INTERGENERATIONAL MNOOMIN (WILD RICE) GATHERING AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Intergenerational Mnoomin (Wild Rice) Gathering and Well-Being

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Mnoomin (Wild Rice) is an important ecological and spiritual Being, and a highly nutritious food source with deep spiritual and cultural kinship to Anishinaabeg. Gathering and processing Mnoomin engages the whole body, mind, and spirit, providing access to culturally nutritious food/s that also sustain a healthy environment. However, settler colonialism has disrupted these practices, damaging environments and undermining treaty rights. Responding to expressed interests by Michi Saagiig harvesters for more research, community education, and support for Mnoomin bed restoration, this thesis discusses the role of Mnoomin in strengthening kinship, community, wellness, and ecological relationships. It also responds to earlier calls to contextualize colonialism in the field of Aging. Grounded in Anishinaabe Four Hills of Life Theory and Gerontological Life Course Theory, this research brings Indigenous and Western social science approaches into collaboration. Based on 12 years of learning with local harvesters, this work advocates grassroots efforts to protect rice beds under the guidance of Michi Saagiig Knowledge Holders.

Keywords: Health, Well-being, Aging, Mnoomin, Manoomin, Wild Rice, Intergenerational Relationships, Indigenous Studies, Aging Studies, Anishinaabeg Methodologies, Community-Based Research

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

SECTION I: OVERVIEW

Chapter One: Introduction

Mnoomin (Wild Rice) is an important ecological and spiritual Indigenous being that is also a highly nutritious and important ceremonial food for Anishinaabeg. Mnoomin is among the most significant cultural keystone species in Ontario, the Great Lakes region and, arguably, Turtle Island.

Though there is a baseline of Indigenous knowledges and experiences emerging in Aging Studies scholarship, Indigenous perspectives and experiences of aging currently remain marginalized in mainstream scholarship. There also remains the need for further story telling of diverse Indigenous intelligences and perspectives in order to more fully understand and advocate for Indigenous experiences of aging, and to contextualize the many impacts of colonization over the course of life and over generations.

One way to better understand well-being over the course of life and in older age is by considering the connections between intergenerational relationships and access to culturally important Indigenous foods. Following a thread of understanding about well-being in the face of colonial oppressions against the natural environment and Indigenous peoples and around earth, this community-based MA thesis examines the intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin as told through stories of kinship and family by Mnoomin caretakers and harvesters in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory. This project brings together Indigenous (particularly Anishinaabe) and Western academic methods with community perspectives and the grassroots work of Mnoomin Knowledge Holders, harvesters, and allied supporters in Michi Saagiig Territory. It aims to deepen

understanding relationships with Mnoomin (Wild Rice) gathering contribute to well-being across the lifespan and inter-generationally.

Michi Saagiig Mnoomin harvesters are connected to many kin and maintain many connections across Anishinaabeg Territory, spanning the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest regions of Turtle Island. Mnoomin harvesters who are from, or residing in, Nogojiwanong (Peterborough), Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, and Alderville First Nation share their unique relationships, experiences, family stories, and kin tie to Mnoomin. A particularly special and unique intergenerational, ecological, and cultural kinship to Mnoomin that is also highlighted in this thesis was shared by Michi Saagiig Harvesters from Hiawatha and Alderville First Nations who spoke about their connections, shared histories, and continuing kinship with Omàmiwininì harvesters, caretakers, Knowledge Holders, and Elders at Ardoch First Nation Mnoomin through Mnoominkewin[1] and caretaking of Pimadashkodeyong[2] Mnoomin seeds that were transferred to Mud Lake and the Mississippi River along the shores of Ardoch First Nation over a century ago.

This thesis offers insights into the cultural and ecological importance of Mnoomin to well-being over the course of life, and over generations in Michi Saagiig Territory, while also responding to scholarly calls to contextualize colonialism in Aging Studies as well as to the expressed desires of Mnoomin harvesters for more research on Mnoomin in the territory that would support protections and greater access to the Mnoomin beds that

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1 The definition of the concept of 'Mnoominkewin' provided by the Mnoominkewin Gathering Organizing Committee on our website is, "the way of life, the art, and the culture, that develops as community practices Mnoominke." Mnoominke then, is "the practice of planting, tending, gathering, and processing Mnoomin into food." (Retrieved from https://www.mnoominkewin.com/2020).

2 The original Ojibwe name for what is more commonly known today as "Rice Lake".

has been obstructed as a result of ongoing colonization. An unanticipated aspect of this project is that, through recorded interviews in which family stories of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg kinship ties to Mnoomin that span nearly 200 years have been shared, this thesis also offers a modest contribution to the local historical record.

In Michi Saagiig Territory there is a growing reclamation of Anishinaabeg food systems and sovereignty rooted to place, land, and water with Mnoomin at the centre. The impact of the Williams Treaties of 1923, the only treaty in Canada to ever explicitly attempt to extinguish Indigenous rights to hunt, fish, trap, and gather in their territory for nearly a century, have had immensely negative impacts on the overall well-being of Michi Saagiig, and the environment[3]. The continued expansion of settler colonial encroachment in Ontario has greatly impeded inherent Anishinaabeg access to Mnoomin, also having negative impacts on and reducing populations of several ecologically related plants, fish, mammals, waterfowl and birds that have been important cultural and ecological species in the region for millennia. This thesis research calls attention to the contemporary kinship and importance of intergenerational cultural relationships between Michi Saagiig and Mnoomin, highlighting how this relationship is synonymous with well-being over the course of life with wellness of a Mnoomin centred ecosystem in the region.

Anishinaabe Mnoomin is a Cultural Keystone Species with ecological connections to nearly all life forms in Anishinaabeg territory - water, land, human and non-human life. The importance of Mnoomin to well-being is vast and diverse. Ongoing colonialism

3 The "basket clause" was added to the Williams Treaties to deny basic rights that were determined in several pre-confederate treaties. See: Migizi, G. (2018), or Pind, J. and Hoggarth, J. (2023).

and colonial violence predominantly inflicted through the legacy of the Indian Act, dishonoured Treaty agreements, continuing intergenerational impacts of Residential and Industrial Schools, the reserve system, the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway, and continued developments along shorelines, the recent 2018 Williams Treaties settlement, in Michi Saagiig territory, has led to a significant decline in Indigenous stewardship and use of Mnoomin over the past 200 years. Consequently, because Mnoomin is a cultural keystone (ecologically) significant species, there has also been a sharp decline in water quality, and all ecologically related species paralleling the introduction of invasive species, which has eroded the environment, or put another way, has eroded Anishinaabeg food system over the past 200 years (Beaver, 2010, Migizi, 2018). Comprising ongoing social, political, economic, legal, and environmental assaults by the Canadian State, the impacts of colonization have been detrimental to the well-being of the Anishinaabe Mnoomin, to Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg (Anderson & Whetung, 2018) and by extension to the well-being of broader Canadians and communities who call Michi Saagiig territory home.

Positionality

I moved to this territory with my first born child in August 2012, and began studying at Trent in September 2012. I was born and raised, and have lived, in Mississauga Anishinaabe territory all my life. My families, both paternal and maternal, have been dislocated for multiple generations from our traditional homelands and communities and while I was not raised in any particular cultural, spiritual or religious practises, growing up in south-central Ontario, I have been given and exposed to a variety of both Indigenous and multi-cultural teachings, as well as some land based

knowledges throughout my life from my Grandparents, parents, and others whom I have grown up around.

The only home I have only ever known is within Mississauga Anishinaabeg Territories in Ontario, and I am raising my children here as well. The relationship I have been building with Mnoomin and Mnoomin harvesters while learning to harvest Mnoomin over the past 13 years has greatly influenced me to better learn how I can help and support well-being in this beautiful place I am privileged to have been born. In 2013, I began to learn local Anishinaabeg oral histories and have since come to understand, through my own participation in Mnoomin caretaking, that there is great interest among Mnoomin harvesters for scholarly work that will help to better educate the broader communities on the cultural and ecological importance of Mnoomin to Turtle Island, to the Anishinaabeg, and to collective well-being. Being invited to participate in community initiatives to protect and restore Mnoomin beds here has been an incredible gift for me and my children. I have learned about Mnoomin and Mnoominkewin from local Knowledge Holders, Elders, harvesters and caretakers, some who have given interviews for this project. I served for two years as an inaugural member of the grassroots group *Community Voices for Mnoomin*[4], and I was later invited to assist the advisory committee in the development of the School of Education's Mnoomin curriculum at Trent University (Mnoomin Curriculum Project, 2024). I continue to support grassroots Mnoomin advocacy and collaborate with Knowledge Holders in the territory in an effort to restore the Mnoomin beds including annual planning and organizing of

4 See Community Voices for Manoomin website at https://communityvoicesformanoomin.ca/

Mnoominkewin day that is held in Curve Lake during Mnoomin-Giizis[5]. I come to this work as a Woman, a Mother of four, a passionate advocate for increasing well-being through rebuilding healthy relationships to land and water, and a supportor of Indigenous food sovereignty through my own growing kinship to Mnoomin.

Project Context

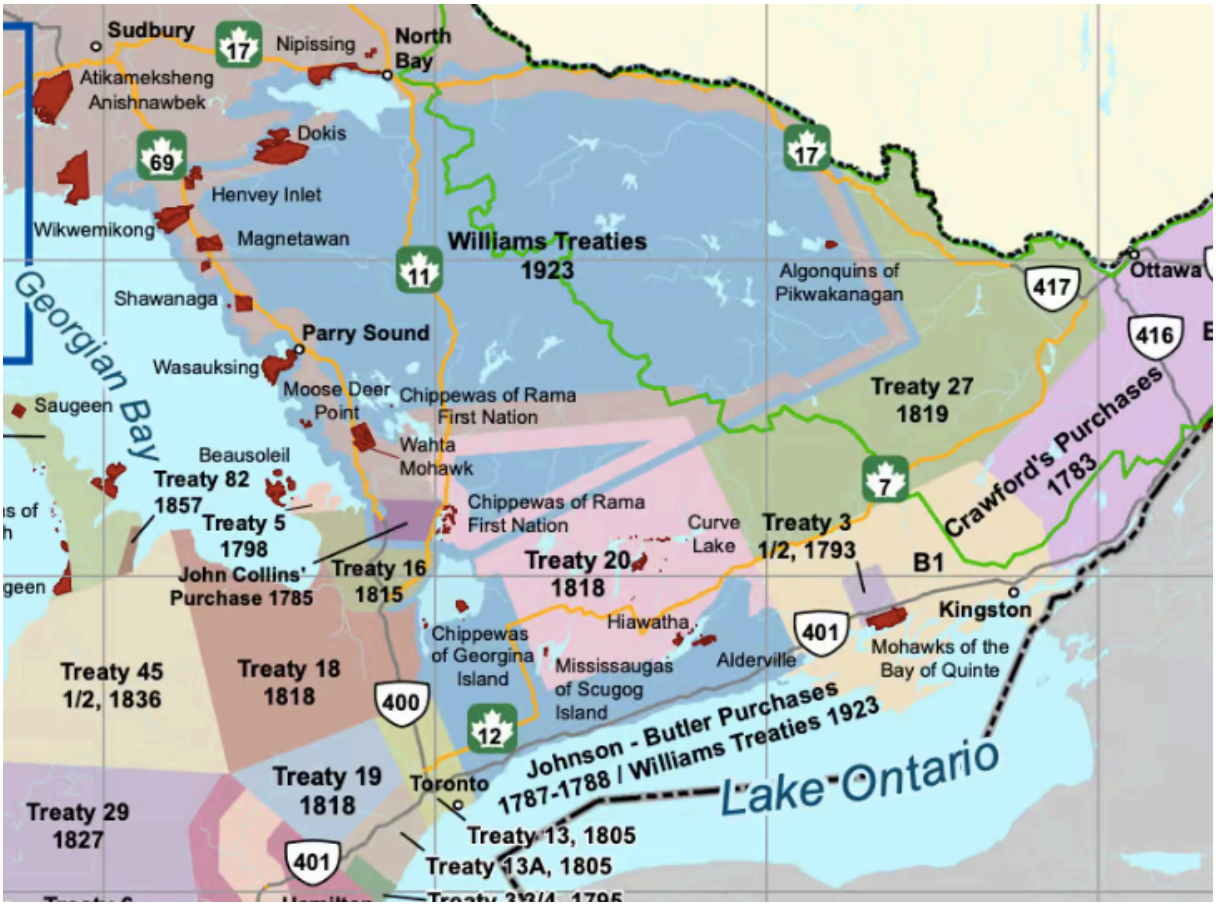
I have been participating in annual Mnoomin harvesting, processing, and reseeding, as well as advocacy work focused on the protection and restoration of the Mnoomin beds in both Michi Saagiig territory and Ardoch First Nation since 2012. During this time my children and I have learned from and participated in annual Mnoomin harvesting and gathering annually alongside Michi Saagiig and Omàmìwininì Mnoomin harvesters. I have also worked alongside fellow land and water protectors, scholars, and Anishinaabe knowledge holders in support of Mnoomin restoration, access, and protection. This thesis project is the result of community connections and relationships built over many years.

In my earlier years engaging with Mnoomin, I learned from the others that there is a great desire in Michi Saagiig territory, to work together, to share, to preserve, and to expand on Mnoomin knowledges by encouraging greater community involvement through more community-based research and education. I was in a rice bed on Chemong Lake in 2016 bantering candidly, (*as those who know me I often do!)*, about graduate school and wanting to come up with a project that would support community health and wellness to which my good friend, Daemin Whetung, pointed out that there in the canoe, on the water, in the rice bed, we were *already doing that*. During my time in the rice beds

5 See Mnoominkewin Gathering website at https://www.mnoominkewin.com/

and in the community I had been told a lot about the interests of Mnoomin Harvesters for more supports to record and research Mnoomin and, after some deep thought about how I could contribute, in the Winter of 2017 I proposed this MA thesis project.

Figure 1.1 Government of Ontario Map with Treaty 20 and Williams Treaties



Note. Pind, J., & Hoggarth, J. 2023, The Conversation.

I have often felt I came to this community of Mnoomin harvesters, paralleling earlier life experiences that have landed me in this territory in the first place and that also eventually called me into this particular thesis project, serendipitously. Essentially how this community-based study of Mnoomin came to be was very simple - I followed my curiosity, listened to the people around me as our friendships grew, and embraced being

in the rice beds - something I felt deeply in the moment had been missing from my life up to that point. From that I was given the gift of building relationship to the Mnoomin and to others in this territory over many years, spending time getting to know this Anishinaabe place, listened to the stories, interests, and needs of others, and of course not minding the bugs, spiders, or worms in the rice beds all that much! From this journey the project emerged along with the privilege of building a great life here for my children too.

11 contributors who I have met on this path, with connections to Anishinaabeg Mnoomin and Michi Saagiig Territory, have shared their knowledge and time for this project through interviews, story sharing, as well as through our time spent together in the rice beds. The stories, histories, and knowledges shared in this thesis describe intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin, the importance of Mnoomin to holistic well-being, local historical knowledges and events, how settler colonial behaviours have impacted the land and waters affecting the well-being of the eco-system and Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, and the collective work of harvesters and caretakers to ensure continuous kinship and access to Anishinaabe Mnoomin over centuries.

At the same time that I was becoming more immersed in Mnoomin caretaking I had also became aware, through my coursework in graduate school, of the call by few scholars in Aging Studies to contextualize colonialism within the field. The online talk by Llanque (2015) provides good insights as to how the lasting and ongoing impacts of colonization need to be considered in studies of health, well-being, and aging. An Indigenous scholar trained as a registered nurse and gerontological researcher, Sarah Llanques' research on chronic diseases among Indigenous populations, as presented in this talk, brings together knowledges of Indigenous researchers in the field of aging

which greatly informed my early understanding of the perspectives and views of Aging Studies and Gerontological scholars who have carried out research with Indigenous persons and communities. The body of literature presented by Llanque offers concepts, perspectives, and unique experiences of Indigenous persons that I had not yet come across in mainstream Aging Studies or Gerontological literature, but that I was becoming better aware of through my involvement in Mnoomin harvesting and earlier life experiences.

Though, during my earlier years learning to harvest Mnoomin I came to understand the structural impacts of colonization on wellness and well-being, especially how colonialism compounds over generations, I was also determined to centre this project on the positive family traditions, cultural, spiritual, nutritional, and ecological values of Mnoomin, because that is the greatest and most important part of this story. For that reason, though it is an established *theme* of this MA research, I did not ask any specific or direct questions about colonialism in my research interview guide. Despite not specifically asking about colonization, each interview contributor still described various first hand experiences and perspectives of historical and ongoing colonialism in Michi Saagiig territory, that parallels the colonization of Mnoomin, and how this has negatively impacted intergenerational well-being in the territory. Mnoominkewin describes a way of life, an art, and an integral part of Anishinaabe culture that is represented by all the traditional and contemporary processes related to Mnoomin[6]. I learned with time and more experience, in grappling with what I knew to be true about the resiliency of Anishinaabe Mnoomin and of the Anishinaabe Mnoomin harvesters' own determination

6 See https://www.mnoominkewin.com/2020 for more terminology.

to continue the spiritually, culturally, and ecologically important tradition of Mnoominkewin, to talk about the negative impacts of colonization in such a way that emphasizes the continuity of Mnoominkewin despite nearly two centuries of colonization. This was also a critical way in which I learned to bring together Anishinaabe knowledges and experiences of aging with Western research on aging in such that it would be helpful to the community where my family and I live.

This project is informed by the lived experiences and views of Anishinaabe Mnoomin harvesters who reside within Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory. I have heard many stories, knowledges, and hopes for Mnoomin shared while on the water ricing or while we processed the Mnoomin into food together, and then later through semi-structured recorded interviews and discussions that we had to support this thesis project. The ultimate purpose of this MA thesis is to honour and share these stories that have been shared with me, and to further advance a common vision for the protection of and continued access to Mnoomin for many generations to come in Michi Saagiig Territory.

This research further describes the importance of cultural-ecological relationships in Ontario and the Great Lakes to the keystone species, Mnoomin. The importance of access to Mnoomin for the nutritious and spiritually benefits, as well as continued engagement in the living practice of Mnoominkewin during Mnoominike-Giiziis (harvest season), which beyond harvesting Mnoomin for food is also integral to intergenerational quality time, learning, telling stories and knowledge sharing amongst family, friends, and communities, and particularly between Elders, Knowledge Holders, and Youth. Mnoominkewin engages everyone in cultural, social, spiritual, and physical activities,

and nurtures ecological relationships that are essential to wellness throughout life and to sustaining intergenerational well-being.

Figure 1.2
Screenshot of Native Land Map with Ontario treaties (including Treaty 20 and WTFN)

Note. Native-Land.ca, *n.d.* Native Land Digital.

This MA thesis further describes the concerns and desires of Mnoomin harvesters by connecting their experiences with the assertion by few Aging Studies scholars that have illuminated the need to contextualize the impacts of colonialism in studies of aging, health and well-being. The impacts of historical and continued colonialism in this territory were prominent in the interviews, further substantiating this call to action within the field, of which there is now also a steady growing body of Indigenous Aging scholarship. In an effort to offer some baseline knowledge of our shared colonial

histories, and to clarify the direct and lasting impacts of colonization on well-being in the territory, this thesis provides some historical and contemporary context in Chapter Two, as well as in Chapters four and five.

Because of continuous settler colonial expansion there has also long been the need to resist physical and legal infringements of Michi Saagiig harvesting, gathering, fishing, hunting and trapping rights, which has required a great deal of mitigation, planning, and community strategizing in anticipation of further environmental damages, especially with future generations in mind. Particularly in the interests of continuing and restoring Indigenous food systems. A historical example of this that I discuss later in this thesis report, is how Algonquin and Mississauga Anishinaabe families transported Rice Lake seeds (over decades during early settlement) from the shores of what is today known as Alderville First Nation to establish Mnoomin beds in Mud Lake at what is now known as Ardoch First Nation. Mnoomin knowledge and seed sharing continues to be especially crucial to the continuity of Mnoominkewin among Anishinaabeg in Ontario. This resistance is also critical to general intergenerational ecological and environmental well-being in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest region of Turtle Island.

One of the most exciting parts of this project are the many creative and thoughtful ways that Mnoomin harvesters draw from Anishinaabeg pedagogies, Indigenous sciences, language, cultural and local knowledges, stories, song, art, community education, ricing tools and technologies, academic research, and guidance from Elders and Knowledge Holders into the continuous and evolving practice of Mnoominkewin. Anishinaabeg took care of and sustain kinship with the Mnoomin for thousands of years drawing from their own evolving body of intelligence and cultural practices. During my

time learning to harvest and process Mnoomin I have come to understand that combining traditional cultural and ecological Anishinaabeg intelligence, science, technologies, and values with contemporary Western scientific knowledges and technologies is common practice among Mnoomin harvesters. Aligning with the methodological approach of harvesters, this MA thesis also brings local Anishinaabe knowledges and broader Indigenous scholarship into conversation with Western Social Science methodologies and Aging Studies scholarship.

Conceptual Foundations

I imagine that, in another time, I would have come into a relationship with Mnoomin and engaged in the practice of Mnoominkewin much sooner in life. The knowledge transmission of how to caretake and harvest Mnoomin, and the stories that tell of the history and cultural importance of Mnoomin in this Anishinaabe place would perhaps have been a primary focal point of our early life and early education. Unfortunately, being born in a colony (something that most of us have never been taught to think or know about), there is additional context needed in order to understand the importance of contemporary Mnoominkewin to intergenerational well-being. Because of continued colonization, there remains a lack of research examples that explicitly address colonialism in a way that could adequately serve people, families, and communities in studies of aging and wellness. As part of community desire for more research and more support for the work of Mnoomin harvesters, one offering of this thesis is to provide some context of settler colonialism in this territory in relation to Mnoomin. This context will support readers/listeners in better understanding the experiences and stories of Mnoomin harvesters in later chapters and how the colonization of Mnoomin in Ontario

(that parallels colonization of the Anishinaabeg) has negatively impacted intergenerational well-being.

Situated as it is within the disciplinary study of aging, this project is also rooted in community-based narratives of resurgence. While social, political, and economic factors play intersectional roles, impacting individuals in unique ways throughout life and informing on wellness, it is not always clear or concise the ways in which capitalist-colonial structures *underpin* such determinants of wellness. Blinick (2012) and Whetung (2016) posit and unpack similar sentiments in their respective Geography-based MA Thesis projects. This is an important element in the discussion of wellness and Indigenous food. Speaking about Mnoomin harvesting in an article for Inforum Winona Laduke (2023) writes "it is a link to ancestors, and a breath of fresh air on wild-rice-full lakes, mist rising, and a seemingly endless sea of rice. And a way to make a living with the natural world, as opposed to exploiting it. That's good for the soul". One way this project contends with the contextualizing colonization is to point out the destructive mechanisms of colonial economic, political, and social structures devoid of baseline understandings of shared human histories. Guided by Anishinaabekwe in her research, Lennon (2020) describes this disconnection as relating to the dislocation of many Canadians from their own Indigenous places, histories, and knowledges through indoctrination into and normalizing of capitalist-colonial society[7].

This thesis project highlights the importance of intergenerational transmission of cultural and ecological knowledges of Mnoominkewin relative to well-being among the

[7] See the thesis *Unsettling Inner Landscapes: Critical Spirituality and the Poverty of Whiteness* (Trent University, 2020), that describes the complexities of transforming settler consciousness and decolonizing identity work for settler Canadians. This thesis takes up the call from Indigenous Elders who have said that *we must remember our original instructions*.

Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and broader Canadian communities in this place, one corner of the only region in the world where Mnoomin grows. The stories and analysis presented herein discuss the multigenerational work to resist colonial acts of violence and destruction of the natural food system, for example, by working to restore the Mnoomin beds. Because Mnoomin is a cultural keystone species, this restoration work further includes interests in restoring Indigenous food systems by rebuilding kinship with land, water, and each other. Land-based relations and ways of life have been purposefully dismantled, and largely forgotten, under colonial occupation and capitalist regimes.

Both the importance of honouring intergenerational kin ties to cultural keystone species such as Mnoomin, and of the Indigenous intelligences and cultural ways of being which persist in the face of ongoing and expanding settler colonial occupation is central to the messaging of well-being in this thesis. This work challenges colonial concepts of *wellness* and *successful aging* by closely examining the ways in which Michi Saagiig Mnoomin Caretakers, Knowledge Holders, and harvesters have been mitigating the physical damage to rice beds while simultaneously creatively bringing forward old ways in combination with contemporary ways to sustain Anishinaabeg culture, food systems, language, art, and traditions. These efforts often include the forming of alliances with non-Anishinaabeg Canadians, the invention of new technologies to harvest and reseed Mnoomin, providing community education, and inviting everyone to participate in annual harvesting opportunities and events. In a similar collaborative effort, the methodological approach to this thesis merges Anishinaabeg and Western qualitative scientific methods and theories of aging, described further in Chapter Two. In its concept, design, and execution, this project honours and makes use of both Anishinaabeg and

Canadian Social Science methodologies and theories combined with intergenerational stories, knowledges, and experiences of local harvesters.

Thesis Question and Research Objectives

The central research question asks: *How is Mnoomin gathering important to intergenerational relationships and well-being over the course of life?* Through a participatory case study of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig Territory, the researcher has responded to this question by attending to the following research objectives, both stated at the outset of the study design, as well as evolving or emerging while carrying out this study:

1. Learn about Youth and Elder/Older relations that occur and are formed during annual Mnoomin gatherings.
2. Identify the range of gathering relations, initiatives, events, programs (organizations or *community organizing*) that bring Youth and Elders together.
3. Better understand and describe how access to Mnoomin is important to well-being over the course of life, in older age and over generations.
4. Learn how community relationships to Mnoomin have changed, developed or adapted over time (this also came to include community of Mnoomin harvesters' response to colonialism and environmental changes caused by ongoing colonialism in the territory).
5. Determine ways to support Mnoomin gathering and intergenerational relationship building that occurs during Mnoominike-Giizis/Mnoomin harvest season.

6. Contribute to the emerging field of Indigenous Aging and Wellness.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into four sections, beginning with Section I, Chapter One Introduction and presenting the research questions and objectives. The following sections outline the remainder of the thesis report.

Section II: Study Context & Design

Section II include Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two provides an interdisciplinary literature review to help explain the approach to this thesis research, and the basis for such a study. This review first describes the relationship of this work to the disciplinary study of aging, with a focus on well-being over the course of life. I consider the relationship between Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies by discussing key concepts of well-being, drawing from the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life Theory and Life Course Theory. Both theories provide some framework from which to relate the personal, community, historical, current and contemporary stories and knowledges to intergenerational well-being. I then provide a brief overview of the local historical record and community work with Mnoomin to better explain the impact of colonialism in Michi Saagiig territory. In this section, I also present scholarship that emphasizes the historical, economical, legal and spiritual importance of Mnoomin to Anishinaabeg. Chapter Two concludes with an articulation of how this community-based case study stands to contribute to the emerging field of Indigenous-Aging Studies insofar as it provides an example of the benefit of contextualizing colonialism and approaching aging research in a

way that connects intergenerational familial, community, cultural, and ecological wellness.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach and ethical considerations that I learned and applied in order to carry out this research project, including methods of data collection and analysis that inform the research findings. I discuss the inherent challenges in taking a multi-methodological approach and describe how I have drawn from both Indigenous and qualitative Western methodologies to address well-being with respect to intergenerational relationships with Mnoomin. I posit this is one way to conjoin Indigenous and Western Academic knowledges and methodologies. While learning about bringing methodologies together, I came to know more about Etuaptmumk, or Two-Eyed Seeing. I learned about this theory after I had begun this project when during my literature review, I came across the work of Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall, and while this was not a theory on which I premised this work, I was encouraged by this Indigenous integrative approach in both traditional and contemporary scientific research. In their chapter, Two-Eyed Seeing in Medicine, Elder Albert Marshall describes the theory as "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of (or best in) Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing, and learning to see from the other eye with the strengths of (or best in) Western knowledges and ways of knowing… and most importantly, using both of these eyes together for the benefit of all" (Marshall, M., Marshall, A., Bartlett, C., 2015, pp 18). Similarly to the framework of Etuaptmumk, outlining the ethics of reciprocity and ongoing relationship renewal that is also foundational to this work, I discuss how and why the study design might serve to be an example framework for responding to the practical everyday experiences of aging, and more deeply understanding the

interconnectedness of our well-being to the well-being of our environmental, ecological, spiritual, and cultural relationships in place. In describing participatory research and land-based learning through case study, I detail how the semi-structured interviews and oral teachings shared with me have been integrated into the broader story that is told about intergenerational wellness in an Anishinaabe place.

Section III: Story Sharing & Research Findings

Section III encompasses Chapters Four and Five in which I present the multitude of stories, knowledges, perspectives, and realities offered up by the research contributors through the semi-structured interviews and ongoing collaborative work with and for Mnoomin. There are many aspects to the importance of Mnoomin for intergenerational well-being in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territories. As such, I have organized these chapters by *Interview Themes* and connected *Story Elements*.

Chapter Four includes the Interview Themes of *Stories of Mnoomin Kinship, Mnoomin Gathering and Well-being,* and *Continuity of Mnoominkewin*. Guided by participant quotes and stories from recorded interviews, I present the profound positive impact on intergenerational well-being that Mnoomin and Mnoominkewin has always had on Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg and all other beings who call this territory home.

Chapter Five includes the Interview Themes of *Colonialism in Michi Saagiig Territory, Current Barriers to Mnoominkewin,* and *Common Vision of Mnoominkewin*. Once again, informed directly by the Mnoomin Harvesters, I share their stories of the ways in which settler colonialism has impacted Mnoomin in this territory, the effects of such impacts on intergenerational well-being and kinship, as well as the resulting ongoing barriers to Mnoomin and people flourishing in resurgence of these life sustaining

relationships. Chapter Five concludes by describing the many ways in which Michi Saagiig and allied Mnoomin caretakers and supporters continue to envision and enact restoration, regeneration, and resurgence for the sake of intergenerational well-being.

Section IV: Conclusion

In Chapter Six I offer concluding thoughts on all that I have learned throughout this research project. I also offer some discussion of the potential ways to further develop this work, and future research.

SECTION II: Context

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

In this chapter I review scholarship from the field of Aging Studies alongside Indigenous scholarship to demonstrate the inter-disciplinary connections in Aging Studies and Indigenous Studies that emerged in this thesis project. I also provide a brief overview of local historical record, informed by local oral histories, texts, archives, and some analysis of Treaty 20 and Williams Treaties in relation to Mnoomin and the issue of settler colonialism in Michi Saagiig territory. To summarize, I also offer a short discussion of the impacts of colonization on Mnoomin and well-being in Michi Saagiig territory. In this chapter, I also describe some of the ongoing grassroots work and research in this territory, as well as the work of broader Anishinaabeg communities and Nations, who are kin to Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg. This literature review establishes this thesis study, underpinned by the grassroots work of Mnoomin Knowledge Holders, harvesters, and caretakers, will be a supportive contribution to the emerging field of Indigenous Aging Studies by providing context of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, as well as the important cultural and ecological significance of Mnoomin to the well-being of Anishinaabeg, and to all Canadians in Ontario, over generations past, present and future. This chapter offers a review of scholarship that positions intergenerational Mnoomin relationships as significant to the study of Aging in this Anishinaabe place and perhaps might also serve as a case study that demonstrates the importance of cultural and spiritual kinship to Indigenous foods to well-being everywhere.

The Anishinaabeg originate from Turtle Island, known more widely today as North America. In my understanding of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe oral teachings, and as

demonstrated by the archaeological record, Indigenous peoples that include the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee, have lived primarily in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest region of Turtle Island for at least 4000 years (Pine Tree Talks, Trent University, 2020). The Seven Fires Prophecy, passed down by Anishinaabeg orators, tells of a mass migration of Anishinaabeg to, what we today commonly call the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest region of Turtle Island (North America), the "place where the food grows upon the water"[8]. The food that grows upon the water is commonly understood to be Mnoomin[9]. Descending from the Anishinaabeg who migrated from the Northeastern Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes region, the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg (also known as the Mississaugas) have lived continuously in the Pemedashcoutayang and surrounding areas since at least the late 1600s (Shpunniarsky and Village of Hiawatha Book Committee, 2016). This is as much as I know and am able to share about this history.

I was told by Anishinaabe Knowledge Holder Caleb Musgrave that Mnoomin relationships are vast with thousands of years of community, ecological, and trade networks that extend all across Turtle Island. As a Cultural Keystone Species, Mnoomin is critically essential to the physical and spiritual health of the ecosystem in Ontario. Mnoominkewin brings many elements of wellness together and the term describes all of the processes related to caring for Mnoomin including harvesting, processing, cooking, ceremonial uses, story, art, as well as engagement in intergenerational community

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[8] The oral telling of this story is common at Mnoomin gatherings, in ceremonies, and this story is retold by Anishinaabe Knowledge Holders, Elders, and historians for centuries.

[9] When I first started ricing, I once heard an older woman talk about "the foods" that grow upon the water to include fish, waterfowl, cranberries, cattails, muskrat, beaver, etc. I do not know their name unfortunately, and though I understand the food that grows upon the water to be Mnoomin, I always remember this perspective, it was what first gave me clear perspective of the entire food system, the importance of Mnoomin to the ecosystem, and of ecological relationships.

relationships as well as Anishinaabeg economic and political organization. Kinship to Mnoomin ensures access to highly nutritious foods. Gathering and processing provides physical exercise, opportunities to connect and socialize with family and community, and to engage in stories, lessons about life and to explore artistic endeavours. Access to the Mnoomin beds support important cultural, spiritual, ecological, and environmental relationships that have sustained life in the territory for thousands of years (Gidigaa Migizi, 2020).

Since the early 1800's Michi Saagiig territory has also become home to the Canadian settler established, Peterborough County. Building on the experiences and works of scholars in the field of aging, the importance of contextualizing colonialism in aging research, that is addressed in this chapter, underpins the cultural, historical, political and scholarly setting from which this community-based thesis has emerged. The study by Sarah Llanque (2015) was among the first I came across in review of Aging Studies literature that posited the need to contextualize the impacts of colonialism on wellness. Similarly, Wilson (2013) also posited the need to more clearly examine and describe the context of social determinants of health in older age, particularly when working with Indigenous persons. Describing the impacts of colonialism, however, is difficult because of the complex intersectional ways in which colonialism structurally affects our day-to-day lives and in turn, our well-being over the course of life and over generations. Well-being, through an Indigenous lens, depends on the maintenance of Indigenous landscapes and ways of being (see Whetung, 2016), which generally do not align with exploitative capitalist economic and political structures that are imposed on the land by a colonial state (Blinick 2012; Grande, 2017; LaDuke, 2023; Whetung, 2019).

Mnoominkewin is a way of life that, despite incredible colonial violence, has endured. This speaks to the integral importance of Indigenous intelligence to inform well-being in place, or rather, of the integral importance of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe intelligence that inform well-being in this Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe place.

In Chapters Four and Five, the Mnoomin gatherers who have contributed to this community project describe their diverse experiences and perspectives through family stories, discussions about their community work and knowledges and the importance of their reciprocal kinship to Mnoomin that, at the heart of it all, aligns with the call for a broader comprehension of colonialism among scholars and researchers. By considering the intersections between intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin and well-being over the course of life, notwithstanding few limitations, this research connects interdisciplinary scholarship that is primarily informed by community-based Indigenous initiatives intended to restore and sustain community wide well-being through cultural and place-based education, community outreach, restoration and protection of the Mnoomin beds, and to establish continued access to Mnoomin for generations to come.

Aging and Intergenerational Wellness

In the context of wellness over time, over the course of life, and over generations, I do not use the terms *age* or *aging* in this thesis to exclusively refer to older persons, though *wellness in older age* is an important component of this project. I use a*ging, well-being,* and *wellness* interchangeably to describe well-being over the span of one's lifetime, sense of wellness in older age, and of intergenerational wellness. I also discuss and relate wellness or well-being to ecological relationships to Mnoomin in relation to Anishinaabeg and non-Anishinaabeg who live in Mnoomin centered environments. There

is a clear convergence between collective ecological care taking with collective intergenerational wellness that is illuminated through the lens of cultural intergenerational engagement with Mnoomin. In part, this thesis addresses omissions of Indigenous aging experiences, intelligences, epistemologies, and perspectives in mainstream Aging Studies and Gerontological scholarship, that are then disseminated through public education as well as interpreted in the media. What is often left out of the data, and in turn mainstream conversation, is the nuance of colonial impacts over time. While this project grapples with the importance of *contextualizing colonialism* in aging research, this is still a relatively unchartered scholarship. There is an emerging body of Indigenous Aging scholarship and Indigenous scholars in the field. For example, Anishinaabeg scholar Cliff Whetung's study of dementia in older Indigenous persons (Whetung, 2021), and Dr. Jennifer Walker, Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Laurentian University and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health Data and Aging (See for example, Walker et. al 2019 and Walker, 2020), both whose ongoing research considers the impacts of intergenerational colonialism on Indigenous health and wellness over the course of life. In the talk, Decolonizing Dementia, Whetung (2021) describes a lag in understanding of cognitive health in older Indigenous persons that is attributed, in part, to systemic oppression and compounded intergenerational colonial impacts on older Indigenous persons. Whetung further asserts that until recently Indigenous persons lived approximately 13 years *less* than the average American. Though this is slowing changing in light of injustices and inequities that are now starting to be addressed, there are still disparities in health of the average Indigenous person as compared to the average non-Indigenous person by older age. Whetung explains this

difference is largely due to compounding socio-economic and political marginalization that occurs throughout life and that has been carried over for multiple generations. Some examples include coerced cultural assimilation projects, rooted in colonialism and racism, such as residential schools that exposed Indigenous people to extreme forms of abuses, higher levels of poverty, and ultimately greater allostatic stressors. The data is demonstrating that colonization is cause for decline in well-being over the course of life and in older age.

Bringing Knowledges Together for Collective Wellness

In this project I have considered how to conjoin Anishinaabeg methodologies with qualitative social science methodologies used in the field of aging. The methodological approach for this project has been adaptive in some ways as the project unfolded. Held (2019) suggests that projects which attempt to combine Indigenous and non-Indigenous methods must start from scratch through relationship building. This was encouraging to read, as I have described, the formation of this thesis project was born of my earlier experiences learning about and harvesting Mnoomin within the communities in the territory, and I have relied on relationships that I had begun to grow with the Mnoomin and to Mnoomin harvesters to bring this MA thesis project together.

I have often thought of a field course I participated in during the Springtime some years ago in the Anishinaabe community at Burleigh Falls, Ontario, and a story that Algonquin Professor Nicole Bell told our class, a group of students from all over the world sitting around an early morning fire, about the importance of story telling and sharing collective intergenerational knowledges. I will do my best to reiterate what I understood was the point of the story; when we gather around the fire and share our

stories, of where we have come from, of where we have traveled, languages, philosophies, our interests and questions, of what knowledges we carry throughout our life, ultimately *of who we are* - all of those stories and knowledges go into the fire situated at the centre of us all. I was thinking, *the fire* in this teaching is both literal and metaphorical. When we sit around the fire in a circle, we are kept warm, we have a place to cook food, and the stories or knowledges we tell each other around that fire, be them funny, deep and moving stories, or maybe just a simple cooking tip, can all be used to build relationships, expand our understandings of ourselves and of the world, and to learn from each other how to live a good life. They may be stories that help us relate to each other, or they may be stories that highlight we are distinct, or maybe both? Perhaps not all stories are equal when they reach that fire, but it is none the less important that many stories have the chance to meet to help us all make sense of things, and maybe to better learn and empathize with the endless ways of being in the world. That analogy of stories in the fire felt like a reminder of the importance of diversity in knowledges and of bringing interdisciplinary knowledges together for the sake of cooperation and collective wellness.

