URBAN ANISHINAABEKWEWAG: (RE)CLAIMING OUR TRADITIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN URBAN SPACES

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ABSTRACT

Urban Anishinaabekwewag: (Re)claiming Our Traditional Roles and Responsibilities in Urban Spaces

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This thesis focuses on how contemporary urban Anishinaabekwewag are understanding our traditional roles and responsibilities in urban spaces. Utilizing storytelling as a research methodology, three urban Anishinaabekwewag participated in individual guided discussions as they shared their life stories. Through their stories, they share how they have come to understand their roles and responsibilities, what has helped each of them on their life journeys, and what they hope to see for our future Anishinaabeg generations. Urban Anishinaabekwewag identity is not yet a widely researched area of Indigenous academia; this research might serve as groundwork to be further explored by other Indigenous researchers.

Keywords: Anishinaabekwewag, urban, settler colonialism, Ancestors, Anishinaabeg, storytelling, community, Indigenous, traditional, roles, responsibilities, land

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Table of Contents

Terminology

For my reader's reference, I want to include a list of terminology used within my research. I share the explanations and definitions of these terms as I know them. Others may have different understandings of the terms, but I want to provide a base understanding of how I know these words. It should also be noted that any terms that are in Nishinaabemowin are given a very simplified English translation. English translations of Nishinaabemowin will never fully capture what is being expressed, but again I want to provide at least a basic understanding of the terms I use.

Urban	I follow the definition Statistic Canada has outlined. In the *Annual Report to Parliament 2020*, "urban areas" are defined by Statistics Canada as "population centres" having a population of at least 1,000.[1]
Roles	Within my research, "roles" refers to any jobs or duties we may have picked up along the way of our life journeys and are influenced by our own skills, gifts, and passions. Where we are geographically situated might also influence the roles we pick up, such as living in an urban area versus a rural area. Roles can look like being an educator (including in a non-Western sense), being a parent, being an artist/maker, being a water protector, etc.
Responsibilities	Our responsibilities look different for all of us, but when I discuss responsibilities within my work, I am most often referring to the inherent responsibilities we have as Anishinaabekwewag, or as Anishinaabeg. As Anishinaabeg, we have the responsibility to be good relatives to those around us (both human and non-human relations), and to leave the world in a better place than how we found it. As Anishinaabekwewag, as life givers, we have a special responsibility to care for water. Our responsibilities as individuals will also vary based on our own nuanced identities (some examples of these nuances: our Nations, our clans, where we are geographically situated, our community needs, etc., all shape how we may come to find and understand our responsibilities). Additionally, the responsibilities we have might differ in urban areas versus rural areas.
Anishinaabe (sing.) *Anishinaabeg* (pl.)	The Anishinaabeg Nation is one large Nation that encompasses several Nations: Michi Saagiig (Mississauga), Nipissing, Odawa, Potawotomi/Bodwewaadmii, Ojibwe/Ojibway, Omàmiwinini (Algonquin), Saulteaux, as well as some Oji-

[1] Government of Canada, *Annual Report to Parliament 2020*, https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1602010609492/1602010631711

	Cree communities. While some sources I refer to within my work may use a different dialect when referring to Anishinaabeg (such as Nishnaabeg/Anishinabek), this is how I will be spelling the term within my work because it is the dialect I am most familiar with. Within quotations and excerpts I use within my work, I share the words exactly as they were shared by the original source – if I use Nishnaabeg within a quote, versus Anishinaabeg, it is the voice of the original source.
Anishinaabekwewag	Anishinaabe women (pl.)
Anishinaabekwe	Anishinaabe woman (sing.)
Nishinaabemowin	This refers to the language spoken by Anishinaabeg, and this is the spelling I am most familiar with. Throughout my work, I may also refer to Nishinaabemowin as "the language," particularly in my Findings chapter. Nishinaabemowin may also be referred to as "Anishinaabemowin," or simply speaking "Ojibway," especially in my findings chapter as those were the words of the kwewag involved in my research.
Kwe	To offer a base understanding, this is loosely the Nishinaabemowin word for woman (sing.), however *kwe* and all of its meanings cannot be fully captured by the English translation. Kwe is not a gendered term, and Leanne Simpson offers a broader understanding of the term in my literature review chapter.
Kwewag	Women (pl.)
Nibiish	I use this spelling for the word water, but because of different dialects utilized within my research, the spelling may vary in my literature review chapter (ex. *nibi*).
Rez	A slang term referring to reserve.
Aunties	A term used by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous individuals (cisgendered Indigenous women, gender-fluid Indigenous folks, non-binary Indigenous folks; referring to someone as your auntie is not limited to cisgendered women) who are older than us and help guide us in life, or act as our role models. Our aunties are not necessarily our familial aunties, but also beloved close family friends. Calling someone our auntie is a term of endearment and indicates a level of closeness with the Indigenous individual it is applied to.
Bush Natives	A slang term or casual term referring to someone Indigenous who lives in the bush or spends a lot of time in the bush.
Blood memory/ Ancestral memory	Blood memory refers to the concept of a generation's memory being passed down genetically. Blood memory may also be referred to as ancestral memory to avoid any negative connotations with the colonial notion of blood quantum.
Nishnaabewin	Not to be confused with Nishinaabemowin/Anishinaabemowin. *In As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson explains that the

	term refers traditionally to "…all of the associated practices, knowledge, and ethics that make us Nishnaabeg and construct the Nishnaabeg world…" (Simpson 23).
Mishoomis/Nmishoomis	Grandfather/my grandfather.
Semaa	Semaa refers to tobacco, which is one of our four sacred medicines (along with cedar, sweetgrass, and sage). Semaa is used as an offering of gratitude and reciprocity. It is considered one of the most important Anishinaabeg protocols when asking for a gift such as knowledge, medicine, or guidance.
Doodem	Clan (sing.)
Doodemag	Clans (pl.)

Chapter One: Introduction

Aaniin boozhoo, Noodinong-Bemosed ndizhinikaaz Biigtigong Nishnaabeg ndoojibaa Anishinaabekwe ndaaw mukwa ndoodem

My name is Noodinong-Bemosed, I am from the community Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation). I am an Anishinaabe woman, and I am a member of the Bear Clan. My father is Ojibway, and my mother is zhaagnaash[2] with some Haudenosaunee ancestry. I grew up as an urban Indigenous kwe living with my three other siblings: my younger sister, and my two older half-siblings;[3] all of us were raised by my mom as a single parent. While we were growing up, my family moved around Ontario a number of times, and we usually ended up living in largely white communities. Living in white-dominant communities is something that greatly impacted my ability to feel confident in being Indigenous, as well as my ability to stay connected with my culture.

My mom always tried her best to involve me and my younger sister in our Anishinaabe culture in order for us to have a sense of our identities as young Anishinaabekwewag. I recall specifically when my family lived in Parry Sound, from when I was seven years old to when I was almost twelve years old, I had the strongest sense of Anishinaabeg community around me. My mom signed me and my younger sister up for Ojibway language classes in elementary school, she would bring us to powwows, she would bring us with her to her women's hand drumming group practice at Wasauksing First Nation, and she would bring us to ceremonies whenever she could.

[2] Term for someone who is white, or comes from European descent.
[3] My older sister and older brother are not Anishinaabeg, so are not included in my research here.

I have many memories of being on the road with my mom, as she often brought both me and my sister along with her when she had to travel. She would drive long distances for her hand drumming gigs, to visit family friends, or to attend conferences for her work. During these travels, I remember how often she would play Asani or other Indigenous musicians in the car, and she would almost always hum or sing along with the music playing. During visits with family friends, they were often visits with Indigenous women who I now refer to as my aunties. The frequency of these visits created such a great feeling of close community around me. I remember all of the times that the smell of both coffee and smudge filled the air, and the loud auntie laughter that my mom and her friends would share as they exchanged stories over the coffee. My entire life has been full of my Anishinaabeg culture and identity in so many ways. It has always been present whether I chose to see it or not. As I got older, I began to look away from my sense of Anishinaabe identity.

Both my younger sister and I experienced racism ever since we were young girls, and I ended up internalizing a lot of that racism. Ultimately, I ended up struggling greatly with my identity from the ages twelve to eighteen. I tried to push my Indigenous identity as far away from me as I could, because I thought I could protect myself from being othered by my white peers if I did. For many years, I was caught up in trying to blend in as much as I could with my white peers. I called myself "Canadian," and I used to pride myself on the histories of Canada that I was taught in school. I was barely taught about Indigenous peoples while I was growing up, but the times Indigenous peoples were brought up in class, it was a romanticized version of history, and I would always feel the weight of all of my classmates' eyes on me. This perceived sensation of my classmates'

looking at me would only further fuel my anxiety about my identity, as I often felt othered.

I remember for many years hating my name and wishing I could have an English-settler name, because my name always drew too much attention and too many back-handed comments. I was given the name Noodinong-Bemosed[4] at birth by my mishoomis, who passed on to the spirit world a year after I was born. For the majority of my life, I went by my name loosely translated to English (Windwalker) to accommodate the comfort of the non-Indigenous peoples around me whose tongues would trip over the pronunciation of Noodinong-Bemosed if they tried. People who did try would laugh it off and tell me it was too hard, but hearing that always felt personal, as though it was a lack of respect and care towards me. Despite going by my name in English, I remember still wanting to shrink myself smaller during school when my teachers would hesitate in front of the whole class when it came to calling out my name. How could they mess up saying Windwalker? I always had thought. Many teachers would refer to me by my last name instead.

When I began to attend post-secondary, I started out attending University of Toronto at their Mississauga campus. I had hoped that by attending university while living in the Greater Toronto area (GTA), I would experience a greater diversity of people and meet other Indigenous students too. However, I often experienced being told by these new friends I had made that I was supposedly the first Indigenous person they had ever met, or that I did not "look Native" to these new people I was encountering. While living in the GTA, I remember feeling invisible as an Indigenous person very often. I was

[4] Because of the dialect, I still do not know what my entire name Noodinong-Bemosed means, and it is something I hope to learn more about as time goes on and I become more familiar with Nishinaabemowin.

meeting people who claimed to have never met Indigenous peoples before, people who had no idea about the histories of Indigenous peoples, and people who were surprised Indigenous peoples still existed and that they were living on stolen Indigenous lands. Even as my pride in being Indigenous began to grow around this time, the feeling of not being seen as an Indigenous woman in the GTA continued to impact my confidence with my Indigeneity and I realized that was not the place for me. I withdrew from University of Toronto and moved to Nogojiwanong (Peterborough) to live with my family.

Following this move, I decided to transfer to Trent University into their Indigenous Studies undergraduate program. During my undergraduate studies at Trent, I had access to opportunities to start to learn about my Anishinaabeg culture, and my language. The dialect that was taught in my Nishinaabemowin course is the dialect used on Manitoulin Island, Wikwemikong First Nation. The dialect is classified as Manitoulin Central dialect of Ojibway and Odawa and is part of Eastern Ojibway. This Nishinaabemowin course was originally taught by Elder Shirley Williams, and Liz Osawamick was my teacher when I took the course. For reference, this is the dialect I use within my work, and it is the dialect I refer to as I continue working on learning the language.

During this post-secondary experience, I finally found the opportunities to connect with other Indigenous students and Indigenous community leaders. An experience that was really pivotal for me and my sense of direction in life was my experience in getting to go to Oaxaca in Mexico for three weeks, as part of a summer Indigenous Studies course. It was in Oaxaca that I got to meet even more incredible Indigenous women. I had the remarkable experience of seeing the vital traditional community work Indigenous peoples are doing out there in order to decolonize their ways of life and reclaim their

traditional ways of life; there were traditional medicine gardens being grown, and community centres being hand built by the community for the community. I got to see that it was a lot of the amazing Indigenous women out there who are leading the way in decolonization for their community. It was that particular experience that really showed me my own passion for Indigenous women as community leaders in decolonization.

After that experience, I have reflected on all of the incredible Indigenous women in my life who helped shape me into who I am today. My mom may have been a single parent raising me and my siblings, but there were always my aunties around. Aunties have always been present in my life. Growing up, I almost always overheard their conversations at the table. I would hear about their personal struggles, and I would also hear their loud unapologetic Indigenous women laughter that has always been medicine for me. As a kid, I was able to have the sense that these were strong women because of the struggles they carried, but they still had the ability to laugh loudly and have big hearts for those they cared about. Strong women, like my mom and my aunties, have always been in my life helping support me and helping shape me into who I am today.

Sharing my story in such length is important because it is the root of my thesis. I want to honour my younger self with my thesis by sharing the story of what she overcame, and that story matters because for many years she felt as though her voice did not matter. My experiences as an urban Anishinaabekwe are not necessarily unique to me, as they reflect the wider impacts of both colonization and settler colonialism: my struggles with both racism and internalized racism, feeling out of place among my white peers, struggling with finding ways to (re)connect in urban areas, feeling invisible as an Indigenous woman in urban areas, and not knowing my own mother tongue. My story

illustrates the experiences of an urban Anishinaabekwe facing harmful barriers that all derive from a settler colonial society.

There are a number of questions that I have been reflecting on over the past few years, as I have been seeking to better understand myself and my Anishinaabekwe identity. How are other urban Anishinaabekwewag finding and understanding their traditional roles and responsibilities while living in urban spaces? How are they engaging in their responsibilities in these urban spaces? What do they see as their roles going into the future? What do they see for the future of other urban Anishinaabekwewag? Because urban Anishinaabekwewag identity is not a widely explored topic in academia or research, especially those who are young adults, these questions cannot be readily answered by any openly available sources online.

This is when I turn to other urban Indigenous women and Anishinaabekwewag in my life to learn how they are connecting with their identity and engaging with their culture and traditions. My goal is that this small piece of research can be a starting point for other Anishinaabekwewag to engage in further conversations about how they understand their cultural identity, roles, and responsibilities in the context of their contemporary experiences. I hope my research can contribute to some form of groundwork that can be built upon by other urban Anishinaabekwewag who seek to do similar work, and that our experiences can be shared and understood by one another.

Our shared stories can generate ideas of how to better live as Anishinaabekwewag in urban spaces, and ultimately help guide each other on a decolonizing journey that can be as difficult as it is. I want us, present-day urban Anishinaabekwewag, to be good Ancestors for those not yet born, and my thesis stems from this desire for our future generations. Our future generations deserve to have confidence and security in their

identity, to know who they are and where they come from, and to know their languages more fluently than we could. This is the motivation for my own research: to honour both our future generations, and my younger Anishinaabe self who always deserved to feel secure and safe in her identity.

It is a challenge in so many ways to (re)engage with our roles and responsibilities as urban Indigenous peoples. But as urban Indigenous peoples it is our own responsibility to figure that out for ourselves – along with the reciprocal guidance of our Elders, communities (both familial and not), and our Ancestors. It is important that this work is done by urban Anishinaabekwewag for urban Anishinaabekwewag. I wish for us, as urban Anishinaabekwewag, to understand ourselves better despite the impacts of colonization, and lead a brighter path forward into a decolonized future. I want this work to aid in decolonizing our identities and our journeys, in hopes that we can generate answers to our questions, and lead to ways of thinking that generate action towards dismantling settler colonialism. Throughout this work, it is important that I use storytelling to honour my Anishinaabeg Ancestors and our own cultural ways of teaching and learning; this particular story may start with me, but it does not end with me.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In the literature review that follows, I discuss Indigenous Studies literature to highlight what traditional Anishinaabekwewag roles and responsibilities looked like prior to colonization, how settler colonialism has and continues to disrupt these roles and responsibilities, and how urban Indigenous peoples are impacted, as a result, in terms of (re)claiming their identity. I focus primarily on works by Indigenous women scholars in order to centre and privilege Indigenous experiences and knowledge in the context of identity, roles, and responsibilities of Anishinaabekwewag. Some of the terminology within my work may differ from the secondary sources I highlight, such as my use of Anishinaabeg versus Nishnaabeg; this is a difference in dialect, as clarified in my terminology table.

