Dancing with Chikapesh: An Examination of Eeyou Stories through Three Generations of Storytellers

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Dedication

This dissertation

is dedicated

to all Residential School Survivors and their families,

to all Storytellers in NDN country.

Untangle the stories,

remove the cobwebs

Re-stitch and re-weave them

into a *Coyote* story or other story,

Whatever style you like

Let the *North Wind* blow into hair

and whisper into your ears *Ishiiyiyuu* stories.

PROJECT COYOTE

WHEN IS COYOTE GOING TO BE A PROJECT OF ITS OWN MERIT

PROJECT COYOTE

BUT COYOTE IS GOING TO TURN IT INTO

COYOTE'S PROJECT (S)

AKA PROJECT FIXING THE WORLD!

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Misti chii niskumitiin, Meegwetch to Eeyou artist, Amanda T. Sam for granting permission to use her artwork in this dissertation.

Meegwetch to my husband and daughters, for their love, patience and support, misti chii niiskumitinawau from the bottom of my heart! May we continue tell our *Chikapesh*, *Nikishan, Earth Diver*, and *Old Meskano* stories together!

Abstract

I was sent to Residence Couture situated on Fort George Island to acquire a Euro-French-Canadian style of schooling. My research examines Indigenous issues in education using Indigenous methodologies. The project involves reclaiming Cree narratives of my family history. By examining Cree oral tradition through the lens of three generations of *Eeyou*/Cree storytellers, my research project lays the groundwork for positing an Indigenous theory of Cree storytelling of the eastern James Bay Cree. First the project looks at my grandparents' generation where the stories were recorded for anthropological purposes. The grandparents' generation told an ancient and sacred style of storytelling and used these stories as teaching tools for cultural transmission. Secondly, it examines parents' generation stories, which were recorded for educational purposes and are used in Cree language classrooms. As a third generation of storytellers, I interweave the sacred stories with contemporary issues that affect Indigenous people into a modern story. Each generation, by their own retelling and re-creating, honours and builds upon the work of the grandmother's grandmother from which the stories first originated.

The format of the dissertation uses such devices as interruptions, repetition, passive voice, third person voice, stops and false starts and a fictional character named *Minnie*. The devices are used to illustrate the disruptive effect of my Indian residential school experience on the cultural transmission of my extended family's oral stories. My Indian Residential School [IRS] experience affects the way that I write and tell my stories. These devices were used to emphasize the implicit and colonial message of the residential school system. My writing has become interrupted and transitional. The interruptions reflect the fact that as a five-year old child I was taken away from my parents, grandparents, and community and placed in an Indian Residential School.

This research contributes to Indigenous research through its personal narrative and insider perspective on Indian Residential School experience and its implications for cultural transmission of *Eeyou*/Cree storytelling.

Résumé

On m'a envoyée à la Résidence Couture sur l'île de Fort George pour que j'acquière une instruction canadienne-française d'influence européenne. Mon étude examine, au moyen des méthodologies autochtones, certaines questions autochtones relevant de l'éducation. Ce projet de recherche consiste notamment en une réappropriation des traditions narratives cries issues de mon héritage familiale. Par l'examen des traditions orales des Cris au regard de trois générations de conteurs *eeyou,* mon projet de recherche pose les bases d'une théorie autochtone des traditions narratives cries de l'est de la baie James. Le projet s'intéresse d'abord à la génération de mes grands-parents, dont les récits ont été enregistrés à des fins anthropologiques. Les membres de cette génération employaient un style ancestral et sacré dans la narration des récits; ces histoires leur servaient d'outils didactiques pour la transmission culturelle. Ce projet examine ensuite les récits de la génération de mes parents, qui ont été enregistrés à des fins éducatives et sont utilisés dans les cours de langue crie. Enfin, en tant que représentante de la troisième génération de conteurs, je crée des histoires contemporaines dans lesquelles les récits sacrés s'entremêlent aux problématiques que vivent actuellement les peuples autochtones. Par ses propres narrations et ses recréations, chaque génération honore le travail des grands-mères des grands-mères à l'origine de ces récits et prend appui sur ceux-ci.

La présente thèse adopte un format qui fait appel à des procédés comme les interruptions, les répétitions, la voix passive, les pauses et les faux départs, ainsi qu'à un personnage fictif appelé *Minnie*. Ces procédés servent à illustrer l'effet perturbateur de mon expérience en pensionnat indien sur la transmission culturelle des histoires orales de ma famille élargie. Ma façon d'écrire et de raconter des récits est influencée par mon expérience en pensionnat indien. Ces procédés sont utilisés pour mettre en lumière le message colonial implicite associé aux pensionnats indiens.

Mon style d'écriture est marqué d'interruptions et de transitions. Les interruptions reflètent le fait que, à l'âge de cinq ans, j'ai été enlevée à mes parents, à mes grands-parents et à ma communauté pour être placée dans un pensionnat indien.

Cette étude, qui se veut une contribution à la recherche autochtone, explore, par le biais du récit personnel d'une histoire vécue, l'expérience des pensionnats indiens et de leur influence sur la transmission culturelle des traditions narratives *eeyou* cries.

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Ceremony[1]

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death.

You don't have anything
If you don't have the stories.

Their evil is mighty
but it can't stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
let the stories be confused or forgotten.
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenceless then.

He rubbed his belly.
I keep them here
[he said]
Here, put your hand on it
See, it is moving.
There is life here
for the people.

And in the belly of this story
the rituals and the ceremony
are still growing.

[1] Silko, 1977, 2006, pp. 2-3. I have kept the original form of the poem where there is a large deliberate space before the last stanza [which begins "what she said" on the next page].

What She Said:

The only cure
I know
is a good ceremony,
that's what she said.

(Silko, 1977/2006, pp. 2-3)

Chikapesh ©Amanda T. Sam, 2008

Walking-Out Ceremony

One of my daughter's Walking-Out Ceremony (on the left) and her cousins with their mothers (in the middle and on the right) at Wabannutao Eeyou School during the celebrations of Annie Whiskeychan Day, a cultural day! **Photo Credit:** Cree Nation of Eastmain, 2000

Aerial view of Fort George Island

Résidence Couture, École Ste-Thérèse-de-L'enfant-Jésus

Photo Credit: Nancy Bobbish: Facebook Ecole Ste-Therese, Fort George, 2012

Part I

A- Oh, where, oh where does Minnie come from?

Miyuupimaatisiwin means, "living a great life," or "living a healthy life."

This is about speaking one's mind

> Now you're forty you can say what's on your mind. Until then you weren't allowed to because you were just a child. Don't ask me where I got that, but I've known it all my life. I've always known that, once you were forty, then you got to speak up clearly. (Gunn Allan, 1987, pp.11-12)

This is one is about sharing

> Sharing what one has learned is an important Indigenous tradition. This type of sharing can take the form of a story of personal experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others. (Archibald, 2008, p. 2)

However, sharing can also be a scary experience and you need to be strong in mind and spirit to do it, especially sharing with others you do not know.

This one is about teaching

Archibald (2008) uses the term 'teaching' as "cultural values, beliefs, lessons, and understandings that are passed from generation to generation. ... The four R's- respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility." (p. 2)

What I am trying to answer are the following questions:

Who am I? What am I doing? Why am I doing it? I will start with, "Who am I?"

Before launching into the story, let us talk about *Eeyou Iiyimuun*. *Eeyou Iiyimuun* is spoken/oral Cree language. There is no standard way of writing the spoken language. Even organisations and linguists have different ways of writing Cree language. Linguists have their own way of writing Cree (see McKenzie, 1987; Vaillancourt, 1992). There is variation in *Eeyou*/Cree terms used in this dissertation. One example is the term *Eeyou* that is written in various forms as *Iiyiyuu*, *Iyiyuuh*, *Eeyou*, *Eeyuu*. Other Cree words have different orthography. Despite the different written orthography the word is pronounced the same way. I do not provide translation for all the *Eeyou* words used in this inquiry. No translation is offered because it is a device used to capture on paper and in written form the Indian Residential School experience where we were expected to learn and acquire the colonial language simultaneously. We were severely punished if we did not learn the colonial language quickly. French was the colonial language used at the Indian Residential School I attended.

A second point I mention is the fictional character *Minnie*. I use italicised Helvetica green-coloured font for *Minnie*. She is introduced (*Eeyou* style*)* in the middle of the inquiry and a brief explanation is given as to why she is introduced then. Minnie appears on page 18 but she is not formally introduced, just like we do in *Eeyou*/Cree oral tradition. As *Eeyou* we socialise with each other but do not introduce ourselves. I am trying to recreate this social *Eeyou*/Cree interaction in the textual form. A third point I mention is the narrator *Coyote*. I use italicised Helvetica orange-coloured font for the narrator, *Coyote.* Although there is no *Coyote* in the James Bay area, I have borrowed the character *Coyote* from the west coast to show that as Indigenous Peoples of this continent we borrow from one another since time immemorial. The character *Coyote* appears out of nowhere and begins a conversation with *Minnie*. This sudden

appearance of the narrator, *Coyote*, may disconcert some people but it was an oral tradition device used here to show how people come and go on this land.

The format of the dissertation uses intertextual weaving of different texts [prose, poetry, stories, images], and deliberate repetition and circularity, including such devices as interruptions, creative repetition, passive voice, third person voice, stops and false starts and a fictional character named Minnie. The devices are used to illustrate the disruptive effect of my Indian Residential School (IRS) experience on the cultural transmission of my extended family's oral stories. My Indian Residential School experience affects the way that I write and tell my stories. These devices are used to emphasize the implicit and colonial message of the residential school system.

I am an Eastern James Bay Cree and I am a member of the Cree Nation of Eastmain. The designation "Eastern James Bay Cree" is a western designation. As Cree we use the term, *Eeyou* (*Eeyouch* for plural) for the coastal communities of Whapmagoostui, Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain and Waskaganish, and *Eenou* (*Eenouch* for plural) for the inland communities of Nemaska, Mistissini, Waswanipi and Ouje-Bougoumou; the not-yet federally recognised community of Washaw-sibi may be using either term. My ancestors were hunters, trappers, and fishers of the boreal forest. Our way of life was changed when northern development came to our homeland. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) was signed on November 11, 1975 between the Cree and Inuit of Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and the federal and provincial governments in order to build hydroelectric dams within that region (Diamond, 1987).

I am reclaiming my family history that is featured in Richard J. Preston's anthropological work, *Cree Narrative: Expressing Personal Meaning of Events*, first published by the National

Museum of Man in 1975 and reissued by McGill-Queen's University Press in 2002. The informant in the study, John Blackned, was my paternal grandmother's younger brother. In the Cree kinship system, he was *niye nimushum*, my late grandfather, and in the Euro-Canadian kinship system, he was my great-uncle. The study was made, Preston writes, at a time when "[f]ieldwork was [being] supported in 1965-69 by research contracts from the urgent ethnology program of the National Museum of Man (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization)" (2002, p. ix). What was so urgent about it? I guess it was the idea or myth of "the disappearing Indian" that was in vogue at that time. That is, we have to record them before they disappear completely.

Disruptions

"Well, we're still here," retorts Minnie, "and still telling our stories."

Little did I know that I would be sitting in the same room as Preston did ten years previously but for him, he was armed with an audiotape and with the purpose of doing it for research contracts and to obtain his doctoral degree. Title and money, I say. By doing this, he silenced us. My cousins and I are the cultural transmitters to the next generation. So now I am trying to reclaim what has been lost.

What struck me as odd when I read this book is how the women have no names, and thus they have no identity. For example, Preston writes, "John was born at the end of the nineteenth century, probably in 1894 ... He was the oldest of four sons (John, Charlie, Tommy, and one for whom I have **not** found a name) and two daughters (for whom I have **no** names) born to Jacob Blackned and his wife [...] Jacob, in turn, may have been the son of Black Ned, an Eastmain River inlander who is mentioned several times in the HBC records for Rupert's House (the Cree name is Waskaganish) between 1870 and 1901" (2002, p. 21, my emphasis). I find it strange that

for the missing son he “found” no name whereas for the two daughters he “had” no names, which implies he tried to find the name of the son but not the two daughters. During the period of his fieldwork, my paternal grandmother, *Louisa, one of the two daughters,* was living in Eastmain, about 100 km north of Waskaganish. My late grandmother, Louisa, told me that my great grandmother was *Elizabeth* and my great grandfather was *Jacob Blackned.*

What message is Preston (1975, 2002) sending me? Males are important but females are not. I realise that was the prevalent attitude of the time (1965-69): Your gender, name and identity are not important; besides, your stories are not worth telling or being heard. I am silencing you. I am taking your story and making it my own. I am rewriting it in my own terms. I am "author," "scholar,” and “authority" of your family history and I decide what should be told and heard and to whom (my adaptation of hooks, 1990). Your family story I can generalize it and homogenize it. I can say it is applicable to all Eastern James Bay Cree. I can say your family history is the lived experience of all Eastern James Bay Cree. Now that is how the book speaks to me. I have cried when I read the stories that my grandmother told me. Their interpretation was distorted. The stories are intended for our children and their children's children. It is our oral family history.

Several years after Preston finished his fieldwork, I sat in the same room with my late grandmother, Louisa and my late grandfather, John Blackned, only this time there was no audiotape. We spent the day drinking tea and with plenty of storytelling. John's wife, Harriet, had already passed away. My grandmother was getting old and in the Spring of 1977, she decided to travel to Waskaganish to visit her brothers and sisters-in-law, Tommy and Mary, John, and Charlie and Dinah Blackned, her cousin, Walter Blackned, her sister-in-law Christian Weistche and her friends, Maggie Cowboy, Anne Hester, Malcolm and Hilda Diamond, and Philip

Diamond. I recalled this was going to be the last time she would visit and perhaps see them. She announced it to us and she wanted one of her grandchildren to go with her. I told her I would go with her. That is how my grandmother and I spent a week visiting our relations in Waskaganish. I found out that Philip Diamond was a very good hunter. Maggie was going blind and in the early morning she could see things but only vaguely and briefly. She was not married but she had brought up three boys; two were already adults and one, a teenager.

Why did I feel so bad? Why did I feel that something was taken away from me? I did know part of the reason. As Hampton (1995) says, "memory comes before knowledge" (p. 48). I feel that my childhood memories had been taken away from me. I also have a strong feeling that they have been re-interpreted and re-written for me. I no longer have authority over them. In the past twenty years, I have tried to make social scientists understand about my family history but my voice was inaudible. Perhaps I was viewed as having no authority to make claim to this oral history and much less to try and interpret it. Perhaps I was viewed as an "assimilated" urban Cree who could no longer live like my Cree ancestors, the hunters/"gatherers." Perhaps I represented a threat to their authority and their claim of scholarship of my people and my nation.

I have three names. My father gave me my first name at my baptism. People from my community gave me an *Eeyou/*Cree name at birth. My father was stranded for a few days on an island during a storm and he did not make it back in time for my birth and that is how people from my community gave me my *Eeyou* name. My *Eeyou* name means “a person stranded on an island during a storm.” I found out that I had a third name when I began Indian Residential School. A friend of mine told me recently she remembers how annoyed I was at the name. I resented the fact I was given this name and I did not identify with it. As soon as I had the chance, I had my name corrected. I called the regional office of Indian Affairs in Quebec City. An agent

told me to write a letter enclosing a supporting document. The agent also informed me that my timing was right because the Department of Indian Affairs was in the process of revising the "Indian status" registry list. I wrote a letter to Indian Affairs and they did correct my name. I have the name that my father gave me. Occasionally, I receive a Quebec Health Card (carte d'assurance maladie) with the old Indian Affairs name, which I promptly destroy. In a way, mainstream society has given me two identities. I chose the name my father gave me.

I left home at the age of five to attend a French Catholic Indian residential school on Fort George Island, a Hudson Bay trading post situated on the Eastern shore of James Bay (Daniel & Morantz, 1983). The first year I was there, I stayed from early September until late June. The next year I was in grade one, my cousin also came to school there and the teacher put her in the same row as me and I served as her translator for the first month. For the next five years I attended the residential school run by the Grey Nuns from the order of “les Soeurs de la Charité" and by Catholics priests from the order, “Oblat Marie-Immaculée (O.M.I.)”. All the schooling was in French and we followed the teachings of the Catholic religion although we had been baptized "Anglican." Cree language was offered in grade 7. The Anglican priest came to the residence every weekend to offer Sunday school to high school students.

I have been silenced many times and many times I have remained silent because that is the way people wanted me to be. Then I refused to remain silent. I did not know at the time I was doing it. That is, refusing to remain silent. Perhaps it was my motherly instinct that took over. For thirty-four years I have remained silent. What broke my silence? I believe it was the high school students and their parents at the school where I was working who shook me out of my comfortable seat and awoke me from my silence. As their Cree Vice-Principal, I could not bring myself to treat the students with disdain, the way they were treated by others, nor could I bring

myself to dismiss them. I also could not bring myself to ignore their voices. The parents' message was loud and clear: they wanted a better education for their children. They wanted the right to have access to quality education, similar to the one available to all Quebecers and Canadians.

B- Minnie goes to university and theorises on Cree Storytelling

The oral tradition

The study of oral tradition has to be written in the form of a story. In writing this chapter, which is based on an earlier paper, I made four drafts until I realised somehow the research did not fit. Then I looked at an assignment I had written for a class on arts-based research and how easy it was to write something for it. Suddenly I realised I was doing it all wrong. Why? I was trying to make oral tradition into an "essayist" or Western style literature, which Cree oral tradition is not (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). The way to do it is to follow in the footsteps of Native writers who have done it successfully and whose stories resonate orality (Erdrich, 1989, 2008; Freeman, 1979; Highway, 1988, 1989; King, 1993, 1994; Momaday, 1966/1968, 1969, 1974; Robinson & Wickwire, 1989/2004, 2005; Silko, 1977; Sarris, 1994, 1998; Slipperjack, 1987; Taylor, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2002; Willis, 1973; for a review of some of these books, see King, 1997, and for women writers, see Brant, 1997). These writers found inspiration from oral tradition. They have taken oral tradition and they made it into written form. In *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, Silko (2000) talks about the interplay of the oral and the written and she also explains the challenge of putting the oral concepts into written form. Although King's novel (1997), *Green Grass, Running Water,* did not originate directly from oral but from written form, it does resonate with orality.

The reason why I want to research Cree oral tradition is that as a young child, my paternal grandmother, Louisa, daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth Blackned, introduced me to stories. At the start, the stories were bedtime stories and then they became stories my grandmother told us (me and my younger siblings) when we took a break from our woodcutting, collecting sphagnum moss, blueberry picking, collecting wood for tanning moose and caribou hide, or other traditional activities. These stories were part of my worldview and were the teachings of my people, the Cree Nation of Eastmain.

Then at the age of five I was sent to Résidence Couture, Indian Residential School, Fort George for a Western style of schooling. The teaching there was in French and I learned *Les Contes de Perrault* and other children's literature. While I was there I was also introduced to Catholic religion. I mention it because this became my first exposure to two versions of the Creation. One version came from Christianity and the other version came from the ancient and sacred stories my grandmother told me before I started school. So there were these two voices in my head: "Dieu créa le ciel et la terre," *Chikapesh* went on the Moon and, using his *Uumshaa*'s hair, snared the Sun. Total darkness ensued. When *Chikapesh* tried to free the Sun from his snare, he scorched his squirrel fur coat. Unable to do it, *Chikapesh* asked for Mouse's help but in the process of freeing the Sun, Mouse scorched his whiskers but he was able to free the Sun and restore daylight. That's how day and night were created." (This is my abbreviated version of the stories of '*Chikapesh on the Moon'* and '*Chikapesh Snared the Sun'*).

My interest in the oral tradition is, as a Mohawk leader put it, "returning the Gift." Unlike the "white" anthropologist, my interest is not the "exotic folklore, myth, legend" or whatever name you want to give it. I am not here, either, to theorise about the demise of the art of Indian

storytelling. Instead I look for it in the form described using King's (1997) terms, tribal and interfusional, which I will describe later in this chapter.