In the Massey Hall lecture by Thomas King (2003) he tells a lot of great stories by relating them back to identity and underlining the power and significance of stories in shaping both individual identities as well as communities and nations. Throughout this thesis I share some of my own stories to highlight connections that I have made to Mnoomin that have taught me about wellness and how to better live in cooperation with other people and fellow life forms. What I have come to understand from my years in the Mnoomin beds alongside harvesters is that sustainable intergenerational well-being

depends in part on one's openness to those stories of others, and perhaps also to be adaptable to plot twists! This thesis relies on both Indigenous and Western research methods to make sense of the research findings. The conceptual framework for this thesis borrows from the wisdom of centring stories as this is an important element of scholarly literature review and interpretation.

In the book *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf* (1970), author and Lakota scholar Vine Deloria describes the differences that exist between Indigenous and North American (Western) understandings of the world. Deloria describes Indigenous cultural, political, and economic systems of knowledges as holistic and "integrated toward a center" (p. 12), in contrast to Western understandings that tend to be linear and compartmentalized:

> Western man has systematically divided his knowledge of the world into disciplines having academic status. All new experience has been differentiated into the major categories and the respective fields of knowledge have been related to individuals through the educational process. But the various fields of knowledge have rarely been related to each other. They had to be mutually exclusive so that each field could have a validity of its own. Without a unity of knowledge, it has been impossible to reconcile the respective fields of knowledge so that the totality of issues can be seen (Deloria, 1970, p.19-20).

Similarly, the relational unity of knowledge that Deloria speaks of has also guided my engagement with both Indigenous and Western methods to define a framework that would support carrying out this project. When it comes to my participation in annual Mnoomin gathering and advocacy, it has been engaging with teachings from the land and many stories from many people that I became informed of community rooted desires, particularly among Mnoomin harvesters, for more research and supports for

community education, documentation of historical and contemporary Mnoominkewin, to strengthen relationships within the territory, and supports for Mnoomin restoration and protections are needed for the sake of collective well-being now and for future generations. I have carried out this work in part through the disciplinary study of Indigenous Studies and Canadian Studies of Aging. Given the colonial history of the Canadian, particularly the role of educational institutions in ongoing colonization and cultural genocide, any argument I could make for merging Canadian and Anishinaabeg knowledges in this thesis project will fall short. This Indigenous place supported life for a very long time and there are deep rooted Anishinaabeg knowledges of how to live well that pre-date the nation state of Canada by thousands of years. I have done my best with the stories I have, the training I have been given by the community and at the university to bring Western Social Science and Indigenous Sciences into conversation methodologically and conceptually to carry out this thesis and community-based research.

Anishinaabe Four Hills of Life Theory and Life Course Theory

To better understand how Mnoomin harvesting supports well-being, this project has relied on a conceptual framework that incorporates Life Course Theory, a Western academic theory of aging which considers various determinants that impact well-being throughout life, and the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life theory, an Indigenous theory which provides a culturally relevant perspective on well-being. Both provide theoretical basis to discuss intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin, as well as the impacts of colonialism that have greatly reduced access to Mnoomin. However, brought into conversation with

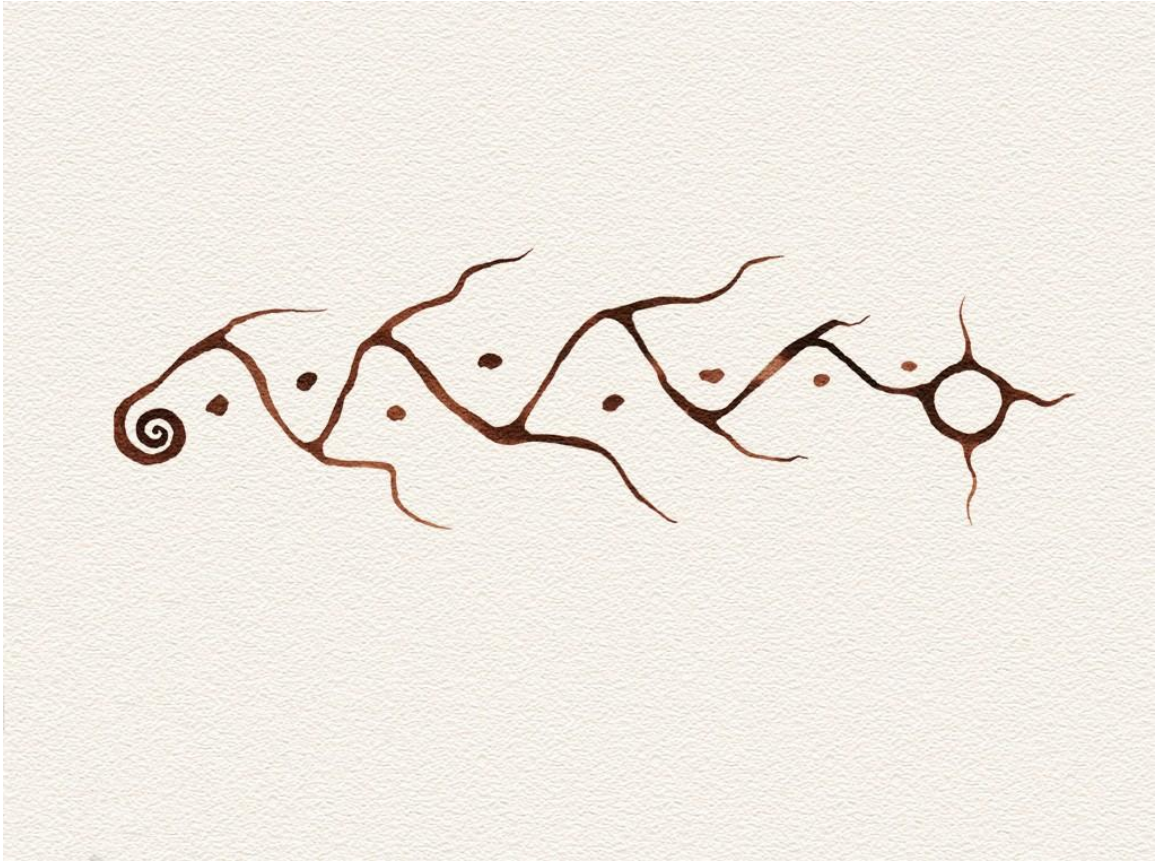
the other, they each expand on scholarly understandings of well-being throughout life and over generations.

In social scientific research, Life Course Theory is widely attributed to Dr. Glen H. Elder (Mortimer and Shanahan, 2002). In the same textbook, Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe (2002) define Life Course Theory "as a theoretical orientation, one with particular relevance to scholarship on human development and aging" (p. 4). The authors go on to explain that life course theory is premised on "age-graded patterns" that are "contextually grounded" to help in understanding how individual lives are shaped by broader societal (political, economic, institutional, family etc.) structures over time. The Ojibwe Four Hills of Life offers an Indigenous perspective of aging that emphasizes a land-based and spiritually centred view of human life in relation to their environment. As described by Peacock and Wisuri (2006), the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life theory relates each stage of life to a season beginning with Springtime and the First Hill representing birth and early childhood and ending with the Fourth Hill in Winter which represents old age and death. Each of the four hills represents the challenges and lessons that we overcome in each stage of life. Whereas the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life theory teaches the interconnectedness of molecular, biological, genetic, ecological and spiritual relations that humans have with the larger world around us, Life Course Theory puts the influence of societal structures of well-being and aging into Perspective. By conjoining Life Course Theory with the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life important elements of well-being that connects spirit, culture, and relationship to economic and political structures are brought more clearly into focus, and can therefore better inform of well-being throughout life in the contemporary context of growing up and aging in a colonial state.

Basil Johnston (1990) writes the story of Weegwauss retelling the dream they had of a dream about a journey over hills and valleys; “the first was steep and jagged; the second and third were less steep and rugged; the fourth was craggy and almost perpendicular, the top enshrouded by a thick white mist” (pp 109). In this section of the book, Weegwauss seeks the council of the Elder, Chejauk, who listens to the the dream and interprets it as the *Four Hills of Life*. Chejauk describes in great detail the elements and purpose of each hill of life, from infancy to death, offering Weegwauss these final words of advice: “Even in old age, life’s work is not finished. There is still much good that can be done for brothers in life. By living out the visions, men and women know something of human nature and living and life. What they have come to know and abide by is wisdom […] I leave it to you to grasp it in your own way, in your own time, and according to the powers of your mind and heart.” (pp 118). With permission, I share Ojibwe artist Don Chretien’s beautiful rendition of the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life:

Figure 2.1

The Four Hills of Life, by Anishinaabe artist Don Chretien, Nipissing First Nation



Note. Chretien, 2024 Artwork. Copyright 2024 by Don Cretien.

Together, the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life theory and Life Course Theory consider the various stages and ages and the many factors, such as environmental, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, political, and ecological, that impact wellness and the experience of aging throughout life. For the purpose of this thesis, both theories are brought into conversation to support a greater understanding of contemporary well-being and to better respond to the call to contextualize the impacts of colonization in the body of Canadian Aging Studies scholarship. This conceptual framework is valuable because the two theories, working together, offer qualitative insights of aging from both

Anishinaabe and Canadian academic perspectives. This is important to the field because, wherein Indigenous knoweldges, methods, and theories have been largely oppressed or marginalized, Indigenous knowledges are fundamental to place-based research, especially in regards to well-being, aging, and health. At the same time, understanding the intergenerational impacts of colonialism may help to identify supportive and effective ways to decolonize and reform the colonial foundations of institutional research that will advance reconciliation. However ambitious, knowing the history of the place in which one investigates in any capacity is an integral step forward in all scholarly research.

As described in Chapter Four and Five, Mnoomin Harvesters correlate their decline in access to Mnoomin to the decline in Michi Saagiig wellness throughout life, especially in older age. Healthy diet and nutrition are well understood to be essential to wellness and longevity, though more consideration of culturally and spiritually important foods, as described in the case study by Anderson and Whetung (2018), are needed. Such studies make clear the benefits of direct access and continued reciprocal intergenerational relationship with Indigenous foods or food systems. In these chapters, harvesters also recall stories told by older family members, that are supported by archival evidence, of significantly larger Mnoomin beds as well as greater access to lakes, rivers and marshes in the territory. Even in very early colonial settlement, there were significantly larger annual yields and much greater community participation in Mnoomin camps or gathering events that provided much more opportunity to physically, spiritually, and emotionally attend to nutritional, familial, community, and cultural sustenance that supported intergenerational wellness for hundreds or thousands of years in this place.

I began this project with an established understanding that Mnoomin is essential to well-being in this territory. When I turned to the scholarship, I found that many studies applied Life Course Theory in relation to biological or physiological studies of aging. While I discuss ecological relationships between Mnoomin and humans generally, particularly the positive effects of accessing culturally significant wholly nutritious foods and the benefits of staying in kinship to land, water, and Indigenous food systems, examining this relationship at the cellular or genetic level is beyond the scope of this thesis. But, as this thesis highlights, the importance of access to traditional Indigenous foods that have been relied upon in reciprocal kinship for thousands of years, it has been very interesting to review studies that discuss *how* such a connection could be made through the application of Life Course Theory. For example, in their study of musculoskeletal and cardiovascular disorders, Hanson M. et. al (2016) apply a life course model of functional capacity that considers early life conditions that may inform later life health conditions. They further describe the limitations of isolating age groups or excluding social environmental factors that are important to understanding wellness in a systemic or relational sense. As mentioned above, Anderson and Whetung (2018) offer a qualitative case study that includes discussion of how the human body and the environment interact in ways that may inform wellness by describing health issues that older Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg are experiencing, such as disproportionately high rates of diabetes, due to a lack of access to traditional Anishinaabe foods over multiple generations. The study also highlights that Mnoomin is also a culturally important food that encourages physical and spiritual engagement through the act of harvesting, processing, and cultivating the plant which further supports wellness throughout life.

Life Course Theory enquires about the ways each life stage is impacted by factors such as environmental, genetic, social, economic, and political that influence health and wellness over a lifetime. The Ojibwe Four Hills of Life theory posits a relational, cultural, and ecological framework for understanding wellness and place-based determinants that impact well-being at each stage of life. Particularly for the sake of contextualizing colonialism in this study, the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life conjoined with the Life Course Theory is a conceptual framework that offers *one way* to examine and describe the complex, intersecting, and compounding impacts of colonialism on well-being throughout life and over generations.

The Importance of Place to Well-being

Some aging and gerontological scholars have highlighted a strong connection between wellness and place. In Aging Studies, the intersection of historical and contemporary relationships is of particular significance for those who are working in rural and remote areas where traditional knowledges and relationships with land where one has roots (for example, Wilson, 2003 discusses this) are also connected to feelings of wellness and expressed desires to age in place (Herron and Skinner, 2013). Though, in the colonial context where Indigenous and non-Indigenous world views, values, and desires collide, understandings of wellness and of place, even on the same physical landscape, are often at odds.[10]

[10] Two examples of this related to Mnoomin are: the Ardoch First Nation Rice Wars (see the Where We've Been section of Ardoch First Nation's webpage: https://www.aafna.ca/our-crew), and the ongoing conflict over Mnoomin in Pigeon Lake (see https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/decolonizing-cottage-country-anishinaabe-art-intervenes-in-canadas-wild-rice).

In a paper discussing the history of the Anishinaabeg in the Great Lakes Region, Anishinaabeg scholar Darlene Johnston (2006) explains aspects of the creation, self-identification and governance of the Anishinaabeg stating: "for the Anishinaabeg, the Great Lakes region is more than geography. It is a spiritual landscape formed by and embedded with the regenerative potential of the First Ones who gave it form" (p. 6). Johnston further explains that wampum belts serve as evidence of ancestral rights over territory and "it also shows the link between totemic identity and territory. Specific tribes are given responsibility of specific regions" (p. 11). Distinguishing more recent colonial French and British interests from Anishinaabeg interests in ecological and social responsibility, livelihood and cultural existence born of thousands of years in the Great Lakes region Johnston goes on to explain that "treaties and wampum belts are a rich source of evidence of totemic identity. In early documents signed with totemic marks, genealogy and territory are fused in a landscape that is both geographic and spiritual" (p. 12).

In the article by Sean Carleton (2016) that is cited in the footnote above, the author quotes co-curator of the Ogimaa Mikana project Susan Blight asserts:

> It cannot be overstated how important manoomin is to the Anishinaabeg. Our relationship to manoomin is over 15,000 years old; it goes all the way back to our migration story and how we as Anishinaabeg came to be on these lands upon which we raised our families for generations. Mnoomin was central to how we came to be here. And for thousands of years, the Anishinaabeg have honoured that relationship. Beyond that, manoomin is connected to Anishinaabeg notions of governance and by that, I mean governing our communities and governing ourselves and how we go about our lives on this earth as Anishinaabeg. There are teachings within manoominike (the harvesting of manoomin) that are central

> philosophical and spiritual tenets of the Anishinaabeg; teachings about respect, reciprocity, working for others, humility, gentleness, responsibility, balance, about relationships, and giving more than you take. Anishinaabeg rarely tell each other how they should be—we have too much respect for freedom and self-determination to do that—instead we are shown how we should be through our land-based practices including manoominike. So, in this way, wild rice is our teacher. And when the manoomin or our freedom to harvest manoomin is threatened, part of our existence as Anishinaabeg is threatened (Carleton, 2016).

Mnoomin is deeply intertwined with Anishinaabeg history, culture, and governance. Mnoomin is central to the foundation of Anishinaabe communities, and way of life. Mnoomin caretaking, harvesting and ceremonial use embodies core Anishinaabe values that shape cultural and spiritual philosophies as well as how to interact with each other.

The Life Cycle of Mnoomin

The importance of Mnoomin as a Cultural Keystone Species includes ecological connection of Mnoomin to many fellow life forms. Mnoomin grows in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest regions, across traditional Anishinaabe territories, as far west as Lake Superior all the way to Southern Ontario. Anishinaabe Mnoomin is also known as Wild Rice and is categorized plantae under the genus Zizania with two species, *Z. Palustris and Z. Aquatica* growing in the North of Turtle Island and, *Z. Texana and Z. miliacea* which grow in the South. There are other related species that grow in Asia and Europe. Mnoomin growth varies in different bodies of water but, I have been taught and have come to observe that Mnoomin generally grows in sandy, shallow lake and river bottoms, cold stratifying over the winter, germinating in late Spring or early Summer, coming to

the floating leaf stage by mid-summer, producing a stem shortly after that can stand as tall as 6-8 feet above the water surface, flowering with male and female flowers, cross or self-pollinating in later summer, seeds develop from a milky liquid into green seeds that reach maturation by late summer to early Fall. The seeds are usually ready to harvest over a few weeks in late August and September. Mnoomin is an annual plant that reseeds itself but, traditional harvesting methods also ensure Mnoomin beds are reseeded. Mnoomin serves important ecological roles such as filtering water, stabilizing soil, staging for waterfowl, fish habitat, and habitat for endangered species.[11] There are many incredible features of the Mnoomin plant, it is absolutely stunning. The Mnoomin Life Cycle is depicted in Figure 2 on the next page.

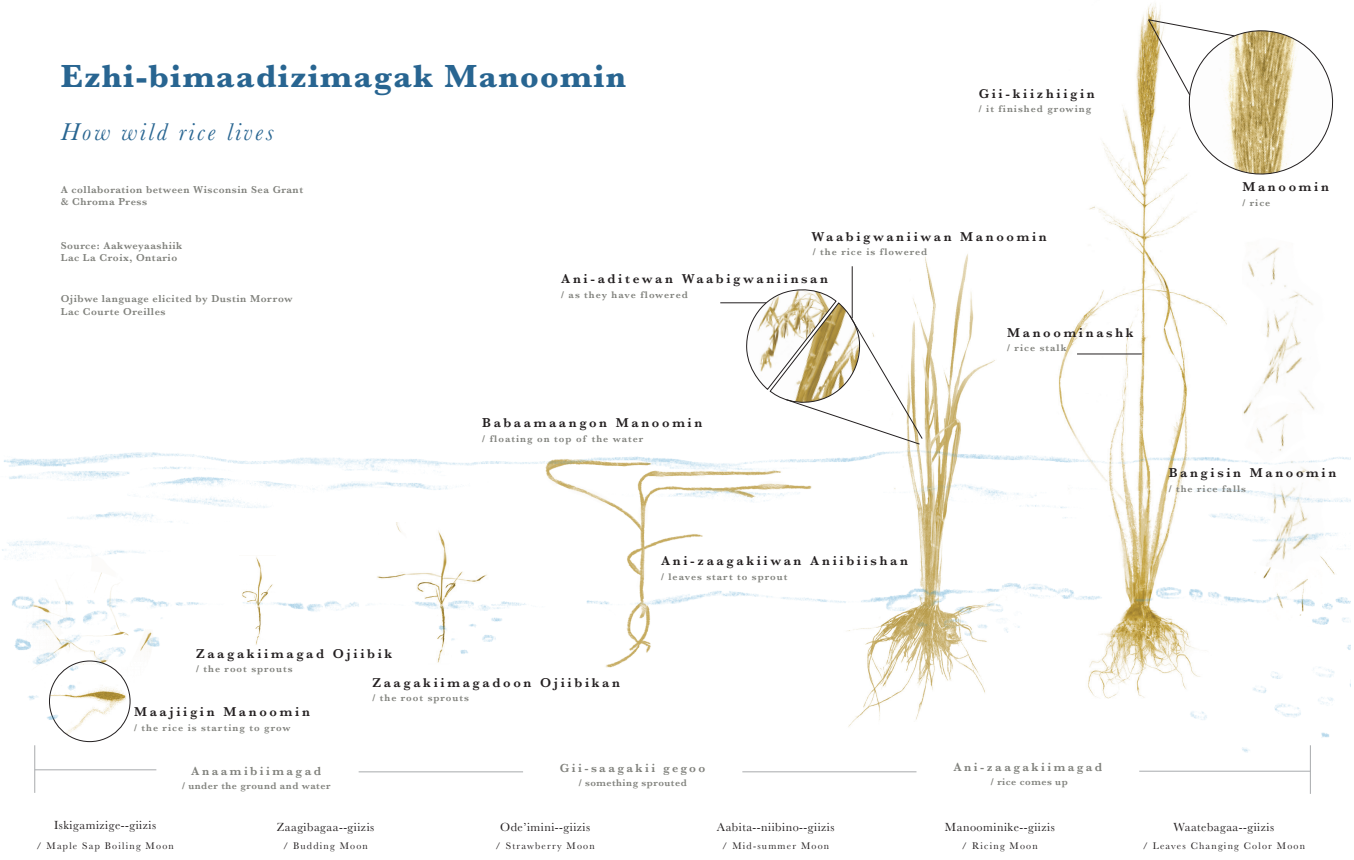
Anishinaabeg Wellness and Relationship with Mnoomin

The value of Mnoomin to Anishinaabeg wellness cannot be understated. According to the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (2021), Mnoomin is an aquatic grain that is higher in protein (12%) than most grains grown in Canada and is more nutritionally dense than any other native plant food in Canada containing essential minerals, iron, potassium, phosphorus, and B Vitamins. In addition to the nutritional benefits of eating Mnoomin, there are also cardiovascular benefits from physically harvesting and processing the grain into food, and as a Cultural Keystone Species it is vital to the collective cultural and spiritual well-being of Anishinaabeg. Mnoomin is a Cultural Keystone Species that is also critically important to the environment, and therefore, if properly cared for, Mnoomin supports wellness among all Anishinaabe as

[11] https://www.aldervillesavanna.ca/index.php/wild-rice/

well as fellow Canadians in Ontario, the Great Lakes, and Boreal Forest regions of Turtle Island.

Figure 2.2 Ojibwe representation of the Mnoomin (wild rice) lifecycle



Note. Wisconsin Sea Grant, 2021 [PDF].

Anishinaabeg relationship to Mnoomin forms the basis of Anishinaabeg origins and is tied to every aspect of being Anishinaabe. As Anishinaabe scholar Susan Blight explains, Mnoomin defines being Anishinaabe in every way. Michi Saagiig oral histories, along with the local archaeological record, indicate that Mnoominkewin has been practiced in Michi Saagiig territory for at least 3000 to 4000 years upwards of 10,000 years (Conolly, 2018; Gidigaa Migizi, 2018; Pearce, 2019). As described by Mnoomin

harvesters in Chapters Four and Five, annual Mnoomin gathering is an important site for learning about and forming relationships to others, as well as to learn about reciprocal ecological relationships to intergenerational wellness. Mnoomin harvests and gathering events are especially important spaces for intergenerational exchanges of knowledge, socializing and building relationships through story telling, craft, art, song, deepening cultural and spiritual relations within family and community, and Mnoomin. In light of the fact that Mnoomin is both a culturally significant plant food as well as an ecologically significant species, the well-being of Mnoomin beds in the territory could theoretically serve as a barometer of collective ecological and community wellness in this Michi Saagiig territory.

The Call to Contextualize Colonization in Aging Studies

The field of aging is highly interdisciplinary, however, the connections between colonization and Indigenous well-being over the course of life have not been well enough investigated or described in Aging Studies (Llanque 2015). The disciplinary project of aging is, however, attuned to the intersections of contemporary experiences and determinants that may inform on well-being throughout life. Within the discipline of Aging Studies, for example, there are many studies that call attention to the centralization of resources and policy dedicated to sustaining neoliberal agendas, which Indigenous Aging Studies scholar Sandy Grande suggests is a practice becoming as outdated as the harmful discourses that come out of mainstream rhetoric that population aging *is a crisis* (Grande, 2017). Among Indigenous scholars there has been a longtime movement towards reclamation and resurgence of Indigenous intelligence, particularly of land-based pedagogies that break away from colonial institutional structures, by and large this

movement relates to connection to place and the understanding that Indigenous relationships to land are critical to physical, cultural and spiritual well-being (Simpson, 2011; Alfred, 2013). Among the general population, feelings of autonomy and relationship to place remain tightly associated with feelings of wellness over the course of life, particularly in older age (Lewis, 2009; Herron & Skinner, 2013). The literature is clear: it is essential for Aging Studies scholars and researchers to consider how historical and ongoing colonization have systematically impacted Indigenous health and quality of life for most everyone. This includes the effects of cultural genocide, forced relocations, land dispossession, and restricted access to culturally significant foods and practices that support mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness. These disruptions may be compounded or, in some cases, mitigated across generations.

One of the concepts on which I have premised this thesis considers the connection between Indigenous aging experiences to what cultural Aging Studies scholar Stephan Katz (2009) has pointed towards; wellness and aging are not limited or mutually exclusive to individuals. Families, communities and societies also age. During my time in the Mnoomin beds, watching the plants grow and change, the insects and the fish change each week over the harvesting season, I also thought more deeply about the aging or life cycles of plants, insects, non-human mammals, the environment, water, and Earth. We collectively age alongside each other. This is important to consider towards contextualizing colonialism, of a place, because a primary mechanism of colonization is to separate and compartmentalize us from our kinships to the land and to one another (Wolfe 2006). Some attention has been given to address and deconstruct capitalist assertions of successful aging in the mainstream which negatively impacts wellness over

the course of life (Chazan, 2020). Notwithstanding, ideas of what constitutes wellness are conditioned and shaped by the capitalist colonial paradigm in order to continue to access, control, and exploit the natural environment. Blinick (2012) describes the structural impacts that colonization of the Mnoomin has had in Ontario, that also parallels colonization of the Anishinaabeg in Ontario who depend on their continued kinship with Mnoomin for physical, spiritual, and cultural wellness. Thus, the contextualization of colonialism and the inherent relationship of colonialism to capitalism is important to understanding well-being over the course of life.

Contextualizing Colonialism: Wellbeing in Michi Saagiig Territory

Local colonial and precolonial history is important to learn and engage with prior to conducting a research study on health and related social conditions. The factors that shape health outcomes across the lifespan and through generations, particularly because colonization and ongoing colonial dynamics remain insufficiently analyzed and documented. Given the widespread impacts, a foundational understanding of colonization and colonialism is essential information in any area of study. In this section I discuss contextualizing colonialism and the importance of doing so to more deeply examine health and well-being in relation to Anishinaabe Mnoomin, in response to the call to do so by some Aging Studies scholars as described earlier. I further this call by positing that, after establishing a foundational reckoning with the structural forms and various ways in which colonization and settler colonialism operate, it is also necessary to then learn about the unique ways that colonialism impacts the specific place in which a research study is to be carried out. While working on this project, I have come to think much more deeply about the specific impacts of colonization in Michi Saagiig Territory. Mnoomin is at the

centre of cultural and spiritual life of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, and it is also at the centre of ecological and environmental wellness in this Anishinaabe place as keystone species that is integral to the Anishinaabe food system. Therefore, when examining the structural mechanisms of settler colonialism that have led to the significant loss of Mnoomin beds, access to highly nutritious foods including and ecologically related to Mnoomin, and loss of cultural and spiritual engagement with Mnoomin in the territory, it become especially clear that colonization of the land and water is inherently tied to well-being.

Michi Saagiig scholar Madeline Whetung (2016) asserts the creation of colonial landscapes, however destructive, do not erase Indigenous landscapes. Also addressing the destruction of Mnoomin beds in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory, Whetung posits the colonization of the territory and destruction of the Mnoomin beds has led to conflicting interests in the use of the lakes and rivers, specifically that challenges Anishinaabe harvesting rights, "is the result of complex land relations that have developed through colonial land relations established *overtop of* Indigenous land-based relations. Original relations with settlers took place through trade that had little to do with land; when settlement of the territory became a directed project in the 1800s, the Crown began to make land cession treaties with the Nishnaabeg people of the area" (p. 2). Despite nearly two centuries of settler colonization of the territory, Michi Saagiig continue to practice Mnoominkewin and care taking of the Mnoomin beds by harvesting, reseeding the beds, and processing the Mnoomin into food annually. Still, colonial food *regimes* have greatly changed the landscape and relationship to traditional foods in the

territory, leading to a decline in community, environmental and ecological wellness that is compounding over generations.

During my time learning from Mnoomin and Mnoomin harvesters, I understand in no uncertain terms that colonialism of the land cannot be compartmentalized from the colonization of the Michi Saagiig and all fellow life forms in this place. The impact of colonialism on the land, of the Mnoomin, and of the Michi Saagiig are interconnected. The disruption and control exerted by settler-colonial structures affect not only the physical environment but also the traditional practices essential to the cultural integrity and wellness of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg. As described in the case study by Anderson and Whetung (2008), there is a clear correlation between the vitality of Mnoomin and the overall quality of life within Michi Saagiig communities. Arguably, many Canadians residing in or around Nogojiwanong/Peterborough in Michi Saagiig territory are also affected by continued exploitation and pollution of the land and water. To better understand well-being over the course of life and over generations, it is critical to examine and contextualize the impacts of colonialism. Mnoomin harvesters understood this very well describing many and varied effects of colonization on their families and communities over multiple generations in their interviews as discussed in more detail in chapters four and five.

The Rice Wars: From Michi Saagiig to Ardoch and Back Again

Following the 1783 Crawford Purchase also known as the Gunshot Treaty, some Mississauga families who lived in the Bay of Quinte at the time chose to remain with Algonquin kin whose traditional territory bordered on that of the Algonquins when they were pressured to relocate to Alnwick Township from Grape Island mission (Alderville

First Nation, n.d., Shanahan, D., 2018, November 8). By the late 1880s Michi Saagiig and Omàmìwininì Anishinaabe families worked together to transplant Mnoomin seeds from Pimadashkodeyong (now more commonly known as Rice Lake, or the Rice Lake Plains) to Mud Lake and the Mississippi river along the shores of Ardoch First Nation (Beaver, 2010).[12] Omàmìwininì Elder Harold Perry-Bah recounts his family and community tending and harvesting the Mnoomin beds that his Great-Grandparents Mary Buckshot and Joseph Whiteduck had planted a century earlier:[13]

> I have recollections starting about six years old and remember then and until war time in 1939 of Indians coming from other areas for the rice harvest, more so than at any other time, many from Alderville. I remember the smoke house, tanning of hides, moccasins, learning things from Ross and Bill Beaver, my father and others, and dancing the rice. Those were the very hard times of the depression, and the wild rice was a factor in pulling the Indians, the local settlers and ourselves through, (Harold Perry-Bah, 1998; AAFNA, 2024).

In addition to the oral tradition of Anishinaabe histories that continue to be passed down by Omàmìwininì and Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Knowledge Holders, there are several archival documents, news stories and scholarly papers that have examined this most important history of Indigeneity and Settler Colonialism in Ontario. Among them Lawrence (2012) offers a detailed review and summary of the significance of Mnoomin at Ardoch First Nation in the book Fractured Homeland: Federal Recognition and Algonquin Identity in Ontario:

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[12] Elder Jeff Beaver also shared this story in the interview for this project.

[13] Personal communication, oral history that has been shared by Ardoch Algonquin Mnoomin harvesters during annual harvesting and reseeding at Mud Lake in Ardoch.

> During the 1880's, at the darkest time for Ardoch when survival itself seemed impossible, Mary Buckshot brought wild rice, or manoomin, from Rice Lake and planted it at Mud Lake. As the white settlements grew, the Rice Lake manoomin beds were extinguished by the construction of the Trent Canal, but the stand at Mud Lake remained. Its hereditary guardianship was passed in a continuous line from Mary Buckshot to her daughter Henrietta Whiteduck, to her grandson Richard Perry, and subsequently to her great-grandson Harold Perry. In the late 1970s, a commercial operation obtained a license to harvest the Mud Lake wild rice, a development that galvanized the small informal community into taking a stand to protect it, (Lawrence, 2012, p 139).

Highlighting the significant loss of traditional land base, hunting grounds and almost immediate interruption to the Indigenous food system in Ontario that came with rapid early settlement, logging industry, mercury and uranium mining - and then the cherry on top - the Provincial governments' attempts to assert jurisdiction over and appropriation of Mnoomin as a capital commodity in Ontario, Lawrence (2012) lays out the nearly century long series of events that further link the colonization of Anishinaabeg, paralleling the colonization of Mnoomin across Ontario from the entire North Shore of Lake Ontario to the Northwestern Treaty 3 rice beds. At the same time, the Anishinaabeg of Curve Lake First Nation (formerly called Mud Lake Band #35), Hiawatha First Nation (formerly known as the Mississaugas of Rice Lake Reserve) and Alderville First Nation, three nations in proximity to Rice Lake from where the Mnoomin seeds were transplanted to Mud Lake[14] at Ardoch, were also in dispute with the federal government over their jurisdiction, access, and care taking responsibilities of the Mnoomin. The Canadian government archival records, spanning from 1897 to 1933, place specific focus

[14] Different from the former Mud Lake First Nation now known as Curve Lake

on Rice Lake (Canada, n.d.). While more research is needed on the history of Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig territory and in Ontario, these recorded interactions via correspondence, reports, news clips, and memoranda between Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg with the federal government, offers more insights at to the historical dispute over wild rice harvesting rights and the long time tensions surrounding land, the exploitation of the natural environment, and the impacts of expanding Canadian settlement in the territory that continues to this day.

The term 'rice wars' came about when, after significant protest by the Algonquins and Michi Saagiig as well as a refusal by the deputy minister to issue any commercial permit, the Ministry of Natural Resources Minister James Auld, unilaterally issued a license to Lanark Wild Rice to commercially harvest the rice beds at Mud Lake (Dean, M. 2004, March 11). Despite significant protest and organized support, Mud Lake was to be zoned for commercial use, which threatened the Mnoomin. Elder Harold Perry-Bah and fellow Ardoch families, supported by the Union of Ontario Indians, Ontario Metis, and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA), protested at the MNR office in Tweed ahead of the first commercial harvest date to no avail. In response, both Native and non-Native communities established a blockade of the lake to prevent the commercial airboat from entering. This resulted in a 27-day standoff in August and September of 1981 that involved more than 100 people including Ardoch Algonquins, local allied Canadian residents, and Mississaugas from Curve Lake and Alderville First Nations resisted against the Province's violent attack on them and the Mud Lake rice beds. The Ontario Provincial Police, who sent 27 cruisers and two helicopters, the MNR who sent seven boats, and Lanark Wild Rice whose employees were present in their vehicles and tow trucks, were

unsuccessful in accessing the rice beds. Not long after, the MNR withdrew their involvement in all matters relating to Mnoomin in Ontario and any matters pertaining to Mnoomin, or Wild Rice, have been assumed by the Federal Government through Parks Canada. The response by the province and police was way out of proportion to the size of the lake and of the traditional Omàmìwininì Anishinaabe community at Ardoch. As referenced from Delisle (2001, 134-38) of the *Rice War* at Ardoch First Nation Lawrence (2012) summarizes:

> The provincial government's reaction to the wild rice issue had been so precipitous, so extreme, and so inconsistent with the actual value of the crop that it led OMNSIA representative Duke Redbird to suggest that the attempt to control the Mud Lake manoomin was a test case for larger issue of Aboriginal rights. If the Province of Ontario had been successful in claiming authority over the Mud Lake rice beds, this would have aided claims to the larger rice beds of northwestern Ontario in Treaty 3. In the end, although Indigenous jurisdiction was not recognized, Ardoch Algonquins maintain functional rights to the rice beds and to this day continue to caretake and harvest the rice beds at Mud Lake, (Lawrence, 2012, p 142).

As described earlier, the historical transfer of Mnoomin seeds to Ardoch was crucial for sustaining Anishinaabe families amidst encroaching colonial settlements and logging that had destroyed their traditional food sources. The transfer of seeds Mud Lake was an especially important and well-planned endeavour given the common issues that Michi Saagiig were also facing in accessing their traditional foods, following the creation of the reserves, the Williams Treaties, and the flooding of Mnoomin caused by the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway.

Though the standoff that occurred at Ardoch First Nation was not the first time Anishinaabeg came together to protect the Mnoomin in Ontario, the event gave rise to a more comprehensive mainstream understanding of the century long disputes over inherent and Treaty rights that include Mnoomin. In their thesis, Mnoomin-Gaawin: Nishnaabe Gimmaawin Na Dani-Daapinaawaa Nishinaabe Oodenoo, Art Beaver (1999) tells of the early struggles to maintain access to the Mnoomin; “a major endeavour for Alderville was the wild rice harvest on Rice Lake. However, from 1897 to 1933 there was a dispute between the Indians of Rice and Mud Lakes and Alderville over the rights to harvest the rice” (p. 69). Beaver further describes archived letters that detail the damages caused to the Michi Saagiig of Alderville due to the lack of access to their Mnoomin beds, and that Alderville representatives had sought legal counsel, despite Section 141 of the Indian Act which prohibited Indigenous people from hiring legal counsel to represent them. Speaking of the Mnoominike-Giizis and harvest time and the first conflicts that arose out of early settler colonialism and Provincial interests in Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig Territory, Beaver writes:

> It was traditional knowledge that had been passed down through the generations. The harvest or the "time of the wild rice moon" was watched by elders Alfred Simpson, James Bigwin and Zachariah Smoke, who determined the readiness of the crop and set the day for the harvest to begin. After the rice was gathered, it was spread to dry in the sun. Then it was put into a large cauldron over an open fire and stirred with a paddle to parch the rice so that the chaff would be loosened from the grain. After removing the cauldron from the fire, the next step was a responsibility that was taught to the young boys because they were light in weight and would not break the rice. They were told to put on their moccasins and step into the cauldron to "dance the rice." Finally, the rice was placed on a tarp or blanket and tossed into the air to winnow the chaff from the grain. The Indians of

> Hiawatha and Curve Lake (Rice and Mud Lakes) took action to protect a traditional resource. A 1905 document indicates that the government of Ontario leased the rice beds for 21 years, which deprived the Indians of trapping [Beaver, Otter and Muskrat], shooting [waterfowl] and gathering wild rice. This prevented the Indians from accessing a very large source of their living. To the Mississaugas of Alderville the ban on gathering the rice was deemed to be an infringement on a right that was given to them by the Creator, (Beaver, 1999, p 71-72).

The infringement of Treaty rights and appropriation of the Mnoomin beds by the Canadian Governments, the damage being done to the Mnoomin beds, and the eventual construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway which flooded thousands of acres of Mnoomin in Pimadashkodeyong and many more throughout the entire waterway, resulted in a huge cultural, spiritual and economic loss for the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of Mnoomin that would otherwise have been harvested, consumed and enjoyed for its' nutritional and ceremonial value, as well as traded and sold by the Michi Saagiig over the past 120 years. This does not even consider the huge losses of fish habitat and staging grounds for waterfowl or reduction in populations of several other mammals and plant species that had relied on the Mnoomin beds. The spiritual, physical, cultural, and economic damage caused by the Canadian Government and settler colonization in the territory is almost incomprehensible.

There are several accounts and a long oral history that describes the density of Mnoomin beds that were once present in the waterway from Wabuskummug (Chemong Lake) to Pimadashkodeyang (Rice Lake). In reference to Pimadashkodeyang, Shpuniarsky (2016) writes: "it has been estimated that the Manoomin covered as much as 5000 acres of the lake" (pp 66). The history of colonial encounters related to Mnoomin

beds and harvesters arguably demonstrates *The Rice Wars* between the Canadian settlers' state and the Anishinaabe have been ongoing since at least the early 1900s. Shpuniarsky (2016) writes:

> The Mississauga people were protective of the mnoomin and looked after it, as it provided steady nourishment and income throughout the winter months. Settlers began harvesting the mnoomin, without permission from any of the surrounding communities and also removing it when they felt it was in their way (it was seen by some as a weed). The mnoomin and its protection was discussed in council and the tri-council of Hiawatha, Scugog, and Mud Lake (Curve Lake). In the late 19th century, the tri-council passed a motion stating that only the people of these communities were allowed to harvest the mnoomin. An Indigenous person from another community was allowed to harvest but only with the permission of the one of the communities (p. 68).

