangential way. There are so many dimensions to the issues that Indigenous people are involved in, such as language, land, environment, health, water, infrastructure, housing, and cultural retention. For many years, the management of all these issues was undertaken and controlled by the federal government until a shift—involving a cultural revitalization—started in the 1960s. This research looks at how the cultural aspect had a profound effect on that revitalization and how culture impacted Indigenous leaders. It is important to note that the culture and tribal paradigms were the only consistent thread that touched each of the issues. My own history working with Indigenous leaders, the background research, academic literature, and conversations with selected Indigenous leaders were the main sources of information that informed this research.

I selected participants for this research based on my access to leaders who had risen to senior positions within an Indigenous organization with perhaps some experience in Western-based organizations. In some cases, the leaders had experience in both types of organizations, and this provided valuable insight into the issue of walking in both worlds. Although the number of participants was relatively small, the numbers of Indigenous people who have reached the most senior levels of leadership is equally small. The majority of participants had more than 40 years of experience in the working world and, for the most part, almost all were involved in Indigenous leadership positions for the majority of this time. The Nipissing University Research Ethics Board protocols required an explanatory participant information letter, attached as Appendix C, which each participant signed with no hesitation. None of the participants asked questions or requested follow up.

Response to the Research Questions

The research questions identified at the beginning of the study (see Chapter 1), which I also reviewed earlier in this chapter, were aimed generally at the influences that led the participants into leadership positions. The conversations also explored their various experiences as leaders. I determined themes based upon the conversations, which uncovered a number of common experiences and outlooks. The importance of language, ceremony, and Indigenous knowledge became important topics. All the participants made related comments that illustrated the differences in worldviews between Indigenous and Western philosophies. S. Wilson (2008) commented on this, saying,

> This commonality is that knowledge [Western epistemology] is seen as being *individual* in nature. This is vastly different from the Indigenous paradigm where knowledge is seen

> as belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge. (p. 38)

There were many examples raised during the conversations where the language was described as the action or the function as part of a ceremony. Jody Wilson-Raybould described her title in the Big House as the Hiligaxste', always a woman, who leads the Chief (Hamatsa) into the Big House at the beginning of a ceremony. The titles belong to the culture and most Indigenous cultures have a similar function, which is carried on through the ages. Leroy Littlebear was piercingly clear in his recent remarks about language, saying, "Language is the repository of all the knowledge we bring in."[14] As an example of this statement on language, Ovide's remark about *pakan* (being different) influenced his position on human rights, and Robert's equating of Indigenous cultures to the *Gogeet* a "supernatural wildman"—a person whose spirit is too strong to die, is another vivid example.

Indigenous Methodology and Methods

I employed a unique Indigenous methodology drawing upon conversation as a method. The fact that most Indigenous cultures depended on oral continuance to support their respective tribal traditions and knowledge was central to the selection of this approach. Kovach (2009) asserted,

> Indigenous knowledges have a fluidity and motion that is manifested in the distinctive structure of tribal languages. They resist the culturally imbued constraints of the English language, and from this perspective alone, Western research and Indigenous inquiry can walk together only so far. (p. 30)

[14] Speech at Queen's University on April 12, 2021.

During the conversations with participants, Sophie was very clear when she stated, “There are some concepts that just can’t be translated.” Kovach (2010) described the conversational method as follows:

> The conversational method is a means of gathering knowledge found within Indigenous research. The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral storytelling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core. (p. 40)

Perhaps Elder Kelly was most accurate from an Indigenous perspective when he stated, “Anthropologists call these legends, we call them teachings.” The personal stories of the experiences of the participants support this method as valid, as illustrated in Chapter 4.

This research also included an introduction to Indigenous paradigms, which led to examples of differing worldviews between Indigenous and Western epistemologies and emerging paradigms. It was evident that there is not only a marked difference between the two worldviews, but a concerted effort by Indigenous peoples and institutions to retain their worldview.

The research into Indigenous issues is complex and broad in scope. In the past, historical research was undertaken by non-Indigenous peoples—mainly by anthropologists or clergy. While it was important to record some of the activities, the lens through which I undertook this inquiry was clearly an Indigenous one. Indigenous researchers examining Indigenous issues with Indigenous people are relatively new in the academic world; as such, the debate on the efficacy of the research continues. The TCPS2 has made some alterations to their ethical standards, but

the ethical policies are still strongly influenced by Western methods of research (CIHR et al., 2018).

General Observations About Indigenous Leadership

This research has chronicled some of the experiences of six Indigenous leaders and explored issues that have impacted the lives of thousands of Indigenous peoples in Canada and, indeed, in North America. These observations are in no way intended to imply that all First Nations are totally culturally homogeneous but it is astounding that the fundamental ontological beliefs of most Indigenous Nations have a similarity that has in fact been —in some way— responsible for their survival as a culture.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this research was not intended to cast blame or make people feel guilty about who they are. Rather, I intended to illustrate the strength and power of a culture that has refused to die. The research also illustrated a number of salient features that mark a difference between Indigenous and Western worldviews. Leroy LittleBear (2021) succinctly stated this difference, "Western science is about measurement; Indigenous science is about relationships." Some of the marked differences are presented in the next paragraph.

