UNDERSTANDING ANISHINAABEG CONNECTION WITH CREATION IN CURVE LAKE FIRST NATION: A CASE STUDY OF DECOLONIZED NATURE CONNECTION AND INDIGENIST MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

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Abstract

Understanding Anishinaabeg Connection with Creation in Curve Lake First Nation: A Case Study of Decolonized Nature Connection and Indigenist Mixed Methods Research

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This thesis explores connection with creation/nature in Curve Lake First Nation, including the components of how this connection manifests and community concerns about and priorities for this connection. Influenced by existing psychological theories and frameworks about how humans connect with the natural world, this research implements novel Indigenist methodologies that are responsive to community interests and desires. Seven knowledge contributors (participants) participated in three research sharing circles to explore the research topic. The research revealed unique concerns and priorities in the community about connection with creation, such as the impacts of treaties and the need for the reclamation of critical natural sites. This thesis also reports on critical aspects of connection with creation through the elements of the Medicine Wheel, as well as the Anishinaabe concept of *mino bimaadiziwin*. Results are presented in thematic analyses and informed the preliminary steps in creating a connection with creation scale for the community.

Keywords: Anishinaabe, Nature Connection, Nature Relatedness, Indigenist Methodologies, Indigenous Methods, Medicine Wheel.

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A Note About Terminology

Before continuing this thesis, it is important to note some points related to terminology and vocabulary. First, the term "creation" is used in this text to describe the land, the waters, nature, the elements, and all other aspects of the natural world. This term was chosen in collaboration with community members who felt that using the term "nature" was not inclusive from a community perspective. While I attempt to use "creation" as consistently as possible throughout the text, there are instances where other terms are employed instead.

In some places, "nature" is used, such as when discussing environmental psychology theories. "Nature" is the term used in that discipline. I also use "nature" when describing my personal experiences, as it is the term I most identify with. In discussing Anishinaabe scholarship, I shift toward using "creation." However, some Anishinaabe scholarship uses "land" to describe creation. I have left quotations from these scholars unchanged. This allows for consistency between the telling of the knowledge shared, including in quotations.

In this manuscript, I have used some *Anishinaabemowin* words. This is the language of the Anishinaabeg. These terms are in *italics*, and English translations are always provided. Sources for these translations are also always provided as many words have varied spellings across knowledge holders. In this document, I also refer to participants as "knowledge contributors." This is based on the model developed by Anishinaabe scholar Amy Shawanda (personal communication, October 10, 2023), as each knowledge contributor in this study contributed substantially to the outcome of this

project. Similarly, I use the terms “knowledge sharing” and “knowledge synthesis” in lieu of “data collection” and “data analysis.”

I use the term “Anishinaabe” to describe members of Curve Lake First Nation. However, some sources referenced use different words to describe the Nation, including Ojibwe and Nishnaabe, and I have left these unchanged to preserve the authenticity of the knowledge holders’ voices. The term “Nishnaabe” is also used by many in the Curve Lake community, and this is representative of a cultural modernization wherein individuals in the community are “notorious for dropping vowels” in the language (Research Working Group, personal communication, May 8, 2024). The letter “g” as a suffix on Anishinaabemowin words denotes a plural (e.g., “Anishinaabe*g*”).

This project is also specifically focused on the Mississauga Anishinaabeg, the Anishinaabe nation to which Curve Lake First Nation belongs (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). The Mississauga Anishinaabeg Nation is one of several nations that make up the Great Anishinaabe Nation (others include the Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Algonquin, and Saulteaux; Williams, 2018). Some members of Curve Lake First Nation also identify with some of the other nations. Furthermore, there are also members of the community who identify only as part of the greater Anishinaabe or Ojibwe Nation and prefer not to be addressed as Mississauga.

There is also reference made to “Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg” in this thesis. This term comes from Elder Gidigaa-Migizi-ban (Doug Williams, 2018) of Curve Lake First Nation and has been adopted by many academics (e.g., Simpson, 2017). *Michi Saagiig* is considered by some to be the Anishinaabemowin term for “Mississauga,” meaning “those who live at the mouths of rivers.” However, there is not currently a consensus in the

Curve Lake community as to whether one term should be used exclusively. Yet, there is currently more literature referencing “Mississauga” than “Michi Saagiig,” and therefore, this is the term used in this thesis. Arguably, as suggested by community advisors, it is more important that individuals have a term with which they can identify, that they are proud of, and that brings them pride in their community and ancestors.

Positionality

Positionality statements provide an opportunity for researchers to establish their epistemological and ontological groundings as individuals and their relevance to their current research (Holmes, 2020). In research involving Indigenous Knowledges and interactions with Indigenous Peoples, particularly when non-Indigenous researchers are involved, this is especially relevant (Moffat, 2016). Specifically, there is a substantial history of extractive research practices in which Western/non-Indigenous researchers have entered Indigenous communities, recorded knowledge, and subsequently presented this knowledge as their own (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020; Simpson, 2017; Thomas, 2021).

Furthermore, many non-Indigenous researchers have been elevated to positions of knowledge holders and experts of Indigenous Knowledges within the academy (Chapman & Schott, 2020; Haig-Brown, 2010). This is problematic not only because it is representative of the extractive nature of past Western research, but also due to the significant roles many knowledge holders play in community, few of which researchers uphold. In the context of this research, it is important to establish the role of one of the disciplines through which data will be gathered and analyzed.

Positionality of Psychology in the Context of Indigenous Research

While this research is not solely based on psychological science, and the methodology employed is directed by Indigenist protocols, it is also important to recognize the colonial history of psychology. Specifically, Western psychological norms in the context of treatment have been used as tools for assimilation and genocidal practices. For example, the construction of Indigenous Peoples as “deviant” has been heavily influenced by a colonial psychological discourse, neglecting to account for how

the "embodied realities of Indigenous peoples were and are produced and perpetuated through texts, legislations, government policies and acts of state that (re)produce, rely on, and perpetuate understandings of deviance" (de Leeuw et al., 2009, p. 283). Some of the elements have been used as tools for assimilation and genocide, and have contributed to perceived deviance in the context of "abnormal" or "unhealthy" behaviours included in legislation such as the Indian Act (1985); colonial projects, such as residential schools (Government of Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, 2021); and—as is particularly relevant to the current project—land theft and the separation of Indigenous Peoples from their traditional territories (Matheson et al., 2022).

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) (2018) also released a statement after the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) final report. In this statement, they acknowledge the need for cultural allyship, multicultural understandings of mental health and well-being—including the Anishinaabe concept of *Mino Bimaadiziwin* ("living the good life"; Debassige, 2010)—and the importance of professional training on the history of the colonial impacts of psychology to Indigenous Peoples' mental health in Canada.

Within the CPA's (2018) response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, mention is also made to the role of psychological science in the reconciliation process. Specifically, the CPA acknowledges the limitations that primarily quantitative psychological tools and Western theories have imposed on Indigenous identities. The CPA further commits to incorporating alternative methodologies into psychological practice. This relates directly to this project in that there was an attempt to bring Indigenist practices into environmental psychological theories and tools.

Finally, some Western psychological theories and frameworks are based on Indigenous Knowledge systems. However, in some cases, this knowledge has been appropriated and is currently understood by most as originating from pioneering Western, typically European, psychologists. For example, in perhaps one of the most infamous yet seldom-mentioned examples of "Whitewashing Indigenous Knowledges" (Safir, 2020) in psychology, Abraham Maslow (1943) borrowed extensively from Blackfoot Knowledge systems to create his theory of human needs, specifically from his time working within the Siksika Nation. While Blackfoot Knowledge is unique, and Maslow's theories are not representative of their complex understandings of being (Bear et al., 2022), the historical disregard of the origins of the knowledge Maslow collected is representative of the extractive nature of much research with Indigenous Peoples.

Another example of this process is, until recent times, the relative lack of discussion surrounding the substantial influence of Indigenous cultures in Africa and the Americas on the work of famous psychiatrist Carl Jung (Vine Deloria et al., 2009). Jung's work with Indigenous nations is especially relevant to the current research as many of the theories and beliefs he derived from these experiences are directly related to human connection with nature (Jung & Sabini, 2016). Borrowing from the words of Jung and a contemporary, Anishinaabe researcher, the need for positionality in academic discourse is apparent:

> The power of science and technology in [the world] is so enormous and indisputable that there is little point in reckoning up all that can be done and all that has been invented. One shudders at the stupendous possibilities. Quite

> another question begins to loom up: Who is applying this technical skill? In whose hands does this power lie? (Jung, 1936, p. 534).
>
> Within many Indigenous communities, we identify ourselves as a form of respect in sharing who we are, where we are from, and who are our ancestors. This articulation helps establish trust (Absolon & Willett, 2005) by locating ourselves in relation to community and distinguishes our research from the many historical research projects which have had negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their communities (Chiblow, 2021).

My Positionality

In the context of my current research, two specific components of my own positionality are particularly relevant. First, I am a settler to the land on which I live and study. The term "settler" itself, positions me within a specific Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous dichotomy and highlights a personal philosophical acceptance that I have made. In fact, some scholars suggest that accepting and understanding one's settler identity is fundamental to beginning conversations about colonialism, reconciliation, and allyship (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015).

My settler relationship with the territory which I call home is deeply intertwined with my research interests, the relationships I build with other settlers and the Indigenous Peoples of this area, and my personal understandings of nature. Part of the inspiration for this research project dates back to my childhood and my frequent trips to what is now known as the Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park. The park is a sacred and special place for me. I spent many summers canoeing the lakes and rivers in the area, camping on the land, and learning about its flora and fauna. However, in 2018, after reading Gidigaa

Migizi-ban's (Doug Williams-ban's, 2018) book, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg: This is our Territory*, my views of the park were drastically changed. I learned that the place where I spent my formative years and where my own connection with nature was so profoundly fostered was, in fact, unceded and stolen territory. The lakes where I had learned to fish were controversial spaces and the subjects of legal conversations, until the park was formally established.

This history has greatly influenced my academic trajectory. The territory itself is one of the primary reasons for my own deep connection with the natural world and my fascination with how humans interact with and are a part of nature. The wrongdoings of private individuals and the federal and provincial governments have formed my conviction to learn more about the rightful inhabitants of this territory. Moreover, my connection with nature and contemporary understandings of the histories of this land have directed my study into the intersections of these subjects. I want to learn more about how the loss of traditional territories can affect one's and a community's connection with nature, and I want to learn more about what it means for Mississauga Anishinaabeg to be connected with nature, partly because of my academic curiosity, but also due to my sense that the reasons that I am so connected with these lands in particular cannot be found in Western academia. Likewise, I am committed to learning more about how the history of colonization and Western psychology have affected Indigenous Peoples' mental health in Canada.

These desires greatly shape my research and personal goals, including my commitment to reconciliation and the promotion of Indigenous resurgence. My commitment to reconciliation and resurgence is highlighted in the rationale of this thesis

and my desire to engage with community and contribute to projects that are of interest to those participating.

The second component of my positionality that I feel is particularly relevant to this research is my identity as an aspiring academic. I recognize that, as Srigley suggests in a reflection on their own educational journey, the "mainstream education system worked well for me" because it is a system designed for people like me (Srigley & Varley, 2018, p. 50). Like Srigley, I was raised by a teacher (as well as another non-teacher parent), and I have found reasonable success throughout my academic career; I have been good at working in the system. This is not the case for everyone, and it is certainly not true of many who hold Indigenous Knowledges. Academic institutions have historically disregarded Indigenous Knowledges, and some continue to (da Silva et al., 2023; Dei, 2010). I am fortunate that I had the opportunity to learn from Indigenous scholars in my undergraduate and current graduate degree. However, I am still a product of an educational system that privileges certain ways of knowing.

Coming into this research, I must recognize that, consciously or otherwise, there are knowledge systems that I privilege. As Srigley and Varley (2018) suggest, my understanding of which epistemologies and ontologies are valid "comes from an epistemological blind spot, perpetuated through my learning in the mainstream educational system, and I need to put that learning down to unlearn some of its key tenants before I [can] pick it up again" (p. 52). This is especially apparent in the impetus for this research project. Specifically, for the past four years I have been a member of the Nature Relatedness Laboratory in the Department of Psychology at Trent University. This lab is run by Dr. Lisa Nisbet, who is also a committee member for this thesis. With

her guidance and my own academic interests, I have come to learn much about the field of environmental psychology, particularly as it relates to human connection with the natural environment.

My initial thesis proposal was focused on the validation of the Nature Relatedness Scale (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013; Nisbet et al., 2009) and other psychological tools in Anishinaabe populations. Through deep personal reflection and consultation with Curve Lake First Nation, the project has blossomed into something that is much more meaningful for the community. However, it was nature relatedness and my time with Dr. Nisbet that led me to this project. It is therefore crucial for me to constantly appraise my own engagement with the project and reflect on my motivations. One of the primary goals of this research project has been to engage in Indigenist research (following community protocols, implementing Indigenous research methods, understanding the relational nature of knowledge; Wilson et al., 2019; Windchief & Sand Pedro, 2019), and this precludes the opportunity to rely solely on existing Western psychological paradigms and methods.

In this research and beyond, I may not completely honour this goal, and this is important to acknowledge before, during, and after the research process. However, it is a part of my positionality, and I can make a conscious effort to live in peace with this fact while keeping my mind open to new opportunities, knowledges, and paradigms. Likewise, throughout this process, I have been reminded of the words of David Danto (2017), a settler psychologist who has conducted research on mental health and connection with nature. Reflecting on a recent project, Danto (2017) writes,

> A challenge for this study, as for the bulk of research within Indigenous communities, was the "outsider" status of the researchers themselves. Despite our interest in, and concern for, the well-being of Indigenous communities, we remain unavoidably non-Indigenous Western psychologists. This "from the outside in" orientation runs the risk of further oppression and colonization in the name of scientific truth (Para. 10).

Like Danto's (2017) work and other settler academics' research, this project employs Indigenist integrations, including in research methods. These efforts, accompanied by my regular reflection on my positionality, have contributed to what I feel has been a successful collaboration.

Some areas in which positionality is of particular importance to this research include my training in psychology and the terminology, practices, and epistemologies this includes; my own connection with nature and my preferences for its description (e.g., as nature vs. creation). These aspects of my positionality were particularly relevant in the methods of the current research. I further reflect on how I navigated these topics in the conclusion.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research in environmental psychology has contributed to the scientific understanding of how humans connect with and are related to the natural environment (e.g., Wilson, 1984). Similar scholarship in the humanities and social sciences has focused on relationships between people, the land, and nature (e.g., Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012). However, research investigating the intersections between Western scientific measures and Indigenous Knowledges regarding nature connection is limited. While this research does investigate these intersections, the purpose of this research project has evolved with the research process. Initially, the goal of this project was to evaluate current Western understandings of connection with nature in an Indigenous context. In conversations with Curve Lake First Nation and through substantial personal reflection, this research project has transformed into something far more meaningful.

This project focused specifically on Curve Lake First Nation—and the research goals reflect this—however, it also contributes to the literature on connection with creation in Indigenous communities. Some literature exists describing different priorities and concerns about connection with creation in Indigenous communities (e.g., Simpson, 2011), but there has been little research investigating community stakeholder concerns about and priorities for connection with creation. Likewise, literature describing in detail what it means to be connected with creation is currently limited. This is particularly true in terms of developing ways to measure this connection (Keaulana et al., 2021). This project represents one investigation into these topics within a specific community. Based on this, this research had three primary goals:

1. To determine the priorities and concerns in Curve Lake First Nation in regard to community connection with creation;
2. To cooperatively develop and follow an Indigenist research methodology that is respectful and responsive to the community desires and needs of Curve Lake First Nation and is robust in terms of academic rigour;
3. To understand how Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation is similar to and distinct from the existing psychological measures of nature connection, and to begin the development of a new integrative measure of connection with creation for Curve Lake First Nation.

There is substantial scholarly impetus for the development of each of these goals and the broader purposes of this research project. There are contemporary and historical concerns regarding connection with creation in Mississauga Anishinaabe communities at large and Curve Lake citizens in particular, including the potential negative impacts of the Williams Treaties (1923) on individuals' relationships with their territory. Specifically, these treaties affected Mississauga Anishinaabeg access to traditional harvesting and ceremonial activities, and this forced removal from ancestral practices may have impacted community members' connection with creation, potentially intergenerationally.

There are also substantial intersections between Mississauga Anishinaabe knowledge and environmental psychology theories. The current push for decolonizing the academy—particularly in psychological science and practice (e.g., Bhatia, 2018; Bhatia, 2020; CPA, 2018; Jovanović, 2023; Phiri et al., 2023)—has catalyzed the development of collaborative projects investigating the importance of connection with nature (e.g., Dew

et al., 2019; Jubinville et al., 2022; Stelkia et al., 2021). Finally, there is a burgeoning literature and growth in academic inquiry into the field of Indigenist research, particularly focusing on developing academic methodologies in accordance with Indigenous community desires, ethics, and protocols. This literature is explored extensively in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This thesis contributes to the larger literature on nature connection and Indigenous nature connection with specific focus on Curve Lake First Nation, a Mississauga Anishinaabe nation in Southern Ontario**.** Mississauga Anishinaabe teachings emphasize the importance of connection with creation (Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2017; Williams, 2018), and this is true in Curve Lake First Nation. What follows in this literature review is a recounting of important information and teachings about connection with creation, as well as historical events that have shaped the ways in which Curve Lake members have been able to connect with creation.

Some of the information shared is relevant to many Anishinaabe nations, including the truths shared by Leanne Simpson (2011) regarding the overarching colonial efforts to remove Anishinaabeg from creation. Other information is relevant to many Mississauga Anishinaabe First Nations, such as the impacts of the Williams Treaties (1923). Yet other information is specifically relevant to Curve Lake First Nation, including the history of the reserve lands. Overall, however, there are two critical themes in the literature and oral histories regarding connection with creation in Curve Lake First Nation: 1) connection with creation is central to a sense of culture and identity and 2) there have been significant attempts to eliminate this connection.

This literature review also explores fundamental concepts in psychology as they relate to connection with nature and briefly highlights some of the attempts of knowledge synthesis between psychology and Indigenous Knowledges. The review concludes with an introduction to the principles of Indigenist methodologies before these principles are operationalized in the methodology of the current project.

2.1 Anishinaabe Connection with Creation Scholarship

Anishinaabeg, overall, are deeply connected with creation. Reflecting on the colonial practice of ownership and possession of properties, Simpson (2017) suggests that Anishinaabeg "relate to the land through connection—generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear relationships" (p. 43). She also reflects that the land "is the base of [Anishinaabeg] power" (Simpson, 2017, p. 42). Connection with creation is so intertwined with senses of self that it governs one's Anishinaabe identity. Therefore, a sense of connection with creation is deeply integral to living a complete life.

Central to the themes presented in exiting literature on Anishinaabe connection with creation is a sense of holistic connection and being. This sense of holism can be understood through the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and the aspects of being it outlines. The Medicine Wheel is further explored in discussing research methodology. Here, however, scholarship relevant to how Anishinaabeg connect with creation is highlighted through the concept of *mino bimaadiziwin* as well as through the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of being.

2.1.1 Mino Bimaadiziwin

Mino bimaadiziwn roughly translates to "the good life" or "living in a good way" (Bédard, 2009; Debassige, 2010). However, scholars and knowledge holders argue that there is no adequate English translation for the deep philosophical and epistemological meaning the concept represents (Bédard, 2009). For example, Spielmann (1998) shares that "bimaadiziwin is nearly impossible to translate into English" (p. 159).

In the context of this research project, *mino bimaadiziwin* refers to the way in which we carry ourselves and choose to engage with creation. It describes a personal

philosophy of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility that humans hold towards creation. It sits in the middle of the Medicine Wheel because it is what guides the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual ways that connection with creation can be fostered and strengthened. That is, without *mino bimaadiziwin*, these connections are more difficult to develop and maintain.

2.1.2 Mental

Creation is considered a teacher in many Anishinaabeg nations (Bell, 2014). Bell (2014) writes that "knowledge is contained within the land of the geographic location of the nation" (para. 11). Other scholars suggest that aspects of creation, including animals, are teachers for humans, as they have been on this earth longer and are very skilled at what they do (Williams, 2018). This is documented in the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* (Peterborough Petroglyphs). *Kinoomaage Waapkong* roughly translates to "the teaching rocks." This translation is representative of a basic tenant of Anishinaabe intelligence; it flows through the land and creation. Therefore, creation is central to learning, teaching, and understanding. In fact, Simpson (2011) suggests that "Nishnaabeg[1] thought comes from the land" (p. 91)

In a broader sense, the mental aspect of being refers to the intellectual components of life (Bell, 2014). This includes the abilities to think, reason, and learn. To connect with creation in a mental capacity is perhaps to learn about and reflect on the skills and knowledges held by other beings. It might also be to understand where humans fit into creation and to understand the important roles we have in this relationship.

[1] See page 2 for variations in spelling.

2.1.3 Physical

Understanding physical connection with creation is perhaps the simplest to conceptualize. However, there are still a plethora of nuanced ways in which Indigenous cultures promote this connection. For example, *manoomin* (wild rice) has been a staple of Anishinaabeg diets for thousands of years (Whetung, 2020). Although there are also mental, emotional, and spiritual interactions associated with *manoomin*, there are several direct physical interactions between the human and the rice.

The harvest involves taking to the water by canoe and using sticks to fell the rice into the boat. This is a difficult physical process that connects the harvester with the water and the rice plants. Next there is the preparation of the *manoomin*. It must be roasted and dried so that it can be stored. This represents another physical connection with creation; as seasons change, humans must adapt how we conduct ourselves and how we think about things like food, or else our functioning will be limited. Finally, there is the consumption that connects the person directly with creation, as it was creation that nurtured the *manoomin* and provided to the people this source of sustenance.

Connecting physically with creation can also take the form of other subsistence activities and games. Having a physical connection with creation is about using the body to cultivate a relationship. Bell (2014) suggests that connection with creation can be achieved through physical contact with creation in whatever capacity it takes.

2.1.4 Emotional

Simpson (2011) suggests that Mississauga Anishinaabeg possess deep emotional intelligence, something she terms “heart knowledge.” Simpson reflects that the Anishinaabemowin word for “truth,” “*(o)debwewin*” translates to “the sound of the

heart." Therefore, to understand truth one must be connected with their heart, their emotions. Sharing the words of Elder Gdigaa Migizi-ban, she recounts that being a good person involves permeating a sense of trustworthiness.

The heart and emotions are incredibly important in the context of connecting with creation. To be emotionally connected with creation means to be connected through the heart. This involves deep reciprocal trust. Not only does it mean that we must trust creation to care for us—to provide for us—but it also means that creation and all it encompasses must be able to trust us. While some may argue that nature, or the earth, may have lost trust in the human species to care for her, many Indigenous nations and Peoples have continued to partake in the reciprocal relationship between humans and creation necessary for mutual flourishing.

Both the Government of Canada (2015) and the Canadian chapter of the World Wildlife Fund (n.d.) have webpages dedicated to conservation and stewardship projects undertaken by Indigenous activists. Locally, in the *Nogojiwanong* (Peterborough) area, the Sacred Water Circle (n.d.) is dedicated to protecting the sacred relationship humans have with the water. Likewise, many other local and international groups are dedicated to promoting the importance of trust-based emotional connections with creation.

