"GOKUM SHOWED ME HOW": FOUR CREE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE MAINTENANCE

BY

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Abstract

Eighty percent of Indigenous children in Canada attend provincial schools off-reserve where there is no legal requirement for inclusion of Indigenous language or content in the curriculum. This has implications for the twin challenges currently faced by Indigenous communities in Canada of maintaining traditional cultures and languages while also overcoming a large gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. While the challenges are well understood, there has been little research into these issues from the perspective of the primary stakeholders in education: children. This qualitative study explores the perspectives of four Cree children, their family members, and some teachers through a critical, social constructivist lens in the context of a James Bay Cree community in northern Quebec, Canada. This study asks, "How do Cree children who live on a reserve and attend non-Indigenous schools, and their families, make space for the expression and maintenance of their language and culture in daily life?" The data analysed include a 'photovoice' project conducted with the four students, and focus group discussions held with the children, their families, and teachers. The findings demonstrate that families maintain Cree traditions through land-based activities like hunting, supported by intergenerational teaching within the family. Although participants expressed cautious optimism for language maintenance, students and parents perceived that Cree knowledge has no place outside of Cree communities. Teachers felt constrained by their lack of confidence, resources or government mandate for including Cree content. Overall, between Indigenous communities' twin challenges of culture maintenance and school achievement, achievement appears to be valued more highly by some parents and teachers. These findings have implications for how we understand the ongoing effects of colonization, globalization, and the hegemony of dominant languages and cultures in Indigenous education.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal[1] communities in Canada face significant challenges to maintain and protect their traditional language and culture in a globalized world. Simultaneously, these communities, in conjunction with schools and governments, are attempting to reduce the shocking disparity in achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. This study touches on both of these challenges, offering an insight into the experiences of four James Bay Cree children, their family members, and teachers from their schools.

In some on-reserve schools in Canada, immersion and bilingual programs have been introduced in an attempt to maintain Aboriginal languages and align curriculum with traditional beliefs and knowledge, although research has highlighted continued underlying suppression of Aboriginal ways of knowing through institutional bias and provincial pressure on school boards (Visser & Fovet, 2014). In non-Aboriginal, off-reserve schools in Canada, where over 80% of First Nations students are educated, no guidelines are in place to encourage the inclusion of Aboriginal content in curricula (Richards & Scott, 2009). What does this mean for the maintenance of language and culture in First Nations across Canada? How do children/youth and their families feel about this reality, and respond to it?

This project explores these wider questions in the context of a James Bay Cree community in the north of Quebec, Canada. The project asks, "How do Cree youth attending non-native schools, and their families, make spaces for the expression and maintenance of their native language and culture in daily life?"

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[1] In Canada, the term 'Aboriginal' refers to three distinct groups recognized as Indigenous in the *Constitution Act* of 1982; First Nations, Métis and the Inuit (Assembly of First Nations, 2016). In this research I primarily use the term 'Aboriginal,' which is preferred in Canadian literature as it includes all original inhabitants of the region (Yellow Bird, 1999). The term 'First Nations' is also an accepted way of referring to members of the Cree Nation, and is used at times in this research. As quotations from the interviews show, some participants also self-identified as 'Native,' a term which has grown in popularity since the 1980's in Canada (Yellow Bird, 1999).

Furthermore,

- What (and who) do the participants report as helping or hindering their efforts to create and maintain spaces for the expression of Cree language and culture?

- How do youth and their families envisage the future of Cree language and culture maintenance?

Using a community-based participatory research model with photovoice as a starting point for focus group discussions, I worked with Cree children/youth and families to reflect upon and share their experiences of off-reserve schooling, in the hope that these stories may also help to inform the attitudes and actions of other stakeholders in the education of Cree children/youth, including teachers and parents.

Context of the research

The state of Aboriginal education in Canada. Education in Canadian First Nations schools is widely accepted to be in crisis (Mendelson, 2008; Visser & Fovet, 2014). Overall academic results for Aboriginal children on reserves have failed to rise over the last decade. Only 40% of 20-24 year olds living on-reserve have graduated high school or earned an equivalent certificate, and challenges of funding and administration persist in First Nations communities across the country (Mendelson, 2008). Education levels for Aboriginal Canadians living off-reserve are above those for on-reserve individuals but still well below the Canadian mean (Richards & Scott, 2009). In the Eastern James Bay Cree community where this study took place, the Cree School Board suffers from many of the nation-wide concerns for on-reserve education, with consistently high absenteeism (22.3%) and a low graduation rate (10.9%) (Cree School Board, 2014).

In response to this crisis, some First Nations families living on reserves across Canada choose to send their children to provincial schools in nearby towns for their schooling. This,

as well as increasing urbanization, means that four out of five Canadian Aboriginal children now attend provincial schools (Richards & Scott, 2009).