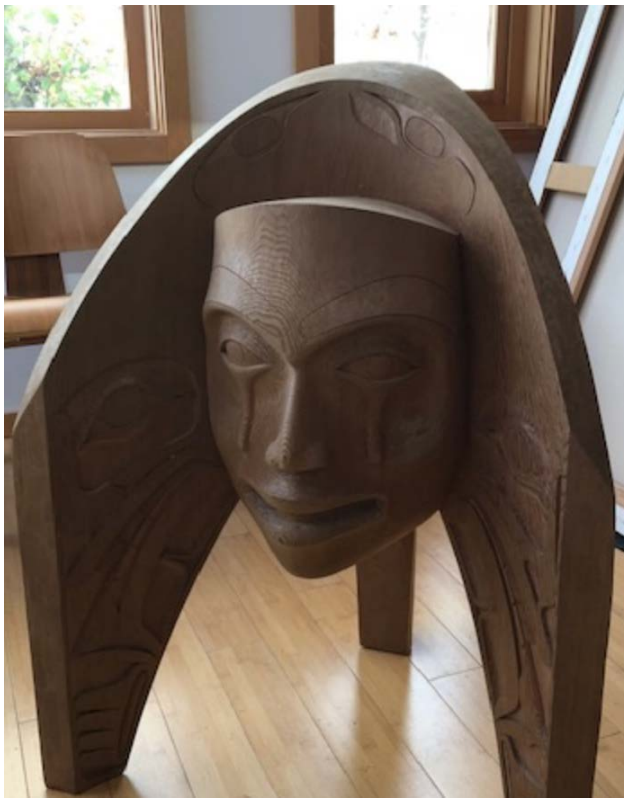
First, Indigenous leaders are almost always mentored from a young age to assume the mantles of leadership. Jody Wilson-Raybould was influenced by her participation in ceremony in the longhouse, as was Mike Mitchell. Both were young children when these events took place. Indigenous pedagogy indicates that potential leaders are recognized by their peers or Elders and the mentoring becomes a lifestyle, rather than learning in a formal institutional setting. Second, language plays a critical role in shaping the values and axiological outlook for many Indigenous people. Language becomes the soul of the culture and affects the manner in which Indigenous

leaders undertake their responsibilities. Furthermore, the Indigenous population not only expects but also demands that Indigenous leaders comply with their cultural and tribal paradigms. This is evidenced by the fact that the leadership is changed if people stray too far from their root values. Third, the concept of time is different. While the Western concept of time is absolute, Indigenous concepts of time are relational. For example, decision making in the federal government is time driven, whereas decision making in Indigenous governance is driven by the consequences of the decision, whether it takes a minute, an hour, a day, a month, or longer.

An interesting observation was that the Indigenous leaders today still make decisions based on their respective cultural background. During our conversations, not once did participants mention money, nor did they reference the stature of their positions or accomplishments. Although I never raised the issue as a metric for the positions held by the participants, I also observed that economic gain was not a priority. As illustrated in the photo of the sculpture by Robert regarding Missing and Murdered women (see Figure 13).

Figure 14

Photo of a Sculpture by Robert Davidson Dedicated to the Missing and Murdered Women



Note. Photo Credit: Daniel Brant with permission from Robert Davidson, taken in his studio.

I did ask him if that was a commissioned piece and his response was no, he just felt compelled to do it. He had no plans for its installation. An additional observation was the frequency of the comments about the cosmos or spirituality. Indigenous leaders are imbued with a sense that we humans are only a small part of the living world and this was a consistent thought.

A Resulting Final Question

A profound question evolved from the six conversations. In hindsight, this further question can be supported by secondary research. I asked the participants—along with a few other colleagues—their opinions on why we, as Indigenous peoples, have survived as a definitive and separate culture. Their responses, I feel, summarize the value of this research:

- “We are still here because we are closer to Creation” (D. Ritchie, Oneida Nation, personal communication, January 8, 2020).
- “There are unseen forces that help us” (Ovide Mercredi).
- “You know it’s kind of ironic that another name for alcohol is spirit. The Christians want to fill us with their spirituality and they had no idea that we had our spirituality and that we had our understanding of the cosmos. So now, we are moving beyond Christianity. Our songs and ceremonies are now filling the void” (Robert Davidson).
- “Some of the traditional knowledge has been lost but the roots of it are strong enough that the resulting decisions are still compliant with the original traditional knowledge” (Sophie Pierre).
- “We are resilient and we understand who we are as a people” (Jody Wilson-Raybould).
- “We can surrender our language and culture, ceremonies, etc., and the respect for it, or we can say we’re not surrendering. My kids are going to grow up knowing fully well who they are. Nation, develop the nation mind, the nation spirit, so that’s the bar I set out there right now” (Mike Mitchell).
- “Our people have been through every single possible feat that you would think would eliminate a people, but we are still here. I really do believe in my whole heart that it has much to do with the connection to the land and to the creator and our Ancestors” (Kluane Adamek).
- “It is a testament to the strength of our culture. I believe the argument can be made that our cultural survival has largely been a result of our collectivism in which we put group first then individual. We have a powerful value system that supports the

protection of the group culture" (M. Kovach, personal communication, January 6, 2020).