My understanding of the oral tradition stories is that they are children's stories, Native children's literature. There is a progression of the type of stories told, as a child grows, for example, as the child matures the stories become more sexual in connotation. Some examples of these are 1) *ishskawsh e-nti-ti-ku-un e-iti-ku-yaan*, 2) *mishta-kwejuu*, and 3) *iskweo kaa uu-kwa-juum-kaa-suut*. All these stories, as King (2003) astutely points out, are shifting and changing from one storyteller to another. Even the same storyteller, she or he will recount a story in a slightly different way on a different occasion or for a different audience. This observation is very much evident in Robinson's (1989/2004), *Write It on Your Heart*.

Problems of understanding stories

The thing with this storytelling business is that you had to be of a certain age to do storytelling. As Wickwire (1989/2004) writes about Harry Robinson's storytelling, "Advancing age actually seemed to stimulate his storytelling ability. By his late seventies he remarked that, 'The older I get; it seems to come back to me. It's like pictures going by. I could see and remember'" (p. 13) and that is the power of storytelling. The stories are so graphic and when they are retold over and over, they do come back. When? It probably depends on the person when the stories come back.

Preston (1975, 2002) describes how Cree children play at storytelling and since they are novices, they get interrupted and teased when they make mistakes. But when and how do storytellers tell their stories? Or what triggers a story? Here, Wickwire (1989/2004) tells us that during their visit to Harry and while chatting during dinner, some element in the conversation

suddenly prompted Harry to launch into a story. Since it was Wickwire's first time visiting, she was unable to pinpoint what triggered the storytelling; she also tells us at the start she used to interrupt Harry's stories with questions. Preston (1975) writes that a person does not interrupt a story. Preston also writes that he had problems understanding certain aspects of Cree culture and his eighteen-month fieldwork was not sufficient to acquire this understanding. It is also clear that Wickwire (1989/2004) does not fully understand Harry's term 'ha-Ha*.' All she says is that it is a Native term for which there is no equivalent in English and that it connotes a magical power inherent in objects of nature and more potent than human's natural power. Boas used it as "wonderful." However, in the translation of Wickwire and Boas (quoted in Wickwire, 1989/2004), I cannot help feel that there are elements missing, such as the living power inherent in the term.

So I come back in circle and write…

At a very early age before going to school, to Indian residential school, my grandmother, Louisa, introduced me to this world of *Eeyou*/Cree stories. And these stories have stayed with me to this day and now I tell and share these stories in English with my children. I also got the *Nanabush* and *Coyote* bug and it does not want to leave me. And they do not want to leave me alone until I dance with them. So I want to dance with Coyote. I also want to go back to my roots and "*draw on oral TRA-DISH-UNN*" (Truchan-Tataryn and Gingell, 2006) and also to "create a colloquy of voices, or trying to dance with Coyote."

How can this oral tradition business weave itself into a study?

The study of oral tradition has to be written in the form of a story.

C- Minnie theorises on Cree Storytelling

Interruptions

"I really do have a problem when I try to write in a linear fashion. Somehow this paper has to weave itself into a story and not an essay," says Minnie out loud looking around to see if someone is watching her.

"I guess I just have to adopt a 'Coyote discourse,' which is different from the Western style of writing. One of the things that I do as I write is I am writing like I am talking to someone," continues Minnie thinking out loud.

Insider view

When my grandmother told me stories I usually did not say anything, I listened. However, if she happened to fall asleep then I would nudge her and ask her, "What happens next?" Or "What did *Chikapesh* do?" or other questions related to the fact that I wanted her to continue the story.

So the story goes...

How different is my research from previous research done on storytelling?

First of all, my research is from an "insider point of view," that is, an insider perspective; however I am aware there is a shift of perspective and tension occurring especially during the data collection time when the storyteller/researcher becomes more researcher than a listener to the storytelling process (For a discussion of this question, see: Archibald, 2008; Sarris, 1994). For instance, Archibald (2008) writes about the tension and shifting of insider point of view that

occurs during the research process. Sarris (1994), in his interviews with Mabel Mackey, also mentions the tension between the researcher and the insider point of view.

The Native writers keep writing that they are "not vanishing" (Chrystos,1988), the "Indians are not disappearing" (Larocque, 1999; Taylor, 2002). This theme is integrated into plays, novels, poetry, and so on and is part of Indian identity. How? Some say it more strongly, more forcefully than others; some say it in a soft voice. That is what I am trying to say. It is like saying, "Hey! I'm here! I'm Native! I'm here where I always have been and I don't intend to go anywhere."

Image of Native People (other than as Cowboys and Indians)

Davies (2002) writes that Thomas King says, "one of the biggest obstacles for Native writers is that North Americans have grown up on a particular Indian in literature, [...] You never know how big a market there's going to be in non-native North America for novels about Indians, especially if you're trying to do something different than the old cowboy and Indian routine or historical western stuff" (p. 1). King continues, "There are many non-natives who have written about Indians, so you have this backdrop against which you have to write. If you move away from that backdrop, as a lot of native writers try to do, than [sic] it puts you on the fringe because people aren't used to seeing Indians in those roles; they're not used to seeing some of the narrative strategies" (First Nations Drum, 2002, p. 1).

King's comment is very relevant since oral tradition (or storytelling), especially done by Native people with Native people, is even more on the fringe, especially if it is to be interpreted within a Native perspective as seen and lived by Natives today.

In the oral tradition, that is, the books written by non-Natives, especially anthropologists, the myth is that storytelling is a dying and vanishing art, primitive in form, that had to be preserved and recorded. This "primitive" art form is however still in existence, as will be illustrated in my dissertation. This art form is also still very close to the original intent and style; that is, the narrator or storyteller tells a story to a small audience.

Perhaps the storytelling/oral tradition was considered as dying because the anthropologists did not realise it is dynamic and changing and it is a changing form even with the same narrator, as Thomas King astutely observed; this is coupled with translation problems. For the most part, anthropologists did not speak the Native language of the group they were or are studying. Native literature in Canada and United States has its roots in the oral traditions. The writings of authors such as Thomas King, N. Scott Momaday, and Silko transcend orality. Several Native writers have found inspiration from the oral tradition; that is, the oral stories. Their writing and their stories resonate orality.

As Thomas King writes in his article "Godzilla vs. Post-colonial," "the term 'tribal' refers to that literature which exists primarily within a tribe or a community, literature that is shared almost exclusively by members of that community, and literature that is presented and retained in a Native language. It is virtually invisible outside its community, partly because of the barrier of language and partly because it has little interest in making itself available to outside audience" (King, 1997, p. 244). The term does not, however, take into account that part of the literature which retains its oral form in English, French, etc. I know this because I have been doing this type of storytelling for the past twenty years in French and English to friends and family. In other words, I have been telling stories to a very small audience (one, two or more people) and mostly in an urban setting.

King (1997) defines interfusional literature as "blending of oral literature and written literature" and he states that the only complete example of this was Harry Robinson's (1989/2004), *Write It on Your Heart* (p. 244). When oral stories become part of the written literature, that is when the stories normally told orally are written down, then they become what Thomas King calls interfusional. Within this categorisation, I believe there are different types of stories. For example, there are stories recorded that have been compiled by anthropologists/ethnographers and the original version is in the Aboriginal language and usually what are published are the translation and the interpretation of the anthropologist (e.g. Preston, 1975/2002). Then you have another type where the stories are recorded and complied by anthropologists/ethnographers but the stories are told in English and the storyteller translated the stories as he told them but the ethnographers do the publication and the interpretation (e.g. Wickwire 1989/2004, 2005). In the case of Robinson's stories, initially the audience is the ethnographer. The problem with this type of interfusional storytelling is that the audience is an ethnographer or anthropologist and the storyteller changes the style of storytelling to that for a novice audience. Once the stories are edited and published then they become available to a wider audience.

Then there are other stories that are not recorded but inspire the writing of novels, short stories, plays, and poetry, for example, Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *House Made of Dawn* (1968); Silko's (1977) *Ceremony*; King's (1993) *One Good Story, That One*; Slipperjack's (1987) *Honour the Sun*; and Highway's (1988) *The Rez Sisters*. An example of poetry is a collection edited by Sarris (1994), *Sound of Rattles and Clappers*. The above-mentioned novels, short stories, plays and poetry have their origins in, or were inspired by, the oral tradition. This, however, is not an exhaustive list.

Now to N. Scott Momaday:

> Dypaloh. *There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and* of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around. (1966/1968/1999, p. 1)

This is version of N. Scott Momaday to fit Eeyou landscape of my stories:

> There was a *miichiiwaap* made of stone. It was made of sphagnum and spruce, and the land was very young and everlasting. There were many colours in the muskeg and the bay was bright with different hues of blue and clay. Green and blue and mottled moose grazed in the Muskeg, and there was great dark wildness in the muskeg beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around (My adaptation of Momaday, 1966/1968/1999, p. 1).

Momaday continued in *House Made of Dawn*:

> Abel walked into the canyon. His return to the town had been a failure, for all his looking forward. He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it. And yet it was there still, like a memory, in the reach of his hearing, as if Francisco or his mother or Vidal has spoken out of the past and the words had taken hold of the moment and made it eternal. Had he had been able to say it, anything of his own language — even the commonplace formula of greeting, "where are you going" which had no being sound, no visible substance, would once again

> have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb—silence was older and better part of custom still—but inarticulate. (1966/1968, p. 58)

Unlike Abel, we, as Cree, are articulate and our return to our community is more successful than Abel's. We are attuned to the old rhythm of our tongue. Our memory is of the past but also the present and the future.

All my writings are not yet woven together; they need to be embedded into one another. They need to form a whole; a holistic form. What is the interrelated connection between the concepts discussed? How are they connected into one another? How are they connected to stories, especially Cree stories? The example with Abel is the disconnect/the tongue-tiedness. What I am saying is in the case of the Cree, more specifically in my case, I feel a connection and I do not feel tongue-tied or alienated. That is why the stories come and they serve as an inspiration and creation of other stories.

My position is that the stories need to be seen within their paradigm and not the Western paradigm. To do that, Indigenous people need to study and research, analyse and interpret these stories within their proper context. The stories are meant to be heard within their Indigenous context and paradigm. We need to look at them within their own philosophy/worldview, within their own paradigm, within their own category.

Eeyou/Cree stories

The *Eeyou*/Cree categorise their stories into two types: *addiiyuukan* and *diibaachiimuun*. *Eeyou*/Cree define *addiiyuukan* as stories that are very ancient; they tell about our ancestors and when the world was young, when the world was made of the animals, trees, beings and spirits

and how the world came to be. Some of these stories date from the Ice age when North America was partially covered with glaciers and when the animals were still Giants and the trees and animals talked and the humans and animals spoke the same language and could understand each other. As Louis Bird (2006) points out, there are elements of truth in the stories and as for the names of the characters, they have been long forgotten. Louis Bird pointed out that the stories are so old that the names of characters have been changed for example, *Chikapesh*, *Nikishan*, [also known as *Iaseo* (Blackned, 1999, vol. 3)].

The *diibaachiimuun* are stories of more recent times within Native history and they are composed of life histories, family history, exploits, hunting stories, safety stories, birth, and death. Within these is included the local news. The stories remind me of connections and the connections embedded in these stories are ways of behaving: social rules or rules of conduct; for example, as a host showing respect to a visitor. Adrian Tanner (1979), in *Bringing Home Animals,* mentions when a Cree family receives a visitor, the family as the host gives food to the visitor and only once the visitor has finished eating, do you let the visitor tell his story. The story could be, for example, what brings him there, news of his family and other members of his hunting group.

This cultural protocol is also mentioned in the story of *Iaseo* (Blackned, 1999, vol. 3) when *Nikishan* succeeds in returning to the mainland. Near the shore, *Nikishan* sees a small *miidjwap* with wood smoke, which means someone is home. He walks towards it and goes inside the *miidjwap.* There is an old woman sitting and she has a pot on the fireplace and she puts a small piece of meat in the pot. Seeing this, *Nikishan* is thinking, “Does she know how many days I haven’t eaten?” When the meat is cooked the old woman hands him the pot and says, “Have as much as you want.” “How am I going to get of rid of my hunger with such a small piece of

meat," he is thinking to himself as he takes the pot. He fishes for the small piece of meat from the pot and starts eating it but the meat seems to be getting bigger and bigger as he's eating it. And when he is full, he hands the meat and pot to the old woman and the meat looks the same as if he did not eat it at all. When he is finished eating, then the old woman tells him that his father is trying to kill him and that he is sending people to kill him. This old woman, who my grandmother called *Miicheshii–Eskeu* or *Fox Woman*, is a spirit helper of *Nikishan*'s mother. *Nikishan*'s mother sent *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman* to help and guide *Nikishan* through his journey back home. *Iaseo* has set several obstacles to trap and kill his son *Nikishan*. Using black magic he sends creatures and beings to kill his son. The first obstacle *Iaseo* set is having *Nikishan* stranded on a far-away island out on the bay. *Iaseo* watches his son from a cloud to make sure he doesn't make it to the mainland. While *Nikishan* is on the island a giant seagull helps him by in keeping him warm at night and giving him shelter on rainy and stormy days. In the end *Iaseo* sets four obstacles for *Nikishan* on mainland. If he passes the tests and if he is able to come out alive, only then will *Nikishan* be able to come home safely. The first obstacle was having *Nikishan* stranded alone on an island far away from mainland with hardly any food except small birds that *Nikishan* sun-dried. In this part of the story when *Nikishan* finally makes it to the mainland, an old woman waits for *Nikishan*'s arrival. When *Nikishan* visits *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman,* she serves *Nikishan* food. *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman* waits until *Nikishan* is finished eating before telling the story of how his father is trying to kill him. The old woman knows the obstacles. The old woman is *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman*. *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman* is a spirit helper of *Nikishan*'s mother. *Miicheshii–Eskeu, Fox Woman* is sent to help and assist *Nikishan* in his tasks and obstacle and also to provide guidance to *Nikishan*. In other words, it is woman magic against man magic (good vs. bad).

Within what I call ancient stories or *addiiyuukan*, these ancient stories trigger more modern and contemporary stories, the ones that we call *diibaachiimuun*. The following is an example of a contemporary *diibaachiimuun*.

Comments on the Occasion of the Inaugural Ceremony of the Eastmain-1: Commemorative Site by Grand Chief Matthew Mukash

The Eastmain 1 Reservoir covers an area of 600 square kilometres that for generations was used by the families occupying this area. Of course these families continue to use the untouched neighbouring parts of their hunting territories. It must however be remembered that the part of the Eastmain River now underwater was the best of their lands. For millennia it was a communications corridor, a source of fish and its banks were prime habitat for the animals upon which the Cree families of this place depended. This was the place of their personal histories.

There are many ancestors of the communities of Eastmain, Nemaska and Mistissini who are buried in the flooded area. We have the names of those that the living still remember on the plaque that will mark this site and will also mark our commemoration of their lives here today. For some of those among us, particularly those from the Moses, Wapachee, Cannashish and Jimiken families, their memories of this area, each turn in the river, each fall campsite and each place named after the birth of a family member or important event, are things that depict their personal journeys through a familiar place, but a place that they will never see again. For future generations, this plaque will be a symbol not only of their family origins in this land but also of the sacrifices made by the Cree people during this time of change in agreeing to the Eastmain 1 Project for the greater good and for the advancement of their communities. (Mukash, 2008)

It was over 35 years ago when the Cree signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) and I have no recollection of it, except I was in the bush with my parents. It was the second time since I was five that I did not need to go to Indian Residential School (IRS). It was not a need, it was more than that, I had refused to go. I got tired of going to school and I think I first became aware of the fact that I was tired of the IRS when I was in grade 4.

It is my ancestral land that has been flooded where I did my first Snowshoe Ceremony, where I was sick with jaundice, where we patiently waited for my father and Johnny to return from their Christmas trip to the community. The memory of the excitement we felt when we unwrapped our packages that our relatives sent. There were some gums, candies, and a few cookies. Such memories, life would never be the same for me because the year after I went to Indian residential school, I do not think I ever returned to my homeland because after that my father began hunting in a different hunting territory which is now my younger brother's hunting territory.

The contemporary issues of such hydroelectric projects in our Native land trigger within me more contemporary *diibaachiimuun* stories interwoven with the ancient *addiiyuukan*. One example of this is the following that I wrote:

Grieving

Are we grieving for our river that was diverted?
Are we grieving for our land that is under water?
Are we grieving for our ancestors whose bones are under water?
Tears come.
We think of the little boy who was abandoned by his parents.
When he woke up everyone was gone,

The *midjwap* was taken down.

He cried and cried and no one came.

Addush came,

Not to harm him but to comfort him.

Addush helped him get rid of his head lice

When the Addush was done,

He told the little boy,

"Now you can go home my grandson.

Tomorrow I'll bring you back to your parents,

I know where they are."

The next morning *Addush* took him back to his parents' camp.

When they got near the clearing

Addush stopped and said,

"Go my child, go to your parents. You're home now."

"Come with me, grandfather," said the little boy.

He called *Addush* (a cannibal) Grandfather because of the kindness *Addush* showed him when no one else wanted him.

"I can't stay my child, your father and I are enemies and he will kill me if he sees me approaching your camp," answered *Addush.*

"Grandfather, you have to stay with me please," begged the little boy.

"As long as your father does not come here I won't go near the clearing. And as long as your father promises he won't try to kill me, I will stay here for a few days," replied *Addush.*

Like *Addush* and the young boy's father, as Eeyouch (Cree) we seek compromise as the South comes over to "develop" our Land. And just like the little boy who also has to choose between his parents and *Addush*, he is saddened by his loss of one. We, too, are saddened by the loss of our land and rivers to development.

A storyteller in the making

What are stories? Louis Bird (2005) writes that he was not only interested in legends but also "in the cultural stories or the oral histories, which took place before European time, and also the stories that took place after the European contact [...] but I did not organize anything. I did not plot, like the writers do, because I am not a writer. I am a collector of stories. I was not even trained to be a storyteller! I learned, along the way, to tell a story" (p. 34).

Interruptions

"But that is how Cree storytellers learn and/or are trained," says Minnie.

> My only interest was to record the stories that I have heard, that I remember, and whenever possible, to try to get an elder to sit down with me and tell me the story. I have learned a little bit how to communicate. So I began to apply a little bit of that. (Bird, 2006, p. 34)

How did he organise the collection of stories?

Bird says this is the way he worked.

> The collection I have accumulated, I begin to think that I should place the legends in the first part, because in order to write these things down, they have to be divided. The first

> part is the legends, all five famous legends that we had from time immemorial. And also, the oral stories. Oral stories are different from legends; they are not made stories, they are actual stories that happened in the past. But the legends are created stories from the past ─ past experiences from our ancestors. That's what legends are. And the legends are teaching material. They are like a book, different kind of books, different subjects, different events in the history, way back. That's what they were. (Bird, 2006, p. 35)

Bird visualises stories as "the movement of life in time, going from the east to west, as an arrow, or as we usually visualize on television about jet stream in the weather report" (p. 35).

Then Bird puts them (legends, cultural stories and oral stories) in a time line but he does not call them as such. Instead he brings the reader into a visualisation process, which to me is very effective. As an Indigenous scholar, this way of viewing his collection of stories I can clearly identify with and understand as such. In other words, what we call a timeline, he describes as a visualisation diagram and brings the reader to visualise the process instead of having a linear thought process. But at the same time, the dividing of time and space Bird borrowed from the Euro-Canadian way of viewing time.

The legends would be placed in the beginning of this visualisation time line. During this period Indigenous people lived on their own on this land. Some groups were nomads and they lived on the land. They moved on the land and that is where legends came from at that time.

Interruptions

Louis Bird is, obviously, talking about nomadic tribes, like the Omushkego Cree. He calls this period "before contact." Not "before Christ," but "before contact period."

"What are quotation stories?" asks Minnie.