The community of this study. The community of the children and families in this study is an Aboriginal reserve of around 600 inhabitants, over 95% of whom identify as Cree, and hold Canadian Aboriginal status (Statistics Canada, 2007). Located in the region of Nord-Du-Quebec, James Bay Cree refer to themselves as Eeyou, and their territory—comprising nine communities—as Eeyou Istchee.

While English (and/or French) are increasingly used by younger generations, 91.2% of local adults identify Cree as their mother tongue, and 69.9% speak mainly Cree at home (Statistics Canada, 2007). The English spoken in the community is Cree Indigenous English, a dialect distinct from Standard English in terms of lexicon, morphological, phonological, syntax, pragmatic, and nonverbal features (Sterzuk, 2011).

In the on-reserve school, graduation rates are low, truancy rates are high, and incidents of bullying and violence among students are frequent (Visser & Fovet, 2014). Students do, however, have one hour a day of Cree language class, are surrounded by art and resources designed by and for First Nations, and interact, often in Cree, with teachers and other staff members who are Cree.

The community in this study is one of the southernmost James Bay Cree reserves, and one of only two with a non-Aboriginal town close enough (one hour away by car) to send children to school as an alternative to the on-reserve school. Doing so is not without sacrifices however; it requires a significant monthly fee for a private bus service, two hours of travel time daily and the absence of Cree language and culture classes.

Situating myself as a researcher. An important aspect of scholarship in Aboriginal contexts is being transparent about the culture and worldview which has shaped us, as well as our motivations for pursuing the research. Absolom and Willet (2004) stress the importance

of locating oneself, both in the ongoing process of interacting with the Indigenous community in which research is being conducted, and in the sharing of learning in a written or presented paper. Researchers must place themselves and their work in a relational context, recognizing the impact of personal background and beliefs (Wilson, 2008). For me, this includes remaining aware of my privileged background from within the dominant culture of my society.

I am a Pākehā (non-Māori New Zealander) woman from a middle class family. I grew up mainly in Christchurch, in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. I am of English and Scottish heritage, and grew up hearing about ancestors who settled in New Zealand between three and five generations ago.

I loved school and achieved well. In retrospect, the comfort and sense of belonging I felt at school may be because, as a member of the dominant culture, I never had to make an adjustment from my home life to public life (Delpit, 1995). Coming from a middle-class, book-loving, Pākehā family, my culture was reflected in the school and the curriculum I encountered (Cummins, 2001). After studying literature and languages, I became a primary school teacher and worked in a culturally diverse intermediate school outside of Wellington for several years before moving to Canada. In this initial teaching experience, I became more aware of the differences in communication, learning and interaction style among children from different cultural backgrounds, although I did not yet connect this to the way in which my own implicit valuing of certain modes over others impacted upon students' experiences of school and their academic outcomes.

After moving to Canada, I began teaching in a Cree community in the James Bay region of northern Quebec, approximately 9 hours' drive north of Montreal. During almost three years spent teaching in the elementary school, I have become aware of the wealth of traditional knowledge and skills in the community. Previously, as a member of the dominant

culture in a settler country, I rarely had cause to question my own modes of learning and interacting. Now, in a cultural minority for the first time in my life—one of only a few non-Cree people living on the reserve—I found myself frequently clumsy and inappropriate in my attempts to communicate, and struggled to meet community norms adequately.

Motivation for the research. An early experience that shaped my understanding of the diversity of ways of being and conceptualising learning came when I attended a moose hide tanning workshop. The middle-aged Cree man teaching the workshop spoke little, instead showing me the steps and expecting me to observe and absorb the necessary actions from his example. Used to verbally-supported instruction, I asked clarifying questions which seemed to surprise and distract him, and to which I often did not receive answers.

In my position teaching at the school I began to notice distinctly Cree ways of being and knowing in the students I taught. The importance of Elders quickly became obvious; the first word I learned in the Cree language – on my first day teaching – was 'Gokum,' meaning 'Grandmother'. I also felt personally challenged by the independent nature of the children, and envious of the Cree teachers, who seemed able to effortlessly teach using a non-coercive leadership approach.

After visiting a non-Cree school in the town one hour away, I became intrigued by the experiences of children who leave the community to attend school off the reserve. This interest aligned with the priorities for research of my Advisory Committee—discussed further in the methodology section—and I therefore chose to focus my inquiry on the ways in which children from Cree families experience off-reserve schooling, and how they make space in daily life for language and culture maintenance.

Theoretical background to the research

I sought to maintain a critical, social constructionist stance throughout the research process. Social constructionism entails being aware that jointly constructed understandings of

the world form the basis for our assumptions about reality, and knowledge is sustained

through social processes. Scholarship from a critical perspective "positions itself as about

critiquing and transforming existing social relations." (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9).