The responses to this final question were profound and inspiring. They provide hope for the future as well as cement the commitment to retention of our culture and cultural values.

Concluding Remarks on the Themes that Emerged

Language

The Indigenous languages cannot be substituted for another language and still provide the meaning that supports an Indigenous worldview. Beyond a mere declaration that language was important, participants offered examples of how language supported their tribal philosophies. Examples include Robert's description of the Gogeet, Jody's recounting of the name of the woman (always a woman) who leads the Chief into the Big House which she explained as a metaphor for life, Mike's reference to Indigenous people as Ongwehon:we (real people), and all of these are examples of the life-giving force of Indigenous languages.

Gender

Participants raised two remarkable instances regarding gender. The first was the comparability of values between cultures from across the country amongst those that had matrilineal social systems. The second was the reference to the relationship with the clan mothers who hold the responsibilities of teaching and handing down tribal values. This became unbelievably real when both Sophie and Jody made remarks about Elders who are not real Elders. It was traditionally women's responsibility to make those types of pronouncements, and it would be sacrilege for anyone other than Indigenous women leaders to tread on that ground. The deep-seated role of women continues.

Elders

Great respect is shown towards Elders, and most look to Elders as a source of guidance and counsel relating to cultural matters. Medicine (2001) accurately noted, "Not all Elderly people are considered Elders. An Elder is a person that has accumulated a great deal of wisdom and knowledge throughout his or her lifetime, especially in the tradition and customs of the group" (p. 78). Each of the participants acknowledged the importance and the role of Elders. Participants expressed a reverence and respect for the role of Elders. This commonality reaches across all Indigenous cultures.

Culture

Simply stated, culture was the foundation of each of the participant's existence, and all had devoted their life's work to supporting and enhancing the paradigms of Indigenous culture. None of the participants sought to diminish the importance of culture; this was particularly evident when they spoke of their connections to their own tribal customs.

Governance

The responses from the participants illustrated that their respective cultural values and foundations significantly affected their governing style. Family, Elders, community, and peers gave these values to them. One did not have to grow up on a reserve to attain these Indigenous values; the roots of these principles are soundly and deeply embedded in tribal or a Nation's customs.

Recommendations

Making recommendations is difficult because they always sound so absolute. Upon reflection, the most I could ask as a desired result of this research is for more tolerance, understanding and acceptance of the value of an Indigenous worldview. This might come from

education or exposure to other cultures, and it might lead to the acceptance that others are *pakan.* In addition, the understanding that there is nothing wrong with being different is central; we should not be judgmental about differences, but neither should we capitulate to a hegemonic approach that detrimentally affects our cultural paradigms. An era of reconciliation was established through the report of the TRC (2015), but as Senator Murray Sinclair (as cited in Enright, 2020) pointed out, "We have found the mountain, and now we all have to climb it" (15:00). The recommendations are offered on two levels for consideration; the first are recommendations for real-world change and the second are recommendations for areas of future research.

Recommendations for Real-World Change

Recommendation 1: More Education to Learn the History and Contributions of Indigenous Cultural Values. Our Ancestors agreed to share the bounty of this country hundreds of years ago, since the concept of sharing was integral to survival. Sharing was and is a cultural trait that is inherent in most Indigenous cultures, until recently where concepts of materialism have crept in. Many of us have forgotten how to share in the traditional sense. Just as Robert learned about the ancient carvings from visits to public museums and reading published books, there should be a more concerted effort to provide educational material on the values of sharing. The educational system needs to take a concerted effort to publish and include more material on Indigenous history, culture and worldview in all stages of the pedagogical experience.

Recommendation 2: More Formal Expressions of Reconciliation. Reconciliation is going to be a long hard road to tread, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation means understanding and acknowledging reality. Reconciliation is different from compensation. Reconciliation does not mean capitulation either way. Reconciliation is based on

respect. Colonization has hit Indigenous cultures' social and governing structures extremely hard and has created some pathways where there is no exit or turning back. In today's world, many First Nations people are bitter and have turned to civil disobedience as a means of addressing their concerns. Many feel this is the only choice they have. Oka, Gustafson Lake, Wet'suwet'en Listiguj, and Sipekne'katik are examples where protest became elevated to civil strife. As indicated in Chapter 1, protest leading to strife was used in the 1960s by the general population, creating a cultural revolution.