Anishinaabeg roles and responsibilities that have traditionally been practiced by our Ancestors can vary by Nation (Algonquin, Ojibway, Potawatomi, etc.), gender identity (this includes all gender identities outside of the rigid Western gender binary), as well as by clan. While my research focuses on urban Anishinaabekwewag (re)connecting with "traditional" roles and responsibilities, I do not mean "traditional" as though it is coming from a fixed historic point in time. Rather, I define "tradition" in all the fluid ways the roles and responsibilities speak to Anishinaabeg culture, values, and how our Ancestors lived them. Our environments, ceremonies, traditions, and cultures have evolved and changed over time, and they will continue to do so as time passes. It would not be realistic to expect "traditional" practices, roles, or responsibilities to look exactly the same. Because this research is focused on Anishinaabekwewag, I focus on the roles and responsibilities held by Anishinaabekwewag in relation to my literature review and

resources that are by Indigenous women. Additionally, I do specify the communities where Indigenous women are from, when I am able to, via sources that are openly available online or included in the book sources themselves. This is important for me to include as it relates to acknowledging the writer's positionality and reflects the unique features of each writer's community in its knowledge and kinship networks.

Indigenous research that focuses on solely urban Anishinaabekwewag the perspective of a younger generation is currently lacking in academia, but I believe it is an important area of work that deserves to be built up. There are many questions we may have as a younger generation of urban Anishinaabekwewag figuring out our identities as they relate to the practices of our Ancestors, while navigating settler colonial spaces. I hope my work can begin to fill in the gaps as we seek to understand ourselves better, break intergenerational cycles, and learn how to be good relatives for all of our relations.

Anishinaabeg History

During this research, it struck me how there is little openly available[5] published Anishinaabeg sources of Anishinaabeg histories, especially prior to the 19th century; most come from biased perspectives of missionaries, government representatives, and Eurocentric historians. This limitation of access to knowledges speaks to the disruption of colonization, as impacts have made it difficult for many urban Indigenous peoples to access the breadth of our own knowledge bases. In her introduction chapter of *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, Brenda Child, who is Anishinaabekwe from the Red Lake Ojibwe, writes:

[5] By openly available, I am referring to sources that can be accessed through things, such as libraries or online databases. While the amount of literature now available by Anishinaabe and other Indigenous writers has grown substantially over the past decades, Anishinaabe history shared by Anishinaabe Knowledge Keepers remains largely within communities and their oral transmission traditions.

> Getting a clear picture of … American Indian histories has long been a challenge. Early generations of historians lacked the tools and perspective to put them into context. Also, historical sources and documents often misunderstood and misrepresented the Ojibwe and other peoples, portraying women with great contempt or trivializing their work and moral character. (Child xvi)

While oral Anishinaabeg histories are alive and well within their communities, finding access to reliable Anishinaabeg histories and knowledges via openly published sources is a challenge.

Anishinaabekwewag Identity

When looking at how urban Anishinaabekwewag understand their traditional roles and responsibilities in urban spaces, it is important to acknowledge the many facets that might make up these, which also inform their sense of cultural identity. Regarding identity, Brenda Child writes that:

> Ojibwe identity and political organization were also very systemic and historically were closely aligned with kinship networks. In the evolution of Ojibwe society by the time of European contact in the Great Lakes region, families, communities, and the doodem developed social and political mechanisms that controlled and apportioned resources. Ojibwe people often describe this tradition as one that dates from a time before Anishinaabeg, when the earth was new … Underlying the doodem tradition was a deeply held regard for the relationship between the human and animal worlds… (Child 27)

Child's work shows how Anishinaabeg ways of life, politically and socially, were heavily influenced by our non-human relations and understandings of the world around us; this way of life is still maintained today for many Anishinaabeg.

In addition to the deep kinship shared with our animal relations, there is also the deep kinship and special Anishinaabekwe responsibility to *nibiish* – the water. Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabekwe from Whitefish River First Nation, in *Indigenous Women, Water Justice, and Zaagidowin (Love)*, explains that:

> Water justice, in Anishinaabek understanding, considers not only the trauma experienced by people and other life due to water contamination, etc., but values the waters themselves as sentient beings in need of healing from historical traumas. Only when the waters are well and able to fulfil their duties to all of Creation is water justice achieved. (McGregor 72)

This above excerpt by McGregor highlights how crucial it is within Anishinaabeg ways of life to care for the water because it is its own being. "Water transcends time and space. In some respects, the waters we interact with in the present are the same waters our ancestors experienced, and the same ones that may be experienced by future generations in turn, should we take care of the waters sufficiently to ensure their (and our) future viability" (McGregor 73).

McGregor writes about how the Anishinaabeg developed laws and cultural protocols over time based on our understandings of the land, and our relations with all beings. "In this way, the Anishinaabek have developed laws, protocols and practices over time to ensure that relationships with water remained in balance, and that life continues" (McGregor 72). This illustrates that Anishinaabeg have traditionally lived by natural law, which was shaped by our responsibility to the land and water. This sense of responsibility

still exists for Anishinaabeg, but Anishinaabekwewag have a special responsibility to nibiish. This unique connection between Anishinaabekwewag and nibiish exists because both share life giving abilities, as "women have the primary role in responsibilities to nibi due to our relationship of carrying a child in water in our wombs" (Chiblow 4). In *Anishinabek Women's Nibi Giikendaaswin (Water Knowledge),* Susan Chiblow, an Anishinaabekwe from Garden River First Nation, writes:

> Many Anishinabek women are re-establishing their relationships with and responsibilities to nibi through various means such as the Water Walks, Idle No More, and water ceremonies. An Elder once told me that it is the women who will make the necessary changes to stop the destruction to nibi and the lands. (Chiblow 2)

The Impacts of Settler Colonialism

Both Deborah McGregor and Madeline Whetung have written about the impacts of settler colonialism on Anishinaabekwewag relations specifically to nibiish. McGregor writes that "[n]ot only has our own relationship to water been disrupted through displacement, relocation, and alienation, but the waters too, have experienced alienation through these same processes" (McGregor 73). She explains further that:

> As Indigenous peoples, we can work toward healing through loving responsibility; through caring for ourselves, our communities, and the Earth (water, forests, animals, etc.) … Loving responsibilities and obligation flow from natural laws and thus are not mandated by governments through legislation, policies, funding or programs … Our ancestors made important decisions, including treaty decisions, based on *loving responsibility* to future generations. (McGregor 73)

McGregor's discussion speaks to the Anishinaabeg responsibility of caring for all of our relations, in spite of the impacts of historic and collective trauma. The lands and waters who take care of us also need help healing from the trauma of settler colonialism so that they will be healthy and around to take care of our future generations.

In *(En)Gendering Shoreline Law: Nishnaabeg Relational Politics Along the Trent Severn Waterway*, Madeline Whetung, who is an Anishinaabekwe from Curve Lake First Nation, discusses specifically the settler colonial impact of the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW) and the disruption it has caused across all Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg relations; but particularly for Anishinaabekwewag and their ability to connect with nibiish. Whetung writes that "[t]he gendered dispossession of our literal shorelines, where much Nishnaabeg law lives, reverberates throughout our embodied relations. It is not only the fragmentation of Nishnaabeg women's relationship to our places but the intimate dispossession of particular gendered relations and possibilities" (Whetung 28). This was an important source to include regarding Anishinaabekwewag and our unique connection with nibiish, but how this connection has been severely disrupted because of the colonization of our waters, and ongoing settler colonialism. Whetung writes about how, as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, Nishinaabeg governance and laws are very much influenced by the waters and their shorelines. She writes that:

> [I]ntimate acts and relationships inform the ways Nishnaabeg engage politically and economically within and across national relationships. This is why Nishnaabeg have theorized governance through such practices as breastfeeding … The spaces between the intimate and the national that evokes Anishinaabe law across multiple embodied spheres of our lives form shorelines themselves. (Whetung 19)

This illustrates the deep root that is being Anishinaabekwewag; we have existed here on Turtle Island for thousands of years and our ways of life, our identities, our cultures, and our values have been in place far longer than Canada's existence. Our cultural values, roles, and responsibilities are imprinted on us as Anishinaabeg, passed to us through successive generations of our Ancestors.

Despite our Anishinaabeg ways being inherent to us, it is not always easy to remember those parts of our identity in today's context. Colonization and settler colonialism has greatly disrupted Indigenous ways of life, to the point where I cannot even imagine the world my Ancestors lived in; the reciprocal relations they had with the land and non-human beings, the knowledges they carried, and the communities they lived in and cared for. Land theft, community displacement, and intergenerational traumas greatly impact the livelihood and well-being of Indigenous peoples today. Lands and territories our Ancestors once knew so well were completely disrupted by settler colonialism (Whetung 18). Many communities across Turtle Island were displaced to parcels of land unwanted by the government in order to make room for incoming settlers or to access resources for their capitalistic greed (Tomiak 929). Because of colonization and the impacts of ongoing settler colonialism, such as government policies creating a pronounced lack of adequate housing on First Nations or the displacement that resulted from traumatic experiences at residential schools disconnecting children from their families, roughly half of the population of Indigenous peoples now live in urban areas[6] for a variety of reasons (ease of access to resources, education, displacement, etc.).

[6] Government of Canada, *Annual Report to Parliament 2020*, https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1602010609492/1602010631711

Overcoming the Past as Contemporary Urban Anishinaabekwewag

In *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, Bonita Lawrence looks at the disconnection some urban Indigenous peoples in Toronto encounter. While Lawrence's Mi'kmaq identity has recently come into question in some social media forums, her work regarding this topic was very informative for my own research prior to me learning about her identity being in question. Ultimately, I want to honour the voices of the urban Indigenous peoples she worked with because they all offered their own valid and personal experiences to Lawrence. Additionally, Lawrence's work focuses specifically on those who identify as being "mixed," which is an important aspect to include because it can be an added complex layer regarding one's urban Indigenous identity that can be difficult to navigate. In Lawrence's chapter "Regulating Native Identity by Gender," Lawrence highlights the colonial roots of the obstacles urban Indigenous women continue to face today. She discusses how most of the early treaties were made with the Indigenous peoples the British were most familiar with – the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee (Lawrence 47). Because of this familiarity, the British knew the roles Indigenous women played in decision making and deliberately excluded the women from the treaty making process. "To bypass older women in traditional societies effectively removed from the treaty process the people centrally responsible for regulating land access" (Lawrence 47). The historical political involvement of Anishinaabekwewag within their communities is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

To further this social and political disintegration for Anishinaabeg communities, the British introduced alcohol to these communities as "chemical warfare" (Lawrence

47). Lawrence describes the chemical warfare of alcohol as having "…an immediate and devastating effect on Ojibway communities in the Toronto and southwestern Ontario region, whose social disintegration and their resulting dependency on the British was devastating" (Lawrence 47). In addition to this violent disintegration of the Anishinaabeg ways of life, the Canadian government introduced the 1876 Indian Act where Indigenous women were targeted by new Euro-centric racist and patriarchal legal regulations. The Indian Act was implemented by the Canadian government to regulate and control the identity of Indigenous peoples -- especially Indigenous women. Because of the Indian Act, if an Indigenous woman with "Indian status" married a non-Indigenous man, or even a non-status Indigenous man, she was no longer "Indian." In 1985, the Bill-C31 amendment made the act less gender discriminatory, but a great deal of discrimination and loss still exists for Indigenous women because of the Indian Act. Lawrence wrote of the impact on Indigenous women:

> Some of the costs have included being unable to participate with family and relatives in the life of their former communities, being rejected by their communities, being culturally different and often socially rejected within white society, being unable to access cultural programs for their children, and finally not being able to be buried with other family members on the reserve. (Lawrence 55)

How urban Anishinaabekwewag might come to understand and know their roles and responsibilities entails having to navigate these colonial and intergenerational repercussions that date back hundreds of years when the British began to attempt to silence the voices and roles of Indigenous women. The chemical warfare of alcohol and the oppressive identity regulation that is the Indian Act furthered this cultural disconnect for women. As Lawrence writes, "[i]t has been the children of Native mothers and white,

[nonstatus] Indian or Métis fathers who have been forced to become urban Indians and who, in their Native communities of origin, are currently being regarded as outsiders because they have been labelled as 'not Indian'" (Lawrence 61). Additionally, Lawrence also highlights that "…ideological racism—a war of images—is a constant issue to be reckoned with for urban mixed-blood Native people" (Lawrence 136).

To expand on the topic of mixed urban Indigenous peoples and the complex navigation of identity, Bonita Lawrence wrote of the thirty urban Indigenous participants involved in her research:

> Reserve-based or northern participants were more focused on the role that land-based collective living—hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering berries and medicines—played in the maintenance of their traditions … in such contexts, it is inevitable that the bulk of cultural practices related to living on the land are simply unavailable to urban Indians. (Lawrence 166)

This excerpt highlights a great obstacle for many urban Indigenous peoples: the inaccessibility to land and ceremony. However, Lawrence also shares that "[f]or urban Native people, an index of their alienation from the land might well be expressed in the extent to which a spirituality of abstract ritual becomes their mode of traditional cultural activity" (Lawrence 166). This excerpt also underlines the fact that the ways Indigenous peoples engage in culture and tradition is fluid and ever-changing; it demonstrates to a degree that anything can be a traditional or cultural practice.

To further this discussion of tradition being practiced in varying ways in urban spaces, Lawrence mentions that "the differences between urban traditionalism and the practices in land-based communities should not be seen as evidence that urban traditions are not valid—provided that the urban traditions are filling the needs of the individuals

who live by them" (Lawrence 169). That statement echoes what I have heard from multiple Indigenous women in my life in recent years, as I have struggled personally with needing to engage in ceremony, but I have been restricted to existing Indigenously within concrete urban spaces. Many things can be ceremony, as long as you carry those good intentions—and it is the intention that matters most because your Ancestors are always listening. This understanding is something that is key for urban Anishinaabekwewag who are working to (re)claim and (re)connect with their traditional roles and responsibilities in those urban spaces.

In addition to the inadequate access to land and ceremony for many urban Indigenous peoples, there are other settler colonial obstacles we face that impact how we understand and (re)connect with our identities. Many, if not all, of Canada's cities have displaced the original peoples of the land and have left no indicator of Indigenous peoples and their rich histories within these urban spaces.

Julie Tomiak, an Anishinaabekwe, in *Contesting the Settler City: Indigenous Self-Determination, New Urban Reserves, and the Neoliberalization of Colonialism*, writes that "[i]n settler colonial contexts the historical and ongoing dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples is foundational to understanding the production of urban space" (Tomiak 928). She mentions how the mainstream narrative regarding the displacement of Indigenous peoples situates the process as a historical event. Tomiak further explains:

> [The] settler state continues to pursue the violent transformation of Indigenous land into settler property and to police Indigenous place-making and self-determination particularly aggressively in relation to cities … This includes the active "forgetting" of the historical geographies of urban areas as Indigenous,

> often unceded, territories, as well as an array of institutional mechanisms that erase Indigenous title, rights, and sovereignty. (Tomiak 928)

This speaks to my own personal experiences as an Anishinaabekwe, which is the motivation behind my research. While living in the Greater Toronto Area, I was often told by non-Indigenous peoples that I was the first Indigenous person they had ever met, and they were often oblivious to the Indigenous histories of the very land they inhabit. The presence and histories of Indigenous peoples being erased in cities creates harmful impacts for the Indigenous peoples who continue to exist in those urban spaces. Experiencing this rhetoric, as often as I did, contributed to my feelings of being invisible to others as an Indigenous person, and it ultimately took a daily toll on me as my Indigeneity felt erased.

The work of Julie Tomiak shows the disruption of settler colonialism for Indigenous peoples in the form of "forgetting" (Tomiak 928). These urban spaces in Canada are born from the violent displacement of Indigenous peoples and continue to benefit from the ongoing displacement, and the collective and active "forgetting" of Indigenous peoples. These are some of the obstacles urban Anishinaabekwewag face while looking to (re)claim and (re)connect with their traditional roles and responsibilities while living in urban spaces. The active and ongoing erasure of Indigenous peoples, especially in urban spaces, is a very harmful and very deliberate act of settler colonialism.