2.1.5 Spiritual

Globensky and Sabourin (2015) suggest that in an Anishinaabe worldview "we are all spiritual beings—humans, animals, trees, plants, rocks, water, along with other co-inhabitants of the earth" (para. 2). This is a fundamental tenant of many Anishinaabe spiritual practices and customs. It also represents a very practical method through which we can understand spiritual connection with creation. Specifically, central to having a

spiritual connection with creation is the understanding that we—humans, plants, animals, the earth—are all spiritual relations. There is no "us and them" there is only "we."

There has been substantial debate in environmental humanities scholarship about the relationship humans have with nature (e.g., Cronon 1995). Yet, Anishinaabe scholars understand that, while we have relationships with all aspects of creation, humans are still fundamentally part of the natural world (Simpson, 2011). There are also many diverse ceremonies through which Anishinaabeg strengthen this connection. Some of these acts of relationship are conducted frequently, such as the placing of *semaa* (tobacco) when taking the life of an animal or plant to feed or heal, others are less frequently practiced but equally important.

2.2 Context for Concerns and Priorities about Connection with Creation

There have been several events that have shaped the ways in which Curve Lake First Nation members have been able to interact with and therefore connect with creation. While not exhaustive, the following sections outline different ways in which members' connections may have been affected, including in the context of traditional territories, the Williams Treaties (1923), and other disruptions.

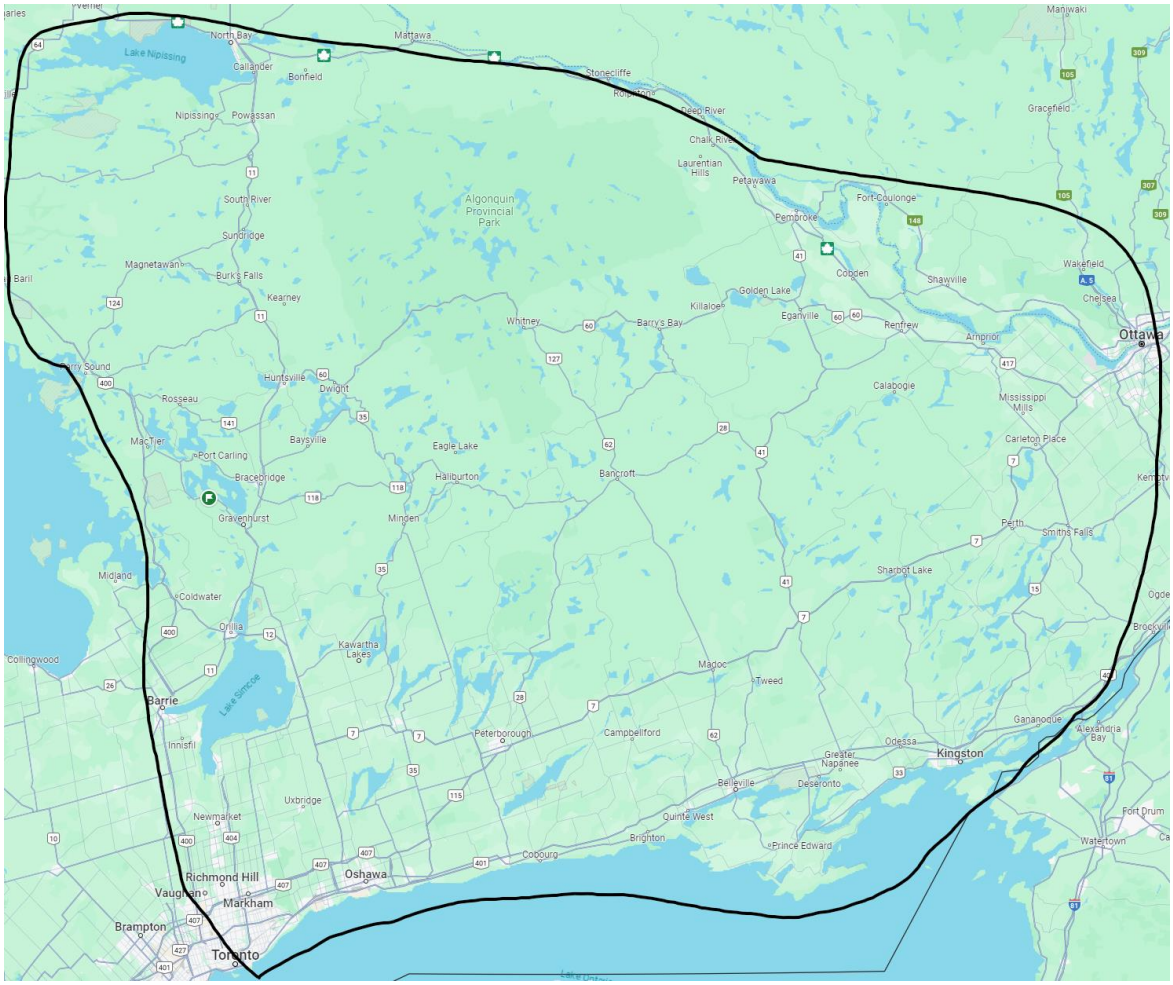
It is worth noting that this review does not include specific descriptions of how different disruptions may have affected land-based ceremonies and other spiritual practices. This was done intentionally, as many ceremonies present knowledge that is meant to stay in the community. Moreover, they present knowledge that should not be communicated in the form of a settler's research.

2.2.1 Traditional Territories

While the Curve Lake First Nation reserve is located within traditional Mississauga Anishinaabeg territory, the land that was designated for the establishment of the reserve is a controversial topic. Officially instated as a reserve in 1837, Mud Lake—which would become Curve Lake in 1964—is one of several Anishinaabe reserves in what is now known as Southern Ontario (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). Curve Lake First Nation is a Mississauga nation (Williams, 2018). The traditional territories of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg encompass the Northern Shore of Lake Ontario, as far South as Toronto up to Lake Nipissing, to Ottawa, to where the *Kitchi-Ziibi* ("St. Lawrence River") meets Lake Ontario (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Approximate Traditional Territories of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg



Note. This map was developed based on the scholarship of Elder Doug Williams-ban and in consultation with Jack Hoggarth, Assistant Professor of Anishinaabe Knowledge at Trent University.

The Mississauga Anishinaabeg have lived in this territory for over 12,000 years (Williams, 2018). However, they did not live in singular locations. The Mississauga Anishinaabeg were nomadic, moving throughout their territory to allow the land time to heal and replenish. Oral histories suggest that the great Anishinaabe Nation (comprising several nations, including the Mississauga) traversed a great ice bridge in the North-East,

slowly migrating to the shores of the great lakes (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). This same history tells of a great flood that forced the Anishinaabeg to survive in a new world. Other oral histories disagree with the great migration from the North-East, but the histories agree that the Mississauga Anishinaabeg were the first peoples in this territory (Williams, 2018).

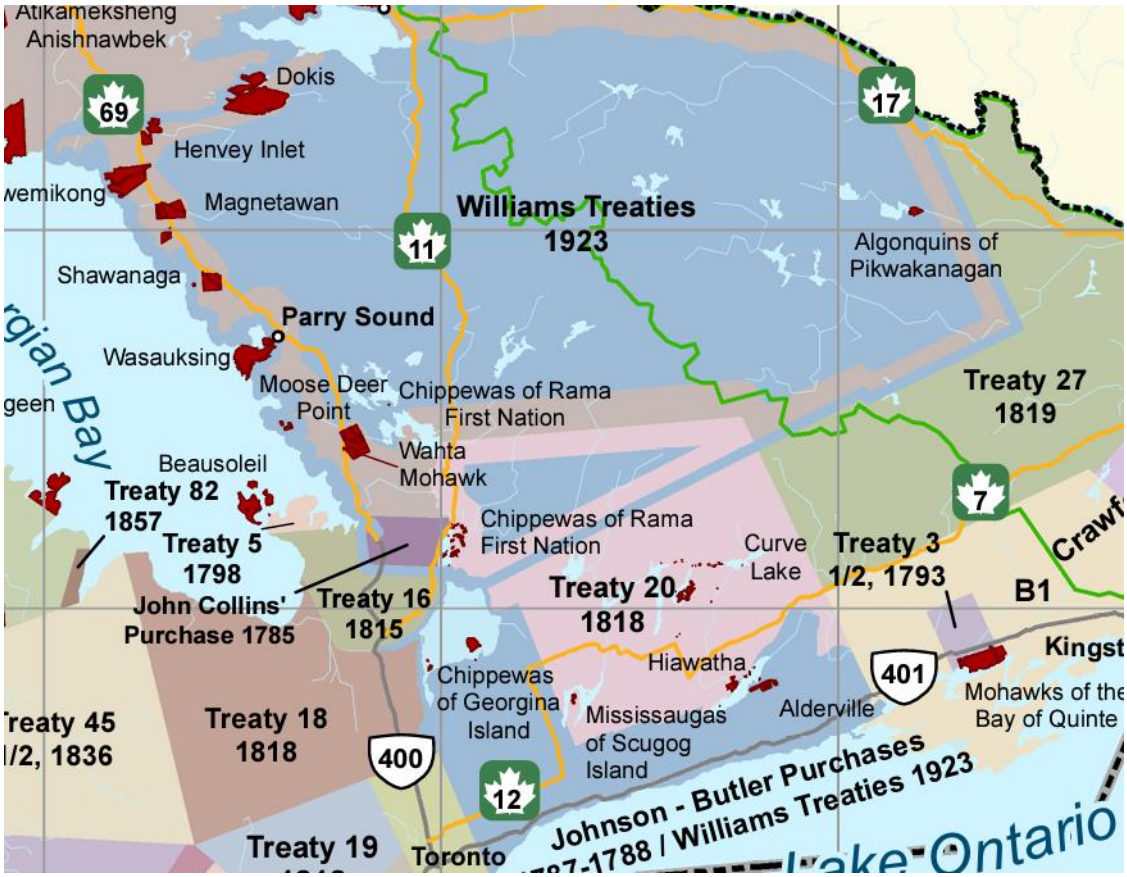
During their long history on this territory, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg made several treaties with other Indigenous nations, allowing access to certain parts of the land (Williams, 2018). The Mississauga Anishinaabeg also migrated North during the 1640-1650s to escape disease and the increasing presence of European settlers. The Mississauga Anishinaabeg travelled as far North as *Baawitigong* (Sault Saint Marie, "the rapids where Lake Superior and Lake Huron meet"). It was at this time that Jesuit missionaries encountered the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. At the time they had relocated to the shores of Lake Huron, and the missionaries assumed this was their traditional territory. The Mississauga Anishinaabeg returned to their territory later in the century. This is also when the colonial historical records note the arrival of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg to the Northern shores of Lake Ontario (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). This led to a further misunderstanding with the settlers, who assumed that Mississauga Anishinaabe territory was further North.

In 1818, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg signed Treaty 20 with the British Crown, surrendering a substantial parcel of land in Southern Ontario (Figure 2; Whetung-Derrick, 1976; Williams, 2018). This treaty became problematic for the Mississauga Anishinaabeg, who had advocated for the maintenance of their subsistence rights, including the protection of certain pieces of land that were significant for food and

culture. Equally problematic was the stated "inability" of the government to pay for the land on the terms they had agreed to (annuity payments).

Figure 2

Southern Ontario Treaties



Note. Adapted from "The First Nations and Treaties Map of Ontario as an Instructional Resource: An Educator's Guide" by Government of Ontario, 2020, (https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/indigenous/the-first-nations-and-treaties-map-of-ontario.pdf). In the Public Domain.

Note. Treaty 20 (1818) is represented in light pink. The Williams Treaties (1923) are represented in blue.

In the early 1800s, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg who would become the residents of Curve Lake First Nation first established themselves on the current reserve grounds (Whetung-Derrick, 1976; Williams, 2018). However, these lands were made available to the Mississauga Anishinaabeg in part because the "settlers did not want [them because] they felt it was too rocky" for agriculture (Williams, 2018, p. 62). But the land in question was still good for hunting and fishing, so it became a gathering place for many Mississauga Anishinaabeg.

The Mississauga Anishinaabeg had an understanding of Treaty 20 (1818) that they would still be allowed access to lands within their territory to hunt, fish, and trap, so long as the land had not been turned into farmland (Williams, 2018). However, it quickly became apparent that the Crown's goals for the treaty territories were focused on settlement and the expansion of agricultural lands. For example, settler families were able to purchase land at low costs and were given additional free land after they had cleared the initial plots for farming. This offer was not made to Mississauga Anishinaabeg. With the expansion of private property also came increasing limitations on the abilities of Mississauga Anishinaabeg to subsist. Further issues developed with the introduction of provincial game laws (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). While their inherent rights to hunt, fish, and gather were protected under treaties, Mississauga Anishinaabeg were being fined for exercising these rights.

This mistreatment of Mississauga Anishinaabeg hunters and fishers extended into their Northern hunting grounds (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). These territories, which would later be covered by the Williams Treaties (1923), were unceded at the time, yet Mississauga Anishinaabeg were being fined for engaging in their protected activities.

After the signing of the Williams Treaties (1923), and within the Treaty 20 (1818) territories, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg began to face other challenges regarding the land. What is now known as the Kawartha Highlands was being sold off to settlers for cottage properties (Williams, 2018). Settlers were able to purchase lake front properties for very low costs, but Mississauga Anishinaabeg—whose traditional territory this was—were not.

This pattern continued for decades until the Mississauga Anishinaabeg began to develop a case for the reclamation of the land. Elder Gitigaa Migizi-ban (Doug Williams-Ban) (2018) suggested that it was at this time that the government decided to turn the remaining parcels of the Kawartha Highlands into a provincial park. He suggests that "the government did that so it would pit allies—people who love parks—against [the Mississauga Anishinaabeg]. [The government] saw that [the Mississauga Anishinaabeg] could rightfully claim the area and they put a stop to it" (Williams, 2018, p. 78).

The land on which Curve Lake First Nation sits is within Mississauga Anishinaabeg traditional territories. However, the land also carries controversial elements of its history. It was designated for the Mississauga Anishinaabeg because the settlers did not want it. Mississauga Anishinaabeg were subsequently limited in their ability to exercise their rightful subsistence activities, and they were disallowed from purchasing land to increase their territories (Blair, 2009; Hoggarth & Pind, 2023; Whetung-Derrick, 1976; Williams, 2018).

2.2.2 Williams Treaties

The development of the Williams Treaties (1923) came after decades of requests from Mississauga Anishinaabeg nations for the recognition of their rights to engage in

harvesting activities within their territory (Blair, 2009; Whetung-Derrick, 1976). Specifically, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg were concerned with the repeated fines they were receiving for harvesting in their territories. Williams (2018) writes that:

> The 1923 Williams Treaty was devastating to my people. I witnessed the trauma and the fear that was put on my people that were trying to live on the land. They lived daily watching over their backs and trying to maintain their lifestyle as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. The government with the implementation of the "basket clause" was a sneaky way to get rid of us as people who enjoyed this part of our great land (p. 75).

Seven First Nations were involved in the Williams Treaties (1923), including Alderville, Beausoleil, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Rama, and Scugog Island First Nations. The territories in question encompassed the land between Lake Ontario and Treaty 20 (1818) and the Northern hunting grounds (Figure 2). Crucially, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg representatives who engaged with the governments of Canada and Ontario were primarily concerned with upholding their rights to harvest in their territory. However, the surrender of land through the Williams Treaties (1923) and the compensation for this land were not the only changes the governments undertook.

According to the Canadian and Ontario governments, beyond the surrender of land to the government, the Williams Treaties (1923) also extinguished Mississauga Anishinaabeg traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering rights. This provision is referred to as the "basket clause" (Blair, 2009). While the governments aggressively asserted that rights had been extinguished by the Williams Treaties (1923), previous treaties covering the land in question and other treaties across the Canadian Nation State upheld these

rights. The Mississauga Anishinaabeg maintained that their inherent Indigenous and treaty rights could not be extinguished based on the Williams Treaties (Williams, 2018). This disagreement led to decades of mistreatment of the Williams Treaties First Nations by various governments, including the seizure of game, fish, harvested products, gathering tools, and the imposition of severe fines on local Mississauga Anishinaabeg for practicing traditional gathering outside of provincially mandated seasons.

In November 2018, after decades of intergenerational efforts by the Williams Treaties First Nations to advocate for their traditional and previous treaty rights to harvest, the federal government acknowledged its mistake and issued an official apology to the affected nations and peoples (Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, 2018). In the apology, the federal government acknowledged the hardship that the removal of these rights entailed in the contexts of food security and the suppression of Mississauga Anishinaabeg culture. The federal government also recognized the existing rights of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg to hunt, fish, and gather on certain treaty territories. However, the territories specified did not encompass the entirety of Mississauga Anishinaabeg traditional territories. Specifically, Mississauga Anishinaabeg from the Williams Treaties First Nations had their rights recognized within "certain treaty territories." These territories extend only as far North as the limit of Treaty 20 (1818). Therefore, the land North of Apsley, Ontario, covered by the Wiliams Treaties (1923) are not considered in this agreement. Mississauga Anishinaabeg from the Williams Treaties First Nations do not have the legal right to harvest in the Northern hunting grounds. This may become a larger concern as community members slowly move their hunting grounds North. As it is not widely known amongst Williams Treaty First

Nation citizens, it is likely that there will be a rise in fines on harvesting as these community members begin to harvest North of Apsley (J. Hoggarth, personal communication, December 5, 2023).

Beyond the fact that the government apology does not account for the Northern territories, there are other problems in its phrasing. Specifically, the apology does not make mention of the intrinsic loss of connection with creation that the Williams Treaties (1923) imposed. Many feared participating in subsistence harvesting, a practice that has tied Mississauga Anishinaabeg to creation since time immemorial (Williams, 2018). It also makes no mention of the shame and fear that those who did participate in "illegal" activities must have felt.

While significant scholarship has investigated the effects of the limitation of traditional harvesting rights on food systems, security, and health within the Williams Treaties First Nations (e.g., Domingo et al., 2021) and in a broader, international context (e.g., Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996; Lemke & Delormier, 2017), little is known about the potential connections between the limitation of these rights and the loss of connection with creation.

2.2.3 Other Disruptions to Connection with Creation

Beyond the effects of the Williams Treaties (1923), other settler-colonial forces had drastic impacts on connection with creation. Namely among these was the physical transformation that Mississauga Anishinaabeg territories underwent with the creation of canal systems in Southern Ontario. Chief among these canal systems is the Trent Severn Waterway.

Mississauga Anishinaabeg traditional territories were radically altered through the creation of the Trent Severn Waterway (Hogggarth & Pind, 2023; Whetung-Derrick, 1976; Williams, 2018). The creation of dams and the canal altered water levels throughout the area, and this led to the decline of *manoomin*. Along with foods harvested through hunting and fishing, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg also relied on the *manoomin* to feed themselves and their families. The attempted reclamation of this traditional food source by Mississauga Anishinaabeg advocates has led to modern conflicts with settlers to the area, who complain that the wild rice is intrusive and makes boating difficult (e.g., Johnson, 2018; Sachgau, 2015; Spenrath, 2020).

Connection with water is central to the way that many Anishinaabeg connect with creation. Prior to the construction of the dams and locks, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg traversed the rivers and tributaries in their territory (Simpson, 2011; Williams, 2018). Renee Bedard (2018) shares that "the *ziibii'gagan* (rivers), *zaagiganan* (lakes), *bog'tingoon* (rapids), *wiikwedoon* (bays), *dkibiin* (natural springs), *bitooshk-biisenyin* (swamps), and *ziigiinsan* (streams) have sustained Anishinaabe people on these traditional territories for thousands of years" (p. 89). She emphasizes the importance of the water as a means of transportation, sustenance, recreation, and spiritual connection.

The construction of the dams and locks limited the water in its ability to move naturally. This not only cut off countless species from their spawning routes, but Anishinaabeg scholars suggest that it "coloniz[ed] the lifeblood of [Mississauga Anishinaabe] system of rivers and lakes" (Simpson, 2011, p. 87), and this colonization was present through the pollution of the waters by the "influx of settlers" for whom this territory was now much more accessible (Williams, 2018, p. 37).

This new accessibility to previously "remote" Mississauga Anishinaabe territories also contributed to the creation of "cottage country" and the eventual selling of crown land to settlers. While settlers moved into areas around the Kawartha Lakes, Mississauga Anishinaabeg were also losing their own territory. Williams (2018) recalls that the flooding caused by the Trent Severn cut the land area of the Curve Lake reserve from 1800 acres to 1200 acres. Likewise, the Mississauga Anishinaabeg also lost access to numerous significant sites that now sit underwater, including places of spiritual importance where connection with creation is fostered and ancient burial sites (Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2017; Williams, 2018). This forced relocation of graves is particularly devastating for the loved ones of those ancestors.

Another event beyond the Williams Treaties (1923) that impacted the abilities of many Mississauga Anishinaabeg to connect with creation was the declaration of the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* (Peterborough petroglyphs "teaching rocks") as a provincial park. When the park was designated, the provincial government did consult with local Elders about some aspects of its creation (Williams, 2018). The Elders and other Mississauga Anishinaabe advocates advised against permitting camping in the park, the creation of a restaurant, and the construction of a large interpretive centre. However, in 1985, a building was erected over the petroglyphs site and the creak that flowed around and underneath the rocks was blocked. This further limited the abilities of Mississauga Anishinaabeg to access the site. Likewise, the teachings on the rocks are meant to be living documents that change with the effects of time, the sun, and precipitation. They are also meant to be living in the sense that they are never finished—knowledge holders are

meant to contribute to the catalogue of teachings, but their ability to do this has been drastically limited.

While there are surely countless other events and decisions that have impacted individual Mississauga Anishinaabe families from connecting with creation how they would have liked, the Williams Treaties (1923), the Trent Severn Waterway, and the desecration of the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* stand as some of the largest affronts perpetrated by settler forces against the intimate connection Mississauga Anishinaabeg have with creation. These examples are specific to the people of this territory, but many of these themes are common among other Indigenous nations..

2.3 Psychological Connection with Nature

Psychological measurement of humans' connection with nature represent relatively recent undertakings. Environmental psychology was developed to address the limited psychological research into the ways that physical environments can impact human behaviours, emotions, and thoughts (Gifford, 2014). The field has evolved since its inception, and now environmental psychologists research a plethora of subtopics within the field, including the impacts of architectural decisions on human health and well-being (e.g., Punzi et al., 2020), human-nature interactions (e.g., Stern, 2000), and more. These researchers may work at the intersections of psychology and environmental studies, regarding human relationships with nature and conservation or “green” ideations (Saunders, 2003). However, other researchers focus on the way that connection with the natural environment affects human well-being (Capaldi et al., 2015).

The grounding theory in environmental psychology and evolutionary psychology regarding the connection between humans and the natural environment is the Biophilia

Hypothesis (Wilson, 1984); because humans have evolved in relationship with nature, nature provides something critical to proper human functioning. Furthermore, some scholars suggest that the modern environment in which many humans live is not ideal for human functioning (Gullone, 2000). Specifically, humans evolved in nature for hundreds of thousands of years, and the projects of urbanization and industrialization are much more recent. Wilson (1984) believes that humans have a universal need to be exposed to nature.