Bird (2006) says

> So that's where I place the legends and also some oral stories and quotation stories. They fit right there, because all these stories, they do not mention anything that is originally from European. In all five major legends, and in the other old stories about An-way, cannibal beings, tribal skirmishes, etc., there is no mention about the steel, metal, or anything. It happens after contact. During that period, before contact, our First Nations had their own lifestyle. So their way of teaching was different; they had developed the teaching system which requires learning at a very early age, by observation, by hearing, by feeling, by imagining (p. 35).

"Is that the purpose of legends and how was it (storytelling) done?" asks Minnie.

Bird (2006) continues with his description of collection of stories:

> The legends were used as historical events, to teach the upcoming generation. Quotations were remembered as cautions, or to make the new generation aware of life experience upon the land. They also have oral histories in time before contact. These oral stories are actual events of their ancestors. And the young people memorized all these stories, and as the people grow older, they refined and applied them as the educational stories. They were equal to books. Those stories were used to educate the young people, to introduce the life experience to them, before they actually experience it. And some stories were designed to activate the mind and interest of the young people, the young persons of five years old, so they will be introduced to the things to come for them to encounter, so they won't be shocked when it happens. These stories were all kinds. Some were exciting

> stories, some were dramatic stories, and some were fantasies, to create excitement in the children. And some were horror stories, some were scary stories, some were totally bad stories. But they were useful, to train the youngster in the daytime, to absorb from the parents how they work, each day, morning to night (pp. 35-36).

Interruptions

"So when were these stories told?" asks Minnie.

Minnie sure asks lot of questions; I guess she wants to become a storyteller too.

"Hey! Where did you come from?"

"I've always been here. Remember," I answer.

"Evenings were set aside time for the elders to tell legends. They were created stories; they were often comical in nature. They were not necessarily true, but they were very useful" (Bird, 2006, p.36).

Interruptions

By listening to Bird, Minnie learned about the traditional views of stories and how they are categorized— how they are divided, the types of stories, how storytellers are trained as storytellers, the goal of the stories. She also had a glimpse of the visualisation process involved in the stories and their context.

How did Bird become interested in collecting the stories? Minnie wonders.

Minnie found out that in 1965 Bird got interested in storytelling and began collecting and recording stories.

Louis (Pennishish) Bird (2007) mentions:

> In time past legends were created as the medium to pass on knowledge to the next generation. And these things happened before other nations ever appeared on the land. According to our ancestors, everything works in order, systematically. Nothing was overused; there was nothing that overextended its usefulness or its benefit to humans. We found a systematic way to survive in the area where we live, the Omushkego country. All these things were extended to us by the Great Spirit and were applied by us in our lifetime through the teaching system that was passed on to us by our elders. Everything worked well, from the beginning of time--until the time of the other nation's appearance.
> When other nations appeared everything began to change. The way it was then, before the appearance of the European, the teachings were about how to respect nature and the environment—the animals and the birds. If one of these were broken by a member of the family, a kid maybe, the punishment was the retraction of the benefits from the nature.
> If a person disobeyed these teachings, or dishonoured them— he was punished (pp. 75-76).

Bird (2007) continues, “So the spiritual development comes along as you are five years old, and it increases as your body grows” (p. 39).

It is around this period that the *Eeyou*/Cree begin telling stories to their children. This period coincides with the “Walking on Snowshoe ceremony”. It is an initiation ceremony that occurs around when a child is five years old and is the winter equivalent of the “Walking-out” ceremony for toddlers, which is performed generally in the Springtime, nowadays, Summer.

The winter one is called in *Eeyou*/Cree *e puumtet* [rough translation: “she or he is walking”]. The assumption in this phrase is that the child is now able to travel by foot and

snowshoes with the rest of the family. And she or he is slowly leaving behind early childhood and moving into the next stage, where she or he will be taught how to do small tasks around the camp. The child is showing more independence by walking on his/her own and is seen as a further step toward adulthood and a look into the future.

The spring ceremony *wewe tihao-suunanuu*, [rough translation: "she or he is bringing her or him outside" and also known as "Walking-Out Ceremony"], the mother and/or the father guide the toddler to walk outside the tepee or dwelling. The symbolism in this ceremony is that the toddler is now leaving the baby stage and is now into the world of the adults and family, joining them. These ceremonies mark the different stages of childhood. The next ceremony is when the girl has her first moon cycle or when the boy kills a goose or an animal for the first time and offers it to an Elder.

Now back to Native stories

As Dana Clayton puts it, "It is about aboriginalising our stories" and "creating a red space" (in Jones, 2007). And Rodger Ross, a filmmaker, says it this way, "Our stories are our stories" and "We don't need to be babysat." "We're good enough to be looking in." In other words, we don't need our stories to be "reconfigured." "We're good to tell them as they are or we can tell them as they are" (Jones, 2008).

Mihesuah (1998) writes:

> Works on American Indian history and culture should not only give one perspective; the analysis must include Indians' versions of events. Many books...hailed as the 'New Indian History,' however, have never consulted tribal people for information. [...] this type of

> work is not really American Indian history; rather it is Indian history interpreted by Non-Indians and should be labeled as such (p. 38).

My motivation in doing research is to include a Native's perspective and to add our *Eeyou* voice in the cacophony of voices.

Mihesuah (1998) further questions works on American history by asking, "Where are the Indian voices? Where are the Indian views of history?" (p. 38). But I cannot help asking myself, "Do the questions go far enough?" You can get an informant and still not present the Indian voice or the Indian voice may be filtered by a non-Indian voice. In terms of their stories, the storytellers seem to be saying: We are good enough to tell our own stories and we do not need to be babysat or we do not need our stories to be 'reconfigured'.

Beings and spirits in Indigenous stories, especially Cree, are not the same as in Judeo-Christian thought. The beings and spirits in Native stories are not part of Western thought or framework. They exist and existed before "contact". The many examples are the legends dating from the pre-contact period, where there is no reference to anything related to the Western World. I believe that is why western scholars such as anthropologists had difficulty grasping the spirits and beings or anything happening within this realm. They have a tendency to frame these legends within the Western philosophy, worldview or paradigm but this created a distortion and misinterpretation (see Bird, 2006, 2007; Robinson, 1989/2004, 2005; Preston, 1975/2002; Swan 2005). It is not an exhaustive list of the types of work but it is only to show a few examples of them.

Reflections

Is Mihesuah's comment applicable to stories? Mihesuah (1998) puts it, "Are the Indian

stories by Indians?" And another issue that she brings forth is: "there is no one Indian voice" (p. 3). Mihesuah (1998) writes, "there is no one Indian voice. Different members of one tribe may have different interpretations of the same stories, and not all Indians can accurately recall tribal stories (provided that they have even heard them in the first place)" (p. 3).

The point that Mihesuah makes is that different tribes have different interpretations of their own history through the oral tradition; in other words, there is not "one Indian voice" even within a tribe. This, therefore, complicates things when you want to generalize about issues. How do you do it? Or, do you want to do it? I am sure there are commonalities but there are also differences.

Interruptions

That's Minnie theorising about "Indigenous voices." And after all that theorising Minnie gets tired.

"I have nothing more to write for now; I'm out of words," says Minnie.

"But I forgot to write about Maria Campbell, That's what I forgot to do," continues Minnie.

On Wednesday, January 7, 2009 I watched Contact on APTN. I saw an interview with author, writer, and elder, Maria Campbell and her comments on oral tradition. I remember her talking about her childhood, growing up on the trap line, trapping and Kuukuum's stories. Why is it, it seems, Kuukuum's stories we remember. We also know about Juumshum's stories, my dad is one and my uncle Harry is another one. The Juumshum stories were shunned because anthropologists took some of their stories. It is the case for my late grandfathers John Blackned (Preston, 1965) and his brother, Charlie Blackned (his stories were also recorded). It is also the

case for my other great uncle, Geordie Georgekish, his stories were recorded in Wemindji. In Eastmain, Gerald McNulty told me that "Abel" Moses' traditional songs are stored in the University of Laval archives. Père Vaillancourt told me that *Amiskuuchimao*, my grandfather Alfred's older brother, loved to tell stories and that is how Père Vaillancourt knew about the legend of *Chikapesh*. He wanted to make a film but first he wanted to finish his dictionary. However, he died before he could make his second project, *Chikapesh*, come true. I worked with le Père Vaillancourt and he knew many stories from Eastmain. He was also a linguist. He specialised in Eastmain Cree and he wrote a book about learning Cree language.

Role of the researcher and Image of Indian researchers/intellectuals

Some of the themes that come up in storytelling are: the role of Indians, storytelling of Native America, and the image of the Indian intellectual.

Cook-Lynn (1998) writes:

> the roles of Indians, [I prefer to use the term Natives] themselves, in the storytelling of Indian America is as much a matter of 'jurisdiction' as is anything else in Indian country: economics, the law, control of resources, property rights. It goes without saying that it reflects our struggle with the colonial experience of our concomitant histories. If that sounds benign, it is anything but that. On the contrary, how the Indian narrative is told, how it is nourished, who tells it, who nourishes it, and the consequences of its telling are among the most fascinating—at the same time, chilling – stories of our time (p. 111).

It is true that the "American Indian intellectual" is to many people a bizarre phrase, falling quaintly on the unaccustomed ears of those in the American mainstream" (p. 111). Cook-

Lynn (1998) continues, “there is no image of an American Indian intellectual” [and much less an image of a female Indian intellectual] (p. 111).

Another point that Cook-Lynn (1998) poses is “the question of telling the Indian stories is still at the heart of what America believes to be its narrative self. It is unfortunate that, in spite of burgeoning body of work by Native writers, *the greatest body of acceptable telling of the Indian story is still in the hands of non-Natives*” (my emphasis, p.112). After reading Cook-Lynn, it seems all doom and gloom for Native writers and yet we continue to write, perhaps not for the mainstream but for our people. Why? It is because we always told our stories to each other in our Aboriginal tongue. We [or I] want to go beyond the tribe and share these stories with other tribes, just like other Native writers and storytellers have done (Campbell, 1973/1983; Highway, 1988, 1989; King, 1993, 1994; Slipperjack, 1987; Taylor, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2002).

Additional comments

The Native writers keep writing that they are not a “vanishing race,” the “Indians are not disappearing” (Chrystos,1988; Larocque, 1999; Taylor, 2002, p. 13); this theme is integrated into plays, novels, poetry and other Native literature. The theme is also part of Indian identity. How? Some say it more strongly, forcefully than others; some say it in a soft voice. That is what I am trying to say. It is like saying, “Hey I’m here. I’m Native. I’m here where I always have been and I don’t intend to go anywhere.”

Interruptions

Where is Minnie in all of this? Where is Minnie in all this discourse? This “Othered” discourse; I guess with time Minnie just gets tired of having people talking on her behalf and presenting talks and delivering speeches about “how she should feel,” or “how she

should view the world." She feels it more with this "Indian Residential School Survivor" thing going on; she feels since she is not a victim of physical or sexual abuse she is not interesting enough to be studied; to be probed in her innermost feelings. In other words, she's not "dysfunctional" enough to make it to the list of "interesting Indians" to be studied and looked at. She just doesn't meet the requirements. Why? She just doesn't have enough dirty linen (sounds sophisticated), alright, dirty laundry to air out in the public space. She's out there on the margin, shifting from two different worlds, drifting in and out like waves on a low tide. That is why when you see her sometimes she looks faded, it means, like a wave, she has drifted into the Aboriginal world and then after a while she reappears. She becomes visible again. What she is doing is merely crossing borders and she doesn't remember the sophisticated term, the scholarly term for these cross-border entanglements. She forgets these. They're too sophisticated for her small little mind. [Does it sound like bell hooks talking?] Yes, talking to you. Theorizing about you. What purpose does it serve this theorizing? What benefit does it bring to the people that need it? In some cases people have been kept out by language and this "Othering."

The end for now!

Now Minnie is happy she has just won a prize; she's ecstatic for a while, jumping around and shouting. After a while she phoned her family to tell them the news, later on she went for a walk. Afterwards when the excitement wore off, she cried. Why....

Prologue

Back in March 2009 I wrote the following:

I started the Minnie series in 2008 as part of my research process as a research tool to help me come to terms with the tensions between research/the academy and being an Indigenous researcher. The series reflects in a way the innermost feelings and opinions of [self] as a researcher. I write them anywhere I can: at home, in the metro, at the library and so on. My role in research is first and foremost as an Indigenous person. My perspective comes from my lived experiences as *Eeyou*/Cree having lived the traditional way of life and seeing the changes happening within Eeyou/Cree society. I witnessed the transformation of *Eeyou*/Cree society from a traditional one to a contemporary one. When I was born, *Eeyou*/Cree society was in the process of joining Canadian mainstream society. Roughly ten years before I was born, my grandparents obtained an Indian Affairs housing. Prior to that, they lived in *Eeyou*/Cree traditional dwelling of *miidjwap***,** *midduukan***,** *midduudsaankuumkw*.

I begin this methodology part of the chapter by introducing *Minnie*. I wrote about *Minnie* in the previous sections but I did not introduce her. Why I did not introduce *Minnie* earlier is an *Eeyou*/Cree way of being. In the traditional *Eeyou*/Cree culture we usually do not introduce each other, it is only in recent times that we do. Introduction is a recent phenomenon that we borrowed from Euro-Canadian culture. How we knew a person's name was when the person left, we asked others in the group who that person was. That is how we used to do or not do the introductions. Now I believe that an introduction of *Minnie* is in order through stories:

"When the rivers were drowned, so too was the will of the Cree People, there will be nothing to sustain them in spirit. Unless" ... they reach back into the past, back into the

past; back into a time of "long ago when Animals could talk" (adapted from Momaday, 1969, p.3). That's the type of stories that I do.

There are things lurking in the Black Spruce tree. There is something mixed with the mist and the fog. It is barely discernible but if you focus your eyes more closely you'll notice something is slowly forming itself into a being, a spirit that does not walk or fly but floats just above ground. When the fog is so thick, you don't dare go out but you have to because you need to piss very badly. You have no choice but to go out. As you lift the ***shkwaw-tem*** *the fog is so thick you can barely see your feet and the ground.*

After that the metamorphosis started. It began with the hair. The hair slowly became thin and wispy, almost like cobweb to the touch. The change was slow, subtle and gradual. At first no one noticed it. ... Then it became apparent. Slowly she was metamorphosing into a Black Spruce tree. Her arms turned into boughs and within the bough lichen began to grow like a beard of an old man. But she still had the face of a moon and her face still shone like the midnight sun. People remembered her when she had charcoal-coloured hair, coarse and braided with beaver-fur and ***shindaken****, her eyes slanted, brown and round, her skin copper-coloured.*

She was taken away from her family at the age of five. Some would say she was kidnapped but that's only said in a hushed voice. At first it was exciting but the excitement soon wore off. When it did, the separation was brutal and homesickness hit her hard ....Through the eyes of a five-year-old the two-storey building was huge and austere and too clean. She had lived in a teepee most of her five years. It was the first

*time she ever slept alone in a bed. At home she usually slept with her siblings. She was used to seeing stars through the **chish-tuuhii-kiin** of the teepee. She found the sleeping arrangement a very lonely and scary and disturbing experience.*

Several years after she was taken away she had difficulty expressing her feelings. When she did, words did not come that easily. How to explain things when words fail to explain even to her family? How to talk in English? The tongue was totally alien to her. It felt it did not belong to her. It felt it was somebody else's tongue but in reality it was hers.

Many years later…

Minnie sat at her kitchen table wondering if she was going to write. Staring at her empty cup of coffee she decided she was ready to pour herself a second cup. At her age she had set herself limits to drink two cups a day. Her goal was to stick with it for health reasons.

She has reached the age where setting limits was a matter of health. Her goal is to have two cups of coffee. Only in exceptional circumstance she has a third cup in the afternoon. This only happens when she is very tired and she is fallen asleep on the metro ride. She generally drifts off around Joliette and opens her eyes at Berri-UQAM. Then she gets off at Guy and goes for a cup of coffee.

So the adventure of Minnie continued in March.

Minnie has not been writing for a number of days, she has been absorbing all the stories she has heard for the past four days. Perhaps she was doing what storytellers do in a way, visiting her relations. Minnie likes the term 'her relative' because she feels it is more informal. That is the way things are, they're informal visits. She just shows up and if the people are there she goes in and sits with them. Sometimes she's offered tea; sometimes she is told stories. These stories are about what her extended family had been doing over the winter, how the hunting and trapping went over the winter, the snow conditions, the quantity and type of snow and how this influences the moose hunting and the behaviour of animals.

That evening, after visiting her relatives, Minnie walked home with her husband and daughters. The bitter dry cold stung her face and she pulled the flap of her beaver fur hat closer to her face. Slowly she felt the warmth coming back to her cheeks. She was slightly distracted by a black dog barking furiously at her. She was hoping the dog's chain would not break in the bitter cold. She picked up the pace when she got in front of the dog, watching it sideways so as not to enrage it even more.

"Whew," she thought silently as she passed the black dog.

Then she wondered, "What would she do if she stopped going to school? What would become of her family?" It was hard not being able to visit her parents and her community. She would like to return for a visit in the summer when she could sit outside with her parents. She loves doing that. She also likes watching her dad smoke fish in the ***midduudsaankuumkw****.*

Yet Minnie doesn't know if it's research she's doing or just documenting local history of her community [or something else]. She would really like if another person or another Indigenous person would read her writings and comment on them because she just doesn't know what she's doing.

At least now Minnie came to write again, she feels she is in the flow of things again. But she also likes absorbing the stories; feeling the pulse of her community, the school. She felt so good to be back in the classroom with the secondary five students and she felt a connection with them. The stories just came right out sometimes in Cree and sometimes in English. In the end she ran out of time and the teacher was nice enough to let the students stay an extra five minutes so she could finish reading the last piece of her writing. And when she was done, the students clapped loudly. It was a spontaneous reaction and at that moment she felt a connection with them and she believed she touched something deep inside them. It was their local history and their stories that she was doing and she was sharing them with the students. That is what it was all about her storytelling on that afternoon on March 2, 2009 between 1:00 to 1:50 p.m. She guessed in a way she was trying to show them some of the material they could use for their Language Arts especially writing.

When Minnie feels lots of tensions, she writes this way:

In COLOUR

what colour am i?

does it matter?

am i olive-coloured?

they need to know

they need to put me in a category

it scares them,

makes them uneasy,

terrifies them when they don't know my colour

because everything needs to be IN COLOR

in order and in category

it matters to others

i'm the same colour as the Sun

i Am the colour as the Earth

i'm the same colour as a Human Being

When she is angry, Minnie writes like this:

Mute

rendered mute at IRS

they took my talk

now I'm taking my talk back

i answer back (in a soft whisper)

after all these years of silence

and no need to do penitence

as an expression of repentance

purgatory, penance, penitence

repentance

for the remission of the sins were words I was familiar with

now no longer in daily use but shown as artifacts of a half-forgotten past

i went back to the old Innu way

catholicism i forsake

blasphemy and heresy, they're okay

my Medicine is Bear grease and smoke.

infused into my vein

so i resist the temptation of becoming vain.

Sometimes "etepueian:"

The Researched "Indian"

the researched “Indian”

how does it feel to be a researched “Indian?”

my daughters and I say that we are not ‘real’ “Indians”

we’re fake “Indians”

the ‘real’ “ Indians” are the ones from India

how does it feel when pushy anthropologists make your image

pushy researchers

when they forge your identity

how does it feel when they want to fit your image that you have of yourself

or what they think your image should be?

how does it feel to be researched?

how does it feel to be catalogued?

how does it feel to be exhibited in a museum?

how does it feel whatever you say

they say,

“can i quote you?”

at least now they ask if they can quote you

nowadays they also ask,

“what is it that i bring to the community that i am researching?”

at least now they ask if they’re bringing something to the community

but the process and the end product are the same

the feeling is the same

you feel like an object

you feel like a museum piece

a showpiece

an “exotic” artefact to be studied,

to be probed

to be exhibited

how can you be polite?

how can you show respect?

this side of the coin our ancestors did not see

what would they feel if they did?

it does not feel good sometimes

you want to vomit

you want to peel your skin off

at least you write your pain away

you write poetry instead of drinking beer

this time your voice is not filtered through the voice

of the researcher

it is your voice

and not somebody else using your voice

the researched “Indian” is researching her-self

Part II

A- Minnie meets Indigenous scholars about Native storytelling

Learning the sacred ways is learning the traditional forms of knowing

(Bastien, 2004, p. 8)

Anderson (2000) quotes Patricia Monture-Angus:

> As I have come to understand it from listening to the Elders and traditional teachers, the only person I can speak about is myself. That is how the Creator made all of us… All I have to share with you is myself, my experience, and how I have come to understand that experience (p. 21).