Shpuniarsky (2016) includes a number of archival records and local accounts of the numerous ways that settlers, Indian Affairs, and the province have interfered with the annual Mnoomin gatherings, despite several other accounts of widespread participation in picnics, sports, and gathering events that included Anishinaabeg and Settler Canadians around Hiawatha and on Sugar Island during Mnoominike-giizis (Mnoomin harvesting season). One example that Sphuniarsky describes is of Chief Paudash petitioning Indian Affairs and the province after the Ministry of Natural Resources assumed jurisdiction of the beds by offering leases for the rice beds to duck hunters, which prevented the Mississauga harvesters from accessing the beds which interferes with Treaty rights to hunt and to gather Mnoomin (p. 68). One would reasonably think that after more than a century of resistance and fierce protection of their Anishinaabe Mnoomin Beds, and the fact that many non-Native Canadians also support the protections of Mnoomin and

Anishinaabe rights to caretake and harvest Anishinaabe Mnoomin, that the Provincial and Federal Governments would have begun to provide baseline supports and public education that would support knowledges of Treaty rights and responsibilities for all Canadians. Instead, year after year the Mnoomin beds in Ontario continue to be targeted, the issue held down by governments, limited time moratoriums put in place, and the ecosystem along with Anishinaabe food systems continue to lack governmental or institutional supports, and in worst case scenarios are made inaccessible or further erode.

Conflicts regarding Mnoomin harvesting and treaty harvesting rights continue to come up, escalating some years more than others. In 2015, there was a dispute led by some shoreline property owners around Pigeon and Chemong Lakes, who formed the group Save Pigeon Lake. They were particularly upset about the restoration of the rice beds, about the look of the lakes when the Mnoomin beds grow in, about their recreational use of the lakes (mainly the use of boats and other watercraft which can be difficult to drive through rice beds), and they complained about the loud sound of the Black Duck Wild Rice harvesting airboat. Whetung (2015) responded to the protests of shoreline property owners by explaining the central role that wild rice plays in Anishinaabe culture and food sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of the traditional practice and of Mnoomin as an modest economic resource. The article highlights the bigger issues of Anishinaabeg rights and the challenges they face in protecting their traditions and managing their resources.

The Indian Act

Ten years after confederation in 1867, the Indian Act (1876) was enacted by the Canadian Government. The Indian Act is living piece of Canadian legislation that

imposes a legal and political framework for First Nations upon which the Canadian State has layered itself. The Indian act has been amended many times since it was enacted, though continues to have devastating and lasting implications for Indigenous nations, and continues to affect all facets of Indigenous life in Canada:

> The consequences of early Indian Act legislation were far greater than the details of those laws. The nation assumed a marked characteristic; a fundamental dualism was planted at the core of Canadian federalism. Two paths were laid out and maintained unquestioningly until after the Second World War: one for non-Aboriginal Canadians of full participation in the affairs of their community, province and nation and one for First Nations people stripped of the power of self-determination, separated from provincial and national life and existing in communities whose colonization was profound and immutable (Milloy, 2008).

The Indian Act is a genocidal piece of legislation that aimed to assimilate and erase Indigenous culture and people. It was designed to forcefully assimilate Indigenous persons into Canadian society and to erode Indigenous languages, kinships, spiritualities, families, communities, governance, place-based relationships, ecosystems, and all aspects of Indigenous life (Joseph, 2018). The Indian Act was central to the development and implementation of the residential school system (Milloy, 2008). The lasting effects of the Indian Act have also significantly harmed Indigenous food systems by prohibiting Indigenous access, care taking, and use of land and water, imposing European farming methods while simultaneously making it difficult to farm by through forcing First Nations to relocate to significantly smaller areas of land than their traditional territories, chronically underfunding and marginalizing Indigenous farming and food economies, prohibiting the sale of farm

goods by Indigenous peoples, and by criminalizing and appropriating traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering sites, to control and exploit natural resources that have also eroded the natural environment and have contaminated water sources. Particularly since the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy,* more commonly known as *The White Paper* was proposed by the Canadian Government in 1969 there has been a lot of debate about what to do about the Indian Act. While the White Paper proposed dismantling the Indian Act, there was a great deal of pushback from First Nations and *Citizens Plus*, or *The Red Paper* was released in 1970. Citizens Plus rejected the proposed White Paper and advocated for the protection of First Nations' rights within the Canadian Constitution and asserted that Indigenous peoples should make their own decisions regarding their governance and future. The debate continues to this day with some asserting the Indian Act is the only legal framework that recognizes Indigenous peoples as distinct from the rest of the Canadian population there are also others, such as Gwawa'enuxw author Bob Joseph (2018) and Nêhîyaw legal scholar Andre Bear assert there are alternative ways for First Nations to assume their own governance on a nation to nation basis. There is continuing debate as to how this could be done. Bear (2023) has posited that Treaty provides a foundation from which Nation to Nation relationships could be best established, though not all territories are covered by Treaty. There are many territories that are unceded, or where there are ongoing land claims and modern treaties in negotiation.

Treaty

Establishing if there is a treaty and understanding both the history of the treaty agreement and how the terms of the treaty have been carried out is an important

consideration in contextualizing colonialism. The *health* of a treaty relationship/s may be one way to understand and inform of Indigenous (and perhaps also non-Indigenous) wellness. From an Indigenous perspective, treaties represent a relationship between two parties or nations, and they are not fixed in time. Treaties are understood by Indigenous peoples to be *living agreements*, they are not fixed in time but instead require regular retelling in order preserve the sanctity, sharing, and peace they are meant to provide. Furthermore, treaty agreements are not now nor were they ever meant to be, sales agreements (Abbott, P., Mowat, D., Williams, D., November 16, 2017, and Migizi, 2018). Though the Williams Treaties have been referred to as "land surrenders" by the Canadian Government, but this does not represent Indigenous or First Nations' perspectives of treaty, evidenced by the nature of precolonial treaties that were made between Indigenous (First) Nations. The term "land sharing" is more accurate. In traditional governance on Turtle Island, Treaties are land sharing agreements wherein territorial and resource boundaries are maintained and respected within and beyond families and communities. Treaties represent cultural, legal, and economic commitments that sustain the relationships between individuals and nations, aiming to share land, land-based resources, and to respect autonomous sovereign governance. Going beyond the work of this thesis, a few questions I have considered while working on this project have been: what role does the interpretation of historical colonial treaties have in addressing the impacts of treaty on well-being? How have colonial interpretations of treaty agreements impacted well-being over the course of life and over generations? How could regular attention and efforts to build and renew treaty relationships, as treaty peoples, inform on wellness across the land?

Anne Taylor (2020) asserts that one important way her family, and many families of Curve Lake First Nation, maintain their treaty relationships is by being sustained by the land within Treaty 20 and Williams Treaties territory. Anne emphasizes the importance of the Michi Saagiig being caretakers of the land in reciprocal ways, given that we are made of the land on which we live, and that this is represented in the treaties:

> One of the ways that we honour those treaties is by taking care of the land. Because in Treaty 20 our rights for hunting, fishing, trapping are there, we are able to continue with those practices even today, and it's still a huge part of our community and the interesting thing about that is when you go to the land to sustain or to feed your family then you become a part of that land (Anne Taylor, 2020).

Treaty agreements are in large part the reason many of us have the privilege to live in Canada today and they remain very important because they established the boarders of Canada (Morin, 2022). As described throughout this thesis, since colonial settlement, the Anishinaabeg have been systematically deprived of their inherent rights to live according to their cultural and economic practices they have upheld on their ancestral land and waters for generations. Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg First Nations and supporting members of surrounding communities in the territory have done significant work advocating for treaty harvesting rights, and for the rights of the Mnoomin. Elder Gidigaa Migizi-Bah/Doug Williams-Bah (2020) explains that language, culture and spirituality have also been undermined in the formation of Treaty 20 and the Williams Treaties. In addition to the continued failure on the part of the Canadian government, in all respects, to recognize Anishinaabeg sovereignty and Indigenous land rights, until very recently very few people have been educated on the colonial history in Ontario.

Consequently, there is continued disconnection, and sometimes contentions in Michi Saagiig territory with regards to treaty rights and responsibilities related to Mnoomin.

Treaty 20 and The Williams Treaties

Treaty 20 was signed on November 5, 1818[15], between the Michi Saagiig and the Crown. Treaty 20 pertains to approximately 1,951,000 acres of land in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory that includes the Kawartha Lakes and the city of Peterborough (Healey, 2022) The Williams Treaties were signed in November 1923 between the Canadian government seven Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Bands in Michi Saagiig Territory including: Alderville First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. The Williams Treaties cover 20,000 square km, which is approximately 4,942,210 acres, stretching across all of Central Ontario from Nipissing to Lake Ontario. While Treaty 20 maintained hunting, fishing and gathering rights, the Indian Act of 1876 and shortly thereafter The Williams Treaties "basket clause", greatly reduced Michi Saagiig access to their traditional lands and food system. The Williams Treaties came about as a result of Michi Saagiig soliciting the Canadian for 60 plus years following the signing of Treaty 20 to better manage settler encroachment, including residences, logging and mining on un-surrendered lands north of the Treaty 20 area, which was interfering with Michi Saagiig traplines, hunting, fishing and gathering areas (Mowat, 2020; Pind and Hoggarth, 2023). Whereas the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa were under the impression they were engaging

[15] During this period the Bagot Commission (1840's) and early civilization acts (1850's) also influenced the manner in which the numbered Treaties were presented, ratified, and subsequently interpreted.

in discussions and negotiations that would make clear their claims to their traditional territories and continued interests in practicing their cultural, economic and political ways of life, the Williams Treaties established quite the opposite. The Ontario and Canadian governments subsequently used the Williams Treaties to acquire huge tracts of land that settlers were already occupying, and Anishinaabeg rights to hunt, fish, and trap were terminated through the Basket Clause (Mowat, 2020). The Basket Clause restricted Michi Saagiig from hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering foods to reserve lands only. This resulted in even greater difficulty in continuing Anishinaabeg ways of life in the territory and led to further legal disputes that lasted another 95 years between Williams Treaties First Nations and the Canadian Government (Pind and Hoggarth, 2023; Manners, 2022). Finally, in 2018 a settlement was reached which included financial compensation, additions to reserve lands, and recognition of the Williams Treaties First Nations' right to hunt, fish, and trap in their territories regardless of reserve boundaries.

The settlement is not sufficient, the damage cannot be undone with money. Over the past century, the majority of the landscape has been changed immensely and has been broken up into thousands of plots of privately owned land, and the intergenerational loss of access to nutritious and culturally important foods, not to mention the economic losses are barely comprehendible. Beyond having to purchase back their own lands, a provision of this settlement, there remains little recourse in terms of regaining real access to the traditional land-base. It will take considerable time and collective efforts to restore colonial damages that have been done to the environment and Anishinaabe food systems in the territory and to reclaim some of the land base, not to mention the ongoing

compounding impacts on intergenerational well-being the loss of land and water access has had over the last one hundred years.

First Nations have responded to the 2018 settlement have been by purchasing back properties, or by exploring conservation and land trust opportunities that will aid in regaining access to important cultural sites as well as to engage communities in culturally important seasonal activities, like Mnoomin gathering. Compounding the impacts of the Indian Act and rapidly increasing Canadian settlement, in the time the Williams Treaties were made the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg saw a significant change to their diet because of the ever-limited access to traditional foods and purposeful dismantling of harvesting and gathering rights.

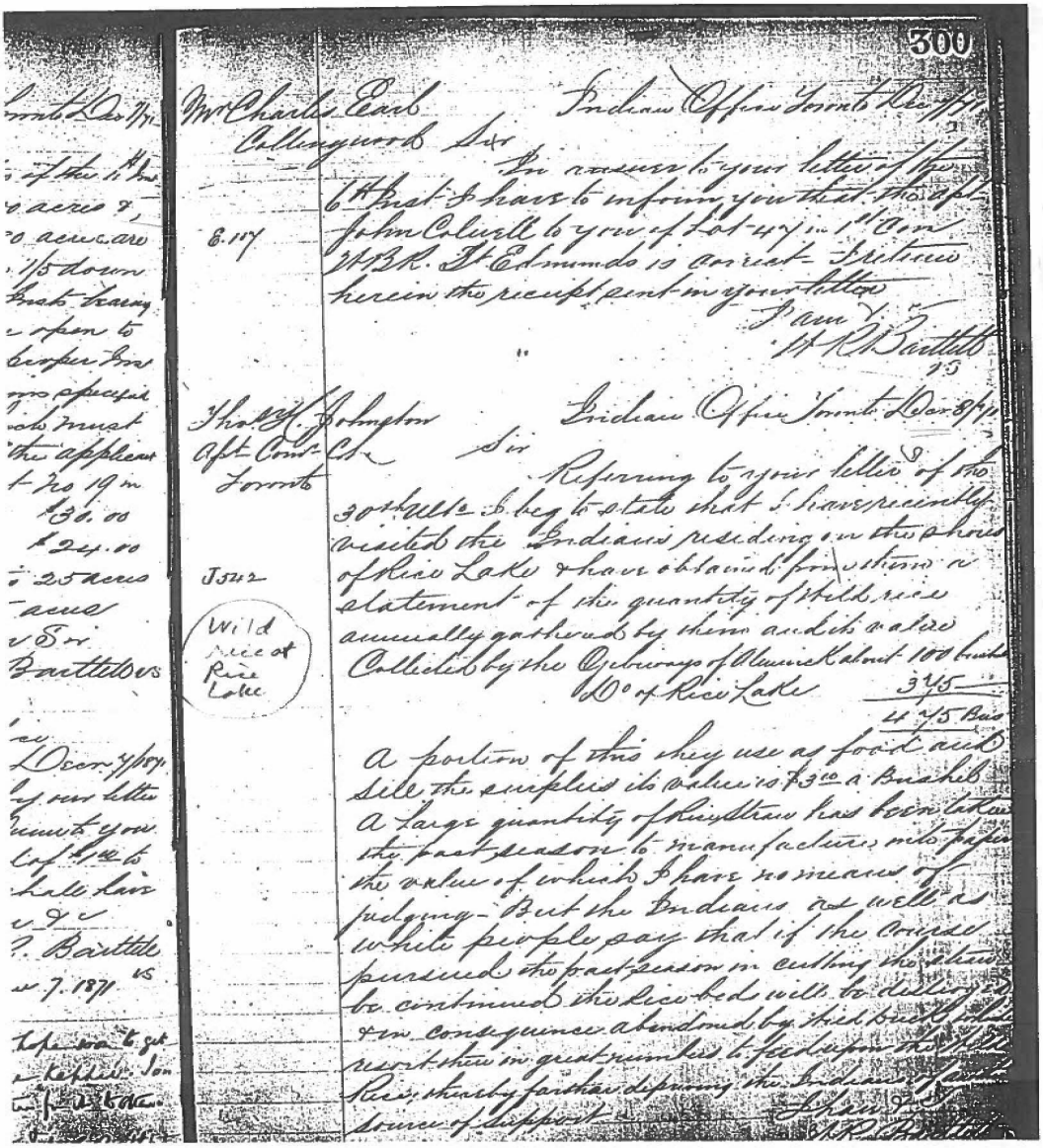
The Trent Severn Waterway

Only twelve short years after Treaty 20 was made, construction of the Trent Severn Waterway began in 1830. It was completed nearly 90 years later in 1920. Over the course of those decades, several petitions were made by Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg as well as by settler Canadians to the Canadian governments addressing the destruction of the shoreline, flooding being caused by the construction of the locks and dams and how this was not only impeding access to Mnoomin but, killing off the Mnoomin beds entirely.

The construction of the Trent Severn Waterway locks and dams is a major project underpinned by motivations to develop Canada into the state that it is today. The motivation by early settler governments to establish a colonial state layered atop of Michi Saagiig society has greatly changed the physical and cultural landscape in Michi Saagiig territory and continues to have significant negative environmental, cultural, and

ecological impacts on Indigenous well-being. A letter written by a Canadian settler resident in the describes the reduction of “rice” due to the flooding caused by the construction of the locks and dams, and the importance of the rice as food and surplus sales of rice by “the Ojibways of Alnwick” (the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe located on the south shore of Rice Lake).

Figure 2.3 Letter to the Canadian Federal Government



Note. Archived letter, 1871, Trent Severn Waterway Archives.

Despite both a long oral history and written records of Michi Saagiig territory notably being a thriving part of "the rice bowl" of Turtle Island (Cameron, n.d), there is significantly less Mnoomin in the territory since the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway. Compared to the large scale harvests of thousand of pounds a mere century ago, in 2017, Jeff Beaver and Rick Beaver harvested about 55 pounds of Mnoomin from a tributary of the lake, recording the harvest for first time since the early-mid 1900s (Macdonald, August 22, 2023). The construction of the locks and dams changed the watershed in the territory, flooding out the Mnoomin stands in Rice Lake as well as many other areas of the waterway, such as in the marshland around Curve Lake First Nation in what are now known as Pigeon Lake and Chemong Lake. When water levels are not too high, there are spots in Chemong Lake and Pigeon Lake where the Mnoomin is still able to grow and thrive.

Beyond the damages to the Mnoomin beds, several culturally and ecologically important species native to the territory have already been significantly reduced, terminated or are now extinct. There are restoration projects that aim to restore the Salmon to Lake Ontario, though the Salmon and Eel that once ran seasonally through the waterway are unable to survive the locks and Dams that make up the Trent Severn Waterway (Whetung 2019). Some species, such as the Omeemee (Passenger Pigeon) have been completely wiped out by settlers and are now extinct (Kimmerer, 2014). These are poignant examples of how the colonization of Indigenous lands parallel the colonization of Indigenous persons and ecologically important Indigenous species that are important to sustaining a good life. The termination of Salmon and Eel in what is now

known as the Trent Severn Waterway, and the settler inflicted extinction of Omemee are cautionary examples of how colonization equates genocide:

> The TSW has affected us and our relatives for hundreds of years. For many years the deeper waters altered the biodiversity of the shorelines, making it difficult for Mnoomin to grow. The movement of animal relatives has also been altered, with far fewer eels and bullfrogs in the territory. While we know these relatives through our oral histories and relational teachings, the physical absence of them in our territory today alters practices that bring to life particular relationships and thus alters contingent relational politics. When I asked Doug Williams about smoking fish, he told me that this was lost because in order to smoke fish, one needs fatty fish. The pickerel that people continue to fish is not fatty enough, and our eel and salmon relatives have long ceased making their way up our waters as a direct result of the dams (Hoggarth 2017; Simpson 2011). Despite disruptions to these relational systems through colonial projects such as the TSW, Nishnaabeg sustain relationships to our lands and waters and the nonhuman beings with which we share territory, even in the face of mass development of public dams and private property, because of a political orientation toward shorelines (Whetung, 2016).

In the early 1900s, the completion of the Trent-Severn Waterway caused flooding that nearly eliminating all the Mnoomin in the region (Williams, 2018; Simpson, 2014). Since then, the continued damages to the Mnoomin beds have been attributed to many factors including: over development of shoreline properties, run off from agricultural and residential fertilizers and pesticides, the introduction of carp (an invasive species of fish) for sport fishing, fluctuations in water levels that are controlled by Parks Canada through the TSW management of locks and dams throughout the watershed, the illegal removal of the rice beds by shoreline property owners, and boats and aircrafts that are used recreationally during summer months. The continued destruction to the Mnoomin beds

and pollution in the waterway denotes a gross failure by the Canadian government and Canadians who reside, work in, and visit this territory to uphold Treaty agreements, respect First Nations' sovereignty, and to respect the land, water, and fellow life forms in the territory that make up the whole of our ecosystem. There was no consultation during the planning and subsequent construction of the locks and dams that would eventually become the Trent Severn Waterway.

Impacts of Colonialism on Well-being

As described in earlier sections, the impacts of settler colonialism on well-being in Michi Saagiig Territory are well recorded, with clear examples of purposefully eroding the natural environment as well as Anishinaabeg cultural, political, economic, and legal ways of life in the interests and advancement of the Canadian State. I explored a significant amount of literature to better understand Indigenous food systems and the connections between colonialism and our food systems. In my search, I came across Trent University professor Haroon Akram-Lodhi's *The World Food System* podcast.[16] In episode two Akram-Lodhi discusses "the first food regime", explaining how the development of a colonial food system in North America has led to inequities in access to food - especially food that is culturally and ecologically significant. My thinking has also been influenced by current events as well. At this juncture in reflecting on and contextualizing colonialism in relation to well-being over the course of life and generations, I would be doing a grave injustice to this work, and to the network of Indigenous peoples globally, to not take pause and speak about the fact that around the world we are collectively witnessing daily images and videos shared by civilians and

[16] See: https://voiced.ca/project/the-world-food-system/page/2/

journalists on the ground in Palestine who are suffering a violent dispossession of their land, their traditional foods and clean water sources, forced dislocation from their Indigenous kinships, and worst of all they are witnessing the murders and brutal dismemberment of their friends, extended families, parents, and their children for the second time since the Nakba in 1948 (Sa'di, A. H., & Abu-Lughod, L. 2007). Following the 75 year long settler colonial occupation by the State of Israel, the conflict has again escalated to genocide of the Palestinian people in May 2023. Violent displacement and active genocide of Indigenous peoples and ways of life through targeted land thefts and resource exploitation are occurring in many parts of the world including the Congo (DRC), Ukraine, Puerto Rico, and Hawai'i (Polynesia), to name only a few. In the interview with Gidigaa Migizi-Bah that is further described in Chapters Four and Five, he spoke of how the question of Mnoomin in relation to well-being is one that is relatable to many of the issues that Indigenous peoples around the world are currently facing.

While settler colonialism in Canada has evolved into a more insidious and complex structure, acts of assimilation, neglect, and cultural genocide have been systemically normalized and woven into everyday lives. Colonial behaviours of the state combined with complacency or lack of baseline knowledge amongst Canadians of the colonial project and the colonies in which we live take up an inordinate, and frustrating, amount of space in this particular discussion of intergenerational wellness. In my time engaged with Mnoomin care taking, protection of the rice beds, and continued access to this important and nutritious food source, I see that most all of the impacts on Mnoomin (on the land, waters, and all lifeforms) can be attributed to expanding settler colonization of Michi Saagiig territory, and Turtle Island. This is why historical and contemporary

colonialism must be contextualized to fully understand the contemporary story of Mnoomin and the importance of Mnoomin to wellness in this territory. What has been described in the interviews, as well as in the oral and documented histories of settler colonialism in this place, tells a bigger story of deliberate and perpetual dismantling of the Anishinaabeg food system by the Province of Ontario and the State of Canada. It is therefore imperative to cultivate a deep understanding of systemic colonial violence through a lens of Indigenous concepts of wellness, starting with our relationships to land and water. Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe cultural and ecological relationships in this territory are so important to the well-being that protection of inherent rights to hunt, fish, gather, and maintain traplines were prominent in negotiations of the Williams Treaties. Whetung (2019) offers an integral example of a well-being centred treaty:

> The networking of relationships is further demonstrated through the Nishnaabeg request to keep the beaver huts in the 1818 treaty negotiations. While we could read this on the surface as a purely economic request for retaining access to a subsistence livelihood, the request carries deeper meaning for Nishnaabeg. In asking to keep the beaver huts, the Nishnaabeg effectively bring their pre-existing treaty relationship to the beavers into the new treaty relationship with settler newcomers. This shows the basic understanding among the Nishnaabeg that the territory is shared with multiple beings and that each group's thriving is dependent on the network of relationships. This approach to treating with other human and nonhuman nations had been used by the Nishnaabeg for generations. In bringing their relationship to the beavers into the treaty talks in 1818, the Nishnaabeg worked to connect legal spheres in order to sustain a relational politics wherein land can be co-inhabited. The one sentence about keeping the beaver huts carries the meaning of the great, networked reality that lives along the shorelines within Nishnaabegaki. But as Doug Williams said, the hope that the treaty negotiators would record these networked relationships between water–beavers–humans–land

> did not come to fruition, and "they surveyed them out." This bracketing out of Nishnaabeg place-based relationships has been a tool of settler colonialism," (p. 25-26).

The call to contextualize colonialism ought to include discussion of the "bracketing out" of Indigenous values and economic practices on Indigenous lands that Whetung (2019) describes. For both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous persons in Canada, difficulties accessing important cultural resources integral to well-being, such as land, water, and ecologically and culturally important foods can be directly linked to ongoing colonialism and the prevalence of capitalism. For example, Blinick (2012) underlines connections between historical and contemporary Canadian-Omàmawinini relations by calling attention to industrial developments as part of Canada's ongoing colonial project that have undermined the inherent and sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples and that is also threatening the environment that many fellow Canadians also call home.

Another way colonialism persists is conditioning mainstream perspectives through biased epistemologies and pedagogical approaches in institutional research (Simpson, 2004, Smith, L. T., 1999, Wilson, 2008). Institutional research may lean heavily on Indigenous participation while simultaneously undermining Indigenous world views and Indigenous persons who are pursuing their own research, utilizing Indigenous methodologies, and drawing from Indigenous intelligence, sciences, histories, and contemporary experiences that are otherwise not well represented or understood in western academic settings; "it is not enough to translate Indigenous land-based relations into western representations for the academy, or to simply discuss our differences" (Whetung, 2020, p. 12). Institutional research influences the development of

educational curriculums as well as community, provincial and federal policies that inform programming and funding. Given the larger body of literature that informs mainstream understandings of aging, health, and wellness, it is integral then to underline distinct connections to Indigenous land-based knowledges, ecological relationships and what this looks like in the contemporary colonial context to truly attend to Indigenous well-being.

In Canadian schools, colonial histories have long been portrayed at all levels of education as victorious or positive *advancements*, leaving out opposing narratives that would provide nuanced understandings of history and expose colonialism as violent, exploitative, and genocidal - and which negatively impacts every party to colonization. Frideres (2011) asserts that colonial narratives generally present a revisionist history in which it is "often forgotten to which Indigenous technologies, means of social organization, ecological knowledge, and direct assistance made that adaptation and settlement possible" (p. 6). There is no Canada without Indigenous Nations, Indigenous knowledges, and Indigenous food systems.

Michi Saagiig Elder and Knowledge Keeper Gidigaa Migizi-Bah described early interactions with the British as being positive and the Anishinaabeg receiving Europeans graciously (Gidiga Miigizi, 2018). Shortly after the first settlers arrived however, the Michi Saagiig saw a massive immigration to their territories in the 18th century. To this day, the territory remains one of the most densely settled regions of Canada with limited access to hunt, fish and gather food on "less than ten percent of the total landmass of the treaty area" (Whetung, 2016, p. 3). Whetung (2016) also points out that "Indigenous peoples are faced with recovering and redoing relationships to place in order to keep Indigenous representations alive in the face of a new landscape of surface

acknowledgements, and a rhetoric of "coexistence" that continues to place Indigenous and settler folks as neighbours on our separate plots, despite a geographically layered reality," (p. 45). Colonial nations layer themselves on top of Indigenous nations while also dismissing and marginalizing Indigenous presence, knowledges, and experiences: "Indigeneity is not because of our *colonized* relations, but because of our *place-based* relations… When we refuse the pre/postcolonial divide, we have to think about Indigenous knowledge creation *as well as* Indigenous knowledge continuance" (p. 10).

The need to better understand out shared histories is surely part and parcel of the call to unpack and contextualize historical and ongoing colonialism from Indigenous scholars as well as scholars in the field of Aging Studies. As described earlier, Llanque (2015) suggests that contextualizing colonization, particularly in aging research, is critical to understanding how intersecting experiences and compounding social influences in a colonial society impact wellness in older age. Wilson (2003) suggests that taking stock of conflicting world views that exist between Western and Indigenous thought is one way to do this. To better understand wellness over the course of life in any meaningful way it is, therefore, essential to examine the individual, intergenerational and collective impacts of colonization, and to be aware from whose perspective the story of colonialism is being told and interpreted. This thesis works towards integrating this context specific to place and with a focus on wellness informed by kinship to a culturally important Indigenous food.

Understanding of Indigenous Aging and Wellness

In Michi Saagiig Territory, part of the Great Lakes region of Turtle Island, Mnoomin is so important to the well-being of the environment and to Anishinaabeg such that learning about Mnoominkewin is an ideal way in which to deeply understand how Indigenous wellness throughout life is inter-sectionally impacted by settler colonialism. I reiterate throughout this chapter the importance of contextualizing colonialism in studies of aging as critical to broadening perspectives of wellness and how to sustain well-being in a good way throughout life. As described earlier in the quote from Anne Taylor, hunting, gathering, fishing, trapping and sustaining oneself from the land, makes one part of the land. Whetung, (2016) says "Indigenous world views emerge out of our landscapes and differ from western thought that operates along the Cartesian divide. Indigeneity is not because of our *colonized* relations, but because of our *place-based* relations. By this definition we can see that our colonized contexts expose our indigeneity but do not create it," Without this context there will remain a huge gap in understandings of well-being, especially in relation to place. That being so, Indigenous knowledges, theories, sciences, and experiences are essential to the disciplinary study of aging and wellness.

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation report in 2015, "reconciliation" has become a buzzword for politicians, corporations, organizations and individuals. Many of us are now outfitted with Orange Shirts every September 30th and a number of locally organized events take place across the country, yet the majority of Canadians remain in the dark about the colonial foundation from which Canada was formed, our shared histories, and how ongoing colonialism affects contemporary life. There has been extensive damage to the wetlands, lakes, and rivers, to the aquatic life, mammals and to

the food system in this place. As described in chapters four and five, kinship between the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and Mnoomin and the practise of Mnoominkewin have been continuous in the territory, albeit to a lesser extent than historically. However, as you will read the words of Mnoomin harvesters in the next chapters that it is easy to see the work that is being done to restore Mnoomin beds and community relations in the territory is providing a renewed sense of optimism and sense of well-being.

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the local history and provided an overview of the colonial damages that have been done to Michi Saagiig territory, through the lens and focus on intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin. This chapter further underlines the importance of contextualizing colonialism in order to better understand well-being in Aging Studies. Addressing the relationship between colonialism and wellness is pertinent to understanding collective wellness in Michi Saagiig Territory and, as a community-based case study, this thesis may also serve to inform understandings of well-being throughout the stages of life and of intergenerational well-being in other places. Forming a foundational understanding of the impacts of colonialism is critical to Aging Studies. The call by researchers and scholars in the field of aging, alongside the stories, experiences, and knowledges of Mnoomin harvesters that are shared in this thesis, demonstrates a possibility for a deeper understanding of Indigenous wellness throughout life, and perhaps to meaningfully contribute to bridging the fields of Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies towards an emerging field of Indigenous Aging Studies. In the next chapter, I describe the methodologies and theories applied to this thesis.

Chapter Three: Methodologies

This chapter outlines the methodologies that I have utilized to frame my approach to this MA thesis. The chapter also describes the many considerations of place-based context and protocols that went into the particular methods employed to serve the research objectives. This includes consideration of the intersections between Mnoominkewin (all processes related to Mnoomin gathering, the art of wild ricing), Mnoomin gathering, intergenerational relationships and well-being in older age. In the contemporary context, Mnoomin gathering is a notable site that brings peoples across Anishinaabeg, Canadian, and Indigenous persons of all ages together every year. This project, as well as its design, has been trans-disciplinary from the beginning; a co-creation involving community, individual and collective imaginings, and the Mnoomin. The stories, experiences, and knowledges shared by the community of Mnoomin Harvesters in the chapters that follow are based in centuries of physical and spiritual engagement with Aki (Land), Nibi (Water), and Mnoomin, in this place. Centring these stories and kinship to Mnoomin that highlight the interdependence of cultural and ecological connections in this territory, forms the basis of this thesis project.

Study Origins

I got into a canoe for the first time in the Fall of 2013 when I attended a Black Duck Wild Rice Community Harvesting Day at Little Bald Lake, and I have been going ricing or assisting with local harvests in some capacity every year since. I think my curiosity about Mnoomin and interest to keep learning must have been obvious! After that year, I began making friends in the community and I started to notice many of them

were Mnoomin harvesters! Despite my late introduction to Mnoomin, my children have had the sweet privilege to be growing up participating in Mnoomin gathering and harvesting almost every year of their lives. Mnoominkewin has become central to our home and lives, we look forward to harvest season and time with our friends in the community every year!

I have been raising my children, studying, and working in Michi Saagiig territory for 13 years. During this time my children and I have learned from and participated in Mnoomin gathering with Michi Saagiig and Omàmiwininì Mnoomin harvesters in Michi Saagiig Territory and in Omàmiwininì at Ardoch First Nation. Michi Saagiig Mnoomin harvesters, particularly from Alderville First Nation, Omàmiwininì in Ardoch have a long history of care taking and harvesting from the Mnoomin beds in Mud Land and the Mississippi River at Ardoch. I have also been learning Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg oral histories and cultural protocols by spending time gathering Mnoomin, by participating in advocacy for the restoration and protections of Mnoomin and, when I am invited, in ceremony as well. I assist with reseeding and harvesting annually and have participated in two local grassroots initiatives co-writing the declaration for the Protecting Anishinaabe Manoomin with the grassroots group Community Voices for Manoomin and serving on the organizing committee for the annual Mnoominkewin Gathering in Curve Lake First Nation that began in 2020[17]. I also gained further insights of the impacts on Mnoomin in this territory working as a graduate student researcher at the Trent Severn Waterway in 2016-2017. Through my graduate coursework, I earned a specialization in Aging Studies, and while completing my coursework I became aware of the gap in knowledge of

[17] https://www.mnoominkewin.com/2020

colonialism in Aging Studies. As I continued on this path, I began to make bigger connections to the importance of Mnoomin to intergenerational well-being, and with encouragement from local Knowledge Holders and becoming aware of their interest for more research and support on Mnoomin this project emerged.

When I first began graduate school, I intended to follow the standard approach and timeline as set out by the university; complete coursework, research a topic of interest, do a preliminary literature review, formalize a thesis project, submit to ethics, and complete a thesis. And, in fact, I achieved nearly all of these academic milestones in less than two years, minus the completion of this thesis research. This written work is arriving six years later, the arrival of my third child, a house move, the Covid-19 pandemic, the deaths of several family members and friends, some big life growing pains, and *a lot* more experience with Mnoomin. I was not ready to produce this work, I had family responsibilities, and most of all I needed more time to build relationships in this place, in community, and with myself.

In *Dancing on Our Turtles Back*, Leanne Simpson (2011) describes the Seven Fires of Creation as connected to Anishinaabeg pedagogy, which resonates with my experience and approach to this thesis:

> By inserting ourselves into these stories, we assume responsibilities - responsibilities that are not necessarily bestowed upon us by the collective, but that we take on according to our own gifts, abilities and affiliations. Nishnaabeg theory has to be learned in the context of our personal lives, in an emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual way (p. 41).

When I first began to transcribe and review the interviews I was given for this project, and then to write formally about my participation at community harvests, I realized very

quickly that *I needed a lot more time* to be physically and spiritually involved in this work before I could speak on it in any meaningful way. I needed more time to deepen my own relationship to this place and to the Mnoomin. This was no linear process. In this time I also learned something so cool about the Mnoomin, that seeds only fall off the plant only when they are ready and can lay dormant on the floor of the lake, river, or marsh *for years* until the conditions for germinating and growing are just right…

Community Call for More Support and Research on Mnoomin

This project is a response to the expressed desires from Michi Saagiig Mnoomin harvesters for more academic support and research on Mnoomin that would promote wellness and well-being among Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and broader communities in Michi Saagiig Territory. A letter of support for this project was provided by Black Duck Wild Rice for submission with my project proposal to Trent University's Research Ethics Board. I came to be doing this project mostly on account of my time in the Mnoomin beds and attending community harvesting days that later led to getting to know, learn from, and work alongside local Mnoomin harvesters. Shortly thereafter, as I mentioned above, I also assisted with community initiatives to educate about and protect the Mnoomin beds in the territory. I also have earlier life experiences and find purpose in social justice work which have been motivating factors in pursuing this work as well. How and why I set out to do this thesis project is based in relationship.

I went ricing for the first time in 2013 when I attended a Black Duck community harvesting day. I returned to their annual community harvest days for a couple more years and in 2015 I started to volunteer more regularly at Mnoomin harvests and helping at the

Black Duck factory at Curve Lake First Nation. Over time I began studying Mnoomin more seriously with support from Knowledge Holders James Whetung and his daughter, Daemin Whetung. Our families have grown to be very good friends since then especially because Daemin and I have a pile of kids between us that are close in age and who like to play together while we chop wood, or pitch rows of Mnoomin to dry it and get the bugs out! The kids like to help sometimes too! My kids and I have also spent some years learning from and assisting harvesting and processing Mnoomin with Omàmiwininì families in Ardoch who I met in 2014 at Trent University. In harvest season of 2015, they invited my family to Ardoch, and we had the chance to meet Elder Harold Perry-Bah and to go out ricing with them on Mud Lake. The same year I got to go ricing with the graduate student class on Mitchell Lake led by Elders Gidigaa-Migizi-Bah and Jeff Beaver and Course Instructor Paula Anderson. I was influenced early on in my learning by the work of community harvesters and Trent faculty, like Paula Anderson, a long time Mnoomin researcher, who I had met when she was the Teaching Assistant for a class that I took with Professor Dan Longboat on Indigenous Food Systems. At the same event, I also met Mnoomin harvester and Knowledge Holder Timothy Smoke who has also since become a friend and who has given an interview for this project. A little earlier that year I met Knowledge Holder Caleb Musgrave from Hiawatha First Nation when I wondered into a talk he gave about Mnoomin harvesting in the Gathering Space at Trent University in the Spring. In 2016 during my term researching at the Trent Severn Waterway, I again met Elder Jeff Beaver along with Knowledge Holder Dave Mowat, who were both very supportive of my interest and continued learning about Mnoomin. In the summer of 2016, when it was reported that several acres of Mnoomin on Pigeon Lake were damaged and

removed by the Federal Government and shoreline property owners, several community members from all over the territory came together to organize into an allied group of culturally diverse folks to work together to support the protection of the Mnoomin beds. From this group I met many other Mnoomin harvesters, learners, community supports, and educators whom I have learned a great deal from as well.

This is really a rough timeline of events, there are of course many things that happened in between though, I offer highlights of my (recent) journey and how I came to connect with the Mnoomin and communities here to better explain the premise for this project. I followed my curiosity and interest in learning about this place by spending time on the land, and have been so fortunate to connect with others who recognized this and were welcoming to me and my children. I think it is also important to highlight the offerings by Mnoomin harvesters the interconnections between Mnoomin harvesters and knowledge holders in the territory, and the close connections and influences that surrounding communities have to Trent University. These connections and experiences form the basis for how I began to know the Mnoomin, as well as for how this project began and has been carried out. All of the interviews for this thesis came about through the inter-web of community, family, and friend connections between Mnoomin harvesters. My children and I have learned something about Mnoominikewin from all of them, and we are always grateful for our time together.