It is possible that there exists a deep biological need for humans to be in natural settings (Kellert & Wilson, 1993). These assertions are particularly relevant in the context of Indigenous populations for whom, in many cases, the stark reality of a rapid and often forced removal from traditional territories provided no opportunity for adaptation though a gradual and/or voluntary and willful separation from the land (Akee, 2021; Kwaymullina, 2020). For most settlers the shift from subsistence living in relationship with nature was gradual and purposeful. Indigenous populations, however, had no choice and were displaced from nature rapidly. Non-Indigenous populations have also begun to recognize the importance of connecting with nature. This has led to the development of innumerable nature connection initiatives around the world (e.g., Children and Nature Network, n.d.; CitiesWithNature, n.d; Nature Canada, n.d.).

Substantial evidence supports the benefits of human contact and relationships with nature. Individuals who spend more time outdoors report higher levels of self-rated well-being (Korpela et al., 2014) and lower rates of negative mental effects such as depression (Cox et al., 2017) and anxiety (Oh et al., 2017). Connecting with or spending time in nature can be beneficial for individuals identifying with other conditions, such as

ADHD (Fabor Taylor & Kuo, 2009) and more general attention improvements (Bowler et al., 2010). Likewise, there has been an expanding interest in nature-based therapies (Buckley & Brough, 2017).

One nature-based therapy that has gained substantial recognition is forest bathing. From the Japanese concept of Shinrin-Yoku, forest bathing involves immersing oneself in a natural environment through the senses (Hansen et al., 2017). It requires individuals to mindfully focus on the environment they are in and appreciate its beauty. Forest bathing can to lead to decreases in the levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) (Antonelli et al., 2019). Beyond the clinical benefits unique to forest bathing, the practice may elevate existing mental health techniques such as mindfulness and increase instantaneous levels of nature connection (Nisbet et al., 2019).

Now recognized for its benefits, forest bathing represents one example of Western scholars' acceptances of traditional knowledges. While some scholars suggest that forest bathing has been overly dissected through a Western lens, the overall acceptance of the practice may indicate a growing understanding and acknowledgement of Indigenous Knowledges.

2.3.1 Nature Connection Measures

Researchers have developed several psychometric scales to assess how humans connect with and relate to the natural world. One of the most frequently used measures in modern research is the Nature Relatedness Scale (Nisbet et al., 2009). Nature relatedness consistently and accurately captures personal levels of nature connection (Keaulana et al., 2021). Nature relatedness also correlates with well-being and sustainability attitudes and actions (Nisbet et al., 2009).

Several other measures of nature connection have been developed. In fact, as of 2021, there were nearly 40 nature connection or nature connection-adjacent scales active in academic literature (Bergland, 2021). These nature connection tools and scales vary in their design. Like the Nature Relatedness Scale, many rely on Likert-based statement responses to ascertain a composite score of nature connection (e.g., Mayer & Frantz's (2004) Connectedness to Nature Scale). Others are based on visual representations of nature connection (e.g., Schultz's (2002) Inclusion of Nature in Self).

Beyond these overarching nature connection scales, scholars have also developed more specialized nature connection measures, such as the Love and Care for Nature Scale (Perkins, 2010), which focuses more on emotional relationships with nature. As is explored in a subsequent section, there have been efforts to utilize specific nature connection tools in Indigenous populations, and researchers understand the need for culturally relevant nature connection measures (Mamaweswen Niigaaniin & MacNeill, 2022). This is highlighted through a recent study investigating how geographical locations and cultures impact how individuals perceive and respond to the nature relatedness scale (NR-6; Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013), including the potential differences in the connections between nature relatedness, spirituality, and wellbeing (Kövi et al., 2023). Kövi et al. (2023) found that there are differences in the relationships between nature relatedness and wellbeing depending on the culture of the respondents. For example, in Canada there was an association between nature relatedness and mental health, whereas in Hungary there were associations between nature relatedness and both mental and spiritual health.

Scholars have also suggested that “Indigenous” scales be developed to better capture participants from various nations’ connections with the natural world (Keaulana et al., 2021). After reviewing all current measures of nature connection as they pertain to Indigenous health and worldviews, Keaulana et al. (2021) concluded that

> Incorporating Indigenous conceptions of nature may expand the scientific understanding of the phenomenon of nature connectedness. Moreover, because Indigenous lifeways are intertwined with nature, the degradation of the environment is particularly harmful and represents a recurring injury to Indigenous people. Thus, Indigenous-focused scales may advance our understanding of how to heal the historical trauma that Indigenous people have experienced (p. 13).

Indeed, there appeared to be a need for community-level and culturally appropriate psychometric tools for evaluating nature connection in Indigenous populations.

2.4 Knowledge Translation and Nature Connection: Towards Indigenist Integrations

Significant scholarship exists investigating the intersections of Western psychological understandings of connection with nature, and Indigenous Knowledges. Much of this scholarship has focused on narrative inquiry and arts-based approaches to knowledge collection (e.g., Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012). Overall and generalized findings from this scholarship have intimately linked Indigeneity to place as an important factor in connection with nature (Sangha et al., 2018). Likewise, local scholarship focused on Mississauga Anishinaabeg has also consistently described nature connection

and relationships with nature as integral to a sense of self and community (Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2017).

More recent research conducted in collaboration with Indigenous organizations has led to new developments in quantitative studies as well. Mamaweswen Niiggaaniin and MacNeil (2022), for example, investigated the relationship between Anishinaabe culture and nature relatedness. Their research consisted of the collaborative creation of an Indigenous culture scale, specifically measuring Anishinaabe cultural connection. In this study, nature relatedness and Indigenous culture were found to be strongly and significantly correlated. Moreover, the researchers identified a distinction between Indigenous identity and Indigenous culture; the specific components captured within the Indigenous culture scale were significantly correlated with nature relatedness, but self-identification as Indigenous was not. While Mamaweswen Niigaaniin and MacNeill (2022) contributed to the academy and the local First Nations they collaborated with, there is still room for investigations into the concept of nature connection itself within Anishinaabe nations.

Other researchers have investigated holistic evaluations of nature connection. Trigwell et al. (2013) examined the role of spirituality in the relationship between nature connection and psychological well-being. They found a strong positive association between nature connection and spirituality. Moreover, spirituality significantly mediated the relationship between nature connection and well-being. Other researchers have developed scales and tools to assess elements of “Indigenous” nature connection (Kruth et al., 2020). However, this research has been criticized for its lack of reflexivity and its implementation of pan-Indigenous labelling (Schmitt et al., 2021). Indeed, there is a

current lack of literature investigating nation-specific and place-based evaluations of nature connection with Indigenous Peoples.

There are also few current evaluations of Western academic theories and studies regarding nature connection by Indigenous researchers or conducted with Indigenous Peoples, yet Indigenous Knowledges have greatly influenced environmental research for decades (Johnson, 1998). Moreover, while there is substantial overlap between Indigenous epistemologies and fields such as environmental psychology—particularly regarding the construction of nature connection tools (Keaulana et al., 2021)—there has been little investigation into quantitative expressions of nature connection in Indigenous populations.

Andersen (2013) highlights the use of quantitative methodologies as expressions of modern colonization as census data and other sources of quantitative data about Indigenous populations often serve to assimilate different nations and cultures in a pan-Indigenous identity. However, there have also been advances in the in the realm of Indigenous quantitative research. For example, Walter and Andersen (2013) suggest that it is not the quantitative data itself that is problematic. Instead, it is the intentions and actions of researchers that serve to manipulate the voices of communities and/or extract data without providing meaningful benefits to the community. Likewise, Indigenous Peoples have been employing scientific and other research techniques in their communities for generations (Closs, 1996). There is a need for research tools that are scientifically valid from Western and Indigenous perspectives and that are respectful of Indigenous communities.

2.5 Indigenist Methodologies

Indigenist research methodologies describe a philosophical approach to research that includes the recognition of the relational nature of knowledges (Wilson et al., 2019). Likewise, researchers employing true Indigenist methodologies must extend its principles beyond their research and live in relation to their understandings of the world. This includes a commitment to learning and following existing and emergent protocols in Indigenous communities (Windchief & Sand Pedro, 2019). Furthermore, it recognizes the significance of the gift that is shared through the transmission of knowledge. This is especially important in the context of non-Indigenous researchers who, for decades, have been unjustly seen as keepers of Indigenous Knowledges and who have not properly acknowledged from whom the knowledge they present in journals, presentations, and books was shared (Minthorn et al., 2018).

Indigenist research methodologies are often compared to *Indigenous* research methods. Distinct from yet intimately connected to Indigenist methodologies, Indigenous research methods describe the practical application of the philosophical approaches of Indigenist research as well as specific tools and methods for conducting research developed by Indigenous Peoples (Kovach, 2010). These include specific techniques for collecting and analyzing data. Indigenous research methods have existed in communities for centuries. However, in recent years, several Indigenous scholars have developed frameworks through which these methods can elevate western research, such as Stó:lō Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008), Anishinaabe research practices (Mcgregor et al., 2018), the Seven Domains of Hawaiian epistemology (Meyer, 2001), and research sharing circles (Hunt & Young, 2021; Tachine et al., 2016).

Beyond these criteria and fundamental to an Indigenist approach is the protocol of introductions. Beyond simple manners, introductions involve centering oneself within the research they are conducting and in the community they are collaborating with (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Therefore, it is paramount that any Indigenist research or research involving Indigenous methods be prefaced with the positionality of the researcher to the community, their own knowledge, and the methodologies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section explores the methodology of this research project. This involves outlining the recruitment procedures for knowledge contributors, providing an overview of the ethical protocols followed, and discussing how and why this is an Indigenist research project. Also explored are the knowledge sharing and knowledge synthesis strategies employed.

3.1 Indigenist Approach and Indigenous Mixed Methods Research

As outlined by Kovach (2018), research employing Indigenous methods and Western methods is not strictly Indigenous research: It is mixed methods research. This research project employed Indigenous research methods (i.e., data-related techniques) in the form of research sharing circles and in the synthesis of the knowledge shared through the Medicine Wheel. However, the project also employed established Western methods in the forms of thematic analysis and participatory scale development. Crucially, this research project was conducted in a respectful and responsive manner as is all true Indigenist research.

Through consulting with various cultural committees, the elected Chief and Council, and in the creation of the research working group, this project intended to be empowering to the citizens of Curve Lake First Nation and allowed them to set the research agenda. Likewise, these protocols influenced the methodology of this project, ensuring representation of Indigenous ways of knowledge creation and striving to decolonize and reframe research. The specificity of this research project was also respectful of the diversity of Indigenous cultures around the world, which in turn, allows for political integrity; this is Mississauga Anishinaabe research, specifically. Finally, this

project was developed in collaboration with key community stakeholders, and this ensured that the research questions were of importance to the community.

3.1.1 Medicine Wheel Framework

The Medicine Wheel is common to many Indigenous nations and communities across Turtle Island (Mashford-Pringle & Shawanda, 2023). It is a tool represented by a circle divided into four equal quadrants. These quadrants correspond to various teachings, knowledge, and descriptions of life depending on the nation or community. Mashford-Pringle and Shawanda (2023) suggest that "the Medicine Wheel can be applied in many different spaces and sectors (including health, education, social work, child welfare, justice, policies, etc." (p. 2). An Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel framework was applied to this research project.

In the context of research, the Medicine Wheel has been applied in several capacities. Some scholars utilize it as a broad research framework, emphasizing the cyclical nature of the research process (Mashford-Pringle & Shawanda, 2023). Others implement the Medicine Wheel in data analysis as a tool for thematic or narrative coding (Verwood et al., 2021). Wenger-Nabigon (2010) suggests that the Medicine Wheel contains teaching which may inform the research and learning process in very operational terms. For example, moving clockwise through the Medicine Wheel, and starting in the Eastern quadrant, researchers can situate themselves in a conceptual framework, move South to develop a theory, travel West to develop an evaluation framework, and head North to conduct analyses (Mashford-Pringle & Shawanda, 2023). Crucially, however, the research process, as captured in the Medicine Wheel, is cyclical and perpetually in motion (Foushee & Gurneau, 2010). Specifically, in completing the analysis/synthesis

phase of a research project, it is important to explore the directions the research might take in the future.

The cyclical research process is present in this project, as I highlight in the presentation of future directions for the research. The Medicine Wheel is also present in this project for the purposes of knowledge synthesis. The aspects of Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation were coded through a deductive thematic analysis into the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel, as well as into an additional component (*mino bimaadiziwin*), comprising the five elements of connection with creation. The results from this project are also presented in the order in which the elements appear in the Medicine Wheel.

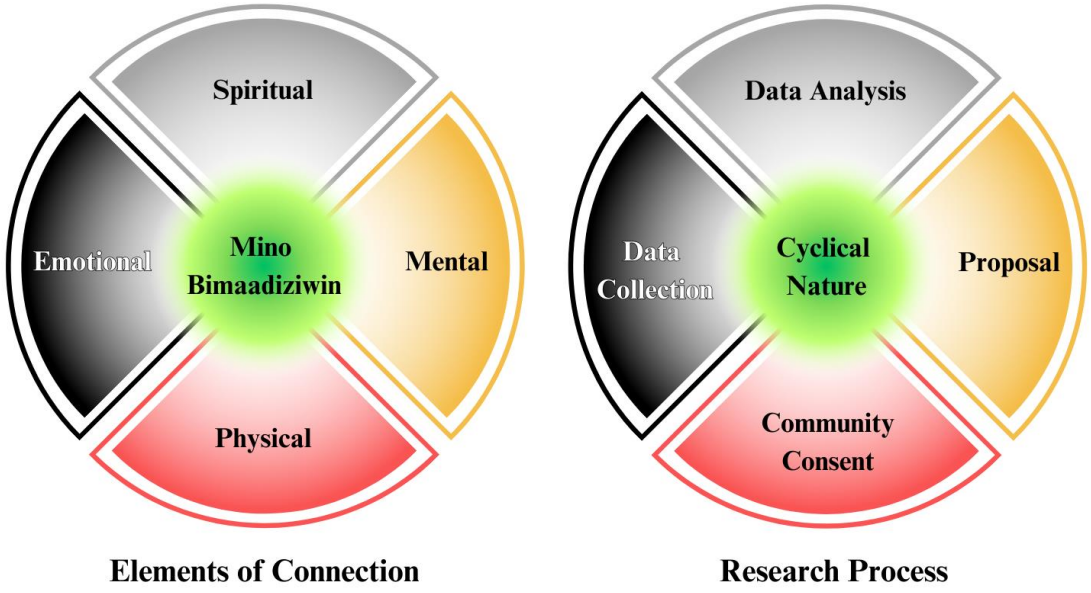
These implementations of the Medicine Wheel—as research framework and knowledge synthesis tool—represent only a fraction of the potential ways in which the Medicine Wheel may influence or enrich research. Likewise, the use of the quadrants for coding in this project is one of many interpretations of this technique. The mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects—and engagement with *mino bimaadiziwin*—of connection with creation represent one of many teachings within the Medicine Wheel. The quadrants may also be used to capture themes within the four seasons, the four directions, the four sacred medicines, and more (Bell, 2014). Furthermore, a fundamental teaching of the Medicine Wheel is the interconnectedness of all things and beings. This project explores connection with creation in categorical terms. However, one form of connection could not exist without the others. Figure 3 is the Medicine Wheel diagram provided by Curve Lake First Nation, and Figure 4 illustrates how the Medicine Wheel informed this project.

Figure 3

Curve Lake First Nation Cultural Centre Medicine Wheel

Figure 4

The Medicine Wheel in Practice



3.1.2 Research Sharing Circles

Research sharing circles are modelled based on "sharing circles," common in many Indigenous communities, which are used to come to decisions and discuss issues as

a community (Tachine et al., 2016). Rather than following the “focused interview” approach (Merton & Kendall, 1946) common to focus groups, research sharing circles are designed to allow the researcher to participate in discussions (Tachine et al., 2016). This allows for researcher positionality to not only be acknowledged but highlighted.

Research sharing circles are designed to address specific subjects and issues, but they do not rely on prompts from a facilitator (Tachine et al., 2016). Instead, the researcher becomes engaged in the conversation, presenting their own perspectives, ideas, and knowledge. This approach is ideal in research where different participants have different knowledge bases (including the researcher). Research sharing circles also focus on collaboration with the participants (Tachine et al., 2016). This is particularly advantageous in research that is meant to capture community values, concerns, and knowledges.

3.2 Knowledge Contributors

The knowledge contributors invited to participate in this collaborative research project were chosen based on the alignment/relevance/value of their particular cultural and traditional knowledges with the topics of this thesis. In a typical Western research model such a purposeful invitation of those who hold the knowledge would be considered a purposeful sampling procedure ,employing the critical evaluation of the phenomena in question and the employment of strategies to recruit cases or knowledge contributors who provide the most academically valuable data for the project (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Such purposeful sampling, or in this context the deliberate invitation of those who hold the relevant knowledge, is common in qualitative research involving Indigenous Peoples (Kennedy et al., 2022). This is likely partly due to the organization of many

Indigenous communities, wherein individuals are identified holders for specific types of knowledge (Hiratsuka et al., 2020). In this project, this entailed recruiting individuals who were impacted by or had knowledge of some of the events that may have impacted Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation, such as the Williams Treaties (1923). It was also crucial that the knowledge contributors have strong relationships with creation and hold knowledge that outlines how to build and maintain these relationships.

As I am not a member of Curve Lake First Nation, cultural committees and the elected Chief and Council established a research working group. One of the goals of the research working group was to identify knowledge contributors in the community. Once identified, these individuals were approached by members of the research working group to ascertain their interest in the research project. If they were interested in participating, they received a copy of the consent form prior to knowledge sharing, so they could review its content and raise any questions or concerns.

Seven knowledge contributors participated together in three research sharing circles. This number was selected for multiple reasons. First, in academic research, qualitative data in the form of group discussions (typically focus groups) recommends the number of participants in one group be 7-12 (Krueger, 2009), with a systematic review of focus group N sizes reporting a mean of 8.4 participants (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Because this project also followed strict purposeful sampling procedures, there were a limited number of individuals in the community who the research working group identified as key potential knowledge contributors. The knowledge contributors in this research project were compensated for their time with a $500.00 honourarium. This sum

is based on the valuable nature of the data they contributed and the Curve Lake First Nation (2013) guidelines for honorariums.

3.3 Ethics

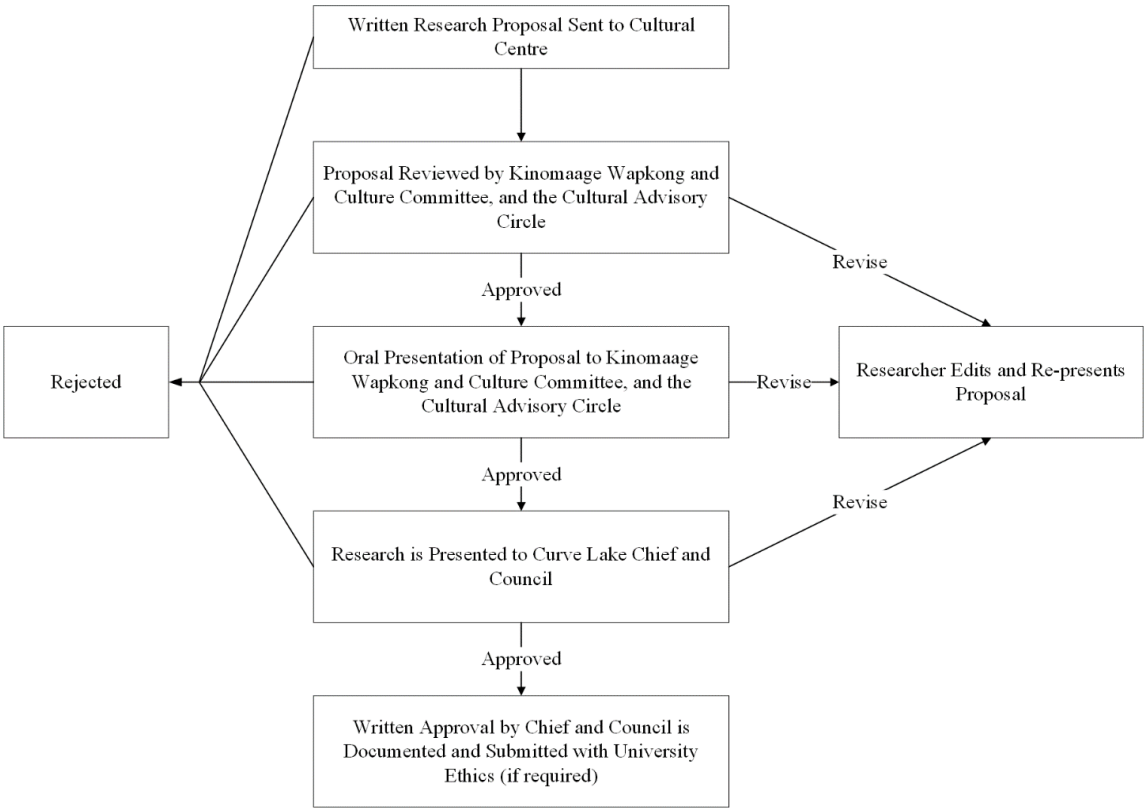
When conducting research with Indigenous Peoples and communities, it is sometimes necessary for researchers to engage in ethical processes and considerations beyond those required by universities or agencies (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; George et al., 2020; Hayward et al., 2021). The Tri-Council statement on research ethics regarding Indigenous populations clearly outlines specific guidelines in their mandate, including descriptions and definitions of key stakeholders and themes in Indigenous research, such as "communities," "customs," and "Indigenous Knowledge" (Government of Canada, 2019). However, the statement also expresses the need to often and likely engage in community-level ethical processes and considerations that go beyond the recommendations it outlines. This is done out of respect for the unique and specific nature of nation's autonomy and rights.

In the context of this project, conducting ethical research involved navigating several specific steps, beyond those required by the university, with the guidance of the Curve Lake First Nation community. Specifically, I first met with and presented the research proposal to two community committees: the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* and Culture Committee, and the Cultural Advisory Circle. Based on the feedback from these committees, I reformulated the proposal to further connect the project with community desires. I subsequently engaged with these committees and my research supervisors several times to develop a mutually beneficial and acceptable research proposal.

After the research proposal had unanimous support from these committees, the community assigned a team of leaders to coordinate the research process. This team was designated the "research working group." This group included representatives from the Curve Lake Cultural Centre and Curve Lake Chief and Council. With the establishment of the research working group and the approval of the project by the committees, the research proposal was presented to Chief and Council. Chief and Council voted and approved the research project, endorsing its commencement. With the written consent of Chief and Council, the research ethics proposal was submitted to Trent University's Research Ethics Board for review, and it was subsequently approved prior to commencing knowledge sharing. It is worth noting that Chief and Council also approved all documents directly involved in the research process, including an OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession; see below) agreement (Appendix B), the knowledge contributor consent forms (Appendix A), and the research aide confidentiality form (Appendix C). Not only were these steps important for building trust with the community, but members of the research working group also saw great value in documenting this process. Figure 3 outlines the current research approval process in Curve Lake First Nation.