Anderson (2000) writes, "I have chosen to start the book by talking about myself because I want to practise an Aboriginal method of contextualizing knowledge" (p. 21).

The purpose of this part of research is to explore research paradigms and in the process find a theoretical framework for methodology, which will be suitable in studying the oral tradition and Cree stories in an Indigenous context. Another part is examining issues involved in doing research when you are the "other," more specifically the ethical issue of "speaking for the other" or as Fine (1999) named it "working the hyphens" (p. 70). In addition, I have attempted to follow and explore an Indigenous oral tradition format and structure in my writing. That is, the structure is cyclical, digressive, repetitive (for an example of this type of writing see Hampton, 1995), and non- linear in contrast to the Western tradition.

In the past semesters I have been reviewing and revising my research. I have been asking myself several questions concerning the theoretical assumptions, research paradigms, methodology and methods. The questions I asked are: Where do I fit in all these research paradigms? Where do I fit in the debate of Indigenous scholars? How do the Aboriginal worldviews fit in these paradigms? How do we use "culturally sensitive research process when exploring Aboriginal issues"? (Pidgeon and Cox, 2002, p. 96) What is knowledge? Who owns knowledge? What type of knowledge is recognized and valued in academia? How do you get non-recognized knowledge recognized?

Aboriginal worldviews

Simpson (2000), in her article, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing,* describes Indigenous culture, worldviews and their construction of knowledge as dynamic, complex and intricate. I found the article very useful. I also found Simpson's Indigenous worldview is closely related to mine; however, my position is that there are many Aboriginal cultures and not just one homogenous Aboriginal culture. For example, linguists stated that there are 150 Aboriginal languages in Canada (Government of Canada, 2004). Another example Aboriginal peoples organized their socio-cultural, political, economic and religious systems differently from one another. Eastern James Bay Cree (of which I am a member) organize themselves along the principle of patrilineal kinship system (Tanner, 1979); it happened occasionally that the hunting ground/territory was passed down from the father to the daughter (Personal Communication, Gilpin-Moses 1976, 1998), whereas, the Huron (now known as Huron-Wendat) were an

agricultural society and their kinship system was/is matrilineal and their socio-cultural, political, economic and religious systems reflected this pattern (Trigger, 1985).

I share some of Simpson's (2000) view on Aboriginal knowledge because I have adapted it to make it my own. My understanding of Cree knowledge comes from having been an apprentice to my paternal grandmother from birth until she passed away in 1992. My knowledge of Cree culture also comes from my parents, my paternal aunt, members and elders from the communities of Eastmain, Wemindji and Waskaganish.

These principles are my adaptation of Simpson's (2000) perspectives on Anishinaabe people knowledge:

1. Knowledge is cyclical and holistic.

2. "There are several truths" and they depend on an individual's experience.

3. Everything is living [Simpson writes "everything is alive" (2000, p. 171); my interpretation is things are "animate" and living].

4. "The land is sacred" and we have to maintain it for future generations (Cree concept of guardians of the land) [a similar concept is translated as "as long as the river shall flow" or "as long as the Sun shall shine"].

5. We have an important relationship with all living things and the spirit-world.

6. Dreams are important and they are considered to contain truths.

7. All living and non-living things and beings are considered important in the cosmos. (p. 141)

Like Hampton (1995), I speak from a narrow platform because I do not speak for my nation. He writes, "I speak for myself and so my platform is narrow" and I am talking about "some things that I am trying to understand as another human being" (p. 46). Also like Hampton, sometimes I may think that I am talking about things that are Cree or about Aboriginal peoples' things, "but I do not know where these things end and when the discussion becomes one about human things" (p. 47).

My interpretation of Hampton (1995) is that there are things that are common among human beings and these are reflected in our worldviews and perspectives as we do research and become scholars. There are also many truths. Hampton has also shown me that before asking "*why* about somebody else's behavior, I should ask *why* about my own." So in thinking about my research I should know "how memory comes before knowledge" (Hampton, 1995, p. 48). That is, I should know what my motive is for doing my research.

Ever since I started school at the age of five, I have had two perspectives: one coming from the mainstream society and the other one coming from Eastern James Bay Cree. I do not view them as clashing but as complementing one another. This view may be closely related to Third Space theory and hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996). Pane (2007) defines the former as a reconceptualisation of first and second spaces of human interaction. First and second spaces are considered:

> Binary, competing categories where people interact physically and socially. Binaries in literacy are the first and second spaces of everyday versus academic knowledge. Third spaces are the in-between, or hybrid, spaces where the seemingly oppositional first and

> second spaces work together to generate new third space knowledges, discourses, and literacy forms. (p. 79)

Multiple views of knowing

I share Enos's (2001) view as she explains the multiple levels of knowing:

> As with these new paradigms and perspectives, Pueblo people acknowledge the subjective ways of knowing are valuable (…); that multiple, sometimes even contradictory, viewpoints are possible and what is true may vary from person to person, from culture to culture; that the stories people tell have multiple levels of meaning, and each time these stories are told new knowledge is gained. (p. 84)

When cultures do not recognize the multiple and contradictory viewpoints, there is a clash of views or one is dismissed as inferior or ignored completely and/or silenced (Fine, 1999).

Why are these issues important to me? To quote Wilson and Wilson (2002): "To get to your destination, you need to know where you are coming from" (pp. 67-68).

I also have to know where I am going. I do know where I cannot go.

Indigenous research paradigms

I am exploring other possibilities such as the Indigenous Research Paradigm (Wilson, 2003) and Indigenous Research Methodology (Steinhauer, 2002). Indigenous research methodology is viewed as "relational accountability or being accountable to *all my relations*" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177; emphasis in the original). "Knowledge is relational," that is, knowledge is viewed as a relational thing (Steinhauer, 2002 p. 70). What does it mean? It means that as a

researcher you are asking yourself the following questions: How am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? (Wilson, 2001, p. 177)

My comment on these issues is that, like mainstream society, Indigenous peoples have several research paradigms and not only one encompassing the whole of Indigenous peoples. My reasoning is Indigenous peoples have different voices, different views, perspectives and worldviews and have experienced colonialism differently at different times and locations. Furthermore, by establishing one research paradigm for Indigenous peoples, the attempt to establish an Indigenous Research paradigm and methodology (Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2001, 2003) may be viewed as the same as what the mainstream society has done to the Indigenous perspectives but only this time it is done by the Indigenous scholars themselves to their own people.

Given that knowledge is as a relational thing (see Wilson, 2001), the next step would be to explore the following question: *Who should develop an Indigenous research methodology?* (Steinhauer 2002, p. 72) Indigenous peoples should develop research methodologies and paradigms. There are, however, diverse views among the Indigenous Peoples and thus there are complexities in these issues. There is also a problem of Indigenous people posing as transmitters of knowledge when they do not understand the knowledge themselves (see Castellano, 2000).

Castellano mentions three types of knowledge in Aboriginal societies. Castellano (2000) writes, “knowledge valued in aboriginal societies derives from multiple sources including traditional teaching, empirical observation, and revelation” (p. 23).

> ***Traditional knowledge*** is the oral transmission of stories of creation or how the world came to be, the origins of clans, the genealogies, and so on and it varies from nation to nation and from family group to family group.
>
> ***Empirical knowledge*** is acquired through careful observation of the ecosystems and it is acquired by doing.
>
> ***Revealed knowledge*** is learned through dreams, visions and communications with ancestral spirits (pp. 23- 24).

Smith (1999) writes that indigenous communities are asking themselves:

> Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated? (as cited in Steinhauer, 2002, p. 70).

I have further questions on these issues like: who expropriates the research and for what means? How will the results of the research be used? Will the research be used against the Indigenous people to justify some government (Indigenous and/or non-Indigenous) policies? These questions are worth exploring considering the history of Indian-White Relations (see Miller, 1989, 1991) and the history of Indians amongst themselves (Adams, 1975, 1999; Deloria, 1988). Wilson (2003) calls his set of beliefs that guide him an Indigenous paradigm. Wilson writes "paradigm shapes our view of the world around us and how we walk through that world" (2003, p. 161).

There are many worlds. There is the traditional Cree world of which I only had a glimpse with my grandmother. Then there is the contemporary Cree world where mainstream values and Cree values have been syncretized and mingle together. For example, as a result of Anglican missionaries who came to James Bay to Christianize the "Indians" in the 1850s, many Crees are devout Anglican but I have observed where Anglican and Cree rituals are mixed within the same ceremony. My father would read from the Anglican common prayer book and then perform a Cree ritual to an animal (bear) and ancestral spirits (his late father or another good hunter). In other words, he would offer a piece of meat, grease and tobacco to an animal spirit or a late person associated with the animal spirit. I do not share the view that the mainstream (Euro-Canadian) or Trigger's (1985) term, "Newcomers" worlds and the Aboriginal worlds are necessarily colliding. In my experience they have been syncretized to form an evolving world. Both worlds are not static in time but changing and evolving. The concept of syncretism was introduced to me while I was doing anthropological studies in 1992-1993. And I walk in the syncretized Cree world. My worlds, Cree and mainstream, have merged into one. That is the way I view the world now. As I stated earlier this concept may be closely related to hybridity theory and Third Space theory. Further exploration on my part is needed to further understand these theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Bhabha, 1994; for a brief review see Pane, 2007).

Hampton (1995) and Enos (2001) make me reflect on what it means to be an Indigenous person trying to belong in academia while doing a Ph.D. As far back as I can remember, it was part of my family to learn a second language at a young age. What that meant was we would leave our extended family (we lived with our paternal grandparents, actually it was my grandfather's Indian affairs housing) at the age of five to attend a Catholic residential school in Fort George.

Reading articles by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Enos (2001) made me reflect that I am the "other" that researchers (who were mostly "white" anthropologists/ ethnohistorians) studied (for example see Chance, 1970; Frances and Morantz, 1983; Larusic, 1968a, 1968b; Morantz, 2002; Salisbury, 1983; Tanner, 1979). How could I fit within their theoretical framework or paradigm? I did not fit in it so I left it. Despite that, I like the research techniques, approaches and methods of anthropology, having seen them in action on the field when I was working in archaeology as a summer student. The aspect I like is collecting oral history and translating it. Sometimes you lose part of the meaning and sense of the story in the translation. Translation has limitations.

Another area I have researched is the notion of "othering" (who speaks for whom) because I felt so uncomfortable and further "victimized" and marginalized by Western science and Western society as I was reading the articles for a graduate class. Reading Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong's (2000) article, I found myself cringing. I had such an uneasy feeling not only as the "Other" but about the fact we put our thoughts on paper maybe hoping or claiming the 'marginalized' will be less marginalized. Somehow by putting our lives and sufferings on a piece of paper somehow the "victimization, marginalization" will end but it does not.

Why are these issues important? As a female Indigenous researcher and from my experience as a teacher and high school vice-principal, I had concerns about the research that I wanted to pursue.

As Hurtado and Stewart (1997) have written, the repetition of certain hurtful and vicious opinions and attitudes will inflict pain on those who are the "victims" (p. 117). I go beyond that to the fact that our lives are published and there are discussions on our lives and how our history was re-interpreted for us and other things done to us that are inflicting pain on us who are already

"victims."

As an Indigenous woman, the gender issues become important and we ask ourselves the following question:

What have we to contribute, to give?

"Our own expectations condition us. Does not our class, our culture as well as the white man tell us writing is not for women such as us?" (Anzaldua, 2003, p. 81)

Have we made research so complex and so full of problems that it discourages marginalized people to even attempt to research themselves? Is it an attempt to further isolate them, marginalize them, and to silence them? Is it our attempt to keep the monopoly of scholarship? Will we ever understand? Somehow when I read these articles that is what it does to me. That is what it comes to mind. It is so bleak. Yet people there have hope. Hope that things will get better.

I find it bleak because I was there. I believe that there are things that can be done in the short term to better the life of people who are put in the margins. These people who are put in the margins are my aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, friends, people I know, their hopes for a better future for their children. It is not for me to theorize about their lives but to offer something concrete in order to participate in their dreams and hopes of their children and their community.

In my work as vice-principal I have encountered a lot of what Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) call "1990s blaming the victim- social science focus on blame" (Opotow, 1990, cited in Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000, p. 120).

My first research proposal did not make sense anymore. Instead I have researched why my emotional side is so angry, frustrated, betrayed, crying and raw to the bones and why I am unable to write something decent, appropriate and adequate for research. I have been unable to write for a month. I have tried and I tried. Writer's block, I say. Suddenly…

I look at my notes and it reads: HOW does it feel be hyphenated and "Othered"?

The notes continue: "I have to learn to have a voice, to voice your voice, I mean, to voice my voice."

I have been trained to be 'objective', to have and create a distance between 'me'/'self' and 'other'. The "I" and "we", "you", "one" - to de-condition or to unlearn and re-learn in the name of empirical science, to talk and speak the colonial discourse (sic). How am I supposed to feel? Happy and joyful, no instead I am angry, betrayed, frustrated. I am feeling somewhat excluded from this exercise.

Why do I have to un-do the wrongs of previous 'social scientists' — to make them feel better? I ask myself: "What is this whole business about?" This part of the exercise I disagree with and I resent it. Why do I have to further air out my "dirty laundry" to others when it was already aired out by social scientists? They have already taken my family and personal history and put it in the public space. They have already turned it into something that is unrecognizable to me. My experiences and my memories have already been expropriated from me. Now, I am being asked to explain myself, to justify myself in the name of science or for science's sake. I have to position myself in the name of university scholarship.

What is acceptable for me to write? What is acceptable for me to sanitize?

This goes back to the issue of what is acceptable to say aloud. It is not safe and unacceptable for me to write those things and that is what society and mainstream institutions have taught me. Otherwise I am bitter, I am racist and I am silenced. My lips are moving but no sound comes out. I am speaking but no one hears and no one listens. “Pourtant” I am talking, I hear my voice. ‘Strange,’ I say. Ochre people hear my voice because we speak of the same voice. They spoke to me one night. At first their voice was faint, the more I listened and the louder their voice became until one day I understood what they were saying. Since then, we speak of one voice, we, the ‘marginalized Cree’. We were not called like that. ‘Troublemakers’ and ‘dissidents’ were the terms used. Government people are too polite to use those words but Cree male leaders also use the terms. Adams (1999) writes about how Aboriginal organizations are oppressors of their own people. He believes that “the structures and institutions of imperialism have to be transformed, not reformed. Corrupt and authoritarian Native organizations that disguise themselves as representatives of the Aboriginal people have to be discarded, once and for all” (Adams, 1999, p. 136). The author here is making reference to a photocopied handout circulated in Saskatchewan in 1994. The same opinion is equally applicable to regional and local organizations. That is a glimpse of the politics of “Indian Education in Canada” as a lived experience by many Aboriginal peoples across Canada.

Now to go back to more serious issues of colonialism, post-colonial theory, reflexivity and feminism, these issues I have to address because they are somehow part of the history of “Indian Education in Canada”. They are part of what Battiste, Findlay and Bell (2002) call “colonial trauma.”

Speaking of colonialism Jacoby (1995) writes:

> Complicity with colonial structures of thoughts, and although its declared intentions are to allow the voices of once colonized peoples and their descendants to be heard, it in fact closes off both their voices and any legitimate place from which critics can speak. (as cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 2)

Then scholars and critics of post-colonial theory ask themselves: Does colonialism then function within academia as a term of compromise that allows us to take the easy way out? (Ibid. p. 2). As Shohat (1993) points out, "one negative implication of the very acceptability of the term 'postcolonialism' in the Western academy is that it serves to keep at bay more sharply political terms such as 'imperialism' or 'geopolitics'' (as cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 3). Eagleton (1994) makes a similar criticism with "postcolonial thought" where "one is allowed to talk about cultural differences, but not—or not much—about economic exploitation" (as cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 3).

Now on the issue of reflexivity, here I share the view of Rosaldo (1989) who writes, "If the classic ethnographer's vice was the slippage from the ideal of detachment to actual indifference, that of present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally Other" (p. 7). I also share Loomba's (2005) comments on reflexivity as she writes, "in the hands of relatively privileged researchers studying those whose experiences have been marginalized, the reflexive mode's potential to silence subjects is of particular concern. It is easy to slip into what Clough (1992) has called "compulsive extroversion of interiority" (cited in Loomba, 2005, p. 2).

I also share the view of what Behar (1993) explains as our tendency as researcher to do the following: "We ask far more revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing of

ourselves; we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable" (as cited in Fine et al., Weiss, Weseen and Wong, 2000, p. 273). I already feel vulnerable and my emotions are already raw because of past victimization that I had to endure at the hands of colonialism. That is why I'm feeling "hyphenated" and "Othered." I cannot stay, however, in that space. Others created that space and I prefer to go to the Third space where it is more creative and positive. If we linger in the past victimization, colonialization, and imperialism, we risk remaining in a hopeless state and nothing will be accomplished.

I was silenced; I am silenced. Why? As Haraway (1991) writes, "vision is always a question of the power to see— and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices" (p. 192); who is afforded—or appropriates—this power to see and speak about what is seen as well as what is hidden from scrutiny is a question that is at the heart of our examinations of social responsibilities to write and re-present in a time of ideological assault on the poor. And I add "and the marginalized".

In her article, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, Mohanty (1991) critiques Western style feminism for its representation of women of Third World Countries (now the term used is Developing World) as a "homogenous" group experiencing oppression in the same manners regardless of their diversity contingent on geography, history and culture. The same is applicable to us Aboriginal women of Canada. We have been discursively constructed as the category (to use Mohanty's term) as a "hegemonic entity".

As I am re-writing myself as a researcher – not as a colonizer or colonized but as a researcher –exploring a third space within the hybridity theory and somehow my research needs to be revised drastically in order to make sense.

I needed to explore the issues of colonialism and its effect on the colonized as I viewed myself at the time I first wrote this chapter. The terminology and language used by the scholars in critical pedagogy and critical, emancipation and transformation theories had the same effect as colonialism itself. We (I include myself as subject, participant, minority, "oppressed," "marginalized") view ourselves as agents, actors, actresses and we wish and choose to participate in the "mainstream" ("colonial") society but that does not mean we are oppressed or marginalized. We do not view ourselves as such.

In conclusion I find that research is a complex endeavour when I am the "Other," especially researching about self-as-a storyteller and my community. Many issues are at stake and are not easy to grasp or grapple with especially when there is a historical context of outsiders coming to research our Cree communities.

Last Interruption (for now)

"I'm falling off a cliff because I have nothing more to say and no more stories to tell. For now… ," says Minnie in a whisper and sighing heavily.

Part III

A- I narrate stories to Minnie and Minnie narrates right back

Stories make you strong.

Like Coyote's footprints stories go this way and go that way.

Interruptions

It took a while for Minnie to write this chapter. The story got stuck and it would not flow. Minnie tried many things but the things she tried did not work. Then it came to her; she was holding on tight to these stories. Just like she did when it was time to leave for the Indian Residential School she held on tight to her parents, siblings, grandparents and everyone she loved, and her community. She held on tight to them not wanting to let them go, not wanting to say goodbye. Afraid she won't come back, afraid she won't ever see her family again. Fears, anxiety crept into her mind. But Minnie realized she did come back and she did see her family, grandparents, and community. And year after year she did come home.