Kwe as Resurgence

In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Leanne Simpson, who is an Anishinaabekwe from Alderville First Nation, introduces *kwe* as a resurgent method to resist settler colonialism. This felt applicable to include in my

research as an Anishinaabekwe myself, and because my research focuses on Anishinaabekwewag. Simpson writes:

> I understand the word *kwe* to mean woman within the spectrum of genders in Nishinaabemowin, or the Nishnaabeg language. Kwe is not a commodity. Kwe is not capital. It is different than the word *woman* because it recognizes a spectrum of gender expression and it exists embedded in grounded normativity. (Simpson 29)

Simpson highlights the very cultural root of *kwe,* as I think it can be easy to forget the depth of Nishinaabemowin and how English translations of our words will always leave them bastardized. In Nishinaabemowin, kwe is much more than a word to use for a colonial gender binary; kwe is colonial resistance. Kwe as method is further explained by Simpson:

> My life as a kwe within Nishnaabewin[7] is method because my people have always generated knowledge withing the kinetics of our place-based practices, as mitigated through our bodies, minds, and spirits … This is an act of resurgence itself: centering Nishinaabeg intellect and thought through the embodiment of Nishinaabeg practices, and using the theory and knowledge generated to critique my current reality … This is kwe as method generating kwe as theorist. (Simpson 30)

Living as kwe is innately political, and because of that it is innately a threat to settler colonialism; as Anishinaabekwewag, we use our lived experiences, thoughts, and feelings to critique settler colonial society in order to generate resurgent responses is the

[7] *In As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson explains that the term refers to "…all of the associated practices, knowledge, and ethics that make us Nishnaabeg and construct the Nishnaabeg world…" (Simpson 23).

embodiment of Nishnaabewin. Canada has worked for centuries to erase our identities and our sense of belonging away from us as Indigenous peoples, and this of course was done through various violent means. As an Anishinaabekwe, I know that any time an Indigenous individual engages in cultural practice (mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally), they are exercising their Indigeneity and actively resisting settler colonialism and the intergenerational impacts of colonization. Even the smallest act of engagement can truly be momentous in terms of identity when considering the extensive history of genocide an Indigenous individual has overcome.

Anishinaabeg Doodem

While I want to emphasize the voices of Indigenous women within my research, my literature review would not be complete without including the work of Basil Johnston-ban and Heidi Bohaker's *Doodem and Council Fire: Anishinaabe Governance through Alliance.* The works by Johnston-ban and Bohaker build context and in-depth understanding in regard to the Ojibway clan system, and how doodem might influence one's roles and responsibilities.

My research includes the work of Basil Johnston-ban as he was and continues to be a greatly respected and renowned Ojibway writer, scholar, philosopher, and intellectual. He dedicated decades of his life to pass on his cultural knowledge in order to keep the language and histories alive. Johnston-ban has provided Ojibway peoples a foundation to better understanding their language, culture, stories, and histories; his contributions are too important and historically rich to leave out of my research. Regarding Ojibway history, Basil Johnston-ban explains in *Ojibway Heritage* that "[t]he Ojibway speaking peoples constituted one of the largest tribes north of the Mexican

border" (Johnston 60), and that "...emphasis was not on the place of origin of birth, but on an affiliation...Custom and practice seemed to indicate that totemic and band or community affiliation took precedence over tribe or other consideration" (Johnston 60). Johnston-ban details the totemic groups in which a band or community would embody to function as a community. According to Johnston-ban, the five basic social units include: leadership, defense, sustenance, learning, and medicine (Johnston 60). Johnston-ban further explains there were originally just five clans to fulfill those basic five social needs but over time more clans were added (Johnston 60). This shows how the clan system derived from community needs of the Anishinaabeg at the time, and as needs evolved, more clans were added to address growing community requirements. I find meaning in these excerpts because it connects to the fluidity of tradition and to the ever-changing needs of the Anishinaabeg.

Regarding the Anishinaabeg language, Johnston-ban teaches that:

> The evidence is strong that the term "dodaem" comes from the same root as do "dodum" and "dodosh." "Dodum" means to do or fulfil, while "Dodosh," literally means breast, that from which milk or food or sustenance is drawn. Dodaem may mean "that from which I draw my purpose, meaning, and being." (Johnston 61)

This demonstrates just how innate these community roles and responsibilities have always been for the Anishinaabeg, having our relations embedded right into our languages.

Heidi Bohaker, a non-Indigenous academic, writes specifically about Anishinaabeg doodem and Anishinaabe governance in *Doodem and Council Fire: Anishinaabe Governance through Alliance*. While I was initially hesitant to include this source at all, with Bohaker being a non-Indigenous academic writing about Anishinaabeg

ways of life, Bohaker did work for a number of years on *Doodem and Council Fire* and worked with a number of Anishinaabeg communities as they shared their own research, histories, and teachings with her; to dismiss this source also felt dismissive of those communities who took the time and trusted Bohaker enough to share that knowledge.

Bohaker's research speaks to something I have wondered about ever since I was a young girl. I have always wanted to better understand how one's doodem could influence how they are perceived by other Anishinaabeg, as well as what behaviours or roles are expected from them as an individual. Bohaker's work allowed me to start gaining a better understanding of what the Anishinaabeg clan system looked like prior to the impacts of colonization. She discusses how doodem has historically influenced one's identity via those social roles associated with their doodem, and how it continues to influence one's identity in present day. Bohaker explains that "…many continue to assert that doodem identities have particular social roles to fulfill because of the behavioural characteristics they share with their doodem namesake" (Bohaker 64).

To illustrate doodem identities and social roles, Bohaker mentions how "…people with the Bear doodem are described as protectors and are likely to take up occupations in policing, the military, and healing" (Bohaker 64). In addition to the example of the Bear, Bohaker also mentions how Loons and Crane are associated with leadership since "[l]eaders were stewards – they took care of the people and land" (Bohaker 139), and fish doodemag are associated with being teachers (Bohaker 64). All doodemag carry their own roles and responsibilities, as they vary from community to community; this then speaks to the varying roles and responsibilities an urban Anishinaabekwe today might have.

Doodem and Council Fire also looks at the roles of Anishinaabekwewag that were carried historically. “Not only were women historically highly respected by Anishinaabe men for their crucial contributions to social and societal well-being, but women had clearly defined political roles” (Bohaker 141). These political roles included women’s councils, and Anishinaabekwewag councils were a key component in Anishinaabeg governance. “During gatherings, women met in councils to discuss issues of importance; one woman, an *ogimaakwe,* or chief woman, then presented the results of the women’s council findings to the men” (Bohaker 141). The advice given by the Anishinaabekwewag council would contribute to matters at hand, such as war and peace (Bohaker 141). Bohaker notes the historical presence of the women’s council in land sale agreements, as the women were present to provide advice and essentially act as advisories to the agreements. *Doodem and Council Fire* made specific mention of an 1805 common council held at Credit River, where the presence and advice of the women’s council was recorded in the minutes. Bohaker also mentions recorded (Western) history from 1892 of an *ogimaakwe* to the Kettle Point and Sauble communities, named Mahmahwegeahego (Bohaker 143). While Heidi Bohaker’s *Doodem and Council Fire* focuses largely on Anishinaabeg political identities and governance through doodem, there was still much to take away in terms of how doodem influences Anishinaabeg identity and what roles and responsibilities might be carried because of doodem; Bohaker also looks at (political) roles and responsibilities of Anishinaabekwewag.

Together as Anishinaabekwewag

In *Role Models: An Anishinaabe-kwe Perspective*, Renée Mzinegiizhigo-kwe Bédard, an Anishinaabekwe from Dokis First Nation, writes:

> Many Indigenous women define themselves through responsibilities of family, community, and nation. We rely on each other as Indigenous women to show each other how to survive, raise our families, and attend to our community obligations … Together, as Indigenous women, we work to determine our identities and responsibilities as women by talking and spending time with each other. (Bédard 192)

My research explores how urban Anishinaabekwewag are understanding their traditional roles and responsibilities, because that speaks to the strength of Indigenous women being able to reclaim their cultural identities—despite all of the gendered colonial obstacles that have been put in front of them. I want to examine *how* they come to understand their roles and responsibilities, so that maybe other urban Anishinaabekwewag who are trying to put in that work might find this work and find some connection with it. I want to contribute some work for urban Anishinaabekwewag that might serve as some insight regarding how to decolonize internally, in order to dismantle settler colonialism externally. Through my research, I hope to show other urban Anishinaabekwewag that there is a path forward to finding our roles and responsibilities, despite how systemic these settler colonial obstacles in our path are. As Simpson wrote, "I am interested in freedom, not survival, and as kwe, I understand my freedom is dependent upon the destruction of settler colonialism" (Simpson 45).

Chapter Three: Research Methods and Methodologies

(Re)Situating Myself within my Research

I am an urban Anishinaabekwe from Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation). My community is situated along the northern shore of Lake Superior, and the name Biigtigong Nishnaabeg translates to "the place where the river erodes."[8] Biigtigong never signed the 1850 Robinson Superior Treaty, and is therefore unceded territory. My community has a longstanding close relationship with the lands and waters that surround them; this close relationship derives from the fact that those unceded lands and waters are the very same that took care of our Ancestors. Although I have never lived in my community, I have visited throughout my life and heard stories from my auntie about the lands and waters in relation to our family. I hope to return after my post-secondary journey to learn more about where and who I come from.

I have always been surrounded by my Anishinaabeg culture because of my mom and my aunties. I often experienced racism in my schools where I was the only Indigenous student, or one of the few students who was not white. I developed shame about my identity. I ultimately pushed my Indigeneity away for years out of fear and insecurity, and I did not allow myself to connect with my culture because of my insecurities. It was not until several years ago, in my late teens, that I began to realize the importance of understanding my identity as an Anishinaabekwe and what that means. I have since been on this journey of looking to (re)claim my Anishinaabekwe identity, and

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[8] "Welcome to Biigtigong Nishnaabeg." *Biigtigong Nishnaabeg*, 6 Oct. 2022, https://www.picriver.com/.

to understand what my roles and responsibilities are in order to best serve all of my relations. My personal journey is the motivation behind my research, as I hope it may connect with other urban Anishinaabekwewag who find themselves on similar life paths. I share my personal stories with both the reader, and the Anishinaabekwewag who I interviewed, so that we can learn from each other and generate ideas to create a decolonized future for those who are not yet born.

Storytelling as Research Methodology

It is important to approach Anishinaabeg identity-related research by privileging an Indigenous methodology, rather than using a Western one. The use of Indigenous methodology allows me to stay true my identity as the Anishinaabekwe researcher, and the identity of the Anishinaabekwewag involved in the research. In *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches,* Margaret Kovach discusses Indigenous methodology saying, "[i]t encompasses Indigenous ways of knowing; it incorporates what Tuhiwai Smith refers to as "researching back," indicating a decolonization objective; it has an ethical basis that is respectful of the natural world; and finally, it values relational techniques in data collection" (Kovach 51). Indigenous ways of knowing connects to identity in that it is rooted in relationships and a worldview that is premised on the sacred responsibilities we carry for those relationships. This frames how, as a researcher, I approach my discussions with the participants and my analysis of the findings.

Specifically, I utilize storytelling as my research methodology which allows for multiple meanings to be found within the stories shared. These meanings can evolve over time and change depending on the listener's positionality. Because of this, there is always

new meaning and knowledge that can be generated from them. When we share our experiences, we are sharing our stories of our experiences. Stories are personal and they are shaped through our cultural lenses. Within Anishinaabeg culture, value is placed on sharing our stories, and speaking with both our heart and spirit. Sharing our stories with each other is an act of healing, and it can help lessen any shame we may carry regarding our identity as we navigate existing in a settler colonial society. We might be able to see parts of ourselves in someone else's story that helps us feel less alone in our own journey and knowing that we are not alone in this journey is uplifting. There is healing when we speak from our heart and our spirit.

In the chapter "The Story is a Living Being: Companionship with Stories in Anishinaabeg Studies," from the edited text *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, Cherokee scholar Eva Garroutte looks at the perspectives of both the Western discipline of narratology and Anishinaabeg storytelling. Garroutte shares a story retold by Kathleen Wescott, who is an Anishinaabe and Cree storyteller. Regarding the Anishinaabeg understanding of storytelling, Wescott tells Garroutte that "[t]he vital qualities of stories enable them to work 'co-creatively' with hearers … helping mold the shape of the world. And they imply that stories do not reduce to their constituent parts … The living nature of stories even enables modes of interaction beyond narration…" (Garoutte and Wescott 68). This highlights the healing power of sharing our stories, especially as urban Anishinaabekwewag. When you share your story, the listener may envision the words you share. But if the listener finds they relate to aspects of your story, they see themselves within the story. We interact with stories beyond simply listening to them: we can see ourselves in a story; a story can linger in our

minds for days as we find meaning within them; or stories might be a learning tool that we carry to help guide us as we walk in this world.

Using storytelling as my research methodology is the most appropriate choice because within Anishinaabeg culture, stories have long been used to convey our teachings, values, and knowledges. Basil Johnston-ban, in *Ojibway Heritage*, writes about the important role of teaching and storytelling within Anishinaabeg culture saying that:

> It was the elders, grandmothers and grandfathers who taught about life through stories, parables, fables, allegories, songs, chants, and dances … To foster individuality and self-growth children and youth were encouraged to draw their own inferences from the stories … The learner learned according to his capacity, intellectually, and physically. Some learned quickly and broadly; others more slowly and with narrower scope. Each according to his gifts. (Johnston 70)

In contemporary Anishinaabeg culture, stories remain a vital means of teaching, learning and sharing knowledge. Storytelling allows the listener, or reader, to find their own meaning in the story being told. Finding meaning within the stories shared, whether in the past or present, is informed by our positionality and individuality, as we all walk through this world with our own gifts, abilities, and experiences.

Storytelling as methodology allows my participants to have agency and have their voices uplifted. This intentional uplifting and highlighting of young Anishinaabekwewag voices is also an act of resisting colonial practices that have historically erased our

voices.[9] This is a critical aspect of my research, as the experiences of Indigenous peoples have long been silenced through various means by colonization and settler colonial society; especially as Anishinaabekwewag. Both our present and historical experiences as Indigenous peoples are often overlooked, misconstrued, or disregarded by mainstream society. As Anishinaabekwewag, there is power in having agency over our stories as we determine how our narratives get to be told and how our voices are heard. In *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, Qwul'sih'yah'maht, who is Lyackson from the Coast Salish Nation, writes "[m]any Indigenous people tell a counter-story to that of the documented history of Indigenous people in Canada … The beauty of storytelling is that it allows the storytellers to use their own voices and tell their own stories on their own terms" (Qwul'sih'yah'maht, 183-184).

Research Methods: Relationality and Reciprocity

While I created questions for a guided discussion, I also wanted to intentionally offer each kwe a personal story of mine in exchange for their personal story. I feel this is an important act of practicing reciprocity and relationality within my research, which I will explain further in the following paragraph. Through this act, we shared our spiritual and emotional experiences that led us to deeper realizations about our identities. As we shared our own stories, it generated some thought-provoking conversations where the participant shared perspectives I had not considered before in regard to urban life. These valuable perspectives will be shared in my findings chapter.

[9] Some examples of how Anishinaabekwewag voices have been silenced by colonial acts are discussed within my literature review chapter.

The inclusion of relationality and reciprocity were important in how I conducted my research, and it is important to explain what these look like in Anishinaabeg research. In *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson writes that Indigenous thinkers, "have always seen the complicated ways our existence is intrinsically linked to and is influencing global phenomena; indeed, our systems of ethics require us to consider these influences and relationships in all of our decision making" (Simpson 56). Simpson further situates reciprocity within Anishinaabeg ways, as she discusses:

> Reciprocal recognition is a core Nishinaabeg practice. We greet and speak to medicinal plants before we pick medicines. We recognize animals' spirits before we engage in hunting them. Reciprocal recognition within our lives as Nishinaabeg people is ubiquitous, embedded, and inherent. Consent is also embedded into this recognition. (Simpson 182)

To expand on what relationality looks like, it is the mindfulness that all beings (plants, animals, water, land, humans) live in relation to each other. Simpson additionally explains:

> [W]hile each individual must have the skills and knowledge to ensure their own safety, survival, and prosperity in both the physical and spiritual realm, their existence is ultimately dependant upon intimate relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty, and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals. (Simpson 154)

It was important for to me to conduct my work with Anishinaabeg cultural values and teachings; this includes the concept of how we are responsible for sharing knowledge. At

the same time, we are responsible for ensuring that the knowledge we carry is being used appropriately; knowledge that is shared is relational (Simpson 156). Methods involved in this, beyond the offering of semaa following each interview, includes ensuring the participants have full control over their contributions throughout the process. I regularly communicated with the kwewag to share transcripts, and chapters that included their voices and stories (such as my findings chapter) to ensure they had full control over their contributions. I wanted to make sure I was always honouring their stories by capturing their experiences as accurately as I could, and as respectfully as I could. If there was something one of the kwewag did not want me to include, or if they wanted something changed, I would respect their wishes and honour that trust they showed me.