Finding a balance is always difficult. It is a good start that land acknowledgements are becoming standard now for governments and for the private sector. As Indigenous people, though, we recall that our Ancestors helped pull up the boats of colonists and helped secure them; however, an understanding emerged very quickly that there were indeed two paths. The *Guswenta* (Two Row Wampum) depicted in Figure 10 in Chapter 5 and outlined in Chapter 2 symbolized a recognition that there were indeed two paths. The Western governments and educational institutions are slowly starting to realize that. Indigenous methodologies are now becoming considerations and accepted by research ethics boards. Consistent with the first recommendation, education and acknowledgment should be paired with programs and requirements to teach the historical lessons that have endured as cultural traditions for centuries. Lessons in cultural sustainability need to be commonplace and not relegated to the historical shelves of academia and policy.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Language Retention Support. Language revitalization is a key to cultural longevity. This has been the refrain of many Elders and knowledge keepers. The participants all spoke of the importance of language and as Professor Leroy LittleBear (2021) stated at a recent speech at Queen's University, "Language is the

repository of all the knowledge we take in, … [Indigenous] languages are process oriented." The oral traditions have kept the culture alive in spite of the assaults on the use of traditional languages. While there have been some federal programs directed at language retention, this has not been a priority fiscally. At my own First Nation, the language program is funded out of our own source revenue, as there is no line item in the transfer payments for language classes. In many schools where the Indigenous language is offered, they are almost always provided on a voluntary basis.

Language is the soul of the culture; it enriches oour worldview. A stronger and richer priority must be directed to language instruction. There is hope in that some universities are including programs on language instruction, but their use should be far more accepted and better supported.

Recommendation 4: Acknowledge the Structure and Validity of the Traditional Forms of Governance. It is simply illogical not to think that the original colonists regarded the Indigenous people as "savages*." Les sauvages* was the word the French explorers used, and Jefferson and Washington, as documented in Chapter 2, referred to the Haudenosaunee as "a group of savages." Franklin (as cited in Fenton, 2010, p. 470) stated they were appropriating some of the concepts of Indigenous governance that they would use in developing their own constitution. As an example, the division of power was one of the concepts the Iroquois Confederacy built into their governing structure. The Iroquois Confederacy had a highly structured system of debate where issues had to be passed back and forth between the 6 Nations until a consensus was reached. This concept was appropriated by the fledgling US government in that legislation has to be go back and forth between the three institutions of government before becoming law.

The imposition of the colonial government took place rather quickly as far as devolution goes, but much of that process was expedited by the horrendous health epidemics that the Indigenous population were experiencing, along with the massive alteration made to the lifestyles and social structures with the introduction of new ideologies. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the most destructive era came with the enforcement of legislation that happened 150 years ago via the Indian Act (1985, originally enacted in 1876). From initial European contact through to the 1930s, many First Nations were still operating under their traditional governing structures and then were forced to comply with the Western form legislated through the Indian Act. There are still communities that reject the imposition of this Western form of government. Further research and analysis needs to be undertaken to determine how traditional forms of governance can be instituted and recognized. It is interesting to note that one place where this overt reticence to comply with Western forms of governance can be found is in the cultures that have matrilineal social systems

Governments have refused to offer any more than tacit lip service to traditional systems of governance. It is ironic that the federal government has developed policies on Indigenous Inherent Right (Government of Canada, 2010). It is not a policy of recognition but a policy framework of what is acceptable within the Canadian government's idea of what "inherent right" should be. More work needs to be undertaken on the values and worldviews of Indigenous peoples in order to restructure how a nation-to-nation relationship could benefit everyone who calls Canada home.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendation 1: Traditional Indigenous Government Structures, Matrilineal Social Structure, and Resistance to the Western Style of Governance. Research needs to be

undertaken to explore and understand the intersection of the relationships between traditional Indigenous government structures, matrilineal social structure, and resistance to the imposition of a Western style of governance. As a hypothesis, an understanding of these intersections may hold some knowledge on the delegation of authority within a traditional governing structure which may also lead to a sociological understanding of roles of leadership within contemporary Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 2: Mechanisms for Federal and Provincial Governments to Recognize Indigenous Governments. Current federal and provincial governments need to examine mechanisms that will allow their structure to recognize Indigenous governments. By this, I do not mean complying with federal policies on "self-government" that have been developed by federal officials. Federal and provincial governments need a level of recognition of operating Indigenous governments that have been developed or reconstituted by Indigenous systems. This would take an acknowledgement by the state that Indigenous Nations have a right to sovereignty, a position that the federal and provincial governments have been unwilling to take. Herein lies a major difference in worldview: Western concepts of sovereignty are attached to an individual like a King or Queen, whereas Indigenous concepts of sovereignty belong to a group of people. This would take a transformational change on behalf of the federal government to undertake a challenge to change the machinery of government.