Tears flow from Minnie's eyes but she was ready to let go her story in the form of a dissertation. As she did with her parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, community when it was time to say goodbye to everyone and attend school for another year. At the Indian Residential School she let them go and she came back. She came back home.

After all these years Minnie remembers …

I remember there are two types of stories in *Eeyou*/Cree storytelling in the oral tradition. The first type of stories that I remember is the ancient and sacred ones that we call *addiiyuukan*. These one forms the ancient stories of Creation, how Things and Animals came to be.

Many of these ancient and sacred stories talk about animals being giants and a time when it was winter all year long. My late grandmother, Louisa told me these ancient and sacred stories are about our ancestors and they tell when the World was young. The World was made of *animals*, *trees*, *beings* and *spirits* that talked. How different was that World from this world as we know it today? The ancient stories are about how The World came to be. This is the world where *animals*, *trees* and '*all living things'* could talk and they understood each other. And *animals* behaved like *human beings*. *Animals* thought and saw themselves as *human beings*. *Human beings*, in turn, saw *animals* as such and treated them as *human beings*. It was a time when the relationship between *animals* and *all living things* was equal and reciprocal. Kiowa writer, N. Scott Momaday (1969) calls this period "when Animals could talk." And I add, "When all *living things* could talk." I elaborate what I mean by that "*Trees*, *dogs*, even *rocks*, talked during this period of time when the world was young, very young. It was a time before *Ishiiyiyuu*, the ancestor of *Eeyouch* today. *Ishiiyiyuu* is eastern James Bay Crees' ancestors. Human beings could hear *all living things*. As human beings we could hear the voices of *all living things* because we dared to listen and we dared to hear.

This is what I am thinking when I remember those ancient and sacred stories. I become like an ancient child, the story medicine contained in these ancient and sacred stories are infused into my veins and seep into my bone marrow. The ancient and sacred stories become the bone marrow of my collective memory, and my act of remembrance. I do dare to remember what

Ishiiyiyuu remembered. What *Ishiiyiyuu* wants me to remember is *Eeyou*/Cree collective memory of where we come from, how we come from, what we were about, when we come from.

In this act of remembrance I have thrown away the bundle given to me when I entered Indian Residential School (IRS). In its place I have put the medicine bundle of ancient and sacred stories on its sacred altar of remembrance. In other words I have replaced the IRS bundle with sacred story bundle and placed the latter on the altar of *Eeyou*/Cree collective memory. Whether these sacred acts of remembrance made sense in my dissertation, I argue that these sacred acts of remembrance make sense because they are part of re-claiming my family history. They are part of re-appropriation and undoing the act of colonisation, especially the ones about the assimilation by removal of *Eeyou*/Cree children from families and communities. The policy of assimilation by removing and placing small *Eeyou*/Cree children into institutions:

Interruptions

SO what? Says Minnie.

So:

We do not remember where we came from,

We do not remember our family history,

We do not remember the history of our land,

We do not remember the history of what has/had existed prior to contact.

The erasure, the silencing, the dis-remembrance and all those acts of colonisation and imperialism need to be re-addressed in acts of remembrance, renewal of story medicine bundles. I did not realise all of these acts but I only understood these acts of dis-remembrance late one night in April 2012. Why could I not write even if the university I attend for the past five years gave me a time limitation. I could not put into words all those things. I could not name them all but I knew what they were and what they have done to me, to my sense of self and identity. Actually two years ago the university sent me a friendly reminder that I had two years to finish. The irony of this time limitation is Indigenous stories have no beginning and have no end. Ancient Indigenous stories go on and on, just like King's turtle in one of his stories: it is turtle all the way. In other words, there is no beginning, no end, just a story, and ancient and sacred story is better. And those stories are certainly not linear. This is just to say a story is circular and cyclical.

Interruptions

"Yo, Minnie! Where are you? I want you to take over the story now. After a while the story gets too heavy and dense. We need to share the storytelling moment. The burden of the Indian Residential School experience."

"I am here. Listening to your story that is what I'm doing.

This jumbled up section of your stories, this part III. It confuses everyone. They do not know the direction your stories are going. They do not see your stories the way you see them. This section, I mean, this Part III is in a way an artefact of what the Indian Residential School experience had made you. The collision of two worldviews, the ancient and sacred one of Ishiiyiyuu, by extension your late grandmother's world of

stories and what the western world taught you at the Indian Residential school and this western-style schooling continued throughout your high school, CEGEP and university. You became very well versed in western style discourse but not so good in your very own stories.

The meeting of these two ways of structuring thoughts collided and did not make sense anymore. The hierarchal and circular views collided. In other words the circle met the square. And this squaring of the circle created distortions. This collision, this crash, confused the hell out of everybody, even Old Coyote was confused and he did not know where to put his paw prints next Old Coyote was treading in muddled water. The collision scattered everything all over the place. Everything was shattered too. And as for the story pieces that can be found, they have to be re-stitched together to form a whole story again. That is what happened."

"You are so wise, Minnie!" replies Coyote.

In ancient and sacred stories there is only time and place. The conception of time is very different. The only way that I can explain this conception of time is by illustrating it with my late grandmother's story:

One day I asked my late grandmother her age. My late grandmother replied that her late mother told she was born when the leaves were all gone. In the eastern James Bay area this time is around the month of October. To signify the time *Eeyouch* looked at nature and more specifically the cycles, for example, seasons and seasons are divided into six seasons unlike the western view of four seasons.

Interruptions

"Now why are you going off on a tangent?" asks Minnie.

The story of my grandmother illustrates a time concept of when and where these ancient and sacred stories existed and continue to exist today in *Eeyou*/Cree world. In other words the ancient and sacred stories continue to exist within that time and within that space.

Interruptions

"*Now that sounds so complicated the concept of Eeyou time," Minnie thinking out loud. "I don't think Eeyouch know and remember Eeyou time."*

"You're right about the remembering not many people remember Eeyou time. The closest I got in books is Vine Deloria Jr's God Is Red."

That is the best explanation that I can give for the moment because my storytelling journey into the ancient and sacred world has only begun. My vision and my dream have only become possible now. It is the accumulation of knowledge made inadequate and disrupted by Indian Residential School experience. I can see and can understand what my late grandmother has told me and has instructed me. The many hours we spent together talking have paid off for me. All those hours of apprenticeship may not have looked like a lot at the time. The link, more specifically the ancestral link, was established and it is still there, vibrating and pulsating inside of me as I recall those ancient and sacred stories I heard from my late grandmother. And the story medicine bundles that I received from my grandmother as a child and as a teen and a young woman are there with me. Those ancient and sacred stories are what make me strong. That ancestral and ancient connection and link I had and I still have.

Interruptions

"I didn't realise it took that long to become a storyteller," continues Minnie surprised. "I thought it was shorter time to become a storyteller."

The Indian residential School experience was a deliberate attempt and an act of disembodiment, this deliberate act, an attempt, an experiment of dis-remembrance. This deliberate act to make me disremember my ancient, sacred roots, to disremember *Ishiiyiyuu*, to disremember *Kwikwhaatchesh*, dis-remember "Young Wolverine" the first to use The Shaking Tent.

Interruptions

"Geez! Minnie, you sure interrupt a lot!"

"Well, I have a lot to say and to ask! Now please excuse me I have more questions to pose!" Minnie posturing.

"You mean "ask' more questions, to ask," I correct Minnie (what are friends for but to correct your mistakes).

"Where was I? What was I going to ask? Ok, I remember now," Minnie's scratching her head. "Oh yes, uh, now who's? I mean," Minnie still confused. "Disremember who? Kwikwhaatchesh? Who's Kwikwhaatchesh?" asks Minnie appearing less confused than before.

"Young Wolverine! That's who! Kwikwhaatchesh is Young Wolverine," I answer. I am so proud of myself knowing something that Minnie didn't know. It is usually Minnie who teaches me many things, like Eeyou knowledge and wisdom.

It was a race against time every act of dis-remembering was followed by an act of remembering performed in the summer months away from the glare and whispers of the assimilative institution called Indian Residential School.

This writing may not appear very scientific and it is not trying to be. It is a subjective critique of the assimilative policies and institutions that were put into place to get rid of "the Indian problem". To erase the "Indian" inside of us. This act of talking back is an ancient form of stories. It is an act of re-affirmation of these ancient and sacred stories and their place in *Eeyou* world. The central role the stories play in our lives as Indigenous Peoples, especially *Eeyouch*, *Wabannutao Eeyouch*.

I remember reading how the Cree Elder Louis Bird pointed out there are elements of truth in the stories and the names of the characters were not remembered because the stories are so old and some date before the Ice Age. There are some stories that are even older than Ice Age. Some sacred stories recount before the world even existed.

The second type of stories I remember, are the *diibaachiimuun*. These ones are more recent. They form family history, life history, tribal history. This type of stories includes events, local news, births and marriage announcements. One example of *diibaachiimuun* is what Maria Campbell (2010) calls "landscape stories".

In this part of my inquiry I am attempting to trace down three generations of storytellers. I begin with my late grandfather John Blackned, who is featured in Richard Preston's book, *Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events* (1975, 2002). Then I look at my aunt Florrie's story, which represents my parents' generation. My aunt Florrie tells her story of the Giant Porcupine. I also examine my stories and where they came from.

This part of our stories is explaining what happened to the stories. This part is a painful one for me as a researcher. I am recounting our life history and family history of storytelling. I am also retelling how the cultural transmission of oral stories was disrupted by colonisation.

My great-great grandmother's stories are told through my late grandfather, John Blackned. These stories became my late grandfather's stories. These stories were recorded as I mentioned by the anthropologist Richard Preston III as part of his doctoral studies in 1965. I use the term grandfather because I am using Eeyou kinship system. My late grandfather, John Blackned was the younger brother of my late grandmother Louisa.

My aunt Florrie's stories were recorded by the Cree School Board and are used as part of the Cree language instruction program. These materials are used as Cree as a first language and not as Cree as a second language. The recording of these materials can also be used for the Cree Culture class at the elementary and high school level. My aunt Florrie is the younger sister of my father. She learned her stories from her late mother, Louisa.

My stories mainly come from my late grandmother, Louisa. Before I went to Indian Residential School I heard the ancient stories from my grandmother. During the summer months our grandmother continued to teach my siblings and me the ancient and sacred stories. Our mother taught us the *diibaachiimuun*. Our mother told us our family history stories when we

went and lived with our parents in the bush. It was during this period I re-learned *Eeyou Ituuhwin*, Cree traditional way of life.

Interruptions

"How did this disruption occur?" asks Minnie, very curious how it happened.

The disruption and rupture occurred with the removal of *Eeyou* children at a very young age from their family, grandparents and community. My aunt Florrie attended Indian Residential School; however, I do not know how many years she went because it is her story to tell and not mine. This Indian Residential School experience is for her to tell and not me. The only part I can talk and write about is my experience at the Indian Residential School. I attended the Catholic Indian Residential School for seven years. This seven-year period was not continuous; it was disrupted because I attended school in my community when I was in grade five and then the next year two years I went back to Indian Residential School. After those two years I went and lived the traditional way of life of my ancestors. I accompanied my parents and my siblings to the bush and we hunted and trapped for six months. We left in October and we came back in March to the community and then we got ready again for the spring goose hunt. During this period I re-learned the stories, the ancient and sacred stories and my family stories. That is when the process of reclaiming the stories came back to me. Our mother told us stories about when she was growing up and how life was for her family who hunted and trapped along the coast. My mother's family were known as home guards in the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) records (Francis & Morantz, 1983) but *Eeyouch* know them as *Winnebego* meaning "People of the Muskeg."

Interruptions

"Why do all these personal anecdotes, family anecdotes matter?" wonders Minnie.

They matter because of the process of getting back and re-appropriating, and reaffirming the importance of these stories is a long process. It is a long journey of taking back the stories, taking our talk back, taking back my talk. I take back my family history. I take back the part of the life stories of my late grandfathers, which they learned from our late great- great-grandmothers.

That is what this longwinded, subjective part of this inquiry is about and it will be about; this taking back, reclaiming, re-appropriation, re-subjectivation, more importantly re-remembrance, a re-enfranchisement, a re-embodiment of ancient and sacred stories. What I mean by re-subjectivation is making these stories subjective again because some of these stories have been objectified through anthropological and academic works.

Interruptions

"Now you have to mention where the stories come from and the owners (the storytellers) of the stories and what happened to the ancient and sacred stories," says Minnie adamantly.

The male line of my great-great grandmother's stories is recorded in anthropological works.

"What about it?" Minnie asks.

I do not know how to phrase this process politely, but suffice it to say and write that my great-great grandmother told stories to her grandchildren. My late paternal grandmother Louisa was one of the grandchildren. My late grandfather John Blackned was also a grandchild of hers. My late grandmother Louisa was the oldest of these surviving grandchildren.

My aunt Florrie and I inherited these stories through her late mother and my late grandmother, Louisa. Thus, we learned these stories on the female side of our extended family. Anthropologists did not record the female line of our stories. My late grandmother's stories, at least some of her stories, were recorded for cultural transmission purposes, for example my grandmother's stories on traditional medicine were recorded and aired on the community radio in the mid-eighties. I have a copy of part of the recording, which I got from Eastmain community radio.

In terms of the kinship system, this female line of cultural transmission of the oral ancient and sacred stories was maintained in its traditional form and I learned those stories from my late grandmother in *Eeyou*/Cree language and in their original version that is oral and not in the recorded form.

Whereas my late grandfather John Blackned, who represents the male line in our kinship system, his stories were recorded as part of the urgent ethnographic studies done by the museums in 1965. In a sense the male line of these stories were appropriated by anthropologists. This act could be considered as a form of colonization when examined within this time frame. Put into this context this act of recording these stories is considered as part of the colonial powers that the Western world and the Western views had of *Eeyouch*, and got to record them before they disappear and before their stories disappear.

The appropriation of our stories and our voices as storytellers is to me a form of disembodiment. Although part of me wants to show respect and reverence to those who collected these stories, part of me also dislikes the act of appropriation of stories and voices of our

storytellers. Until I weave out of this dislike and make it into a creative story, this sense of disfranchisement of our stories will remain there. That is why writing this part of the dissertation is a difficult task to do. As children we were taken away from our parents, grandparents and communities and placed into colonial and assimilative institutions known as Residential schools for many years. And at the same period our stories are being recorded and placed in institutions such as museums, universities and helped build and establish the American branch of anthropology.

This disembodiment and disfranchisement of our stories is difficult to write about and it is not easy to describe and explain, perhaps that is why I delay to write this section. Perhaps it will help others to explain and describe the pain it causes when the stories are taken and are objectified and are made generalizable to everyone. The stories become "objective" and "generalizable," which is very good for science but not so good for the storytellers and their stories.

In this chapter I explain how I selected the two *Eeyou* stories, *How the Wolf Came to Be* and *Mishikaakw/The Giant Porcupine* and also my own stories. As I explained in the previous chapter, the *Eeyou* of *Eeyou Estchee*, known as eastern James Bay Cree, we categorise our stories into *addiiyuukan* and *diibaachiimuun*. The first two stories I selected, *How the Wolves Came to be* and *Mishikaakw/The Giant Porcupine* are *addiiyuukan* whereas my stories are inspired from the *addiiyuukan* and *diibaachiimuun*. My stories and poems are copyrighted at the beginning and the end of each story simply because Minnie's non-verbal gesture wanted the stories to continue and this is a way to signal this non-verbal communication in a textual form. In the Western sense my stories would be classified as fiction and interfusion because some facts contained in the stories are based on real events but these are fictionalised in order to entertain

the audience. As Louis Bird described these stories, they are so old and ancient that the names of the characters are very old and forgotten. The themes and the content, the subject matter, the animals in the stories are so old; they date before contact. There is no reference to Western material culture and religious ideology.

Now in the next section of this inquiry I explain how I chose the stories and I explain how I translate the ancient and sacred stories. I will pull out the theme, lessons and teachings that are featured in those ancient *addiiyuukan*.

Translating the stories

There is a translation provided for my late grandfather John Blackned's story, *How the Wolf Came to Be*. There is no translation for my aunt Florrie's story *Mishikaakw/The Giant Porcupine.* In order to be consistent with the translation of both stories I decided to do a translation of my late grandfather's story, *How the Wolf Came to Be* as if there was no translation before. The technique that I used to translate my late grandfather's and my aunt's ancient and sacred story is I listened to the whole story as a listener without an intent of translating. Then I listened to the story a second time but with the intent of translation. On the third time I listened and I translated the story. Afterward I listened to the whole story until I had translated most of the story. There are places I translated from memory. Once the translation of the whole story was finished, I listened to the audio of the story while reading the story at the same time. I did the listening and reading of the story so as to ensure that the translation follows the story. When the ideas in the story were difficult to translate, I translated the main Cree concept into English. In other words I translated how I understand the concept in Cree language and I offered an equivalent in the English language. This is what I call free style translation. I translated chunks of

the story. As I mentioned earlier, there is a translation of my late grandfather's story. In my version of the translation of my late grandfather's story, *How the Wolf Came to Be*, I borrowed the terms, *old man* and *young man*, used by the translator Anderson Jolly.

Specific comments related to translation of John Blackned's ancient and sacred stories are that the interviews were tape-recorded in 1965 (and the translation is revised where necessary). There is translation that is available with each segment of the story. The storyteller, John Blackned, tells the story in segments to allow Anderson Jolly, the translator, to translate the story to the anthropologist, Preston. At times during the storytelling, the translator asked for some clarifications from the narrator or some precision in terms of the meaning of the story being told.

Some parts of the translation are done by memory. What I mean by this is what I remember from listening to the stories for the past two years and as I remember the stories from childhood memory. My comment on the interaction between the narrator and the translator while I listened to the CD is I can deduce that the narrator and the translator are community members. The relationship between the narrator and the translator is of "confiance." Their interaction can also be seen as a storyteller relationship in the sense that the narrator /the storyteller is the teacher (is teaching the translator about storytelling) so this sense the narrator is the teacher and the translator is the apprentice storyteller. The translator is learning about Cree storytelling as he is doing the translation. I can deduce by the questions and more specifically the clarification questions that the translator asks during the translation. The translation is almost simultaneous.

Description of the Storytelling moment

In terms of storytelling Leslie Marmon Silko (1998) recounts the experience of storytelling and this is how she describes it:

> Storytelling can procure fleeting moments of experience that they were and how life felt long ago. What I enjoyed most as a child was standing at the site of an incident recounted in one of the ancient stories that Old Aunt Susie told us as girls. What excited me was listening to her telling us an old-time story and then realizing that I was familiar with a certain mesa or caves that figured as the central location of the story she was telling. That was when the stories worked best, because then I could sit there listening and be able to visualize myself as being located within the story being told, within the landscape. Because storytellers did not just tell stories, they would in their way act them out. The storyteller would imitate voices of vast dialogues between the various figures in the story. So we sometimes say the moment is alive again within us, within our imaginations and our memory, as we listen (p.20).

Interruptions

And what kind of stories did your late grandfather tell?

"Well, I don't remember but I remember my late grandmother Louisa telling me this and found this CD at a university library," I say to Minnie. "Now do you want to hear it?"

"Yes, yes!" says Minnie eagerly. She is one of the few people who's quite eager to listen to ancient and sacred stories.

My late grandfather John Blackned's story

How the Wolf Came to Be

Long ago there was an old man. He lived with his wife and two sons. The eldest son was already an adult and the youngest son was very young, still a child. The old man

and his wife went hunting together. They usually travelled by canoe. The family had only one canoe.

One day the old man and his wife went hunting together but they did not come back at the end of the day. Their eldest son did not know what happened to them. Each day was the same. Every day the eldest son would walk to the shore and to see whether their parents returned from the hunt. Every day there was no sign of the parents returning.

The younger brother began to cry because he started missing his parents. The older brother had great difficulty consoling his younger brother. The older brother remembered what their mother told them about crying and about making a lot of noise. She said a wolf would heard them if they made too much noise and it come and fetch them.