Adopting a critical stance, an individual "attempts to use his or her work as a form of social

or cultural criticism, [accepting] basic assumptions that all thought is fundamentally mediated

by power relations that are socially or historically constituted" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008,

pp. 404-405).

Paulo Freire asserted that oppression of some groups in society is ongoing through

education structured with the cultural norms and worldviews of the dominant group (2000).

Freire's Critical Pedagogy questions the systems of belief and action maintained by the

power structures of society and acted out in schools, asking *who benefits*? (Burbules & Berk,

1999). This approach focuses on praxis, and pursues goals of social justice in education by

challenging schooling practices that privilege those students whose identities fit within

existing normative discourses and practices of education (Edgeworth, 2015).

Many Aboriginal researchers see critical theory as aligning with decolonizing efforts,

as it seeks to critique constructed 'common sense' concepts that have been used to oppress

and maintain inequalities for Aboriginal peoples (Smith, 1999). This approach is consistent

with the current study, in which aspects of established education practice, such as restrictive

language policies and monoculture curricula, are examined from the perspective of Cree

participants.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the rationale and motivation for the current research,

along with the questions to be explored. I have also outlined the contexts for this study: both

literal (a James Bay Cree community in northern Quebec, Canada), and theoretical (social

constructionism and Critical Pedagogy). The following chapter will provide a review of the

literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

      This literature review examines the scholarship relating to the study. I begin with a

definition of culture and intra-/intercultural relations, before briefly describing James Bay

Cree territory, history and culture. I then set the study in historical context, detailing the

impact of colonisation in Canada on education through different eras. Subsequently, the ways

in which education reinforces inequalities through cultural dominance are analysed with

reference to post-colonial theory. The fifth and final section discusses the challenge of

maintaining Aboriginal culture and language. As this literature review demonstrates,

colonialism is far from over, and Aboriginal communities in Canada continue to be

influenced by the dominance of Western language and culture in and through the education

system.

Culture

      There are probably few words with as many definitions as culture (Bonner, 1980).

Culture has been described as a moving target which we accept as ambiguous and suggestive

rather than precise due to the complexity of what it represents; "it reflects and encapsulates

the muddles of life" (Skelton & Allen, 1999, p. 4). Because culture is replicated over

generations, it has been described as "the intellectual inheritance of a society" (Gilroy, 1993,

p. 8).

      Barnett and Lee (2002) synthesize a range of definitions to suggest that culture is:

> a group's shared collective meaning system through which the group's collective
> values, attitudes, beliefs, customs and thoughts are understood. (…) Culture may be
> taken to be a consensus about the meaning of symbols, verbal and nonverbal, held by
> a community (277).

      Culture is not a stand-alone, objective body of knowledge and values, however.

Culture frames our perception of the world and of our position within that world, giving us a

framework with which to satisfy what Said (1978) calls "the mind's demand for order" (p.

54). This is related to the human tendency to use culture to intensify its sense of itself by exaggerating the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away (Said, 1978).

Cultures are not static, and change and variation is evident within cultural groups and across generations (Bristol, 2012). This interaction has been characterised as cultural borrowings or "gifts one culture offers to another culture" (Harris, 1998, p. 29). The space in which two or more cultures meet and exchange these cultural understandings has been deemed by Torres Strait Islander scholar Martin Nakata as "the cultural interface" (2002, p. 27). Nakata (2002) notes that for Aboriginal people in postcolonial societies,

> traditional forms and ways of knowing, or the residue of those, that we bring from the pre-contact historical trajectory inform how we think and act and so do Western ways, and for many of us a blend of both has become our lifeworld. (p. 27).

Nakata further notes that spending centuries interacting at the cultural interface has not meant Aboriginal people always passively accepting the culture of the Other, rather it implies operating in a state of constant negotiation where a variety of responses— "rejection, resistance, subversiveness, pragmatism, ambivalence, accommodation, participation, co-operation"—can be and have been used (p. 27).

An understanding of this complex space inhabited by Aboriginal people is crucial to this research project which is situated at the interface between Cree and wider Canadian views about education, child-raising, and what it means to be successful as a Cree person in 2016.

The James Bay Cree

Aboriginal groups are not a single-minded, monolithic entity (Frideres, 2008), and there is significant variation in the history, cultures, languages and beliefs of different First Nations even within the same geographical region. For this reason, and to provide contextual

information about the setting – physical and cultural – of this study, this section gives an overview of the James Bay Cree Nation.