Recommendation 3: Participatory Roles Within Community. Undertake a contemporary study on participatory roles within a community. Most Indigenous cultures have clearly defined roles for members within their community. While conditions have changed drastically within overall society (with the introduction of elements like the internet, social media, and overall advances in technology), the deep rooted cultural values remain intact. The

challenge now is how to use these new tools to enhance the tribal philosophies that have proven sustainable over the centuries.

Recommendation 4: Reproduce this Inquiry with a Larger Sample of Participants. In Chapter 1, I outlined some of the limitations and complexities of this research project. A larger sample of First Nations leadership with leaders at a local level may produce different results in terms of level of importance and the elements that affect governance. A second area of future examination could include some leaders with a Eurocentric perspective to provide commentary on issues relating specifically to reconciliation. A third area as described in the limitations in Chapter 1 was to undertake a Nation specific examination of the same scope of research.

Final Words

This research, which has taken me on a journey of ingenuousness and an exploration of events and cultural practices that I have been around all my life, has been a revitalization of awareness. I have attended ceremonies and been in awe, I have sat with Elders who have given me inspiration, I have been looked to by others to provide administrative guidance, but most of all, I have realized through this research that our cultures are to be cherished and strongly supported. I do not expect to become a cultural zealot and see life only through a cultural lens, but I do know that keeping a balance in my life is important and perhaps that too is one of the fundamentals of our collective Indigenous cultures that has been the foundation of and reason for our sustainability.

As an analogy in martial arts, everyone starts with a white belt and the epitome is to become a black belt, but once a black belt is attained, the learning just begins. A master once informed me that when you put on the black belt and wear it repeatedly for each lesson, the belt

starts to fray and the more you wear it and take lessons, it frays to the point where it becomes white, just like a beginner. This is so much like the Indigenous philosophy that everything happens in a circular fashion and that learning is circular. This also speaks to the humility that was exemplified in the conversations I had with Indigenous leaders. Humility is a cultural trait—one that is exhibited continuously in the ways that Indigenous leaders demonstrate their leadership. Indigenous leaders seem to know that they are in for the long haul and that they need very thick skin to surmount the constant hurdles while trying to support a better life for their citizens. Perhaps it is time to appropriate the counsel of an American political advisor: *It's the culture, stupid!*

Thanks to the participants and the countless numbers of people I have unofficially spoken with while undertaking this journey. I am more certain than ever that Indigenous cultures will survive and thrive, and we will all be richer for it.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

And now our minds are one.

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Appendix A: Mohawk Language of the Ohèn:ton Karihwatehkwen

Kentióhkwa! Sewatahonhsí:iost ken'nikarihwésha, ne ká:ti Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwen enkawennohétston.
Group assembled here! Listen well for a short while, as Before of The Business consolidated the words will be passed

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Onkwehshón:'a kén:tho onhontsà:ke ratinákere.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge all the people that live here on earth.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Ionkhi'nisténha tsi Ionhontsá:te tsi shé:kon iakorihwató:ken tsi nahò:ten taiakohtka'wenhátie.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge our mother the earth that still she is dependable with what she gives up for us. Let our mind be that way.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kahnekarónnion tsi tionkhiiá:wis ne aionkwania'taná:wen.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the waters that they give to us to wet our throat/quench our thirst.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kentsonhshón:'a tánon ne nia'tekón:ti tsi kahnekarónnion kontinákere.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the fish and all the many kinds of creatures that live in the waters.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Ohonte'shón:'a tánon Ohtehra'shón:'a tsi shé:kon tkonhtká:was ne kaia'takehnháhtshera. Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the grasses/plants and the roots that still give up for us for us to be healthy/well

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Onónhkwa'shón:'a tsi tionkhiiá:wis ne aoti'shatsténhsera.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the medicines that they give to us their strength/power.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kaienthóhsera, ó:ni' ne Tionhnhéhkwen – Ó:nenhste, Osahè:ta, tánon Onon'ónsera.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the Harvest, also the life sustainers – corn, beans and squash