To console his younger brother the older brother made toys for him. The younger brother continued to cry because none of the toys pleased him. Until one day the older brother made a flute. The younger brother liked the flute so much that he forgot about crying. The younger brother stopped crying.

One day when the young man went near the shore of the river to look for their parents, he saw a canoe. He stayed along the shore to see who was coming and he was desperately hoping it was their parents. As the canoe got closer he noticed that there was only one person paddling (in the canoe) and he knew it wasn't their parents. As the canoe got closer he saw it was an old man. He didn't recognize the old man but he remembered what their mother said about a family living nearby. He remembered his

mother saying that the old man was wicked but he did not remember the reason for his wickedness.

The story that the young man and his younger brother's mother told was that the old man had many daughters. And his daughters couldn't stay married to their husbands for long because the old man would kill his son-in-laws. But this story the young man didn't remember.

The young man remembered his mother's story of the old man but he didn't know about his daughters or what the old man did to their husbands. The young man just knew that the old man was wicked.

"What are you doing there? Are you waiting for someone?" asked the old man as paddled to shore.

"I'm waiting for my parents to return from their hunt. They left many days ago and they haven't returned yet," answered the young man.

"And what do you have in your hands?" asked the old man.

"Oh, it's a toy I made for my young brother. You see he won't stop crying after our parents left. And I have tried everything possible to make him stop crying. And this is the only toy that consoles him. He hasn't stopped crying since our parents left. He misses them terribly," answered the young man.

"Can I see it?" asked the old man.

The young man gave the toy to the old man for him to look at. The old man, once he finished looking at the toy, threw it to the front of the canoe.

"Hey, give it back, here. That's the only thing that consoles my younger brother," protested the young man.

"Go and get it if you want it back," replied the old man.

The water was deep at the front of the canoe so young man went inside the canoe to fetch his younger brother's toy. As soon as the young man got into the canoe, the old man pushed the canoe off the shore and started paddling. The water was deep and the young man couldn't jump out of the canoe because he didn't know how to swim.

"PLEASE, take me back to shore," begged the young man.

"My younger brother will cry. He will not stop crying once he sees that I'm not back," the young man pleaded but to no avail.

The old man didn't listen to the young man's pleadings, he continued paddling faster and harder. The old man didn't say a word until they came across a shoreline. The old man told the young man that his camp was nearby.

"Go ashore to my camp where you will find my three daughters. And you can choose one of them as your wife," the old man said to the young man.

The young man went ashore to the camp and he went inside the teepee and he saw three young women and young children sitting inside.

“Your father brought me here and we left my young brother at my camp. He must be crying non-stop when he sees that I haven’t returned. We live by ourselves, our parents didn’t return from their hunt and that was many days ago,” said the young man.

“Your father told me that I would find you here and I could choose any one of you as my wife,” continued the young man.

The two eldest daughters agreed to marry the young man. Then it was their turn to tell their story.

“You see all these young children, they are our children from our previous marriages. We cannot stay married for long our father kills our husband and sometimes our children. So we are warning you, after a while our father may try to kill you. We are telling you this because we would like to stay married to you longer than our previous husbands,” said the young women.

“What do you think if I tried to kill your father before he tries to kill me? Do you agree that I do that?” asked the young man to his new wives.

“Yes, we agree with that because we would like to stay married with you,” answered the wives.

So it was then decided that the young man would try and kill the old man.

So he said to his new wives, “Tell your father that I will make a new canoe.”

When the father arrived the young women told their father that their new husband would make him a new canoe. The old man was overjoyed. The old man thought that the

young man didn't mind anymore and that the young man didn't hold a grudge against him for kidnapping and keeping him away from his younger brother.

For many days the young man worked on making the canoe. One day he put something in between the bark of the canoe. He placed a magical instrument that made a musical sound. It was an enchanted instrument, if a person paddled the instrument would begin making a singing sound. Whoever heard it would become enchanted by it and lose touch with reality

Every day the young man was busy making the canoe for the old man (his father-in-law). One day the old man invited the young man to go to fishing. One of the young man's wives overheard the conversation and later when she was alone with her husband, she said to her husband, "I think my father is going to try and kill you. He's inviting you to go fishing so he can kill you and he will make it look like it's a fishing accident," continued the wife.

"I'll try and kill him first before he succeeds in killing me," answered the young man.

The next day the old man and the young man prepared to go fishing. One of the young man's wives warned her husband to be careful with their father. The wives knew of their father's schemes of trying to kill their husband and this time they suspected the old man was going to make it look like a fishing accident.

The first thing that the old man did was to invite the young man to an area where there were rapids. Once there the old man challenged the young man to cross the rapids and the old man asked the young man to go first but the young man declined and insisted

that the old man go first. As soon as the young man said for the old man to go first the old man called out his bird. You see the old man saw himself as a bird. The old man sent his bird across the rapids. The young man was watching all of this and he waited. As soon as the old man's bird was half way through the rapids the young man called out to the bird. The old man's bird, distracted by the unexpected call, fell into the rapids.

"Your bird didn't make it back," said the young man to the old man.

"Now it's your turn to send your bird," answered the old man.

The young man sent his bird and his bird made it across the rapids and back.

The old man didn't suspect that his magical powers were diminished by the fact that his bird was killed. He was too arrogant to realise and recognise that fact.

Afterward the old man and the young man returned back to the camp. After a while the old man invited the young man to go fishing again.

The old man and the young man went fishing and before they left one of the wives warned her husband to be careful with her father because she knew her father would try again to kill her husband. Even if the old man did not succeed in killing the young man the first time, the old man was determined to try a second time. The old man was going to try again to kill the young man while fishing. The wives knew that their father was going to try and kill their husband like he had done with their previous husbands. And that is the reason why they warned their husband to be careful with their father that the father would try to kill the husband while they went fishing.

The young husband reassured his wives that he would try and be very careful with their father and he would watch out for their father's attempt to kill him.

That he would watch his every move.

And once they were in the canoe the father-in-law suggested that they paddle to the middle of the lake because the fishing was better there. The fishing was better in the middle of the lake and the fish were bigger so they would be able to catch bigger fish.

They paddled to the middle to the lake of the lake and once there the father-in-law took the fishing line and the harpoon and he instructed his son-in-law to harpoon fish that were jumping up and try to harpoon the biggest ones. The son-in-law harpooned the biggest fish but at the same he was watching his father-in-law whether he was going to push him overboard. But nothing happened and the father-in-law didn't attempt to push him overboard so the son-in-law relaxed. Soon afterward the father-in-law told him to try and get the biggest fish so the son-in-law would be able to use it as glue for the canoe that he was making. Once they caught many fish but the father-in-law said they would continue fishing until dusk by then they would be able to catch the biggest fish ever.

After a certain point the son-in-law caught a very big fish and he asked his father-in-law to help him get it into the canoe but the father-in-law did not move for a while as if he didn't hear or he pretended that he didn't hear his son-in-law's request for help. And when the son-in-law was not watching he abruptly moved the canoe to one side since the son-in-law was not expecting the sudden move of his father-in-law and didn't expect the canoe to move to one side the son-in-law fell into the water and he tried to ask his

father-in-law to help him pull him back into the canoe. But the father-in-law tried to knock him back into the water. When the son-in-law saw that his father-in-law was trying to drown him he stayed under the water and held his breath and he remembered his father and his mother telling him that if he thought of himself as an otter that he would have the qualities and have the skills of otter like swimming under water and which was what he did. He held his breath and swam like an otter. And when he thought he was far enough away from his father-in-law so his father wouldn't see him he came to the surface of the water. He watched his father-in-law standing inside the canoe and looking at the water on both sides of the canoe. And the father-in-law was satisfied and he felt that his son-in-law had drowned. He was self-satisfied for succeeding yet again in killing the husband of his daughters. He was so proud of his success so he thought.

But the son-in-law was watching him from the shore of the lake. He was relieved that his father-in-law didn't succeed in drowning him. When the son-in-law was satisfied that his father-in-law didn't see him and thought that he was dead, then he made his way home along the shore of the lake.

Once he was there he entered the teepee the wives were surprised and yet very happy that their father didn't succeed in killing him. But the wives knew and could guess what happened when they saw the state of their husband. The husband put on some dry clothes and had some food. After he was done he recounted the story of how his father-in-law had tried to kill him by thinking that he had drowned him and when he was done recounting the story how their father had tried to kill him, he told his wives to clean and cook the fish he brought home. And at the end of the day when they thought the

grandfather/ father would return from fishing the wives would give pieces of fish to their children so the grandfather would see his grandchildren eating fish.

And that is just what they did. The wives cleaned and cooked the fish and they thought that their father would return, they called out their children and gave them pieces of fish and ordered them to go greet their grandfather at the shore of the lake. When the grandfather returned from fishing he saw his grandchildren greeting him at the shore of the lake and he also noticed that his grandchildren were eating fish and he was very curious where they got the fish they were eating.

"Grandchildren, where did you get the fish you're eating?" he asked his grandchildren.

"Our father brought fish home and our mother cooked it for us," answered the grandchildren.

"Don't say foolish things, grandchildren. They are playing with your father's body and sending your father back and forward to each other," replied the grandfather believing that he had killed his son-in-law by drowning on their fishing trip. He was so sure that he had killed his son-in-law. He continued to walk and he went toward the camp and he entered the teepee and the first person he saw was his son-in-law well and alive; he was very surprised to see him alive since he believed that he had drowned him during their fishing trip. He pretended to be happy to see him alive and greeted him politely. The son-in-law did the same, he greeted his father-in-law politely and pretended that nothing happened between them and he showed no ill feelings towards his father-in-law. But everybody knew what happened. They all pretended that nothing happened. So the

days went by and the son-in-law continued to work on the canoe. And the father-in-law did not make any other attempts to try to kill his son-in-law. Then one day the son-in-law announced that he had finished the canoe that he made for his father-in-law but he told everyone that he was waiting for a special day or occasion to offer it as a gift to his father-in-law. So days went by until one day the son-in-law talked to his wives and he told them,

"Tomorrow morning I will be offering the canoe as a gift to your father," said the husband to his wives.

The daughters told their father their husband would be offering a canoe as a gift in the morning.

The father-in-law was so happy and he thought that his son-in-law had forgiven him for kidnapping him and for his many attempts of trying to kill him.

The next morning the husband talked to his wives before offering the canoe to his father-in-law. He instructed them to tell their father to try his new canoe on the river and to suggest to him to paddle towards the bay.

After the young man finished talking to his wives he went to get the canoe and he brought it to his father-in-law. And there he offered the canoe as a gift to his father-in-law. The father-in-law was unsuspecting of the intentions of his son-in-law. He didn't know that his son-in-law was also trying to kill him so he could return home to his younger brother and also he could bring his young wives home to his camp. That was the motive of the son-in-law but the father-in-law was unsuspecting of the true intention

of his son-in-law. Because he was blinded by his own intention to kill his son-in-law like he had done to his previous son-in-law. Never in his wildest dreams did he suspect others would have the desire to get rid of him. He was in such total awe of his new canoe that he forgot about everything. And when his daughters suggested that he try out his new canoe he was so overwhelmed with joy and awe that he eagerly agreed to his daughter's suggestion. So the father/father-in-law took his canoe to the shore of the river and he tried it out. He was so proud of his new canoe; he thought it was so well made that he destroyed his old canoe. Before he took his new canoe to the shore to try it out, he destroyed his old canoe.

Then he went to the lake and tried out his new canoe. He was happy and proud, he was paddling back and forth while his daughters, grandchildren and his son-in-law were watching. He was so proud and enthralled with his new canoe and his new canoe was making a singing sound.

"Juuuh, Juuuuh!" the canoe was making as the father-in-law was paddling and he was enthralled with his new canoe. Seeing that their father was so enthralled with his new canoe the daughters suggested to their father that he try it out on the bay. So the father paddled into the bay so that the singing sound of the canoe got stronger and louder and the father got carried away and he kept paddling listening to the sound of his canoe and he didn't realise that he was paddling way out into the bay. Then suddenly a thick fog came and he did not know where he was so he called to his daughters.

“Daughters! Daughters! Where are you?” called the father but the husband signalled to his wives not to answer their father. They just stood on the shore listening to him calling out and his voice got further and further away until they didn’t hear him anymore.

“Your father is now dead!” the husband said to his wives. The husband knew that his father-in-law went further and further into the bay, then he panicked because he knew he was lost and in his panic he caused his new canoe to capsize and he drowned.

“Now your father is dead!” repeated the husband, they couldn’t hear the old man’s voice anymore. After a while they returned to their camp, and they stayed there until the husband was able to make another canoe. The husband had to make a new canoe because the old man had destroyed his canoe when his son-in-law offered him a new canoe. There was no other canoe at their camp so the young man could not see his younger brother until he finished making a new canoe. Finally one day he finished making the canoe and he said to his wives to get everything ready because tomorrow morning they were going to return to his camp and see his brother. Finally after all this time he was going to be able to see his brother again and he was hoping that his young brother was well after his long absence. The next morning they prepared everything.

The next morning they went to the young man’s camp. And when they got near the camp they saw a wolf along the shore. And they got there the wolf greeted them.

“ It’s me!” said the young wolf.

The older brother was surprised, he didn’t know what to answer.

“ I was crying when he left and didn’t return. After a while a wolf came to visit me and he turned me into a wolf,” continued the young brother now a wolf.

“It’s okay,” said finally the older brother. “As long as you are okay!” continued the older.

“You have to promise since you are now a wolf and you were a human before; you have to promise that you will eat nothing but what humans eat,” the older brother counselled his younger brother now a wolf.

The older brother and his wives went to the camp and they gathered the older brother’s belongings and left the camp leaving the younger brother now a wolf. The older brother went to his wives’ camp and there they remained. That’s the story of how the Wolf came to be.

The end of the story!

Interruptions

“Now that’s a good story! Or as Thomas King would say, “One Good Story that One!” says Minnie quite satisfied. But she was just getting started in her storytelling moment and she didn’t want it to end.

“How about your aunt?” Minnie asks.

“What about my aunt? And which one are you talking about? I ask.

“I hear one of your aunts is a storyteller and a great storyteller she is, that’s what I’m told,” continues Minnie.

"Now who told you that? I bet it's Raven or Coyote!" I ask.

"Yep! It's one of them! I forget! Please tell me one of your aunt's stories," pleaded Minnie.

So I choose one of my aunt's stories and this is the one I choose for Minnie. Don't ask me why! I just did!

My Aunt's Story

Mishikaakw/The Giant Porcupine as told by Florrie Mark Stewart

I'm going to tell you the story of porcupine,

A porcupine named the Giant Porcupine.

Once there was man, a hunter.

He lived with his wife.

They had no children

They lived only the two of them.

One night the hunter dreamt about his wife. He dreamt that someone very ugly came to their camp and kidnapped his wife.

The next morning he told his wife about his dream.

"Last night I dreamt of you. I dreamt that someone very ugly came to our camp and kidnapped you," he said to his wife.

The wife usually stayed at the camp cutting firewood while her husband was away hunting.

One day a Giant Porcupine came to the camp while the husband was away.

“Come with me,” the Giant Porcupine ordered the woman.

“No,” replied the woman defiantly.

“This is what I am going to do to you if you don’t come with me,” threatened the Giant Porcupine.

He went to the pile of firewood and struck the firewood with his tail. The firewood flew all over the place and giant quills were stuck on some of the firewood. Seeing the anger of the Giant Porcupine, the woman was terrified and she complied and went with the Giant Porcupine. The woman was so afraid of the Giant Porcupine.

The Giant Porcupine and the woman left the camp and they walked and walked until they reached a hill. The Giant Porcupine went into the cave of the hill and he ordered the woman to follow him.

They walked inside the cave. Finally they went out at the other side of the hill. They walked and walked until they reached another hill. They did the same thing. They went inside the cave and they followed the tunnel until they came out the other side of the hill.

They began walking again until they reached a third hill. This third hill was bigger than the previous ones. They went inside the cave and walked inside the hill following the

tunnels until they came across another Giant Porcupine, bigger than the other one that kidnapped the woman. It was the father or the mother of the Giant Porcupine.

The biggest Giant Porcupine said to the Giant Porcupine "Why did you bring the woman here? You don't know Ishiiyiyuu's anger." (Ishiiyiyuu is the ancestor of the Cree)

The Giant Porcupine and the woman walked past the biggest Giant Porcupine and they went deeper into the cave. They stopped until the Giant Porcupine thought they were deep enough underground. "This is where we're going to stay," said the Giant Porcupine to the woman.

Meanwhile the husband of the kidnapped woman could sense something was wrong. As he was walking the hunter knew and sensed that someone kidnapped his wife. He decided to make his way home. When he arrived home there was no one there. He looked around and he saw the pile of firewood was scattered all over and giant porcupine quills were attached to some of the firewood. He looked some more and he saw a trail of the footprints. He followed the trail.

The hunter followed the trail until he came upon a hill. He saw that the Giant Porcupine and his wife were inside the cave so he went inside the cave too. He did the same, he walked inside the cave until he reached the other side of the cave and he came out of the hill through there.

The hunter resumed following their tracks until he came upon another hill. He went inside the second hill and he came out through the other side of the hill. He continued walking and following the trail.

After a while the hunter came upon a third hill. This one was even bigger than the two hills that he had passed. He went inside the cave where he followed the tunnel until he came upon a Giant Porcupine.

As soon as the biggest Giant Porcupine saw the hunter, he said to him.

"This is how my anger is."

The biggest Giant Porcupine went toward the wall of the cave and sprayed quills with his tail, the rocks broke into small pieces.

Then the man said to the biggest Giant Porcupine

"This is how my anger is" and he took out his bow and arrow and shot an arrow into the rocks. The wall of the cave came tumbling down. The man turned around and started shooting at the biggest Giant Porcupine until the latter was dead.

Then the hunter continued his quest to find his wife. He walked underground following a tunnel until he came across the Giant Porcupine who kidnapped his wife.

As soon as the Giant Porcupine saw the hunter, the former asked the hunter, "Do you want to know and see my anger?" The Giant Porcupine turned around and started shooting quills with his tail and the rocks broke into small pieces. The hunter said to the Giant Porcupine, "And now do you want to see how strong my anger is?" The hunter took out his bow and arrows and began shooting at the wall of the cave and the wall came tumbling down. The hunter turned around and began shooting his arrows at the Giant Porcupine until he killed the Giant Porcupine. Once the hunter killed the Giant

Porcupine, he said to his wife, "Now let's go home." So they got out of the cave and they went home to their camp. The end.

Interruptions

"What about you?" asks Minnie.

"What about me?" I say.

"Do you tell stories too? It seems to run in the family, that storytelling business," says Minnie.

"And why do you call it, "that storytelling business"? And yes, I do storytelling. I do as you put it "THAT STORYTELLING BUSINESS!" I say.

Minnie noticing my annoyance says, "My, are we touchy! It's not good for storytelling if you're touchy. The story won't turn out well! The story will become all tangled like a cobweb on an early morning when the dew is still fresh when the sun's rays hit it! Then the dew evaporates like mist but it doesn't become like fog coming from the bay and circling your midjwap."

So I calmed down and tried to be less touchy and this is what I told Minnie.

Interruptions

"Why do you keep repeating?"

"Well, if you want people to remember it, you have to repeat it several times," I answer and quite satisfied with myself.

“But you’re writing it down so there is no need to repeat,” Minnie says. “If you keep repeating it sounds redundant and it becomes redundant.”

“Oh!” I say. “I didn’t know.”

“And I might add, it just confuses people, even Old Coyote!” exclaims Minnie.

Chikapesh Went on the Moon by ©Elma Moses

Now, how did he do that? asks Coyote.

Well, you know he is a Tricky one too. Like Coyote, Nanabush and Raven.

You know Chikapesh is always walking somewhere and he sees and hears things.

And he goes back home and asks for advice from Uumshaa, his older sister. The Wise One.

I call her like that, The Wise One, because she seems to know everything. That Uumshaa.