The James Bay Cree are a Canadian Aboriginal Nation whose traditional territory, 'Eeyou Istchee', is spread across 450,000 square kilometres, or two-thirds the size of France (The Grand Council of the Crees, 2011), and is now populated by around 16,410 inhabitants (Cree Board of Health and Social Services, 2013). James Bay Cree speak Eastern Cree, from the Algonquin language family. In the 19th century, a written form of the language, called Cree Syllabics, was created by adapting the symbols developed for Ojibway by an English missionary in the 1840s (Burnaby, 2002).

Traditionally, Cree lived nomadically, moving seasonally between hunting camps, and meeting other groups during the summer months. For most Cree, this nomadic lifestyle continued after contact with European settlers until well into the twentieth century, despite the efforts of missionaries and trading posts to establish sedentary settlements (Carlson, 2008). Several of the nine modern-day communities eventually developed near to Hudson Bay trading posts where Cree and fur-traders met for commerce (Visser & Fovet, 2014).

The relationship of inter-dependence with the land, exemplified by the centrality of hunting activities, is crucial to Cree culture both historically and today, a fact that has been described extensively by Cree and non-Native writers (Carlson, 2008; Visser & Fovet, 2014). In James Bay Cree communities, the calendar continues to be based around the hunting cycle, such as the important periods of Moose Break and Goose Break, which fall in late autumn and early spring respectively, and during which time community spaces empty as families go out to their bush camps.

Carlson describes the Cree commitment to Eeyou Istchee as "a complex relationship between land and people, where neither one has control of the other, and where 'land' means not just ground but all the various beings with whom the Cree interact" (2008, p. 4). Some

Aboriginal scholars assert that this relationship is part of a holistic worldview with a "fluid, integral sense of existence and a framework for generating, sustaining and applying knowledge about the physical and metaphysical world" (Ouellette, 2011).

In Cree culture, oral history—a collective history told through stories—is an important component of understanding the world. While Western cultures emphasise written sources, oral traditions are transmitted through intergenerational family relationships and community interactions (Des Jarlais, 2008).

Colonisation and Education in Canada

The history of education in Eeyou Istchee over the last several centuries reflects Canada's colonial history from the days of pre-contact traditional learning; to the fur trade period bringing some limited contact with Hudson Bay Trading Posts and missionaries; to the dark chapter in Canadian history of the Indian Residential Schools; to the creation of the Cree-controlled Cree School Board (CSB), founded and developed by local activists (Visser & Fovet, 2014).

Pre-Contact: Cree ways of teaching Cree knowledge. Pre-contact Eastern Cree teaching began with a period of parental indulgence and affection, followed by 'slow apprenticeship' in the community where children learned from experts through observation until competence was reached (Preston, 1979). Methods of teaching and learning among James Bay Cree are context-driven, are based on observation, story-telling and hands-on experience, and take place over extended periods of time according to learners' intrinsic motivation. (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994; Ouellette, 2011; Visser & Fovet, 2014).

The geographic isolation of the James Bay Cree allowed for a fairly long, uninterrupted continuation of traditional practices, with communities frequently restricting contact with trading posts and missionaries (Carlson, 2008). As a result of this isolation, as well as admirable cultural resilience in the face of colonising efforts, the James Bay Cree

have historically been able to safeguard their language from external weakening influences to a greater extent than other Canadian First Nations (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994). Analysis of census data in the mid-1980s (Burnaby & Beaujot, 1986) found that James Bay Cree were maintaining their language more effectively than anywhere else in Canada.

1870s – 1990s: Indian Residential Schools. This ability to maintain the language is even more remarkable given the damage caused by the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system, active from 1879 until the 1990s. These institutions were an instrument for the destruction of Aboriginal culture and language, by intending to isolate children from the influence of their communities (Titley, 1986).

The IRS were "total institutions" (Assembly of First Nations, 2011, p. 3), where every aspect of children's lives, including their appearance, speech, diet and daily activities were subject to strict control by the staff, often members of various Christian denominations. Total institutions have been described as "unmaking the people over whom they gain control," (Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 1997, p. 91), an aim that is clear from the writings of Duncan Campbell Scott, first superintendent of Canadian residential schools: "Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed" (Milloy, 1999).

This same superintendent acknowledged in 1913 that due to the poor conditions in housing and diet, causing widespread tuberculosis outbreaks within many schools, "fifty percent of the children…did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein" (quoted in (Milloy, 1999, p. 51). Death by beating, suicide, fire, and freezing after attempting to run away have also been documented (Grant, 1996).

The IRS system is now considered to have committed cultural and biological genocide (Chrisjohn et al., 1997; Churchill, 2004; Mundorff, 2009). Mundorff (2009) notes that childrearing is the quintessential process that ethnic groups perform to perpetuate their

culture. Removing children forcibly therefore constitutes a genocidal attack as powerful as direct killings; "such techniques, like a time-bomb, destroy by delayed action" (Mundorff, 2009, p. 117).