I have good memories of my early introductions to Mnoomin and to Mnoomin harvesters. I remember the first time I visited Ardoch First Nation to gather Mnoomin, some to reseeds and help restore the smaller beds in Mud Lake and the Mississippi River, some to process into food later on. They shared their stories of forever kinship to

Mnoomin, and how it had saved their community. I remembered hearing James Whetung and some others tell similar stories at the first community harvest days I attended. During my time in their rice beds, I have seen how they continue to honour their sacred responsibilities as Mnoomin caretakers, especially in how openly they teach others to do the same. I came to learn about *The Rice Wars*, that I wrote about in Chapter two, and heard James Whetung speak about when he went to help protect the rice beds at Ardoch, that he had learned to process Mnoomin from their Elders and Harvesters and how this experience had influenced him to return to Mnoominkewin in Curve Lake like he recalled his older relatives and ancestors had done. There are a lot of steps to gathering and processing the Mnoomin, and over the years I have learned both traditional and contemporary methods and tools for gathering and processing Mnoomin. That these lines of community kinships and connections have been kept open has so important to my learning about Mnoomin.

There are two stories I *really love to tell* about how this thesis project was more personally inspired, not only because they are hilarious! But also because it goes to show how much on the land and relational learning is needed to truly understand how to engage methodologically meaningfully, and getting to better know ourselves through the many worlds around us! One is of when I went to meet with Jeff Beaver near Herkimer Point in Hiawatha, early one rainy morning, to ask him more about "wild rice".

To back up a bit to give a little more context than I have above, I had met Jeff along with his colleague Knowledge Holder and (former) Chief Dave Mowat, earlier that summer of 2016 in Peterborough while working as a research assistant for the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW). They served as Williams Treaties First Nations consultants and

I was invited to tag along with them by the TSW environmental assessment unit that day to visit private shoreline properties at Pigeon Lake where permit requests had been made to remove Mnoomin from the water along shorelines, and around docks. There was also one permit request to cut huge channels of the Mnoomin beds for boat passage, which to my knowledge was denied. During my time at the TSW, one of the things I had been tasked with was to digitally archive "the wild rice files". While doing so, I came across several documents and letters dating to the late 1880s that described the depletion of the rice beds, and harm to the Anishinaabeg food system and livelihood for the Ojibwe peoples derived from annual rice harvests, that was caused by the construction of the TSW locks and Dams (see Figure 2.3 in Chapter Two). It might have been hard to believe the assault on the Mnoomin beds has persisted for well over a century, except that in my years learning to canoe, to rice, to care for the Mnoomin, and studying the history, I have now witnessed extensive damages to the waterway and to the Mnoomin beds along with a lack of support from governing bodies for their protection and restoration, ongoing since early settlement began in the 1800s.

Near the end of that day visiting the shoreline properties, I asked Jeff Beaver if he would be willing to talk more with me about the Mnoomin, and he welcomed the conversation. I followed up with an email and we set plans to meet at Hiawatha First Nation for a visit to Herkimer Point the following week. In his response, Jeff noted, in a single sentence, where to meet, the time, that it was forecast to rain on that day, and to "wear boots". Side story - Jeff grew up in Alderville First Nation and has been working on the land for a very long time, and I grew up about 138km south of Alderville, in the

City of Mississauga.[18] Mississauga was still mostly forest and farm fields when I was growing up and I spent my fair share of childhood running and playing barefoot through the Mississauga woodlands and along the Missinnhe (the Credit River),[19] from Meadowvale to the lakeshore in Port Credit. But, by the time I was born, Mississauga was very much an established suburban place, covered by a lot of cement and I spent as much time hacking around the neighbourhood, doing cartwheels on perfectly mowed lawns, living on hose water for summers on end, and admiring the graffiti under the bridges, at least until the streetlights came on. Where my Grandfather and Uncles told me they used to hunt deer, rabbit, and turkey, I have only ever known as the city centre where Square One, the city's biggest shopping mall, City Hall and all kinds of condo buildings are located. Needless to say, mine and Jeff's ideas of "boots" were quite different! I met Jeff just outside the reserve, and just a short walk into the marsh I found myself knee-deep in the creek, rubber *ankle* boots full of water, helping to break apart a beaver dam! While we worked, I asked about "wild rice", and we swapped stories about our families and how we came the doing the work we were doing. Jeff eventually handed me a "coyote scented" rag and told me to tie it to a sapling on the opposite side of the creek. By the end of the conversation he simply said that more research was needed on Mnoomin and I should try for it. I returned to the research office at Trent covered head to toe in mud, and probably smelling a little like a coyote. Noticing this and laughing a little, my thesis supervisor asked how it went? Smiling, I let him know it went very well!

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[18] The City of Mississauga is Ojibwe Anishinaabeg territory historically covered by Treaty 13A (1805), Treaty 19 (1818), the Credit Treaties 22 and 23 (1820). See History of Mississauga: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://www5.mississauga.ca/rec&parks/websites/museums/pdfs/history_of_mississauga.pdf

[19] https://www.georgetownon.ca/how-credit-river-in-ontario-got-its-name

Turns out I am not all that bad at dismantling a beaver dam. That summer Jeff let me tag along with he and others to learn about and help with some of their work monitoring the beds, measuring water levels, and harvesting. Jeff also gave a recorded interview for this project in 2017.

This second story is shorter and brings me full circle to the beginning of my Mnoomin journey. Just before I proposed this project, I was paddling on Chemong Lake with Daemin Whetung in a rice bed near Curve Lake. We were chatting about my Aging Studies course and my search for a project that could tie in the theme of aging. For those who haven't been in a Mnoomin bed, the plants can grow 4–6 feet above the water, so when you're sitting in a *jiimaan* (canoe), all you see is Mnoomin in every direction. If you're flexible, you might just catch a glimpse of others in the canoe. Then, from across the water, we heard James call out, "If you want to know more about growing old and being well, you should study wild rice!" We all laughed—it felt as if the plants themselves had spoken.

That is, essentially, how this thesis came to beThere have been so many funny and meaningful moments along the way—getting to know Mnoomin harvesters, spending time in the rice beds, working on the land and water, and at the computer screen. These experiences have taught me much more than just how to harvest and process Mnoomin. There has been laughter, a bit of frustration, and plenty of mistakes! Reflecting on the past decade, I deeply value the relationships and reciprocity that have shaped this journey.

Study Design

The table below lays out the research design and shows the links between the conceptual frameworks, research objective, and methods that were used to organize this thesis.

Table 3.1 Study Design

Research Question	How is Mnoomin gathering important to intergenerational relationships and health in older age?				
Conceptual Framework	Aging and intergenerational wellness		Life Course Theory and Anishinaabe Four Hills of Life	Parallels between wellbeing and colonialism	Call to contextualize colonialism in Aging Studies
Research Objectives	Learn about the relationships that occur during annual Mnoomin gatherings	Identify Mnoomin relationships and events that bring community, youth, and Elders together	Learn about and describe how access to Mnoomin impacts wellbeing over life and inter-generationally	Examine how community relationships to Mnoomin have changed or developed over time	How to best support intergenerational relationship building that occurs during Mnoomin harvesting
Methodological Approaches	Land-based learning to Community-based Case Study of annual Mnoomin Gathering in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg Territory		Conjoining Anishinaabeg methodologies with Qualitative Methodologies in Aging Studies		
Methods	Participatory Observation and Learning and Indigenous Land Based Learning	Semi-structured interviews	Story Telling and Oral Teachings	Literature and Archival Document Review	Talking Circles (focus groups) proposed but not conducted due to pandemic and subsequent leave to care for my children

Methodological Approach

Community-Based Case Study

Land-based pedagogy is an important way in which Elders and Knowledge Holders pass important cultural and traditional knowledge to younger generations (Bell, 2013; Simpson, 2011). This project took a community-based approach that features a case study of Mnoomin harvesters and caretakers who reside in Peterborough County, Ontario within Michi Saagiig territory. This thesis was carried out with the support of Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabe Mnoomin Knowledge Holders along with fellow urban Indigenous harvesters who live in Michi Saagiig territory including Nogojiwanong (Peterborough), Curve Lake First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Selwyn Township and Douro-Dummer Township.

Case studies are an effective way to understand how the specific characteristics of one group relate to a larger group, for example, how communities interact with big organizations, or how the issues of experiences of one group may represent or serve as analogy for broader issues or experiences in society (Yin, 2011). This case study explores how intergenerational relationships relate to Anishinaabe Mnoomin and how access to this culturally significant food reflects various aspects of well-being throughout a person's life and across generations, revealing how culturally important ecological relationships and the effects of colonialism intersect to influence well-being over time. Mnoomin is known to be a culturally significant food and a keystone species in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest ecosystem. At the site of Mnoomin gathering there is evidence that Anishinaabeg and environmental wellness are intertwined.

Conjoining Anishinaabeg and Qualitative Methodologies in Aging Studies

When I was considering methodological approach to this project, I thought about the similarities and differences between Western and Indigenous epistemologies. I wondered if I was making the right choice in conjoining Western thought and philosophies with Indigenous thought and philosophies for this project. But, when I thought practically about how the community of Mnoomin harvesters operate on the ground, I realized they are already employing combinations of knowledges and methods in order to navigate, or straddle, both Indigenous ways as well as the settler colonial ways in everyday life. I also wondered about global Indigenous knowledges lost when a people are colonized, or when a peoples become the colonizer? I think that in order to lack conscience in colonizing another, one must have become displaced from, abandoned, or forgotten, ones 'own Indigenous roots. But can Indigenous Knowledge be reclaimed? Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains that in Indigenous research, community involvement and collective input are crucial. In this foundational text, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith posits that Indigenous knowledge depends on the agreement of the community and the wisdom of Elders to be validated and shared, while Western research typically relies on teamwork and peer review. Michi Saagiig scholar Leanne Simpson has posited that Indigenous knowledges have a history of being "cherry picked" by Western academic researchers, institutions, and government organizations in the attempt to make sense of issues and to come up with solutions that fit a Western paradigm or agenda (Simpson, 2004).

While I optimistically put forward this project, that draws from elements of both North American Indigenous and North American Western Colonial theories and

methodologies, wondering about the possibilities for conjoining Anishinaabeg knowledges with Canadian knowledges, I also understand the need to be thoughtful and careful in doing so. Fortunately, I am a curious academic with a habit of ignoring silos of disciplinary knowledges. Instead, I am preoccupied with relational connections, stories, and experiences, and how these reveal patterns and practical insights about the world - and I also think we live in a time where we need many ways of thinking and knowing in order to attend to collective well-being. Still, I remain aware that combining Anishinaabe and Western institutional methods requires careful thought about how Indigenous knowledge and research goals align with or differ from Canadian academic goals. Ultimately, the question is, to what extent will this approach support the community by the end of the project?

Reflections on Research and Methodologies

To understand and articulate the importance of Mnoomin gathering to wellness through an aging lens, more than any of the academic work I have done for this graduate project, it has been the years of building my own relationship to Mnoomin and to community harvesters that has truly taught me the importance of Mnoomin to well-being. It took some time to unravel a good approach to this project. I have relied on a combination of Aging Studies literature and Critical Indigenous Methodologies, in combination with local oral histories and knowledges in an attempt to combine Anishinaabeg methodologies with Western academic methodologies by drawing from Life Course Theory and the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life Theory.

As I have continued to examine my methodological and conceptual framework, especially while writing this report, I realize that early on I lacked the experience to

articulate the connections I was making and have inadvertently taken an adaptive research approach in coming to better know how to bring Anishinaabeg methodology into conversation with qualitative institutional academic methodologies. In the book Dancing on Our Turtle's Back, Simpson (2011) retells the story of Muskrat diving down for a tiny bit of earth to remake the world. The methodological lesson in this story is that, like Muskrat I searched all throughout the process of this research, diving deeper and deeper, to find this methodology by developing a relationship to this work through practice, like Muskrat does through their dive down into the dark recesses of the water to bring up that little bit of earth.

Held (2019) describes the growing body of literature that is concerned with combining Western and Indigenous methodologies as one that requires "a new ethical space to advance decolonization, ostensibly of research, methodologies, and academia, but generally of society and nations" (p. 2-3). Ultimately, relationship was fundamental to the methodological approach in the context of this thesis project. *In Research is Ceremony* author Shawn Wilson explains that *methodology* asks, "how do I find out more about this reality?" Wilson (2008) also elaborates on the responsibility, as storyteller rather than merely an objective researcher, of communicating one's own life experiences into the telling and dissemination of community-based work that is conducted by or with Indigenous persons and that utilizes an Indigenous research paradigm:

> Indigenous people in Canada recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling. They also recognize that listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and thus adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life, (Wilson, 2008, p.60).

Links in knowledge must be made by *doing* work that draws together knowledges and methodologies. In the process of writing this report, my thesis committee advisor Dr. Paula Sherman pointed out to me that I may have felt limited methodologically, and more connected to the land-based part of this work, because Indigenous theory and practice are intertwined and cannot be separated or else the essence of connections to land and spirituality are weakened. It has been fundamental to this project to prioritize relationships and help to bridge build between bodies of knowledge, with a special focus in this thesis of the relationship between Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies, but to also highlight the relationships that exist, or could exist, between Michi Saagiig, Mnoomin, and to all Canadians. Mnoomin harvesters offer a great deal of practical solutions to restoring intergenerational wellness among Michi Saagiig in the territory, but also to increase wellness across communities by starting with concern and care for the well-being of the Land, Water, and Mnoomin beds.

Bridging Interdisciplinary Knowledges

Through the unraveling of this thesis project, I have worked to bring together bodies of knowledges as well as to bring together many stories of intergenerational Mnoomin kinship. In *Di-bayn-di-zi-win To Own Ourselves* (Fontaine & McCaskill, 2022), Don McCaskill talks about straddling two worlds in academia; one with Western views and one where the Indigenous Studies department had to prove intellectually rigorous while also trying "to fit in, adhere to the rules of the institution, and be normal, and on the other, to address the cultural, political, and community issues of Anishinaabeg in a way that reflected the social, linguistic, and pedagogical principles, protocols and

values of Anishinaabe culture and involvement in Anishinaabe communities," (p. 24). Through these lessons and experiences from earlier scholars, I too hope to have managed to also locate some common ground between Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies. Both fields of study are rich with interdisciplinary thought and pedagogical approaches that emphasize holistic understanding and the integration of diverse perspectives. Indigenous studies is well understood to be founded upon inter-disciplinary knowledges (read Smith, 1999, Wilson 2008, Fontaine and McCaskill 2022), and in the studies of Aging multi-disciplinary concepts and frameworks are often utilized (for example see Katz, 2014; Colibaba, McCrillis, & Skinner, 2020; and Skinner, Andrews, Cutchin, 2018). Through their work with Indigenous persons and communities, some Aging studies scholars have also engaged with Indigenous knowledges in ways that challenge mainstream views of aging, for instance by considering intersectional ways in which identity, culture, age, gender, queerness, neurodivergence, economic position, and ability interact to inform wellness in the context of a colonial society (a few examples are Grande, 2018; Llanque, 2015; and Chazan, 2020).

One Indigenous theory of conjoining knowledges is Mi'kmaq Etuaptmunk, which translates in English to Two Eyed Seeing (Thomas, 2016; and Marshall, 2020). Etuaptmunk, advanced in Western academia by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall, is one methodological approach to bridging Indigenous and Western knowledges and approaches to research. Though this theory could surely also be applied to the conjoining of any two or more bodies of knowledge. Similarly to Mi'kmaq Etuaptmunk, this project brings together local Anishinaabeg methods of community-based learning and research with qualitative social science methods. This work emerged from land-based learning and

storytelling with Knowledge Holders and Mnoomin harvesters, but methodological approaches and tools such as participatory observation and recorded interviews have also been used to support the organization and textual transformation[20] of local knowledges. As a graduate student I have been learning about methodological approaches in course work and literature review, but I could not have really understood the impacts of colonialism in relation to Mnoomin and well-being in this territory without real world experiences. Without being physically and spiritually involved in Mnoomin gathering and community work, I could not have fully understood the significance of Mnoomin to well-being in this territory. Additionally, I could not have effectively presented the importance of Mnoomin to well-being without some training in both Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies.

Having undertaken this project as an advocate of Anishinaabeg rights to stewardship of the Mnoomin beds in Ontario, I absolutely agree with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) sentiments that "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (p. 5). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) further asserts that community action projects and Indigenous research centers and academic programs are two distinct pathways for which "an Indigenous research agenda is being advanced" (p. 125). Rather than trying to fit Indigenous experiences into Western frameworks, Llanque (2015) suggests that incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the research process helps to break down colonial barriers and allows participants to influence recommendations for policy changes

[20] "Textual transformation" is one of six "social forces" that David Newhouse coined to describe contemporary Indigenous resurgence and resistance to ongoing colonization/decolonization.

or future research that affect their own lives. The rigour of Indigenous intelligence is much needed to achieve this (Fontaine & McCaskill 2022; Wilson 2008). An Indigenous wellness approach, presented as part of an emerging field of Indigenous Aging Studies, may also be an important contribution to reconciliation in Canada?[21]

Ethics

This project was granted ethics approval by the Trent University Research Ethics Board (See Appendix A for the REB Approval Letter). The REB application process was instrumental in clarifying and refining the responsibility of respect and reciprocity that I have to those most impacted by this research. One way I have worked to ensure that this thesis adheres to good ethics is by creating a community-based project that honours and upholds the values and goals expressed by the Mnoomin harvesters I have engaged with. This approach includes distinctive representation, building from existing community relationships that preceded this work, and finding a way to engage with this research project in ways that I could reasonably continue beyond the completion of this thesis. Robyn Rowe (Health Data Research Network ICES Maui Hudson), whose presentation at the 2022 virtual conference, *Indigenous Research Ethics in a Digital World: Building a Foundation for Indigenous Data Sovereignty*, asserted the implementation of recommendations stemming from a project should reasonably include the researcher in the continuation of the work beyond academic research. While I generally agree with this view and enjoy the privilege of doing community research, where I will likely live for the rest of my life, there are certainly scenarios in which one may not be able to stay in the place where they have studied or conducted community research. For example, someone

[21] For example, Newhouse, (2016); Newhouse & Long, (2016)

who travels far from their home territory or community with the objective of learning new skills and exchanging knowledges through their studies or research from which they may then bring back to the benefit of their home community is crucial to broader wellness, as well as to growing bodies of scholarship. That being so, if there is anything I have learned from this thesis it is that reciprocal relationship, especially through research, is integral to well-being. One example such reciprocity could continue even where a researcher is not staying in place, is one where a student or researcher fosters relationships that may link two or more communities in a unique and reciprocal way, likened to cultural exchange rather than mining or appropriation. On the other hand, gathering and using cultural information for personal gain without reciprocation has been problematic especially with regards to research with Indigenous persons, as described in Chapter two. Such cherry picking or mining information for personal gain without clear and reciprocal output contributes to further marginalizing Indigenous knowledges. Academic work that is community-based and carried out the way the people and the place involved are asking is therefore critical to establishing ethical and well-informed scholarship.

As part of my academic contributions through this project, I have reflected on how local Michi Saagiig and Omàmìwininì Anishinaabeg land-based methodologies can be integrated ethically with qualitative Western research methods in a way that is both respectful and supportive of Mnoomin and Mnoomin gatherers in this territory. To this end, I have put into service the opportunities that I have had as a graduate student to access institutional academic supports and expertise of my professors, thesis supervisor

and committee to attend to expressed community interests for more research and supports for Mnoomin and Mnoomin Harvesters in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Territory.

Reciprocity

This project was formed partly because of my involvement in community Mnoomin activities, and because Mnoomin harvesters have graciously taught me and my children about Mnoominkewin. This project involved listening to and learning from the cultural knowledges, experiences, expertise, and family stories that were shared by community Mnoomin Knowledge Holders and harvesters. As I became aware, I followed common local protocols that I have been taught by Michi Saagiig and Ardoch Algonquin Anishinaabeg Knowledge Holders and Indigenous scholars, Elders and Professors at Trent University to carry out this work.

When applying to the Trent University Research Ethics Board to carry out this project, I also reviewed the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2018), the Aboriginal Education Council Terms of Reference (nd.), and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) Calls to Action (2015). I also reviewed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008) which was officially adopted by Canada in 2016.

As part of this thesis research project, I conducted 11 interviews in total. To initiate plans for interviews, I got in touch with Mnoomin Harvesters whom I was already acquainted through my own involvement in community and annual harvesting either in person, by email, or through social media messaging to open discussion about interviews for this thesis. When I was able, I offered semaa (tobacco)[22] when I first asked, but in

[22] It is customary to offer Tobacco when you would like to ask someone for help or knowledge

some instances, this was not possible, especially during the COVID-19 lock downs. In a few cases, interviews were scheduled and I offered semaa at the start of the interview to formally ask for the interview. In total I offered semaa to 10 local Mnoomin Harvesters in request for recorded interviews and everyone accepted. I was also invited to do an 11th interview with the parent of one interview contributor.

We planned interviews at locations that were most accessible to everyone, at the homes of harvesters around the territory, on campus at Trent, in a coffee shop in downtown Peterborough. Interview contributors were incredibly thoughtful and accommodating towards me as well. I was pregnant and gave birth for part of the time that I was working on this project and a great deal of respect for my comfort and accessibility was given to me. Shortly after, the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns began, and as a primary caregiver to my family, my studies were stalled for more than a year. After two leaves of absence, it took me quite a while to get back on track. Without accommodations from Mnoomin harvesters who provided interviews, my supervisor, committee member, and Trent graduate studies, I would not have been able to complete this project.

Methods

This project has been greatly informed by the restoration projects implemented by Mnoomin Knowledge Holder Jeff Beaver, by the grassroots work of Black Duck Wild Rice and, by the stewardship by Ardoch Algonquin First Nation for Mnoomin beds at Ardoch. As described earlier in this chapter, this project has been guided by local Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg intelligence and epistemologies through land-based, or participatory learning to gather Mnoomin, participate in community Mnoomin harvesting

events, a broad review of local historical literature and archives, learning about grassroots organizational work, and conducting interviews with community members. This thesis conjoins Indigenous and Western methodologies, theories, and research tools to bring interdisciplinary knowledges[23] of intergenerational well-being into conversation (refer to Table 3.1).

Paddling through a Mnoomin Bed: Land-Based Learning

In Fontaine and McCaskill (2022), McCaskill discusses the development of the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies (formerly Native Studies, and before that Indian and Eskimo Studies) at Trent University. As the first department of Indigenous Studies, the authors share some of the difficulties the department faced as "some Western Academics could not make sense of Anishinaabe ways of doing and knowing and did not accept that the department could have academic rigor," (p. 9). McCaskill recalls department Chair, Cree-Métis Dr. Joe Couture advancing the understanding at Trent University that "Anishinaabe learning comes about through "doing it" before reflection or analysis and is best acquired through oral traditions and ceremonies" (p. 5). I agree. My learning about Anishinaabe culture have come almost entirely from participating in community Mnoomin harvesting and the research methods I utilized for this project reflect as much.

One objective of this project has been to share my learning about earlier research and ongoing ecological restoration projects as a supportive contribution to the continuity of the important relationship with Mnoomin in the territory. I had been participating in

[23] Primarily Indigenous Studies and Aging Studies, but also drawing from Indigenous Environmental Sciences, as well as Geographical and Gerontological studies.

Mnoomin gathering and learning about Mnoomin for about three years before I began this thesis research project. In my role as a community participant, helper, and friend, I also took on the role of "graduate student researcher" to carry out this project and contribute to Mnoomin work in the community. Beyond the need to contextualize the impacts of colonialism in Indigenous Aging studies, as described in chapter two, there is also very little scholarship or work done in the field of Aging Studies that has engaged with Indigenous land-based research. Though, I was already "in the field" when I learned there was as desire and need for more academic research related to Mnoomin, and particularly of the intergenerational cultural and ecological importance of Mnoomin to Anishinaabeg. As a result, my own land-based learning evolved to also include participatory researcher. The relationships I developed through participating in community Mnoomin activities and harvesting have led to a much more meaningful and thorough analysis than would have been possible without the trust, consent, and friendships that underpin this project. As a methodological approach, my participation in Mnoomin community and activities has also informed the interview structure and the analysis that is described in Chapter Four.

I had established some foundational understanding of the parallels between the health of the Mnoomin beds and the well-being of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, and how the two are inherently connected, and this informed my methodological and conceptual framework. The relationships to Mnoomin as described in the interviews for this project demonstrate how economic, political and ecological well-being interact with individual and collective wellness.

Semi-Structured Interviews

For this project I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with Mnoomin harvesters, Knowledge Holders, Elders who I have come to know from my own participation in Mnoomin gathering. I was also invited to do one additional interview with a parent of one Mnoomin Harvester who gave an interview.

The Interview Contributors

Chapters Four and Five are underpinned by the knowledges and stories that were told to me in recorded interviews with the following Mnoomin Harvesters, Caretakers, Knowledge Holders, and Elders. They are listed here in the order of which their interviews took place:

Elder Jeff Beaver. Jeff is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Elder, Mnoomin knowledge holder and harvester from Alderville First Nation.

Daemin Whetung. Daemin is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Mnoomin knowledge holder and harvester from Curve Lake First Nation.

Caleb Musgrave. Caleb is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Mnoomin knowledge holder and harvester, historian, founder and operator of Canadian Bushcraft from Hiawatha First Nation.

Georgie Horton-Baptiste. Georgie is a Saulteaux Anishinaabe Ikwe Mnoomin caretaker, harvester, and Anishinaabemowin language speaker and Nogojiwanong resident from Manitou Rapids Rainy River First Nation.

Marjolaine LaPointe. Marjolaine is an Omàmìwininì Mnoomin caretaker, harvester, educator, Anishinaabemowin language speaker, and Nogojiwanong resident from Ardoch Algonquin First Nation.

Paula Anderson. Paula is a Scottish-Canadian, Indigenous Studies , PhD. candidate, organic farmer, community food sovereignty activist, and Nogojiwanong Resident.

Timothy Smoke. Timothy is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Mnoomin knowledge holder, caretaker, and harvester, from Alderville First Nation.

Maggie Vivie-Bah. Maggie is Saulteaux Anishinaabe from Manitou Rapids Rainy River First Nation.

Elder Dorothy Taylor. Dorothy is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Elder, oral historian, hand drum singer, Nibi protector, and Mnoomin knowledge holder from Curve Lake First Nation.

Elder Gidigaa Migizi (Doug Williams)-Bah. Elder Doug-bah is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Elder, historian, professor, chief, pipe carrier, author, Anishinaabemowin language speaker, and Mnoomin knowledge holder from Curve Lake First Nation.

Patti Shaughnessy. Patti is a Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe-5th generation Irish settler, artist, director, performer, artistic producer, and Mnoomin protector from Curve Lake First Nation.

I reached out to participants for interviews both in person and by email, offering *Semaa* (tobacco) as is customary in Anishinaabeg culture when making a formal request for knowledge and support. Most of the time, I was able to make this offering in person. But, given the distances between us and how much we rely on digital communication these days, a few of those interviewed kindly said yes before I had a chance to offer *Semaa*. In those cases, they welcomed me to do so at the beginning of our conversation, which I appreciated deeply. Before each interview, I sent along an Information Letter, Consent Form (Appendix B), and a copy of the Interview Guide (Appendix C), outlining

the questions I planned to ask. I also brought printed copies to each interview—one for me, and one for the person I was speaking with. Consent forms were signed, in person, at the start of each interview and I have since retained them in my files. The Information letter and consent form provide details about the research project, the approval given by Trent University Research Ethics Board, explain that participation is voluntary and would remain so throughout the entire project, that interview contributors could consent to sharing their identity in the final thesis report and any publications resulting from this thesis, or they could at anytime choose to be anonymous. I received consent to audio record and transcribe each interview that, upon completing the graduate program, I agree to return to each contributor their recorded interview on a USB (or similar digital format), along with a digital or printed copy of their interview transcripts. The intention is for participants to be credited for their contributions to this thesis, and to retain ownership of their individual contributions to this thesis research and to the broader body of scholarship for which this community-based thesis project may contribute.

As described earlier in this chapter, I was already participating in Mnoomin harvesting and related community activities. Interviews for this project were conducted with Mnoomin Knowledge Holders and harvesters in Michi Saagiig territory with whom I had already formed relationships. In a western research context this is sometimes referred to as a snowball method (Smith, J. and Johnson, R., 2015). In an Indigenous context, this approach is based in kinship, welcoming and renewing relationships, and doing work that is being asked from within the community (Kovack 2009, Wilson, 2008). It is conventional in western research for "research participants" to remain anonymous throughout the research process. Indigenous research protocol sees that it is appropriate

to credit knowledges. Contributors for this project are identified and credited in this report for their work, knowledges, and contributions to this project including in some ways to my own learning and engagement with Mnoomin as they have taught me, and my children in some cases, a great deal. That being so, I continued to provide the option at any point in the research process to remain anonymous if preferred until the time came to defend and publish this thesis.

In my request for interviews, I provided some information verbally and I also provided a copy of the information letter by email or in hard copy. Once I received a positive response, I offered semaa (traditional tobacco) to make my formal request for their contributions to this project. I have been taught that tobacco should be offered once clear intentions, and a clear request is made so as not to put anyone in a difficult position by agreeing to something they may in fact need more information. Once I received a positive response and consent to an interview, I then followed up to book a time to conduct the recorded interview discussions. In a few instances, due to logistics or timing, I offered semaa at the very start of the interview, though I have been taught that semaa ought to be offered ahead of making such a request. In these cases, the interviewee was aware of my intentions, fully informed of the thesis project and had provided consent verbally or by email, and I am grateful that flexibility and understanding was extended to allow me to formally ask for their participation and support at the time that we met for the interview. At the start of each interview, I provided Informed Consent forms as per Trent Research Ethics Board protocols (see Appendix B). All of the interview contributors signed an informed consent. The Informed Consent form provided additional written details about this project. I retained the signed copies and provided a second copy

of the Informed Consent form along with the interview questions to each interview contributor. Before the completion of the thesis each interview contributor was given a copy of the thesis report in order to provide feedback, request changes, add or retract from their contributions to the project as they deemed reasonable. Following the defence of this thesis, all interview materials including audio recordings and transcripts will be returned to each contributor, or to their families as per their wishes.

The interview questions were designed to address the research objectives and were organized into four sections each containing two or three relevant questions: Part A. Background; Part B. Experiences; Part C. Context; and Part D. Conclusion of the interview. Participants were provided a copy of the interview guide ahead of the interview time, and therefore had time to consider their responses before the interview began (see Appendix C). The first section asked about their background knowledges and early life memories of wild rice gathering (Mnoomin gathering). The second section asked about their experiences with Mnoomin. The third section asked about challenges related to continuing the cultural intergenerational tradition of gathering Mnoomin. The last section asked if there was anything further the participant felt was important to contribute to the understanding of the importance of the relationship between youth and Elders and Mnoomin. In light of the conversations, it generally did not make sense to ask the last question. and I only asked it in a couple of instances; for a referral to others who may be interested in contributing to this project.

The interview questions were filtered by my prior experiences participating in Mnoomin gathering and related community activities, as well as by my preliminary literature review in which I became aware of the very few Aging Studies scholars who

have posited the importance of colonial context in relation to health and wellness in studies conducted with Indigenous persons. This prior experience and preliminary research informed the research objectives which then served as a basis for the interview questions. At the time of developing the interview questions, I also understood the great loss of Anishinaabemowin due to the impacts of early colonialism such as Indian Day Schools and Residential Schools where children were not allowed to speak their language (Pind, 2021). This has caused a huge loss of language in this territory. English translations for Mnoominkewin, such as "wild rice harvesting" are most commonly used. Though I am aware that some of the persons I interviewed do speak Anishinaabemowin, I used the English terminology in the interview guide. In hindsight, I recognize that provided information, consent forms, and the interview guide in both languages is more appropriate and I regret not realizing sooner for this project.

All of the interviews took place in Michi Saagiig territory at locations of the interviewees choosing including one at Trent University, one at a downtown café, one at a restaurant in Hiawatha, at their personal homes that included two in Nogojiwanong, one in Alderville First Nation, one in Curve Lake First Nation, one in Douro, one in Bancroft, and one at my own home. The interviews were semi-structured but guided by a set of nine interview questions.

The purpose of the interviews was to engage with community responses to the research objectives. The interview responses also connect the real lived experiences and relationships to Mnoomin that exist in and around Nogojiwanong, particularly over the past century, to the literature. Recording histories, stories, and knowledges that are traditionally passed on through oral storytelling, land-based teachings, and other forms of

recorded knowledges are also important to future generations as Elders and Knowledge Holders grow older or pass away.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an Indigenous pedagogic knowledge sharing tool, especially for the intergenerational transfer, continuation and expansion of knowledges (King, 2003; Wilson, 2008; Iseke, 2013). Story telling is central to this thesis, from the literature review, my own participation in Mnoomin gatherings, and especially through the interviews. While analyzing the interviews it was very clear the stories, experiences, histories, and world views that were shared are intrinsically linked to one another *through* their relationship to Mnoomin. Wilson (2008) writes "analysis from a Western perspective breaks everything down to look at it. So, you are breaking it down into its smallest pieces and then looking at those small pieces. And if we are saying that an Indigenous methodology includes all of these relationships, if you are breaking things down into their smallest pieces, you are destroying all the relationships around it" (p. 119). The themes presented in the analysis and interpretations section of this report, Chapters four and five, characterize small pieces of *data* shared in the interviews, but the bigger story of intergenerational well-being in relation to Mnoomin in this territory becomes very clear.

In review of the scholarship paired with a close examination of the project interviews, I have come to better understand that Anishinaabeg epistemologies are rooted in relationship and prioritize contemporary community needs by drawing on tried and true inter-generationally transferred Anishinaabeg intelligence. Often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge, Indigenous knowledges are indeed Indigenous Sciences

and Intelligences founded upon principles (Wiggan, 2019; Simpson, 2014). Indigenous Sciences depend on observation, experimentation, and analysis. Observation, experimentation and analysis that, according to oral tradition and supported by more recent western archaeological studies, have been in development and practice since time immemorial. Discussing the impacts of capitalist-colonialism in the face of climate change, Bardi-Kija-Nyul Nyul scholar Albert Wiggan (2019) posits:

> I can refer to my mob, that is witness for thousands of years to floods, droughts, ice ages, and so the knowledges that was collected and developed was then, in order to adapt to those changes, in order to become resilient to those sorts of changes, was passed on and embedded in my Indigenous peoples cultural , in their management practices, in their social systems. We hear of this term songlines, it's all there baby! (Albert Wiggan 2019).

Wiggan, along with similar Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Holders and contemporary thinkers including Algonquin Anishinaabeg Elder William Commanda-bah,[24] assert that we are all Indigenous to somewhere, and that now is a crucial time to reclaim or relearn these traditional knowledges and languages, not only to foster better relationships with one another, but also to address today's challenges that stem from historical and ongoing colonialism. Story telling is one way to better understand and develop foresight as to the necessity of bringing knowledges together for the sake and well-being of future generations:

> This concept of separatism, about they're Indigenous-they're non-Indigenous, when you start to look at the reality and roll back the time of evolution 3000 years ago, we were all Indigenous from somewhere. And so, that instinct, that common ground about our Indigenous makeup is in all of us and we can connect on that

[24] https://circleofallnations.ca/new/circle-of-all-nations/

> level. We need to seriously appreciate and integrate Indigenous knowledge as part of mainstream operating processes. Not only in conservation and land management, it has to be in so many other industries, in other aspects of our life. The only reason why I say that is because this is a system of management that has existed for 60,000 years. And incredibly in Australia it still exists in certain parts of the country, including the Kimberley's. And so I think there's a really great opportunity here for science and Indigenous knowledge to create a real force to be reckoned with when it comes to stabilizing our planet, when it comes to stabilizing our existence as Homo Sapiens, and I don't think you can have one without the other. They will both compliment one another if we be serious about integrating that knowledge as part of mainstream awareness and practice (Wiggan, 2019).

Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed each audio file manually by listening to the audio and typing them out in a word document. Using the 11 interview audio files and transcripts, I began a thematic analysis of the transcripts. Because I had come into the research project with some experience and understanding of intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin, I approached analysis of the interview data drawing from pre-established themes as well as emergent themes; I utilized a structured framework for coding in combination with an emergent framework by identifying key themes informed by the research objectives. I then identified themes that reflect the knowledges, experiences and concerns that were shared in the interviews. I utilized two common methods for coding. The first, thematic coding, in which I looked for dialogue relative to the established themes that I knew would most likely be discussed in the interviews. The second, descriptive coding, allowed me to examine words and ideas that I

could not have known would be raised in the interviews. This approach helped to support or fill in gaps of the established themes, more thoroughly analyze and organize into themes the wide range of topics that participants raised in our interviews, and to better demonstrate the connections between the stories, topics and issues raised in the interviews. After the interviews were completed and transcribed, I listened to the interviews and read the interview transcripts many times to locate recurring keywords and alike stories or knowledges to discern emergent themes provided by participants. This coding structure enabled me to address my research objectives informed by the literature and my own participatory experiences while also honouring the deeper insights and context provided through the knowledges and stories that were shared.

The literature review provided in Chapter Two offers the historical and contemporary context of intergenerational relations to Mnoomin, and includes existing scholarship representing a call to action to contextualize and address the impacts of colonialism on the well-being of Indigenous peoples in studies of aging, health and wellness. This initially felt like a monumental task. I found guidance and clarity, however, leaning into the interconnecting kinship relations. In holding all the diverse pieces of this larger story of Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig territory, I came to understand the interrelated parts as a sort of cosmology. I created a diagram of this Mnoomin cosmology as a reference guide so that I could it all laid out. This visual aid helped me to organize this thesis report and in particular, to articulate the research findings. Chapters Four and Five are organized by the themes and their related story elements, which were determined not only by the thematic analysis, but also by a holistic reflection on the oral teachings and experiences I have had participating in Mnoomin gathering.

The Mnoomin cosmology diagram (see Figure 4.1) that is presented in Chapter Four, includes and connects the pre-established themes included in the semi-structured interview questions (Mnoominkewin, Cultural and Ecological Relationships, Colonialism), with themes that emerged in the research process (Continuity of Mnoomin Gathering, Re-indigenization, and Mnoomin Restoration). The circular design of the diagram demonstrates the interconnectedness of the various themes and story elements that have been raised in both the interviews and in the literature. Aligned with my methodological approach of conjoining Anishinaabeg and qualitative methodologies in Aging Studies, I also created a linear version of this diagram in the form of a table that is also presented in Chapter Four. Each visual represents the differing knowledges and methodological approaches that have informed this research.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed one way of conjoining Anishinaabeg and Aging studies to address well-being in Michi Saagiig territory in relation to intergenerational relationships to Manoomin. This methodological approach was formed on the basis of relationship building as well as local interests and desires for more community and academic supports therefore it may also serve as an example framework for responding to the practical everyday experiences of aging in this territory. Particularly in this era of truth and reconciliation, addressing the harms of Canadian colonialism, capitalist exploitation of the lands and waters, and an emphasis on Age-Friendly communities with large populations of older peoples such as is in this territory.

In working with Michi Saagiig Mnoomin Gatherers as a student researcher, I prioritize the local Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg paradigm/approach to knowledge and

relationship to Mnoomin as the foundation for understanding well-being in this territory. Particularly on lands in which Anishinaabeg have lived the longest and thus, have the greater experience in relation to well-being on this land then Anishinaabeg methodological approaches (including reseeding, restoring, and re-educating about the Mnoomin beds) are central to collective and individual needs in relation to environmental, ecological and social well-being in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territories. Though there are many factors to consider when it comes to contemporary well-being, when the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg say that Mnoomin is the center of well-being in this territory, I agree with them, it is.

The work of Mnoomin Gatherers and Protectors goes well beyond the Mnoomin beds. Mnoomin caretaking is a significant example of the importance of humans to the ecosystem. There is great value in Mnoomin relationships, not only to those residing within Michi Saagiig territory, but to all who live in and depend on the Great Lakes ecosystem and environment. The work of Mnoominkewin is done by few in Michi Saagiig territory, but it is integral to everyone. Mnoomin is central not only to Anishinaabeg wellness over the course of life and generations but, as a cultural keystone species, will also sustain wellness of many other species.