One day Chikapesh was walking in the woods when he stumbled across an unusual looking tree. When he touched it, the tree felt strange. When he went home that evening, he asked his Uumshaa about the strange tree. “It’s a magical tree and if you blow at the top of it; it will grow,” answered Uumshaa. The next day Chikapesh went back to the place where he saw that magical tree. There was the magical tree and Chikapesh decided to try what his Uumshaa said and sure enough the tree grew.

At the end of the day he asked his Uumshaa and two wives to pack their belongings. Since they were nomads they did not have much. They travel light those nomads. Those hunters. And that's what they were. Anyways let's go back to the story.

The next morning they packed up their belongings and they took their teepee down and off they went. Chikapesh took them to the magical tree. When they got there he told them to climb the magical tree.

"What are we going to do when we reach the top?" asked the wives.

Chikapesh told them not to worry about it. And when they did reach the top, Chikapesh blew and with each breath the tree grew taller and taller. Once in a while Uumshaa and the wives would look down and they would get dizzy and fall. Chikapesh using his magical powers managed to catch them and they climbed on. And Chikapesh continued blowing on the tree until they reached the moon.

So you see, Chikapesh was the first man on the moon and ***not Armstrong****.*

Once there, the place looked like Earth but it was more beautiful than the Earth. There were lots of tracks of animals, especially squirrels.

Chikapesh was so happy he set up lots of snares. He snared lot of squirrels that one day he asked his Uumshaa to make a squirrel fur coat and pants to go with his coat.

And she did.

When she was finished, Chikapesh wore it proudly. One day as he was walking, he saw a burned track. Strange looking tracks. Better ask, Uumshaa, he thought to himself.

When he went home that evening he told his Uumshaa what he had seen.

“Niimshaa, “he said, “I saw these strange looking tracks. They are huge and all scorched.”

“Oh that,” said Uumshaa. “That’s the Sun’s path and whatever you do, don’t set snares there.” Ordered Uumshaa.

Early the next morning Chikapesh went to the place where he saw the burned path and he set his snare there right in the middle of the scorched trail. And he continued with his walk and he forgot all about it and went home. When he got home, he ate and went to sleep. Then the next day when the sun should be passing by, it was still complete darkness. Uumshaa seeing this, she woke Chikapesh straight away.

“Where did you set your snare?” she asked Chikapesh

Chikapesh did not answer.

“Where did you set your snare?” she asked over and over.

“I set my snare on the burned trail.” Chikapesh finally answered.

“Chikapesh you caught the Sun in your snare, now go over and set the Sun free,” ordered Uumshaa.

Chikapesh got up and he walked toward where he could see a little bit of light.

As he got near his snare the light got brighter and brighter. He finally reached his snare, the light was very bright and it was very hot. And there was the Sun caught in his snare

and when he tried to get closer to the Sun, it was too bright and too hot. But he tried to free the Sun but as he got closer the Sun scorched his squirrel fur coat and pants.

“What am I going to do? I can’t leave the Sun in the snare,” he said to himself.

Then Chikapesh saw a little mouse.

“Little mouse, can you help set the Sun free? “ asked Chikapesh.

The mouse tried and on its attempt at setting the Sun free, the little mouse scorched its whiskers.

But on its second try he was able to gnaw the snare loose. The Sun was set free, thanks to the little mouse.

And Chikapesh walked home at the start of a bright new day!

“Is that how day and night got created?” asked Coyote.

“Yes, that’s the story of how day and night came to be.

If Chikapesh hasn’t snared the Sun then we would have daylight all the time. Night would not exist.”

Piyeuuitchs e diimuukuudead!

That’s the end of the story!

Interruptions

“Now I want another story,” demanded Minnie.

And I did not know Minnie could be that demanding so right away I told her another one. I didn't mind it because I was getting rusty. I haven't told a story to anyone for a long time. Many months actually so I was quite eager to comply to Minnie's demand of more stories.

My stories: Interfusion style

I write because, like George, writing heals the wounds of the residential school experience; the pain of being taken away from my family at a very young age. This one is for all the Indian residential school survivors:[2]

Crying

I hear children crying
At night is when the voices get strong

I hear children crying for their moms,
Dads, aunties, uncles, kuukum, juumshum
Like thunderous rain, they cry
At the full night sun like howling wolf, they cry

Like the little boy who wouldn't stop crying

[2] The poem "Crying" and its introduction were originally published in The Nation (Moses, E, (2008, August 15). "Crying," The Nation, vol. 15, p. 20). The reference to 'George' is to a generic George that I know who went to Indian Residential School.

When his grandfather, Addush left

What can we do to make you stop?

Said his Father.

If you bring Niibiin, I'll be happy again.

So Father went to look for Niibiin

He went where he heard the Elders tell Niibiin is

In the Land where the South Wind blows

Father went to search for it.

When he got near it

He saw Muskrat swim on the lake.

Muskrat, he said

Do you know where I can find Niibiin?

I'll offer you pi-mii

Good rich kakuush-e-pimii

The best you can find

Father knew that Muskrat loved grease

Especially Bear grease

So Muskrat revealed the secret of Niibiin.

That night Father went there

The teepee was well guarded by Trout and Walleye

Father ambushed them

Sewed up their mouth tightly

Before Trout and Walleye could shout

But I guess he didn't sew up Trout's mouth too tightly,

Trout shouted with his tight little mouth,

Djiim-skim-kuunanuu dji-nii-biin-nim-nuu!

Djiim-skim-kuunanuu dji-nii-biin-nim-nuu!

They've stolen our Niibiin,

They've stolen our Niibiin

But it was too late

Father ran away with Niibiin

And Muskrat had helped him swim across the lake.

Trout, Walleye and other animals chased after Father

But when Father's foot touched the ground

Snow melted,

Flowers bloomed,

Ground behind him turned into snow.

The Animals could not catch Father

So they went back to their village

They decided to hold a council.

- *Who told the Stranger where Niibiin was? they asked.*
- *It wasn't me, answered everyone,* ***even Muskrat****.*

Earlier Muskrat dove under water

Past slippery weeds he swam

Hoping the Pi-mii would wash off

Deeper he swam

Harder the Pi-mii became

Fur matted and streaked with Pi-mii

He came to the surface of the shimmering water.

Trout and Walleye noticed Muskrat's fur paws were streaked with Pi-mii

-Muskrat, where did you get Pi-mii?

-Oh, I found it along the shore as I was swimming on the lake.

Meanwhile Father arrived

Niibiin came

The little boy stopped crying

He played outside

He still missed his Grandfather, Addush

But Niibiin stayed with them.

That's how seasons came to be,

Niibiin is Summer.

So for the Indian Residential School Survivors,

Like the little boy, Niibiin came.

When Summer came,

The crying stopped.

They knew

Soon they're Coming Home.

Medicine Woman by ©Elma D. Moses

Her white hair glistened in the midnight sun the shadow from the moon showed her round face and her thin lips whispering incantations to the soft autumn breeze. Jackie heard the 'sh,' 'tshe,' sounds. When the breeze was in the right direction Jackie got a whiff of sage and cedar scented smoke. The old woman was in her late seventies and she was wearing a long multi-colored skirt and blouse that she made herself, a powder blue cardigan, a plaid shawl and moccasins trimmed with sealskin. 'Uuhbiyoohkat.' That's how Crees called this type of moccasins. The old woman's name was Mary but since there is no 'r' in Cree it's pronounced Mely. Jackie had accompanied her grandmother for this ritual performed at the full moon in autumn. Jackie, a young girl of sixteen, was wearing similar clothing to her grandmother and her long dark hair was braided with "shindaken" and beaver fur.

Mely and Jackie lived on the rez but for this ritual Mely had asked her grandson, David, a six foot tall, slim boy who walked like his grandfather, Alfred, but handsome like his other grandfather, David who he is named after, to drive to the winter camp situated 80 km from the village. The grandparents' generation was baptized Anglican and all had

English names; otherwise the Anglican priest refused to baptize anyone with an Eeyou name.

Now there was a movement in the village to bring back the old ways but since there were people opposed to it, the rituals had to be performed outside the village.

Jackie did not realize that her grandmother, Mely, had all these powers. She believed the books of history/anthropology she read in her history class. Jackie did not realize until then that women performed these rituals too. Her head was spinning, the experience was too much for her. Her grandmother, sensing something was wrong, stopped her incantations and asked how Jackie was feeling. Her grandmother sang a soft lullaby type song and gave her a warm drink.

"Here drink this. It's Labrador tea, you'll feel better," said Kuuhkum.

Jackie drank the warm liquid slowly, she felt her senses coming back, feeling much better.

"I'm okay, now kuuhkuu," she whispered.

Mely continued with her incantations and slowly they entered the Sweat lodge. An owl hooted in the distance and you heard the slow hum of the traffic on the James Bay highway. The workers were bringing material to build another dam and diverting one more river. At the same time this was the second beginning of Jackie's training as a medicine woman. The Indian Residential School where she had to leave her family,

grandparents and community every fall and only to come back home in late June interrupted the first one.

The Story of Gillpit by ©Elma D. Moses

"Gillpit," my grandfather Amblii called out. He waited a while. "Gillpit," he said again with a much softer voice. I was so terrified, I didn't answer. My grandfather held out a piece of Juicy Fruit gum. I came out of my hiding-place from underneath the steps of my front porch, still trembling with fear. As I stood up I am a young boy of nine years of age. My hair was neatly cropped and washed yesterday with Sunlight soap. My hair damp from the early morning dew. Strings of my hair glistened in the early morning light and pieces of cobweb were caught in my hair. I took the gum. I unwrapped it quickly. I put it greedily into my mouth. It tasted so good because the last time I ate was the night before.

"Taan e itiyin wech taan ente, "asked my grandfather. (What are you doing there?)

"Nemowi uyesh!" I answered. (Nothing!)

"Ashtem bech wecheuu e tchiweyan," said my grandfather gently taking my hand. (Come with me. I'm going home.)

And we headed towards my grandfather's house situated not very far from the community center. We could hear the loud music and the laughing and shouting coming from the community center. Yesterday the chief of the village chartered a floatplane full of beer to thank the voters who voted for him. The villagers did not need to make homebrew from raisins or spruce tree branches. The villagers were very happy with the

beer. They thought it was much better than the homebrew. They believed that beer wouldn't rot your gut as fast as homebrew.

As we walked my grandfather asked me the last time I had a meal.

"Tayiisb match kaa mitchisuin," asked my grandfather. (When was the last time you ate?)

"Uutakushiid," I answered. (Yesterday.)

"Daan de e taaduuo tchikawi kiye kuuhtawi," asked my grandfather. (Where are your parents?)

"I don't know," I answered.

"Where did you sleep?" asked my grandfather.

"Underneath the steps of my house," I answered.

"You must be tired and hungry, let's hurry home, I have some nice moose stew and bannock left that I made this morning," said my grandfather. When we arrived at his cabin right away my grandfather gave me a bowl of moose stew. I ate it so quickly that I spilled a spoonful on my grandfather's tablecloth. I didn't taste much but I felt the stew warming my belly. My grandfather served me a cup of warm tea and bannock. I asked my grandfather for jam but he said he didn't have any. The jam was for my bannock. When I was done eating I felt so sleepy. My grandfather pointed at his old sofa. I went to the sofa and my grandfather gave me a pillow and a soft blanket. And I fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning Youth Protection and Social Services agents showed up at my grandfather's house. They talked in a hushed voice with my grandfather for a long time. Finally they left. My grandfather said out loud, "I wonder who called them," he saw me standing there by the doorway. "Sorry," he said, "didn't want you to hear that."

"I'll tell you what. Let's go fishing on one of the islands on the bay," continued my grandfather. I have never seen my grandfather look that nervous before. "Yeah," I shouted, unable to restrain my enthusiasm. My grandfather knew how much I love going fishing for a week with him on the James Bay Islands.

An hour later grandfather and me were off on a fishing trip and we stayed there for a month. And when we returned the police waited for us. They took my grandfather away and they put me on a floatplane with the rest of the village kids my age. The floatplane was going to an Indian Residential School. I stayed at the school for ten months. When I returned back to my village, the villagers took me to my grandfather's place. I stayed with my grandfather. He took good care of me. And once in a while I went to visit my parents but they were too drunk to know I was there but I still went, just like my grandfather told me to.

Many years later my grandfather told me the whole story of our fishing adventure. My grandfather told me that the Youth Protection and the Social Services agents were coming back the next day to take me away and place me in foster care. My grandfather didn't want that although he tried to convince the Youth Protection and Social Services agents that I was safe with him and that he would take care of me. The Youth Protection

and Social Services agents didn't want to know anything about it. And they decided they were coming back the next day to take me away and place me in foster care. When the Youth Protection and the Social Services agents left, my grandfather thought up the fishing trip plan. He knew the agents could not come to the islands because it wasn't their jurisdiction. The islands belong to the North West Territories. When we got back to the village, he said that the authorities charged him with kidnapping. And he spent six months in jail. In the meantime the village lawyer, who is a Human Rights lawyer, arranged to have my grandfather adopt me like in the traditional custom of my people, the Innu. That's the story how I grew with my grandfather, Amblii. And now I plan to become a Human Rights lawyer when I go to university. As for my parents they still drink and they look much older than my grandfather and I still visit them once in a while.

I remember the sense of loss I felt when I wrote the ancient stories in written form; I felt the stories lost their sense of "fluidity" and I felt the stories became rigid and "stagnant."

Earth Diver by © Elma D. Moses, 2012

Yo, Coyote wasn't there
He was in our imagination
He was just a thought
In Thought Woman's mind
As soon as Thought Woman thought of Coyote
Coyote came to be
Coyote appeared suddenly
"Hey, where did I from?" asks Coyote quite puzzled

No one answered.

“And where is everyone?” still asking questions that Coyote

Still no one answered.

Meanwhile further away,

Out of earshot and out of sight from Coyote is the following scene.

Earth Diver came and made the Earth

Out of the mud found in muskrat’s paws

Before that each Animal took turns diving

Searching for a grain of Earth

Water was deep

Each came back exhausted and near death

But each Animal was revived

Under the care of our grandmother, Spider Woman

Finally at the last attempt they sent Muskrat

Muskrat did not want to go after seeing the state of all his friends arrived

He was scared, no, more than scared, he was terrified.

He did not want to die

He was too young to die

Animals seeing that it would difficult to convince

Muskrat to dive

Devised a plan to trick Muskrat into going

They knew that muskrat had a weakness for pi-mii (grease)

They offered, but it was more like a bribe of grease, to Muskrat

Animals knew Muskrat would do almost anything for grease

STOP THE STORY FOR NOW! STORY WILL RESUME LATER

After many days of trying to convince Muskrat

They succeeded

How?

One of the great hunters/fishers known in the whole universe arrived

Not only was she well known for her fishing skills

She's also known for making the best fish oil in the whole Universe

And Muskrat knew that

Being Muskrat, Being a connoisseur of the finest fish oils in the whole Universe

So Muskrat agreed to dive

Partly also he had a secret crush on her

That no one knew except him

And Muskrat wanted to impress her with his diving skills.

So Muskrat dove

Many hours they waited and nothing

And Otter and Trout were in big argument about who forced Muskrat into going

They looked like they were about to fight it out

Swan was trying to calm them without much success but only aggravating the situation

When things began to look like all hope was lost and they thought they would never see Muskrat

Owl spotted bubbles on the surface of the ocean. Tiny ones, barely visible.

To this day no one could explain how Owl was able to see during the day when Owls generally have night vision. It is said that day Owl was first to see the bubbles. Some things are unexplainable and that's one of them.

Let's go back to our story. The Animals scooped Muskrat out of the water and tried to revive him. They kept checking his paws and they saw nothing. Weasel looked more careful! Lo! And behold! In the front paws that was a speck of dirt. A tiny grain ….

I'll stop here. You know the rest of the story! …

"AW! " said Minnie so disappointed in the abrupt end of the story that she was enjoying so much.

Interruptions

Why do you write down the stories if you don't feel comfortable about it?

At the moment I'm not really sure why. I wanted to be a writer when I was in my twenties and I tried. I even bought myself a writing pad and all but nothing came out of it. Then I met this guy and I told him stories while he painted. I didn't write but I told stories. That's what I did. I became a storyteller and I didn't even know it!

When I became a storyteller as an *Eeyou* youth I also practised *Eeyou* culture. I went with my parents to practise *Eeyou* way of life of our ancestors.

Eeyou youth feel the effects of the destruction of the land, rivers. On the one hand, people want *Eeyou* Youth to follow in the footsteps of the parents and the grandparents. Northern development and projects bring destruction to the land, rivers and the environment. These 'developments' have an impact on everything that is living, such as wildlife, the plants, the fish, the whole ecosystem. How are these young people supposed to continue *Eeyou* way of life when the ecosystem is changed? What are the youth to do when they can no longer go on the land with their parents and grandparents? They may no longer be able to learn from the land as their parents, grandparents and their ancestors did.

Remembrance and survival may be a way to sustain part of culture. Without knowing it I was doing writing in the spirit of remembrance and survivance and I have created several characters.

"When did this occur?" asks Minnie very curious.

After the apology delivered by Prime Minister Harper in 2008 I began to get interested in stories again. Last Fall I took a creative writing course and after three classes I could see it helped me go in the right direction. Today I realize that I can use all the characters that I have created into a story for my dissertation. How am I going to do this?

Interruptions

"Now we are learning to be storytellers by reading books? That's so funny! Well, you got to do what you have to do, girl!" says Minnie more to herself than to me.

In this section of the dissertation, I discuss the process of becoming a storyteller, which involves the understanding and interpretations [analysis] of the stories. In other words, it is the

process of becoming a storyteller and that process is what was disrupted by the removal of *Eeyou*/Cree children from their parents, grandparents and community when we were placed in those institutions called Indian Residential Schools.

In *Cree Narrative,* Preston (1975/2002) discusses how in the early stage of storytelling children imitate storytellers. This is the second of the storytelling experience when *Eeyou*/Cree children play at storytelling. The first stage is being the listener/audience. The first stage you learn how to listen for example, not interrupting at the wrong time. Participating in a storytelling experience is how you learn to develop your listening skills and you also develop your observation skills. You observe the storyteller, how she tells her story, her gestures and body movements, basically the non-verbal language. During the storytelling experience you hear the different types of dialogues and you hear the songs (e.g. *Chikapesh* and *Kaatchituuhske).* You also hear the sounds of different objects (e.g. How the Wolf Came to Be, the magical sound the canoe makes on the water).

You see the narrator doing the actions of the character as in *Chikapesh* and the *Kaatchituuhske*. One example is the story when *Chikapesh* actually meets the mammoth and he tries to impress it with the power of his magical bow and arrow. Until this point of the story the mammoth is unimpressed with *Chikapesh*'s arrow until *Chikapesh* shoots at a rock and the rock explodes into pieces. The mammoth tries to escape but it is too late because *Chikapesh* saw where it is heading by the movement of branches. As a listener/storyteller you pay attention to all these small details.

By the time you hit the critical age of forty you have accumulated many stories (ancient, sacred and new ones, even newly created ones). You can begin your life as a storyteller if you

choose to do that. But you can also choose to become a storyteller much later in life (see Harry Robinson, 1989/2004). It is a personal choice when the storyteller feels ready to tell his or her stories. It is also a personal choice what type of stories in his or her repertoire. A storyteller decides which stories he or she will tell, when and where and which ones he or she will not tell.

I use the term 'storytelling business' to refer to the stories of storytelling and storytellers. The personal stories of how storytellers became storytellers and the process of storytelling is what I call the storytelling business and I do not use the term as in the economic sense.

Choosing the stories

I introduce my late grandfather's John Blackned's story, *How the Wolf Came to Be*. He recounted the ancient stories, sacred stories, traditional medicine, fur trade stories, family stories, life stories and other type of stories.

As I mentioned earlier, his stories were recorded for anthropological purposes. When I listen to his stories I know that he is telling the stories to an anthropologist who does not speak Cree. The stories are interrupted by translation. The late Anderson Jolly is the translator and he also plays the role of intermediary between the storyteller, late Elder John Blackned, and the anthropologist, Richard Preston. That is how the story flows between the three people.