The IRS legacy is crucial to understanding Aboriginal experiences of education today. The intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations communities (Assembly of First Nations, 1994), and the struggle to maintain Aboriginal languages stem from the practices of the IRS (Kroskrity & Field, 2009). All the children in this study have family members who attended residential schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 2009 to provide a forum for determining and sharing what occurred in the IRS system, and to lay the foundation for reconciliation based on mutual respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). After hearing from more than 6000 witnesses across the country, the TRC published detailed accounts of survivors' experiences, along with recommendations for changes to be made at the federal, provincial and local level (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

1980 onwards: The Cree School Board and local alternatives. The Cree School Board (CSB), established in 1978 by Cree education activists, was one of the first Canadian Aboriginal institutions to exert full pedagogical, financial, and political control over education policies and administration (Visser & Fovet, 2014). After the Cree School Board was formed, grassroots language immersion programmes in schools began and culminated in the Cree Language in Instruction Program which was implemented in the 1990s.

Inequality in, and through, education

Early critiques: Freire and Bourdieu. In 1970, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Bourdieu's *Reproduction* were published, both seminal texts independently drawing attention to the fact that education in its current form reproduces class relations in society.

Freire demonstrated that external oppression can become internal oppression, with the dominant culture's worldview and attitudes influencing the way members of a minority views themselves (Freire, 2000). This phenomenon has been identified in Canadian Aboriginal communities, particularly as a result of the residential schools' assimilative agenda (Neegan, 2005).

Similarly, Bourdieu (1990) viewed education as a tool for maintaining class inequalities. Success is dependent upon a student's 'cultural capital'—their familiarity with the dominant culture and ability to understand and use the dominant dialect—which is generally not possessed by lower class pupils, making their failure inevitable (Grenfell & James, 1998). Success or failure in education is generally viewed from a meritocratic perspective, which legitimises the institutional mechanisms producing ongoing social inequality (Grenfell & James, 1998).

These approaches are relevant to the case at hand, as Canadian Aboriginal peoples have experienced centuries of oppression and marginalisation (Lavia & Mahlomaholo, 2012), and within the education system constitute a minority culture whose cultural capital is not generally valued.

Cultural dominance in education.

Most recent literature examining factors that contribute to lower educational attainment for Aboriginal peoples acknowledges the pervasive impact of colonisation and institutional racism. No knowledge is class, gender, and race neutral, and schools, acting as the custodians of knowledge for a society, perpetuate particular ideologies and reject others (Dei, 2011). A wealth of academic scholarship has demonstrated that schools act as microcosms of society, reflecting and reinforcing the cultural hegemonies of a society (Battiste, 2013; Delpit, 1995; Des Jarlais, 2008; Regan, 2010). This hegemony is asserted

through the official curriculum (encoded in documents) and the null curriculum (content which is excluded) (Ouellette, 2011).

The message that the dominant culture's norms and worldview is superior to that of minority cultures can be overt or covert, intentional or, more frequently, unintentional (Cummins, 2001). Differences in communication modes, for instance, can be interpreted as evidence of intelligence or lack thereof. In middle class literate culture, everything must be made very clear and knowledge explained for its own sake. In other cultures, it may be expected that you do not repeat shared knowledge, as this would be considered redundant (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Returning to the critical theory question of "who benefits?" it is clear that cultural dominance in education benefits the dominant culture, acting to maintain and reproduce inequalities within society (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

State schools in Western countries, including those with high proportions of minority students, tend to be dominated by white teachers (Landsman & Lewis, 2006). Delpit (1995) describes how those whose own (dominant) culture is reflected in the institutions around them may lack the knowledge and awareness to understand the diversity of their students. When teachers encounter students who operate from a different worldview, "they can often comprehend them only as deviants, pathologically inferior, certainly in need of 'fixing'," (Delpit, 1995, p. 74). Even well-intentioned teachers may be restricted by their institutions, or find themselves caught between opposing forces within schools; conversely, well-intentioned institutions are only as culturally-competent as the individuals who carry out their work.

Impact upon Aboriginal students. Dominant culture students can move seamlessly between homes and public institutions where similar values, worldviews and communication styles exist, leading them to believe that this reflects an objective 'reality' (Delpit, 1995). In contrast, children from minority cultures learn that to succeed at school they must become invisible and inaudible, and that their culture and language must be left at home (Cummins,

2001). The dismissal of diverse ways of knowing and being impacts upon academic achievement of minority children, as students are expected to learn in an 'experiential vacuum,' with their previous experiences deemed irrelevant or even an impediment to academic progress (Cummins, 2001, p. 12).