Selection of Research Participants

When determining who I would be having conversations with for this research, I had to consider what is realistically achievable with a two-year master's thesis (versus the scope of a four-year doctoral thesis, for example). I decided to keep the number of participants to three Anishinaabekwewag. To determine who to interview from there, I narrowed the focus to roughly my generation of urban Anishinaabekwewag between the ages of 20-30. I chose this age group in order to get a better idea of the decolonization work urban Anishinaabekwewag my age are doing, and I feel as though it can illustrate a path forward for younger generations of urban Indigenous peoples. I also chose to focus on urban Anishinaabekwewag from Ontario, because these are the Anishinaabeg lands and communities I am most familiar with. I feel as though I am able to better connect with and find a greater sense of relationality based on the commonalities of our

geographic and cultural locations.

I chose Anishinaabekwewag I had pre-existing relationships with, as the familiarity enabled me to explore ideas with a greater degree of trust and responsiveness. However, I want to acknowledge that my existing relationships with these kwewag impacts how I hear and interpret their stories. Because I have known each of the kwewag for a varying number of years, I already have some context regarding who they are as individuals and where they come from as Anishinaabekwewag. This influences how I interpret their stories, but I feel this also speaks to the fluidity of storytelling. As Leanne Simpson shares in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, "[t]he relationships between the storyteller and the listeners becomes the nest that cradles the meaning" (Simpson, "Dancing on our Turtle's Back" 104).

In my findings chapter, I offer introductions to each of the involved Anishinaabekwewag before sharing their stories. When I refer to these kwewag by "name," I use pseudonyms to keep their identities anonymous. Keeping the identities of the kwewag anonymous was part of the consent process. Remaining anonymous was important in enabling them to feel safe in sharing their stories. For the pseudonyms, Nishinaabemowin words were used that reference the land. The pseudonyms I chose for each kwe are also words that I feel suit them as individuals; the words I chose for these kwewag and the explanations are discussed within my findings chapter.

The three kwewag who I decided to reach out to for this research have been urban Anishinaabekwewag their whole lives, but each of them has always had community ties. Each of the kwewag have varying degrees in which they visit and are involved in their

home community.[10] All three of them have grown up with a sense of their Anishinaabeg identity and with their own understandings of what that means. Each has some knowledge of cultural practices, language, and knowledge, but there are noticeable variations in their knowledge, which is one impact of being urban Anishinaabeg.

All three of the kwewag were sent invitations to participate in my research via email, these emails included information regarding my research. Once each of the kwewag responded and confirmed they were willing to participate, they were sent an informed consent form (see Appendix A and B). Because of the public health restrictions due to the ongoing pandemic, the three interviews were initially planned to take place over Zoom, which also would have helped address geographic challenges as none of the kwewag involved in my work are situated in the same city. However, two out of the three interviews fortunately managed to work out in person, and the third interview was held over Zoom. All three of my interviews took place during October 2021, and the length of each meeting varied from one hour to two hours.

Guided Discussions

During two of the guided discussions that took place I felt it was relevant to share a painting that I had come across during my own research in Heidi Bohaker's *Doodem and Council Fire: Anishinaabe Governance through Council Fire*. I chose to share this painting with these two participants because their home communities are from the region illustrated, as is my own home community. The painting depicts our Anishinaabeg Ancestors in their canoes in 1836 during a gathering of surrounding Anishinaabeg

[10] In my findings chapter, I do mention if a kwe has ties to any other additional communities.

communities in the Sault Ste Marie area who came together for canoe racing games. The painting was done by American George Catlin who witnessed the scene:

 [11]

The painting itself resonated greatly with me when I encountered it during my research. It was unexpected for me to see, and I found myself feeling emotional while staring at the painting. I wanted to share it with two of the participants because they are both from the depicted area in the painting. I wanted to share with them the image of their Ancestors thriving and having fun in a pre-settler colonialism context. Seeing how our Ancestors thrived as Anishinaabeg without being limited by today's colonial restrictions is so meaningful. This painting itself tells a story of how our Ancestors lived, and it allows us to imagine how life could have been for us today. It represents the material evidence of identity through ancestral relationships, and thus, our sense of who we are now. It also juxtaposes our connection to our ancestral homes, and by extension our roles, responsibilities, and relationships with our contemporary experiences in urban settings, which can feel disconnected from the natural land. As I showed the painting to two of the participants, I could sense it resonated with them both as well as there was a long silence

[11] George Catlin, *Canoe Race Near Sault Ste. Marie*, 1836-1837, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., 1985.66.434

while they stared at the image. I gave them both a moment to reflect on the image and have any time they needed to have that connection. While their reflections on the painting were not solicited for this research, this was a moment of emotional connection, of being able to share a happy image of daily life of our Ancestors in a medium in which they are rarely seen, prior to the 20th century. In essence, this was a gift that I could share with two of the Anishinaabekwewag.

For each of the three guided discussions (see Appendix C for guided discussion questions), I was very intentional about the inclusion of heart, spirit, body, and mind. I wanted my heart to be present when asking my participants the questions I did, and while I listened to them speak. I wanted to share parts of my spirit as I offered to share my own personal experiences to demonstrate spiritual intimacy. I had not planned to share a very personal dream I had when I was 20-years-old, but when I asked each woman about when they had first started to realize their own roles and responsibilities, it was something that I felt called to do to engage in that reciprocal and relational intimate space; it was my own experience of when I first started thinking about what my roles and responsibilities meant to me. Through sharing this dream with each of them I was also engaging in my own storytelling methodology, because I continue to reflect on that dream six years later as I continue to look for meaning within it and generate my own knowledge regarding my own identity.

During the research for my own work, and while speaking with the kwewag who participated, personal stories and traditional stories were always present and carried significant meaning. While this research stems from my own personal stories, traditional stories have helped guide me on my journey and find meaning within my experiences.

For example, as a young girl, I recall reading many children's books about Nanaboozhoo (most of these books were by Joseph McLellan, who is Métis), and the Mishomis Book by Edward Benton-Banai-ban, all of which really stuck with me. As I have grown older, seeking to better understand my Anishinaabekwe identity, Leanne Simpson's retelling of Anishinaabeg stories in her book *The Gift is in the Making* was one of the first Anishinaabeg teachings I encountered. It enabled me to better understand Anishinaabeg values and guided me in learning to be a better relative to my non-human relations. The story *Our Treaty with Hoof Nation* particularly resonated with me after spending too many years not allowing myself to connect with my Anishinaabe identity. At that point in time, it felt truly rejuvenating for my spirit to read Anishinaabeg stories and connect with our values again. My personal story was informed and continues to be informed by teachings embedded within traditional stories.

This research could not have been done if the Anishinaabekwewag had not been willing to speak from their hearts in sharing their stories. In sharing their personal stories, they show how traditional stories and teachings guide them on their life journeys. Storytelling as Anishinaabeg is so innate and necessary to us in order to find meaning and generate knowledges. It continues to be a primary means of knowledge transmission, moving from one generation to the next, laying the paths for future Ancestors to walk.

After the Guided Discussions

At the end of each discussion, I gave the participant the medicine of semaa in the form of a tobacco tie as a sign of my gratitude, and to honour our Anishinaabeg cultural

protocols. I gave each participant an honorarium,[12] and a handmade card from a small Anishinaabeg business with a personal note to say chi-miigwetch. The personal notes I wrote in each card for each participant came from my heart, in order to recognize the heart they put into sharing their words with me. All of these tokens of gratitude were an act of reciprocity to recognize the time and energy each of the kwewag willingly offered me.

Each of the guided discussions were recorded with the consent of each participant. One discussion was recorded via Zoom,[13] and the two other discussions were recorded via digital audio recording in person. The recordings were then transcribed using a combination of a transcription software, and me listening to the recordings by ear. Because the transcription software could not accurately transcribe any Nishinaabemowin words used in the discussions, as well as moments where a participant did not speak clearly enough, I went through each transcription to edit as needed.

Following the completion of the transcribing work, the individual transcriptions were sent to each participant via email so they could determine if there was anything they did not want me to include in my work. They communicated their wishes regarding any details to leave out via email. This was part of the consent process to ensure that each kwewag had full autonomy over their stories, this included omitting any details they felt were too personal to share. Each of the kwewag shared that they only wished for names (of people, organizations, and schools) to be left out. As per the consent process regarding

[12] The honorarium amount offered to the kwewag was fifty dollars.
[13] Zoom, which is an online video meeting platform, allows video and/or audio recordings to be made.

anonymity, I reassured the participants that no real names would be included in my research.

After each kwe determined what they wished to have shared, I listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions for common ideas and meanings in the words of the participants. The analysis was done without the assistance of any software. I reviewed my notes several times and made notes on the transcripts and maintained an additional set of notes to reflect on my findings. I looked for common themes that emerged across the transcripts and my additional notes. These ideas were synthesized and analyzed to develop key themes across the guided discussions. With any themes that emerged, I explored through the connections to each of the stories shared by the kwewag.

While this method is similar to Western methods, I again utilized a holistic approach to this research. While listening to their words I was listening with all of me: heart, mind, body, and spirit. While I was physically listening to the words of the kwewag with my mind and body, my heart and spirit were also connecting with their stories. My heart felt the emotions that were brought up during the guided discussions that I had with the Anishinaabekwewag. These emotions that occurred as a result of the stories were enlightening for me. They helped me better understand my own personal experiences based on similar shared experiences. There were feelings of sadness listening to some of the stories, such as how each kwe shared some of the impacts of intergenerational trauma within their families. There were also feelings of my heart being full, as each of the kwewag had stories of Anishinaabeg joy involving their families or Indigenous youth in

their lives.[14] The emotions I felt while listening to their stories showed me that I am not alone in my struggles as an urban Anishinaabekwewag, and there is so much strength and brilliance within each of us.

Being able to have the discussions I did with these kwewag was nurturing for my own spirit in so many ways. Prior to this research, I had never experienced sitting down with other Anishinaabekwe and discussing something as personal as navigating our life journeys. This is why I feel my spirit connected so strongly and passionately to the stories of these kwewag. I recall my heart feeling so full after every discussion, because speaking about these topics was a new experience for me. It meant so much to me that these kwewag shared their stories with me, as well as stories that have been passed down to them from previous generations.

Discussion & Analysis

When analyzing all three transcriptions of the conversations with the Anishinaabekwewag, I took the time to go through each discussion. I made note of how each kwe has come to understand their Anishinaabekwe identity, how they have come to understand their roles and responsibilities, and how their journey is ongoing. From this point, I then drew connections from all conversations and found similarities between all three women and their journeys, which was also recorded in my notes.

Because I want my research to serve other urban Anishinaabekwewag who are on similar life journeys, I want to illustrate how these women have come to understand themselves, their roles and responsibilities, how they hope to do their own work for their

[14] These stories will be included in greater detail in my findings chapter.

community,[15] and what they hope to see for the future of Anishinaabekwewag. It was important that when I had conversations with each of the women, the questions I used to guide the conversation were framed very intentionally to address each aspect. Coming into this research project, I had the intention of looking to understand how urban Anishinaabekwewag are decolonizing their identities in urban and colonized spaces, and what these women are doing to achieve that decolonization for both themselves and future generations; because that is what they are doing as they look to understand their family histories, (re)connect with both their ancestral and traditional Anishinaabekwewag ways, they are disrupting settler colonialism by refusing Western assimilation and breaking these colonial cycles for future generations.

The Ever-Changing Nature of Storytelling

In *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson explores how one can interpret and analyze information within Indigenous research. He writes "...if we try to use an Indigenous paradigm in analyzing the results of our research, the importance of relationship must continue to take precedence" (Wilson 118). He explains that "[m]any Indigenous lessons are known for the different levels of insight that may be gained from them, depending upon the thinking and readiness of the student…Logic needs to become more intuitive as the researcher must look at an entire system of relationships as a whole" (Wilson 120). Wilson's excerpt speaks to the ever-changing meaning that can be found within storytelling, and it speaks to the fluidity of meaning. The meaning of a teaching, or a story, depends on the listener's thinking; and our ways of thinking are always changing, growing, and evolving. Within Anishinaabeg

[15] The topic of community, and what it looks like for my participants, will be discussed in my findings chapter.

storytelling and storytelling as methodology, stories are open ended, and there is no singular absolute truth to be found within a story. This is important for me to highlight because the meaning I find in the stories of the interviewed Anishinaabekwewag will continue to shift and evolve over time.

Returning again to Leanne Simpson, in *Dancing on our Turtle's Back*, she writes that "[s]torytelling is at its core decolonizing, because it is a process of remembering, visioning and creating a reality where Nishnaabeg live as both Nishnaabeg and peoples. Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism…" (Simpson, "Dancing on our Turtle's Back" 33). This particular excerpt resonates with me, because I feel as though the storytelling from the Anishinaabekwewag who participated in this research engaged in this envisioning process.

Sharing our stories as young Anishinaabekwewag is incredibly valuable for us, and not just in terms of academic research. Storytelling is a teaching tool, and we can learn from the stories we exchange with one another. While we may have some similar shared experiences as urban Anishinaabekwewag, we all walk our own individual paths and carry our own knowledges. By sharing our stories with each other, we can work to understand what is working for us within these urban spaces, and we can look to change what is not working so that our future generations do not have to go through the same experiences.

Chapter Four: Findings

The impacts of colonization and ongoing settler colonialism have created as many barriers for Indigenous peoples to truly know themselves and their identity. To name a few of these barriers: we are subjected to a Euro-Canadian learning system we, as Indigenous peoples, did not consent to; those who have "status"[16] are subjected to the Indian Act and all of the divides amongst Indigenous peoples that it creates; and we are subjected to the long-lasting effects of intergenerational trauma. Navigating these complexities, among many others, while trying to understand your identity and Indigeneity in urban spaces is another difficult layer to work through. The intent of this research is to look at how urban Anishinaabekwewag are working to (re)connect with and (re)claim their traditional roles and responsibilities, while living in urban spaces.

Limitations of this research centre on the small number of participants and the access that I had to possible participants. The information from the guided discussions, while robust in the context of these stories, cannot necessarily be generalized to the experiences of other urban Anishinaabeg, or more broadly, other urban Indigenous peoples. The participants were all connected to me through personal relationships, so do not reflect a range of urban Anishinaabeg experiences beyond those of the participants. As well, the synthesis and analysis of the findings are viewed through my own cultural lens. The ways in which I interpret the stories of the participants aims to be congruent with the participants' intent. In providing the participants with the transcriptions of their discussions, I have attempted to ensure that the ways in which I utilize their words is as

[16] This is referring to Indian status, which is a legal identity as defined by the Indian Act. Not all Indigenous Peoples have status, this can be largely due to gender discrimination within the Act (discussed in my literature review chapter), as well as other forms of discrimination that exist within the Indian Act.

contextually appropriate as possible. However, I remain responsible for how I express my interpretation of the themes in this work.

The main goal of this is to begin laying a foundation of research to explore how urban Anishinaabekwewag view their identities, their relationships with their communities and kin networks, and how they interpret their understandings of roles and responsibilities in contemporary settings. Beyond the research, I believe this can provide insight and inspiration to urban Anishinaabekwewag who are on their own paths to (re)claiming their identity.

Through the guided discussions, the participants' stories reiterated how they understand responsibilities; responsibilities are tied to the needs of our kin and how vital it is to be a good relative for all of our relations and for our generations not yet born. These responsibilities can look like learning Nishinaabemowin in order to pass that knowledge onto following generations or decolonizing our own identity in order to break colonial cycles for the future generations (Jiigbiig, personal communication, October 2021). Our roles might be picked up along the way based on one's own individual gifts, passions, and skills. Our roles might look like being an educator and passing on ways of knowing and understanding. One's role might also look like being a maker, such as beading or sewing, or engaging in creating art in a wider form of mediums.

I interviewed Anishinaabekwewag who come from different Anishinaabeg communities in northern Ontario, but who live in urban areas. To respect the privacy of the kwewag involved, I do not use their names in my research, but I do refer to them by the pseudonyms of Jiigbiig, Aazhiw, and Giishkaabkaa. I chose Nishinaabemowin words that refer to specific aspects of the land to name each kwe, because we ultimately all come from the land. Jiigbiig is the Nishnaabemowin word for beach, Aazhiw is the word

for mountain, and Giishkaabkaa is the word for cliff.[17] The Nishinaabemowin words used for each kwewag are also based on their personalities or their stories. I chose Jiigbiig for this kwe since she is currently living on the West Coast, and I wanted to choose a word for her that also included water to represent her connection to canoe building. Aazhiiw is the word I selected for this kwe because she has a presence that feels as though her spirit could be as old as mountains. I decided to use Giishkaabkaa for this kwe, because it often feels as though she has a perspective that captures a bigger picture of things as though you were standing on a tall cliff and getting a bigger view of the land.