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kahihshón:'a iotón:ni tsi ionhontsá:te.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the fruits that grow/make their selves on the earth.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kontírio tsi tkonhtká:was ne aoti'wà:ron.
Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.
All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the animals that they give up for us their meat.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Okwire'shón:'a tánon Karonta'shón:'a, énska néne Wáhta niiohsennò:ten, ne ohén:ton enká:take akwé:kon ne okwire'shón:'a.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the saplings and the mature trees, one is called the Maple, it will be the leader of all trees.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Otsi'ten'okón:'a né:'e tsi shé:kon ionkwathón:te kontirén:note. Shaià:ta À:kweks nihohsennò:ten né:ne shonkwahró:ris tóka' thé:nen tenka'nikonhrhá:ren.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the birds because still we hear them singing. One is called Eagle he tells us if anything is worrisome.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Otsi'nonwa'shón:'a né:'e tsi iotiió'te iotiianerahstonhátie tsi ionhontsá:te.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the insects because still they are working to make the earth good.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Ionkhihshothó:kon Ratiwé:ras tánon Ratikennoréhstha né:'e tsi shé:kon á:se shonón:ni tsi kahnekarónnion.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge our grandfathers the thunderers and bringers of rain because still they renew the waters.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Kaié:ri Nikawerá:ke néne othorè:ke nonkwá:ti, entie nonkwá:ti, nà:kon nonkwá:ti, tánon è:neken nonkwá:ti.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the four winds/four directions north, south, east and west.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Tetshitewanonhwerá:ton ne Shonkwahtsí:'a Tiohkehnékha Karáhkwa né:'e tsi shé:kon tehohswathè:ton tánon ro'tarihà:ton tsi ionhontsá:te.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge him our Elder brother the sun because still he is shining and heating the earth.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Ionkhihsótha Ahsonthenhnékha Karáhkwa né:'e tsi skátne konnón:kwe teiotirihwaienawà:kon.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge our grandmother the moon because together with the women they help each other.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Teiethinonhwerá:ton ne Iotsistohkwarónnion, ióhskats teiohstaráthe tsi tkaronhiá:te.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge the stars, the beautiful they shine in the heavens.

Now our minds are one

Akwé:kon énska entitewahwe'nón:ni ne onkwa'nikòn:ra tánon Tetshitewanonhwerá:ton ne Shonkwaia'tíson, akwé:kon ne roweiennentá:'on tsi nahò:ten teiotawén:rie ne tsi ionhontsá:te.

Tho ká:ti naióhton nonkwa'nikòn:ra.

All one we will wrap it up of our minds and we greet/thank/acknowledge him the creator, he has given everything that we need to live on the earth.

Now our minds are one

Ó:nen ká:ti tho niió:re ia'tetewawenniháhrho. Tóka' thé:nen saionkwa'nikónhrhen, í:se ki' né: ó:nen sasewakwatakohá:ton. Ó:nen wetewarihwahnhotón:ko nón:wa wenhniserá:te. Eh káti' niiohtónhak ne onkwa'nikòn:ra. Tho niiowén:nake.
Now, then, that is how far we have gone with our words. If there is anything that we have forgotten to mention, now, then, you could fix it or add to it. Now we opened the day. Therefore, let our minds be that way (appreciative). Those are all the words

Ó:nen ká:ti tho niió:re ia'tetewawenniháhrho. Tóka' thé:nen saionkwa'nikónhrhen, í:se ki' né: ó:nen sasewakwatakohá:ton. Ó:nen wetewarihwahnhó:ton nón:wa wenhniserá:te. Eh káti' niiohtónhak ne onkwa'nikòn:ra. Tho niiowén:nake.
Now, then, that is how far we have gone with our words. If there is anything that we have forgotten to mention, now, then, you could fix it or add to it. Now we closed the day. Therefore, let our minds be that way (appreciative). Those are all the words.
Now our minds are one

Appendix B : Discussion Guide

Influences

- Discussion about influences, and if there was an epiphany, what was it and when did it happen?
- Discuss their guidance and stories of their rise to leadership
- Discuss connectivity and how, as individuals in leadership positions, were they able to remain grounded
- Discussion and identification of coping mechanisms while working and leading in a duality of governing structures

Indigenous Thought

- How important is Indigenous thought as a function of leadership
- Why has Indigenous thought prevailed through the centuries of subjugation, marginalization and institutionalization?

Culture

- How much of a role does culture play in sustaining the values that Indigenous leaders are bound to?
- Do you feel that your cultural identity helped or restricted you as a leader?
- How do you identify Indigenous definitions of culture and how does it lead to cultural sustainability?
- How important is culture as a principle of Indigenous leadership and governance?

Decision Making

- Are there metrics that can be identified that will support Indigenous decision making?
- How much does culture affect or impact these metrics?
- What are the cultural markers that shape Indigenous life?
- How much of the respective cultural paradigms influenced their principles and thought processes?

Challenges

- What were some of the most difficult challenges faced and how were they dealt with?
- What type of support systems were in place and were they helpful or pose another level of challenge?
- What are the views on transformational leadership
- Is there a power associated with Indigenous leadership that is derived from cultural prerogatives?

Knowledge

- Is there an intersection of relational and western concepts of knowledge that are necessary to survive in the modern world?
- Are there consequences to this intersection?
- Does Indigenous culture contain a philosophy that has been smoldering beneath the surface waiting for the right time in history to resurface?

Appendix C: Participant Information Letter

Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: An Examination of the Impact of Culture on Indigenous Decision Making and Leadership as it affects First Nations Governance conducted by Daniel Brant, PhD Candidate in the Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University. If you have questions or concerns about the scholarly or academic aspects of this research, questions or concerns can be directed to Dan Brant:

What is the project about?