Involuntary minorities (groups who have been incorporated into a country against their will through colonisation, using force or manipulative politics) may adopt behaviours that are opposed to dominant group norms in order to assert identity and independence (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Aboriginal communities in Canada may also feel mistrustful of an education system that has historically attempted to destroy their culture, and respond by rejecting the system: "the importance of obtaining a good education becomes secondary to what may be perceived as a further assimilative assault on Aboriginal culture, language and traditions" (Richards, 2013, p. 5).

Underachievement of students is a concern in many Aboriginal communities worldwide, and there is a body of literature that evaluates approaches to supporting Aboriginal students. In New Zealand, the Te Kotahitanga project led by Russell Bishop (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003) used qualitative research with Māori students and their families and teachers to develop an Effective Teaching Profile, identifying elements that teachers can embed in their practice in order to promote better outcomes for Māori children and youth. Respecting and including students´ culture and language is central to this profile.

The Te Kotahitanga Project demonstrates that inclusive content increases the likelihood of students succeeding academically. Children are culturally-situated beings and education is conceived, delivered and interpreted by individuals through a filter based on their own language, culture and experiences. For students to excel, most require a relevant, meaningful curriculum that affirms the student's culture and experiences (Ball, 2004).

Aboriginal leaders and researchers alike are increasingly pushing for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural approaches to education (Ball, 2004; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003). Studies have demonstrated that schools with strong links to Aboriginal communities have higher retention rates of Aboriginal students (Myles & Mackay, 1995).

Aboriginal languages at school and in the community

Language and culture maintenance is an ongoing effort for communities around the world. The weakening of Aboriginal mother tongues, which threatens minority linguistic, cultural, and educational rights, is a direct result of colonisation (McCarty, 2003). The current hegemony, both symbolic and economic, of English (Kroskrity & Field, 2009) poses a threat to the languages of Canadian Aboriginal communities.

Language, the living museum of a culture (Nettle & Romaine, 2000), is the vehicle through which people come to know, understand, and interpret the world, and identify themselves as part of a culture (Marmion, Obata, & Troy, 2014; McCarty, 2003). Maintaining competence in an Aboriginal mother tongue allows communities to retain access to traditional information encoded in their language. Furthermore, learning an Indigenous language from infancy helps children to build a culturally cohesive identity with links to the land, elders, and their communities (Ball, 2009).

Children's language use. Language development trends among Aboriginal children are not monitored in Canada (Ball, 2009). It is clear, however, that the numbers of children speaking their mother tongue fluently are decreasing. Analysing the 2006 Census data, Norris (2006) found that only 12.4% of Indigenous children under four years of age speak an Indigenous language at home, and another 5% speak an Indigenous language as an additional language.

In the James Bay, rates of language competence among Cree children are higher than the national average for Aboriginal groups. Communities are however concerned over the

increasing dominance of French or English, particularly in those communities which are close to non-Aboriginal towns, which is the case for the community in this study (Cree School Board, 1997).

Linguistic profiles of Aboriginal children. Although a greater availability of recent statistics may indicate that this has shifted, James Bay Cree is still classified as a Category A language, meaning that it is still being learned by a high proportion of children in the traditional way (Krauss, 1996). This makes it rare within Canada, where only 30% of indigenous languages are now spoken by children (Krauss, 1996).

The linguistic profiles of Aboriginal students are varied and complex; they may enter school speaking the Native language as a primary language, have a receptive understanding of the language, or have no language proficiency at all (McCarty, 2003). Hornberger's (2003) receptive-productive continuum differentiates between those who can only speak or write a language, those who can only read or listen to a language, and those who fall somewhere in between. Some scholars see a link between the dominance of receptive language skills among younger generations and language loss (Krauss, 1996; Meek, 2007).

Translanguaging. The benefits of speaking multiple languages are now widely accepted (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009). Despite this, multilingual practices like codeswitching remain stigmatised, often discouraged or forbidden in schools (Troike, 2008).

 Bilingual communities code-switch "because they have at their disposal more than one code" (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009, p. 295). Codeswitching is the act of moving between two or more languages or linguistic codes within one utterance or one conversation (Palmer, 2009). Increasingly scholars embraced the term *translanguaging* (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009) to encompass the full range of multilingual practices.

Translanguaging is a natural part of bilingual speech, often occurring unconsciously as people communicate within their speech community. When interacting outside of that

language community, translanguaging can be an important way of expressing identity (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Language and culture maintenance within communities. Much research on Aboriginal language maintenance focuses on the initiatives of communities and on-reserve schools, with scholars suggesting that the best hope for preserving Aboriginal languages lies in those schools "under at least a modicum of Indigenous community control" (García & Baker, 2007, p. 36). This is evident in the James Bay region, where research has been conducted on the Cree Language in Instruction (CLIP) programme implemented—and subsequently pulled back—in Cree School Board institutions from the 1980s onwards (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994; Visser & Fovet, 2014).