Figure 5

Research Ethics Process



3.3.1 Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession

Consistent with the professional and academic recommendations of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (n.d.), the methodology undertaken in this research project was guided by the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP). For the purposes of this project, these principles directly related to storage of research data and data sovereignty, consultation with designated cultural groups on data collected, and a commitment to maintaining the accessibility of this research for community members. Prior to commencing this research, I collaborated with the research working group and my supervisors to develop an OCAP contract for this

project. Below is a brief description of each component of OCAP. The components outlined below come from the First Nations Information Governance Centre (n.d.).

Ownership. Ownership refers to the relationship between the data collected and the First Nation involved in the research project. Specifically, the First Nation community has collective ownership of the research data.

Control. First Nations must control all aspects of the research process. A body appointed by the First Nation must oversee each stage of a research project's development, including the opportunity to review any and all publications derived from the research data.

Access. Community members of the First Nation must have access to the data they provide and the results of the research project. Likewise, access refers to the First Nation's authority over who has access to the data collected during the research project.

Possession. First Nations must possess the data from research projects in their community. This possession allows for the principle of control to be exerted.

Community-Specific Research Protocols

Collaborating on research with Indigenous communities can also involve specific protocols related to how meetings—and research—are conducted (Riddell et al., 2017). For this research project, these protocols related directly to how knowledge sharing was accomplished. A designated support person was present at each research sharing circle. This support person had been instructed in cultural and healing ceremonies and practices by community Elders. Elders are members of Indigenous communities who have been recognized for their knowledge (Joseph, 2019). The term "Elder" and its translations in various Indigenous languages, is common across Turtle Island. In the Anishinaabe

context, Elders are pillars in the community, renowned for their cultural and healing knowledge. The research working group recommended including a support person in the research sharing circles to provide medicines and guidance to knowledge contributors who may be triggered by the content of the discussions. For example, discussing controversial and difficult topics like the harvesting bans imposed by the Williams Treaties (1923) can be emotionally, mentally, and spiritually draining,

The support person began each research sharing circle with a smudge and remained present to provide support to any knowledge contributors who needed medicines or healing because of any triggering content in the meetings. In keeping with the recognition of the difficulty of certain topics of discussion, the consent form knowledge contributors were provided with also contained specific contact information for health professionals and support services in the Curve Lake community.

3.4 Knowledge Sharing

After reviewing the consent form and expressing their interest in the research, the seven knowledge contributors participated in the three research sharing circles. Each research sharing circle was approximately three hours in length, and they were scheduled approximately two weeks apart. These same knowledge contributors were consistent throughout the research sharing circles. The research sharing circles were all held at the Curve Lake Cultural Centre. Knowledge contributors provided full and freely given informed consent by signing the consent form before the first research sharing circle began. Knowledge contributors also gave verbal consent and were given the opportunity to raise any concerns before the second and third research sharing circles.

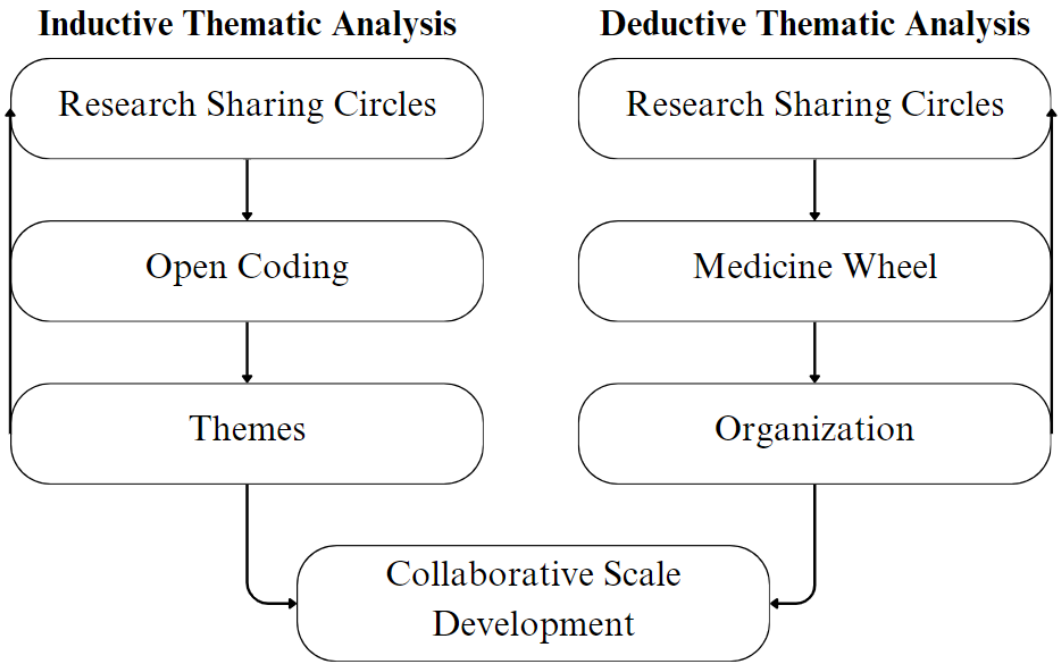
The discussion at the first research sharing circle began with introductions, allowing the researcher and knowledge contributors to situate themselves in the research questions. I subsequently reviewed the goals of the study at each research sharing circle, and the conversations unfolded naturally. There were no specific questions prepared in advance of the research sharing circles, and questions posed by were open-ended, as is recommended in research sharing circles (Hunt & Young, 2021). The knowledge shared was recorded with an audio recorder. I subsequently transcribed the audio recordings. The knowledge was hosted in Trent University's secure, encrypted OneDrive storage platform.

3.5 Knowledge Synthesis

This project employed multiple knowledge synthesis strategies. Due to the Indigenist nature of the research, it was crucial to include Indigenous methods within the knowledge synthesis. However, given the nature of academic policies and the Indigenist mixed methods goals of the research, it was also important to include accessible and accepted Western techniques for knowledge synthesis. The research sharing circle knowledge from this project was explored through three different lenses, including a grounded inductive thematic analysis utilizing open coding, a deductive thematic analysis employing teachings from the Medicine Wheel, and a preliminary participatory quantitative scale development process highlighting the results of the thematic analyses.

Figure 6

Knowledge Synthesis Framework



3.5.1 Inductive Thematic Analysis: Community Concerns and Priorities.

I employed an inductive thematic analysis to explore the knowledge from this research as it pertains to community concerns about and priorities for connection with creation. The thematic analysis followed the basic process described by Braun and Clarke (2006), with some additional steps. Specifically, I familiarized myself with the research transcripts through multiple re-reads. Based on my impressions of the data, I developed initial codes and themes. These themes were coded into NVivo 14, a qualitative data analysis software. I then grouped excerpts from the transcripts into themes and sub-themes. This process, while the basis for initial thematic analysis techniques, has been described as inductive thematic analysis, in contrast to deductive thematic analysis (described below; Fereday et al., 2006).

The knowledge synthesis diverged from a standard thematic analysis in its collaborative design. Specifically, the themes were presented to the knowledge contributors—who represent experts on connection with creation—for input. Sometimes termed the "Delphi technique," this research practice is used in circumstances where a researcher is interested in understanding the overarching opinions and thoughts of experts on a topic (Brown, 1968; Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). In the current research, this method involved my initial creation of codes after the first research sharing circle. I subsequently presented these themes to the knowledge contributors during the second and final research sharing circles. The final themes, along with this thesis, were approved by the research working group to ensure that no knowledge is being shared that is not meant to leave the community.

3.5.2 Deductive Thematic Analysis: Curve Lake First Nation Mississauga Anishinaabeg Connection to Nature and Land.

I employed a deductive thematic analysis to evaluate the elements and important practices of Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation using the aspects of the Medicine Wheel as a guide. Deductive thematic analyses—that is mapping quotes and themes within qualitative data to existing coding frameworks—is an accepted process in qualitative research (Blum et al., 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2013). It is especially useful in situations where a robust theoretical framework has already been established. The elements of human existence (*mino bimaadiziwin*, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual) are particularly well-suited to organize the ways in which a population connects with creation, as they encompass both sensory and metaphysical ways of interacting with the environment.

Deductive thematic analysis is also useful in research where bias and skewed data are possible (Mackieson et al., 2018). I am an outsider to Curve Lake First Nation, with an extensive education in Western methods of inquiry. This could lead to missing important concepts or themes because they do not fit into a Western academic understanding of how humans might connect with creation. Employing an existing research framework like the Medicine Wheel may also promote the diversity of the reported data. Going into the research sharing circles, the Medicine Wheel outlined that there are ways of connecting with creation through each of the elements of human existence. In keeping with the collaborative nature of the research project, I organized quotes into a Medicine Wheel framework using NVivo 14. I presented these quotes to the knowledge contributors for comment before finalizing them.

3.5.3 Preliminary Participatory Scale Development.

After the second research sharing circle, based on the results of the initial thematic analyses, I developed initial Likert response-style scale statements to capture one's level of connection with creation—specifically for Curve Lake First Nation members. In the third research sharing circle, I presented these statements, and the knowledge contributors and I edited them thoroughly as a group. This stage of the research was participatory in that knowledge contributors were active in making decisions about the scale (MacDonald, 2012).

The themes from the thematic analyses informed the conversations around the scale. I also employed my knowledge of scale development and existing nature connection tools from academic psychology. This allowed me to present preliminary

scale statements to the knowledge contributors. These statements were discussed; statements were added and removed, and a scale was developed.

As only the preliminary phases of scale development were within the scope of this project, I endeavored to follow best practices for scale development to the extent possible in this project. To accomplish this, I followed recommended guidelines for developing psychometric scales outlined by Boateng et al. (2021). This process was also influenced by available literature on the construction of existing nature connection scales, including the Nature Relatedness Scale (Nisbet et al., 2009) and the Inclusion of Nature in Self scale (Schultz, 2002).

The first step in constructing a scale for the behavioural and social sciences is to identify the domain of the measures (Boateng et al., 2021). The domain, or concept, the scale intends to measure is connection with creation in Curve Lake First Nation. As there is no measure that currently captures this specific domain, it was critical to have a concise definition of what it means. Connection with creation refers to the ways in which individuals feel connected with the non-human world, including all aspects of nature and wholistic relationships between all parts of the natural environment. The next step was to delineate different dimensions within the domain. These dimensions are represented by the elements of connection with creation explored in the deductive thematic analysis of this project.

To generate scale statements for the different dimensions, an inductive approach was used to evaluate the results of thematic analysis of the elements of connection with creation (Boateng et al., 2021). This led to the initial scale statements (Appendix D). However, the process was also participatory, and I engaged directly with knowledge

contributors to develop the revised scale statements. Boateng et al. (2021) suggest that best practice is to combine inductive creation of scale items (described above) with a deductive approach. In the current research, this deductive approach—involving the exploration of literature and existing scales—was conducted prior to collecting data in the research sharing circles. It is also further employed subsequently in an examination of the unique properties of the new measure.

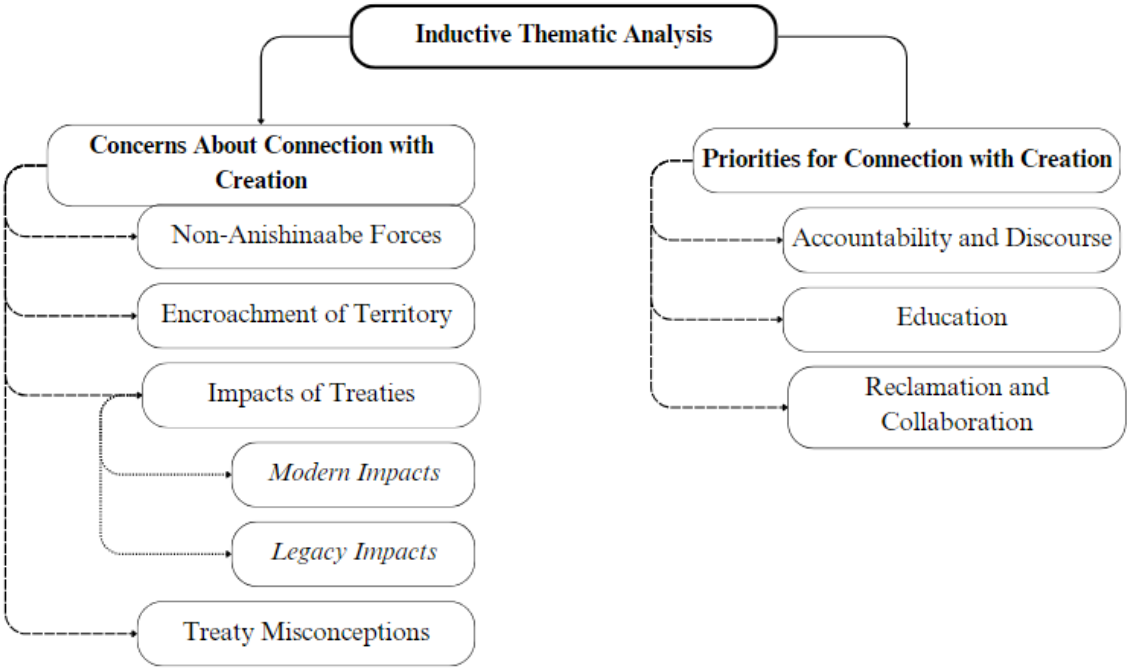
Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Inductive Thematic Analysis: Impacts on Connection with Creation

Employing Braun and Clarke's (2008) methodology for thematic analysis, I identified community concerns about connection with creation, and community priorities about connection with creation as primary themes. Subthemes were also identified within these main themes. Figure 7 outlines the organization of the inductive thematic analysis.

Figure 7

Organization of the Inductive Thematic Analysis



4.1.1 Concerns About Connection with Creation

Knowledge contributors shared several concerns about connection with creation in the community. These concerns were largely related to the impact of external forces on the community, including treaty regulations and community misconceptions about the treaties. The following outlines the subthemes identified in the data.

Non-Anishinaabe Forces. There was distinct concern among knowledge contributors of the impacts of forces outside of the Anishinaabe community on connection with creation. Some of these forces were applicable to the general population, such as concerns about climate change. Sandra reflected:

> These winters we're having. I mean, this is not normal. I shouldn't have to be scared to go spear musky in the middle of February on the lake, right? I shouldn't have to look at bucks driving on the road with their antlers on, shouldn't see that. they should be gone in December. Lots of things. Ducks. Geese. They're still here. Saw a robin the other day in Peterborough. It's February. Robin, Peterborough. That's messed up.

However, the majority of the concerns within this theme held Anishinaabe identity as core components. For example, Jordan shared his frustration with public perceptions of harvesters in regard to his fishing practice: “I might go get 400 walleye to 600 walleye in the spring in various locations, but times that by the millions of hunting and fishing licenses that are given out to people.” He also recognized the contributions of non-harvesting-related forces to population decline such as hydroelectric dams. The decrease in fish populations in Mississauga Anishinaabe territory could impede the generational transmission of fishing, a culturally significant harvesting activity that provides many with a sense of connection with creation.

Another knowledge contributor expressed concern over the lack of respect for Anishinaabe culture from outsiders as it relates to connection with creation. Shawn felt that the commercialization of the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* represents an overarching Canadian attitude that cultural, land-based sites are “monuments of Indians of the past.”

Shawn also expressed frustration with academic and other institutions' disrespect for burial sites:

> Trent took bodies and bones and put them on shelves in the anthropology department. We fought to get them off those shelves … the Quackenbush site is one of those … where they took all the bones from there and they put them in the boxes on the shelves and they sat down there for 40-50 years.

Knowledge contributors commented on the significance of the removal of the remains from the earth, as burial is a meaningful way of connecting loved ones and ancestors with creation in perpetuity.

Encroachment of Territory. Treaty 20 (1818; Figure 2), while a large land mass, contains vast parcels of privately owned land. This means that Mississauga Anishinaabeg (and other Canadians) must seek permission from landowners to access their property, including for harvesting activities and ceremony. However, Mississauga Anishinaabe traditional territories are vast and include the Northern territories implicated in the Williams Treaties (1923). Unlike Treaty 20 (1818) territory, the Northern territories contain large parcels of Crown Land (or treaty land, as one knowledge contributor labelled it because "it's two signatories … two people" who share creation (Jordan)). Jordan reflected on this fact. Regarding land within Treaty 20 (1818) territory, he recounted that, "In reality, 90% of it's private, and unless you get permission written, you can't go harvest there." Of the Northern territories he posited that "about 75% of it is treaty land" (Jordan).

This was concerning because the Williams Treaties First Nations did not regain their legal harvesting rights in the Northern Territories. The knowledge contributors

suggested that the continually shrinking lands in Treaty 20 (1818) territory where they can harvest might lead community members to travel North, and this could become a large problem when representatives from the Ontario government begin distributing fines. Knowledge contributors were also wary of the increasing density of the population in Treaty 20 (1818) lands with the continued popularity of "cottage country" and the influx of immigrants to Southern Ontario. The knowledge contributors were not critical of the immigrant population, but they felt that as signatories to the treaties in this territory, they should be part of the decisions regarding population increases. Jordan believes that the:

> reality is there's going to be coming a time, maybe not in my generation—I'm 26 years old—but when my kids or my kids have kids, we will not be able to harvest here in this territory. I mean you can look at the statistics that show the immigration that comes into Canada at a high level. And it very much surpasses the capacity of the territories that we hold as Anishinaabeg here. So, the more people that come into our territory, the more pollution, the more hunters, fishermen, people who want to live that Canadian lifestyle … It oppresses us.

He further elaborated that because of this encroachment—intended or otherwise—Anishinaabeg "will have to move to [their] Northern hunting grounds" (Jordan).

Shawn also expressed concerns about this encroachment and suggested that it will lead to further displacement of Mississauga Anishinaabeg who want to participate in harvesting and land-based ceremonial practices:

> We're just getting pushed, you know, farther and farther to either assimilate, and create your own cultural genocide, and do what Canada wanted you to do all along, or you have to remove yourself from that assimilation into another land

> base where, you know it's inevitable. It's going to creep up on you, but it just gives you that much more time … to teach your children or grandchildren, you know, what it is to be Ojibwe[2] and what is the importance of our connection to the land.

Shawn suggested that if Mississauga Anishinaabeg are located in a place where they cannot foster their connection with creation, they must either acquiesce to a colonial mentality or migrate. This is not to say that there are not Mississauga Anishinaabeg who feel connected with creation in urban centres, but those who do find connection in harvesting and land-based ceremonies are in a position of being perpetually displaced until there is no land left to move to. Shawn further reflected on this point, sharing, "once we go here [Northern Hunting Grounds], where do we go from there? Eventually, we're going to be in Hudson Bay. Eventually, we're going to be living with the Inuit, if we really want to maintain our culture and be able to harvest off of the land."

Impacts of Treaties. During the research sharing circles, there was substantial conversation about the impacts of treaties. These conversations generally revolved around two themes: Legacy impacts of treaties, and modern impacts of treaties.

Legacy Impacts. Legacy impacts refer to the historical events that impacted individuals' connections with creation in the past, as well as how these historical events became generational impacts, affecting the way some individuals still connect with creation. These impacts typically related to controversies around the Williams Treaties (1923) and the basket clause imbedded in those treaties that supposedly eliminated Mississauga Anishinaabeg rights to harvest in their territory. Shawn recalled of his

[2] See page 2 for variations in spelling.

childhood and early adulthood that "there was no recognition of crown lands at that time, and we were always told that we were subjected to hunting licenses, fishing licenses, regardless, if we were in Treaty 20, even though in 1818 those rights were protected."

Indeed, these rights were guaranteed in Treaty 20 (1818), and it was the introduction of provincial harvesting legislation that led to the development of the Williams Commission in the early 1900s. However, the results of this commission, the Williams Treaties (1923), only further oppressed the local First Nations. Shawn reflected on this process:

> Those rights that were protected were taken away by the province when the province took over hunting and fishing and trapping through their own legislation. They just absolutely ignored the treaties themselves. So, for the majority of my life, I was subjected to what the crown told me I could do, not what the treaty told me the people before me protected for me. You were subjected to fines. You were subjected to having your guns confiscated, if you were hunting without a license. You were constantly harassed by the conservation officers. It seemed like they would target us specifically and ignore other non-native hunt camps, things like that.

The sentiment of systematic targeting of First Nations harvesters was shared by other knowledge contributors. Alfredlin recalled that "airplanes even chased us and caught up to us in helicopters, skidoos. But at first when there wasn't none of that, them game wardens would walk all day to follow us." Rory also shared a story of a friend who was fined by conservation officers. His friend, having no money for proper mittens, had dressed in oven mitts, and the officers stripped him of them. Mabel also shared memories

from her life. She informed us that if she heard an airplane on the lake, it meant they "wanted to get us."

While many of these events took place in the past, their impacts still hold power today. Mabel felt that "what a lot of Curve Lake old timers are afraid of is that confrontation, that money to pay for a lawyer." This means that many people gave up their harvesting skills, while others conformed to provincial regulations. By giving up harvesting skills many families lost their ability to connect with creation through harvesting. Some individuals also feel confined by the regulations and feel that they are not representative of Mississauga Anishinaabe values. Regardless of the historical nature of many altercations with conservation officers and government officials, the impacts of the Williams Treaties (1923) and other treaty impositions are still felt by Curve Lake First Nation community members.

Modern Impacts. Although there are fewer modern treaties—relatively speaking—those signed one or two hundred years ago continue to govern and impose restrictions on Mississauga Anishinaabeg. These restrictions relate to harvesting and connection with creation in multiple ways. Shawn reflected on the new rights First Nations have earned in Ontario regarding purchasing land: "They gave us the opportunity to purchase land. But it's still going to take a 20-year process to get it turned into reserve land because there's no expedited process that has been negotiated." This means that First Nations are able to purchase land to expand their reserves, but the process for the transfer of the property takes 20 years.

Some knowledge contributors also felt that the specific impacts of treaties are representative of a larger colonial project. Shawn shared that:

> Law enforcement, the justice system have always been there to instill fear and incarcerate us at great numbers. Because that's one way to get rid of the Indian problem, just throw them all in jail. Right? You want to deal with the hunting and fishing and stop them doing that? Arrest them. Bring charges on them. Bring financial issues or burdens. Whatever. Bring all that on, right? And if we can still continue to do that, then they'll all still be good little Indians and we can still control them.

While some of these actions have decreased or ceased in recent years, there are still representatives of regulatory agencies who practice this type of tactic. Jordan felt that, while there is no longer a legal precedent for conservation officers to arrest or fine Anishinaabe harvesters, some try to use the status of their position to bully harvesters. For example, Shawn shared a story of a recent encounter he had while spearing fish. He witnessed a conservation officer harass people fishing before asking for their licenses or identifying information. Shawn felt that "there was no need for that conservation officer to do what he did." He could have chosen a different way to approach the situation. Other knowledge contributors also acknowledged that these experiences continue to happen, although some had not had direct experience with that type of behaviour themselves. Shawn felt that this type of tactic is so effective because the colonial governments "have worked strategically to instill fear in [Indigenous Peoples]."