I see Mnoomin gatherers do their work out of pure love for their culture, for the land and water, for their ancestors and for future generations. Mnoomin care taking improves wellness over the course of life by ensuring continued access to the natural and sustainable food system of this place, honouring the personhood and kinship of all life forms. My work with Mnoomin over the past 12 years, I hope, is only the beginning. I guess we will see how everyone likes this report, ha! Getting to do this work, make a

contribution to restoring the Mnoomin beds, recording a small part of local Mnoomin and family histories, teaching my children to gather Mnoomin, and being able to provide it to them for sustenance has been one of the greatest privileges of my life - and recognizing this from the start was a particularly special part of how this project unfolded methodologically. The next section features two chapters that share the stories told by Mnoomin harvesters in the interviews. Likened to a sharing circle, and continuing in the spirit of conjoining knowledges, excerpts from each interview are organized thematically and shared in conversation with one another.

SECTION III: STORY SHARING & RESEARCH FINDINGS
Chapter Four: Mnoomin is Good for Us

*The entire village would go out. Everybody would rice. Everybody knew how to rice. Everybody had ricing sticks (*Caleb Musgrave).

In this section of the thesis, I share the family and community stories of Mnoomin that were shared with me in the recorded interviews. In total there are nearly 20 hours of recorded interview discussions that include local family histories and stories of Mnoomin. While reviewing the interviews, that included manually transcribing and organizing the knowledge shared into themes for this thesis, I became more familiar with the interconnectedness of family stories, the importance of Mnoomin to intergenerational well-being, and the bigger story of Mnoominkewin that emerged. In the process, the recorded discussions began to feel a lot like a sharing circle. The stories, ideas, and personal experiences related to Mnoomin and place that have been shared are unique and each offer distinctive knowledge about Mnoominkewin, but every story told is also highly complementary to one another, and each of these stories are deeply rooted in fundamental Anishinaabeg values and perspectives of what it is to be human. For this reason, I have written this chapter in the spirit of a sharing circle, such that the voices of the Mnoomin harvesters are centred and brought into conversation with one another. I realize this is a slightly divergent approach to interpretative or qualitative research, but to do any justice to this work, it felt right for these family stories, local histories, and Mnoomin knowledges to be told in the words of their original speakers. I suppose I think of this much the way I recall learning how to rice - the experience of being in a canoe on the water in a rice bed brought a clarity and sensation, like a deep-seated memory, that

can only be described by those who have known and experienced it. It is my hope that through the interview excepts shared in this and the next chapter that anyone reading may also experience these words, stories, and knowledges, as closely as possible to how they were told to me.

I have organized quotes into both established and emergent themes and, in appropriate places I also share some of the teachings that arose from discussions I had with Mnoomin harvesters for this project along with reflections to support, or perhaps moderate, to more clearly convey and connect the stories of Mnoomin to the scholarship and to call attention to the prominent topics raised by harvesters. These chapters are quite fun to read and are much like listening in on a panel discussion or podcast. In these chapters, I weave together the various knowledges and stories shared, organizing quotes —some longer, some shorter—to highlight the key themes that emerged from the research. My goal is not only to make these themes clear but also to help readers connect with and feel a part of the ever-continuing story of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig Territory, as told by Mnoomin Harvesters.

To reiterate, the central research question asks: *How is Mnoomin gathering important to intergenerational relationships and well-being over the course of life in Michi Saagiig Territory?*

I addressed this thesis through five supporting research objectives:

1. Learn about Youth and Elder/Older relations that occur during annual Mnoomin gatherings.

2. Identify the range of Mnoomin gathering relations, initiatives, events, programs, organizations or community organizing that bring Youth, Elders and Knowledge Holders together.
3. Better understand and describe how access to Mnoomin is important to well-being over the course of life, in older age, and intergenerationally.
4. Learn how community relationships to Mnoomin have changed, developed, or adapted over time (this also came to include the community of Mnoomin harvesters' responses to colonialism and environmental changes caused by ongoing colonialism in the territory).
5. Determine ways to support Mnoomin gathering and intergenerational relationship building that occurs during Mnoominike-Giizis/Mnoomin harvest season.

Community-based Research

The interview discussions are described and quotes from the interviews are shared in this chapter and in chapter five. The interview contributors relate their cultural, community, and familial histories, as well as the personal experiences they have as Mnoomin gatherers. Through the interview process, I also became more aware of the greater story of intergenerational care and collective healing that focuses on restoring well-being, with Michi Saagiig Mnoomin Knowledge Holders and Harvesters placing Mnoomin, a cultural keystone species and spiritually and ecologically important food, at the centre. The interview excerpts shared in this chapter four highlight the deep rooted cultural and spiritual kinship to Mnoomin and furthermore point to the integral importance and personhood of Mnoomin as part of community.

One way to understand well-being is to consider our cultural and ecological relationships with traditional foods. As described earlier in the thesis, Mnoominkewin describes a way of life, an art, and an integral part of Anishinaabe culture that is represented by all the traditional and contemporary processes related to Mnoomin. This includes sharing and teaching knowledges of Mnoomin through story, language, engaging in care taking of the Mnoomin beds using traditional and contemporary tools and knowledges to harvest, reseed the beds, processing the Mnoomin seeds into food, and generally supporting the larger ecological relationships that we collectively depend on in the Great Lakes and Boreal Forest regions of Turtle Island. The responses and stories shared in the interviews included the experiences, histories, concerns, as well as the hopes, plans and ideas for the future of Mnoomin. The analysis in these chapter are interpreted through my own participation in Mnoomin gatherings and involvement in community advocacy for the protection of Mnoomin beds and of Williams Treaties rights holders to access, restore, maintain and harvest their Mnoomin. This chapter also includes stories of kinship between Michi Saagiig and Omàmìwininì Mnoomin protectors and harvesters from Ardoch First Nation who have been care taking the beds that were originally populated by seeds from Pimadashkodeyong (Rice Lake, between Hiawatha First Nation and Alderville First Nation, Michi Saagiig territory). The seeds were brought from Pimadashkodeyong and planted along the shores of Ardoch First Nation, in Mud Lake and the Mississippi River, by Michi Saagiig and Omàmìwininì families more than a century ago. Within a decade of this seed transfer, the Mnoomin beds were completely flooded out of Pimadashkodeyong due to the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway. The perspectives and stories shared in this chapter demonstrate the importance of

embracing Indigenous place-based knowledges that connect cultural and ecological relationships and that light a path towards intergenerational well-being in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe territory with the living practice of Mnoominkewin at the centre.

Representation of Findings

As described in Chapter Three, the methodological approach has drawn from both qualitative Indigenous studies and common Western social science research methodologies. Below are two visual representations of how I have organized the common themes that emerged from the interview responses and stories shared by Mnoomin harvesters. The first (Table 4.1) is a chart that offers a linear perspective, categorically organized into a list of "themes" beginning with *Stories of Mnoomin Kinship*, moving towards the contemporary context and a *Common Vision of Mnoominkewin*. This linear perspective has served very well as an organizational tool for this project and for how this written thesis is presented. The second (Figure 4.1) is a circular diagram that demonstrates the inter-connections between the experiences and knowledges, including both established themes that I was aware of at the start of this MA research as well as emergent themes that arose from the interviews. The circular diagram is informed by contemporary Indigenous pedagogical tools such as the Medicine Wheel and Anishinaabeg epistemologies of well-being, but with the inclusion of historical and contemporary political, economic and cultural landscapes, as well as specific considerations ongoing settler colonization in relation to Michi Saagiig Mnoomin. This part of the thesis aims to contextualize colonialism in order to better understand its impacts across the life course and through generations. The circular diagram, while imperfect, represents a cosmological and spiritual relationship with the physical world—

where our lives are intimately tied to the health of the land, water, and all other living beings with whom we are in constant connection.

Still, it is impossible to capture the whole wisdom and experiences of Mnoomin in relation to well-being that has been shared by Mnoomin harvesters, knowledge holders, and Elders in a single diagram, or even in a single thesis for that matter. Mnoomin harvesters have unique insights and perspectives of the past and of this place, as well as of the present in the face of an ever-evolving colonial landscape. From here, taking a note from those who had to do the same to preserve the Mnoomin in the past, all that can really be done is to use this knowledge to plan for the future of Mnoomin and continuity of kinship and access to Mnoomin for future generations. These diagrams, one that organizationally represents a linear view, the other a 360-degree interconnected, spiderweb like, field of Mnoomin relationships represent how bringing together Anishinaabe and Canadian/Western scientific methods, theories, values and world views may be helpful to encouraging greater understandings and devising greater supports for intergenerational Indigenous well-being. The next two pages show the table and diagram that lay out the themes, both established and emergent, that were most prevalent in the stories and knowledges shared by harvesters in the interviews.

Table 4.1 Interview Themes and Story Elements

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MNOOMIN	
INTERVIEW THEMES	**STORY ELEMENTS**
Stories of Mnoomin Kinship	• Cultural Continuity Across Generations • Youth, Elders, Family, and Community • Anishinaabe Foodways • Harvesting and Processing Mnoomin into Food • Culture, Art, Songs, and Language
Mnoomin Gathering and Well-being	• Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual • Nutritious Food • Physical Activity • Socializing • Spiritual Nourishment • Mnoomin Kinship and Ecological Relationships
Continuity of Mnoominkewin	• On The Water and On The Shoreline • Ricing Technologies • Collaborative Efforts Towards Mnoomin Restoration
Colonialism in Michi Saagiig Territory	• The Indian Act and Williams Treaties • The Trent Severn Waterway • The Rice Wars • Colonial Impacts on Intergenerational Well-being
Current Barriers to Mnoomin	• Colonial Structures and Attitudes • Access to the Water, Proximity to Rice Beds, Privatization of Shoreline
Common Vision of Mnoominkewin	• Re-Indigenizing Mnoomin Restoration • Reseeding Knowledges by Reseeding Rice Beds • Michi Saagiig Food Sovereignty • Community Outreach and Education • Community Projects and Organizations

Figure 4.1 Intergenerational Relationships with Mnoomin

The centre of the circular diagram is the central focus of this thesis project and represents the thesis research question, *Intergenerational Relationships With Mnoomin*. The surrounding bubbles represent the predominant themes that have arisen from this research. The themes correlate to one another and meet again at the centre. The themes

have evolved from both established themes and questions that this thesis started with, as well as emergent themes and questions that came through in the interviews and subsequent analysis. The themes form the basis for understanding the interwoven landscape of dynamic relationships that exist because of Mnoomin. I found it challenging to represent this web of connection in writing, and when I sat down with a pen and paper to doodle my way out of that writers block conundrum, I thought about some of the Indigenous teaching tools I have learned about such as the Medicine Wheel and the Ojibwe Four Elements Circle[25] which in turn, helped me to more clearly organize and articulate my reflections, new knowledge, and research findings. The circular diagram also helped me to articulate how I have come to think about Mnoomin kinship and the significance of Mnoomin to intergenerational well-being. While engaged in the analysis component of this project, I read *The Seven Circles: Indigenous Teachings for Living Well* by Chelsea Luger and Thosh Collins (2022) who also offer utilize circular diagrams to describe the many facets of well-being through an Indigenous lens. Their work resonated very well with the methodological approach of this thesis, merging traditional and contemporary perspectives and tools to better understand and strive towards collective well-being that is rooted to place.[26] The remainder of this chapter, and Chapter five, share the interview excepts, interpretation and analysis into the themes that are described in the diagram and table above.

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[25] I am also very inspired by the philosophies and teachings of Hoop Dancing, which play part in how I think about life and community.

[26] A little shoutout to Chelsea Luger and Thosh Collins, your book was very motivational for me in completing this thesis!

Stories of Mnoomin Kinship

The practice of Mnoominkewin encompasses a whole eco-universe with infinite layers of connection and kin ties to the cultural keystone species Anishinaabe Mnoomin. In this chapter, Mnoomin harvesters share stories about growing up with Mnoomin, spending time on the water harvesting and reseeding the Mnoomin beds, recalling family meals, telling about local histories, stories told to them by their parents and grandparents, and a bigger memory of the time not so long ago when whole communities would get together at harvest time and of the determination, hard work and hope towards returning to THAT Mnoominkewin again someday soon. This section is *the best* section of the thesis, with many common symbiotic knowledges full of humour, love, and optimism for the future of Mnoomin are shared.

Cultural Continuity Across Generations

The tradition of passing along knowledges through physical practice and spiritual relationship is among the most integral intergenerational components of Mnoominkewin. The harvesters, Knowledge Holders and Elders who spoke about Mnoomin share a great deal about their intergenerational experiences, knowledges and memories of Mnoomin. In our discussion, Gidigaa Migizi-Bah shared memories of wild rice camping with family, highlighting the role of storytelling as an important aspect of teaching and learning that is passed down through generations, particularly from Grandparents, who have knowledges and memories from much earlier generations whom Grandchildren come to know through these stories and experiences. Gidigaa Migizi-Bah explains that during these gatherings, storytelling serves as a means to navigate human relationships and life's challenges, focusing on practical lessons about community and interpersonal connections

that revolve around common everyday experiences, fostering a sense of belonging through family and cultural traditions that happen during Mnoomin harvesting season. He highlights the importance of engaging youth in the preservation and transmission of cultural values:

> We always had families, you know, camping, doing wild rice. So you know, our Grandmothers, well, my Grandmother raised me. She was one of the older ones in the group. But before her, there was her Dad who was always around until he died in the late 'forties. I remember that's where some of the storytelling started. But, storytelling in the Summer is more restricted to telling stories about relationships and humans, not spiritual ceremonial stuff. They talked about that in the Wintertime. There, it was mostly talking about, and I think that what was, what I was picking up during those story telling times from the elders, at the rice camps, would be stories about how to deal with human problems. How to deal with relationships you know? And you hear about different things that human beings do like marriage. You hear about them talking about other people, or some hunting prowess, right? You know with me particularly, they told me a lot about lineage. I don't know why I was picked to be part of the old ones. But I think it's because, I think there is a kind of an understanding in the culture that you get little kids interested in things that are important to carry on the culture
>
> (Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

Timothy Smoke added to this, describing the distinction between discussing cultural traditions and actively participating in them, the importance of storytelling paired with direct experience, emphasizing that true understanding and appreciation of these stories come from being in the rice beds with an older family member, Knowledge Holder, or Elder:

> It's hearing all those stories, but trying to ensure that we keep that intact. That's, like one of the most important things is that as much as we talk about it, it's

> something that needs to be done. So people, they talk about it, but it's like, once you actually get them there it's a totally different environment because people will share their stories. But until you're actually out there and in those beds, you won't understand or enjoy that feeling because it's something you want for yourself. Yeah… it's great being out there with those older ones (Timothy Smoke).

Timothy also shared his reflections on the intergenerational dynamics of Mnoomin harvesting, emphasizing the hard work involved in the practice. He recounts his Grandfather's memories of teaching and learning within the family while in the rice beds, really highlighting the importance of collaboration between younger and older generations:

> My Grandfather, he remembers taking his Father out. Like going with him, and there was always that one in the front, one in the back. But like, if you're actually out there for a long period of time, it is hard work [...] my Uncle would go with my Grandfather. So it's like kind of that sense of, like you're teaching them in the same sense they taught me. As well as working with Jeff, what you're looking for when you're out in the field, you need to have somebody who's, he's looking for the right head on the plant [...] He would go out with my Grandfather or he'd go out with my Great Uncle because that's kind of just what they naturally did. So they would go out as a family, and he would be about 19-20 when he would go out as well. So he'd be out there pulling through, pulling them through. So, it's not as romantic as it sounds, because it's a lot of hard work actually, pulling yourself through when you're hitting those really nice beds of rice because they get real thick. My Grandfather talks about, he's gone up to the Ardoch area, but he would go farther up because there were thicker beds, and they would spend weeks up there and they would be, my Grandfather had 8 children, 4 boys, 4 girls, and then my Great Uncle Mel, he had 4 boys, 4 girls as well. So yeah, they would go up as like a camp for like two weeks. And they would just run shifts, like, go out for an hour, then come back, switch off, go back. And it was always the kids pulling the

> older ones through because it's just that muscle <laughter> I don't know what it is, but it's just having the younger one pulling through. So, in the same sense now, I've gone out with my Uncle before and my other uncle Jim, he used to take an Elder from our community and he said, it's something about being younger, guiding that older person, there's a balance there (Timothy Smoke).

Likewise, Caleb Musgrave emphasizes the importance of everyone in the community getting involved as able, further elaborating on the practicality of *learning to rice* and describing how Knowledge Holders and Elders' teaching younger generations through hands-on experiences by paddling and processing Mnoomin they have gathered together:

> Everybody needs to eat. So, everybody gets together to get that food, those Knowledge Holders get a chance to pass it down. So, what we usually end up doing is we'll put out a young one to paddle and the old one will rice. So, that Elder will do the ricing, and the young one in the front of the canoe or the back of the canoe will learn more and more about how it's done properly [...] And then going through the actual processing with people like James Whetung or Jeff Beaver, my Uncle, Tom Cowie, and on my own. I'll take my Nephews out, like Ziigwan and Taylor, and all them. I'll take them out on the water, and they'll rice with me, and I'm not an Elder yet, but they learn a lot from me and I learn a lot from them. And then when we take it to the Elders, like Tom or Jeff, or even Winston Taylor or Doug Williams once in a while, they'll tell us even more what to do for the next time. So, there's a lot of different ways we have that relationship with the Elders and with the youth. But it's kind of scattered here in Mississauga Territory because the process has not been, it used to be like a community. Everybody would go out. Rice Lake used to be nothing but Rice
>
> (Caleb Musgrave).

This story from Caleb highlights one of the most prominent themes that came out of the interviews; there has been a continuity of Mnoominkewin that ties generations together through the act of gathering Mnoomin. The tradition of intergenerational involvement in annual gathering carries with it the knowledge of how to harvest Mnoomin and why it is culturally, economically, and spiritually important to do so, while simultaneously nurturing the bonds between youth, Elders, family, and community.

Youth, Elders, Family, and Community

Traditionally, Mnoominike[27] involves the participation of youth, Elders, parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, cousins, knowledge holders, and the extended community.

> Mnoomin is a sacred food. Sacred meaning it was a gift from the Creator [...] I don't like to call it "wild rice". My Dad used to call it black rice or duck rice because there was always some ducks in there when he was gathering it. So, you know, that's a food that brings families together. So that's one thing. Another thing is the stories, the stories that goes with Mnoomin bring the families together, young and old. And then thirdly, the actual task of gathering it and preparing it for food. It used to be a family activity, but now it's a thought, it's not so much anymore. But, when I was younger it was (Dorothy Taylor).

Daemin Whetung talked about how her Father, James Whetung, began his lifelong learning and work with Mnoomin:

> He learned from his Uncle, is where he was first introduced to the rice, and then he and his Dad, and some other members from Curve Lake ended up going to Ardoch and actually learned how to process it there [...] I work with my Dad every Fall. Now it's basically a two people team, plus volunteers. Also, my daughter comes for the ride (Daemin Whetung).

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[27] The practice of planting, tending, gathering, and processing Mnoomin into food.

Discussing how Mnoomin gathering brings youth and Elders together, Mnoomin Knowledge Holder Daemin Whetung talked about reclaiming traditional knowledges and finding ways to bring people together and the importance of curiosity and ambition to re-learn and reclaim Indigenous food based knowledges:

> We have to go to the Elders for knowledge. I see a lot of more youth participating in it for different reasons, but I think it's about tapping into old knowledge. So, it's kind of like a treasure hunt! Even beyond the Elders to further back, and trying to find what we were, what we had before. It brings us together because food brings you together [...] It's really important to have my kid out there and to share with her what I've learned in a positive way where I'm not forcing her to learn it, but she just gets to be exposed to it (Daemin Whetung).

The importance of being shown Mnoominkewin as a natural part of growing up is critical to the continuity of the values, traditions and benefits of kinship to Mnoomin throughout one's lifetime. Elder Dorothy Taylor, one of the kindest people I have ever been privileged to meet, enthusiastically reminisced on her early childhood experiences going out ricing and processing the Mnoomin seeds into food with her family:

> Ever since I was first put in a canoe. So I would have been, before I was 10 years old. Actually, I was born and raised in Oshawa, Ontario. My Parents were both from Curve Lake, but they left the village for employment. So, I was born and raised in Oshawa. But my Dad was really an outdoors person. His Mother, my Grandmother, was from Scugog First Nation. Oshawa is really close to Scugog. So, we'd always go there, like all the time to visit my Uncles and my Grandparents. And when we called him Poppa Waasa, and, anyways, so he'd make he make sure we were always on the lake [...] So we'd go there. My Dad, he took us, me and my sister everywhere with him, and he did everything for us, and then we'd have our canoe on the roof, and we would go out on to Pigeon Lake,

> and we would fish or go out and rice, you know? So, that's always, since I can remember we've been doing it. My Dad used to get the rice, he'd bring it home because we'd eat a lot of the rice soup [...] it was rice that he picked himself and, because we lived in an apartment in Oshawa, we would sit there at the kitchen table, I'd help my Dad take out the kernels right from the rice and that, you know? [...] And, we'd get a big mason jar of it like that *[gestures size of large jar with her hands]* (Dorothy Taylor).

The deep intergenerational bonds to Mnoomin within Dorothy's family are clear. Dorothy emphasized the unity and strength derived from communal Mnoomin activities, especially with ones' own immediate family members. Similarly, Georgie Horton Baptiste's mother, Maggie Vivie shared with me a cherished childhood memory of eating wild rice with her Grandparents:

> Well, when I was small, when I was a little girl I mean, we ate wild rice. My Grandma and Grandpa were the ones that did the ricing, the wild rice. And then we ate it. Sometimes my Grandma used to fry it just like popcorn. I used to like it like that. And she used to put some sugar after she gets done. She'd sprinkle sugar and some blueberries. And that was… that used to be a treat when we were small (Maggie Vivie).

Maggie's fond memories of the Mnoomin treats that her Grandma made for her highlight the vital role of our older family members have on us. Many of us grow up with fond memories of the foods our grandparents and parents cooked or provided for us, and special treats or favourite foods.

Mnoomin, is a central and important cultural food and so imparting the knowledge of Mnoomin to younger family members supports the continuity of traditions.

Daemin spoke about growing up ricing within her community of Curve Lake First Nation, emphasizing the important intergenerational bond within families:

> I've been wild ricing all my life. Like, I have memories of ricing since I was little on different scales throughout time. So, it was pretty small scale when I was young. And now it's like a major part of my life [...] we'd go out as a family. So, we did hunting and trapping, and wild ricing was one of the seasons, and making maple syrup in the Spring and stuff. My parents would take us out and I just remember hanging over the airboat with my earmuffs on and my life jacket, riding up to my chin, and just like reaching over and feeling the wild rice through my hands and things like that. We weren't made to work the wild rice, but we were there to see it and be a part of it (Daemin Whetung).

These stories of Mnoomin tell of both the continuity of the ancient practice and also of the contemporary resurgence of Indigenous Anishinaabe knowledges that has evolved through maintaining connections to intergenerational traditions, and ancestral ways of Anishinaabeg life with Mnoomin at the center. Though Mnoomin harvests are, for the moment, not the large community and family events they were not so long ago, many families continue Mnoomin gathering in a spirit reminiscent of their older relatives and research contributors spoke passionately of their memories and experiences of togetherness during Mnoomin gathering season. A mere century after the flooding, on the south side of the Pimadashkodeyong, Tim Smoke recalls Mnoomin harvest time as a child in Alderville First Nation, his siblings, and cousins all horsing around together when the rice was brought home:

> When my uncles would come home, that's when it was like a family gathering essentially, because we're all there to kind of dance it and parch it and whatnot. My uncle even talks about how he had these really nice rice sticks. But we, I was

> probably 9 or 10, and we broke them because we were using them as light sabres! [...] so he has to make more now. So, that was kind of the process that he would use to show us how to make our own rice sticks, because we were using them for the wrong reason […], they haven't riced in a few years because they're union workers or they're labourers. So it's like, they're at that time in their lives where they're starting to retire and settle down and kind of get back to doing the things they like doing. So it's in the same sense. Like, I'm sort of picking up that responsibility of providing for myself as well as understanding the importance of ricing, and of remembering it as a child, and being like how simple it was. And, now it's like self-mentorship in a way within our family, because they don't do it as much but they can tell me so that when I go out there it's like all those lessons are still in-tact. So, when I'm navigating, it's like we're still doing it as a family
>
> (Timothy Smoke).

As Timothy mentions, Mnoomin knowledges of how to make ricing sticks, how to navigate the waters, or how to bring younger children into learning about ricing through play are prominent. Caleb also described such a time as a child:

> Once when I was really young. My Dad took us out and showed us the patches that are on Rice Lake, because there's not many of them. So, he just showed us, he would come off, he'd show us how to pick it and put it back in the water. Didn't teach us how to gather it for food. Just taught us how to put it back in the water to make sure it kept growing, so we'd one day be able to have food
>
> (Caleb Musgrave).

Similarly, Daemin Whetung talked about ricing while pregnant and the significance that experience has had in her child's memories and relationship to Mnoomin. Daemin's observations illustrate how the collective experience of harvesting Mnoomin fosters a strong sense of community and shared identity, particular in childhood:

> I had my baby out there when she was in my tummy [...] It's really important to have my kid out there and to share with her what I've learned in a positive way, where I'm not forcing her to learn it, but she just gets to be exposed to it
>
> (Daemin Whetung).

Daemin went on to express how the continuity of these knowledges across generations lives inside of community members, even when the practices have been oppressed or made illegal:

> We are the Knowledge Holders over time. Even if things aren't being practiced, we're supposed to have the stories and the teachings. And, we carry them inside of us for the times when they need to come out. I'd love to be one of those women holding that knowledge, and I'd love to help my kid become one of those women
>
> (Daemin Whetung).

Daemin's words highlight how Mnoomin stories serve as a bridge that connects past, present, and future generations, and reinforces family and community relationships while also reseeding inherent Anishinaabeg knowledges.

> I was involved with Mnoomin from almost like day one. You know, I was out there and on the land, uh, through my grandparents almost immediately after birth. Like that, they would've had me out there. Even that summer, you know, I was born in February and that summer they probably would've had me out, probably if the kids were babysitting me while they're out picking rice. In those days, you're still born into it. Right? It was just part of the cyclical things that they did. So one of the cyclical things they did was pick Mnoomin you know? So I was, I remember the first things about it was playing with other kids at, uh, rice camps that we had. And, then also being made to work intense, until you got tired, got sick and tired of it, and you ran away sometimes under the bush to hide from them. They would be mad at you, but then you'd come out to eat <laughter>

> because that was for a kid. Well, you know, when you're made to do something and you dance on wild rice ‘till you get tired [...] But I mean, they were understanding, I didn't really have to be that severe. I would just go and leave it alone. Yeah. And of course they come along say, how come you left? You know, you gotta finish. We gotta finish (Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

Anishinaabe Food Ways

Anishinaabe food ways are deeply rooted in the land-based practices and traditions that have sustained communities for generations. The stories shared herein make clear that Mnoomin is central to Anishianabe food ways, and is also central to shaping Anishinaabe culture, economy, governance, and identity. Descriptions of Mnoomin harvesting, processing, and sharing are braided together with broader understandings of well-being, heritage, and ecological kinship. Georgie talked about how spending time with her Grandparents as a child centred around Mnoomin and other Anishinaabeg food ways:

> I do remember, you know, them eating fish, which is a pretty, a very common staple especially the further north you go among the Nishinaabe people. Wild rice and fish are two main food staples. So, I do remember, you know, eating, cooking, frying fish, you know, on the beach, on the water (Georgie Baptiste).

Mnoomin is central to the ecological food system in the territories in which it grows. Caleb Musgrave described Anishinaabe perspective of the ecological food web in order to emphasize the critical role Mnoomin has always had to both the Anishnaabeg (Indigenous) food system for humans and all fellow life forms within and surrounding Pimadashkodeyaang (Rice Lake):

The Mnoomin was in such large volume that the Muskrat population was exponential, upwards of 8 to 10,000 Muskrat being trapped here, and not even putting a dent in the population. So, Muskrat alone, and Beaver, and Otter do really well in that wild rice patch, that Mnoomin patch. When it comes down to the fish, um, everything from Pan Fish, such as your Blue Gills, your Pumpkin, you see your Crappies. Perch, all the way over to your Catfish, such as the Bullhead and the channel cats, as well as Walleye, they use that rice patch as a deep-water nursery because it's up to 10 feet deep in good patches. It can survive 10-foot depth water. And, so instead of having to just stay in the shallows, they can go deeper into the water to get their food and not be predated by Musky or Pike or larger Walleye or Bass. And so, it's a safer ecosystem for them. And the more bait fish you have, the bigger fish you get. Like if you have a huge population of bait fish, you're gonna find trophy sized Musky every time, or trophy size Walleye, or trophy sized Bass. And so those nurseries that are so vast are really, really, really important because it's not like a cattail swamp where the roots choke out the water. The roots are down in the mud at the bottom, the stocks grow straight up, they're all competing to get to that sunlight. And so it becomes a natural ecosystem for all those fish to be able to move unhindered without being predated as easily upon by the larger fish, uh, snapping turtles will lay at the bottom and they'll wait for those smaller fish to come to them. You'll have Painted Turtles going up to the surface, such as the Red Ear Slider, which is arguably an invasive species, but you also have things such as the Blandings Turtle, the Green or Map Turtles, things like that across our territory, using these patches as spots to sunbathe because they can get up on top of all that stock. That's been crushed over by the Muskrats, and bathe on it and actually use these as small little islands out in the deep water where they can get further away from predators, such as larger turtles, foxes, skunks, seagulls, et cetera. These baby turtles, these baby snapping turtles, baby painted turtles, they can use these areas as natural habitat for themselves. Then you have dragonfly. Dams will fly mids, all those animals that have their forms developing on the stocks. Like when I go out and rice, I'll almost every time, I'll find those exoskeletons of dragon flies that have erupted from their

> pupa state on the stocks almost every day. You'll find a dozen of 'em or are hundred or so bugs. There's bugs the bugs alone. Like I know James has almost a science based on what all these bugs are and when they show up, and how far along the rice is. It's a genuine thing. There's like dozens of species of insects that rely on those stocks throughout the season. From those little, tiny spiders to the little mids, to the, almost like an aphid like bug, this little green thing and white little thing. All these little insects rely on, and then those insects are food for the dragon flies, who are food for the birds that come through, who are food for the mammals that come through and it keeps going. Like there's not a single time that you don't see it as an ecosystem (Caleb Musgrave).

Caleb has an intimate and extensive knowledge of the ecological relationships in the territory, but with this he also expressed the importance of cultural and spiritual knowledges that arise, through Anishinaabe epistemology, by recognizing and engaging in kinship the way fellow life forms most need. Recognizing also the autonomy of fellow life forms, like Mnoomin, and having a sense of how to interact reciprocally is integral to understanding the role of Mnoomin in Anishinaabe food systems that supports broader well-being:

> It's like passive agriculture, but it's more, I don't like the term agriculture for it, because it's not a harvest, it's not a yield… We have no dominion over the Mnoomin. But it's more like that relative is there until we need it, and that relative is waiting for us to come and make use. Whereas corn, we have to raise our relative up and we gotta take care of that relative. We gotta protect that relative (Caleb Musgrave).

Deepening the understanding of how wide-reaching the importance of Anishinaabe Mnoomin has always been, Marjolaine LaPointe emphasizes the deep connection

between Anishinaabe culture, history, and economy with that of others, describing one example of gathering and trading Mnoomin and maple sugar:

> I think, you know, the cultural and spiritual pieces of it are intimately tied in with a historical understanding of our economies as Anishinaabeg. Because our economies were built on the rice [...] We would gather together, and trade. The rice and maple sugar were what we would trade with the Cree, and we would trade with the Mohawks. We would bring them all together. Omamawinini means *they bring together*. And so, as we kind of further develop as Indigenous people through this ridiculous process of colonization, our young people are looking to culturally based ways of developing economies. And, they're not satisfied with with the status quo [...] Since time immemorial, we centred around these plants, you know? Whether they're the maple trees or the wild rice. But, specifically the wild rice, we grew out of that rice as a people (Marjolaine LaPointe).

The profound significance of Mnoomin extends far beyond its ecological role; it embodies the very essence of Anishinaabe identity, culture, and economy. The essential role that Mnoomin plays in maintaining ecological balance and supporting an Indigenous food system cannot be understated. It is also a highly nutritious food source. The cultural, historical, and spiritual elements of Mnoomin are integral to Anishinaabe economic practices and community cohesion. The emphasis on traditional practices like gathering and trading reflects a deep-rooted connection to the land and a commitment to reviving these practices in spite of ongoing settler colonization. Together, these perspectives illustrate that Mnoomin is as central to Anishinaabe life today as it is known to have been in the past:

> Mnoomin is a sacred food, meaning it was a gift from the Creator. We use, we have wild rice. Actually, you shouldn't call it *wild rice*. My Dad used to call it black rice or duck rice, 'cause there was always some ducks in there when he was

> gathering it. So, you know, so that's a food brings families together. Another thing is the stories, the story that goes with Mnoomin bring the families together, young and old. And then thirdly, the actual task of gathering it and preparing it for food. It used to be a family activity, but now it's a thought, it's not so much anymore. But, when I was younger it was […] it represents my childhood, my happy childhood. It represents a really important food, a sacred food for my culture (Dorothy Taylor).

Further describing the importance of Mnoomin to her community, Elder Dorothy Taylor references the Great Anishinaabe migration from the east coast of Turtle Island, explaining that Mnoomin is a nutritious food source that helped her ancestors survive the migration to the Great Lakes where the food grows upon the water:

> Having the schools come out is really great because you can, like, a lot of people get exposed to that one time, and then you just need one or two interested people out of the group to carry it on, right? Having Curve Lake school come out is great. The high school or the native organizations that young people are a part of coming out is really great for us, and there's always like a couple people that are more keen than everyone else that, you know, will probably be the ones that are, will be doing this in the future. Well, you, you hope for it, right? Like it's so nice. We had a group come out. There was this young Anishinaabe boy, and he came to the Pow Wow like a week or two later, and he was running my demonstrations, and telling all the people coming to my demonstration stand. He was the one teaching them, and I just got some pictures. I was like, wow, you're going to, you're definitely one of the ones that are gonna be doing this. He was so proud of himself too. I was so proud of him (Daemin Whetung).

> You could survive and carry that Mnoomin with you and you wouldn't die of malnutrition. It's got B vitamins, and it’s a protein. I know it's perfect. So that’s another reason why I eat it at home. I always have it at home (Dorothy Taylor).

> The ancestral community where I come from. I know that it's still highly prized and they, you know, come Thanksgiving, it's always a part of their dish, you know, always. I think every family has a wild rice dish. I don't think that is around here, but I do know in Manitou Rapids that they have that, and it's prized for that. A lot of the old people there in that community, they still, it's still a huge part of their diet (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

> Rice Lake was full rice-Mnoomin. I never saw that in my lifetime but have heard Doug Williams bah and my pupa speak of it. Nishnaabeg would travel to Rice Lake every fall to harvest. Must have been fun, many Nishnaabeg convening there to harvest. There was also mnoomin in Mud Lake (Chemong Lake). Doug spoke of that at our Mnoominkewin Gathering a few years ago. I do remember as a kid, my pupa Murland, he was a trapper, he was cleaning ducks and he showed me what was in its digestive tract. He said, "look, it was eating wild celery and Mnoomin" (Patti Shaughnessy).

Harvesting and Processing Mnoomin into Food

The practice of harvesting Mnoomin is an integral aspect of Anishinaabeg foodways, serving as a powerful means of connecting youth, older family members, community and Elders, along with other than human kinship ties. This is further continued in the ways that Mnoomin is processed into food and the long history of gathering knowledge about where to find Mnoomin, how to identify it, growing conditions, when the best time to pick it is, most efficient and sustainable harvesting practices and then how to make it into a long-lasting food source. Reminiscing about the abundant beds that were once present near Curve Lake, Gidigaa Migizi-Bah talking about the importance of knowing where to pick rice and mentioned one place his family took him ricing as a child:

> Mostly around Fox island, which is the island out here. You know, and the beds right around it. You know, we had some big beds! (Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

During Mnoominike-Giiziis (Mnoomin Moon), a lot of time is spent in close quarters, cooperatively working in a canoe out on the water to harvest the Mnoomin, which is and then brought back to shore to begin the process of turning it into a food. A great deal of hard work is put into processing the seeds into food that can be safely stored and consumed for until the next harvesting season. Processing the Mnoomin goes hand in hand with harvesting. Each day gathering the rice also begins the process of laying it out to cure, turning it every day to ensure it dries evenly and to let the remaining insects crawl or fly away before parching/roasting, dancing, and winnowing the Mnoomin. Both harvesting and processing the Mnoomin are spaces for connecting with family and community across generations, to transfer of cultural and ecological knowledges, all while reinforcing cultural identity and ensuring access to nutritious foods, staying physically and spiritual well, and support Indigenous food sovereignty:

> For me, how specifically wild rice gathering brings Youth and Elders together and how important it is for my community, how important it is for me personally, it is entirely tied in with my identity, with food sovereignty, with making sure that my children have those connections (Marjolaine LaPointe).

The profound significance of harvesting Anishinaabe Mnoomin to all aspects of Anishinaabeg cultural identity, intergenerational well-being, and food sovereignty, is evident in how reflections about access to Mnoomin is central to building relationships and forming important understandings of spiritual, emotional, and physical connections to all other aspects of present Anishinaabe culture that is inherently tied to the past:

> The practice of harvesting Mnoomin is a way of life, carried from generation to generation. At our gathering, we begin with the sunrise, we gather by the water by fire to honour our water and greet the day. The time of the Mnoomin harvest is also duck hunting season. Early morning we hear gunshots out on the lake, while the sunrises, A little jarring but hey! Those ducks are swimming in and around the wild rice beds. The ducks are eating well. The joy of the day, community members harvesting Mnoomin by hand, in canoes, with cedar sticks. On shore, the art continues, tending the roasting fires, making sure they are neither too hot or too small, so the seeds are roasted just right. This is Mnoominkewin, it is an art. Wes Whetung named our gathering "Mnoominkewin, the art of wild ricing". In the past, Nishnaabeg used beautifully woven Black Ash baskets for gathering and winnowing. My grandmother, Maggie Pat, she was a basket maker. She would trade or sell her baskets to Shagnash (white people), or use them herself. They were works of art with a purpose, beautiful, durable, essential. In recent decades, we've watched our Black Ash trees suffer and decline from the Emerald Ash Borer, and with them, a vital part of our traditions. Harvesting Mnoomin, every part of it, nourishes the spirit of our communities. From the intense learning that happens through doing, to the joyful celebrations where we come together to eat and to honour the rice. Sounds of joy, children playing along the shoreline, others going on the lake-and it may have been a first time them. Our elders sharing stories and sitting together speaking Anishnaabemowin. It's nourishment. Its bringing us closer to our ancestors as we practice what they did for thousands of years. I remember a young woman at the Mnoominkewin Gathering in 2020, she sat quietly through the day, quietly beading while she listened to the activity happening around her. With each bead she stitched, it was as if she was sewing the world of Mnoomin into existence (Patti Shaughnessy).