Each kwe did not grow up on their reserve, but all three of them do have varying experiences of still growing up near their community, visiting their community, or growing up around other Anishinaabeg communities. As a result, each woman did grow up around their Anishinaabeg culture, and they each have varying levels of familiarity with it. Two of the three women involved, Jiigbiig and Giishkaabkaa, know who their clan is. Aazhiw has some idea of what her clan could be, but she does not know for certain. Discussion of clans came up when I spoke with Aazhiw and Giishkaabkaa, but neither of them felt their clan has not necessarily been influential in terms of understanding their roles and responsibilities at this point in time. While I was initially curious if one's clan might be involved in how these women have come to understand their identities, because clans were not ultimately discussed widely by the kwewag, I do not extensively discuss it within my findings.

All three kwewag have attended or are attending university in Indigenous Studies or Indigenous-related fields, such as Indigenous Sciences. Attending university has played a role in their better understanding of themselves, and a better understanding of

[17] This dialect is still the Manitoulin Central dialect.

community. The topic of post-secondary education, including some of the positive and negative impacts of attending university, is one that will be further explored in this chapter.

Jiigbiig is an Anishinaabekwe from Temagami First Nation. She also has ties to other communities such as Wasauksing First Nation and Atikameksheng Anishinawbek First Nation, as she has aunties from those communities. She shared with me that she did not grow up in her community because it is an island that has not been accessible for some immediate family members of hers who have physical disabilities. As a result, she has grown up close by her community and has lived in urban areas such as Sudbury. Jiibiig did her undergraduate studies in Indigenous Environmental Science and is currently attending graduate school in British Columbia where she is studying law.

Aazhiw is an Anishinaabekwe from Garden River First Nation, where she has always been familiar with the lands and the waters that surround her community. She did not grow up in her community, but she has visited often to see her family and for hunting trips. Aazhiw mentioned during my time with her that she does not consider herself to be "urban" necessarily, because she grew up in a suburban environment. Aazhiw is currently attending post-secondary, where she is working on completing her undergraduate studies. Currently, she is living in Ottawa, where she is closely involved with a local Indigenous youth organization in her free time.

Giishkaabkaa is an Anishinaabekwe from Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation). She did not grow up in her community, but she has been able to visit in recent years and has started building a better connection to her kin. This kwe has lived in Ontario, the Yukon, and Alberta while growing up. Owing to where she has lived over the years, she has ties to other communities such as Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and

Wasauksing First Nation. However, moving as much as she has over the years is something that has impacted her ability to connect with her Anishinaabekwewag identity, as she now seeks to do that important reclamation work for herself. She is currently situated in the Nipissing area, where she is attending post-secondary working on her undergraduate studies in Indigenous Studies. Additionally, Giishkaabkaa works at her university as an Indigenous peer mentor.

I have learned a great deal from each of these kwewag during the time spent listening to their stories, as each of them have very different lived experiences as urban Anishinaabekwewag. However, there are still commonalities shared among them living as urban Anishinaabekwewag in a Western world. These findings have been divided into sections named according to the common themes that came out of these discussions. The first section of this chapter, (re)emergence, is where I share how each of the kwewag has come to realize there was a need to understand their traditional roles and responsibilities. The subsequent sections discuss the commonalities that were found across all three discussions with the kwewag. These sections are community; engaging in cultural practices; aki (land) and nibiish (water); language; and hopes for future urban Anishinaabewekwag.

(Re)emergence

The discussions with each kwe began by asking when they first realized the importance of traditional roles and responsibilities, and each offered very different responses. Each participant's journey has been unique, but with some commonalities, and this is reflected in the stories they share.

The theme of (re)emergence was an experience shared by all three kwewag. This theme reflects the emergence, and re-emergence, of cultural identity as a critical aspect of self in each participant. Throughout their lives, the participants describe various points of cultural connection that wax and wane, depending on their ages and the circumstances they are confronted with.

Aazhiw shared that she did not start realizing the importance of traditional roles and responsibilities until she started growing older. This is when she recognized there was a need to find her individual Anishinaabekwe identity outside of her sizeable family:

> …When I'd go back to my grandparents on the [reserve], we didn't really do much with the community, it was just my family. But I have a lot of family; it's like a third of the community. That was my only access to being Native, which was hanging out with my family, and not everything else. So I'd never thought of any of the community aspects of that. I feel like as I got older I started exploring my identity outside of my family, because I always knew that my family is very much bush Natives,[18] and all of us are in science. So, I thought of those traditional roles and responsibilities, like our relationship with the land and everything, but not really anything outside of that.

What Azhiw raises regarding her family and community reflects her personal understanding of community extending beyond her family and including her non-familial kin around her.

Jiigbiig spoke about the multiple points in her life where she started thinking about her roles and responsibilities:

[18] See table of terminology.

> I think maybe doing my Berry Fast.[19] It was kind of when I'm becoming a woman, and I kind of started to think about that as a 14-year-old. One point would have been the first time I'd worked for my reserve, back in my community a couple of summers. The first time I got to do that, I was helping with a birch bark canoe build, and we really did a lot of harvesting all within our traditional territories. I got to really think about the land and places that my grandparents grew up in in a different way, and thinking about my roles there and I was 18. And then I think university was helpful for really just getting through my degree in Indigenous Environmental Studies, I got to really think more about my roles and responsibilities in a more academic sense. But yeah, I guess in different senses, I got to begin that journey at different points in my life.

What Jiigbiig shares regarding starting her journey at different points in her life is something that resonates with me, and an important point to share with others. Similar to Jiigbiig, I believe my journey also started at different points in my life: when I was 20-fyears-old and I experienced a dream[20] that was very impactful in terms of my identity; when I had the opportunity to visit Oaxaca and meet incredible kwewag out there; and even during the time I have worked on this research. In these experiences, our roles and responsibilities are not revealed to us all at once as better understanding one's identity is a constant and growing process. We learn more about our roles and responsibilities when we are ready, and our learning happens through engaging with the world around us. We might have dreams that help guide us, or we might have interactions with the land that

[19] A Berry Fast occurs when a young woman has her first menstrual cycle. As a rite of passage, it creates the space for a girl to move into being recognized as a woman.
[20] This is the dream that I briefly discussed within my methodology chapter.

lead us to reflect on our relations. The process of coming to know ourselves is a lifelong journey that wanders along many paths.

Giishkaabkaa discussed how she did not realize the importance of traditional roles and responsibilities until she had attended a screening of the film Indian Horse in 2018, and heard an Elder speak the language in the film:

> The first time I remember ever thinking about having a responsibility to traditional practices was after I moved back here [from Alberta]. There was the screening of Indian Horse at university, and then there was the Elder Edna Manitowabi. She was the grandma in Indian Horse, and she did a prayer in the language and then I was just really overcome with grief for not knowing my language and that I hadn't practiced it since elementary school. The grief made me realize how important language is in our culture, and how I wanted to learn it, even a little bit so I could understand, because our whole culture revolves around the language. That's when I realized how disconnected I'd become. It really showed me how important it is to reconnect with tradition…

Hearing Giishgaabkaa talk about this moment for her was hard-hitting for me because I have experienced similar feelings, particularly when it comes to hearing a fluent speaker of Nishinaabemowin. Hearing the language being spoken fluently makes me feel as though that my spirit is at home, but my mind cannot process what is being spoken, and my heart yearns to understand; there are then feelings of grief when I become too aware of the reason(s) I cannot understand my own language.

Community

As Anishinaabeg, being mindful of community and how to best work for our community is something that is vital when looking to understand our roles and responsibilities. As an Anishinaabekwe who is still working to understand my own roles and responsibilities, I am by no means an expert of what community looks like. I do understand that the role of community, in relation to better understanding our identities as Indigenous peoples, can exist in many different forms. Community can look like our families who guide us on our journey, including all of our aunties and strong kwewag who surround us. Community can look like our youth who surround us and inspire us to work towards a better future for our kin who are not yet born. Additionally, community in urban spaces can look like the Indigenous student communities we find while attending post-secondary or urban Indigenous organizations where we might find our first sense of community.

My participants discuss both their home communities, which refers to the specific Anishinaabeg community (the land, the people, their kin) they come from, and the Indigenous communities in urban spaces that have offered them a sense of belonging and better understanding of their Indigeneity. For all of the kwewag involved, they have managed to find a sense of community through being involved in local urban Indigenous organizations (Indigenous youth organizations, Friendship Centres), or through regularly attending local Indigenous community events.

Aazhiw shared that her family has played a significant role in how she has come to understand her roles and responsibilities. In addition to this, being involved with a local urban Indigenous youth organization that is close to her has also helped her:

> I've been told a few times that I have very caring energy. I definitely want to embody that and be taking care of people, medicines, and language. In terms of having that motherly energy, especially with [an Indigenous youth organization], I always want to be standing up for youth. And with my little cousins too, I try to be a good role model, give them advice, things like that. I was saying before, my only kind of access to other Native people was my family, and I guess coming here [to university]. I've just learned so many things, and just how everything works, how to be a part of a community, and what each person's responsibilities are, being a part of marches and protests…

This kwe, Aazhiw, has come to better understand herself through being around Indigenous youth, both her family members and the Indigenous youth she meets by being involved in urban Indigenous organizations. Aazhiw's experience with youth in her life can connect to Renée Bédard's *Role Models: An Anishinaabe-kwe Perspective*, as she shares:

> Besides Elders and other adult women we share our lives with, it is important to note the influence of the young girls, children, and babies in our lives … It is through the very young that we learn how to be mothers, aunties, and grannies … The young teach us compassion, humility, generosity, and kindness. As women we need to look up to the very young as the grandmothers and grandfathers of the next generation. In this way, babies, children, and youth are also our role models. (Bédard 192)

Being involved with youth has shown Aazhiw her own passion for helping support Indigenous youth succeed, as well as being a youth advocate and good role model for her cousins.

Aazhiw's story reflects the process by which we come to know ourselves and growing into our strengths and passions. It also speaks to the cultural imperative that we work to become positive role models and eventually Elders for the youth in our lives. The relational responsibilities that we carry extend to all our kin. In modeling these positive roles, the hope is that our youth will take up their responsibilities, and in turn, decolonize further and reconnect traditional knowledge for the strength of future generations.

Jiigbiig shared that it has been the strong women in her life who have helped guide her on her journey:

> I guess I've always been lucky enough to grow up with my culture, and having my mom guide me through that. I've always had a lot of other Indigenous people in my home, like my family and my family friends, but not so much at school. I think that my mom has really been foundational for me, but she's had to really do a lot of that reclamation, and I need to too. I think just really a lot of the women, a lot of my aunties, have really instilled a lot of the responsibilities I have, but it's a lot of values around kindness, truth, and telling your truth was always really instilled in me…

This Anishinaabekwe shares that it has been her mom and her aunties that have really helped shape who she is, and how she has come to understand herself. The important role of aunties in being guiding figures in community is something that has been echoed a lot through the literature sources used for this research, as well as in my own personal experiences. This again connects to the work of Bédard, as she writes:

> …Many of us Anishinaabe-kwewag (women) look to our mothers, grannies, aunties, cousins, sisters, and friends as our most influential role models … Many Indigenous women define themselves through responsibilities of family,

> community, and Nation. We rely on each other as Indigenous women to show each other how to survive … Indigenous women's identities are tied to the inter-relationships we have with the women in our families, communities, and connections we make with Indigenous women outside our communities… (Bédard 191-192)

In our contemporary urban Anishinaabeg experiences, we continue to find our role models in our kinship circles. The importance of these kinships is in how they continue to inform and frame the lens through which we see ourselves now and into the future.

Jiigbiig further expanded on what community means to her, what it looks like to her, and how she can relate to the difficulty of navigating community as she grew up not having Indian status:

> I feel for a lot of people who don't have status but have connections to community because I have been there and that has been my experience. But yeah, I find having community in different spaces was really important, but thinking about that too though, it doesn't take the place of my people relationally, like my family. I think that's important, and I think it's tricky to navigate when you are growing up away. But finding those spaces where you can find community, but not confusing that with who your actual relations are. How I am Anishinaabe is through Teme-Augama Anishnabai and relations there.

This is an important point that this kwe made, and it is a difficult topic to navigate because it is so nuanced for each individual urban Indigenous person. As urban Indigenous peoples, it is important to know where you come from: the land, your familial relations, your kin. It is because of where we come from that we are Anishinaabeg, and those relations should be honoured. Our familial relations, our kin, and the land we come

from make up aspects of our identities in ways we may not realize. Knowing who our Ancestors were (and are) and knowing our traditional territories will help inform us as individuals to some degree or another of who we are as Anishinaabeg. It is important to keep where we come from in mind, as we navigate forward on our life journeys.

Often, for the sake of survival as urban Indigenous peoples in settler colonial cities, we need to find those urban Indigenous communities. We need to find that sense of belonging somewhere in urban spaces. These communities we find in urban spaces can be life-changing, and it is important that they are honoured and respected. An example of community we may find in urban spaces might be community that is built within Friendship Centres, which are often located in urban areas. I use this example specifically, because I recall this is where I experienced my first sense of community as a child while living in Parry Sound. It first started when my mom had signed both me and my younger sister up for dance classes being taught at the Parry Sound Friendship Centre. We regularly attended community events that took place there, like potlucks and holiday events. We used to visit this Friendship Centre so frequently I was able to recognize more and more local Indigenous folks; it became a familiar and safe Indigenous space for me as a young Anishinaabe girl.

Giishkaabkaa shared that while she still feels she is on the journey of understanding what her roles and responsibilities look like, it has been the Indigenous peoples around her in these urban spaces over the years who help her, even if just a little:

> Because I'm still on this journey, I don't know where I sit in all this. I still feel very removed from tradition. The only thing that kind of helps me is the little tidbits I get from being around other Indigenous people. I feel like no matter how much I want to reconnect, it just never has presented itself to me, and so I can't

> even say anything has particularly helped me because I feel like I have not moved forward from those years ago when I listened to Edna [Manitowabi]. It's just been like tiny little bits of knowledge from other Indigenous people I surround myself with. So I feel like I have not been able to really find even my bearings in tradition or my responsibilities.

While this kwe expressed how she does not feel as though she has not made much progress towards (re)connecting and finding out what her roles and responsibilities are as an Anishinaabekwe, I believe those tidbits of knowledge she has received over the years still amount to something meaningful in terms of better understanding what it means to be Anishinaabeg; it is knowledge she did not previously know. While I cannot accredit this belief to a singular teaching from a singular individual, it is more so of a cultural value that I was raised with after hearing it frequently throughout my life from other Anishinaabeg. Whether it is one more word of Nishinaabemowin that you have learned, or one more Anishinaabeg teaching that you have picked up, it is one more piece of your identity that you did not know before.

Post-Secondary School Experiences

Two of the kwewag, Jiigbiig and Giishkaabkaa, offered an in-depth discussion regarding attending post-secondary, engaging with the Indigenous student communities they found at school, and how these experiences have impacted them in terms of better understanding themselves. In my personal experience, the Western education system, specifically in Ontario, is not one that is the most inclusive, accurate, or accessible. We spend so many years of our lives within this education system, and it is often not until post-secondary where we have the chance to experience a level of freedom that allows us

to explore topics that appeal to us individually. However, post-secondary institutions are still settler colonial institutions. As Indigenous peoples going through this Western education system, not everyone will have positive experiences within these institutions. Some of us may manage to feel that we fit in via the student communities we find, and some of us may not manage to feel that way at all. These very different experiences that can occur for Indigenous students in post-secondary is illustrated by both Jiigbiig's story, and afterwards, Giishkaabkaa's story.