Another prominent discussion about the modern implications of treaties revolved around the Northern hunting grounds covered by the Williams Treaties (1923). Specifically, in the statement of apology for the Williams Treaties (1923; Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, 2018), the Williams Treaties

signatory First Nations legally regained their rights to harvest in Treaty 20; they did not regain their rights to harvest in the Northern hunting grounds. Shawn summarized this point well:

> As far as the Northern lands, the basket clause took away all hunting and fishing rights in that area. We didn't gain those back, but we were led to believe that we did upon the signing that we were going to be allowed to hunt and fish in the in the Northern lands, so we still contest that, and we still hunt in those areas, and we're still subjected to being charged for hunting in those Northern areas.

Therefore, there is a substantial parcel of land in which signatories to the Williams Treaties (1923) are subject to fines for harvesting.

Further exacerbating the impacts of this is the relative scarcity of crown or treaty lands in Treaty 20 (1818) territory, whereas the Northern hunting grounds contain much more of these lands. Signatories to the Williams Treaties (1923) are able to hunt on crown lands without a license. However, much of the Treaty 20 (1818) territory is privately owned. Therefore, without the Northern territories, there is limited territory on which to harvest and connect with creation. Sandra felt that "it really is limited … it's more privately owned."

Overall, treaties continue to impact members of the Curve Lake First Nation community. These impacts are primarily manifested in continued abuses of power by regulatory authorities and the relative lack of harvesting land due to the loss of the Northern territories.

Treaty Misconceptions. The knowledge contributors felt that not everyone in the community is aware of the implications of the treaties in terms of their limitations but

also the rights they guarantee. One misconception highlighted i the geographies of where the treaties lie and with whom the treaties were made. For example, reflecting on his upbringing, Shawn felt that he "heard about Williams Treaties (1923), but Treaty 20 (1818) isn't a Williams Treaty. It's a pre-confederation treaty, and that seems to get lost." This means that Treaty 20 (1818) was signed with the United Kingdom, and the responsibility to uphold the treaty was later adopted by the Canadian government. This potentially explains the confusion about harvesting rights when the Ontario government subsequently took over the responsibility for hunting and fishing regulations.

Shawn further went on to explain that when he was growing up treaties were not often discussed; "It was the fact that Curve Lake was a reserve, and everything else outside of Curve Lake was Ontario." Other knowledge contributors also felt that there is not a consensus between Curve Lake community members, much less other Williams Treaties (1923) First Nations regarding what the treaties mean. For example, Jordan believes there are members of Curve Lake who do not know they can hunt without a license outside of the Curve Lake reserve. Therefore, some community members may not be aware of the rights they are guaranteed through the treaties.

Conversely, there may also be community members who believe that they have more rights than they actually do. Shawn's words previously outlined that the Williams Treaties (1923) First Nations were led to believe that the 2018 apology (Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, 2018) restored their rights to harvest in the Northern territories. Jordan believes that many members of the communities still believe this:

> The amount of different reservations that our family and the people that I know in Williams Treaties … still harbor stuff … because they were led to believe that we retain those rights. But in reality, we weren't told within that treaty signing that … that payment … was the payment for compensation of us signing away our rights.

He further went on to share how he feels these disagreements might manifest in the following decades as the population in Treaty 20 (1818) continues to grow:

> The government's going to oppress us and going to pull that treaty that was signed in 1818 and 2018, and they're going to say, "well, here it states in section, blah blah blah. You signed away your hunting rights. Therefore, you're not allowed to be in there. You have to stay within your treaty Territory," then our arguing on a nationality level is how are we supposed to harvest in our territory when it is overpopulated (Jordan)?

There was concern in the research sharing circles about misinterpretation of the treaties overall, and specifically, as they relate to which rights community members do and do not possess.

4.1.2 Priorities for Connection with Creation

I coded identified priorities about connection with creation under three themes: accountability and discourse, education, and reclamation and collaboration.

Accountability and Discourse. Knowledge contributors outlined several points of accountability, primarily for the federal and provincial governments. A primary measure of accountability centered on the nation-to-nation relationship outlined in treaties and other agreements. This relationship was particularly salient in conversations about harvesting rights and the connection with creation they foster. Specifically, one

knowledge contributor outlined how a corporation is partnering with First Nations for power lines. They are "the first corporation in North America to do that, that the First Nations will own half of that transmission line" (Jordan). This knowledge contributor felt this type of partnership represents the accountability that governments should have towards Indigenous communities. However, another knowledge contributor felt that currently "things are happening way above our level that we don't know about" and that these decisions affect them "culturally, spiritually, affects [their] land, affects [their] territories, affects the animals, affects everything and it's huge" (Shawn).

Sandra, regarding decisions about land use and other decisions related to how Curve Lake community members connect with creation, "would like to see that it starts … working as a partnership." The knowledge contributors felt that a meaningful way to work towards this goal would be for the Ontario government to consult with First Nations about hunting and fishing seasons and, as one contributor noted:

> understanding that [Anishinaabeg] have years and generations and history of knowledge when it comes to our ground … we understand how Mother Earth and everything works in in this nation. And I would like to see that kind of deriving fact that it's honoured and it's respected from a perspective of … weighing in and seeing what we have to say to change and alter that kind of regulation for everyone (Sandra).

Sandra also shared some information on a recent work project that required substantial collaborative discourse and honoured accountability to the first peoples of the territory:

> Where I am in my department, we're wanting to build an Indigenous cultural centre like on base, and it's a big thing. It's a big endeavor, and they're actually

> involving a lot of Elders and whatnot, because it's on Algonquin territory. But that being said, I mean, there's talks on … "why should the room be round," you know, "why should there be complete windows surrounding and then all-encompassing in an open roof setting like allowing that light, allowing that connection."

In this project, specifically, the organization is entering a discourse about the architecture of the centre, taking into account the importance of feeling a connection with creation even when visitors are inside the building.

There appeared to be motivation from the knowledge contributors, and perhaps the broader community, to hold external forces accountable for their relationships. Shawn shared his personal acts of enforcing this accountability regarding his interactions with conservation officers and other government officials:

> I am one of those ones that push those, to hold them accountable on how they treat us and how they treat the young ones coming up that we're not going to sit back and take that anymore. We're not going to be treated that way anymore because there's nowhere in those treaties that makes the crown superior to us. We're in a nation-to-nation negotiation.

However, there is still fear in the community over retribution and the hardships that regulatory authorities have imposed in the past, and in some cases, continue to impose. Overall, the knowledge contributors felt there should be a push for collective discourse with fellow First Nations and other communities to ensure that the nation-to-nation and other moral accountabilities are met.

Education. There appeared to be some misinterpretation of the treaties and how they impact community members. This presents an opportunity to provide education on these impacts and, potentially, collective action in future discussions about treaties. Sandra recalls that:

> when the William Treaty actually came out, there were a lot of questions and a lot of research that needed to happen … to understand, because now there were markers on where those communities lie with their own line, and understanding that and having that kind of grasp of almost regulating and fencing us … to a certain … area.

There was and continues to be confusion regarding the treaty borders, and this is one area where education could provide tangible benefits for the community. Shawn also felt that there was a need for:

> far broader education in our community about hunting and fishing and rights and what you can do and what you can't do and what the conservation officers can do and what they can't do because we assume that they can do all of this stuff when technically they can't do it.

Likewise, Jordan felt that there could be benefits in coming together as a community and with other communities to go into depth and say "hey, let's sit down. Let's understand these treaties. What do they mean? What's the interpretation."

While broader education about harvesting rights and treaties could lead to increased connection with creation, there were also suggestions about increasing connection with creation directly. June, for example, referenced her teachers several times regarding the way that she interacts and connects with creation. This is further

explored in discussing *mino bimaadiziwin*, below, but there is a desire for community members to learn good ways in which to foster relationships with creation.

Reclamation and Collaboration. Beyond community education and productive discourse with external decision makers, knowledge contributors expressed a desire to reclaim control over certain rights and responsibilities and to collaborate with other nations and communities on issues of governance, sustainability, and connection with creation.

One specific project the knowledge contributors felt could benefit from further community contributions was the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. While Curve Lake First Nation has some impact on how the park is run, there are still controversies that could be addressed, such as those previously discussed. Sandra phrased it well: "there should be a revision if it's not working, if it's not giving back to the carvings themselves … it's not just an economic resource … its sacred. [It] is to be protected." While there was no consensus of how exactly the park should be run, there was a sense that its current operations are not ideal, and that more Anishinaabe influence would be beneficial.

Although there is concern about the external forces that are impacting Mississauga Anishinaabeg abilities to connect with creation, the knowledge contributors also felt that there is an opportunity for Indigenous-led initiatives and operations. For example, Sandra reflected on another community's ecological restoration project:

> if we're talking about an amazing fishery and hatchery, [Wiikwemkoong] they have that one with the walleye … to have that fry again. That's one of the hardest fish to actually grow to the growth stage for being able to release … why are we

> not adapting to these kinds of economic developments in the sense of what can we give back in replenishing?

There appeared to be a desire to develop or support projects that would help creation to flourish. Moreover, the knowledge contributors emphasized the need for collaborative initiatives. Sandra shared her vision for this process: “I'd also like the community and the other neighboring nations to adapt to how can we give back to population growth.”

Jordan also spoke about the necessity of collaboration. Referencing the other First Nations in Southern Ontario, he reflected that:

> We are all Anishinaabe people of this territory. There's seven reservations. We all lived in nomadic ways. We all have family in every single one. I can name a family member in every single reservation, even Pikwakanagan and even Tyendinaga. Yeah, I have family there. We are all caretakers of this land.

The same knowledge contributor also felt that local First Nations must sit down as true partners of this territory and make sure that animals and plants and everything that grows here is protected.

Although there were many discussions about partnerships and collaboration with other First Nations, the knowledge contributors also commented on the necessity of including non-human actors in decision making processes. One knowledge contributor commented on existing methods for understanding different perspectives on an issue:

> They’re trying nowadays to look at this two eyed seeing … But it's not just two eyed seeing. It's not just looking through our eyes [it’s also about seeing through] the land and everything that grows up there. There are multiple eyes. There’re multiple beings that live out there in the forest from the plants, animals, insects to

> the little people that live out in the bush. And if we don't maintain that we're not going to be Anishinaabe no more because we rely on the bush, we rely on the spirits in the forest (Jordan).

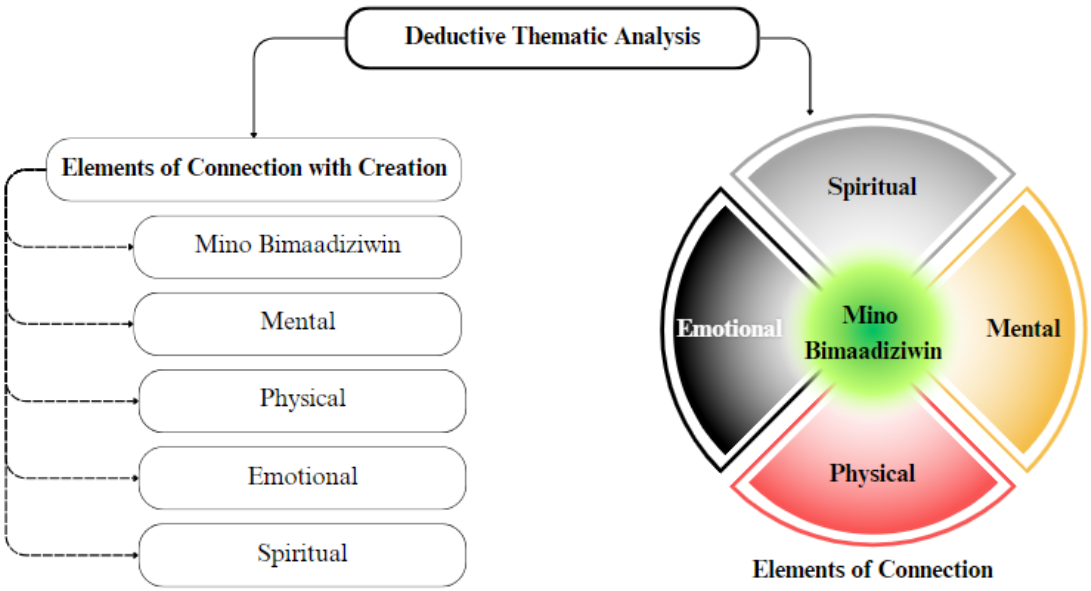
In the context of collaboration, it is clear that there is a need to include non-human actor perspectives in decision making.

4.2 Deductive Thematic Analysis: Curve Lake First Nation Mississauga Anishinaabeg Connection with Creation

The following deductive thematic analysis outlines the elements of connection with creation that were explored during the research sharing circles, including those captured within the theme of *mino bimaadiziwin* as well as the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Figure 8 outlines the organization of the deductive thematic analysis.

Figure 8

Organization of the Deductive Thematic Analysis



4.2.1 Mino Bimadiziwin

Initially, the Medicine Wheel I had outlined for the knowledge synthesis process of the deductive thematic analysis did not include a section for *mino bimaadiziwin*. However, through conversations with the knowledge contributors and deep personal reflection, I decided to include this component of connection with creation. While it is certainly informed by the other components and overlaps with them, it represents a more comprehensive sense of responsibility on the part of humans to uphold a strong and positive connection with creation.

While there was substantial discussion around respect in the research sharing circles, one knowledge contributor also reminded the research sharing circle of "those seven *Mishoomisag*, those seven grandfathers … lead the way as our fundamentals" (June). June was referring to the Seven Grandfather Teachings of *zaagidwin*, *mnaadendiwin*, *dbaadendiziwin*, *aakdehewin*, *gwekwaadziwin*, *nbwaakawin*, and *debwewin* (love, respect, humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, and truth). The other knowledge contributors agreed that these seven fundamental teachings can act as guidelines for living *mino bimaadiziwin* in interactions with creation. Rory echoed this and that he thought of "respect—to respect the land and the animals—that's the main thing."

There was also a discussion of responsibilities. Shawn felt that Anishinaabeg "are given a huge, huge responsibility to look after this earth." Another knowledge contributor reflected on her philosophical outlook of responsibility:

> I'm about leading in a way that I'm creating good … moccasin tracks for, for myself and for the generations like we're always supposed to be thinking of these

> generations that are coming, you know … I just, I want our culture [and connection with creation] to be preserved for not just 20 years. You know, I want it to be preserved for a lot longer (June).

Shawn also felt that this responsibility was deeply engrained in his being. He spoke of "protection of land and water [and how] it just comes in our bodies … there are responsibilities that everybody has [and that] our teachings that are handed down to us that substantiate everything that we're told that we are to do, our rights, our responsibilities."

The generational nature of the teachings Shawn discussed and June's desire for her culture to thrive for many years also represent the necessity of a perpetual relationship with creation. Other knowledge contributors shared concrete ways in which they act on their responsibilities to creation. For example, June recalled that she joined the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* Committee at Curve Lake First Nation "because of the connection to the land, to be able to be one of those protectors of that place." Likewise, Sandra reflected on her family's ritual after they finish their duck hunt: "Well, we spend just as much time cleaning up all those shells and grabbing them from the water after the hunts. Like when the morning's done and making sure that it was like we weren't there."

Other knowledge contributors shared their perspective of what it means to live *mino bimaadiziwin*. Mabel believes that "it means respecting everything that you come across. Being honest, true, being able to look yourself in the eye and know that you've done the best you can every day, being grateful."

Practicing *mino bimaadiziwin* in the context of connection with creation provides a framework for individuals to hold themselves accountable to their relationship with

creation through teachings, specific responsibilities, aspiring for generational relationships with creation, and through concrete actions to care for creation.

4.2.2 Mental

In many Anishinaabe nations, creation serves a central role as teacher. There are also mental exercises and ways of being that can connect humans with creation. This theme explores creation as a teacher as well as the ways humans must mentally engage with creation to build a relationship.

Creation as a teacher featured prominently in the discussions throughout the research sharing circles. Several knowledge contributors discussed the innate intelligence of the natural world, including the animals and the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. Shawn shared one comment that met with complete agreement among the knowledge contributors and captured a stark reality regarding the intelligence of non-human animals: “the Creator knows that all those animals can survive without us. But we can't survive without all those animals. We’ll die. We're gone. But they will survive if the human race disappeared.” Humans are highly dependent on other animals, yet there is much less reliance on humans in the natural world. This teaching is perhaps currently skewed as there are human-led conservation efforts to protect certain species, but even in these circumstances, many of the endangered species are endangered because of human disruptions and activities. Overall, however, the knowledge contributors felt that non-human animals are more intelligent in their ability to survive and thrive in creation without modifying it extensively. Mabel shared that “they’re smart. Animals all are. They’re smarter than we are.” Rory aptly summed the consensus of the group that “anybody that says animals are stupid, they’re the stupid ones.”

Other knowledge contributors commented on more specific ways that they learn from creation and engage with aspects of it mentally. Sandra reflected that "if you take the time to just sit and be in their [an animal's] presence … you can learn so much about even how to focus your own day … having that awareness and understanding … not being so quick and impulsive." Therefore, animals can teach humans how to become more mentally calm and how to engage with the present more meaningfully. Shawn also shared some specific teachings he has learned from other species:

> I look at the Beaver and the feed beds, the size of these feed beds. I look at their channels, how long their channels go out when there's still ice on the pond and I know they're still out there eating, not eating in their feed bed. They're digging up those roots out there … They're chewing on those things. I look at the fat on the kill of a deer … I look and gauge that fat and that's going to tell me that that animal has predicted that that winter is either going to be an easy winter or harsh winter.

Beyond the broader teachings on how to carry oneself in the world, animals also provide practical and useful teachings.

Jordan reflected on an experience where an animal led him to another place of knowledge:

> When I went in there and I shot that buck—and I don't miss often. I'm not bragging or nothing—but I do not miss often, and I missed that buck. I walked in after that buck to see if I could find him, and I found them trees. So he guided me to them trees to say "I need you to protect these" because that deer in our culture represents kindness and that kind gesture was of him showing me that area to

> protect … it was on purpose that I missed him. And he led me to the trees, and we were able to stop the destruction of the trees because that is a site where our ancestors had connection.

The trees Jordan referred to were a patch of old growth birch trees. These birches are located within a recently purchased section of forest the new owners were planning to clear cut for lumber. However, the deer led Jordan to this important location so that he could protect the birches, and so that he could learn from the trees and his other teachers about harvesting birch bark for canoes, houses, to make sap, and for a plethora of other cultural practices. The other knowledge contributors also commented on the significance of birch trees for culture and subsistence.

Besides animal and plant species, the knowledge contributors also felt a strong mental connection with the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. For example, Jordan shared that the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* is particularly important for knowledge preservation: "without that rock and that mindset of the people, we wouldn't know some of the teachings that are on there, very, very old teachings … it's very sacred in that aspect of knowledge."

Knowledge contributors also shared ways that creation helps keep us mindful of our place and intentions. Some of these lessons are foundational to having a relationship with creation and manifest into components of *mino bimaadiziwin*. Mindfulness in creation appeared to be particularly important. June shared a story of a relative who "went kind of nonchalantly … in the bush" and who did not centre her purpose for being there in her mind; "she wasn't being mindful of where she was." She was "whipped by … a branch" (June). This was a reminder for her to be mindful of her relationship with the natural world. This same relative entered the bush to harvest medicines but did so without

a specific purpose. To harvest one must enter with “that kind of mind … you need to have good thoughts” (June).

June subsequently went on to elaborate on proper protocol for harvesting and being present in nature through sharing more of her relative’s story:

> Before you're even coming in, you know, holding your semaa and thinking about those things before you're even coming in. So it was just like the land telling her, you know, that spirit telling her “come in here and with good intentions, you know, like why you're harvesting this? Why are you in here?” You need to have that already (June).

This type of awareness and mindfulness can lead to better engagement with creation and more fulfilling relationships with other non-human actors. However, in this time of environmental devastation, it is also important to be intellectually aware of the impacts humans are having on the environment when they do not interact with creation in mindful ways.

Shawn felt that “there's responsibilities that everybody has … to protect the land and the water for their community.” Part of connecting with creation mentally is to be aware of this responsibility. Creation provides specific teachings, like those of the beavers or the deer or the teachings of the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. It is also important to engage with creation mindfully, and it is crucial to be aware of the responsibility that humans hold towards creation.

4.2.3 Physical

Each knowledge contributor had a strong physical relationship with creation. They were all harvesters, including hunters, trappers, fishers, and gatherers. These

practices tied them to creation in very physical ways, as they require exertion and physical prowess. However, there was also a consensus that it may not be practical for everyone to engage in these activities and that there are other ways to be physically connected with creation.

Knowledge contributors shared that there are many ways to engage with creation, including harvesting activities, that are not directly related to the action of taking a life or gathering medicines. For example, Mabel felt that "just sitting outside and feeling the breeze, the wind, sunshine" can connect you with creation physically. Rory referring to a loved one reflected that "She doesn't hunt, but she helps cut the meat up, packages it … and cooks it." In this way, one can be connected with the animal and creation physically without being the one to take the life.

Along with harvesting activities, there are also physical activities that are representative of connection with creation in ceremonial ways. June shared that some Anishinaabeg:

> start off with that [connection and the] teachings [about] that connection our parents [initiate]. And in our community, they nurture that connection to the land to where we are by burying the placenta and planting a cedar tree above the placenta to nurture our connection to the land where we are.

This act of burying the placenta fundamentally connects the human with creation. That child is then able to watch the cedar grow and see themselves in the natural world as a physical part of themselves has contributed to its success.

Another way that knowledge contributors felt it was important to connect with creation was through the senses. June described a desire for her children and

grandchildren “to eat wild meat.” This way they will have a connection with creation through tasting the difference between harvested foods and those purchased at the grocery store. June also elaborated on one of the ways that touch can connect us with creation and even “starting that morning … when you get out of bed, even though it's like our floors, but we're grounding ourselves to our mother when even our feet just hit the floor, we're connecting back after that time of rest.” Sandra also reflected on the way touch can affect relationships with creation as she discussed one of the reasons that birch is so cherished: “because that's going to give you that warmth, that instant … life” when it is lit for a fire.

Sandra also reflected on the way sounds can deepen relationships with creation: “And the woods is quiet, but at the same time is it ever really quiet? It has like creaking and with the trees when they sway and all the sounds of the birds, the wind, like everything.” Being in the forest can allow us to tune into the sounds of nature, increasing our capacity to engage with creation mindfully. This is also true of smell, as one knowledge contributor shared their experience of commuting to Ottawa from Curve Lake: “with your windows down as much as it's busy bustle going up to Ottawa when you go by Carleton Place, you have the windows down, you can smell the sweet grass like you can smell it, and it makes you happy” (Sandra). Shawn reflected on the importance of truly seeing parts of creation and nature:

> we can see those others. We can see the sun. We can see the moon. We know they're out there and they're all part of our stories. And we can see how they affect the water and the tides in that relationship … Once you know all of those, it gives you a better understanding of why we are so connected.

Seeing the interconnection of living things can bring us closer to understanding the way we connect with those same parts of creation. The interaction of the senses can also strengthen this connection, as one knowledge contributor reflected, “when I sit there, and I take in the light, all of the sounds that I hear … it brings me closer” (Shawn). Connecting with creation physically is a multifaceted process, involving specific activities and practices, as well as appreciating the ways in which we interact with the natural world through senses.

4.2.4 Emotional

Emotional connections with creation came out as deeply important components of overall connection in the research sharing circles. These connections manifested in elements of heart truths or relationships of trust with creation. They also presented as a deep sense of purpose and comfort when in creation. Deep emotions were present in the discussions as well. Many knowledge contributors reflected on feelings of awe, wonder, and blessing for the ability to interact with and appreciate creation and nature.