Part of carrying Mnoominkewin forward is understanding and being able to relay practical knowledges about the environment, like knowing the right time to go ricing, and the need to be especially aware of weather and conditions of the rice beds. This is

especially important in contemporary times when western economic demands contrast with Anishinaabe economic needs, one has to be mindful of their time and abilities to balance western work responsibilities with cultural, spiritual and ecological responsibilities - that is to know when to go out harvesting! Whereas his Grandfather and Uncles would go out for one-two weeks during the harvest season, Timothy emphasized harvesters now go out only one or two days at a time, or once a week over the course of the gathering season:

> It's different now because we're not getting as much as we used to because we're going to do 1 to 2 days at a time, or once a week for like a month where they could actually hit it. My grandfather remembers going, and he told me, if you want to guarantee that you're going to get rice, don't go until after September long weekend, because that's when, you know, it's at least starting to get green or that it's going to be ready. It gets, you're going to hit it right at the right time [...]It's a full process. Like you really have to, and it's actually like working with people like Jeff [Beaver] and actually seeing the environment, the new environmental aspects that come into play [...] Because like, last year and the year before we had two different seasons [...] Last year water levels were high. But, the year before that, water levels were so low that the season was early. So it's really trying to, I guess you could say keep your finger on the pulse. Like trying to really time it to where you want that rice right at the perfect moment (Timothy Smoke).

Culture, Art, Songs, and Language

Mnoomin has also traditionally been a cornerstone of Anishinaabeg cultural expression. The presence of wild rice in the community enables people to share memories, knowledge, language, and songs associated with Mnoominkewin. Research contributors recounted fond memories of processing rice with their families, dancing the

rice, and singing ricing songs, illustrating how these activities are deeply embedded in culture, art, songs, and language. The presence of the rice nurtures the cultural well-being of the people, and as a result more people in the community have been given an opportunity to share their memories, knowledges, language and songs they know about Mnoomin harvesting and gathering. Elder Dorothy shared about these very things as she remembered how ricing was an integral part of her childhood memories with her father, and how her family's relationship with Mnoomin was connected to other ecological relationships within the territory. After talking about bringing home and eating the rice, Dorothy went on to say:

> And then we'd go duck hunting in the Fall, and they'd be among them rice beds there [...] we'd put our moccasins on and sing. We'd dance the rice and that. That was always the funniest part. My Dad liked to sing, and he would clap and sing. We would dance to the rice and sing along [...] we would do it at home on the balcony [...] we also had a little, a family cottage on Lovesick Lake and he would bring his rice there and we would dance on the Skow rock actually, we called it Skow Rock, S-K-O-W, was his parents trapping cottage on Lovesick Lake [...] I have lots of good memories from when I was younger there. So, we danced the rice on Skow Rock (Elder Dorothy Taylor).

This story and others illustrate how Mnoominkewin both creates and is celebrated in songs and stories, preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge and values. Patti Shaughnessy shared how her work in theatre and performance inspires ideas for community work and connects artistic projects to grassroots initiatives that support community well-being through cultural continuity of Mnoominkewin. Patti told me about how her work in theatre led to the eventual creation of the annual Mnoominkewin gathering event in Curve Lake:

In 2018, I directed the world premiere of Drew Hayden Taylor's *Cottagers and Indians* at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. The play was commissioned by Richard Rose, who was the artistic director at the time. *Cottagers and Indians* told the story of what has come to be known as the "Wild Rice Wars" in the Kawartha Lakes region. It was about a conflict between a Nishnaabeg man, who maintained his right to grow and harvest Mnoomin, and a white woman cottager who did not want the rice growing along her shoreline. Looking back, I think that project may have helped set the stage for the Mnoominkewin Gathering. It might have been about a year later when James Whetung called me one evening and said, "Let's do a Mnoomin festival in Curve Lake! We'll call it *Mnoomini Giizis,* Wild Rice Moon!" And that was that, we began planning the gathering. James and I have a long history of working together in theatre and through the Ode'min Giizis Festival, a multidisciplinary arts festival we held in Peterborough from 2007 to 2012. So it felt natural that from that call, we began growing Mnoominkewin in a truly organic way. On the shores of Curve Lake, we invited the community to come out onto the water, to harvest rice, and to take part in the processing. I feel that this community-based project had a deeper impact than theatre in some ways. People were active participants rather than passive audience members, and that level of involvement made all the difference. Years ago, James and I had been rehearsing for Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* at the old Market Hall in Peterborough. It was September, right in the middle of ricing season. Rehearsals were intense — I think we had only about twelve days before the premiere. James was rehearsing the character of Nanabush, and during one rehearsal, he turned to me and said, "I don't think I could ever do this again. I'm ricing in the morning and evening and trying to learn too many lines!" It was a hectic time — but he did it: acting while ricing. When we first started organizing the Mnoominkewin Gathering, we agreed on a four-year plan. The fourth year would coincide with the centenary of the 1923 Williams Treaty. That treaty had a devastating impact on our rights to harvest, and over time, the wild rice beds had dwindled. It was deeply meaningful to mark the centenary standing by a bay full of rice,

> celebrating how we have maintained and continue to maintain our right to harvest
>
> (Patti Shaughnessy).

Annual Mnoomin gathering is an integral time for the intergenerational exchange of important cultural knowledges, new ideas, and stories that teach us how to live. Participating in Mnoomin gathering and processing engages the body, mind, and spirit in the land, family, community, language, arts, and Indigenous intelligence. In my understanding of gerontological study, contemporary perspectives of aging and well-being are often measured on an individual basis that is then compared to a broader community or demographic. While many consider intergenerational understandings of wellness over the course of life, few take stock of the deeper intergenerational relationships that, as Mnoomin harvesters highlight, are interconnected with the land, community, spirituality, ecosystems, culture, and traditions.

> Our life revolves around it. Like my goals and my future revolve around it. I'm taking on a more eco-tourism side of the business where we take people out and teach them more than the actual collecting of rice. Like we're collecting rice, but not for selling. It's the teaching part that I'm more interested in and sharing that. And, so access to rice is important, but I can see that my Dad's like <laughter> well established a rice bed right in our front yard, and so we have a boat launch now I can take people out right from there. And it's really nice that we don't have to travel out to find rice now, that we can see it doing so well, and that it's harder for people to take from us when it's so close, that we can protect it [...] Now I know there's people <laughter>, there is like situations where people don't want us to access it or it feels like more difficult to access. They just like, it just becomes an uncomfortable process, like when we're at Pigeon Lake
>
> (Daemin Whetung).

> When I was a kid, I just remember, it sounds so lame, but my Aunt was holding this like big Ziploc bag of wild rice, I would've been about 7 or 8, and *it was like she was holding gold*. Because like all my Uncles were working, so the fact that they had that one piece, like that one bag, like we've always had it, but that much at that time there was a level of excitement in the house because it was like Thanksgiving time, so everybody's around. And so yeah, historically it's always been something of high value because it's something we all did as a family
>
> (Timothy Smoke).

Mnoomin Gathering and Well-being

Mnoomin harvesters shared many ways they feel their well-being is nurtured through their relations and work with Mnoomin. The practice of Mnoominkewin involves engaging your mind through learning and generating knowledges; physical activity to harvest and process the Mnoomin; emotional and mental wellness is supported by being outdoors on the water, on land, and spending time with family, friends, and community; spiritual nourishment through engagement with culture, language and arts; and then enjoying nutritional, social, and spiritual benefits of eating the Mnoomin. There was also a lot of pride and sense of security expressed in caring for and harvesting one's own foods expressed in the interview discussions, which speaks to the broader collective importance of connection to Indigenous food systems, paralleling the importance of reciprocal roles that humans have in maintaining environmental wellness.

The practice of Mnoominkewin brings into perspective the all elements of well-being, involving all parts of the oneself through the engagement of physically gathering the seeds, care taking of the Mnoomin beds, processing the seeds into food, spending

time outdoors on the land and on the water, spending time with family, community, youth and Elders, learning the value of direct relationship to food and food autonomy, engaging with cultural knowledges, and nurturing spiritual connections. Mnoomkewin provides a great deal of knowledge on how to live well through practical kinship:

> I think just the sharing, of being out there, there's something special about going through the rice and kind of working together and hearing all the different sounds that are out there, the birds and the fish, you know? Just being out in nature, and it kind of almost takes you back in time to where, you know it's been going on for thousands of years. So, it just kind of gets into your blood. But, this is something that's just been done forever and, it's just a great feeling when you're there, for everybody (Jeff Beaver).

> In our community, even now, it's part of our programming, like for health and social services. So some people will go out as a way of social therapy, and it's a brilliant thing to do because it kind of allows you to immerse yourself, it creates that self-identification as well. So you want to enjoy that, and most people who go now, that's what comes with it. It's something they could tie themselves to (Timothy Smoke).

> Mnoomin is almost always in my pantry. James and Daemin are my suppliers. I don't rice every year, mostly because I was organizing the gathering leading up to our gathering. Mnoomin is a superfood for me. And so versatile. I eat it with berries and yogurt, put it in soups, make casseroles and pilafs. The seed itself has a nutty flavour but takes on other flavours. When I look at the old Roy studio photographs of our people ricing, I often imagine what conservations were had in the canoes or stories told. And I wonder who fell in the lake! Ricers have such knowledge of the lake ecosystems. Knowing what fish consumes the Mnoomin or lives in it. How the Mnoomin contributes to the health of the lakes. When I see the ricers out on the lake moving gently with the cedar sticks, gathering carefully, its like watching a graceful dance (Patti Shaughnessy).

Nutritious Food

Access to nutritious food is a fundamental aspect of well-being and an indicator of health. Mnoomin is a profoundly nutritious food. Describing the nutritional and physical value of Mnoomin, Caleb Musgrave emphasized the efficiency and productivity of Mnoomin harvesting, highlighting how a single good day on the water can provide a whole year supply of Mnoomin, contrasting it with the labor-intensive process of cultivating other crops. I asked how important Mnoomin is:

> Vital?! My family, our goal in life is to have 60 to 80% of our diet coming from the land. And if you have a good day in a canoe and a good patch, you can get your entire year's supply. If you do it right, if you work hard, if you're in the right spot, the conditions are perfect, you can get everything you need in a single day. And that's saying something because if I was to do the same thing with acorns, it would be three weeks, four weeks of work. If I was to do the same thing with wheat or corn, it's a lot of work to get that corn developed. You gotta watch that corn all year round, make sure the deer and the coyotes, and the raccoons don't get to it. And the squirrels even, and the chipmunks, and everything else wants your corn! Whereas the only thing you gotta really compete with for rice is geese. And so I just shoot the geese, and I got meat! (Caleb Musgrave).

Similarly, Georgie reflected on the health benefits of Mnoomin, noting its importance in family traditions and the role it has in mitigating health conditions such as diabetes:

> The ancestral community where I come from. I know that it's still highly prized and they, you know, come Thanksgiving, it's always a part of their dish, you know, always. I think every family has a wild rice dish. A lot of the old people still eat it because it's, they've always done it that way. And it's good for them. If you have diabetes, it helps to regulate your blood sugar. You know, that much. So, hanging on to those old ways. I'm sure if, as Indigenous people, if we return to those old diets, we would become much healthier people,

(Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Stories shared about the health benefits of Mnoomin as a highly nutritious food underscore the essential role of Mnoomin in sustaining physical well-being, cultural continuity, and food sovereignty:

> Many of our community members suffer from diabetes now. Too much sugar in the diet. In fact, many Indigenous communities suffer from diet related illness. All this directly related to loss of land and traditional hunting grounds and game wardens taking away fish catches and game. So, its wonderful to see our Elders and community coming to the gathering and being fed salmon, pickerel, mnoomin, berries… The very act of going out to rice has physical benefits. Launching the canoe, paddling, harvesting, unloading the rice onto shore. We need to get back to that physical activity (Patti Shaughnessy).

Physical Activity

Mnoomin harvesting and processing also requires a great deal of physical activity, which is good for the body. The intensive physical labour involved in Mnoominkewin promotes overall physical health, a key contributor to overall sense of well-being:

> Wild rice is hard work. It's long, hard work from the little bit that I have observed, you know? You can go out ricing for two weeks, and you can get a whole canoe full of rice grains, but that's only the beginning, you know, and you have to come in, and then you have to let the, you can either let your rice, the grains dry for a little bit, or else you can start the drying process right away. But it's hard work. Especially if you do it the old way (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Socializing

Mnoominkewin is an inherently social activity and promotes well-being through bringing people together, nurturing and reinforcing connections, cooperation, and

collaboration. Georgie spoke about the social aspects of Mnoomin gathering, demonstrating how it strengthens community bonds:

> In terms of our young people having access to that, you know, there's also that balance of keeping it, you know, for your communities for the teaching value, for the connection to the heritage. In terms of our young people having access to that, you know, there's also that balance of keeping it for your communities for the teaching value, for the connection to the heritage (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Spiritual Nourishment

The act of transforming Mnoomin into food is seen as a way to nourish not just the body, but also the spirit, fostering a holistic sense of well-being. Many of the stories shared with me speak to the sacredness of processing Mnoomin into food, emphasizing its cultural and ritualistic importance. There are spiritual relationships that are formed and nurtured through this interaction between plants and animals including humans. This spirit is in the food that we harvest, process, and eat. And this is how this nourishes both our physical bodies as well as our spiritual well-being.

Many of us have memories of culturally important foods, of the care that went into the foods that our grandparents made for us or even continue to make special family recipes. These are living memories, stories, and traditions as old as time. Mnoomin gathering supports spiritual wellness. The tradition of gathering Mnoomin, memories of eating it with family, special recipes, and enjoying it at special events or ceremonies along with cultural stories and knowledges of Mnoomin link every generation to the past, present and the future. Mnoominkewin demonstrates how well being over the course of life and generations is directly correlated to our ecological relationships and to the environment.

> James has told me that Mnoomin will not grow in dirty water. It thrives in clean water. Our lakes have suffered pollutants caused by industry so perhaps the water is healing just as we as Anishinaabeg are healing (Patti Shaughnessy).

Mnoomin Kinship and Ecological Relationships

Those who had not grown up in ricing families or communities expressed having come back around to Mnoomin gatherings because it was a good time in their life to seek it out. Mnoomin gathering events are also times in which many are reminded of their kin ties to family, community and place, while many others come to deeper understanding or recognition of the importance of reconnecting with land and their own Indigeneity. Through local Anishinaabe knowledges, Mnoomin gathering is a time in which to reflect on cultural knowledges and traditions, to think about and engage in relationships to the land, water, and to each other.

Emphasized in the interview discussions is the importance of living in cooperation. The kinship between Mnoomin and Anishinaabeg is reciprocal, central to the well-being of the ecosystem and all life forms. The practice of Mnoominkewin is a testament to Anishinaabeg role in maintaining ecological balance and the interconnectedness of all life forms. Mnoomin care taking ensures continued access to the nutritional and culturally important food source, but the *practice of Mnoominkewin* also contributes to the well-being of the entire ecosystem in the territory, Ontario, and more broadly the Great Lakes. As we take care of the Mnoomin, the Mnoomin takes care of us. Mnoomin has a tremendous ecological value demonstrated by both the human and many kindred species whose lives are supported by the rice beds:

> And then you look at the ecological value, wild rice can absorb thousands upon thousands of parts per million of pollutants, whether it's E coli, Norwalk kind of stuff, sorry, not Norwalk, E. co-li or other waterborne pathogens, all the way to heavy metals. They can absorb quite a bit of toxin, and we're looking at things such as the Odenaabe River right here in the centre where my community is the first community at the Odenaabe River. We get all of our water from the lake here and we have wells, but those wells are connected to the lake (Caleb Musgrave).

For Anishinaabeg, Mnoomin is the centre of all relations; physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental. It is commonplace to talk about eating a healthy diet filled with nutritious foods, drinking water, exercising, and sleeping well. What is often missing from mainstream dialogue of wellness is the quality of our relationships to our environments, in which we may or may not be able to access nutritious foods, safe drinking water, or even clean air. Perspectives of wellness in relation to Mnoomin include the land and water:

> I'm in a different era of rice harvesting because I hear the old stories, like how far we've come, that we would come to a place where grass grew on the water. Or, that it was through prophecy, that we were starving at one point, and that this rabbit showed us the way to the water. So it's kind of parlaying those tidbits, but actually seeing the reality of just, when that rice is there it's not just the rice because there's a whole environment and ecosystem within itself, that's sustaining itself, and the fact that we are a part of that as well. It's that natural cycle. So, when you look at it, people say it's folklore, but it's the oral tradition of our people, it's natural tradition and lifestyle (Timothy Smoke).

Also present in the conversations with Mnoomin harvesters is the role that Mnoomin has always played in shaping life in Michi Saagiig Territory from the time of

Anishinaabeg migration from the Eastern Seaboard, to early European Settlement[28] in the region, Mnoomin has played a major role in shaping communities in the territory as we know them today:

> The Peter Robinson Irish emigrants came to the Kawartha Lakes sick and hungry. They travelled on disease infested boats for months before they arrived here. It's not written in local history books, but our oral stories tell of the Anishinaabe helping them with what medicines to take, how to tap maple trees, to navigate the rivers, to live in the bush, what this land can provide them. This learning did not happen overnight for the settlers, yet the acknowledgement of Anishinaabe knowledge and assistance has nearly been erased from the mouths of Irish descendants. I know, because I am a decedent of the Irish who came here in 1823. The Irish were starved out of their land in Ireland, brought here, given stolen Anishinaabe land to farm, and become taxpayers. Interesting that the oppressed can become the oppressor either directly or indirectly (Patti Shaughnessy).

Continuity of Mnoominkewin

Rooted deeply in ecological, spiritual, and community relationships, Mnoominkewin embodies a profound connection to the land and water, upheld through ongoing efforts to restore, protect, and pass down traditional knowledges connected to Mnoomin. Research contributors illuminated how this continuity has been and is being carried out, in various ways, by various actors in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin territories. Anishinaabeg have never stopped ricing and carrying the knowledges. Cultural

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[28] Some European settlement in the territory began earlier on, though a large emigration of Settlers from Ireland, often dubbed the "Peter Robinson Settlers" arriving in 1825, were among the first wave of Settlers to occupy the territory. Their histories have been documented by few local historians, though often missing from the record are the oral histories and relationships that Irish Settlers formed with Michi Saagiig and their dependence on the existing Anishinaabe food system. For example, see: https://globalgenealogy.com/countries/canada/ontario/general/resources/101251.htm

knowledges and traditional skills continue to be passed on to every generation. As Caleb Musgrave succinctly summarized the contemporary situation in his community:

> There used to be hundreds of us that knew how to rice, but now there's maybe a handful of youth and they're still learning (Caleb Musgrave).

As the interview discussions unfolded, a great deal of local oral history and many family stories were shared about many generations of Mnoomin harvesters and caretakers who have sustained the Mnoomin through intergenerational knowledge sharing and cooperation between families and communities here in Michi Saagiig Territory and broader Anishinaabeg territories. These stories shed light on the interconnections between Anishinaabe Mnoomin harvesters and the work they have done over centuries to ensure the continuity of Mnoominkewin in the Great Lakes region. One story that was shared is of Michi Saagiig families who have close ties to Omàmìwininì families and who have planted, mutually cared for, and gathered Mnoomin in the beds at Mud Lake and the Mississippi River for over a century along the shores of Ardoch First Nation. The community and familial kinship to Mnoomin is rooted in the 19th century transfer of Pimadashkodeyong Mnoomin seeds to Mud Lake to ensure the continuation of Mnoominkewin, and knowledge exchanges between the communities that continues to this day. This was an integral part of the resistance to the erosion of Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig territory, particularly following the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway.

Elder Jeff Beaver shared this story about the transfer of seeds from Rice Lake to Ardoch, explaining that it took decades and much cooperation between Michi Saagiig and Ardoch Algonquin families to establish the beds at Ardoch that have now been tended to annually for over a century. The connection that Michi Saagiig have to the rice beds

and to the Ardoch Algonquin families located in Mud Lake and along the Mississippi Watershed at Ardoch First Nation is a particularly special one, which as described in Chapter Two led to the rekindling and relearning of important Mnoomin knowledges, during the Rice Wars, which brought Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee from many nations together to protect the Mnoomin beds from being damaged, removed or appropriated by the MNR and private companies:

> Ardoch is where the seed out of Rice Lake was taken back to Ardoch by our relatives back in the early 1900s. And thank God they did that because it wasn't very long after that, 30 years, it was all gone here in Rice Lake. Everything was gone. They [settlers] changed the whole landscape, and the whole cultural significance of the area. Because people came from Ardoch, it was four days by canoe, and people came from around four days from canoe, and all points in between would have all congregated here. So, all the islands would have been filled with people camping and gathering rice. When it all disappeared, they had to just go find another bed, or they just quit, or something? We don't know where they all went, but it was just gone here. But, anyways thankfully, it took, I think it probably would've took, probably 10 to 15 years of hauling rice from Rice Lake back to Ardoch, and getting those beds going back there. There's a lot of acreage there. You know? I know for my own thing; it takes a long time just to get three or four acres going that replenishes itself. You're looking at least five years just to get that much going. So, when you've got one hundred and some acres down there, a lot of time and a lot of effort to do that. So, then when we went to Ardoch we thought, well let's bring some seed back again to Rice Lake. So, we went there, when I was first started, and we brought some back and put it in the Indian River and, oh a few other places, quite a few places around the lake. And it would grow, and it would come off to a floating leaf stage, and some would get to the full stage
>
> (Jeff Beaver).

Although the connection to Mnoomin knowledges and gathering has been interrupted, harvesting has always continued in some capacity, and in recent years there has been a growing resurgence of Anishinaabeg renewing their knowledges through engagement with Mnoomin harvesters and harvesting events[29], and then returning this knowledge to their communities, securing green seed to replant Mnoomin beds to restore the practice of Mnoominkewin and enjoy this culturally important food source. Some research contributors talked about their parents' or Grandparents' involvement in asserting inherent and treaty rights as well as protecting the Mnoomin beds during the early development of the Trent Severn Waterway.

On The Water and On The Shoreline

Learning about Mnoomin harvesting often begins with a focus on the water, especially for many who do not have immediate access to the water, to boats, canoes or to the Mnoomin beds. Though much of the focus on Mnoomin harvesting is on the activities and work that happens on the water, activities on the shoreline also play a vital role in continuing Mnoominkewin. The shoreline is where much of the teaching, storytelling, community engagement, ceremony, all of the processing and family caring, and the bulk of advocacy work to protect the Mnoomin takes place. Considering the connection between the water and the land through a lens of Mnoominkewin underscores the importance of both shorelines and waterways as sacred spaces where cultural traditions, family, community, and geographical relationships, as well as ecological stewardship converge:

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[29] The fourth annual Mnoominkewin event is a great example of the resurgence of Mnoomin interests. For an overview of the turnout at the 2023 event see: https://www.mnoominkewin.com/

> Having the schools come out is really great because a lot of people get exposed to that one time, and then you just need one or two interested people out of the group to carry it on, right? I don't ever expect that everyone's going to be interested in it or at least at the same time in their life [...]. Having Curve Lake school come out is great. The high school or the native organizations that young people are a part of coming out is really great for us, and there's always like a couple people that are more keen than everyone else that, you know, will probably be the ones that will be doing this in the future (Daemin Whetung).

Many aspects to Mnoominkewin take place on the land. This includes gathering or making materials and tools like canoes, ricing sticks, roasting pots or animal hides, tarps, and winnowing baskets, or maintenance equipment like boats or processing machinery, and then preparing areas for each of the steps involved in processing the green seed into food that can be stored and eaten later on. Along with processing, many harvesters need support from family and friends to maintain usual childcare, and household responsibilities in order to go out gathering or to learn about Mnoomin at workshops, day trips, or camps. Additionally, in the context of colonization that has led to greatly differing opinions and attitudes towards the lakes, rivers, and the Mnoomin, a great deal of work also goes into community outreach and relationship building. This includes petitioning all levels of government to uphold Treaty rights, especially for the protection of the Mnoomin beds.

Despite the variety of activities and tasks that go into Mnoominkewin, everyone finds their way to keep it going. Elder Dorothy Taylor tells a most beautiful and unique story that demonstrates how very important the *shoreline work* of Mnoominkewin is to intergenerational well-being through the teachings passed down through generations. To

teach her children what her father taught about Mnoomin, using the ricing sticks he passed down to her Dorothy taught her children to rice from the shoreline:

> I'm in a wheelchair. I have muscular dystrophy, unfortunately. So I can't spend as much time in the canoe. So how I was able to teach that to my kids… my dad passed away and I got his rice sticks. And so I took them to Little Bald Lake, I have my canoe and I said, there's the rice bed. This is how you rice [gesturing with the ricing sticks how to knock the rice], and they went out ricing, and we did the ricing together, me from the shoreline, I showed them where to go (Dorothy Taylor).

Ricing Technologies and Traditional Knowledges

A few Mnoomin harvesters discussed the different ways they harvest Mnoomin. During my time learning about Mnoomin, I have spent time learning different methods for gathering and processing, and I have heard many stories about the history of Mnoomin. Like the stories, with time, ricing technologies have also evolved and changed. Mnoomin Knowledge Holders, like Daemin Whetung, Caleb Musgrave, Elder Jeff Beaver teach others how to gather Mnoomin from a canoe and process the seeds into food using traditional methods. Though, Knowledge Holders and harvesters also utilize modern technologies and tools to aid them in maintaining, reseeding, monitoring, harvesting, and processing Mnoomin into food. The use of modern technologies like GPS mapping software, drones, processing equipment/machines, and airboats are necessary tools given the changing needs of Michi Saagiig communities and competing colonial interests in the waterway of Canadian governing bodies and shoreline property owners. However, preserving traditional cultural practices with tried and trusted traditional tools, canoes, ricing sticks, parching seeds over an open fire using a pot and a paddle, and

winnowing with baskets or blankets to ensure Mnoominkewin remain most valuable and continue to be taught to ensure Mnoomin is as widely accessible as possible.

The Mnoomin itself is known to have a whole understanding of the role it plays in the eco-system. It has, after all, thousands of year's experience dedicated to living and surviving in this place, surely pointing towards a sustainable ecological intelligence to care for the environment in the face of contemporary issues, like for instance, water pollution from shoreline property chemical run off, sewage dumping, damming, and gas powered watercraft. Water pollution that flows downstream into Michi Saagiig territory from the top of the watershed is very damaging to Mnoomin beds, and it also reduces the quality of drinking water. Whereas Mnoomin is able to help clean the water:

> That lake is our aquifer. If that aquifer is full of toxins from Peterborough and Lindsay and the highways 7 and 115, you're looking at a lot of poison that's coming down that river to my community. Why? Why would we not want to have another kidney in there to filter it out? And that would be that Mnoomin. Mnoomin is a filter plant just like cattail. Cattail will choke out a river. Mnoomin won't choke it out (Caleb Musgrave).

While some Mnoomin harvesters share their preference for harvesting Mnoomin by canoe and processing by hand, many engage in a combination of both traditional and contemporary methods for harvesting and processing. Regardless of the approach, protocols and respect for traditional practices remain central, ensuring that the cultural and ecological integrity of Mnoomin harvesting is maintained. Younger people pick up the skills and knowledge that is passed on to them and build on the tradition with their own innovative approaches harvesting and processing, as well as ways to continue to provide education to their families and community members. Moreover, the Mnoomin

also maintains a growing intelligence and adaptability to an ever changing environment that serves the water, the eco-system, and us humans very well.

Collaborative Efforts Towards Mnoomin Restoration

One of the greatest collaborative efforts between harvesters and caretakers involves going out and reseeding the rice beds to maintain this important cultural and ecological relationship year after year and over generations. Similar to the diverse preferences in harvesting practices, Mnoomin harvesters have various approaches to their responsibilities towards Mnoomin, especially when facing management challenges influenced by external organizations, such as the Trent Severn Waterway, or in asserting treaty harvesting and gathering rights. Harvesters navigate protection, management, and access to Mnoomin through grassroots initiatives, community outreach and education, as well as by collaborating with or providing consultation to fellow Indigenous organizations, academic institutions, and government units such as the Trent Severn Waterway, and First Nation Band Offices to effect positive change through continuing education, research, grant funding, protection, and access to Anishinaabe Mnoomin. A few organizations with common objectives to local harvesters to preserve intergenerational wellness through ecological initiatives that are premised on Anishinaabe Knowledges and continuity for well-living are: The Black Oak Savannah, Black Duck Wild Rice, and Nibi Emosaawdamajig – Those Who Walk for the Water.[30]

[30] Odawa Grandmother Josephine Mandamin-Bah is widely credited with raising awareness of water health through her water walks around the Great Lakes that began in 2003. Women all over the Great Lakes continue to raise awareness and advocate for the water every year: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxN8G_PeWS0

Every Mnoomin harvester has their own unique relationships to Mnoomin and engage in harvesting practices that align with their views and purpose, employing strategies that often involve engaging both within and outside of institutions to maintain, protect and continue access to their Mnoomin beds, and innovative approaches to engaging with or expanding upon Mnoomin knowledges. One commonality I understand remains across harvesters; however, collective intergenerational wellness is nurtured through kinship to Mnoomin, and it must be protected, cared for, and remain accessible.

> I know that we have to go to the Elders for knowledge. I see a lot of more youth participating in it for different reasons, but I think it's about tapping into old knowledge. So even beyond the Elders to further back, and trying to find what we were, what we had before (Daemin Whetung).

> Bringing those old ways because not every Anishinaabe young person would have access to wild rice. You know, there was only a few communities here and there where the wild rice grew, and around here they're fortunate that wild rice used to be in abundance. Over the years, it fell away, you know, due to areas where they were removed or the conditions of the water when the Trent canals came in, they flooded their rice beds [...] those conditions caused the rice to disappear (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

> Replanting and bringing it back so that the young people today, those who are interested, you know, are given the opportunity to experience it in a way how it used to be, even though today it's modernized. But, they still get that opportunity to go out with a canoe, and their ricing sticks, and participate that way. And, you know, sometimes a young person who experiences that even though it's just a wee tiny bit of how things used to be, that awakens their interest to explore even further in other areas (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

A lot of work continues to go into coping with and resisting the historical and contemporary colonial impacts to the land and in turn, cultures of Indigenous persons in order to ensure the continuity of land-based relations from which culture derives (John Mohawk, Original Instructions, 2008, page 126). Mnoomin Knowledge Holder Winona Laduke (2012) posits the need for *a return to a food-based economy*.[31] Mnoomin harvesting is one example of an economic practice that is rooted to the regeneration of the land, respecting the interdependent nature of the human relationship to all fellow life forms, supporting biodiversity, cultural diversity, and a thriving, equitable, sustainable economy. At the same, the argument is sometimes made that Indigenous practice ought to remain technologically static or locked in time. For example, there is an erroneous assumption that if traditional harvesting rights are upheld that should also mean that only "traditional" tools, like canoes as opposed to airboats, ought to be used. But this argument ignores the realities of modern lifestyles and needs. There is ample evidence that using contemporary tools (like an airboat to gather Mnoomin, or a roasting machine to assist in processing higher volumes of Mnoomin where there are far fewer persons to engage in manual processing) maintains a high level of environmental and economic integrity, in turn reducing political unrest because of the potential to meet collective needs.

Summary

The continuity of Mnoominkewin among Anishinaabeg communities in Ontario reflects a resilient intergenerational commitment to preserving cultural, spiritual, and

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[31] See also: LaDuke, W. (2013). Seeds the Creator Gave Us. Bioneers. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEVg_KMPCmg

ecological kinship despite historical and contemporary challenges of settler colonialism. This chapter highlights the continuation of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig Territory. This chapter also discusses the wider resurgence of gathering activities and knowledges that can largely be attributed to the restoration efforts of Mnoomin harvesters and community supporters who have worked for decades to harvest, caretake, and reseed the rice beds annually, provide community education, provide processed Mnoomin to local communities, provide green seed to fellow communities, and provide opportunities to access the Mnoomin. Moreover, a great deal of work to advocate for both treaty rights to harvest as well as physical protection of the rice beds has been ongoing by Anishinaabeg and fellow Canadian supporters for more than a century.

Many harvesters shared how they came to Mnoomin harvesting later in life, while others recalled elements of Mnoomin being a part of their early years. This chapter offers just a snapshot of these important intergenerational kin ties to Mnoomin in Eastern Ontario. The stories shared herein further demonstrate the importance of our ecological relationships and engagement with the land, water, and traditional foods, like Mnoomin. Mnoomin is traditionally present for all special occasions and ceremonies and, as described by harvesters in this chapter, Mnoominkewin offers a pathway to living a healthy lifestyle.

Anishinaabeg Knowledge Holders, Elders, and leaders here in Michi Saagiig territory and all around the Great Lakes have been working to re-educate and re-establish Anishinaabeg political and economic structures for decades[32]. There is mention in this chapter that Mnoomin helped to sustain the lives of the first settler Europeans to the

[32] See: https://www.wyomingpublicmedia.org/tribal-news/2023-10-19/anishinaabe-activist-winona-laduke-advocates-for-sustainable-local-food-and-textile-economies-at-farm-festival-in-the-tetons.

Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe region. At the centre of this work is the understanding that intergenerational relationships are integral to annual Mnoomin harvesting traditions. There is a desire by Mnoomin caretakers to re-establish wider support in bringing all ages of community members together. The importance of including family and community members of all ages in the care taking, gathering, knowledge sharing, and physical processing of Mnoomin is a notable sentiment in the interview discussions.

The art of Mnoominkewin is a practice of well-being that incorporates social connections, nutritious food, physical exercise, cultural knowledges, engagement with plants, fish, birds, and insects, other than human mammals, traditional and contemporary technologies, quality time with family, friends, Elders, youth, Land and Water that endure and support well-being throughout the entire year, over a lifetime, and over generations. Mnoominkewin offers a continuum of physical and spiritual and cultural kinship that connects the past, present, and future that instills a great sense of purpose in collective caring.

Discussions with the Mnoomin Harvesters demonstrate that while the practice of Mnoominkewin is not as widespread as it once was, Anishinaabe kinship to Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig territory has endured. A few harvesters mentioned that the lack of Mnoomin that is visible in the waterway is a likely reason for the reduced interest and participation in annual gathering. Though the Mnoomin is not as abundant in the lakes and rivers in the territory, it has continued to grow and even thrive in some parts of the watershed. However modest some harvest years have been in recent decades, harvesters continue the tradition and share what they gather with their families, and with their communities. Still, there is a great deal of concern about the work needed to restore the

Mnoomin beds. Michi Saagiig territory has been greatly impacted by dense colonial settlement over many generations.

Chapter Five: Restoring Mnoominkewin

Chapter Overview

The Mnoomin harvesters who provided interviews for this project have each contributed towards the protection of Mnoomin with the intention to continue community access to Mnoomin. This section focuses on the work of confronting colonial barriers to ensure the continuity of Mnoominkewin, expanding on themes four through six as outlined in Table 4.1. In this chapter I share interview excerpts that describe harvesters' experiences and observations of colonial impacts on the Mnoomin, and in turn on the Michi Saagiig over generations. Within these discussions there are also insights as to how to respond to historical and ongoing colonization that has affected the health of the Mnoomin beds, access to Mnoomin, and intergenerational wellness. This leads into some reflections that describe a common vision for the continuity of Mnoominkewin.

Colonialism in Michi Saagiig Territory

Colonial impacts on Mnoomin and Anishinaabeg First Nations were repeatedly described in the interviews given by project contributors despite no direct questions about colonialism. While the impact of ongoing colonialism is an established theme of the project, I intentionally excluded questions of colonialism from the interview guide so as to put an emphasis on the enduring cultural and ecological relationships with the Mnoomin. Still, interview responses reinforced colonialism as an important factor in understanding contemporary issues that Mnoomin harvesters are confronted with. The continuity of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig territory persists even in the face of more than two hundred years of colonialism in the territory. This section summarizes three

pivotal incidents that have occurred over the last century which were recounted in the interviews; three colonial acts, that have interrupted the Mnoomin-centred Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe food system.

The Indian Act and The Williams Treaties

The colonization of Anishinaabeg Mnoomin goes beyond environmental "impacts" to Mnoomin. Daemin Whetung posited that despite a continuous kinship with Mnoomin in many ways, the relationship has been greatly weakened if not completely severed due to policy and legislation like the Indian Act which led to the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families to residential schools and religious Catholic and Christian schools that forbade language and pushed a patriarchal colonial agenda in order to assimilate and ultimately kill off Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island (and in many places around the world).

As described in Chapter Two, the Williams Treaties was interpreted by early Canadian Government as a bill of sale of sorts, rather than a land sharing agreement. This arbitrary interpretation of the treaty, particularly the erroneous inclusion of the Basket Clause, has greatly impacted the natural environment and impeded upon inherent Anishinaabeg rights to hunt, gather, trap, fish, cultivate, and harvest foods. Though, these rights along with relationship, or in this context Indigenous jurisdiction and caretaking, of the water were never given up:

> We never gave up any rights to our lakes. The lake bottom, it's still ours. That's not included in the treaties at all. Of course they argue that part of the treaty is assumed, and lakes are part of it. When nothing says that. That's their own interpretation (Elder Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

There is a well-established understanding of the multi-generational colonial impacts that is clearly set forth in the first-hand accounts shared by Mnoomin gatherers. I knew from my years of participating in annual Mnoomin gathering and reseeding in Michi Saagiig territory and at Ardoch First Nation that it would be a salient topic in interview conversations. Although I did not ask specific questions about colonialism, nor did I present any questions about colonialism of the territory in the interview guide, stories of historical and ongoing colonization of the Anishinaabeg and of Anishinaabe Mnoomin came up again and again. Specifically, inter-generational memories of a time before the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway, and subsequent to the construction of the locks and dams the inability to continue to fully exercise treaty rights, including harvesting Mnoomin, due to extensive private ownership, developments and houses that now overcrowd the shorelines of the waterway and that prevent ease of access to the lakes, overuse of the water for recreational purposes, damage to the waterway by private property owners or part time residents in the territory and the introduction of invasive fish species (especially Carp) into the waterway by the province of Ontario:

> The Trent Severn Waterway blocked Nishnaabeg river and lake highways to access to Mnoomin and traditional hunting grounds. With the completion of the TSW, there was increased pollutants into our water systems due to industry. You think about the toxic waste of the General Electric and Outboard Marine, Quaker Oats, Westclox in Peterborough, that poison runs into our lakes and rivers. The fluctuation of waterways led to destabilizing our Mnoomin beds. But the earth will heal itself, with the help of Indigenous plants that clean the water. Untouched shorelines, limited dredging and "weed removal", allows nature to constantly rejuvenate itself (Patti Shaughnessy).

The Trent Severn Waterway

The construction of the Trent Severn waterway began nearly 200 years ago at Bobcaygeon and resulted in the Rice Lake Mnoomin beds being drowned out by subsequent flooding of the area. The construction of the locks and dams greatly changed the landscape in the territory, and the damming of the lakes and rivers greatly reduced once abundant food sources, causing some to be terminated from the waterway all together (such as the Salmon and Eel as described in Chapter Two) and the flooding out of the Mnoomin beds.

> My Grandfather as well, like that's some of his memories. He remembers ricing just before it [Rice Lake] was flooded. So he would have been like maybe 9. So, that's a pretty key memory for him because, remember he's he's 93 now. So, he just remembers like coming back, and they would go duck hunting, and they would go fishing, and they're trapping, and like that rice season was a part of their process, before they went back home [...] so it would have been like the thirties-ish [1930's] (Timothy Smoke).

> Another big reason why it's hard to get at the wild rice is because it grows specifically at shallow water and with the building of the canal, the Trent canal system, it raised the water and Curve couldn't, in particular, we lost a lot of our rice beds that way, and our cranberry beds and our trap lines. So that was in the beginning. I know my Grandfather on my Mom's side, Poppa John was his name, we have awesome pictures of him in the rice beds from her place. Yeah, so that's all gone. There's not much around Curve Lake. We have to travel if we want to get rice. We have to travel far, (Elder Dorothy Taylor).