Jiigbiig shared her experiences of going through schooling her whole life, and what that has looked like for her as an Indigenous woman:

> Through elementary school, I was the only Native or even the only person that wasn't just white in my class. And then in high school, I was the only Native girl…And because you spend so much time within schooling, going to university and finding other Indigenous students and finding that community was really impactful for finding my roles and responsibilities. And I think I am really passionate about truth telling. If I didn't go into law, I would have wanted to go into film, maybe. But I think that I've never been good at storytelling through my words, but I can tell stories. I've wanted to kind of be a storyteller in other ways, whether that be through media, or I don't know. I feel like even just my couple months at law school, I feel like we're definitely storytellers. As hard to say as it is, I'm not sure if I want to practice law, but I am really passionate about environmental justice, especially around resource development, and what that looks like, and what we're dealing with…

Jiigbiig's experience within the education system being the one of the few Indigenous students in her school surrounded by largely white peers is one that can be a

common experience for urban Indigenous peoples. Aazhiw went through a similar experience growing up, as she shared in the (re)emergence section, where her only access to other Indigenous peoples was by visiting her family. Similarly again, both Jiigbiig and Aazhiw found a sense of community with other Indigenous students during post-secondary. This found community allowed them to better understand their own sense of identity, and it helped show how they can engage in what they understand as their roles and responsibilities. After many years of being in school with mostly non-Indigenous peers, these kwewag were able to find Indigenous spaces facilitated by Indigenous peers at post-secondary.

Post-secondary Indigenous spaces can offer Indigenous students the feelings of cultural safety in order to explore and engage in their own Indigeneity. Being able to talk with other Indigenous peers, and discuss topics you might not necessarily feel like you can discuss with peers who are non-Indigenous, offers the chance to learn better about our own identities, especially if you have grown up in schools being the only Indigenous student. This is something that mirrors my own experience as I grew up almost never having any Indigenous peers in my classes. It was not until I attended post-secondary in an Indigenous Studies program that I finally had many Indigenous peers around me, and there were cultural supports available for Indigenous students (such as having more opportunities to participate in ceremonies that nourished spiritual health).

Giishkaabkaa shared how post-secondary has been revealing to her in many ways regarding her journey of understanding her identity better:

> I've always been really anti-school. I hate how it treats Indigenous people, but I also hate how it treats people who are different in any capacity, it's not set up for anyone. Just the other day in class [I heard] that you can decolonize while you're

> in school, but while you're decolonizing, you're also being colonized. So you can work on your decolonial journey in some aspects, but no matter what, while you're under colonial institutions, you will be colonized in other ways. It makes me think of how Indigenous peoples weren't allowed to have lawyers, so they became lawyers. But in the journey to be lawyers, to fight for their people, they were colonized and they came back different. You always come back different. In our world, you're either working in [capitalistic] labor or you're in school, and we're forced into these positions where we have to colonize ourselves to be successful in a colonial world. I've always felt like my roles and responsibilities are with the land and helping out with animals, and I [can't] do that without school.

She discussed some instances in which attending post-secondary and finding that Indigenous student community has been insightful for her, again in varying ways:

> I guess when I was at [a college], I was technically a mature student because I wasn't right out of high school. And we were also on a smaller campus, so even though [the college] likes to pretend that we had [Indigenous] supports, so we really didn't have supports because we were on the smaller campus I became very well known in the Native lounge there, just as someone you could go to if you have an issue. Whether it was an issue with a professor, or you just needed someone to go with you to an appointment, I was always there, because the staff were never there.

Giishkaabkaa continued to share her experience at this post-secondary institution:

> In the lounge, because there was no staff there and it was just students, people just started using it as a free-for-all room. So [non-Indigenous] people would come in

> and just treat the space [disrespectfully] until I would confront them. I would just advocate for the space and for the medicines that were in there, and I just tried my best to prevent harm, because people would constantly come in and say [harmful rhetoric], and I was telling them about how harmful that is, especially in front of these 18 year-old Indigenous kids who are just trying their best to succeed in post-secondary, where we already have such high dropout rates. I really took it upon myself to try to reduce that harm and keep all these kids safe, and it caused a lot of trouble for me because I got reported so many times I got kicked out of that space. But I really enjoyed my role as like, if people needed someone, they knew they could come to me, even non-Indigenous students would come to me.

Unlike Jiigbiig and Aazhiw, Giishkaabkaa had a less supportive experience during the time she attended the discussed college. This kwe acknowledged her own disdain for how the Western schooling system treats students who are "different in any capacity," but we are all forced to go through this system to be "successful" in the current Western capitalistic society. She shared that she has always felt called to looking after the land and our non-human relations, but that is something she cannot do as a job for survival within capitalism without a post-secondary degree. She also discussed her experience of becoming a protector and advocate for the younger Indigenous students at this college, but only because the institution failed to provide Indigenous students with the adequate supports and safety. Despite taking it upon herself to fulfill this role for those younger students, because she felt the institution was not, this experience ended up showing her that being an advocate for Indigenous youth is something she is passionate about.

Ultimately, I feel called to address this topic of post-secondary education as a standalone section after what was shared with me from my interviewees; all three of them

shared such critical and concerning aspects of being Indigenous within the Western education system. Being Indigenous within Western education systems is something that can be harmful and anxiety-inducing for some. As Indigenous peoples, some of us might experience the pressure to attend post-secondary in order to be "successful" – but this idea of success is based on settler colonial terms.

In a 2018 survey done by Indspire that focuses on the experiences of Indigenous students in post-secondary, their findings reported that "[s]tudents repeatedly said they were most comfortable while in Indigenous student centres and when part of program-specific Indigenous groups and spaces…" (31). Their survey also reveals that some Indigenous students struggle finding connections and a sense of community within post-secondary, something that mirrors Giishkaabkaa's experience. As shared in their report:

> Some students described the burden of being one of the few Indigenous people in their program and having to represent all Indigenous peoples and be responsible for educating their peers and instructors. The emotional labour these students carry must be recognized. In addition to the usual stresses that any post-secondary student faces, it wears on Indigenous students to have to correct faculty members, represent all Indigenous voices and share their lived experiences … Indigenous students described the burden of facilitating cross-cultural understanding and defending Indigenous worldviews as a responsibility they should not have to carry. (Indspire 32)

In addition to the emotional labour described above that some Indigenous students face in post-secondary, Indspire reports that 45% of Indigenous students experience racism attending post-secondary (Indspire 9). Western education systems may not be meant for

us as Indigenous peoples, but whether we are successful or not within these institutions is not a reflection of our worth as individuals.

Even though attending post-secondary, specifically those with Indigenous institutions, allows some Indigenous students to find community, and better understand their identity, this will not always be the case. It is important to address that as young urban Indigenous peoples, we should not rely entirely on the academy to learn about our identities or better understand ourselves. Within urbans spaces in general, there is a lot of mixing of different Nation's teachings, cultures, and practices. If an individual is working on (re)connecting with their own Indigeneity and they do not already have some understanding of who they are, navigating urban Indigenous spaces (such as post-secondary) may be more confusing than anything. Within urban spaces, you are only able to learn from the people that are there, and who are allowed to pass on those teachings and knowledges.[21] The role of post-secondary education in relation to urban Indigenous students' identities can be a whole entire research project in itself, and because of this, it is outside the scope of my work. How post-secondary impacts one's urban Indigenous identity raised many questions during my own work, and this is work I hope future Indigenous researchers can carry on and find answers to.

Prior to settler colonialism, we freely practiced our own knowledge and education systems. We had our own education systems that allowed for our own Indigenous brilliance to flourish and grow; there were no mandatory Western education systems we were forced to go through. These Indigenous education systems still exist today in the form of community-led programs and schools, such as the Akwesasne Freedom School, Kâpapâmahchakwêw, the Turtle Lodge International Centre for Indigenous Education

[21] Allowed by the educator's own cultural protocols and ethics, according to their own Nation.

and Wellness, and more. These Indigenous-led education initiatives are focused on passing down their cultural ways of knowing and learning for their children. They are intentionally and actively resisting the assimilation of settler colonialism by doing so; these are incredible acts of Indigenous resurgence and Indigenous brilliance.

As Indigenous peoples, I hope that there can one day be less pressure on our youth to attend Western post-secondary in order to achieve this supposed idea of success. I hope that there will be less of defining ourselves according to settler colonial terms. Leanne Simpson, in *As We Have Always Done*, writes:

> My experience of education from kindergarten to graduate school was one of coping with someone else's agenda, curriculum, and pedagogy, someone who was not interested in my well-being as a girl, my connection to my homeland, my language or history, or my Nishnaabeg intelligence. No one ever asked me what I was interested in, nor did they ask for my consent to participate in their system. (Simpson 149)

It is important as Indigenous peoples, and as Anishinaabeg specifically, that we are learning to think outside of the rigid confines of Western education. We need to engage in ways of thinking and produce generative Anishinaabeg knowledge in ways that are not taught within these institutions. This is another facet of colonial cycles that are important to break for the sake of our communities, our youth, and our future generations.

Engaging in Cultural Practices

Just like community, engaging in cultural Anishinaabeg practices takes many forms. When the kwewag were asked how they engage in their roles and responsibilities while being in urban spaces, they each gave responses that innately connect back to

Anishinaabeg ways. Truth-telling, advocacy, hunting, eating ancestral foods, making, and creating were all discussed.

Giishkaabkaa discussed her passion for youth advocacy, and the personal importance it carries for her:

> There has been a lot of times in my life where I needed an advocate, and I never had one. So I think it's really important that I try to pay that forward and make sure that younger people have an advocate and have people speaking for them and standing with them. Yeah, there was a lot of times in my life where I just felt like it was me against everybody, and that's an awful place to be. So being an advocate for community, and being an advocate for land, and being an advocate for youth – I always joke about this with my job, but I love to see Indigenous youth succeed. It makes me incredibly emotional, I cry about it. I genuinely cry about it, because it's such a healing thing to be able to see them succeed. It's something that brings me a lot of joy, and so putting in the work to making sure that continues to see Indigenous youth succeed.

This kwe is compelled to be an advocate for Indigenous youth because of her own experiences growing up, where she felt she had no one standing with her. She now finds herself enjoying seeing Indigenous youth succeed so much, that it makes her emotional to see. She recognizes their success as healing; healing for her to see, healing for our youth to experience, and healing for our future generations.

Aazhiw shared how important it is for her family to be able to hunt, and how important eating those ancestral foods are:

> Yeah, I guess another thing is food. Because I guess that comes with being on land with moose and deer and beaver. We have a trapline too, which I haven't

> been out on yet. And maybe it's from being from my community and being surrounded by water, but we're real big into fish. On my first moose hunting trip, it was North of Thunder Bay, we were fishing and stuff and my uncle taught me how to fly fish, and we discovered that I'm very good at it.

When she spoke with me about another moose hunting trip she had with her family, she shared that: "I feel like there's some moments where I see glimpses of—you just feel timeless for a second." Hearing her say this felt profound as it made me think about the power of our Ancestors, and the carrying of ancestral memory.[22] It also prompted me to show her the painting *Canoe Race Near Sault Ste. Marie*, shown in my methodology chapter, as it depicts her Ancestors in a timeless moment.

This kwe, Aazhiw, further shared how she engages in what she has come to see as her role as an educator, as well as how she engages in her responsibilities while in urban spaces:

> I guess with everything going on, well it's not a responsibility, but it's a role I've found myself playing with everything being on the news, and just growing up with no other Native kids really at all, for me to people around me – most times I'll have enough patience to let people ask me questions. And I'd rather have them ask me questions than being direct with some other Native person who doesn't have the energy. So I find myself doing that a lot, answering people's questions, and trying to teach or point them to resources. So that's something I often do in urban spaces. And during this pandemic too, just trying to get out in the land as much as I can. And because Algonquin's territories, it doesn't look that much different than here. There's a lot of the same animal brothers and sisters that we

[22] Ancestral memory can also be referred to as blood memory, see table of terminology for definition.

> have in my community, so I'm just trying to get out a lot. And I guess helping my family, I don't know if we're reconnecting, more like reclaiming sort of things.

Aazhiw finds herself engaging in teaching moments when she can, in order to better educate those around her. She also takes the knowledge that she does carry, and she passes it onto her family to help them with their own work of (re)claiming their own Indigeneity. This can be seen as part of the Anishinaabeg responsibility to pass on teachings and knowledge, because knowledge is not ours to own (Simpson 156). Her acts of going out onto the land can speak to the responsibility of relation building between herself and her non-human relations and engaging in those reciprocal relations. As Aazhiw goes out to visit those relations (the land, the animals) of hers, she becomes better acquainted with them, and she renews those pre-existing relationships she has with them. As discussed by Deborah McGregor in *Indigenous Women, Water Justice, and Zaagidowin (Love)*, engaging in reciprocal relationships with our non-human relations has been long practiced in order to sustain all of our relations for future generations (McGregor 72-73).

Jiigbiig spoke about how she engages in what she understands as one of her roles as an Anishinaabekwe, which is being a maker:

> I guess with that passing down. My grandma had always been a maker, she made beautiful knits and beaver hats, and was just a really gifted sewer in that way. So, I find that through the university in urban spaces, having the resources and money set aside to run beading classes. I learned how to do beading and all these different types of beading, and I feel like I really got to engage with creating and making through that. I think that carrying down that kind of knowledge now I have, since my grandma passed, she gave me all her patterns for knits. My auntie knows how

> to sew, and now I know how to bead too. They're kind of transferrable in that sense. Having those resources to be able to access in the city has been really important to continue being a maker in my family.

Additionally, Jiigbiig shares the importance of learning the language, and the responsibility of being able to carry forward Nishinaabemowin within our communities so that the next generations will know their language:

> And then I think that even just through the university to be able to take even one Anishinaabemowin class, and getting credit for that, it's important and powerful and impactful for trying to reclaim that. And I think that we need more resources to get more speakers, even if we're learning as adults, to be able to bring that back to our community and to be able to have language nests so that young people know their language as a baby.

Jiigbiig engages in her roles as an Anishinaabekwe via making and creating, with the intention of passing that knowledge down to ensure the survival of our Anishinaabeg cultural practices; something that is our responsibility as Anishinaabeg. Jiigbiig also expressed the importance of having resources in urban spaces for Indigenous peoples to learn our languages. As this kwe mentioned, she feels the responsibility to bring her knowledge of the language back to her community to ensure the younger generations will also know Nishinaabemowin. What Jiigbiig discussed connects to Leanne Simpson's work, as she explains that it is "…our responsibility to work with our Ancestors and those yet unborn to continuously give birth to a spectacular Nishnaabeg present" (Simpson 10). A spectacular Anishinaabeg present includes knowing our languages, our cultural practices, our Anishinaabeg knowledges, and engaging with all of our relations; we have a responsibility to our Ancestors and our future generations to produce that. Jiigbiig is

participating in producing this spectacular Anishinaabeg present as she engages with being a maker, like her own grandma was. Jiigbiig is actively trying to learn Nishinaabemowin better for our youth to be able to live in the language, and so that they can know their language even as babies.

Aki (Land) and Nibiish (Water)

All three of the participants mentioned how they feel called to advocate for the land and waters. Two of the kwewag, Aazhiw and Jiigbiig, shared how the land has played a role in their understanding of identity. However, Giishkaabkaa shared how she feels a need to be better connected with the land in a way that is not accessible for her while living in an urban area. I believe that feeling called to advocate for our lands and nibiish is also innate to us as Anishinaabeg, particularly the calling to advocate for nibiish as Anishinaabekwewag.[23] Since time immemorial, our Anishinaabeg Ancestors lived life by natural law. Deborah McGregor writes that:

> Properly understanding such natural law requires vast knowledge of the environment and how it functions in ensuring survival for all of Creation … In this way, the Anishinaabek have developed laws, protocols and practices over time to ensure that relationships with water remained in balance, and that life continues. (McGregor 72)

I believe because these practices, protocols, and laws were practiced by our Anishinaabeg Ancestors since time immemorial, they must still be ingrained in us today to some degree or another passed down by Ancestral memory.

[23] The relationship between Anishinaabekwewag and nibiish is a topic that was discussed in my literature review chapter. I include excerpts from both Deborah McGregor and Madeline Whetung regarding that special relationship.

Aazhiw shared throughout my discussion with her how often her family is out on the land, whether they are hunting or camping. Because Aazhiw and her family are so involved in science, through working in science-related fields and studying science in post-secondary, she shared that she has had discussions with her dad about being an Anishinaabekwe in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and what her responsibilities could look like for her:

> What I've talked about with my dad is being an Anishinaabeg woman in STEM, with climate change and everything. That is at the top of my mind all the time. I guess I want to be an advocate or protector or someone who looks out for the environment and the land at every level.