One knowledge contributor noted that a fundamental aspect of her relationship with creation is being “respectful of all living things” (June). It is crucial to establish a relationship of mutual trust with creation and to know that if you are respectful of it, it will honour you. This was highlighted in another knowledge contributor’s explanation of the confidence she has gained through living a strong relationship with creation:

> the confidence in knowing … I know if the world were to stop, and you'd have to actually rely on the land and put all your hands into the creator, I know I'd be okay. Because I know I can start a fire and I know I can be out in the woods. I

> know. I know how to shelter myself from the elements. I know how to snare and fish and hunt (Sandra).

Sandra has always tried to maintain and foster a respectful relationship with creation. Through the practices she employs to ensure this respectful relationship, she has gained through creation a sense of confidence, both practical and emotional. Several knowledge contributors expressed that building relationships with creation allowed them to become who they were meant to be.

This developed sense of self and comfort through prolonged connection with creation also appeared to have more immediate effects through emotions. Mabel explained that:

> I don't feel complete unless I'm outside, where I can feel the air and see the water and it just makes it complete. I don't even know how to say it. Like if you're going to the city, you're just so tense and closed in. But when you're on the land, and even around here, even just outside your door, you look at the start of the night and feel that, feel that breeze, and it just makes you whole.

There is a distinct difference in Mabel's emotional state when she is in creation compared to in highly urbanized areas. Moreover, being in creation makes her feel whole. Other knowledge contributors agreed with this sentiment: Being in creation helps them to feel complete. In fact, June shared that being in creation makes you feel "you're in the right place. You're where you're supposed to be." Being in creation provided for the knowledge contributors a sense of wholeness and sureness in their character and identity. Shawn captured this when he reflected that "If we don't have land and water, we are not who we are."

Knowledge contributors also discussed specific emotions and feelings as they relate to connection with creation. Reflecting on a specific part of creation, Sandra shared the reaction she has to seeing a strong birch tree on the land: “you’re in awe of its capability to be able to grow in that way and for all it’s offered in those years.” Birch trees were of particular significance for the knowledge contributors, and Sandra is filled with a sense of awe at their ability to provide for humans in such multifaceted ways. Rory, sharing a story about a particularly stressful time in his loved one’s life, recalled “she'd want to go up to the cabin, and as soon as she got there, we parked the car and truck started walking, said her stress would go right away.”

Creation, in this case, provided an escape from stress and allowed for Rory’s loved one to connect with creation and be immersed in senses of awe and wonder, like what Shawn described as a feeling of “amazement that we are gifted so much” through creation. Alfredlin also shared stories of his sense of wonder and awe:

> When I see something like that, I feel the Creator blessed me by me seeing that. I've seen a lot with a lot of stuff I have. I've had hummingbirds land on my hand that looked at me. I've seen so much—little wee bears, big, big bears. Yeah, it's really … something in nature.

For Alfredlin, this sense of wonder and awe is also an opportunity to reflect on his privilege to encounter such beauty and feel such emotions. He feels blessed to be able to engage with creation and all it encompasses.

Emotional connection with creation, then, is about establishing a trusting relationship that can foster senses of deeper connection and trust. According to the knowledge contributors, it is also about being aware of the specific feelings and emotions

experienced when in nature. Moreover, it is about reflecting on how blessed humans are to be able to have those experiences.

4.2.5 Spiritual

Throughout the research sharing circles there was a general sense that spirituality and spirit permeate into all conversations about creation. In a discussion about hunting regulations, Jordan shared that:

> It's not the Canadian government who can tell me or the Ontario government where I can and can't harvest. It's our great Spirit. He's the one who says you go where the animals are and the animals lead us to them places. You know, we have our ceremonies and our talks, and then we all communicate together.

A connection to spirit guides many if not all aspects of connection with creation, including harvesting activities.

However, there were also specific conversations about what it means to have a spiritual connection with creation. These discussions included reference to the fact that creation is a great source of spirituality, that certain parts of creation have particular spiritual significance and draw, that being spiritually connected necessitates a sense of self-inclusion in creation and through relations to other beings, and that there is a need for thankfulness when interacting with creation.

When reflecting on her upbringing and others' experiences of spirituality, Mabel shared "I know people talk about church and all that, but my dad used to say the outdoors was his church … but it sums it up almost like your whole being, connecting being outside." When asked if connection with land was part of her spirituality, Mabel responded that "Oh, it is definitely, big time. It's all my spirituality. It's everything like

the trees, the grass. Like I believe they all have the spirit. And you connect with that." Connecting these sentiments with some of the emotional aspects of connection with creation, Alfredlin reflected that in nature: "you really feel connected, as you said with the land. And then because I went to church a lot—and I spent a lot of time there—but with nature … you're more free, and you feel really inside so good."

Creation, overall, was a strong source of spirituality for the knowledge contributors. But there were also discussions regarding specific locations with great spiritual significance. The *Kinoomaage Waapkong* and surrounding area was agreed to be one of such locations. Jordan shared:

> I mean the spirituality of that area is unbelievable because a long time ago, with our prophecies, when we came up the Saint Lawrence, we talked about how harsh it was to get to that area with them spirits from those lakes and the waters. And they sang us songs and … we followed them all the way up in there. And not just that rock is sacred, but that whole area.

There are teachings about the initial voyage to the territory where the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* are located and that it was spiritual guides who made the path clear for the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. It was also an incredibly harsh environment, and for the knowledge contributors, this solidified its importance, as there were no practical reasons for exploring the area. Instead, there was a powerful spiritual drive to be connected with that particular territory. Further reflecting on this, Jordan shared that "when you go in the bush … them spirits help us in the forest. They talk to us, and they guide us and they teach us." Other knowledge contributors briefly discussed the importance of Mississauga Anishinaabe clans as spiritual guides for connection with creation. Shawn reflected that

"We were given clan systems to give our relationship with us to the other beings that are out there."

There was agreement among the knowledge contributors that there are spiritual guides in creation that help humans to discover and interact with particular locations and territories. Some knowledge contributors also discussed the interconnectedness of all beings in creation and where humans fit into this. That is, there is no real distinction between humans and creation, and the plants, animals, insects, and territories are all the relations of the people. One notable exception to this was the sense that other parts of creation have not strayed from their paths. For example, June shared that other "living things, their connection never, never swings, you know, they're all still connected the same way" and that "because of colonization we are having to get that back."

This sense of interconnection also outlines a relationship based on generosity and thankfulness. Several knowledge contributors shared teachings about the importance of being thankful in intention but also through tangible actions. Alfredlin reflected that even though "there's some critters [he] hates," you must "give thanks … to see all those animals." The other knowledge contributors agreed that it is important to be thankful and acknowledge this thankfulness for creation. Mabel shared that:

> Most times in the morning [when] I get up, the first thing I do is I have a bottle of tobacco by back my back door and I take that and give thanks for another day of life and ask to be the best person I can be. I give thanks for all the things that Creator gives you. And that sets my day.

Other knowledge contributors commented on the importance of *semaa* (tobacco) in harvesting activities. But Mabel felt that it is crucial to be thankful for the day and for the

ability to experience all creation has to offer beyond the necessary reciprocity of leaving *semaa* for the life of the animal or the generosity of the medicine plants.

Spirituality and spirit were pervasive in all conversations of connection with creation. However, the conversations also outlined how creation itself is a source of spirituality. Likewise, there are specific locations with strong spiritual connections. It is also critical to recognize the place of humans in creation and to see other beings for the relatives they are. Finally, connecting with creation must be influenced by an overall sense of thankfulness.

4.3 Preliminary Participatory Scale Development: Integrative Measure of Mississauga Anishinaabeg Connection with Creation

The formulation of the scale was based on the qualitative results from the deductive thematic analysis. It was also influenced by existing psychometric nature connection tools. The discussions around the scale statements are explored here, and the new scale is also outlined. The scale statements were written to capture key topics within the themes presented in the deductive thematic analysis. I drafted initial scale statements based on the knowledge synthesis described above (Appendix D). I presented the initial scale statements to the knowledge contributors at a subsequent research sharing circle.

4.3.1 Participatory Process

The knowledge contributors suggested adding some statements to the scale and also changing specific phrasing of certain statements to make them clearer. For example, in *mino bimaadiziwin*, “I give thanks with *Semaa* (tobacco) to Creator for all that was, all that is, and all that will be, always” was added. The knowledge contributors felt that this statement leads all relationships with creation. Moreover, we discussed the significance

of *semaa* and the importance of engaging with this medicine. Other terms were modified for clarity in the community. For example, in physical, “traditional foods” was changed to “Anishinaabe foods.” The knowledge contributors felt that this was a more accurate way of describing culturally significant foods in the community.

4.2.1 Scale Measure

The scale statements are presented below (Table 2). It is crucial to note that while the order in which the statements are presented is flexible for the most part, the knowledge contributors felt that future participants must be presented with the following statement from *mino bimaadiziwn* first: “I give thanks with *Semaa* (tobacco) to Creator for all that was, all that is, and all that will be, always.” This statement sets the tone and intentions for the rest of the scale completion, and it represents a fundamental aspect of relationship with creation. The statements are also presented in Appendix F, formatted as they would be for future participants who may respond to the scale.

Table 1
Revised Connection with Creation Scale Items

Component	Statement	Rational/Theme
Mino Bimaadiziwin		
	I give thanks with *Semaa* (tobacco) to Creator for all that was, all that is, and all that will be, always.	The knowledge contributors felt that this was a fundamental requirement for having a good relationship with creation.
	I lead with *Semaa* (tobacco) but also know the role and importance of all Anishinaabe *Mshkiki* (medicines).	The knowledge contributors felt that a working knowledge of when and how different medicines are used is important for a good relationship with creation.
	When I interact with creation, I am guided by the *Mishoomisag* (Seven Grandfather Teachings).	The Seven Grandfather teachings as guides for interactions with creation was a central theme.
	I have a responsibility to protect all creation.	Acknowledging one's role as a protector was a prominent theme.
	I act in ways that will allow future generations to connect with creation.	Understanding the necessity for intergenerational relationships with creation was a prominent theme.
	I take actions to protect creation.	Taking concrete actions to protect creation was a prominent theme.

Mental		
	I learn from the land, fire, water, and air; all beings of Creator; and all parts of creation.	Learning from creation was a prominent theme, and knowledge contributors felt it was important to list different elements of creation as teachers.
	Anishinaabeg cannot survive without creation, but creation can survive without Anishinaabeg.	The rest of creation (inclusive of animals, natural processes, etc.) can survive or will adapt without humans, but humans rely on creation.
	If I was to harvest or gather, I would be mindful of my motivations.	Being mindful of one's motivations was a prominent theme in the context of harvesting foods and gathering medicines.
	I constantly remember the value and the sacredness of creation.	Being aware of the value and importance of creation was a prominent theme.
	I am always respectful of creation.	Acknowledging the need for respect of creation and waters was a prominent theme.
Physical		
	I eat or wish to eat Anishinaabe foods from creation.	Acknowledging the importance of traditional (Anishinaabe) foods that come from creation was a prominent theme.
	I always connect with creation through my senses.	Several knowledge contributors reflected on how they connect with creation through their senses.
	I leave the land and water the way I found it or better.	Leaving the physical environment untouched or improved was a prominent theme.
	I often reflect on how the land and water fulfill me mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.	Having an awareness of how creation and water sustain oneself was a prominent theme. The knowledge contributors felt that it was important to include all aspects of being in this statement.

	Creation can provide me with everything I need to survive.	Acknowledging that all we need to survive is provided by creation was a strong priority for the knowledge contributors.
Emotional		
	My mind, body, and spirit guide me in having a respectful relationship with creation.	The mind, body, and spirit can impact our emotions which guides us to interact with creation in a good way.
	I feel like I am where I'm supposed to be when I'm on the land/water or think about the land/water.	Having a sense of "rightness" when on creation/water was a prominent theme.
	I am drawn to the land/water and creation.	Feeling a draw to creation/water was a prominent theme.
	I often feel awe and wonder when I am on the land/water or think about the land/water.	Experiencing a sense of awe or wonder was a prominent theme.
	I feel whole and complete when I use or give Anishinaabe Mshkiki (medicines).	The knowledge contributors felt that interacting with medicines provides a important emotional role in self-sustainment.
Spiritual		
	My spirituality is based on my relationship with creation and Creator.	Spirituality through connection with creation was a prominent theme. The knowledge contributors felt that the connection must also include a relationship with Creator.

I feel spiritually connected to Creator and Mother Earth.	A spiritual connection with creation/water was a prominent theme, and the knowledge contributors felt that “Creator” and “Mother Earth” encompassed the entities with which this relationship exists.
Creation provides me with various unique spiritual experiences.	The knowledge contributors felt that there are various spiritual experiences one can experience in creation and that they are all valid and unique (e.g., there are different forms of spirituality based on the seasons, times of day, etc.).
Certain parts of creation (e.g., places, beings, elements) are very spiritual for me.	Specific parts of creation were identified as spiritually thematic.
The plants, animals, land, and all of creation are my relations.	Acknowledging that humans are part of creation was a prominent theme.
I give to Creator and creation for all its gifts (e.g., with *Semaa* (tobacco)).	The importance of reciprocity and thankfulness was a prominent theme.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In the following sections, I discuss the results of this research in detail and outline how they addressed the research goals. Subsequently, I provide a brief overview of the cohesion of the current research results with existing literature. I provide an evaluation of the research methodology and ethics employed in this project, and I conclude with a discussion of the limitations, future directions, and implications of this project.

5.1 Inductive Thematic Analysis Discussion

The inductive thematic analysis revealed two prominent themes: concerns about and priorities for connection with creation.

5.1.1 Concerns About Connection with Creation

There were three subthemes in the concerns the knowledge contributors had about connection with creation: non-Anishinaabe forces, encroachment of territories, and concerns about treaties. The first major force outside of Anishinaabe control was climate change. Indigenous populations are disproportionately affected by climate change, and this is well-established in the literature (e.g., Davis, 2010; Norton-Smith et al., 2016). The results of this research also support this in a local context. This was illustrated by the limitations climate change poses on traditional practices such as Sandra's reflection that she "shouldn't have to be scared to go spear musky in the middle of February on the lake." Warmer temperatures have led to decreased opportunities to fish and spear on the ice, an activity that has connected Mississauga Anishinaabeg with creation for generations. Sandra's statement also reveals the need for culturally relevant indicators of climate change at the community level. The ability to walk on the ice to spear fish is an important indicator of climate change in the Curve Lake community.

Another non-Anishinaabe force identified was a misunderstanding and disrespect for cultural norms and values. Specifically, there has been disrespect for Mississauga Anishinaabe practices that connect Mississauga Anishinaabeg with creation. For example, Shawn shared his frustration over an institution's removal of human remains from a burial site. Not only was this culturally disrespectful, but it is also incongruent with Mississauga Anishinaabe values regarding connection with creation after death. Other examples of misunderstandings and disrespect of Indigenous traditional activities have been documented in the literature. For example, Inuit hunters have been degraded for seal hunting, an activity that has connected Inuit with creation for generations and has served as a significant contributor to traditional diets (Farquhar, 2020). Concerns about Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation based on the interference of non-Anishinaabe forces are in some cases shared by other Indigenous communities and cultures. However, this research outlined two specific ways that these forces manifest in the Curve Lake community. Specifically, because of climate change, activities like ice fishing are becoming impossible. In addition, outsider disrespect for cultural teachings has led to devastating actions, such as the removal of remains form burial sites.

The second primary concern identified was based on encroachment of territory. Anishinaabeg scholars have discussed the direct impacts of territorial encroachment on connection with creation (e.g., Williams, 2018). However, the knowledge contributors provided novel insight into some of the practical limitations this force presents. Knowledge contributors discussed the quickly shrinking availability of crown (or treaty) land in Treaty 20 (1818) territory. Specifically, while Treaty 20 is a substantial parcel of land, much of that land is privately owned. This means that Mississauga Anishinaabeg

are unable to harvest or gather on this property without permission from the landowners. Moreover, the increasing population of Southern Ontario continues to put pressure on the natural world. The knowledge contributors felt that this pressure is decreasing the amount of viable land and waters in Treaty 20 and that this will push Mississauga Anishinaabeg further North as they try to maintain the practices that connect them with creation.

The continued encroachment on Mississauga Anishinaabe territories is directly related to the final primary concern of the impacts of treaties on connection with creation. Other scholars have discussed the impacts of specific treaties on Mississauga Anishinaabe connection with creation (Williams, 2018). However, this research identified specific concerns that relate to the mechanisms through which the treaties function. While previous literature has discussed the legacy impacts of the Williams Treaties (1923), this research outlined modern impacts of the treaties as well as what the knowledge contributors considered to be treaty misconceptions.

Shawn suggested that, regardless of changes to the law, many representatives of governments continue to behave in ways that are damaging to connection with creation. For example, while Williams Treaties (1923) signatories have the right to harvest in Treaty 20 (1818) territories without a licence, some conservation officers continue to harass Mississauga Anishinaabe hunters, fishers, and gatherers. This type of experience can taint traditional activities for individuals, and this negative association can lead to a decreased sense of connection with creation. Likewise, it can limit how individuals can increase their connection with creation. Exacerbating this issue is a lack of understanding of what the treaties and laws do and do not outline.

The knowledge contributors felt that there are members of the Curve Lake community who do not understand exactly what rights they are granted by the treaties. In contrast, there are some individuals who are under the impression that they have legal rights to harvest in the Northern territories covered by the Williams Treaties (1923) when in reality, they can be fined for doing so. In both cases, the lack of consensus in terms of treaty knowledge can lead to decreased or limited abilities to increase a connection with creation. If individuals feel they have fewer rights than they do, they might not be connecting with creation outside of the reserve, and this might limit their ability to connect meaningfully. If they believe they have more rights than they do, a negative experience in the Northern territories—such as a fine—might lead to a negative association with harvesting activities.

The knowledge contributors also reflected on other specific impediments to connection with creation such as the controversies surrounding the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* and the devastation caused by hydroelectric dams. These impediments are discussed in existing literature (e.g., Simpson, 2017; Williams, 2018). However, this research has provided novel insights into the concerns of Curve Lake First Nation community members about connection with creation.

5.1.1 Priorities

Three main priorities regarding connection with creation in the community were identified: accountability and discourse, education, and reclamation and collaboration. The knowledge contributors agreed that there was a further need for accountability on the parts of the provincial and federal governments. This desire for accountability was

primarily related to upholding treaty and legal promises as they relate to activities that foster connection with creation.

Previous scholarship has outlined Anishinaabe perceptions of treaties (Stark, 2010) and the need for reestablishing proper treaty relationships between Canadian governments and Indigenous nations (Baskatawang, 2023). Stark (2010) suggests that Anishinaabe treaties are based on "respect, responsibility, and renewal [and that] the Anishinaabeg expressed these principles when they negotiated treaties with the United States and Canada" (p. 156). This is mirrored in the results of the current research which suggest that treaties are contracts between two or more equal and sovereign nations, and that they are living documents. The knowledge contributors also felt that it was necessary to open a discourse between Curve Lake First Nation and Canadian governments to account for the stagnation of certain treaty protocols. Specifically, as times change, so too must the relationship between nations evolve.

As there was concern among the knowledge contributors about treaty misinformation, there was also a desire for education. In the research sharing circles, this was primarily focused on educating community members of their rights. There was some discussion about the importance of passing down cultural teachings. However, education about rights, as guaranteed through treaties and laws, was a top priority. This may be due to the fact that Curve Lake First Nation has developed several programs and initiatives for increasing connection with creation and for passing on cultural teachings, and so the knowledge contributors feel that efforts are already being made in this regard. It might also be due to the fact that the community is now facing barriers to increasing their connection with creation efforts. For example, without a collective effort to actively

oppose continued colonial forces that are working against Mississauga Anishinaabeg connecting with creation, it may be difficult to mobilize the resources needed to accomplish these goals.

Simpson (2017) reflected on the academy's role in promoting Anishinaabe knowledge: "the academy does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg[3] intelligence without taking a principled stand on the forces that are currently attacking Nishnaabeg intelligence: colonial gendered violence, dispossession, erasure, and imposed poverty" (p. 164). Perhaps this reflection is also representative of the nature of knowledge and connection transmission in the community. Specifically, Curve Lake is at a point where they cannot strengthen their efforts to promote connection with creation without non-Anishinaabe (i.e., governments) recognizing the rights the Mississauga Anishinaabeg hold. If education led to a consensus in the community of each Mississauga Anishinaabe person's rights, it might become more difficult for colonial forces to ignore those rights.

The final sub-theme identified under priorities was the need for reclamation and collaboration. In terms of collaboration, educating the community about treaty and legal rights would go a long way to realizing collective action against colonial impositions. As the knowledge contributors shared, there are several First Nations in this territory, and collective action between them would increase the likelihood of meaningful change. This is evident from the organization of the seven Williams Treaties First Nations leading to the 2018 apology (Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern

[3] See page 2 for variations in spelling.

Affairs, 2018). Collaboration with other First Nations to strengthen the forces against colonialism may also contribute to further reclamation.

The knowledge contributors spoke of the need to reclaim important sites in order to foster greater connection with creation. One of these sites is the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. The *Kinoomaage Waapkong* is currently co-managed between Curve Lake First Nation and Ontario Parks. However, the knowledge contributors felt that more Mississauga Anishinaabe influence is needed. The knowledge contributors also felt that Mississauga Anishinaabeg are ideally suited to protect a location like the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* as they are aware of the need for collaboration between themselves and non-human forces. Jordan reflected on the role that the "plants, animals, insects … spirits" must play in this protection, as they all represent different and valid perspectives. Furthermore, engagement in this type of collaboration—understanding the perspectives of non-humans—could also lead to direct increases in senses of connection with creation.

5.2 Deductive Thematic Analysis Discussion

The deductive thematic analysis in this project outlined important themes around connection with creation through the Medicine Wheel components of *mino bimaadiziwin* and the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of connection with creation. These results, at the time of writing, represent the first documented use of the Medicine Wheel to explicitly evaluate the components of connecting with creation in academic literature.

5.2.1 Mino Bimaadiziwin

The knowledge contributors highlighted the importance of the Seven Grandfather Teachings in *mino bimaadiziwin*. The Seven Grandfather Teachings serve as guidelines

for living a good life in many Anishinaabe communities (Simpson, 2011). The knowledge contributors agreed that it is important to engage in the practices of *zaagidwin, mnaadendiwin, dbaadendiziwin, aakdehewin, gwekwaadziwin, nbwaakawin,* and *debwewin* (love, respect, humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, and truth). Anishinaabeg scholars have reflected on the significance of these teachings in living *mino bimaadiziwin* and connecting with creation. The teachings are associated with seven different animals. Respectfully *zaagidwin, mnaadendiwin, dbaadendiziwin, aakdehewin, gwekwaadziwin, nbwaakawin,* and *debwewin* are associated with the eagle, buffalo, wolf, bear, sabe, beaver, and turtle (Mills, 2018). For example, Mills (2018) writes that "To cultivate knowledge is to know wisdom, which helps us make decisions that honour our well-being. This is represented by the beaver, who patiently uses his impressive teeth and creative mind to build sustainable communities" (para. 2). Based on this, the beaver teaches wisdom, and there is wisdom in building sustainability. At present, there is little Western academic scholarship discussing the Seven Grandfather Teachings. However, there is literature that focuses on concepts of sustainability and environmental responsibility in the context of connection with creation (Whitburn et al., 2019).