Bilingual and immersion programmes in on-reserve schools have been advocated for and studied in-depth, with many showing positive results in terms of not only maintaining language but also empowering students to succeed academically as proud Aboriginal individuals (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009; Kroskrity & Field, 2009).

James Bay Cree communities have proposed language maintenance strategies including "Elders in the teaching" (Cree School Board, 1997). This is in line with intergenerational teaching, although some scholars suggest that this approach leads children to view heritage languages as solely the domain of grandparents and other Elders (Meek, 2007).

Inclusion of Aboriginal languages in non-Aboriginal schools. In Canada, provincial schools are under no obligation to include Aboriginal language or content. One Report of the Auditor General (2000) found that "the Department does not have the necessary assurance that First Nations students are receiving culturally appropriate education" (2000, p. 5). In fact, Quebec is the largest province in Canada without any specific Aboriginal curriculum

(Ouellette, 2011). This lack of inclusiveness has been criticised by numerous government and academic studies (Assembly of First Nations, 2011; Auditor General, 2000; Faries, 2009).

The Canadian province with the highest graduation rates of Aboriginal students is British Colombia (BC); 38.5% of Aboriginal students have not completed K-12 schooling in BC, compared with 47.4% in Quebec (Richards, 2013). In BC, provincial school boards are legally required to draw up Aboriginal education enhancement agreements, reporting regularly on goals to improve outcomes, and must contact local Aboriginal community members when making school policies and establishing targets for students (Richards, 2013). The goal for this, however, is primarily to improve conventional educational outcomes, rather than to preserve minority cultures and languages.

There has been ongoing academic interest in the experiences of Aboriginal students in non-Aboriginal school settings, and how this impacts upon language and culture maintenance (Ball, 2009; Delpit, 1995; Deyhle, 1995; Meek, 2007). This often foregrounds the perspective of the school, looking at the policies and structures within the institution rather than focusing on the perspectives of children and families, as this research seeks to do. Bishop et al.'s Te Kotahitanga study (2003) is a notable exception, citing students and parents extensively and often verbatim to ensure their voices are heard.

Conclusion

This section has summarised the literature in a number of areas relevant to this study, including an historical outline of colonial practices in education in Canada, the ongoing impact of these through the cultural dominance in today's schools, the linguistic and cultural diversity of young Aboriginal people today, and the efforts of Aboriginal communities to preserve their traditional language and culture in the face of globalisation. Awareness of this context allows us to better understand the comments and experiences of children in this study

in off-reserve schools, and families' motivations for, and misgivings about, the decision to educate children outside of their community.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore how four Cree students, their families, and teachers at their schools include Aboriginal language, culture and identity while the students are enrolled in Canadian provincial schools off-reserve. This chapter sets out the methodology used in the study. I begin with the theoretical underpinnings then describe the case study design, give an overview of participants, discuss ethical considerations, and finally analyse the trustworthiness of the study.

Theoretical underpinnings of the project

Qualitative research as an outsider in an ethnocultural community (where the culture of one ethnic group dominates) is a challenging task. Researchers interact with individuals and concepts within a totally different cultural and epistemological framework from their own (Nagata, Kohn-Wood, & Suzuki, 2012). Furthermore, for many Aboriginal communities the experience of being researched over centuries of academic interest has been negative (Smith, 1999).

This section briefly outlines the history of research in Aboriginal communities, epistemological differences, and the broad theories underpinning the methodology of this project. My efforts to mitigate the methodological concerns raised are outlined in the Research Design section.

Theft and misrepresentation: Research in Aboriginal communities. There is both a moral imperative and practical purpose behind the need to make research culturally-competent. Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserted in her seminal work 'Decolonizing Methodologies' (Smith, 1999) that years of research have generally failed to benefit Indigenous peoples being studied. Research has frequently been non-reciprocal; a 'stealing' of Indigenous knowledge (Smith, 1999, p. 197). Academic inquiry in the social and medical sciences has also

frequently begun from a paternalistic standpoint, positioning Aboriginal peoples as problems to be solved by external influences (Cochran et al., 2008).

Underlying the relationship between researcher and First Nations is a history of forced relocation, systematic discrimination, and expropriation of resources and territory (Menzies, 2001). Indigenous communities may be cynical about research, based on negative experiences with deficit-focused research that misrepresents local realities, even when researchers consider themselves well-intentioned (Smith, 1999). Not only does such research continue a cycle of institutional abuse of Aboriginal peoples, a failure to employ appropriate, culturally-competent methodology also damages the internal validity of the study and wastes the time of all participants (Cochran et al., 2008).

Epistemological Differences. Researchers are located at the "nexus of power in the dominant society" (Menzies, 2001, p. 22), in a position to delineate what constitutes knowledge. A Eurocentric colonialist paradigm has dominated research historically, and is implicit in many of the assumptions and protocols of much mainstream research today (Des Jarlais, 2008).