The construction of the Trent Severn Waterway also came industrial uses of the waterway, such as logging, as well as greater tourism, and private shoreline development,

all which have greatly reduced the Mnoomin beds and that has almost completely destroyed the natural food system:

> There are a lot of factors that transformed the landscapes here. One of the biggest factors was the development of the Trent Severn Waterway. This transformed the regions' landscapes, waterways and ecosystems and continues to affect and transform the region due to shoreline development, pollutants going into the waterways from agriculture, boating and cottage development. You know, originally it was "just" to move materials, right? Yet, these massive changes on the landscape were accompanied by a set of development patterns that also impacted people's ability to access their land and waterways. Through agriculture, one of the first things that happened was the privatization of land. All of a sudden people couldn't cross the land to actually get to where they needed to go to access the food and ecosystems that they needed to access. This coupled with the reserve system, which was put in place through the Indian Act, have had hugely detrimental effects on Indigenous communities ability to be food secure and have food sovereignty (Paula Anderson).

The Rice Wars

In Chapter Two, the rice wars are described in connection to Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig Territory. In Chapter Four, there are excerpts wherein Elder Jeff Beaver describes the historical familial and community kinships that led to the transfer of Mnoomin seeds from Rice Lake to Mud Lake at Ardoch First Nation:

> When the Trent Severn Waterway came through, the people of Alderville came to the people of Ardoch because we have familial connections kind of back and forth between the Algonquins, or Ardoch, and the Michi Saagiig, Mississaugas of Alderville. So, they came to us with the rice from Rice Lake and asked us to hold it for them, and to add it to the rice beds that we had there already. And so, we, we are the keepers of the Rice for Alderville, and Alderville folks still come in

and rice in the rice beds that we are maintaining there. And, in 2006-2007, there was a uranium exploration company called Frontenac Ventures who had staked claims to several hundred acres of our traditional territory. A lot of it which contained those rice beds. And, they had a plan to, like, they were… they destroyed a whole bunch of land, and they were drilling for, they were test drilling for uranium, and they also wanted to drain Crotch Lake was one of their plans. And that was going to be their open pit uranium mine. And so, in order to protect the rice, all of the communities, I mean, we have, you know, people from Tyendinaga that come up in and rice in Ardoch. We have, you know, sometimes people from Curve Lake [...]. So, we took Frontenac Ventures to court. We also, well, they took us to court really. And, uh, we blockaded their space. We took over the Robertsville mine site and we maintained a blockade there through the summer. We actually had no idea of what was happening until there was a settler who came to see us, and his name is escaping me at the moment, but his property had been torn up, and there was all kinds of mining stakes that were driven into the ground. And, he had a tree farm, and his tree farm was like smashed up. And it was horrible because in Ontario, when people buy property, they own the first six inches of soil. But they don't own anything underneath it. The province owns the mining rights, and the province can sell those mining rights to any surveyor or exploration company that they sold too [...] Algonquins of Ontario, which, Ardoch is not a part of, hadn't yet signed any kinds of agreements. We, to date, have not signed our inherent rights away. We still maintain our inherent rights to hunt and fish and gather. So, when Frontenac Ventures came through, we still had maintained those rights, and we had evidence of that [...] And so, by maintaining our relationship to Mnoomin specifically, but also to hunt and fish and to pick medicines, we were able to protect all of Eastern Ontario. I mean, if, you know, like the uranium byproducts would've contaminated water all the way down to Kingston, and then into the St. Lawrence Seaway all the way up past Ottawa, one into the back. Like, it was a nightmare (Marjolaine LaPointe).

The oral histories from both Michi Saagiig and Ardoch Omàmìwininì, along with the archival records that are described in Chapter Two, certainly demonstrate the Rice Wars of the 1980s to present began much earlier and continue to this day. This particular event however is critical to this thesis as it highlights one way in which Mnoomin knowledges have been impacted in Michi Saagiig Territory. Incidentally, assaults on the Mnoomin or purposeful attempts to impede upon Anishinaaebe kinship and access to Mnoomin, have incidentally led to wider education and greater connections through protection of Mnoomin. Daemin and Elder Dorothy both described how incidents at both Ardoch First Nation (nearly 40 years ago), and more recently in 2015 on Pigeon Lake both led to mobilization of community members from Curve Lake First Nation, in the spirit of protecting and learning about the Mnoomin:

> Some other members from Curve Lake ended up going to Ardoch, and actually learned how to process it there (Daemin Whetung).

> It's not part of our everyday diet but, as soon as Mnoomin was threatened on Pigeon Lake, everybody mobilized in Curve Lake and we went there and protected it (Elder Dorothy Taylor).

Colonial Impacts on Intergenerational Well-being

Colonial impacts on well-being of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg and Anishinaabeg Mnoomin are numerous, and these impacts overlap in many and complex ways. Anishinaabeg families and communities have been directly harmed by the damages done to the Mnoomin beds in the territory. Citing numerous impacts on the growth of Mnoomin including the construction of the Trent Severn locks and dams, overdevelopment of the shorelines that prevent access to the Mnoomin beds, chemical

run off or dumping from privately owned shoreline properties including homes, cottages, resorts, golf courses, and farms that are located along the waterway. Additionally high levels of boat traffic through the rice beds, manual or mechanical removal of the Mnoomin from the Lakes (permitted or not by the Trent Severn Waterway), and the introduction of invasive fish species, like Carp, have further damaged the rice beds. Furthermore, economic demands under colonial-capitalist regime is also one of the leading factors cited by Mnoomin harvesters that prevent individuals and families from participating in Mnoominkewin and harvesting because of the difficulties being able to take time away from work or to afford to participate in seasonal cultural activities and work required to maintain the Mnoomin beds, harvest Mnoomin, process the rice into food, provide access to Mnoomin as gifts or for sale, and provide culturally and ecologically significant knowledges and education to younger generations and extended family or community so that they may take up and continue the practice of Mnoominkewin.

Describing the decline of Mnoomin gatherers and Knowledge Holders from Alderville who are available for ricing season or ricing camps:

> I think in the last 10-20 years it's been a lot harder. I think ricers or harvesters, there was an abundance, but where we're at now, it is really a select few. And, I would say there's only like, for my generation, there was only maybe two or three in our community. The generations before, there might have been two or three, but the ones before them, there might have been like thirty (Tim Smoke).

Contemplating the current colonial state, underpinned by capitalism, it is important to consider access to nutritious and culturally important foods. Harvesters described a myriad of ways in which they pull double duty to support both economic,

political, and social responsibilities within Anishinaabeg and Canadian societies. Mnoomin gatherers mediate between the costs of living, attending school, and Canadian job-market responsibilities often at the expense of being able to participate in Anishinaabe economic, political and cultural essential responsibilities, like Mnoominkewin:

> Well, even to get anybody out now is a tough job because it's just the way lifestyles are. Both parents are usually working, and the kids are in school, and you know, that's just the way things have changed in my lifetime. Like when I was growing up, everybody could probably well, everybody worked part time trades and all that, like carpenters. So we always had the Spring and the late Fall off. So, it was just a seasonal thing, part of our life that we'd go trapping in the Spring and hunting in the Fall because everybody was kind of laid off anyways, right. So, you know, that's just the way the whole cycle for years and years, everybody would be laid off and we'd all just go trapping for two or three weeks. But, now people are just too busy trying to you know, it cost a lot of money to live now, and back then it wasn't that expensive maybe. But now, people, there's no way people could take three weeks off to go trapping because, you've got bills to pay (Elder Jeff Beaver).

In discussions about their own land and resources Mnoomin harvesters also described a persistent struggle to be heard. Despite attending meetings and providing evidence of the historical and ecological significance of Mnoomin, they regularly face dismissal and ignorance by those who perceive the cultural keystone species as an aquatic weed and nuisance to their interests in the waterway. Even when false claims are duly refuted and evidence such as historical maps, the local archaeological record, as well as Anishinaabe oral history and perspective are presented, there continues to be a lack of

baseline education and understanding of basic ecological value of Mnoomin, of treaty, and of respect. The facts presented are often undermined by municipal property owners and governing bodies who have contradicting interests that favour their use of the waterway, or perhaps who simply do not comprehend any way forward:

> The biggest challenge has been making people listen. I've been to a lot of these meetings. I've been to a lot of these Town Hall get togethers where people try to talk about what the problem is, and they try to come to resolution, and they never invite First Nations when they want to figure out the resolution. By the way we show up, and we talk, and we talk with them about like, this is what it is. This is what it is! We try to re-inform them. A lot of them believe that Mnoomin is an extinct species or it's an invasive species, that's not native. They try to claim that it was never here, or that if it was, it was in small amounts, and we try to show them like, no, here's the maps. Here's the actual physical maps from the 1800's of how vast this rice patch was. Or, they'd say that it's not that big, that we shouldn't be commercially harvesting it. Well, okay. Here's the archeological record showing that our rice was traded all the way down to Mexico and all the way to Alaska. Well, they don't wanna pay attention to that neither, and they say that it's an environmental problem because 'it's choking the water". Well, do you not understand how a marsh works? Like what a marsh does, what rice does? It's a filter plant. It's cleaning the water. It's a nursery plant. It's a nursery for those small fish. The fish are doing better because we have Mnoomin. The muskrat numbers are doing better because we have Mnoomin. The ducks and geese are doing better because we have Manoomin. They don't wanna listen to that because it makes their precious little lake that they wish was in the Muskoka where they go only forward the COHA. They see it now looks like it belongs back in the marshes again, and that pisses them off because it doesn't look like Muskoka. Well, next time, pay more and go to the Muskoka, then leave our patches alone. Leave our rice alone. But it just takes time, takes time and endurance. Um, I know that James and Jeff, and Dave Mowat, and Doug Williams, and Tom Cowie have

> been fighting them for decades now and pushing against them for decades now. So, now it's the next generation's turn. Those guys are all getting old. They're all old farts. Now they're all fart and dust. So, we gotta let them step down and relax, and let them unwind and rest, and let us young bucks get up and start causing trouble now (Caleb Musgrave).

Current Barriers to Mnoomin

Stories of how Mnoomin harvesters came to learn about, engage with, and became Mnoomin Harvesters, Caretakers, and Knowledge Holders is a central element of the interview discussions. While some have been going to the Mnoomin beds or gathering Mnoomin all their life, or for as long as they can remember they have experienced Mnoominkewin as part of family and community traditions, and enjoying Mnoomin as a staple in their diet, others came their relationships with Mnoomin later in life. Most often the reunion with Mnoomin came about through seeking or serendipitously finding and following opportunities to reconnect culturally. One of the most prominent topics of discussion in the interviews, as well as what I have heard while participating in community restoration work, is of the many intersecting barriers to accessing knowledge about Mnoomin, knowing where to go and who to ask, and how to access the Mnoomin beds.

Whereas colonial Canadian society has layered itself upon the natural land base in recent centuries, Anishinaabeg have necessarily adapted to contemporary First Nation Reserves as well as urban and rural lifestyles. From these stories of inter-generational traditions, knowledges, and memory, while there is robust intergenerational continuity in Mnoominkewin, Anishinaabeg in Michi Saagiig territory have been tested to the limit over the past two centuries due to settler colonialism, the forced relocation to Reserves,

the imposition of the Indian Act, the Williams Treaties, continued resources extraction and development of the land that crowd the shorelines of lakes, rivers, and marshlands that were once abundant with Mnoomin. Mnoomin harvesters have particular insights as to the inner workings of settler colonialism, which are clearly identified through pivotal events or incidents that they describe in their interviews. One such event is the construction of the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW), which has caused some of the most significant changes to the landscape and environment in this territory in recent history. This was followed by the Williams Treaties, which further entrenched colonial control and contributed to systemic disruptions.

Subsequently, settler colonial encroachment, *the Rice Wars,* and the wider appropriation of Anishinaabe Mnoomin intensified the negative impact on traditional practices related to harvesting. This also led to the loss of the most abundant rice beds in Ontario. This loss resulted in the dismantling of Michi Saagiig (Indigenous) food systems and a substantial reduction in natural food sources, particularly those ecologically related to the Cultural Keystone Species, Mnoomin. Consequently, there has been severe lack of access to Mnoomin, which has contributed to the decline in intergenerational well-being among Anishinaabe, that parallels the decline in well-being of Anishinaabe Mnoomin.

Contextualizing the ways in which settler colonialism, capitalism and exploitation of the land impede upon Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg sovereignty, food sovereignty, family, community, and cultural traditions, lack of access to nutritional and culturally important foods, lessening of community involvement in the face of individually having to keep up with contemporary colonial lifestyles. For example, school and work

schedules may conflict with natural seasonal food cycles which mean that few are able to participate in ongoing harvesting and processing needed to procure enough food for their families and communities.

Colonial Structures and Attitudes

Gidigaa Migizi-Bah has spoken and written of a time when friendships and alliances were forged between early European settlers and Anishinaabeg that preceded colonial abuses on Turtle Island.[33] Notwithstanding, the lack of baseline knowledge of our shared histories, Indigenous histories, treaties, and continued capitalist-driven colonialism in Ontario has spawned anti-treaty groups like that of Save Pigeon Lake. Such groups represent a living legacy of the doctrine of discovery thinking that consequently, and irrationally, justifies the continued colonization and exploitation of the natural landscape and Waters that shape Turtle Island, and the genocide of millions of Indigenous peoples around the world. Anti-treaty groups are characterized have internalized colonialism and systemic racism and not only does dealing with the physical environmental and personal damage caused by such groups take up precious energy, time, and resources that would otherwise be dedicated to everyday *being*, cultural continuity, and much needed ecological restoration. Moreover, continued lobbying for the removal of Anishinaabeg Mnoomin parallels continuing forced assimilation, and erasure, of Anishinaabeg. Treaty agreements have been arbitrarily interpreted to favour the Canadian agenda for ownership and control of land and people, despite pre-existing economic, political, and legal systems of sovereign Anishinaabeg Nations. Annual Mnoomin yields

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[33] Gidigaa Migizi-Bah personal communication (2020), also see: Gidigaa Migizi and Leanne Simpson (2018). *Michi saagiig nishnaabeg : This is Our Territory*.

may be seasonally impacted by many natural forces, but the greatest detriment to Mnoomin and the practice of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig territory, have been human actions born of systemic colonization:

> I think myself, what has to happen here is that the government has to help us out. That the government has to designate that plant a heritage plant, and tell the lake settling cottagers to leave it alone. Or, aside from government, those groups that oppose us getting and keeping rice going, we have to get together. That's how we solve these things, through dialogue and getting together, not fighting. I mean, the rice is gonna suffer. I think we've got to somehow get together, and nurture this plant, and then people accept it. They want a pristine, no weed, meaning no rice to them. They want their kids to swim and their motor boats not to be clogged up. That's all they want, right? But, that's in opposition to rice. So, how would this group that you're now part of, solve these problems? Cause I, as a so-called Elder, I'm perplexed as to how to solve these? I don't have the ready answers. You know? The answers I give are that this is a sacred plant, we gotta save this plant. But, I don't know how to save it with all that's happening to it. Someone has to protect this plant. Why are we the ones to have to tell the world how important our old ways are? Why don't they start to realize that these things are important. You know, in the long run… Why does that system, that settler system out there, think in itself that they have the best way, the only good way, and everybody should join them? Well, to me, it's self-destruction. There's no sustainability out there that I see. And the rice is in trouble, deep trouble because of the greed. We call that the lifestyle of greed that has been introduced into the lakes around here. Our lakes (Elder Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

In the contemporary context, societal attitudes born of a legacy of the earliest colonial acts and treaty, The Williams Treaties, stink of the Doctrine of Discovery. As Gidigaa Migizi points out, the current state of affairs, shaped by attitudes and interests rooted in early acts of colonization, is unsustainable. As a result, the vitality of Mnoomin,

which parallels our own, is at risk. The legacy of colonization has come at a significant cost to Indigenous wellness and lifestyle. Marjolaine emphasizes some of the changes that have occurred:

> The early part of the 20th century, there was less Mnoomin in the waters and as the water levels were fluctuating and damaging the rice, that was also like the height of assimilation, residential schools destroying our languages, cultures, and everything else as we work through that through time [...] we have been, in the last 20, 25 years, 30 years, repopulating those rice beds, rebuilding our economies as Indigenous people. I mean, that's something that I think settler society doesn't often think that we have a right to do [...] And so using wild rice as an example, building an economy around it is problematic in the eyes of settlers, white settler society. They don't really like it when we do those things. And the cottage industry by and large, that is land that was stolen from Anishinaabe people (Marjolaine LaPointe).

There is also a continuing problem with private property ownership due to prioritizing recreational use of the waterways in Ontario over environmental caring, Anishinaabe foods, treaty rights, and treaty responsibilities in exchange for the privilege of sharing the land and living in this place. Ironically, while describing the relationship Anishinaabeg have had with Mnoomin since time immemorial, Anishinaabe Knowledge Holder Caleb Musgrave also described the local oral and written historical record of early settlers also relying on Mnoomin to sustain their families in their first decades in what is known today as Peterborough County and the Kawartha Lakes:

> We know that in the late 1800's, early 1900's, because they really didn't get settled heavily until after 1823, like they were slightly in the Peterborough region but, before that, not really. By the 1890s, there was a lot of people, an influx of people coming into the core at the lakes and Rice Lake valley region, and they

> required starch. So, they would actually buy it off us. They would buy it or trade it off. It was usually buy it outright with Canadian dollars or British pounds, whatever it was back then and, exchange it. And so they would live off, some estimates I've heard, 25% of their diet was wild rice. I've heard other statements where it was less than that (Caleb Musgrave).

Settler reliance on Mnoomin had to do with how perfectly the plant is adapted to the ecosystem:

> This is not a great place to grow wheat, right? There's like the five wheats, which is like a rye and that's about it. And that wasn't developed into the 1860s. So that first 40 years of Europeans being here or these Canadians being here, settlers being here, it was not a lot of good wheat. So, they had to rely on something else, such as the Mnoomin or acorn, which I've read about people using acorn around here, but not as much as hearing them use the wild rice (Caleb Musgrave).

Interview responses revealed many intersections of colonial capitalism in Ontario that Mnoomin caretakers and Anishinaabeg are constantly mediating in order to continue their sacred relationship with Mnoomin. Through these discussions, in relation to Indigenous Aging and wellness, the call to contextualize colonialism in the body of Aging scholarship is appropriate and long overdue. For example, Jeff Beaver shared:

> Because Rice Lake got infected with Carp, from the reintroduction they did on Lake Ontario, they were never here before, the Carp are breeding and doing a lot of thrashing around the same time as the rice is germinating off the bottom of the lake. So, it's really that loose soil down in there and any little disturbance at all, you know, a big Carp rolling around, a whole bunch of them is going to uproot those little plants and they'll float to the surface and then they're dead. So, I don't know how many million Carp were out there in that lake, but when you get all

them carp thrashing around in the bays, right in the rice beds, it wasn't very long before it was all gone (Elder Jeff Beaver).

Michi Saagiig Mnoomin harvesters continue to gather at Ardoch annually to harvest Mnoomin, observe the health of the beds, and assist in caretaking and reseeding of the Rice Beds. The transfer of Pimadashkodeyong Mnoomin to the Mississippi River in Ardoch in the late 19th century continues to be considered among the greatest kin ties between Michi Saagiig and Ardoch Algonquin that I could discern from the stories told in the interviews as well as those I have heard in conversation while participating in Mnoominkewin.

During community gathering events hosted by Black Duck Wild Rice on local lakes in Michi Saagiig Territory James Whetung has also shared stories of Mnoomin knowledge resurgence that was inspired by Omamawinini Ardoch First Nation Elders and Mnoomin caretakers in their protection of the rice beds[34]. This was reiterated in conversation with his daughter, Daemin Whetung who talked about her Dad recounting his time helping to protect the Mnoomin at Ardoch, watching Mnoomin being harvested and processed in both traditional and more modern ways by older practitioners and Elder Knowledge Holders, which he relates to the harvesting practices of his parents, Grandparents, Uncles and Aunts, and what the family recalls of Mnoomin harvests at Curve Lake First Nation. The importance of the Rice Wars at Ardoch in the role of Mnoomin knowledge resurgence cannot be understated.

These relationships continue in younger generations of Mnoomin practitioners. While Jeff Beaver talked about a time of Mnoomin camps and gatherings in his

[34] You can read more about that here: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://nourishingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BDWR-Case-Study-FINAL4.pdf

generation, younger Mnoomin harvesters shared memories of watching their older/Elder relatives travelling to the Mississippi to set up rice camps annually in past generations. To maintain contemporary family and community ties, many harvesters now make day trips to gather the rice and caretake the Pimadashkodeyong seeded rice beds at Ardoch during Mnoominike-Giizis (Mnoomin Harvesting Moon/Season) in between gathering and reseeding in Michi Saagiig territory.

Continued retelling of these stories, that describe the forethought of earlier relatives and community members in both territories to collaborate in transferring seeds to the Mississippi and ongoing care for these rice beds, along with the huge response to direct threats on those rice beds indicates the critical importance of continued community and familial relations and cooperation among Anishinaabeg Mnoomin harvesters (and Indigenous food systems and sovereignty advocates/protectors) to maintain cultural keystone species like Mnoomin in central and eastern Ontario. Care taking of the rice beds on the Mississippi River are important to the restoration of Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig Territory, and broadly to the Native ecological plant, animal, bird, and fish species in Ontario and the Great Lakes.

While direct conflict related to the Mnoomin beds growing at Mud Lake and along the Mississippi watershed near Ardoch First Nation has subsided in recent decades, as the Mnoomin beds are re-established through natural reseeding of the annual plant in other areas of the waterway, as well as restoration, community education and advocacy work by Mnoomin practitioners and protectors in Michi Saagiig territory, there is again increase in opposition to the resurgence of the plant, primarily by Non-Indigenous shoreline property owners. It is a testament to the resilience of Native plant species and

expertise of Mnoomin Knowledge keepers that the Mnoomin restoration efforts have been fruitful despite continued damage to the waterway. There continues to be significant and varied factors which negatively affect Mnoomin here in Ontario and across the Great Lakes.

Over the past decade however, shoreline property owners have been especially active in petitioning for the removal of rice beds through permit requests, privately drudging the rice out of the water or damaging the rice beds with chemicals and blocks of salt, and organizing the community group "Save Pigeon Lake" to garner support to prioritize the recreational use of the waterway over the natural habitat and Treaty rights of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg to continue to caretake of and gather the Mnoomin for food. Whereas wellness over the course of life has been sustained for generations, the food-based economy that once thrived in Michi Saagiig Territory, in which Mnoomin is central, there is now a poverty of cultural connection and increasing rates of disease in conjunction with reduced access to cultural keystone species and the erosion of the environment. The Black Duck Case Study Report by Anderson and Whetung (2018) provides further overview of the many impacts that settler colonization has had on Curve Lake First Nation akin to fellow Michi Saagiig Williams Treaties First Nations as well as in other places like Ontario[35]. The erosion of Anishinaabe Mnoomin wellness parallels that of Anishinaabeg well-being:

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[35] Extensive impacts to Mnoomin relations have occurred across Ojibway First Nation communities due to structural changes to the environment in places where locks and dams have been constructed. The Collaborative Great Lakes Manoomin Project is one example of emerging efforts to relearn about and restore cultural keystone species across Ojibway Aki: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3a2ea4a0a2ee4cafa8dbab38420ab745

> So many First Nations communities, they're built beside water… Some of those communities, you know, they tell stories of how they used to be able to drink water, and then along comes industry and it pollutes their water. And then, they realize the value of what used to be is now no longer there [...] nowadays, you know, we have to verbalize and say things so that our young people will understand much the same way that, you know, we were talking about the medicine wheel or the unity circle. We have to find new ways to say old things. In that way, the Water Walk is, it's a new way of saying an old thing, and, it just helps to bring a greater consciousness inside your head and your heart, where you wouldn't have thought of it that way before, prior to going on a Water Walk, and seeing those water ceremonies done, and hearing those songs, and hearing those prayers, it, just, um, brings it home in a different way [...] Because you are part of it. The water is alive, even though, you know, we may not, all of us may not have been told that we instinctively know that it is when we look back and we hear, you know, the stories that our mom, our parents, you know, our Grandparents have told us. So, you know, when I went out ricing, you know, that first time and being on the water, it was also a leap of faith for me, because even though I am involved with the water, I don't spend a whole lot of time on the water. I can't swim. So, I have a very healthy respect for water. So, you know, having that respect, healthy respect for water, you know, water, there's balance in all things, a common teaching about things, you know, there's a balance. You always keep that balance. Water is powerful. It can take a life, but it also can give you life because you can't exist without it. So, there's always that balance, and that was, that's what I was really reminded of the first time I went out. Also, you're gathering the rice the way they used to do it a long time ago, having a fire and then putting on your moccasins and stomping on the grains. Like I said, I knew that I had been there before (Georgie Baptiste).

Mnoomin gatherers spoke a lot about their continued struggles to access and protect Mnoomin in Ontario. Beyond environmental factors like climate change, the

impacts of the Trent Severn Waterway and over-use of the waterway for recreational purposes, the contemporary protest by shoreline property owners who dispute the harvesting and reseeding of the beds, purposefully disrupt the restoration of the rice beds, and in some cases also physically damage the rice beds are also factors that make accessing and harvesting Mnoomin difficult and in some instances, unsafe. These factors also demonstrate ongoing colonialism in the territory.

Access to the Water, Proximity to Mnoomin beds, Privatization of the Shoreline

Issues of access—especially restrictions caused by extensive private development along shorelines and the resulting environmental degradation—were so widespread that they were raised in every interview. Elder Jeff Beaver shared reflected on the privatization of spaces and resources that were once shared collectively:

> The lake shores are being privately owned now, and you can't get into a lot of lakes even though there is rice there [...], the impacts that they all have on the rice is another limiting factor I guess you could say. But yeah, access is probably one of the most important things in ricing, because we can't get in there […] You know that kind of stuff is kind of frustrating because you can't really get to the lake because it's all private now. You know, it's frustrating. The fee was for ah, it's up on little Bald Lake. Yeah. But the owners, the first owners, they charged us, and the new owners the last few years, they haven't charged us, so… But there's a sign there. Five dollars in five dollars out. But they kind of waive the fee for us […] And Ardoch, we have our relatives live there, the Perry's. So, we can launch at their place. But he's 80 something years old now so, we're hoping that we can get to, maybe even buy his property and umm, then we'll have access at his place. Because when he passes away, we don't know what's going to happen to his property and if we'll have access at his place. Because you could sell to anybody then you're done there. You can't go, unless you go way down the river and

launch there, then you have to paddle back. Yeah, access is a big, big problem (Elder Jeff Beaver).

Describing the importance of gathering for the Mnoomin, Marjolaine talked about how much harvesting and processing Mnoomin is very important for the Anishinaabe people. Especially highlighting that gathering events bring families and the community together, supports their food sovereignty, and because Mnoomin gathering is an intergenerational practice, it connects us to the past and future. Without it, integral parts of Anishinaabeg culture and tradition are lost:

> It's vital. It's kind of really hard to explain how the entire process from going out and checking the rice, just waiting for it to be ready to all the way through, from gathering into parching, and dancing, and winnowing how it really has. It really does bring everyone together. It's an entire community process and there's room for everyone [...] Without access to Manoomin, that impedes not only our, as Anishinaabe people, our food sovereignty. Mnoomin is a staple in our communities. I think the process of it is one of those action pieces that ties us to our ancestry. And it ties us also to our future generations [...] there's certain things that have to happen all through the year in order for it to be a good ricing year. But, also thinking about the rice for the future years (Marjolaine LaPointe).

Daemin also shared about the vital importance of having easy access to Mnoomin rice beds and how, thankfully, her family has been able to establish this access. She shares about how much this means to her:

> Our life revolves around it. Like my goals and my future revolve around it. I'm taking on a more eco-tourism side of the business where we take people out and teach them more than the actual collecting of rice. Like we're collecting rice, but not for selling. It's the teaching part that I'm more interested in and sharing that. And so access to rice is important, but I can see that my Dad's well established a

> rice bed right in our front yard, and so we have a boat launch now I can take people out right from there. And it's really nice that we don't have to travel out to find rice now, that we can see it doing so well, and that it's harder for people to take from us when it's so close, that we can protect it (Daemin Whetung).

The process of harvesting and preparing Mnoomin is essential. It strengthens community bonds, upholds food sovereignty, and connects every aspect of Anishinaabe culture, spirituality, and life. Even where there is considerably less Mnoomin practitioners, the inherent importance of Mnoomin continues to be well understood:

> You know, you have friends and relatives that you don't see for a long time, but you know, when they pass away, you have a great loss. It hurts. And, that's the way it is with Mnoomin. I think for my community, not too many of us gather anymore. It's not part of our everyday diet, but as soon as Mnoomin was threatened on Pigeon Lake, everybody mobilized in Curve Lake and we went there in a protected it (Dorothy Taylor).

A Common Vision for Michi Saagiig Mnoomin

Among the various experiences and approaches that Mnoomin harvesters take in maintaining access, restore, and protect Mnoomin, and to continue to pass along harvesting knowledges, there is a common vision for *the good seed*. In their interviews, Mnoomin harvesters and Knowledge Holders spoke about the goal of reseeding and restoring the rice beds that will simultaneously reseed knowledges of Mnoomin and restore important cultural activities, traditions, and access to the most nourishing grain Indigenous to Turtle Island. This community-based work is intimately and intricately connected to intergenerational well-being.

Mnoomin Restoration and Collective Wellness

Mnoomin harvester described the restoration of Mnoomin as one that is a cultural, spiritual, and community responsibility rooted in the well-being of their families and territory. Mnoomin is far more than a food, it has spirit, it is an important medicine, and is a central part of Anishinaabeg cosmology. As shared by harvesters, restoring Mnoomin is tied to restoring balance within themselves and the land. This section explores how the return of Mnoomin supports collective wellness, as understood through lived experience and interdependence within the ecosystem:

> In general health, you're looking at a food that can fix, if not negate diabetes. It can fix heart problems. It can fix digestive problems. This food is genuine pure medicine. And so [it's important] for our Elders in the community, where diabetes is one of the leading cause of death, second, only to heart disease. A medicine food that can treat both is vital for our survival. Our Mnoomin is part of our Seven Fires, Prophecy, and it's also part of our Eighth Fire Prophecy that we need that Mnoomin to keep the spirits alive and feed our spirits, so that when we have ceremony, we must always have that Mnoomin with us as it's one of the few foods that both us and the Manitou can feed on. And so our survival is dependent on it. No matter how you swing it, our survival requires it (Caleb Musgrave).

> It supports the ecosystem. So, it's not just the rice that you eat, but it's the fish and the rice, the beavers and the rice, the birds that feed off the rice… it's about the whole ecosystem and having all of the riches that come from that, it's so well rounded like that (Daemin Whetung).

As emphasized in these reflections by both Caleb and Daemin, the health of Mnoomin and the well-being of fellow life forms and people are profoundly connected.

Restoring Mnoomin means restoring relationships with the land, with spirit, and with each other. When Mnoomin thrives, so do the communities around it.

Reseeding Knowledges and Reseeding Rice Beds

Reseeding the Mnoomin beds is an act of cultural continuity, care, and teaching. As Daemin Whetung shares, each grain of rice holds the presence of those who came before, offering a direct relationship with history and identity. Teaching the next generation how to engage with Mnoomin through the practise of harvesting, eating, and simply being present with it is one way of reseeding knowledges, or bringing those intergenerational memories that still live in the body to fruition:

> I wish that people could see the value in it. Like I'm trying to teach my kid the value in it. It's so deep within us. I don't know how to talk about it properly. I want to show my kid rice is accepting. Like my Dad tells me that each grain of rice is one of our ancestors. So when you get to go out there, you get to be with your history, you know, it doesn't take a mediator. Like, I mediate for people. I introduce them to the rice, but what happens between people and the rice is their journey. And, so I hope my kid gets to go on that journey, be like lives a better life from, from knowing her history and from consuming something that's so natural to her body, and so, so good for her mind that she can share that with other people in the future as well (Daemin Whetung).

Moreover, the importance of continuing the kinship with Mnoomin, including the responsibilities of care taking and harvesting, sustains the rice beds as well as the knowledge systems that grow alongside them:

> Anishinaabe Mnoomin requires some care taking in order to preserve the beds. In reference to the natural elements, human removal of the plant and that Mnoomin

> is an annual plant species: It's an annual plant, so it's necessary for us to have this relationship, and with it all the time, the seed is going back into the water[...] without the harvesters going out, it's not going to be as plentiful
>
> (Marjolaine LaPointe).

> I'm in a different era of rice harvesting because I hear the old stories, like how far we've come, that we would come to a place where grass grew on the water. Right. Or that, it was through prophecy, that we were starving at one point, and that this rabbit showed us the way to the water. So, it's kind of parlaying those tidbits, but actually seeing the reality of just, when that rice is there it's not just the rice because there's a whole environment and ecosystem there that's sustaining itself, and the fact that we are a part of that as well, because it's the natural cycle. So when you look at it… like people say it's folklore, but it's our oral traditions, the natural tradition and lifestyle (Timothy Smoke).

To reseed Mnoomin is to also reseed memory, story, and connection. As Marjolaine reminds us, this relationship depends on us showing up. The Mnoomin needs harvesters just as much as we need the Mnoomin. These teachings are not only shared in words, but in practice, in movement, and in educating younger generations.

Michi Saagiig Food Sovereignty

Mnoomin Harvesters collectively described the various need for, sense of responsibility towards, and clear understandings for a return to a food-based or food-centred economy in order to re-establish collective wellness. Community wellness is also described herein as central to individual wellness. For example, the harvester who is free to exercise their right to caretake and gather Mnoomin can then share with family and community who may not be able to (individually) access the food otherwise (Anderson and Whetung, 2018). Described throughout this chapter and Chapter Four, there are

several examples and stories given of the importance of collective well-being and caregiving that supports the continuation of food sovereignty with Mnoomin at the centre:

> We know that the rice is important. When the Pigeon Lake strain of rice got attacked back in 2014-2015, Hiawatha was one of the first reserves to show up to the OMI meetings, to the council meetings, Town Hall meetings. We had a huge influx of our members show up, as did Curve Lake, as did Alderville, as did Scugog. But we [Hiawatha] showed up as much, I'd say, as much as the other groups, and stood our ground with them, you know? Showed a unified front regarding our Manoomin. I wish that our, I think for us is the fact that we don't see it as often as Curve Lake folks do, or Alderville has it all up and down through all their creeks and streams, and their back marshes. Whereas, Hiawatha, we don't have more than just back in the back marsh at Herkimer that has any at all. So, that makes it a bit of a challenge. But I think personally, I think if our people saw it on the shores every day and saw it growing and developing throughout the season, and saw it turn into that stock in the Fall, and become that beautiful seed that it is, I think at least a third of our community would be out there ricing (Caleb Musgrave).

> A lot of what we would harvest, we're throwing back into the lake and replanting, and regrowing all the time (Marjolaine LaPointe).

Something that was also brought to attention in the interviews is the difficulty in making time away from financial responsibilities and the specific time of year for Mnoomin harvesting:

> The end of August, beginning of September, this is back to school, back to work, end of summer. It's the way that our economy, our system is organized, education and work, it seems to me that it's the time of year when everything is getting prepared for the Winter season, so that there's food until the next Spring, when

> everything starts blooming and popping up again, and people don't seem to be able to take the time away from school and work (Elder Jeff Beaver).

Still Mnoomin harvesters and caretakers expressed holding this responsibility with integrity and feel that it is important to find ways continue Mnoominkewin despite the challenges faced by modern economic demands and time constraints:

> Everything from our physical, social, spiritual connection to Mnoomin and the way of the world. Because right now, you know, the way it is, there's only a select few who do get that opportunity to go out, and it's those people who have made it a part of their business. It's difficult […] We have to start actively picking up those little teachings, those bundles, those that work. If we want to see our, those things continue on for the next generation. You know, who's gonna do it if we don't? (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Community Outreach and Education

The need for community outreach and education was made clear in the interviews, though perspectives as to what extent both Anishinaabeg and non-Indigenous people should be involved in Mnoomin-related activities varied. Caleb Musgrave noted that, while large numbers of community members of all backgrounds often show up in moments of crisis to protect the Mnoomin beds, there is still a noticeable lack of sustained engagement from within Michi Saagiig communities when it comes to regular annual harvesting and actively passing on related knowledge. He emphasized that protecting Mnoomin requires more than moments of mobilization, it also needs long-term involvement from Anishinaabeg people in gathering, teaching, and nurturing this relationship for the sake of continuity.

At the same time, there are many individuals from outside the immediate Michi Saagiig communities, Anishinaabe from other territories, Indigenous to Turtle Island or otherwise, who have shown genuine interest in learning about Mnoomin and contributing to its protection. While generally it is important for wider involvement as part of broader education and solidarity efforts, it is also reasonably to use discernment as to how engagement should unfold, and on whose terms. Georgie Horton-Baptiste reflected on the value of involving non-Indigenous people in Mnoomin harvesting, particularly as a way to build understanding and respect for Indigenous rights and relationships to the land:

> It's crucial that the non-Indigenous community becomes involved and aware of Mnoomin, the meaning, and the traditional value that it has to Indigenous communities. And, I think one of the best ways to do that is to involve them in that work, or at least give them a reader's digest view of how it's done. And, you know, James Whetung, both times that I've gone and spent that time out, there was a great number of non-Indigenous people. And, I was really happy to see that, you know? I was a little bit disappointed that there wasn't more of our own people out there, but I was really happy to see that the amount of non-Indigenous people who were there [...] the more people that get to observe that work, and be part of it, the more that they'll understand the insistence of the people in this territory to adhere to the Treaty and they have that right to gather the Mnoomin
>
> (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Georgie reflects on both the opportunity and the challenge of how to welcome non-Indigenous involvement in a way that encourages community involvement, education and supports respective treaty responsibilities. Community harvesting events are great fun, but they are not without purpose. They are also about sharing knowledge, reconnecting,

and addressing harms through supporting Anishinaabe reclamation of kinship with Mnoomin.

Community Projects and Organization

A few of the harvesters reflected on how they grew up with knowledge about Mnoomin, but had not had any direct experience with harvesting, gathering, or processing it. The importance of grassroots organizations who provide opportunities to learn about and access the Mnoomin, and in many cases, for Anishinaabeg to reconnect with Mnoomin where there were few or no earlier opportunities, were highlighted:

> A friend and I went out with James Whetung, out in the canoe, even though like I said, it was a new experience in my adulthood, I knew that I had visited these places before, and to me, because wild rice is our traditional medicine, our traditional food, I was so happy to participate, even in that short while that we were there. You know, going out on the water and having our ricing sticks and hitting the rice, and watching it as it fell in the canoe (Georgie Horton-Baptiste).

Reflecting on the importance of organizing between communities and neighbours to support each other Marjolaine recalled times when it was important to have maintained good relationships to protect common interests in caring for the land and water:

> That relationship between the settlers and Ardoch was really important to build and to maintain. I don't know really how strong it is now, but it certainly allowed for a meeting of peoples and joining in a common cause to protect the land (Marjolaine LaPointe).