This research is an examination of the impact of culture on Indigenous decision making in leadership as it affects First Nations governance. Over the years of increasing activity in First Nations governance, Indigenous leaders have been placed in a situation where they are expected to conform to or comply with western ideologies of governance structures while being held accountable by First Nations memberships who carry a different worldview of what First Nations governance means. Many First Nations speak of traditional systems of governance while others are ensconced in the Westminster style of governance. The conundrum continues and the results are recorded and written from austere sources such as the Auditor General of Canada and the United Nations. Discussions and perceptions of leaders who have had responsibility at the highest level will provide insight into the cultural dilemma.

Research on Indigenous peoples has for the most part been undertaken by non-Native persons, usually anthropologists, social scientists, environmentalists and Non Indigenous academics. Not until relatively recently has research on Indigenous issues been undertaken by Indigenous people. Accordingly, the manner in which this research is being conducted is more in line with the ways in which Indigenous people communicate with each other; that is, through conversation. To undertake this research, I have delved deeply into relevant literature by Indigenous academics. One author you may be familiar with who has shaped my thinking is Margaret Kovach (Cree/Salteaux), whose book and articles (2009, 2010), on *Indigenous Methodologies,* and "Conversational method in Indigenous research" guide my research. Another strong influence is Shawn Wilson's (Cree) (2008), *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods.* In addition, I have consulted a wide array of documents, from the Indian Act and its historical underpinnings, such as the Royal Proclamation of 1783, to the recent report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015. There are many more books and articles I have been investigating, and would be most happy to discuss any of them with you, or answer any questions you have about my research.

Why am I asking you?

As a prominent leader, you have been thrust into two worlds and challenged to navigate between the western epistemic systems but held to accommodate the traditional worldviews held by Indigenous peoples. There are few people who have had the level of experiences that your position demanded, particularly considering where you came from. My informal and general thesis is that we as Indigenous people have survived as Indigenous people because of the strength of our respective cultures. This inherent factor is reflected in decision making and leadership. Indigenous leadership is different than western forms of leadership and my research is exploring why those differences exist and what ends might they serve. Having had the honour of supporting the Indigenous leadership, there are shared experiences that bind the relationship and the journey that we as Indigenous people have been charged with, while being on earth only for a limited time. I hope this research may contribute to increasing the quality of life that our future generations will live. Nia:wen Kowa.

Why should I participate? What are the benefits?

The primary benefit will add to a volume of work being undertaken by Indigenous researchers – that culture is not only important but critical as a factor that will support Indigenous people as contributing a viable part of the values that this country can be proud of. With considerable focus being attributed to reconciliation issues at this point in time, understanding how culture has held Indigenous peoples together will be important to understand.

How will this research be conducted?

This research will be conducted utilizing Indigenous methodologies; specifically, through informal conversation. While the necessary protocols will be observed, it is anticipated that the conversations will revolve around the experiences each of you as leaders have had and can share. With culture as a focal point, sharing stories of issues and resolution to those issues will be at the heart of the discussion. The stories and conversations will be recorded and you will be provided with all transcripts of your conversations for your review and approval. Segments of the conversations may be used in my dissertation, but only with your approval.

What am I being asked to do?

You will be asked to commit some time to talk with me, Daniel Brant, about your experience, your background, your influences, your observations, and your assessment of the impact of culture as it affects First Nations governance. This will not be a structured interview, as I will lead the conversation with some questions related to your experience as a leader. However, to begin the process, I will ask you to reflect on your path to becoming a leader. Your response will serve to examine how much a cultural axiology influenced events which led to leadership. You will also be asked to reflect on your time 'in office' as a leader and comment if possible, on what you observed as decisions that had cultural underpinnings. Each of the respondents in this study have had different challenges, therefore responses will not be rated or ranked against each other. There is no standard set of questions as the methodology being employed is categorized as "conversation as a methodology."

I am asking you to commit to one or more conversations lasting about two hours. If more time is required to express your views, I will honour your wishes. Subsequent interviews may be scheduled, but due to the distances involved, and the fact that I am committing to visiting you on

your home territory, or a location of your choice, we can make those decisions collaboratively. Above all, your convenience is the priority; all times and places will be negotiated with you ahead of time, and on an ongoing basis.

All conversations will be recorded by means of a hand held recorder as well as a "Livescribe pen". Once the conversation is complete and transcribed, I will send you a rough copy for your your comments and approval. I will follow up by phone to ensure you have received the material. You will have the choice of receiving the transcripts by hard copy or electronically. In either case, I ask for your response within a 7-10 day period. In keeping with the aspect of confidentiality, it is anticipated that you will personally review the transcript and the time to complete this review will be a function of the length of our conversation. Extended conversations may take up to 2-3 hours to review. If our conversation is two hours, it may take much less time to review the transcript. If you need more than 7-10 days, that will be fine. I anticipate all the interviews, your checking, revising, and approvals of transcripts to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Because this is a formal process within the structure of a University in Canada, the university protocols will need to be observed. A Statement of Informed Consent (at the conclusion of this letter) will have to be signed indicating that you understand what you are agreeing to and that you are free to decline at any time. I would ask that you respond to this letter and sign the consent form within 7 days of receipt. If you require clarification, the time can of course be extended.