This kwe shared that she has heard lots of stories from her grandparents about how easily they used to be able to travel on the waters by their home community via canoe. She shared: "…my great grandpa would tell stories about how from Sault Sainte Marie he'd go and talk with the French and English. He would travel by canoe all the way to Montreal." Aazhiw comes from a family who are very familiar with the lands and waters they live on and have a long-existing generational relationship with the aki and nibiish that surround them. The relationships her family has is something that inspires her own responsibilities she feels as an Anishinaabekwe for protecting aki and nibiish.

Jiigbiig shared how impactful it was for her to work for her home community and work on building a canoe, as they harvested everything within their traditional territories. She further shared with me:

> I think, as cheesy as it sounds, the way I walk in the world is very informed by my upbringing and teachings of Anishinaabe values, and I've always been in that, but I haven't had the confidence to speak about it in other spaces and see myself

> carrying those experiences and sharing with others. Not necessarily through teachings, but my experiences growing up around culture and stuff like that. And I see like, being able to work on birch bark canoes, because I got to do it another summer too. That was something my grandma was like "Oh, well, I didn't get to do that as a little girl…" and yeah. I know that it's just good to have Anishinaabe people knowing those kinds of skills.

What Jiigbiig shared here speaks to the resilience of Anishinaabeg practices, skills, and values. Despite colonization, this kwe is still here walking through this world informed by Anishinaabeg teachings and values passed down to her from previous generations, a practice of loving responsibility from our Ancestors (McGregor 73). She has been able to engage with Anishinaabeg reciprocal and relational values with the land, and practice harvesting from Anishinaabe aki in order to build canoes. Jiigbiig's discussion ties back to what she shared in the previous section, it is her responsibility as an Anishinaabekwe to pass on the Anishinaabeg cultural practices she has learned.

Giishkaabkaa shared how she has felt connected to the land and animals, but post-secondary has proved to be a difficult barrier to overcome. She shared: "I think my role is to help land in any capacity I can, but I'm pursuing a degree where I'm not even working towards that goal because I couldn't handle the Westernized ideas of environmentalism and biology." While I cannot speak to what aspects of Western science Giishkaabkaa struggled with specifically, there are stark differences between Anishinaabeg understandings in relation to the land, and Western understandings.[24] This kwe expanded further about her wishes to be a protector:

[24] As an example, Western science tends to be more analytical and objective, where as Anishinaabeg knowledge tends to be more holistic and spiritual. For further understanding in the difference of views, refer

> I know it's in our teachings to try to do things with a good heart and a good mind, but I just find that I'm often just too angry. Because I'm really mad at how our world has ended up. I'm also really mad at the fact that now Western society has now decided that Indigenous peoples are valid enough that we ought to share our knowledges with them to "help save the world" that they messed up. If we share the different herbs and plants that we use as medicines, and I know from being in biology classes, that they specifically want that so that they can use that for themselves. They're going to exploit it like they have with our other medicines. I feel like I want to protect our knowledges, and our medicines, and our sciences from being homogenized in with Western culture. Because that's what Western culture does, it homogenizes everything into one monolith…I think that it's important to protect our cultures from Westerners.

This kwe expressed how she feels the need to protect not just the land, but our medicines, and our knowledges from the risk of being homogenized within Western culture. What Giishkaabkaa brought up is a very important discussion that deserves to be had, but further expansion regarding the subject is beyond the scope of my research.

Language

Each participant shared how important Nishinaabemowin is to them as Anishinaabekwewag, and they have come to see learning the language as one of their responsibilities to carry it forward for our future generations. Carrying the language forward is seen as part of our Anishinaabeg responsibility, to ensure those that are not yet born will be able to speak Nishinaabemowin and remain as engaged (if not more) with

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to my literature review chapter. Deborah McGregor, Madeline Whetung, and Leanne Simpson offer their Anishinaabekwewag understandings of land and waters and share how Anishinaabeg have come to understand the world around us.

such a vital aspect of our culture. As noted by Johnston-ban, the culture is in the language, and the language shapes the ways in which knowledge, including that of relationships is shared (Johnston 60). Giishkaabkaa shared in the beginning section how hearing the Elder Edna Manitowabi speak the language in the film *Indian Horse* is what made her start realizing the importance of roles and responsibilities, and the grief that overcame her because she did not understand the language. During my time speaking with each of the kwewag, they all shared wanting to learn Nishinaabemowin better, in order to pass it on for future generations.

Jiigbiig previously mentioned the importance of learning our languages and bringing them back to our communities. She continued discussing the importance of language sharing:

> I was lucky enough to take a [university] course and get something from it. I know a lot more words than I did at the beginning of it. I don't really know how to string long sentences, but I think that's reclamation, because my grandpa was a speaker, and I think that's one of my responsibilities is to try and help there and maybe through the practice of law…

This kwe shared that she feels that (re)claiming the language is one of her responsibilities as an Anishinaabekwewag, especially because her grandpa was a speaker of Nishinaabemowin. This is something that is powerful, because it feels as though in a way she is honouring her grandpa as she seeks to learn more of the language. Through learning Nishinaabemowin, Jiigbiig is doing the important work of connecting to her Ancestors as well as future generations; she is contributing to building a spectacular Anishinaabeg present.

Regarding the importance of learning the language, Aazhiw spoke about the meaning it carries for her:

> I don't even know who the last person was [in my family] to be speaking Ojibway. Two of my aunties, they started this kindergarten and preschool on the reserve. So when I was home this summer, at the end of the day [all of] the kids [on the bus], I heard them saying "baamaapii" between each bus stop, and you'd never heard the language spoken around my family before.

Aazhiw shared that she does not know who the last person in her family was to be able to speak Nishinaabemowin. The initiative of Aazhiw's aunties highlights the important decolonial work many Indigenous women, and in this case Anishinaabekwewag specifically, lead within their communities. As discussed within my literature review chapter, Anishinaabekwewag have been important leaders and vital community members since time immemorial. In *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, Brenda Child writes that "[w]omen performed an indispensable role in passing on cultural values and attitudes … across generations" (Child 19).

Giishkaabkaa's experience with working on learning the language reflects a wider issue of urban Indigenous peoples who seek to reclaim their languages:

> It's been years and I still haven't been able to get even my bearings in the language. But I think because of how important language is, if I ever have kids, I want my kids to learn because tradition and culture revolve around it. It's so interconnected to everything. There's only so much you can learn [about culture] without learning the language, you know?

Giishkaabkaa's experience as an urban Anishinaabekwewag who has tried the learn her language off and on while living in urban spaces during her life connects to a larger issue.

This is a common experience for other urban Indigenous peoples because of the lack of adequate resources in urban spaces to learn their languages beyond beginner phrases (ex. knowing how to introduce oneself in the language, counting, knowing greetings, etc.). Regarding this, Bonita Lawrence writes:

> A serious issue, however related to this concern about the validity of urban spirituality, is the relative lack of emphasis in most urban settings toward relearning Indigenous languages. Individuals described how they sporadically attended language classes and stopped learning after learning only a few phrases, generally enough to allow them to identify themselves in traditional terms. (Lawrence 167)

Each of the kwewag realize the importance of learning the language, and they know the cultural weight it carries. As Giishkaabkaa mentioned, the language is so interconnected to our culture. Doing the work to reclaim our language, as discussed by all three kwewag, is not an easy task. Our families have been impacted by colonial legacies, which for many of us disrupted our abilities to speak our mother tongue, to understand our traditional knowledge as framed by our language, and to uphold our relational responsibilities to all our kin.

Hopes for Future Urban Anishinaabekwewag

The impacts of colonization have drastically changed what our Ancestors may have anticipated for our current generations, including with respect to our roles and responsibilities, how and where we live, and how we perpetuate our communities and

culture. The question for our generation is what will the future[25] look like for urban Anishinaabekwewag in terms of (re)claiming those traditional roles and responsibilities.

Jiigbiig shared with me how, as an Anishinaabekwe who is currently living in British Columbia for law school, she struggles with engaging with her roles and responsibilities being so far away from Anishinaabe aki. She discusses:

> I think that even just geographically, some of the skills that I've picked up, I can't practice here, like working with birch bark because there's no birch here. I feel like it's so hard sometimes when your reality, as an Anishinaabekwe, like what makes you that is so deeply entrenched in place and people connected to that place who are also your relations. This is the first time I'm living away from Anishnaabe aki. I feel like a lot of access to resources to think about your roles and responsibilities is easier because you should be prioritizing the Indigenous peoples and Nations of that land. There's so many more nations to think about, there's just so many more Nations geographically.

Interestingly, I felt what this kwe discussed here connects to the traditional mobility of Anishinaabeg, and it speaks to a level of the need for community building with other Indigenous Nations. What Jiigbiig is experiencing as an Anishinaabekwe living on the West Coast, and understanding that it is her responsibility to prioritize the Indigenous peoples of those lands, reminds me of what Leanna Simpsons refers to as Anishinaabeg internationalism. Leanne Simpson, in *As We Have Always Done*, writes:

> Nanabush walked the world to understand their place in it, our place in it, to create face-to-face relationships with other nations and beings because Nanabush

[25] As a starting place to prompt their thoughts, I suggested the idea of thinking seven generations ahead.

> understood that the Nishnaabeg, that we all, are linked to all of creation in a global community…(Simpson 57).

Even though Jiigbiig shared her struggle with adjusting to being an Anishinaabekwe no longer living on Anishinaabe aki, she is out there building relationships with both human and non-human Nations. She is exercising her responsibilities of being a reciprocal and respectful Anishinaabeg relative, for both her own home community and the communities she is a visitor to.

Jiigbiig continued her discussion of what she sees as the future for urban Anishinaabeg who look to (re)claim their identities and Indigeneity:

> I think the future is still going to be grounded in land relations and roles and responsibilities, for me, will always be connected to Anishinaabe aki. I think that we do have to wander out to do things, but I think that always keeping community in mind in terms of not the urban community, but your people and your land in mind, and just carry it forward into the future. And I'm not saying you have to go back to your reserve necessarily, but I think at least having strong relationships to your kin who are Anishinaabe is important. At least visiting your land, just visiting your traditional territories or stuff like that is important. Knowing where you come from. And in an urban sense, I think that wherever you are in urban spaces, it's always going to be someone's traditional territories, and you really have to think about that. Futurities with enacting your own roles and responsibilities as an Anishinaabekwe.

What Jiigbiig discussed here speaks to both the concept of Anishinaabeg internationalism, as well as Anishinaabeg ways of knowing where we go out into the world and learn better by engaging in the world around us. Additionally, this kwe illustrates how she hopes

urban Anishinaabekwewag will work to connect with their communities and keep those communities in mind in their future. I appreciated how she addressed that this does not include going back to one's reserve,[26] but at least knowing who your kin are (both human and non-human) and visiting your traditional lands.

Aazhiw shared what she sees for other urban Anishinaabekwewag in the future, and her discussion speaks to the need for self-determination and sovereignty as Anishinaabeg:

> I definitely think there's a lot of us that are breaking cycles in terms of new generations. I guess I'm an optimist, but I think we have to be asserting our sovereignty and things like that. And one thing I would like to see more of is solidarity between Anishinaabeg on both sides of the border. I learned this summer with [working with urban Indigenous youth], is having spaces like that, and having safe spaces for you [as an Indigenous person]. Like, community members within a city is very important. Or even having access to little patches of green space, like gardens.

Aazhiw referred to the border between Canada and the United States in this excerpt. The border is a settler colonial concept imposed on Indigenous peoples and our already pre-existing territories. Regarding historically where Anishinaabeg communities lived, Brenda Child writes:

> …Ojibwe clans found economic opportunities and resources that allowed them to spread over a vast region of central North America, constructing communities that

[26] Reserves may not always be one's traditional territory in the first place, due to the reserve system that displaced Indigenous communities to allotted parcels of land. Even if one's reserve is still located on their traditional territories, an urban Anishinaabekwewag may just feel stronger ties to the urban area they already live. Or finally, the city in which an urban Anishinaabekwewag lives in is already their traditional territory, and there is no reserve to necessarily "return to." Essentially, "returning to the reserve" is not a universal resolution for all urban Indigenous peoples.

> by the middle of the eighteenth century were located north of Lake Ontario, around Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, and north of Lake Michigan. (Child xiv)

This imposed border has been very disruptive for Indigenous communities, including how we, as Anishinaabeg in Canada, are able to demonstrate solidarity with Anishinaabeg in America. The disruptions can include the difficulty of navigating two different settler political systems on either side of the border, the difficulty of travelling across the border, or even the financial means it requires to travel (the cost of gas, the cost of flying, etc.).

I further asked Aazhiw what she sees for the future of urban Anishinaabekwewag, specifically those who are seven generations ahead:

> For myself personally, I view myself raising a family on the reserve, but not everyone has access to that. I was thinking about this, I was thinking about how in places like New York City, that is a pretty sprawling built up urban area. And there must be spaces for the Indigenous peoples that are from there, they must have their spaces. But then, for Indigenous peoples from places like that, there's no going back. So I don't know, I wonder how I would feel in a situation like that?

Her points she made are really important, because these big cities, like New York or Toronto, are always going to be someone's traditional territories. These cities intentionally displaced the Indigenous peoples of those lands, and those are their home territories; where would they go back to? How do people connect to the land and the water in those highly urbanized spaces where the concept of private property comes with fences to keep people out and a legal system to enforce it?

Giishkaabkaa shared her thoughts regarding future urban Anishinaabekwewag, and she stressed the importance of having Indigenous-only spaces that are respected as such:

> I don't know, I really struggle with the idea of remaining urban, but I know it's not a possibility for all Indigenous peoples to return to their home community because our communities are so small, if the entire population of urban Indigenous peoples were like "I don't want to be urban anymore." I don't know. I would love to see people respecting Indigenous only spaces as being Indigenous only. There's so much understanding behind women only spaces, but BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour] don't get that same respect. Whiteness causes so much trauma for BIPOC, I don't understand why they feel the need to insert themselves into cultural spaces. It's really frustrating and I hope that there is less consideration for white feelings in the future in urban spaces. I think there needs to be a push in urban spaces to allow for that safety. Because when you're an urban Indigenous person, you're always under the white gaze.[27] And that's a source of trauma, to be under the white gaze. Especially urban Indigenous women, and Two-Spirit, and just non-men. It's really important to have those [safe] spaces.

I feel this kwe inadvertently answered the question I was left with after my discussion with Aazhiw. Urban Indigenous peoples do not need to necessarily leave urban areas in the future, in terms of doing our (re)claiming and (re)connection work, but they do at

[27] The term white gaze refers to the impact of being Othered through the default setting of white society being seen as "normal" and all other populations and cultures as being "exotic," unusual or even sub-human. The result is that the imposition of white society, whether through historic or contemporary forms of colonization, ends up with Indigenous populations having less access to their own resources, lands, and cultural spaces.

least need Indigenous-only (and Indigenous women-only, Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ only) spaces in urban areas for the sake of cultural security and safety.

Giishkaabkaa continued her discussion of her hopes for the future of urban Anishinaabeg, and she brought up a critical topic of the inaccessibility of land (including land-based ceremonies) while being in the city:

> I'm still living in a city right now, and I don't really have the tools to decolonize myself, I don't have the tools to go back to tradition. As much as it's great to see students and my peers work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers and reconnect that way. They have the privilege of having a car to go to the reserve. I don't have that. I'm stuck in a city, so I can't access tradition and culture the same way someone with a car can…

What Giishkaabkaa shared regarding the inaccessibility of land and ceremony in urban areas connects to similar experiences from urban Indigenous peoples in Bonita Lawrence's work.

Lawrence writes "that for urban Native people, access to the land is usually restricted to walking in a park, observing the flourishing of weeds in an alley, or cultivating a small garden" (Lawrence 166). Though this might be an over-embellishment to some extent regarding the inaccessibility of land for urban Indigenous peoples ("observing the flourishing of weeds in an alley"), the inaccessibility to land for ceremony or cultural practices for urban Indigenous peoples is made worse if they do not have a vehicle to travel or even a driver's licence. This might be more likely for some urban Indigenous peoples who live in larger cities, such as Toronto, because they live in a city with a relatively sufficient transit system. Being able to access any ceremony that takes place outside of the city can therefore be difficult for urban Indigenous peoples to

participate in. It may require accessing a location that is not served by public transportation, for example, making it difficult to get to without a personal vehicle or without having a social network that includes friends with vehicles. As Giishkaabkaa touched on, she feels she cannot access tradition on the same level her peers can, because she does not have the mobility to travel to the land and participate in more land-based ceremonies. In my own experience, I have had to rely on others for transportation and coordination of ceremonies. This remains a critical difficulty that requires resources (transportation and availability) that are increasingly difficult for many of us in urban spaces.