My aunt Florrie's stories flow like real stories because they are not interrupted by translation. Her stories are recorded and made into a CD by Cree School Board (CSB).

Did I choose the stories or did the stories choose me?

I chose these five stories: *Chikapesh Went on the Moon, Crying, Medicine Woman, the Story of Gillpit* and *Earth Diver*. The first one come from the oral tradition and *Crying* also

comes from the oral tradition form and it blends together the ancient story *How Summer Came to Be* and the contemporary issue of Indian Residential School system. The second one, *Medicine Woman*, is about re-learning the sacred ways, whereas *The Story of Gillpit* deals with contemporary issues: social issues; social malaise; intoxication. The grandfather continues the traditional way life of hunting, fishing and he teaches it to the next generation, his grandson. The other elements in the story of Gillpit, are colonialism, Christianity, adoption of Christian names, Indian Residential School, sedentarization and community life, the emergence of outside services, such as government services, clinics, local schools, band councils, displacement of the traditional ways by outside and external forces, customary adoption not recognised by federal and provincial governments and land jurisdiction. It is a very short story but full of cultural references and issues related to Indigenous peoples and their contemporary and everyday realities. The two stories *Medicine Woman* and *The Story of Gillpit* deal with the adoption of Christian names, *Mary* becomes *Mely* and *Clifford* becomes *Gillpit*. *Earth Diver* is a recreation of several ancient and stories of creation from different tribes and making it into an *Eeyou* style of story.

My stories

In this part I describe how I select stories to include in the dissertation and describe the criteria I used to select. I basically give reasons for why I selected the writings.

I remember the sense of loss I felt when I wrote the ancient stories in written form; I felt the stories lost their sense of "fluidity" and I felt the stories became rigid and "stagnant".

The first story, *Chikapesh went on the Moon*. I performed this story at first and then I wrote it down because I found it difficult to do a simultaneous translation at every performance. Some of the places I performed it were at a Childcare Centre (Montreal Area), Youth Centre,

local high school in my community, and McGill Powwow. Once I wrote down the story, I used it when I got invited as a guest speaker to a Children's Literature class and to a Colonialism and social work class.

In the second story *Crying*, I performed it at McGill Powwow and it was published in a Cree community magazine, *The Nation* on August 15, 2008.

I have reworked an ancient story as part of my creative process. First I listen to the story. Then I listen a second time with the intent to translate the stories from memory that is remembering the storytelling moment. Anthropologists, such as Preston (1975, 2002) in *Cree Narrative* and the anthropologist working with Harry Robinson recount a similar experience, the graphic description of the landscape and the characters and action so that you as the listener/audience are transported to that moment in the story. That is the effect of the storytelling experience when a good and experienced storyteller tells the story.

Some days it is more difficult to rework them just as some writers do not necessarily write every day. But what I do that is in writings like *Crying*, and *Chikapesh went on the Moon,* I incorporated other elements, for example *Crying* retells the legends of the little child with head lice and I compare the crying of the child with head lice and the children who went to Indian Residential school. Both stories have a similar sense of longing, a feeling of abandonment, loneliness, finding love, friendship and companionship in people that you least expect or in places you least expect.

My stories are a recreation of ancient and sacred stories. They are a fusion style, the blending of the oral tradition with contemporary issues that affect Indigenous peoples of Canada, more specifically, Eeyou/Cree. The story of *Crying* recounts the experience of homesickness of

many children who were taking away from parents, grandparents and community and they cried for their loved ones and the crying was more intense at bedtime. *Crying* is about the children being taken away from their family and sent to Indian Residential School (IRS); all year we longed for and missed our family, our community. This memory of homesickness came after the Canadian Government Apology to us former Indian Residential School Survivors. This story came me to one night and I wrote it on McGill College and finished it in a restaurant on Ste-Catherine eating a sandwich at 10 pm. I was quite nervous and anxious. It is a healing story. My spirit wanted to heal from the ordeal that I have suffered for being taken away at a very young age.

The story is also a commentary on the implicit assumption of the assimilative policy. Children who attended residential schools were 'tabla rasa" and we were devoid of 'real' knowledge." It was not the case for many of us, we knew the ways of our ancestors, we spoke the language of our ancestors, and we have the creative imagination of our ancestors!

Prior to attending these residential schools our parents and our grandparents performed the ancient and sacred ceremonies to some of us, and that is probably why some of us had strong and resilient character within us when we attended the Indian residential school and some of us lived in this creative world that was a gift from our ancestors and this gift sheltered us from the negative effects of Residential school by blocking these out. As in Silko's (1977/2006) *Ceremony* the stories stayed in our bellies. The stories found shelter in our bellies and in turn we found shelter in the stories and they gave us strength when homesickness hit us hard. And homesickness did hit me hard at times during my stay at the residential school.

The *Earth Diver* (Moses 2012) is an example of fusion literature; it is a mixture of several creation stories, *Thought Woman* (Silko), *Spider Woman* (Hopi), *Earth Diver* (Robinson, 20) and

Earth Diver (Eeyou, Naskapi, Innu versions from the Algonquian oral traditions). For Coyote character, the inspiration was found in Harry Robinson and Thomas King. The character of Muskrat comes from Eeyou oral tradition, *The Boy who had head lice.* A written version is found in Emily Masty's (1998) *Telling a story about storytelling* and in an oral form narrated by my late grandfather John Blackned.

The story of *Earth Diver* is my re-creation, my re-imagination of the Creation story found in many Indigenous groups of the Americas. It represents a fusion of oral literature, our oral stories and the written ones. In our collective memory, part of collective imagination there is space, many spaces where we borrow from one another. Borrowing is an authentic Indigenous adaptive mechanism to enhance and make our cultures vibrant and alive. The mechanism was used to make our stories come alive. Do not ask me how I know this, all I can say I have always known to be this way. The storytelling way is how you become an apprentice to a family member, a grandmother, a grandfather, an aunt or another relative. As you become more skilled then you move from your family to other people within your entourage and your community, people within your tribe.

The influence of the oral tradition is that the story begins with how many characters there are and a rough estimate of the age of the characters (e.g. still a young man). Age is generally described as developmental stage or life stage and not by date of birth or number of years.

The characters are described, if at all, in a simplistic manner. In other words there is no description of characters as in physical description that you would normally find in the western style literature. It is up to the listener to creatively imagine the physical description of the

character in their imagination. The characters are generally described in terms of their kinship relations with one another. Then a stranger comes into the story.

Generally there is description of the setting, if there is one it is very sketchy, just a bare minimum is being offered by the storyteller. This device is used to offer the listener creativity of imagination; in other words, this device is used to permit the listener to creatively imagine in their mind the characters and the setting. These are based on lived experience as a listener of the ancient and sacred stories as a child and as an adult.

The stories generally go off on tangents, many non sequiturs; this part may disconcert a person, a reader used to the western style of writing and literature.

One can state that this oral literature is very simplistic in describing characters and setting and that there is no plot, and the story goes off on a tangent, and that it is convoluted. These stories from oral tradition do appear that way when one uses the Western style lens and perspective in examining, analysing and interpreting them. The readers may ask, "What is this? This is not literature." "The characters are simplistic, the storyline is simplistic" may be some of the reactions of the Western style readers when they read the books that are influenced by the oral tradition.

Now I move to specific analysis of John Blackned's story of *How the Wolf came to be*. At the beginning of the story we are told that there is an old man and his wife and they lived with their two sons. We are informed that the eldest son is already an adult because he already knows how to make a canoe and once in a while he goes hunting with his father when his mother cannot accompany their father. This also means that since the eldest son has developed the hunting skills

and tool making skills (e.g. making a canoe) he is now old enough to marry and start his own family.

Whereas the youngest son is still very young and he is a very sensitive character because he likes to cry a lot. That he is very dependent on his parents and his older brother to look after him and to care for him.

At the beginning of the story we are told of the number of people in the household, their social relationship, or their kinship relation, the gender and the age of the people and their collaboration with one another. The age is measured in term of the life stage not in terms of years, birth years.

In this story it is the mother who is teaching her sons. And she is doing this teaching through storytelling; that is, she is telling stories to her sons in order to teach them about life, teaching and telling life lessons.

Stories tell us who we were and they inform us of who we are

Stories tell us what we were and they still inform us of what we are

Stories tell us how we were and they still inform us of how we are

Stories tell us where we were and the stories still inform us of where we are going

As an adult, your focus and the interpretation of the story shifts from a child to an adult character. You focus on the adult characters in the story and their relationship to one another and how they behave with one another. For example the character, *Addush* embodies and represents the struggle of the good and the bad. (He kills and eats people). However, *Addush* still has some good qualities in him when he shows compassion to the abandoned child. Eventually he gets to

love the child, in this sense he is still able to re-establish good relations with human beings. He still has human qualities in him. *Addush* are believed to be human at first but once they taste and eat human flesh then they become *Addush*. This explanation sounds very simplistic; but there is a whole state of being that needs to be further explored in another study. The relationship of human and non-human also needs more examination than is done in this study. Space does not permit me to do so at this point.

The role of the mother is as an intermediary between the world of humans and non-humans and to temporarily establish "good" relations between the human and nonhuman world. With her help the two archenemies arrive at a compromise that both can temporarily live with. For a few days they lived close to each other but they did not interact with each other. The implicit notion is that only the young boy interacts with his father (the world of human beings) and *Addush* (the world of Non-humans). In this world of Non-humans it is believed that they were once human beings but they did something terrible. And through these terrible acts Animals lost those characteristics of being human. One terrible act would be eating human flesh.

Eeyou had different magical powers and they had animals and birds as their helpers to perform these magical deeds. Spirit helpers (animals, birds, things) could have magical power, objects possessed inherent magical and mystical powers as observed in the young man who put a magical object in the canoe. That magical power was in the form of a sound that enthralled the old man and put him in a trance and his attention was only focused on this.

His obsession to kill his son-in-law as he did to the previous ones blinded the father-in-law from clearly seeing that his son-in-law had that same intention and that the son-in-law was also working his wives; that he had recruited his new wives as accomplices in killing the old man.

The wives agreed to the plan to kill their father because they wanted to stay married to their new husband and had formed a loyalty to their new husband and in the process, betrayed their father and at the same time exacted revenge for the murders of their previous husbands and children.

One of the themes that is present in both my late grandfather's story and my aunt Florrie's story is the magical and mystical powers in animal, birds, and living things. Magical power within objects is inherent and this magical power happens when a person comes into contact with it through the senses (in this case, the sense is hearing just like in Homer's Iliad: the singing of the sirens can put you in a magical state; you will be hypnotised by the magical sound). The magical sound can put a person into a trance. And they lose contact with their senses and in the process they lose contact with the everyday reality of our world.

Another theme that is prevalent in the ancient and sacred stories is the killing or eliminating of others in order to restore balance and harmony. In my aunt Florrie's story, the restoration of harmony is done when the husband kills the Giant Porcupine in order to get back his wife. In this sense, this killing is to restore balance and harmony in their life as a couple.

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Now she is supposed to be writing about the conclusion and the implications. What does she have to say about story?

What she has to say is that the stories are still here and they still operate in *Eeyou* language. My family who has inherited these stories are still passing down these stories to the next generation. The different types of stories are being transmitted but the genre that is passed down is the *diibaachiimuun* type, the life story, family history, the cautionary tales, how to be safe while hunting, *Eeyou Ituuhwin* (Cree way of life) are the types of stories that are being passed down.

Eeyou way of life has changed dramatically since the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, known in Cree as *Niskumoon*, which means Agreement.

Interruptions

"Now what can you conclude about these stories?" asks Minnie.

What else can I conclude about these stories?

The stories of my late grandparents and my aunts are ancient and sacred. The stories are used as teaching tools for young and old. My stories are a blend of the traditions of the oral and the contemporary western tradition. I mix the Cree oral tradition with contemporary issues affecting the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and more specifically, *Eeyou* eastern James Bay Cree.

Some of these, like my aunt Florrie's stories, are accessible in school. They were recorded by the Cree School Board and are used in Cree language classes both at the elementary and secondary schools; however the use of these stories is not consistent and may depend on the preference of a teacher and a school.

I do not know whether I was able to adequately capture and explain the effects of my Indian residential school experience on the cultural transmission of our oral tradition.

I was born into a family of storytellers: my great grandmother, my grandmother and her siblings (my grandfathers) were all gifted storytellers. I grew up in that storytelling environment and at a very young age I was fascinated by this world of storytelling, especially the ancient and sacred stories. The ancient and sacred stories were and are my favourite ones. My world was disrupted at the age of five when I was abducted, like thousands of Indigenous children of the

Americas, from my family, grandparents and community. This rich storytelling environment is what I was deprived of while I was at the Residential School.

Interruptions

"What further does she have to say?" Minnie says.

"Well, what she has to say is this," I say.

Further research is needed on whether Cree schools use these resources, the recorded stories of the late John Blackned, storyteller, Florrie Mark Stewart and other *Eeyou*/Cree storytellers. How are the stories used? Who uses the stories and for what purpose? Where are the stories used? When are the stories used? Further research is needed in developing curriculum in Indigenous stories and making it accessible to schools. Further research is also needed in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the Indigenous story curriculum.

Implications

What are some implications of this inquiry?

What implications does this research have for higher education?

What implications does this research have on *Eeyou*/Cree education?

This research has implications for Language Arts courses, for example *Eeyou*/Cree stories can be used in Language Arts class as a reading and writing program at the elementary and secondary levels.

This research has also implications in higher education for Indigenous Studies, First Peoples Studies, Ethnic Studies Programs or Literature Classes where one can introduce these stories as part of the oral literatures in a literature program. In terms of research on Residential school system, the lived experience of Residential School Survivors is just as important as written documentation.

Development of sensitivity protocol (sensitivity of subject matter)

In order to minimize the continued negative effects and impacts on former Indian residential school survivors and to minimise the feeling of objectivation and theorisation of our Indian residential school experience, my recommendation is to develop a protocol when talking about Indian Residential School system.

This protocol can take the following form:

At the beginning of a talk/presentation a presenter/researcher/academic asks if there are former IRS survivors in the audience and acknowledges their presence and also mentions potential emotional harm may occur due the subject matter that will be discussed. There is a need of a guideline to discuss this matter that is conducive to healing for former residential school survivors.

As a former Indian Residential School Survivor I believe that intellectualisation, generalisation, theorisation of our experiences further alienates us instead of promoting healing from the traumatic experience of residential school experience. It is also a tool to further silence us. This objectivation of our experiences has a similar effect as those institutions that abducted us from our parents, grandparents and our community.

Now the academics, the researchers (myself included), intellectuals know better than us how our identity should be, how we should be feeling about these negative experiences, whether we became good parents are not, whether we have and/or become alcoholic because of this experience, whether our lives will be mired in violence, drugs and alcohol, lack of parental skills.

Interruptions

"Where are your other stories?" asks Minnie.

"What? You mean the ones about," paused Coyote quite puzzled at the same time.

"About our resilience, our stories of resilience, where are the success story, the stories of resilience? Is that what you are asking me?" asks Coyote.

"Yep, yes, those are the ones I mean. Where are they?" Minnie wanting to know.

Because we do not own that experience and someone else takes that experience and knows better what the impact and effects that Residential School experience had on our lives. In this sense it is like the Indian agent who knew better what was best for us.

My suggestion in dealing with Indigenous research in terms of requesting permission:

First, the permission and request to conduct research in the spoken language, preferably in an Indigenous language especially if the Elder(s)'s first language is an Indigenous language,

Second, the written permission should be in an *Indigenous language*.

Third, the written permission should be in the *colonial* language. In this case the colonial language is English.

Fourth, the research community need to know that the colonial version is a translation and it is not the *original* version. The original version is the *Indigenous language***.**

What I expect is my dissertation to become a dust collector. As in the many reports that were and continue to be produced and once they are done and presented and discussed they get shelved and that is the end of them. Forgotten and collecting dust. As in my monograph stored in a university library collecting dust. That is what I expect of my dissertation. The stories, however, contained in this inquiry will become alive because I will continue to perform, read and tell them to the next generation as language arts presentations at our local school.

I go back to my traditional *Eeyou* roots of storytelling and I say again. My position is that the stories need to be seen within their paradigm and not the Western paradigm. To do that, Indigenous people need to study and research, analyse and interpret these stories within their proper context. The stories are meant to be heard within their Indigenous context and paradigm. We need to look at them within their own philosophy/worldview, within their own paradigm, within their own category.

PART IV

A-Minnie concludes her storytelling journey for now

SURVIVANCE IS THE CONTINUANCE OF STORIES

(Vizenor, 2008, p.1))

Interruptions

Survivance as a narrative resistance? Is that what this is about all along? You did that and you didn't even know it, only at the end of this journey!

"Ever complicated your story."

"Yeah! I could make it even more complicated."

"How can you even make it more complicated as it is right now? People are confused! Stories are tangled up in cobwebs here and there."

"By writing all my dissertation comments, your disruptions, in my Indigenous language."

"Remind me. What's your Indigenous language again?"

"Eeyou Iiyiimuun."

"What's that Eeyou something?"

"In English it' means Cree language, like in Thompson Highway's, oh yeah, it's Tomson 'without the "p"' and Louise Sky Dancer Halfe's writings.

"I forgot that important language ..." [inaudible]

I think you're trying to be difficult. That's what I think." Minnie muttering and very unhappy with the situation.

"I'm not! I'm just doing what other storytellers are saying and doing!"

As Dana Clayton puts it, "It is about aboriginalising our stories" and "creating a red space" (as cited in Jones, 2007). And Rodger Ross, a filmmaker, says it this way, "Our stories are our stories" and "We don't need to be babysat." "We're good enough to be looking in." In other words, we don't need our stories to be "reconfigured." "We're good to tell them as they are or we can tell them as they are" (Jones, 2008).

I do not know whether I was able to adequately capture and explain the effects of my Indian residential school experience on the cultural transmission of our oral tradition. I go back to my storytelling roots and I say again.

I was born into a family of storytellers: my great grandmother, my grandmother and her siblings (my grandfathers) were all gifted storytellers. I grew up in that storytelling environment and at a very young age I was fascinated in this world of storytelling, especially the ancient and sacred stories. The ancient and sacred stories were and are my favourite ones. My world was disrupted at the age of five when I was abducted, like thousands of other Indigenous children of this continent, from my family, grandparents and community. I was deprived of this rich storytelling environment while I was at the Indian Residential School.

My late grandmother Louisa used to end her stories (in a humorous way) and Coyote and I end this story the same way.

Our stories become the colour of Red Ochre

The Earth!

The North Wind kisses our faces and

blows thousand kisses

We dance the Mikushan with Nikishan, Chikapesh, Miicheshii-Eskeu and all others who danced on this Earth before Ishiiyiyuu came and decided this was good place for us to be

This land was a good place to tell our stories.

And this is where we have been since

Eeyouch/Eenouch

e diibaachiimuuik piya e aaddiiyuucheik!

Its s urvivance

Story is Word Word is Story

Word became Story Story became Word

Word is Story became Word

Story is Word became Story

Word is Story

Story is Word

Piyeuuitchs e diimuukuudead!

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Glossary

Addiiyuukan: Ancient and sacred stories

Chish-tuuhii-kiin: where the poles of the tepee meet & symbolic representation between the inside and outside world

Diibaachiimuun: More recent stories such as landscape story, life story, family history, events, gossip, birth announcements, and wedding announcements

Eeyou/Eeyouch, Eenou/Eenouch: our designation for ourselves, eastern James Bay Cree

Eeyou Iiyimuun: Cree language.

Ishiiyiyuu; Ancestor of present day Eeyou/Eeyouch

Kwikwhaatchesh: Young Wolverine

Miicheshii–Eskeu: Fox Woman

Miidjwap: teepee

Midduukan: winter dwelling covered in sphagnum moss

Midduudsaankuumkw: domed-dwelling

Shkwaw-tem: the door of a teepee

Shindaken: twine