One of the most important reasons I took up this thesis project was because, through my time learning and participating in community-led initiatives to protect and restore the Mnoomin beds, I came to understand that this work was not only needed on the land, but

also in the realm of research and advocacy. Through the interviews, Mnoomin harvesters and Knowledge Holders have shared a desire for more research, greater awareness, and stronger support systems that will support the continuation of Mnoominkewin to improve well-being in the present as well as to ensure access and well-being for future generations. This sentiment was echoed in many of the interviews. Participants spoke of the need to share their experiences and teachings more broadly, with the hope that doing so would help deepen public understanding—especially among those living within Michi Saagiig territory—of the profound relational, cultural, and historical importance of Mnoomin. It was not just about raising awareness, but about renewing kinship ties to the rice and the responsibilities that come with those relationships. Timothy Smoke offered a powerful reflection on this point, emphasizing the potential for this kind of work, particularly through interviews and community-based research, to support Mnoominkewin and how special this place is because of Mnoomin:

> Whatever comes out of this interview series that you're doing, and the final piece, I hope that more people at least, whoever you interviewed that they allow this as well, to be some sort of public access, because rice harvesting in this area holds a lot of history, like prior to even Peterborough's existence or even confederation itself [...] I think when people read, however they access their information, they actually take the time to research and understand what is so great about this area. There is a huge, huge amount of history that comes just from rice alone. It's like, you look at Rice Lake, there was a whole society living within that lake before it turned into that lake [that it is today]. And that's another heartbreaking thing about it, is that you don't want those things to just be memories, right? Or just be told as stories. You want to ensure that those things are still passed on. So, things like

> this, these interviews and whenever this comes out, I think there could be a huge push to get things back on track to where we once were (Timothy Smoke).

Timothy's words highlight the importance of this work, especially when done with community, is integral to By sharing stories, teachings, and knowledge in accessible ways, this work aims to contribute to that ongoing effort to "get things back on track"—not only through policy or academic dialogue, but through honoring and amplifying the voices of those who continue to live in relationship with Mnoomin.

Summary

Mnoominkewin, the art of wild ricing, lights a pathway for living well. The continuity of Mnoomin harvesting and gathering is carried on through parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren. The knowledge and kindship of Mnoomin also lives in the land and waters, in the places where our food grows and where our bodies, minds, and spirits are nourished, and to where we will all one day return. While colonialism continues to disrupt these vital relationships through structural and systemic barriers, the path forward is not all that complicated. While more support is needed and much work remains, maintaining open lines of communication, the way the treaties were intended to be embraced for example, and creating opportunities for meaningful cultural engagement are essential steps toward building stronger relationships with place and with each another. These efforts are fundamental to sustaining wellness that is attainable through Mnoomin and relative ecologically and culturally rooted Indigenous food systems. The teachings, practices, and care demonstrated by Mnoomin harvesters and caretakers show us that the solutions to restoring collective well-being already exist.

SECTION IV: DISCUSSION

Chapter Six: Conclusion

I think you're, interestingly, studying a phenomenon that is just a microcosm of the bigger picture, you know? Of the destruction that happens with our ecosystems, in our environmental systems of how what they practice is just not sustainable. And what we're trying to maintain is the older plants that have sustained us forever,

(Elder Gidigaa Migizi-Bah)

I believe it can save people, not just my people, but all people,

(Daemin Whetung)

This community-based thesis project is inspired and underpinned by the many decades, and collectively, the centuries of grit and work by Anishinaabeg Mnoomin harvesters, Knowledge Holders, Elders, families, and communities who have shared their stories, knowledges, experiences, and expertise of the land and waters over generations. We could not know what well-being in this territory is without the continuation of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe Mnoominkewin that has been nurtured by hundreds (thousands!) of generations of Anishinaabeg and fellow kin. In this concluding chapter, I summarize the project's objectives, methodologies and key findings. I discuss how the diverse narratives and experiences shared by harvesters as presented in this thesis bear witness to the profound relationship between Mnoomin and intergenerational well-being both locally and in broader contexts of community and ecological well-being. In this concluding chapter I present recommendations grounded in these knowledge and my own interpretations and research findings that emphasize the importance of continued support

for Mnoomin bed restoration in the waterways, as well as the need for academic and community collaborations that will support local initiatives for generations to come.

As I have throughout the body of this thesis report, I offer further reflection of the journey I have been on in following my passion for grassroots initiatives towards collective well-being, Indigenous sovereignty, I also reflect on some of the limitations I encountered along the way. This chapter reiterates the importance of contextualizing colonialism in studies of health and wellness and further submits the need to centre and advance Indigenous methodologies, relevant to place, for example Anishinaabeg methodologies in Anishinabeg places, including combining research institutional and Indigenous methodological approaches in Aging Studies and pointing to the way in which this approach may support the emerging field of Indigenous Aging Studies. I conclude with suggestions for future research as well as practical applications for how this work may continue and evolve.

Outcomes

This thesis set out to understand the intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory. The research objectives were met by engaging with a combination of research methods including semi-structured interviews, participatory learning in Mnoomin harvesting, ceremony, land-based learning, and researching historical and archival records, that have contributed to a comprehensive understanding of intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin and the ways that Mnoomin is important to well-being in Michi Saagiig Territory. This work further highlights the profound impact of colonialism on Mnoomin and Anishinaabeg, as well as the resilient collective work to continue Mnoominkewin.

The framework for this project was based on both established knowledges from my own prior experiences with Mnoomin as well as emergent ideas, common perspectives, and experiences that have come from the interview discussions. Mnoomin is critical to the intergenerational health of the Anishinaabeg and of Canadians because it is essential to the intergenerational health of the ecosystem where we live. Beyond asking about intergenerational wellness and well-being over the course of life in relation to Mnoomin, I also explored the ways in which capitalism and settler colonialism have impacted well-being and have also greatly changed the natural landscape in Michi Saagiig territory.

A primary purpose of this thesis was to respond to the expressed interests of local Mnoomin Knowledge Holders for more academic support that may further their important work with Mnoomin. This work has involved learning about, researching, and documenting local histories, stories, and knowledges and conveying as much in this thesis report to better inform interdisciplinary understandings of wellness and intergenerational well-being. Especially in response to contextualizing colonialism, and perhaps also in contribution towards an emerging field of Indigenous Aging Studies. This thesis further asserts the need to provide baseline knowledge that helps to contextualize colonialism in the disciplinary study and education in the field of Aging. Moreover, to build a robust baseline of knowledge and understanding about our shared histories, it is crucial to include local knowledges in scholarly work to more broadly understand the real experiences and impacts of colonization. This thesis informs of the intergenerational relationships to Mnoomin that support well-being in Michi Saagiig territory and calls for

the validation of the lived experiences and concerns about the impacts to the Mnoomin that are informed by Indigenous knowledges born from thousands of generations in place.

Recommendations

In this section I offer some recommendations grounded in the interviews and my participation in Mnoomin harvesting and advocacy for Mnoomin restoration, education, and protections. These recommendations could support intergenerational well-being through supports of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg territory. These recommendations may also be relevant to other culturally important Indigenous foods and food systems. While I recognize that some of these recommendations may be ambitious, many of them are already underway to some extent. None the less, these initiatives remain marginalized, rely heavily on volunteerism, community grants and donations from organizations, First Nations and individuals, and there is no programming, supported or funding by municipal, provincial or federal governments despite Treaty 20 and Williams Treaties responsibilities in exchange for use of Anishinaabeg land and waters. Mnoomin harvesting has continued in spite of ongoing colonial interruptions that include legal and physical access barriers enforced by all levels of Canadian government and government parties over the past 200 years. During my time learning about Mnoomin I have seen growing support for Mnoomin bed restoration and access, largely due to the incredible work of Mnoomin harvesters and allied community supporters across the territory. My hope is the following recommendations also reflect their insights and efforts:

Recommendation 1

Promote and fund Indigenous language learning: Anishinaabemowin is critical to preserving cultural heritage and transmitting ecological knowledge in Michi Saagiig territory.[36] Language revitalization efforts are essential for maintaining cultural continuity and intergenerational well-being. Basic Anishinaabemowin is offered in few Ontario public schools, but more support is needed to support the regeneration of Indigenous languages.

Recommendation 2

Community funding and educational outreach support for Mnoomin bed restoration: As this thesis research demonstrates, community involvement in Mnoomin restoration strengthens cultural ties and promotes a sense of ecological stewardship. Community participation in Mnoomin restoration would provide opportunities to learn more about our shared histories, centre ecological relationships, reconnect culturally for Anishinaabeg, and build more equitable and kinder treaty relations among Canadians and First Nations that is rooted in cultural exchange and respect. Local efforts to restore and harvest the rice beds is critical. Three current examples of community-based opportunities to support Mnoomin restoration in Michi Saagiig territory are community harvest days that are organized by Mnoomin Knowledge Holders Jeff Beaver in Alderville First Nation, workshops and community harvest days offered throughout

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[36] Caleb Musgrave (personal communication) talked about the knowledge embedded in Anishinaabemowin, which offers inherent practical knowledges of the land and how to live, but also embodies Indigenous thought. Leanne Simpson also talks about this in Dancing on Our Turtle's Back (2011). In a first year grad studies, Dr. Elder Shirley Williams shared about the importance of reclaiming one's own heritage, even if one no longer lives in their place of origin or the place of their ancestors' origin. She emphasized the importance of learning these languages because they help us to better know ourselves and how we can relate to one another.

Mnoomike-Giizis (harvest time) by Black Duck Wild Rice, and the annual Mnoominkewin Gathering at Curve Lake.[37]

Recommendation 3

Supports and funding for community events and programs: As evidenced throughout this thesis, intergenerational knowledge sharing is an important part of Mnoominkewin in Michi Saagiig territory. Mnoomin gathering is an important site for relationship building and knowledge sharing between Elders, Knowledge Holders, older generations and youth.

Recommendation 4

Fund and support the develop educational programs: Educational programs that center Indigenous knowledges about Mnoomin foster greater interdisciplinary understanding and respect for Indigenous cultural practices. One example of such an offering is the Mnoomin Curriculum Project that provides Manoomin Lesson & Unit Plans to Ontario Grades schools. The project was collaboratively designed and facilitated by Trent University Faculty and local Community Knowledge Holders and delivered to School of Education Students at Trent University (2024).

Recommendation 5

Remove barriers to shoreline Access: access to shorelines and bodies of water is crucial for maintaining Mnoomin harvesting practices and respecting treaty rights. Municipal governments can play a role in securing this access for Indigenous communities.

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[37] See https://www.mnoominkewin.com/2020.

Recommendation 6

Enact protective legislation for water, wetlands, marsh, and shorelines, and promote Indigenous stewardship of shorelines and waterways: Legal protections for shorelines and ecological systems connected to Mnoomin are necessary to preserve these critical habitats and respect inherent Anishnaabeg and treaty rights. Lakes, rivers, marshes, and swamps have never been ceded.

Recommendation 7

Support and fund restoration projects: Ongoing funding for Mnoomin restoration projects will support their success. Provide ongoing funding for the restoration and monitoring of wild rice beds and related cultural practices.[38]

Recommendation 8

Support reconciliation efforts locally: Integrating Mnoominkewin into reconciliation efforts may address historical injustices and may support the well-being of Indigenous communities by acknowledging their rights and contributions, ensuring access to this nutritious and spiritually important cultural keystone species, and supporting the reinstatement of Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg legal and political frameworks, as described in chapter two, for which Mnoomin is at the centre.

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[38] Alderville Black Oak Savannah Webpage https://www.aldervillesavanna.ca/index.php/wild-rice/:
"Restoration of historic Wild Rice beds, ongoing inventory, and monitoring of existing beds are very important for the future of Wild Rice. Securing funding to ensure the future of Wild Rice in the region is an ongoing challenge for Alderville First Nation."

Recommendation 9

Promote the disciplinary field of Indigenous Aging Studies: Support scholarly calls to contextualize colonialism in post-secondary studies of Aging through post-secondary level courses that support learning about colonialism/colonial impacts on health and wellness. For example, contextualizing colonialism in the academic study of aging to better understand intergenerational wellness, and how historical events inform contemporary well-being.

Recommendation 10

Promote early education of what it means to be Indigenous and for all people to have a meaningful relationship to a place: To become more aware and to better understand historical and contemporary relationships between those who remain on their Indigenous homelands and those who no longer have connections to their ancestral places or homelands. Every being on the planet is "Indigenous" to somewhere.

Recommendation 11

Formal recognition of the personhood of Mnoomin.

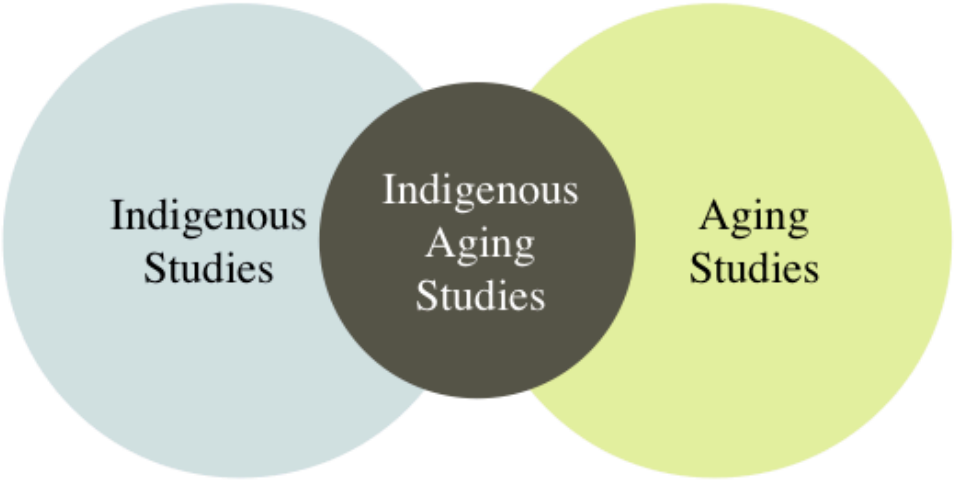
Contributions

This thesis brings together Anishnaabeg voices from around Michi Saagiig territory who speak about on the importance of Mnoomin in their lives. This community informed project documents local Michi Saagiig family stories, experiences, and knowledges, situated within an historical account of the territory, treaty relationships and colonial violations, and a positive vision of healing, reconciliation and collective wellbeing for the future. This project offers a deeper understanding of the important

intergenerational ecological connections by describing why continuity of access to Mnoomin (cultural keystone species and Indigenous food sovereignty) is essential to wellness throughout life and over generations. The presence of Mnoomin in Ontario waterways indicates a healthy ecosystem which parallels Anishinaabeg and broader Canadians' health over the course of life.

This work contributes to a deeper understanding of the impacts of colonialism on intergenerational well-being, and promotes the important call to contextualize colonialism in the field of Aging through example of community based study, knowledge and relationship to place through land based learning. This thesis addresses identified omissions of Indigenous aging experiences and perspectives in mainstream scholarship, describing how colonialism has impacted wellness in Michi Saagiig territory over generations. This thesis bridges multiple fields of thought such as Indigenous Studies, Health, Indigenous Environmental Sciences, and Aging Studies.

Figure 6.1 Combining Methodologies to support Indigenous Aging Studies



As a case study, the project design offers a framework for how to carry out similar community based research in an ethical and reciprocal way. This work has grown out of the my own relationship to place. Situating myself as both resident and researcher within the context of experiential, land-based learning in collaboration with community Knowledge Holders, Elders, and Mnoomin Harvesters, I have become deeply embedded within a myriad of interconnected relationships that continue to also nurture my own and my children's well-being. My learning journey has been a deeply personal one that has involved growing and reciprocating community connections in my life and the lives of my children. Recognizing and upholding inherent rights for Indigenous food systems is essential to more fully nurture empathy, kinship, and an action-oriented sense of collective well-being that will, in turn, go a long way in interrogating colonialism and dismantling systems of oppression.

Study Limitations and Future Research

The knowledge and stories shared in this thesis are so rich and dynamic they could not all fit within the scope of this project. It is important to me to honour all that was shared with me, and I hope to make further contributions through collaboration with community harvesters in other ways, such as continuing to assist with annual Mnoominkewin, restoration, advocacy of Water and Mnoomin, community projects, and education. One area in particular I have found is worth examining further is the important role of community organizing and carrying out the work of Mnoomin protections and restoration. This work is dynamic and can be very demanding, requiring a variety of skills including Indigenous traditions, cultural knowledges, Indigenous languages, knowledges of harvesting, reseeding, processing, and preparing food, cultural stories,

songs, and related arts, grant writing, community education and advocacy, public speaking, community event planning, justice and policy at all levels of government, and academic research. The vast majority of individuals who engage in this work in Michi Saagiig territory are volunteering their knowledge, skills, and physical labour through grassroots initiatives. More research in this area would also further the dialogue of accessibility and addressing issues of colonial patriarchy. I find this quote by waaseyaa'sin christine sy in their article *At the Boiling Place* relatable to that which I have observed while taking up this work:

> Land (re)matriation for me signifies a dynamic process that is occurring amongst womyn and like-minded Indigenous peoples. In this process womyn persist their relationships with land inter-generationally or restore themselves from a variety of locations to land-based relationships. Anishinaabeg land (re)matriation is nation-specific, shaped locally, and informed by the shifting ecological worlds we inhabit. It refers to the persistence and the re-generation of relation-ing between Anishinaabeg, land, knowledges, and womyn's authority in a cagey neo-colonial context—a context that is also impinged upon by the power of Indigenous agency (waaseyaa'sin christine sy, 2016).

While particular determinants of well-being such as access to healthy food, close family relations, traditions, and environmental factors are well understood to play important roles, there remains a lack of baseline knowledge about the impacts and barriers to fully accessing and enjoying basic needs due to colonialism. A major challenge to this project is the lack of scholarship, beyond Indigenous Studies, that directly links and calls out the impacts of colonialism on well-being over the course of life. This project captures only a snapshot of the wider impacts of colonialism, and much more story sharing on this matter is needed, especially in regards to informing appropriate

methodological approaches for studies of aging and wellness that aim to actively support the concerns and interests of the communities in which research may be conducted. Greater emphasis on baseline education about Indigenous peoples, dislocation from Indigenous roots, shared histories, and colonial structures that perpetuate compounding intergenerational harms is needed.

Concluding Thoughts

The Importance of Mnoomin in the Era of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is integral to the wellness of all Indigenous Nations and to Canadians alike. Professor David Newhouse (2016) describes the convergence of Indigenous Leadership and community agendas with the reconciliation agenda of Canada as follows:

> Reconciliation has four aspects: an equity component (closing the gap) that focuses on improving the life conditions of Indigenous peoples; a harmony component centered on improving the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; a restoration component that concerns the renewal and improvement of the nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, as well as the recognition of Indigenous interests and rights to lands, territories and resources; and a critical conversation about Canada
>
> (Newhouse, 2016).

This thesis describes my own journey in connection to Mnoomin, but is primarily a response to the expressed desires of Mnoomin Harvesters for more community and institutional supports that could help to deepen understanding of the sacred

intergenerational and ecological relationships to Mnoomin and well-being in Michi Saagiig territory. Whereas common social science research tools, such as participatory learning, interviews, and report formatting have helped to organize and present the research findings, the local family and community stories were most significant in the interpretation of this thesis. Indigenous knowledges and story telling are foundational in asserting the importance of interdisciplinary connections to well-being over the course of life. Conceptually, this project brought an Indigenous theory, the Ojibwe Four Hills of Life Theory, and a Western Social Science theory, Life Course Theory, into conversation with the other to underpin the bigger story of well-being in this case study. Practical conjoining of these methods and theories included Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg informed land/place-based learning, protocols for engaging in local cultural knowledges, and most importantly, carrying out research that has been specifically identified by community Knowledge Holders and harvesters. This project was premised on the generous work of Mnoomin harvesters and supporters who helped to shape the direction of this project by teaching the researcher about the cultural relationship to Mnoomin, Mnoominkewin, and about the importance of this kinship to the broader circle of life in this territory.

Review of existing scholarship in the field of Aging Studies was integral to making meaningful connections between intergenerational community wellness and the grassroots work of Mnoomin harvesters to the disciplinary study of Aging. The earlier work of Aging Studies scholars who established the need to contextualize colonialism had opened the gates for this inter-disciplinary connection to be made. Indigenous knowledges will always best inform of Indigenous well-being, there are no better teachers of how to live well in place then those ones who have been in place the longest.

Contextualizing colonialism is an important contribution to the emerging field of Indigenous Aging.

The call to address colonialism in the field of Aging Studies and Gerontology, particularly in studies that are conducted with and for Indigenous persons, is critical. Moreover, this call is significant to the epistemological and pedagogical direction of future education and research, particularly where there are interests to *decolonize* at the institutional level. For example, advancing baseline education of colonial history, addressing why and how systemic oppressions persist, and to better inform of Indigenous land or place-based knowledges, as highlighted in this thesis, that are often taken on and guided by community members through practical grassroots work *outside of the institution*.

Learning to gather and take care of Mnoomin has helped me to build a relationship to this place, and to more deeply understand the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism. Mnoomin gathering nurtures cultural and ecological relationships that have been integral to well-being in this place for many centuries and will continue to be - this knowledge fuels the purpose and reason to resist the expansion of colonial empire and to support the resurgence of Indigenous governance, food systems and values. In the contemporary context, there is great value in working both within and outside of Canadian institutions to support community interests and grassroots work related to Mnoomin. One way to do this is by utilizing institutional access, knowledges, and resources, as demonstrated in this thesis, to support community-based interests. Disciplinary interests to contextualize colonialism in Aging Studies, given the subject matter, would support the growing body of Indigenous Aging Scholars and Scholarship

and could further possibilities to Indigenize the disciplinary study of Aging Studies and Gerontology. This could be done by prioritizing methodologies that take stock of how the researcher may respond to expressed community needs or desires for specific supports through research, to contextualize colonialism in the research, to ensure practical recommendations that can be reasonably implemented, and to also consider what role or relationship the researcher will have with the community beyond the completion of the research project.

Completing this thesis certainly came with some challenges, and much more research and work that tends to well-being over the course of life and over generations through an Indigenous lens is still needed. This has been one of the most exciting and challenging adventures of my life! I continue to spend as much time as I am able in the Mnoomin beds and supporting the restoration and re-education of Mnoominkewin every year and look forward to the future of Mnoomin because I think it has an incredible role to play in teaching us how to live and be well in Ontario and beyond. I think it is important to close this report by bringing my reflections back to the beginning of this story.

I first learned to gather Mnoomin the good old-fashioned ways in a jiimaan (canoe) and to process the good seeds into food by hand from James Whetung and Daemin Whetung of Curve Lake First Nation, Knowledge Holder and Elder Jeff Beaver of Alderville First Nation, and from the Omàmìwininì ricing families in Ardoch First Nation. Michi Saagiig Knowledge Holder Caleb Musgrave of Hiawatha First Nation showed me how to make ricing sticks. I also learned to think in more nuanced ways about the use of modern harvesting technologies while helping to bag up Mnoomin at the

shoreline or from a little motorboat on the water alongside the Black Duck Wild Rice airboat and while assisting Daemin Whetung in the operation of the roasting and dancing machines. No matter the harvesting methods, the work of Mnoomin harvesting is demanding, requires a lot of supportive hands, and several weeks to process the Mnoomin into food that can be stored until the following Mnoominike-Giizis, or longer.

I have also greatly enjoyed learning about the year-round shoreline work and planning that goes into Mnoominkewin. Some parts of Mnoominkewin, like chopping wood, doing chores around the homes of Olders and Elders, helping out at related seasonal tasks like boiling sap at the sugar bush, and many related seasonal activities necessary for ongoing stewardship of the ecological, cultural, and spiritual relationships that support well-being of Anishinaabeg families, communities, governance and economic systems that stem from kinship with Mnoomin in Ontario. In the colonial context, carrying out these activities inherently also supports the land, water, and earnest treaty relationships - that have been continually neglected or outright challenged for well over a century.

Most of all, I am so grateful for this community of Mnoomin harvesters for recognizing my love, curiosity, and connection to the Mnoomin, and for inviting me and my children to relearn some of the ways of our own ancestors. I got into a canoe for the first time when I was 29 years old at that first community harvesting day. But, *because I wandered* up to the community harvesting day over a decade ago and *because it was offered at all*, my children have been growing up on the water and have known the Mnoomin *all their lives*. From this experience, my deepest hope is for every child in Ontario, now and for generations to come, to always know a life with Mnoomin.

Bringing the interview discussions into conversation with each other emphasizes the importance of Mnoomin to families and to this place. Mnoomin is an essential ecological and spiritual necessity, and the practice of Mnoominike, the art of wild ricing, is essential to collective well-being in the territory. The important kinship to Anishinaabe Mnoomin, as told by Mnoomin harvesters, points to a fundamental wisdom embodied by the Mnoomin. I imagine the ripple effects of collective caring in this place might make life better in all places, too. I leave you with a few words of encouragement from Anishinaabe Elder Gidigaa Migizi I received along this journey and hold dear:

> It's a good area of study. Any help we can get is really good. I think it's going to add to the knowledge that we have. The knowledge to help us with carrying forward the importance of rice. You know, it's a big question. A simple question, but very important, so, it's a good question, congratulations for that. And, I wish you well (Elder Gidigaa Migizi-Bah).

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(2018) [Interview] Paula Anderson, Peterborough, ON.

(2018) [Interview] Marjolaine LaPointe, Peterborough, ON.

(2018) [Interview] Georgie Horton-Baptiste, Peterborough, ON.

(2018) [Interview] Timothy Smoke, Peterborough, ON.

(2018) [Interview] Maggie Vivie, Bancroft ON.

(2018) [Interview] Daemin Whetung, Lakefield, ON.

(2020) [Interview] Dorothy Taylor, Peterborough, ON.

(2020) [interview] Gidigaa Migizi, Curve Lake First Nation.

(2021) [Interview] Patti Shaughnessy, Douro, ON.

Appendix A: Letter of Support from Black Duck Wild Rice

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1600 West Bank Drive
Peterborough, ON, K9J 0G2

RE: Letter of Support for Aging, Intergenerational Wellbeing & Manómin Gathering in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabek Communities in Ontario

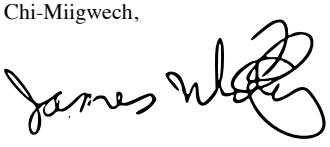
Dear Heidi,

I am writing this letter in support of your MA thesis project at Trent University and am looking forward to collaborating with you on your research project Aging, Intergenerational Wellbeing and Manómin Gathering in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabek Communities in Ontario.

Wild Rice is an important plant to the environment and to the health of our communities. Having been trained in my youth by my elders, I have been working with Wild Rice and advocating for the restoration and preservation of this important plant and food source for several decades. During Wild Rice harvesting season my organization, Black Duck Wild Rice, offers educational workshops to community members and local schools. I am glad to be able to continue this work with younger generations and am very excited to work on this project with you as I believe it will greatly benefit both First Nations and Settler communities in the Peterborough area.

I understand this project will look at the importance of Wild Rice harvesting as one that brings youth and elders together. It will also explore how the relationship between generations and the community relationship to Wild Rice influence well being in older age. As part of our collaboration, I look forward to helping you better learn and understand the importance of Wild Rice through your participation in harvesting related work and land based learning activities, such as helping to gather the Wild Rice and attending workshops this harvesting season. I will also help with knowledge translation as you work on this project over the winter months. I am very happy to collaborate on this project because it will help to expand knowledge of the social and cultural importance of Wild Rice to the health and well being of all generations in our communities.

Chi-Miigwech,



James Whetung
Operator, Black Duck Wild Rice

Appendix B: Trent Research Ethics Approval

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Office of
Research & Innovation

Heidi Burns
CSIS
TC

January 18, 2018

File #: 24984
Title: Aging, Inter-generational Wellbeing & Manómin Gathering in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabek Communities

Dear Ms. Burns,

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled "Aging, Inter-generational Wellbeing & Manómin Gathering in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabek Communities".

The committee strongly suggests and encourages you to encrypt any data that is being collected that contains any personal or identifying information. Please add a statement to your consent form concerning this. For help with encryption services, please contact Trent's IT Department.

Please add a running footer to your consent form, with the date of Trent REB approval and consent revisions number (e.g., 01-Jan-12, Version 2), so that the consent form used can be easily identified in future.

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It does not undermine or replace any other community ethics process. Full approval depends upon the approval of all other bodies who are named as stakeholders in this research.

In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) your project has been approved for one year. If this research is ongoing past that time, submit a Research Ethics Annual Update form available online under the Research Office website. If the project is completed on or before that time, please email Karen Mauro in the Research office so the project can be recorded as completed.

Please note that you are reminded of your obligation to advise the REB before implementing any amendments or changes to the procedures of your study that might affect the human participants. You are also advised that any adverse events must be reported to the REB.

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.

With best wishes,

Karen Mauro for

Dr. Peri Ballantyne
REB Chair
Phone: (705) 748-1011 ext. 7813, Fax: (705) 748-1587
Email: periballantyne@trentu.ca

c.c.: Karen Mauro
Compliance Officer

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Appendix C
Interview Guide

Project Title: Aging, Inter-generational Wellbeing & Manoomin Gathering in Michi Saagiig and Algonquin Anishinaabek Communities

Research Question and Objectives: The central research question asks" how is Manoomin (Wild Rice) gathering important to inter-generational relationships and health in older age?' This research question will be answered through the following objectives: 1) Learn about the relationships between youth and elders that are forged or reinforced during annual Manoomin gathering; 2) identify the range of gathering initiatives and programs that bring youth and elders together; 3) better understand and describe how access to Manoomin impacts well being over life course and in older age; 4) analyze how community/inter-community relationships related to Manoomin have changed or developed over time; 5) determine how to best support intergenerational relationship building that occurs during Manoomin harvesting.

Part A: Background
1. How long have you been participating in Manoomin gathering?
2. Did you participate in Manoomin harvesting when you were a child?

Part B: Experiences
3. In your view, in what ways does Manoomin gathering bring youth and elders together?
4. How important is access to Manoomin for you?
5. How important is Manoomin to your community?

Part C: Context
6. What do you believe are challenges to accessing Manoomin?
7. How do you think those challenges could be overcome?

Part D: Conclusion
8. Do you have anything you would like to add that you feel is important to understanding the relationships between youth, elders and Manoomin?
9. Do you have any suggestions for further interview participants that you feel would also help improve my understanding of the community relationship to Manoomin?

Statement of Consent

As a participant in the above project, I understand and agree with the following:

1. I understand that this project has been approved by the Trent University Aboriginal Education Council and the Trent University Research Ethics Board.
2. I have been fully informed about the nature of the research and the extent of my participation in the project to occur in this order:
   a. Participation will include an interview to be scheduled for one to two hours in duration.
   b. The researcher will provide me with a copy of the interview transcript to review and I may change, add or remove any part of my interview as I feel is necessary.
   c. The researcher will follow up with me, at a time convenient for me, to provide me with a copy of the final thesis before it is published.
3. My participation in this project is entirely voluntary;
4. I may withdraw my participation in the project at any time without consequence;
5. The information supplied throughout the duration of the project will remain confidential;
6. Unless otherwise agreed, I may be identified if I give permission/consent:
   a. You have my permission to use my name in reports or publications that result from this study (please circle one): **YES** **NO** **Initial here: _____**
7. My identity will only be known to the principal researcher and will remain confidential, unless otherwise agreed in section 6a of this document.
8. With my consent this interview will be audio recorded.
9. The information gained from this project will be stored responsibly and securely by the researcher.
10. I will be provided with a copy of my own interview transcripts and a digital copy of the audio file from my interview upon completion of this project.
11. I will receive a copy of the final thesis written by the MA student researcher Heidi Burns in order to review how my knowledge and experiences have been interpreted and shared.
12. I acknowledge there is no direct benefit for participating in this project, though I may experience benefits to myself and others related to sharing my experiences and knowledge.
13. I have been provided with a copy of this informed consent form for my own records.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Project Information Letter and Consent Form

Master of Arts in Canadian and Indigenous Studies
Graduate Researcher: Heidi Burns
Telephone: 705-748-1011 ext.7938
E-mail: heidiburns@trentu.ca
Faculty: Dr. Mark Skinner E-mail: markskinner@trentu.ca
Faculty: Dr. Paula Sherman E-mail: paulasherman@trentu.ca
Project Title: Aging, Inter-generational Wellbeing & Manoomin Gathering in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabek Territory

PROJECTINFORMATION LETTER

Boozhoo, Aaniin Gidigaa Migizi,

I am writing to request a time that I can make an offer of semaa (tobacco) to you in request for your participation in my graduate research project Aging, Inter-generational Wellbeing & Manoomin Gathering in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabek Territory. I am undertaking this project in part fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Canadian and Indigenous Studies program at Trent University and as an advocate of Manoomin.

My project examines the relationship between Manoomin harvesting and intergenerational relationships. The project focus is on the experiences of Anishinaabe Knowledge Holders and Community Members who live or work in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough County and surrounding Williams Treaties First Nations and who participate in annual Manoomin gathering in the Great Lakes region. The project goal is to offer meaningful historical and present day insights as to how ongoing initiatives to restore Manoomin beds and preserve annual Manoomin gatherings that bring youth and elders together may be better supported in this region. The primary thesis questions asks: 'how is Manoomin gathering important to inter-generational relationships and health in older age?"

I hope to better learn about your experiences with Manoomin. Your participation is completely voluntary and would involve a one - two hour interview. During the interview you may choose to answer any questions you wish in ways most comfortable to you, ask questions of your own, and you may end the interview at any time for any reason. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded. You may consent to sharing your identity in the final thesis report and any publications resulting from this project, or you may choose to remain anonymous. You are welcome to follow up with me at any time after the interview and, with your consent, I will follow up with you about the interview and provide you with a copy of your interview transcript and a copy of the digital audio recording of our interview on a USB stick. I will also provide you with a copy of the thesis report so that you may review your contribution to the project before anything is published. Digital files of our interview will be kept secure and confidential for the duration of this project and upon completion will be deleted from my files.

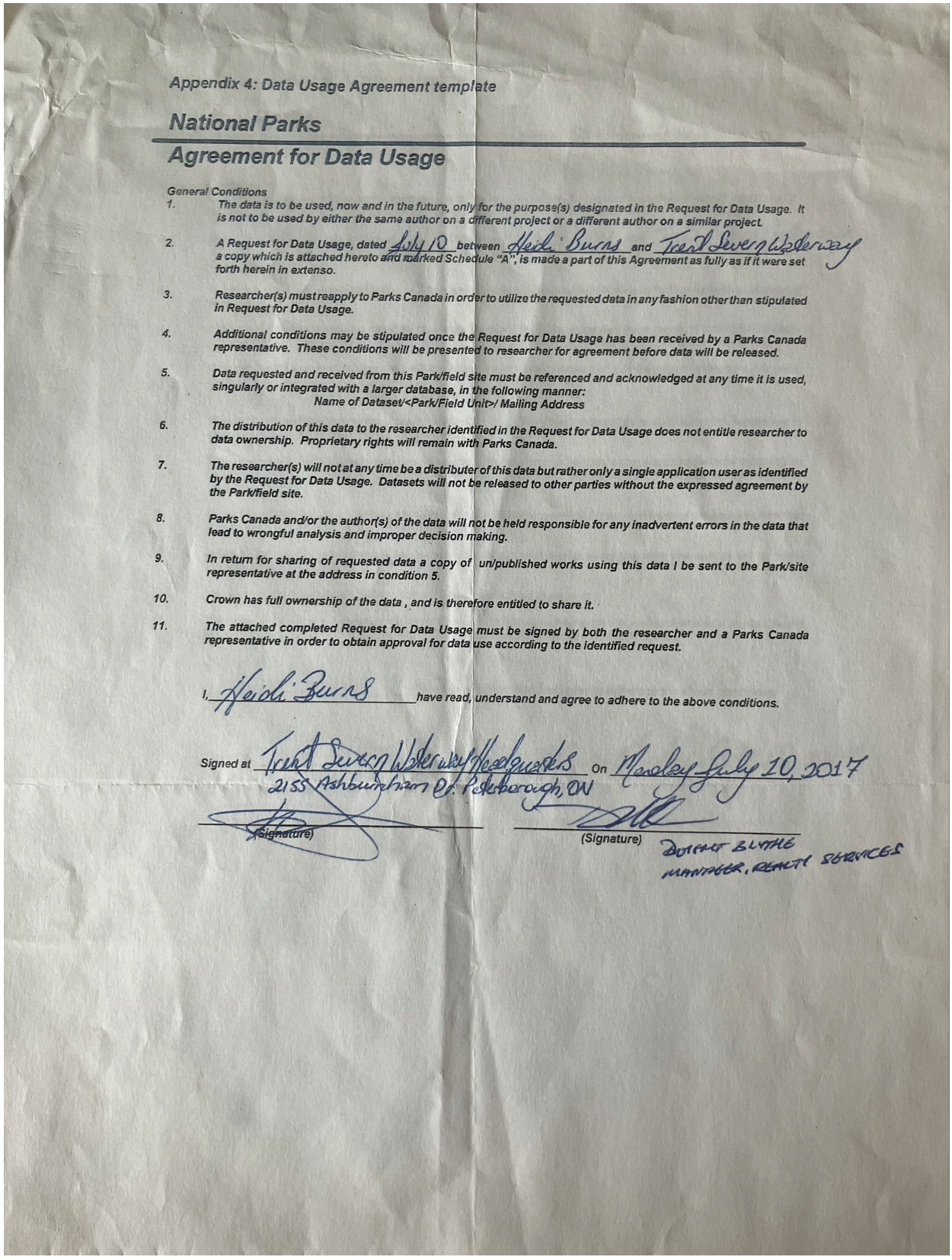
This study has been reviewed and approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board. Please direct questions pertaining to this review to Jamie Muckle, Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Trent University, Phone: 705-748-1011 ext. 7896, email: jmuckle@trentu.ca

If you are willing to participate or if you have questions, please telephone or e-mail me at the contact information provided at the top of the page.

Miigwech sincerely for your consideration,

Heidi Burns

Appendix E: Trent Severn Waterway Data Usage Agreement



Appendix 4: Data Usage Agreement template

National Parks

Agreement for Data Usage

General Conditions

1. The data is to be used, now and in the future, only for the purpose(s) designated in the Request for Data Usage. It is not to be used by either the same author on a different project or a different author on a similar project.

2. A Request for Data Usage, dated July 10 between Heidi Burns and Trent Severn Waterway a copy which is attached hereto and marked Schedule "A", is made a part of this Agreement as fully as if it were set forth herein in extenso.

3. Researcher(s) must reapply to Parks Canada in order to utilize the requested data in any fashion other than stipulated in Request for Data Usage.

4. Additional conditions may be stipulated once the Request for Data Usage has been received by a Parks Canada representative. These conditions will be presented to researcher for agreement before data will be released.

5. Data requested and received from this Park/field site must be referenced and acknowledged at any time it is used, singularly or integrated with a larger database, in the following manner:
   Name of Dataset/<Park/Field Unit>/ Mailing Address

6. The distribution of this data to the researcher identified in the Request for Data Usage does not entitle researcher to data ownership. Proprietary rights will remain with Parks Canada.

7. The researcher(s) will not at any time be a distributer of this data but rather only a single application user as identified by the Request for Data Usage. Datasets will not be released to other parties without the expressed agreement by the Park/field site.

8. Parks Canada and/or the author(s) of the data will not be held responsible for any inadvertent errors in the data that lead to wrongful analysis and improper decision making.

9. In return for sharing of requested data a copy of un/published works using this data I be sent to the Park/site representative at the address in condition 5.

10. Crown has full ownership of the data , and is therefore entitled to share it.

11. The attached completed Request for Data Usage must be signed by both the researcher and a Parks Canada representative in order to obtain approval for data use according to the identified request.

I, Heidi Burns have read, understand and agree to adhere to the above conditions.

Signed at Trent Severn Waterway Headquarters 2155 Ashburnham Dr. Peterborough, ON on Monday July 10, 2017

(Signature) (Signature)

DOUGLAS BLYTHE
MANAGER, REALTY SERVICES