Nature connection has been associated with pro-environmental ideations and behaviours (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013; Whitburn et al., 2019). This supports the importance of *mino bimaadiziwin* in connection with creation. Specifically, having a strong connection with creation may lead individuals to work towards *mino bimaadiziwin* as guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

The knowledge contributors felt that part of connecting with creation through *mino bimaadiziwin* involves the importance of reflecting on the impacts one's actions

will have on future generations. June, for example, referred to “leaving good moccasin tracks” for her children and their children’s children. Other Anishinaabe scholars have also discussed the importance of thinking intergenerationally (e.g., Simpson, 2011). Likewise, other scholars have documented the importance of thinking about future generations. Hunt (2023) reflects that many “Indigenous groups are working to preserve … lands and wildlife for future generations … they can think many generations ahead when deciding how to use their resources” (p. 46). Western scholars have also identified the need for future-focused conservation. Vanderheiden (2004) suggests that humans must think of “conservation in the capacity of foresight, which requires us to act not only upon the duties that we have now, but also upon those that we will predictably have in the future” (p. 337). Similarly, through the discussions with the knowledge contributors, to connect with creation through *mino bimaadiziwin*, it is crucial to engage in a relationship that extends beyond the present.

The final primary aspect of connecting with creation through *mino bimaadiziwn* highlighted the importance of giving medicines. This was a significant topic of discussion in developing the scale statements. Knowledge contributors felt that connecting through mino bimaadiziwin requires an understanding of the reciprocity of the relationship between humans and creation. In keeping, it is important to be thankful for what creation provides and to give back to creation. The most fundamental practice of this reciprocity is through *semaa* (tobacco). The knowledge contributors felt that giving *semaa* is necessary to properly connect with creation. While the importance of *semaa* is addressed by Anishinaabeg scholars (e.g., Simpson 2011; Williams, 2018), little other academic literature has investigated its importance.

5.2.2 Mental

Two prominent subthemes under the mental component of connection with creation emerged: creation as a teacher and the importance of mindful intentions in creation. The knowledge contributors commented extensively on how creation can be a teacher. In fact, for many Anishinaabeg, creation teaches or takes the role of teacher (Bell, 2014). There were several references to the way that creation serves as a teacher during the research sharing circles. One of the fundamental lessons that the knowledge contributors outlined is the reality that humans need creation to survive, but many elements of creation do not depend on humans for their survival.

Scholars across disciplines have reflected on the importance of creation (in their own discipline's terminology). However, Anishinaabeg scholars have also outlined the importance of creation not only for subsistence but for intellectual flourishing. As the knowledge contributors shared in the research sharing circles, there are very clear lessons to be learned from creation. John Borrows (2013) explains that:

> Nishnaabeg[4] have long taken direction about how we should live through our interactions and observations with the environment. People regulate their behavior and resolve their disputes by drawing guidance from what they see in the behavior of the sun, moon, stars, winds, waves, trees, birds, animals, and other natural phenomenon. The Nishnaabeg word for this concept is … *akinoomaage*, which is formed from two roots: *Aki*: *noomage*. '*Aki*' means earth and '*noomaage*' means to point towards and take direction from (as cited in Simpson, 2017, p. 161).

[4] See page 2 for variations in spelling.

Akinoomaage also means “teacher.” That means that the derivation of the word “teacher” is “to take direction from creation.” This is mirrored in the conversations with the knowledge contributors who shared specific teachings from creation, including Shawn’s teachings from beaver behaviours and Jordan’s spiritual lesson from the buck. Engaging in environmental education through this lens may prove beneficial for promoting connection with creation. That is, instead of learning about natural processes from an anthropocentric perspective, appreciation should be given towards the creativity and intelligence of non-human elements of creation.

Another common theme presented by the knowledge contributors was the need for mindfulness or mindful intention when interacting with creation. When harvesting medicines, the knowledge contributors expressed that it is necessary to hold one’s intentions with them as they go about the process. For example, if someone is harvesting a medicine for their child who is ill, they should carry that intention as they harvest. Similarly, the knowledge contributors suggested that there is a need for an awareness of how human actions impact creation. At present, there is little scholarship discussing mindful intentions in Anishinaabeg harvesting practices. However, other scholars have suggested that engaging with and learning from creation requires us to “set our intentions in harmony with the natural cycles and laws of nature” (Martin, 2021, p. 153).

There has also been some scholarship in academic psychology exploring the role nature as a teacher and the benefits of being mindful in nature. Recently, Mashford-Pringle and Stewart (2019) developed an education program called *Akiikaa,* which is Algonkian for “it is the land.” In this program, graduate students in the University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health are immersed in land-based education

where they learn about the intrinsic connections between Indigenous communities and aspects of creation. Likewise, while there is limited research about how intentions impact the way we interact with creation, there is some psychological scholarship that reinforces the importance of mindfulness when connecting with creation. For example, the wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature may depend on the individual's relationship with the natural world (Richardson et al., 2021). The benefits may be affected by a person's relationship with the natural world (nature connectedness) and their engagement in mindful activities in nature, including focusing on the smell of flowers. While this is not the same as harvesting with good intentions, it does support the notion that when we engage meaningfully and genuinely with creation, we are more likely to feel the benefits of our time spent in creation.

5.2.3 Physical

While there was significant discussion around subsistence activities and how they connect Mississauga Anishinaabeg with creation, the knowledge contributors also felt that there are other physical ways of connecting with creation, including playing other roles in the process of preparing traditional foods. Rory reflected that his loved one does not participate in deer hunting, but she helps process and cook the meat. In this way, she also connects with creation. Likewise, Mabel felt that simply being present in creation is a way to connect physically with it.

There were no explicit discussions around accessibility and connection with creation, but, overall, the knowledge contributors felt that connecting with creation physically means engaging with creation in whatever capacity is comfortable. Recent research suggests that engaging with creation in accessible ways can be extremely

beneficial. People with mobility impairments may be unable to participate in traditional nature-based activities, such as harvesting, but virtual forest bathing could be an alternate way to engage with nature (McEwan et al., 2013).

The knowledge contributors also discussed the importance of connecting with creation through the senses, for example, the smell of sweetgrass, the sound of crackling cedar, the taste of wild meat, and the heat of a fire. The knowledge contributors felt that engaging with creation through the senses is a meaningful way of increasing connection. Simpson (2011) writes about the importance of connecting with creation through the senses when she shares the importance of the "taste [of] the sweetness of *ziisbaakdwaaboo* (sap)" (p. 80). Non-Anishinaabeg scholars have also researched the benefits and importance of connecting with creation through the senses. For example, people tend to prefer natural soundscapes compared to urban ones (Payne, 2013). Sounds of nature have been used to reduce stress (Alvarsson, 2010). Nature smells can also impact humans. For example, some blooming plants release odours that have been shown to increase calmness (Weber & Heuberger, 2008). However, there is little research that has investigated the way that the senses can affect one's connection with creation or nature directly. The current research, however, suggests that the senses are a route through which connection can be fostered.

5.2.4 Emotional

Emotionally connecting with creation was of deep importance in the research sharing circles. The knowledge contributors spoke extensively on the importance of heart truths and knowing the importance of respect when in creation. These sentiments mirror Simpson's (2011) reflection that emotions play an important role in trust and

relationships with creation. The knowledge contributors also reflected on feelings they had when they were in or thought about creation. Mabel reported that she does not feel complete unless she is outdoors. For the knowledge contributors, creation is a place of safety and comfort. This sense of comfort may be based on the reciprocal relationships of trust that the knowledge contributors have with creation. Simpson (2011) shares the words of Elder Gidigaa Migizi-ban who expressed that comfort is about "being a person whose word you could trust" (p. 125). Perhaps having a relationship with creation that is guided by the heart is a fundament requirement to feel comfort in creation.

Western research suggests that individuals with a stronger connection with the natural world are more likely to act in ways that are healthy for the earth (Mackay & Schmitt, 2019). Moreover, other scholars have suggested that it is difficult for humans to act in ways that promote conservation and other pro-environmental outcomes without first situating the "human" in nature and being connected with the natural world (Cronon, 1995). Spending time in nature can also provide immense benefits to one's emotional state (e.g., Cox et al., 2017; Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013; Oh et al., 2017). Western scholars have also investigated the importance of emotions in connecting with creation. For example, emotions are a key pathway through which humans form a connection with nature (Lumber et al., 2017).

Another key theme the knowledge contributors commented on was the deep emotions they experience when they interact with creation such as awe and wonder. Anishinaabe author Richard Wagamese (2016) captures this sentiment well as he reflects on his place in creation:

> Fog drifts across the harbour the way a cat slinks across a room, and in that jaw-dropping silence are mystery and elegance and power. Sitting here on a morning grey as stone, in a city on an island tucked against a mountain, you come to realize how dynamic living on a planet can be when you remember that we're on one. This great island tucked against the bowl of space is home. It is majestic and at the same time a humble being—allowing us all to grow and evolve. Aki—Earth. I will walk her skin today attuned to her heartbeat, the feel of her thrumming against the soles of my feet (p. 35).

Western academics have investigated the way that deep emotions, such as awe, can be related to engagement with creation. For example, feelings of awe can mediate the relationship between nature contact and well-being (Anderson et al., 2018). These findings are congruent with those in the current study. Several knowledge contributors expressed the awe they experience in the natural world. Alfredlin also expressed feeling "blessed" because of what he gets to see and experience in creation.

5.2.5 Spiritual

The knowledge contributors all felt that their own spirituality was based on aspects of creation, including the land, waters, and animals. These perspectives are shared by Anishinaabe scholars who suggest that humans, along with other aspects of creation, are all spiritual beings (Globensky & Sabourin, 2015). Western scholarship has also investigated the ways in which humans connect with creation spiritually. Ferguson and Tamburello (2015) suggest that "beautiful weather, mountains, and waterfronts are … suppliers for connections to the sacred" (p. 309). Spirituality may explain the links between nature connectedness and well-being, and nature connectedness is associated

with non-religious spirituality (Trigwell et al., 2014). Other research has shown that spirituality plays an important role in connecting with nature (Kövi et al., 2023).

While the knowledge contributors felt that creation as a whole is a substantial component of their spirituality, they also suggested that particular aspects of creation are especially spiritual for them. Jordan, for example, commented on the extremely strong spirituality present at the *Kinoomaage Waapkong*. Similar teachings have been shared by other Anishinaabe scholars (e.g., Simpson, 2017; Williams, 2018). Western research has investigated the role of place attachment and connection with aspects of creation. For example, Gosling and Williams (2010) found associations with place attachment and connection with nature. Other research has outlined "place spirituality," indicating that spirituality can be influenced by attachment or connection with a particular location (Counted & Zock, 2019). However, there is little literature investigating the relationships between place attachment, spirituality, and nature connection. The current research suggests that there is a link between these, as knowledge contributors commented on the importance of their traditional territories, the specific spiritual locations within them, and their deep connections with creation.

The research sharing circles also brought out discussions about the interconnectedness of all parts of creation. Knowledge contributors recognized that humans are part of creation, but that some have strayed from the "natural" path because their connection with creation has been eroded by colonialism and other forces. These sentiments are also supported in existing Anishinaabe scholarship (Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2017). Likewise, Western researchers have attempted to capture the extent to which individuals feel they are part of the natural world. Schultz's (2002) Inclusion of

Nature in Self Scale, for example, was developed based on existing measures of interpersonal closeness and modified to capture one's interconnection with the natural world. Likewise, other research has identified how individuals empathize with nature, including the ability to share emotional experiences with the natural world (Tam, 2013).

The final aspect of a spiritual relationship with creation explored was the importance of thankfulness for creation. The knowledge contributors expressed that, even in times of frustration, it is crucial to be thankful for what creation provides. Recent Western research findings support the importance of gratitude in fostering a connection with creation. For example, Chen et al. (2022) found that gratitude can facilitate connection with nature. Tam (2021) also developed a theory of measuring gratitude towards nature, involving the creation of the Trait Gratitude to Nature Scale.

5.3 Preliminary Scale Design Discussion

The scale developed as part of this research is highly unique and specialized to a specific population. However, it has some similarities with existing nature connection scales. For example, the statement "I learn from creation, fire, water, and air; all beings of Creator; and all parts of creation" suggests the intelligence of other parts of creation. Similarly, one statement in the connectedness with nature scale (Mayer & Frantz, 2004) is: "I recognize and appreciate the intelligence of other living organisms." However, this statement does not include the active component of learning that the statement from the current research does. Moreover, it does not account for non-living aspects of creation. While Mississauga Anishinaabe teachings describe all parts of creation as animate (Simpson, 2011), Mayer & Frantz's (2004) scale does not mention what many Western audiences would consider inanimate, including fire, water, and air. The scale developed

for the current research does address these elements of creation and recognizes that they hold intelligence.

One statement in the Nature Relatedness Scale (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013) is: “I always think about how my actions affect the environment.” The current scale contains a similar a similar statement: “I act in ways that will allow future generations to connect with creation.” These statements communicate similar ideas. However, the statement from the current scale makes connection with creation a central component of thinking about the environmental impacts of human actions. The Nature Connection Index (Richardson et al., 2019) also has some similarities with the measure developed here. For example, the statement “I often feel awe and wonder when I am in creation/water or think about creation/water.” One statement in the nature connection index reads “I find being in nature really amazing.”

While there are some similarities between the statements developed and existing nature connection scales, there are also some important differences. Notably, the scale developed in the current research has substantially more spiritual components. This may be due to the fact that it was designed specifically for use in Curve Lake First Nation, where the knowledge contributors felt that creation is a large part of spirituality. However, other research suggests that there is a relationship between spirituality and connection with nature (e.g., Kamitsis & Francis, 2013; Kövi et al., 2023). Likewise, the scale includes several statements that are very specific to the community, such as those that include cultural teachings, medicines, and Anishinaabe foods.

Another unique statement in the current scale is: “the plants, animals, land, and all of creation are my relations.” This statement speaks to the kinship present between

Mississauga Anishinaabeg and other beings and parts of creation. It also emphasizes that Mississauga Anishinaabeg (and all humans) are part of creation. One statement in the current scale discusses the *Mishoomisag* (Seven Grandfather Teachings). This statement, while specifically designed for Anishinaabe communities, also holds significance in other populations. That is, the seven teachings of *zaagidwin*, *mnaadendiwin*, *dbaadendiziwin*, *aakdehewin*, *gwekwaadziwin*, *nbwaakawin*, and *debwewin* (love, respect, humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, and truth) could likely be used to help guide everyone's relationship with the natural world. Notably, something unique in many of the statements developed is the use of the term "creation." Based on feedback from the knowledge contributors, it was crucial to use this term rather than "nature" or "the land." Using the term creation may promote a sense of interconnectedness between humans and other parts of the world. Specifically, there may be individuals who do not see themselves as part of nature, but they may feel more connected with creation. Conversely, however, there may be individuals who would prefer to use other terms.

5.4 Evaluation of Indigenist Methodology and Ethics in the Current Research

A fundamental goal of this project was to develop and follow community-led, respectful, and academically rigorous methodology and ethics. In keeping with existing literature and policies on research ethics with Indigenous populations (e.g., Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; George et al., 2020; Government of Canada, 2019; Hayward et al., 2021) this meant engaging with the community early in the research process to determine if the project would be beneficial for them. Likewise, it meant positioning myself within the community and gaining trust and respect from community members.

The methodology followed in this project was successful. This included the implementation of Indigenist research protocols, including the extensive ethics process, as well as the implementation of Indigenous research methods in knowledge sharing and knowledge synthesis using research sharing circles and the Medicine Wheel analytical framework. This project has struck a balance between existing academic norms and expectations, and community-level values. For example, the implementation of research sharing circles rather than focus groups made the knowledge contributors feel more comfortable with the research process. Likewise, the unique attributes of sharing circles (the inclusion of the researcher's voice, etc.) added value to the research.

5.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to this project that are worth addressing. This study engaged with a relatively small sample of knowledge contributors. Although the selection process was rigorous and was based on the recommendations of the research working group, it would have been beneficial to have more voices in the research. One knowledge contributor commented on this directly:

> I think also it's important to know that you know you're gathering information from us individuals that are here and we're only a small select few of the whole population of Curve Lake. And also, it's important to know the difference in generations as well, like the older ones would have experienced a lot different than what we experienced (June).

A larger sample size may have provided more intergenerational knowledge sharing and could have led to different insights into connection with creation. The knowledge contributors in this research also all have strong connections with creation that include

traditional and cultural activities. Other individuals in the community may have drastically different perspectives on connection with creation.

Another limitation was based on the nature of the knowledge that was being shared. Specifically, it is not possible to capture the intricacies of the topics discussed in three sessions. Shawn suggested that "it's difficult to put it all in your paper because it's a lifetime. It's generations." This is particularly applicable when discussing connection with creation, as there are innumerable teachings and experiences that cannot be captured in hours; it takes generations to cultivate understandings of these teachings.

The potential benefits of the research to the Curve Lake community are also limited. Specifically, there are certain teachings and knowledges that would not be appropriate to share with individuals outside of the Curve Lake community. Jordan reflected on this: "sometimes we don't share it all because it can be used against us… when you share too much, it can be really harmful." It would not be appropriate for certain teachings to be presented in this format. Moreover, it could be damaging if teachings that are meant to stay in the community were present in this research. Therefore, while this research contributes to the academy and the community in many ways, there is a distinct lack of specific cultural teachings and ceremonies.

The use of the word "creation" may also be viewed as a limitation because it could prove to be an isolating term. Some individuals may associate "creation" with religious spirituality, and this may deter them from engaging in this research, including completing the scale. Unfortunately, this limitation is difficult to avoid. The choice of vocabulary in scale development can influence the way participants complete the scale

(Tourangeau et al., 2000). However, it is also difficult to find language that is unanimously accepted.

This research project also employed a two-dimensional version of the Medicine Wheel. However, the Medicine Wheel is multi-dimensional and can be used to understand concepts of time and relationships (Mashford-Pringle & Shawanda, 2023). Additional knowledge synthesis could have incorporated the concept of time. For example, each component of connection with creation could have been explored in terms of its past, present, and future implications.

Finally, this research project conducted only qualitative inquiry. While this is not a limitation itself, this project could have benefited from a quantitative component as well. Ideally, the scale could have been implemented to address its quantitative validity. Moreover, part of a survey including the scale could have requested feedback from a larger sample regarding the relevance and quality of the scale. This would have strengthened the project.

5.6 Future Directions and Implications

This thesis and the research outcomes have several implications, both for the academy and for the Curve Lake community. Furthermore, there are concrete plans for future scholarship that will extend the current research.

5.6.1 In Academia

This research is part of the growing literature on connection with creation/nature. It has contributed to scholarship on Indigenist methodologies and community-informed research. This research has provided novel insights into the human-nature connection.

While the data collected for this thesis is localized to the Curve Lake community, the insights of the knowledge contributors are still valuable in the broader academic world.

Knowledge contributors provided unique perspectives on the challenges the community is facing regarding connecting with creation. The themes presented in this research, while representative of Curve Lake First Nation, are also generalizable to a certain extent. For example, concerns about treaties may not be unique to Curve Lake as much of the Canadian Nation State is governed by similar treaties. Future studies could further investigate community perceptions of treaties in Curve Lake First Nation, but they could also increase the scope of this research by including voices from other Indigenous communities. Likewise, the components of connection with creation identified are indeed unique to Curve Lake First Nation specifically and the knowledge contributors participating in this study. Given the desire of the psychological academy to pursue decolonization (Canadian Psychological Association, 2018), this research can serve as inspiration for conducting similar research in other Indigenous communities. However, there are considerations that must be made. Research taking place in or involving an Indigenous community must adhere to that community's own ethics, protocols, and established methodologies.

This project also led to the development of a collaborative methodology and ethical framework. Likewise, it outlined some areas of interest in the community, specifically through the Curve Lake Cultural Centre, which acts as the research hub of the community. These topics include further understanding connection with creation, gathering community impressions of treaties, and further developing a community ethics process. These are all projects that could benefit from the resources the academy can

provide. For example, Trent University has a well-established Centre for Community-Based Research. The topics of interest to the community could be translated into community-based research project proposals. The Cultural Centre might call on other academics to assist with research. This would be hugely beneficial for the academy and aspiring academics.

The current research may also be used to inform future decisions in the academy. The topics addressed in this thesis are of great importance to the Curve Lake community and represent opportunities for rich knowledge sharing and dissemination. Likewise, the results from this study have highlighted several interesting directions for future research. For example, the use of the Medicine Wheel framework highlighted that individuals can connect with creation through multiple avenues. In fact, future research projects could focus solely on the spiritual aspects of connection with creation in Curve Lake or elsewhere; or future research could explore the intersections of the elements of connection with creation.

One specific avenue for future research is the importance of the *Mishoomisag* (Seven Grandfather Teachings). Researchers, in collaboration with communities, could investigate how each of these teachings specifically relates to connection with creation. There are also potential quantitative avenues to explore regarding this topic. For example, it may be possible to generate a scale that measures how much different individuals act in ways that exemplify the teachings.

There are other quantitative explorations that could be undertaken based on this research. The most concrete of these is the use and validation of the scale. The scale could be implemented in a survey with other measures of connection with the natural

world, as well as measures of well-being or pro-environmental behaviours to see if there are correlations between these measures and the new scale. One specific future direction could be to explore the use of a measure like the Nature Inclusion in Self Scale (Schultz, 2002). This scale was developed based on existing human interpersonal connection scales.

Because the knowledge contributors expressed the importance of the interconnection of all of creation, it would be interesting to see how the Nature Inclusion in Self Scale may be modified and implemented in the Curve Lake community. The Nature Inclusion in Self Scale presents participants with a series of drawings of two circles labelled with "nature" and "self." In the first option, the circles do not intersect. In each progressive choice, the circles intersect more until, in the final option, the circles are entirely overlapping. The overlapping of the circles is meant to represent interconnection between the self and nature. This scale could be modified with the term "creation." It could also be modified to include a variety of other terms relevant to the community, such as "*Kinoomaage Wapkong*" or "Curve Lake."

5.6.2 In the Curve Lake Community

Based on conversations with the knowledge contributors and the Cultural Centre, there is substantial interest in continuing the current research project. Members of the community would like to see the scale implemented to gather information about the state of connection with creation in the community but also to explore the relationships this connection has with other outcomes such as well-being.

Another implication for the Curve Lake community comes from the ethical and methodological frameworks established in this project. Specifically, I am helping the

Cultural Centre to develop a clear process for proposing research projects in the community. Likewise, we have begun a catalogue of community-approved research methodologies that can be employed in future research projects. Knowledge shared from the current project may also be impactful for the community. It will provide additional understandings of connection with creation in the community and may inform the development of interventions and activities to increase this connection. The community may also decide to partner with academic institutions like Trent University through the Centre for Community-Based Research to extend data collection based on the current project.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis had three goals:

1. To determine the priorities in Curve Lake First Nation in regard to community connection to creation;
2. To cooperatively develop and follow an Indigenist research methodology that is respectful and responsive to the community desires and needs of Curve Lake First Nation and is robust in terms of academic rigour;
3. To understand how Mississauga Anishinaabeg connection to nature and land is similar to and distinct from the existing psychological measures of nature connection, and to develop a new integrative measure of connection to land for Curve Lake First Nation.