Moving Beyond the Stories…

Our traditional values, roles, and responsibilities are inherent to us as Anishinaabekwewag, though we may not always be aware of it. Each kwe seems to have had a long-standing sense of what they want to do in their lives, and this sense was further refined by the guidance of communities and relationships they have had present during their life journeys. Youth advocacy, language advocacy, and land advocacy were all discussed by all of the kwewag regarding their own passions they carry in life. It is important for us as urban Anishinaabekwewag to find our own meanings in life, and to find our own roles and responsibilities. We can use the guidance of all our relations, our clans, our names, our passions, and skills, but it is crucial that on this journey we are engaging with those around us in order to learn better about ourselves for the sake of our communities and breaking cycles for future generations.

Listening to each other's stories, as Anishinaabewewkag, and finding meaning within our similar experiences helps us understand ourselves, and it helps us identify what

work collectively needs to be done in order to generate a better future for our next generations. Through the stories of the kwewag I had discussions with, I personally developed a stronger understanding of how urban Anishinaabekwewag might come to understand what their roles are, and how those roles can be engaged with in urban spaces. Jiigbiig shared how the role of being a maker is one that has been passed down generationally to her from her own grandma. Those skills (beading, sewing, and working with hide) are transferrable which she plans to one day pass onto the next generation of young Anishinaabeg. I enjoyed hearing from Jiigbiig about becoming a maker. I had never had the opportunity to sit down and listen to an Anishinaabekwe share her stories of she came into the role.

Through the stories the kwewag shared, they passed on their understandings of their Anishinaabekwewag roles and their responsibilities, as well as what decolonial work they hope to see in our future. The stories from these kwewag highlight that you do not need to rush to find what your role is as an Anishinaabekwewag, but your role will find you. Your role is also contextualized based on where you are at in life, what passions you bring with you, as well as the individual gifts you carry. For example, Aazhiw found herself picking up the role of helping educate those around her, such as her family and non-Indigenous friends, so they can learn better. She also has found herself in the role of being a role model for the Indigenous youth in her life, such as her younger cousins.

Similarly, our responsibilities as Anishinaabekwewag are very much tied to our Anishinaabeg values and teachings. The main overarching theme in terms of Anishinaabekwewag responsibilities seemed to be enacting your Anishinaabeg responsibility to be a good relative: a good relative to our Ancestors, a good relative to our non-human kin (including the lands, waters, animals and more), and a good relative to

our future generations. Engaging in our responsibilities in urban spaces includes decolonizing our own identity and knowing where we come from as Anishinaabeg. Practicing our responsibilities as an urban Anishinaabekwe also includes learning our language, to help revitalize Nishinaabemowin for our communities and our future youth. It is recalling the protocols that enact reciprocity in those relationships and that express our gratitude for the gifts of our relatives that enable us to continue to live well.

The Anishinaabekwewag participant contributions point to sources of hope for (re)claiming Anishinaabe identities, roles, and responsibilities, and also address the ongoing frustrations with the current status of Anishinaabe identity in urban areas, and more broadly within the nation of Canada. The comments from the Anishinaabekwewag suggest that there are no easy solutions to address settler colonialism, and that this must be part of our continuing dialogues as urban Anishinaabekwewag. As Bonita Lawrence's research suggests, there are multiple layers of issues that impact urban Anishinaabeg, including class, economic factors, "blood quantum," and a clear sense of community (Lawrence 158). Julie Tomiak notes "how settler colonial rule in Canada … spatially confine Indigenous interests, including ownership of and responsibilities to the land…" (Tomiak 933). This containment is echoed in Madeline Whetung's work discussing the colonization of Michi Saagig territory and the Trent-Severn Waterway. She goes further to argue that Anishinaabeg continue to resist the containment, and instead continue to enact their relational responsibilities to the waters and all their non-human kin (Whetung 31). This provides me with hope that the work that we do in (re)claiming also ends up healing the lands and waters we are responsible to.

My discussions with the kwewag helped show me how our Anishinaabeg values still influence us as urban Anishinaabekwewag today; how we engage with the world just

looks different for us in urban spaces. It is really the values and teachings that are centering our (re)claiming of our traditional roles and responsibilities. The secondary sources I used for my research illustrated that Anishinaabeg values have been passed down since time immemorial, and that those values have always influenced how we engage with the world (see work by Deborah McGregor, Leanne Simpson, and Madeline Whetung). Despite the changes brought on by colonization and settler colonialism, the Anishinaabekwewag involved in this research expressed a clear desire to ensure the work of (re)claiming traditional knowledge, roles, and responsibilities is strengthened. Even though the urban Anishinaabekwewag identity may not necessarily be seen as traditional, there is still very much that connection to and embodiment of the roles and responsibilities of Anishinaabekwewag. This is part of the overall healing process from the harms caused by colonization, and it will enable these kwewag to become good Ancestors for future generations.

In conducting this research, I found, contrary to my expectations, that the Anishinaabekwewag who participated in my research were enacting traditional roles and responsibilities in response to contemporary Indigenous issues. I am also struck by the idea that my understanding of our roles and responsibilities has not necessarily expanded in understanding the diversity of them, but that instead I gained a sense of greater depth of that understanding. Prior to my research, I was expecting more roles to be identified, but also more roles to be impacted, and new ones to emerge as a direct response to colonization. In other words, I was expecting new roles to emerge in response to the needs of contemporary Indigenous issues. Instead, the Anishinaabekwewag were living in contemporary contexts and yet in traditional roles. Examples of this include Giishkaabkaa and Aazhiw who have both found themselves in the role of youth advocates

and leadership, and Jiigbiig who engages in her role as a maker, bringing traditional knowledge into the present. Each one of these Anishinaabekwewag will eventually become teachers of the next generations, thereby helping preserve Anishinaabeg culture and knowledge.

Through the stories the kwewag shared, they passed on their understandings of their Anishinaabekwewag roles and their responsibilities, as well as what they envision for our future for other urban Anishinaabekwewag. The voices of the kwewag involved are especially important because research that highlights urban Anishinaabekwewag in their early to mid-twenties is currently lacking. This age group of urban Anishinaabekwewag brings attention to how we are currently understanding ourselves in urban areas, and what needs to be done in order to better understand ourselves in urban spaces.

Chapter Five: This is (Not) the End – Concluding my Research

These stories do not end with my work, but they will continue to evolve and change over time. These stories might answer some questions regarding the discussed topics, but the stories will also provoke more questions. It is my hope that maybe this work and these stories will connect with another urban Anishinaabekwe who finds some reassurance or learns something new about themselves in this work. You are not alone on this journey, kwe. Never give up doing this reclamation work for yourself, and for our future generations. We are breaking cycles.

When reflecting on my time working on this research, I struggled with the positionality of being an Anishinaabekwe in academia. I struggled with this because I am always thinking about the work of defending the land, the water, and the protecting of community that I see other Indigenous folks engaging in. I think about the fact I am engaging with a settler colonial institution, while there are others out there doing that hard work and challenging the very presence of settler colonialism on Indigenous territories (such as Wet'suwet'en, or 1492 Land Back Lane). I came to the slow realization that with that way of thinking, I was putting this huge weight on myself of having to figure myself out as an Anishinaabekwe and knowing who I am *now*. I need the time to figure out who I am and what my gifts are in order to bring them back to my community in the best way I can. While I am not able to do the work I believe my heart and spirit truly wants to carry out at this point in time, I want to take this opportunity to pursue research in the academy and turn it into a little piece of Anishinaabeg work and put it into the universe in hopes it connects with another urban Anishinaabeg person in a good and relational way. When looking at our individual journeys and our individual stories as urban

Anishinaabekwewag, it is not fair to ourselves to compare our stories to someone else's. This is how I can work to break a damaging cycle and to lift up other Anishinaabeg.

It was important for me that when doing this research, I do it in a decolonial and good way[28]. I wanted to utilize my Anishinaabekwe lens any way I could within my work. Because my work is inspired by my own life stories, I wanted to lean into storytelling as my research methodology. With the help of the three amazing Anishinaabekwewag who offered their time and energy for my research, that I had the privilege of speaking with and learning from, my work has ultimately become a collection of stories. Storytelling remains such a vital part of our culture, our way of sharing knowledge and of building relationships. It helps us to generate ideas about how to decolonize our futures.

There are many questions remaining, for me, however. When I started this research, I wanted to understand how urban Anishinaabekwewag come to understand their identities in the context of their perceived roles and responsibilities within their communities. How does an urban Anishinaabekwewag who has very little exposure to their culture and community even begin to connect to their culture, to develop their sense of identity? How does the current education curriculum, developed from a settler colonial lens, contribute to perpetuating the disconnection of urban Anishinaabeg children and youth? Where do they find the cultural buffers to reinforce the language, practices, histories, and values? Not having consistent and constant access to culturally-based knowledge, particularly since so much is in the form of oral stories which may require

[28] "Good way" is used broadly to refer to interacting with others in ways that are respectful, reciprocal, and responsibly, consistent with traditional teachings and cultural protocols. Although it sounds simplistic, it can be quite complex in the nuances and depth of relational interactions.

particular cultural protocols, means that urban Anishinaabeg children and youth risk being even further disconnected from themselves.

Another question that I have centres on the relevance of clans. This was not really addressed in the stories shared by the Anishinaabekwewag. In my understanding of traditional Anishinaabeg society, the clan system had a direct bearing on the roles each person had within the community. However, the disruptions caused by colonization have heavily impacted the knowledge of the clans' roles over several generations. This emerged in the research in the absence of discussion about the clan system's influence. This left me wondering how one's clan would influence our understandings of our roles and responsibilities in contemporary contexts and particularly in urban areas. Another area that this research touched on more questions is that of the role of post-secondary education. What was highlighted here is that there is not enough research currently regarding urban Anishinaabeg identity, but more particularly of Anishinaabekwewag identity and knowledge.

While my research may ultimately raise even more questions along the way, this speaks to the need for more work to be done to find these answers; this is work that should be done by future Anishinaabeg researchers. This chapter is concluding one work, but this is not the end for our stories as urban Anishinaabekwewag. As more of us explore our sense of connection and identity, more of us will also be picking up our responsibilities to our human and non-human kin, (re)claiming the knowledge that helps us live in a good way with each other. Our lands need us, our waters need us, all our relatives need us to be doing this healing work. Doing this healing work will create a

spectacular Anishinaabeg present that honours our Ancestors' love for us and honour the generations to come.

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Appendix A – Research Information for Participants

Study Title: Anishinaabekwe Identity and Well-Being in Urban Spaces

Researcher: Noodinong-Bemosed Christianson

Supervisor: Joeann Argue

Aaniin,

I am a Master's student at Trent University, in the Canadian Studies & Indigenous Studies program. In order to complete my program, I am required to carry out a research project that will become the body of my thesis, and would greatly appreciate your participation in this project.

My research question is: How do urban Anishinaabekwewag reclaim and understand their traditional roles and responsibilities to land while living in urban spaces? I will be interviewing three urban Anishinaabekwe to explore their sense of identity, sense of culture, sense of connection, and sense of community.

To ensure your anonymity for this research, I will use a pseudonym in place of your actual name. Any identifying information of individuals or reference to specific events discussed by you will be changed to maintain your confidentiality, and that of others.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or about being a participant, you can contact me at (647) 389-9570 or nchristianson@trentu.ca. If you have any questions regarding the research ethics review or the research process, you may contact Trent University's Research Department at researchintegrity@trentu.ca

Information for Participants

Research Purpose: The purpose of this project is to explore how Anishinaabekwewag make sense of their identity and well-being in urban spaces.

Research Methods: This research project will involve interviews with three Anishnaabekwewag focused on the reclamation work these urban Anishinaabekwewag are doing. The goal is to explore how identity, culture and well-being are experienced by each kwe. Each participant will be provided with a copy of her interview transcript to review and edit as she feels necessary, which will then be returned to the researcher.

Researcher Accountability: Consistent with Indigenous research ethics, the researcher is accountable to a community advisory committee made up of several individuals who have a background in both Indigenous and Western healing/helping methods and who are familiar with trauma and trauma effects. The researcher is also accountable to the Research Ethics committee and the Indigenous Education Council of Trent University. As well, the researcher is accountable to the participants to ensure the participants have full

input into their contribution to the project by receiving copies of their transcripts for review and editing.

Participation: Participation is strictly voluntary. Participants may choose to remove themselves at any time with no negative consequences or penalties whatsoever.

Commercial Use: The researcher will not make use of the information gathered for this project for any commercial venture.

Expected Benefits: The researcher anticipates that participants will gain deeper insight into their individual experiences, both past and present.

Indirect benefits may occur in the strengthening of Indigenous identity or a sense of well-being through insights gained through the interviews.

Potential Risks: The participants may experience periods of anxiety, distress, or similar emotions during or after the interviews with the researcher as a result of discussing personal events in the participants' lives. The researcher will provide the participants with suggestions of available support services (i.e., counselling, Elders, crisis phone lines, etc.), if needed. As well, if, during any of the interviews, the participant becomes unwilling to continue, the interview will be stopped, and may be rescheduled for another time, or ended altogether.

Study Duration: The study will take place from September 15th 2021 to December 30th 2021.

Data Gathering, Storage and Use: The researcher will use a digital audio recorder and notes (either by hand or computer) to record interviews with participants.

The researcher will be responsible for storing all acquired data and information in a secure storage unit (i.e. locked file cabinet) in the researcher's home office. Any electronic files will be stored on a flash-drive (memory stick), with a backed up copy, both of which will also be stored in the locked storage unit. Any interview data (i.e. transcripts) being transmitted electronically will be encrypted to maintain confidentiality of participants. At the completion of the project, all interview documents will be destroyed and/or erased electronically.

The data will be used specifically for the researcher's dissertation document, along with directly related articles or presentations the researcher produces as part of her responsibilities to any research funding sources she is accountable to.

Confidentiality: The researcher is responsible for and committed to ensuring the confidentiality of the project participants. The researcher will not discuss the information received from any participant with another individual without specific written consent, unless that participant is at risk of harming him/herself, or another individual.

The researcher may discuss non-identifying and non-specific information with others, such as in a case study example for instructional purposes, or in articles or presentations in order to share the findings of the research.

No identifying information about individuals or specific events will appear in the final dissertation document. All data will be stored in a locked storage unit, and all electronically transmitted data will be encrypted.

_____

_____

Noodinong-Bemosed Christianson, Researcher
M.A. Student

Joeann Argue, Supervisor
Faculty, Indigenous Studies Dept.

Appendix B – Participant Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project, and furthermore, understand that I will be asked to review the transcripts from my interview(s) and to provide any editing to that transcript that I determine to be necessary. I may also revoke my given permission to the researcher to use the transcript, should I so desire.

I understand that if I disclose information to Noodinong-Bemosed Christianson that indicates that:

- I may be at risk of harm by my own actions or the actions of another, or
- I may be at risk of harming another person

Noodinong-Bemosed may make an immediate referral to local mental health services where the participant appears to require specific mental health supports.

I acknowledge that my signed consent will allow the researcher, Noodinong-Bemosed Christianson, to include non-identifying information and quotations from my interviews with her in the final dissertation document, and in any publications and/or presentations developed directly from this research project.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this information and consent form.

Participant's Name (print):

_____

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

Appendix C– Semi-guided Discussion Questions

1. As an urban Anishinaabe woman, when did you first realize the importance of traditional roles and responsibilities? What led you to that realization?
    a. What made you first realize there was importance for you to learn your roles and responsibilities?
    b. What do those roles and responsibilities look like to you?
    c. How did you come to understand those roles?
        i. Eg. Were there supports such as individuals or ceremonies?
2. If you are still figuring out those roles and what they mean to you, what has been helpful for you on this journey to figuring that out for yourself?
    a. Eg. Cultural arts, attending community events, listening to Elders speak, learning/speaking the language.
    b. Have there been specific supports that have helped you with this work?
    c. What opportunities over time that you have been involved in helped shape your understanding? (eg. youth conferences, leadership programs, etc.)
3. Living in urban spaces, how do you engage in your roles and responsibilities? How do they translate while being in the city?
4. How do you view work within these roles and responsibilities going into the future as an Anishinaabekwe?
    a. Eg. as community leaders, educators, mothers, etc.
5. What do you see for the future in terms of urban Anishinaabekwe and the roles and responsibilities within that (changing) cultural context?