Will I have access to the findings?

You will be provided with ongoing transcripts, including a summary of the dissertation, or the entire draft if you wish. You will also have access to any publications arising from the study (i.e., summaries, research papers, journal articles, or presentations). Signing the consent form includes consent to the use of my findings in subsequent publications. However, if you wish to withdraw any part of your participation at any time, you can request a withdrawal of part or all of your conversation and data by contacting the researcher (Brant) or the supervisor (Campbell).

Your Rights

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be given the option to have your participation anonymized or agree to be cited. You will be asked permission to make a voice recording of the conversation. You may decline. If you agree to a voice recording, you will be provided all transcripts of your recorded conversation for your review and will be asked to provide a written agreement that the transcripts accurately reflect the conversation. If you agree to be cited, the quotation and its use in context will be provided to you for your agreement. You may decline or wish to have the statement anonymized.

You have the right to ask any questions to clarify anything that you are unsure about. You have the right to refuse to participate in any aspect of the conversation without explanation and you have the right to end the conversation at any time. You have the right to withdraw any part or the entire conversation by directly contacting me, Dan Brant or Terry Campbell, my supervisor. I would ask that any decision of this manner be made within two weeks following your receipt of the transcript. If you request any withdrawal, the transcripts and recording will be destroyed. All

data collected from the conversations will be stored on a USB and encrypted to ensure data security for the respondents. The USB will be stored for five years, accessible only to my supervisor and me.

What about confidentiality and anonymity?

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential, unless you have explicitly agreed to be cited and identified. I will assure your privacy and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms that disguise participant identity, unless you have agreed to be identified.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to participate, decline to answer a particular question, refuse to participate in discussions you find objectionable or make you feel uncomfortable, or withdraw from the study altogether at any point in time.

Possible risks

The only possible "risk" is the amount of time your participation may require. Any other possible risks are mitigated by the fact that you will have every opportunity to withdraw or decline to participate in any aspect of our conversations and to review and revise all transcripts.

Please note that I have engaged the support of Elder Fred Kelly throughout this research project.

Statement of Informed Consent to Participate in Research

As a participant in this research project, I clearly understand what I am agreeing to do and that I am free to decline involvement or withdraw at any time, and that steps are being taken to protect me. I have read the *Participant Information Letter and Consent Form* and have had any questions or concerns satisfactorily answered. I have been provided with a copy of this letter.

Name: Date:

Signature

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Nipissing University's Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Research Coordinator
Nipissing University Research Ethics Board
North Bay, ON P1B 8L7

Appendix D: REB Final Report of an Approved Protocol

Project Info

[redacted]
PI: Campbell Terry(Faculty of Education and Professional Studies)
Project Title: An Examination of the Impact of Culture on Indigenous Decision Making and Leadership as it Affects First Nations Governance
Submitted: N/A
Submitted by: N/A

Event Info

Event No: 101862-Ref No : 1839
Notes:

Common Questions

1. COMPLETION DATE

#	Question	Answer
1.1	Please provide the date you completed your research.	2021/05/31

2. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

#	Question	Answer
2.1	Provide the number of participants that have completed the study	6
2.2	Advise the number of participants that have withdrawn from the study.	0
2.3	If the withdrawal rate was higher than anticipated, please describe any know circumstances.	

3. PROJECT INFORMATION

#	Question	Answer
3.1	Have any research participants suffered any serious or unexpected harm?	No
3.2	Have any ethical concerns arisen while conducting this research?	No
3.3	Since the original ethics approval was granted, have there been any unidentified risks or benefits to participants?	No
3.4	If you answered Yes to any of the above questions, please provide details and what safeguards were provided to participants.	

4. RECORD RETENTION

#	Question	Answer
4.1	Please provide specific details as to the disposal of data (WHO, WHAT & HOW) collected in this project (records, video, audio, data etc.) and/or the time frame for record retention?	Data consists of (all audio, no video) recorded material, my (Dan Brant's) personal written notes of the conversations, verbatim transcripts of the conversations with participants, edited versions of the transcriptions, emails to the participants providing them with their opportunity to review and revise the transcripts, emails with the participants with their contribution to the dissertation as included in the dissertation with an opportunity to revise, edit or cancel. Return emails with the participants' comments forms part of this collected information. All material will be put on an USB and encrypted and stored in my (Dan Brant's) home office on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. I will also keep a separate copy in my security box at the Bank of Montreal on Bell Boulevard in Belleville Ontario. The material will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years before being destroyed.