To accomplish these goals, a collaborative research methodology was developed to explore Curve Lake First Nation community members' understandings of connection with creation and to further understand what may be impacting the way in which community members can connect with creation.

This research responds to multiple professional, academic, and community calls to action. It was heavily influenced by Western psychology—a discipline that's representatives have called for Indigenization and decolonization (Canadian Psychological Association, 2018). The research also responded to calls within the academy to develop collaborative research methodologies and ethics with Indigenous communities. Finally, it addressed genuine interests in the Curve Lake community, thus strengthening the relationship between the community and the academy, represented by Trent University.

This research was also successful in accomplishing the specific research goals originally outlined. Specifically, this project 1) determined, within the sample of knowledge contributors, priorities for and concerns about connection with creation in the community. 2) developed a comprehensive Indigenist methodology, including community-informed ethics, to conduct the research project. Finally, 3) identified specific elements of connection with creation in the Curve Lake community and discussed these in the context of existing scholarship on connection with creation/nature.

6.1 Positionality

While I attempted to remain mindful of my personal beliefs and perspectives throughout the research process, there were points at which I had to take a step back and reflect on how my positionality was affecting the research. First, I entered my initial coding of the data in a psychological science mindset. This was particularly relevant when producing the deductive thematic analysis. Specifically, I found myself coding substantially more quotations under the "mental" aspect of connection with creation. I believe this was because of my training in psychology where many aspects of human experience are ascribed to mental processes. For example, I coded many quotations about thankfulness under the mental component, as I understood thankfulness as an intentional mental process describing feelings of gratitude. However, in conversations with the knowledge contributors and further reflection on Medicine Wheel teachings, I learned that thankfulness can also be understood as a component of spirituality and, for some, a form of prayer or ceremony.

I also reflected on my own positionality after the final research sharing circle where the knowledge contributors and I edited the scale statements. My initial scale

statements (Appendix D) typically used what I felt were “secular” terms to describe the natural world, such as “nature” and “land.” However, the revised scale statements use the term “creation” much more frequently. I initially found it difficult to use this term consistently. In fact, I still do not personally use “creation” to describe the natural world. However, as the scale was designed for the Curve Lake community, it was crucial for it to reflect the language used in the community and the language that the knowledge contributors felt was most appropriate.

Chapter 7: Medicine Wheel Reflection

I would like to take some space here to reflect on my experiences throughout this graduate degree and research process. I have framed this reflection based on the cyclical processes outlined by the Medicine Wheel in figure 5. This project has been deeply impactful for me, and I hope to convey some of the significant ways in which this research, the knowledge contributors, and the community have, I feel, drastically improved me as an academic and as a human.

I began this research project with a very clear purpose: I wanted to validate the nature relatedness scale in an Indigenous population, and I wanted to know if current environmental psychology theories account for Indigenous perspectives on connection with nature. This clearly evolved into what I believe has been a much more meaningful project, and I have many people to thank for this.

When I first presented my proposal to the *Kinoomaage Waapkong* and Culture Committee and the Cultural Advisory Circle, I was very nervous to make a good impression. I had also developed a proposal that was not appropriate for the community. While I had researched the literature and publicly available information about Mississauga Anishinaabeg connection to land and developed—from my perspective—a culturally sensitive proposal, I was missing some key components. I was challenged by the committees and staff at the Curve Lake Cultural Centre to reflect on my reason for engaging with this research and focus on what benefits it could bring to the community. Being a stubborn academic, I initially fell back on the existing literature. Thankfully, one of the first pieces I reinvestigated was Doug Williams' (2018) book *Michi Saagiig*

Nishnaabeg: This is our Territory. Although I had already read this book, my second (and third, and fourth…) reading brought a few key points to life.

Fuelled with the guidance of the committees, I began to identify with stories in the book. The most prominent of these were Williams' (2018) reflections on the designation of the Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park and the impacts of the Williams Treaties (1923). As I explored in my positionality statement, the Kawartha Highlands park is a significant place for me, and I had done some preliminary research on the treaties for a course during my undergraduate degree. In those subsequent readings of the book, something clicked, and I knew how to reframe the research project. It would no longer be about validating Western theories through an Indigenous lens. Now it would be about understanding how these negative events impacted connection with creation in the Curve Lake community and developing some sort of tool to help the community reclaim some of that connection.

This was not some sort of white saviour project, however. I was deeply interested in the academic and intellectual aspects of this research, and I was also motivated by a calling from the land itself to give back. This led to a new proposal that was met with more enthusiasm from the committees, the Cultural Centre, and Chief and Council. This excitement for the project aided in the ethics and community consent process, and the excitement also meant that the consent was enthusiastic. There were people in the community who were genuinely interested in and excited about the research project. Arguably, this should be a requirement for any research conducted with community, but it still felt good to have developed something that had garnered such interest.

With the building interest in the project and the ethics process completed, it was time to begin collecting data. I have described the mechanical aspects of the data collection process already, but I also want to reflect on the affective components of it. I have been part of different research groups, working on various projects, and I have always enjoyed being part of the data collection and analysis processes. However, meeting with the knowledge contributors at the Cultural Centre and engaging with them in dialogue has been the most meaningful part of my academic life. I cannot possibly express in words on a page the immense sense of honour I felt to be included in the conversations we had, and I am so grateful that this discourse took place.

I believe that conducting research sharing circles was the correct way to collect the knowledge used in this project, and the collaborative nature of the knowledge synthesis added to the authenticity of the voices in this thesis. I also deeply enjoyed my time with the knowledge contributors. I cannot speak for them, but I found that our meetings went by very quickly. I also want to acknowledge the meaningful relationships I was able to build as part of this process. I can only speak for myself, but I feel like I have connected with the knowledge contributors in impactful ways. In fact, the knowledge sharing only became more meaningful when the formal exchange of knowledge was extended to more intimate conversations.

In the first circle, one knowledge contributor told me that it would be impossible to truly understand what we were talking about without going onto the land myself. Likewise, in the second circle another knowledge contributor told me that the knowledge that would be most impactful for me could not be captured in the research project and that it would have to come from interactions on the land. Fortunately, these teachings also

came with an invitation to connect with creation with the knowledge contributors. I will not share here the teachings I was given or the personal experiences I had, but I will say that these teachings and experiences elevated my appreciation for this project to a level otherwise unattainable. *Miigwetch* to those knowledge contributors and to creation.

As I explored when discussing future directions for the research, the end of this project is really the beginning of something far larger. Likewise, this thesis is not the culmination of this research. This research is, in fact, only the beginning of something potentially much larger and longer lasting as the experiences I have shared with the Curve Lake community will live on in a reciprocal relationship. There are tangible future plans for this line of research, but my commitment to the community extends far beyond those. If Curve Lake calls, I will answer.

I am left now with a deep sense of accomplishment, but an even deeper sense of excitement for what the future holds.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Research Consent Form

Understanding Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Connection to Land and Nature

Informed Consent

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the research and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must give you enough information so that you can decide if you want to participate in the study.

Researchers and Contact Information

The following people are involved in this research. You can contact them at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

Researcher:
Jacob van Haaften (jacobvanhaaften@trentu.ca)

Supervisors:
Dr. Chris Furgal (chrisfurgal@trentu.ca),
Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard (dawnlavellharvard@trentu.ca)

Community Contacts:
Eliza Braden-Taylor (ElizaBT@curvelake.ca)
Steve Toms (SteveToms@curvelake.ca)
Donavon Taylor (CPManager@curvelake.ca)
Tracey Taylor (TraceyT@curvelake.ca)

Participants:

If you are 18 years or older, self-identify as Michi-Saagiig Nishnaabeg, and have a deep connection to or relationship with the land, we invite you participate in this research. You will also need to be able to speak in English or have access to an interpreter who has signed the research confidentiality form.

Purpose:

We are interested in learning about nature connection and connection to land in the greater Curve Lake community and in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. We are also interested in learning about how unjust decisions and rules, such as harvesting bans unfairly imposed by the Williams Treaties, have affected Michi Saagiig connection to land and nature.

Task Outline:

For this research, you are invited to participate in three research sharing circles, lasting a maximum of three hours each, to discuss the state of nature connection/connection to land in the community. After we have developed an understanding of these topics as a group, the researcher will develop a survey/scale designed to measure nature connection/connection to land in the community. The researcher will bring a draft of this survey back to the research sharing circles for further feedback. This survey may be used in future research guided by the community.

You will be compensated for your time with an honourarium of $500.00.

Potential Risk or Discomfort:
We do not think that this research will present any risk. However, some of the conversations about historical and modern events might be uncomfortable. If you feel any discomfort, you are welcome to leave the research sharing circle at any time, and members of the Curve Lake Health Centre. You can contact the Curve Lake Health Centre here:

Phone: 705-657-2557
Address: 38 Whetung St. E., Curve Lake, ON K0L 1R0

Mental Health Wellness Team Contact:

- Mental Health Worker Courtney Taylor: CourtneyT@curvelake.ca
- Community Healing Representative Marcie Williams: MarcieW@curvelake.ca
- NNADAP Worker Bailley Taylor: BailleyT@curvelake.ca
- Mental Health Crisis Worker: MentalHealth@curvelake.ca

A dedicated Elder will also be present for each sharing circle to provide medicines and care.

Potential Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. You will be helping the researcher and the community to better understand the topics important to Michi Saagiig connection to nature and land.

Confidentiality:
The research sharing circles will be recorded for transcription. Each participant will receive a pseudonym in the transcriptions. *Participants may choose to have their real name published by signing the appended line on this consent form. Participants will be given the opportunity to review all publications containing their name prior to final release*. Upon the completion of the transcriptions, the recordings will be destroyed.

Right to Withdraw
Participation is voluntary, and you may leave the research at any time. If this happens, you will be asked whether or not you would like your data to be destroyed after transcripts have been finalized.

Access to Data
Future researchers or public individuals will only be given access to the research data with the approval of the researcher and the Curve Lake Chief and Council, and only for purposes related to the research questions in this project.

The researcher will retain sole copies of the anonymized transcripts for potential future research OR until which time the Curve Lake Cultural Centre has established a secure, encrypted digital storage solution with specific security protocols. Copies of the transcripts will be kept for at least 1 years but not more than 5 years following the completion of this project.

Research Consent Form

Only anonymized data from this research will be published unless specific consent is provided by an individual to publish and attributed quote. Attributed quotes will be approved by the individual in the context of the quote before submission for publication. All published data will be screened and approved by the research working group. No money will be made from this data, and the researcher has no conflict of interest from this research. Participants will receive the results of this research through community presentations and a summary report prepared by the researcher (around August, 2024).

Please read the following points carefully:

- I understand the purpose of this research and my involvement as described above.
- I understand that participating in this research is voluntary and that I am free to leave at any time. If I leave, I will be asked if I want my data to be destroyed.
- I understand that my information will be kept confidential using methods described above, and I agree to keep confidential the conversations shared within the research sharing circles.
- I agree that my answers and conversations within the research sharing circles can be analysed for the purpose of this study.
- I am aware that this research has been reviewed by the Trent University Research Ethics Board, study number 24-28847. I am aware that I can contact the university's Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Jamie Muckle (email: jmuckle@trentu.ca) if I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research.
- I am aware that this research has been approved by the Curve Lake First Nation Chief and Council. I am aware that I can contact the Curve Lake First Nation Chief and Council with any concerns I may have with this research.
- I have read and understood this consent form.

By signing this form, I recognize that I have read and understood this agreement, and that I have carried out this agreement willingly.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Optional: I _____would like to have my real name used in publications instead of a pseudonym. Use of my real name in any form will ONLY take place after my opportunity to review final publications and appearance of my name in the final form before release.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

OCAP Agreement

OCAP Protocols and Commitments

The following outlines the protocols and commitments shared by Curve Lake First Nation and Jacob van Haaften through the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Possession, and Access) standards for the current research project: Contemporary Impacts of the Williams Treaties on Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Connection to Land and Nature. These commitments are intended to promote data sovereignty for and respect of Curve Lake First Nation in the context of the current research project relating to the Master of Arts thesis of Jacob van Haaften.

Ownership

1. I, Jacob van Haaften, recognize that all knowledge shared, discovered, and gathered is the collective property of the research participants, Curve Lake First Nation, and the researcher. In keeping with intellectual property rights, the thesis manuscript will be the property of the researcher.
2. Although there are no commercial intents planned for this research project, any funds generated by the direct sale or promotion of the knowledge collected are to be used at the discretion of Curve Lake First Nation. If commercial opportunities present themselves, these opportunities will be presented to Curve Lake First Nation Chief and Council for their discretion and/or approval. This excludes academic grants that are granted based on the academic, personal, and community achievements of Jacob van Haaften.

Control

1. Any publications of knowledge collected during this project will be given to the research working group selected by Curve Lake First Nation before their release to the public. The research working group will provide feedback within one month (30 days). This includes the publication of and is not limited to:
    a. A thesis.
    b. Journal articles.
    c. Books or other written accounts of the project.
    d. Audio/visual productions.
    e. Presentation slides, notes, and speeches.
    f. Rough notes, including preliminary/initial results.
2. Curve Lake First Nation has the right to direct the storage, archiving, and destruction of knowledge collected during the research project in collaboration with Jacob van Haaften and the study participants. This includes the storage of:
    a. Sharing circle, meeting, and discussion notes.
    b. Electronic and hard-copy survey data.
    c. Data analysis outputs, graphical representations, and written reflections.
3. Based on the recommendations of the Kinomaage Wapkong and Culture Committee, the Curve Lake First Nation Cultural Advisory Circle, and Curve Lake First Nation Chief and Council, the research working group will be updated monthly or by request and involved in the research process. This involvement may include but is not limited to:
    a. The direct supervision of knowledge communication/collection.

b. The ability to make unargued decisions about specific knowledge collection and recording, including sacred teachings that are not meant to be shared with the general public. Specifically, there are certain elements of Michi Saagiig culture that are not to be shared with outsiders.

4. Acknowledging that in academia the use of published research is regulated by academic integrity standards and ethical guidelines, I, Jacob van Haaften, will work with Curve Lake First Nation to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the knowledge shared/produced by this project in future publications that may cite or quote the current research. To promote the integrity of the research data, future publications will include a protective disclaimer requiring future researchers to contact Jacob van Haaften and the research working group before reproducing quotations from the publication.

Access

1. Curve Lake First Nation will hold direct digital and paper access to all publications, presentations, anonymized transcript research data, and knowledge. This includes publishing all research in open-access formats and locations.
2. If, for whatever reason, Curve Lake First Nation does not want to hold direct possession of certain parts of the research, this research will be made available to the community in a timely manner and in perpetuity (I, Jacob van Haaften, will provide and ensure that Curve Lake First Nation has access to my updated personal contact information).

Possession

1. At the request and discretion of Curve Lake First Nation, the community will be in direct possession of digital and/or paper copies of all research knowledge, including:
    a. A dissertation.
    b. Journal articles.
    c. Books or other written accounts of the project.
    d. Audio/visual productions.
    e. Presentation slides, notes, and speeches.
    f. Rough notes, including preliminary/initial results.

The outlined terms have been agreed upon by Curve Lake First Nation and Jacob van Haaften. The undersigned (Jacob van Haaften) commits to upholding the terms of this agreement to the best of their ability.

Signature: Date:

Appendix C

Confidentiality Form

Confidentiality Form

Research Support Confidentiality Agreement

This study, Understanding Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Connection to Land and Nature, is being undertaken by Jacob van Haaften from Trent University.

The purpose of this study is:

To learn about nature connection and connection to land in the greater Curve Lake community and in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. The study is also interested in learning about how unjust decisions and rules, such as harvesting bans unfairly imposed by the Williams Treaties, have affected Michi Saagiig connection to land and nature.

I, _____, as a research assistant/support member, agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing it in any form or format (eg. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Principal Investigator(s);

2. Follow the REB approved research data management plan for keeping research information secure while it is in my possession;

3. Return all research information in any form or format to the Principal Investigator(s) when I have completed my research tasks;

4. After consulting with the Principal Investigator(s), erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Principal Investigator(s) (eg. information stored on a hard drive).

Research Support:	Support Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____
Principal Investigator (PI):	PI Signature:	Date:
_____	_____	_____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Trent University. For Questions regarding participants rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Trent University Office of Research and Innovation at researchintegrity@trentu.ca or the university's Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Jamie Muckle (email: jmuckle@trentu.ca).

Appendix D

Initial Scale Statements Presented to the Knowledge Contributors

Mental

1. I learn from the land, the animals, and all parts of nature.
2. Humans rely on the land and animals more than animals rely on humans.
3. If I was to harvest, I would be mindful of my motivations.
4. I am aware of how my actions impact the land and nature.

Physical

1. I eat or wish to eat traditional foods from the land.
2. I often connect with the land through my senses.
3. If I were to go on the land, I would try to leave it the way I found it.
4. I often reflect on how the land sustains me physically (through food, water, shelter, etc.).

Emotional

1. My heart guides me in having a respectful relationship with the land.
2. I feel like I am where I'm supposed to be when I'm on the land or think about the land.
3. I am drawn to the land and nature.
4. I often feel awe and wonder when I am on the land or think about the land.

Spiritual

1. My spirituality is based on my relationship with the land.
2. I feel spiritually drawn to parts of nature.

3. The plants, animals, and land are my relations.
4. I practice reciprocal giving with the land (e.g., with tobacco)

Mino Bimaadiziwin

1. If I were to interact with the land, I would be guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
2. I have a responsibility to protect nature.
3. I act in ways that will allow future generations to connect with the land.
4. I take actions to protect nature.

Appendix E

Curve Lake First Nation Connection with Creation Scale

For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement using the scale below. Please respond as you really feel, rather than how you think "most people" feel or should feel.

Mental

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
I learn from the land, fire, water, and air; all beings of Creator; and all parts of creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Anishinaabeg cannot survive without creation, but creation can survive without Anishinaabeg.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I was to harvest or gather, I would be mindful of my motivations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I constantly remember the value and the sacredness of the land.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am always respectful of creation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Physical

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
I eat or wish to eat Anishinaabe foods from creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I always connect with creation through my senses.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I leave the land and water the way I found it or better	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often reflect on how the land and water fulfill me mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creation can provide me with everything I need to survive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Emotional

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
My mind, body, and spirit guide me in having a respectful relationship with creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like I am where I'm supposed to be when I'm on the land/water or think about the land/water.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am drawn to creation/water and creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often feel awe and wonder when I am on the land/water or think about the land/water.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel whole and complete when I use or give Anishinaabe Mshkiki (medicines).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Spiritual

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
My spirituality is based on my relationship with creation and Creator.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel spiritually drawn Creator and Mother Earth.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creation provides me with various unique spiritual experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Certain parts of creation (e.g., places, beings, elements) are very spiritual for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The plants, animals, and all of creation are my relations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I give to Creator and creation for all its gifts (e.g., with Semaa (tobacco)).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mino Bimaadiziwn

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly
I give thanks with Semaa (tobacco) to Creator for all that was, all that is, and all that will be, always.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I lead with Semaa (tobacco) but also know the role and importance of all Anishinaabe Mshkiki (medicines).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I interact with creation, I am guided by the Mshoomisag (Seven Grandfather Teachings).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a responsibility to protect all creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I act in ways that will allow future generations to connect with creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I take actions to protect creation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Calculate and average scores for each section and a total score.

Disagree Strongly = 1

Disagree = 2

Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3

Agree = 4

Agree Strongly = 5

Appendix F

Draft Research Proposal Form for Curve Lake First Nation

Curve Lake First Nation Research Proposal Form

Curve Lake First Nation welcomes opportunities to collaborate on research projects from a variety of disciplines. Likewise, the community is open to partnering with any educational institute or organization willing to abide by community protocols and conduct ethical research. This document outlines the steps we expect researchers to take before contacting Curve Lake with inquiries about research projects. Please fill out this document and submit it with any supporting documents to _____.

Researcher Name: _____

Research Project Title: _____

This document must be completed for each research proposal and cannot be used for multiple research projects.

General Research Information

1. Please select the type of research you wish to conduct with Curve Lake First Nation (select all that apply):

- ☐ Health
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Cultural (anthropological, archeological, sociological)
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Natural Science (other than environmental)
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Spiritual
- ☐ Media Studies
- ☐ Historical
- ☐ Linguistic
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Geographical
- ☐ Engineering or Technological
- ☐ Educational
- ☐ Other: _____

2. Please specify the type of research you are interested in conducting (e.g., Health: Mental Health or Engineering: Water Treatment):

3. Research statement of purpose (Max 500 words):

Research Involving Participants (Complete if applicable)

4. Will this research involve the direct participation of Curve Lake First Nation citizens?

5. Who will participate in this study? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Elders
- ☐ Members of Chief and Council
- ☐ General Population
- ☐ School Children
- ☐ Those in specific occupations (specify): _____
- ☐ Others: _____

6. What information will participants be required to provide? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Name
- ☐ Age
- ☐ Address
- ☐ Phone Number
- ☐ Email Address
- ☐ Indigenous Status
- ☐ Other: _____

7. Describe any direct benefits to participants for their participation (other than compensation):

8. Will participants be compensated for their time? How will the participants be compensated? (see below current Curve Lake First Nation recommended honourarium rates) **Add to document**

9. How many participants will be required for this research? Provide rationale for the sample size.

Curve Lake First Nation Specific Questions

10. What is the direct benefit to Curve Lake First Nation for collaborating on this research project?

11. Why have you selected Curve Lake First Nation, specifically, to collaborate with? Note: responses such as "the reserve is close to my school," "Curve Lake is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg community," and "Curve Lake was a signatory to the Williams Treaty" are not specific enough.

12. How will you implement the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) in this research project? (Curve Lake First Nation requires a written OCAP agreement for each research project)

School Research Projects (Complete if applicable)

13. What institution is hosting this research project (university/college name)?

14. Are you a student researcher?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes:

a. What degree program is this research being conducted for?

b. Who is/are your supervisor(s)?

Note that we require supervisors to be aware of their student's research proposal.

Signature of supervisors acknowledging they are aware their student is submitting a research proposal to Curve Lake First Nation (add lines for multiple supervisors):

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Document Checklist

All applicable items must be completed for consideration.

☐ All relevant questions in this document have been answered.
☐ Questions 9 and 10 have specific and detailed responses.
☐ An OCAP agreement is appended to this document.

☐ All information in this document is accurate to the best of the researcher's knowledge.

☐ This file follows this naming format: "last name, first name_year_Curve Lake First Nation Research Proposal."

Researcher Information

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This research proposal will be reviewed by the Curve Lake First Nation Research Working Group. Researchers will be contacted by the Working Group after the proposal has been discussed at their monthly meeting.

If the Working Group is interested in this research project, the researcher will be invited to orally present their research to the Working Group and answer questions about the project. If the research is approved by the Working Group, it will be sent to Curve Lake Chief and Council for final and official approval.

Research must not be conducted prior to final Chief and Council approval.