The epistemological framework of Western academic institutions have their roots in the concepts of rationalism and "value-free" inquiry that developed during the Enlightenment (Des Jarlais, 2008). A key concept of this framework is positivism, the dispassionate pursuit of decontextualized, objective principles of behaviour, usually through experimental and correlational studies using quantitative analysis (Arnett, 2008). The belief that phenomena can be objectively observed, categorised and analysed has been bolstered by the globalisation of Western culture, reaffirming the West's belief that it is the "centre of legitimate knowledge" (Smith, 1999, p. 63).

Positivism has been robustly critiqued for its focus on Western ways of knowing as the base point for all comparison, with critics arguing that it serves to maintain the status quo

of cultural and social hegemonies by establishing a false norm that positions all other experiences as deviations (Smith, 1999; Wendt & Gone, 2012). Critiques have been made by critical, feminist, constructivist and other post-modernist philosophies of science, which hold that independent, universal truth does not exist. In a constructivist epistemology, reality is socially constructed (Robson, 2002), and perceptions are framed by individuals' cultures and worldviews. Diverse ways of experiencing and understanding phenomena are inevitable and valid (Wendt & Gone, 2012).

A rejection of the dominance of Western epistemologies entails accepting that Aboriginal knowledge may be conceptualized and expressed differently. Research with and for Aboriginal peoples needs to value Aboriginal ways of knowing. For instance, the validity of storytelling is frequently highlighted by authors discussing research with Native Americans and Canadian First Nations (Menzies, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Empirical knowledge gained through observation is also considered to be of the utmost importance in many Aboriginal epistemologies (Steinhauer, 2002).

Culturally-competent research relationships. Although non-Aboriginal researchers cannot claim to fully master Aboriginal research methodologies, such approaches can and should inform and shape research efforts (Kovach, 2009). To avoid perpetuating the pattern of paternalism, (Cochran et al., 2008), research must therefore be of benefit to the community and guided by local priorities (Wilson, 2007). To achieve this, communities should be involved in setting the agenda for research (Cochran et al., 2008).

Researchers must prioritise the development and maintenance of respectful, reciprocal partnerships, where relationships are built between the community and the researcher (Wilson, 2008). Local input into research in Aboriginal communities must also be authentic (investigating a relevant, significant issue) and "from the grassroots," taking into account the

range of interests, opinions and resources in the community (Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000, p. 73).

Research Design

Prioritising local concerns for subject choice. Keeping in mind the ethical and methodological issues associated with outsider research in Aboriginal communities, I sought to prioritise and foreground Cree voices at all stages of this study. I used a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to establish my area of study before selecting a methodology.

CBPR is a methodology that prioritises positive social change and the empowerment of marginalised communities (Nagata, Suzuki, & Kohn-Wood, 2012). In effective participatory research, researchers work collaboratively with participants within a system or community to identify the problems or issues of focus.

I began a series of discussions with an 'Advisory Committee' of four Cree teachers at the local reserve school where I am employed as a Special Education teacher. These women, all experienced Cree teachers living on-reserve, shared what they considered to be the priorities for education in their community.

Concerns highlighted by the participants included students' (mis)behaviour and violence at the on-reserve school; maintenance of the Cree language and culture; and the ethnocentricity of some teaching methods used by non-Cree teachers. As discussed in the Literature Review, these concerns resonate throughout the Cree Nation and in other Aboriginal communities.

Through this consultation I became intrigued by the fact that many community members, teachers included, chose to send their children to be educated in non-Native schools where Cree curriculum is apparently inaccessible, despite their desire to maintain

Cree culture. This led me to focus my research on exploring the perspectives of Cree children attending off-reserve schools.

Research design. This research is a case study of the phenomenon of Cree children attending off-reserve schools. A case is a bounded system, and a case study seeks to understand the complex, interrelated elements that form an organized whole (Stake, 1997). The focus groups were chosen to represent the three main stakeholders in education: students, families and teachers. In this study, the focus groups are (1) four children; (2) family members of participants (three mothers, one father and a grandmother); and (3) two teachers at schools attended by participants.

Qualitative methodology was selected as it focuses on individuals' behaviour and experiences in their own environment and in a way which foregrounds individuals' and groups' own perceptions and perspectives (Fassetta, 2014; Wendt & Gone, 2012). Qualitative studies have been celebrated as contributing to a "rising tide of voices", which shares Aboriginal experiences, promotes Aboriginal knowledge and thereby resists ongoing colonisation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Photovoice was chosen as a tool for the project as it a) focuses on shared control of the research process; b) has the potential to build capacity among participants; c) is an accessible research tool; and d) has an explicit emphasis on social action (Spencer, Kohn-Wood, Dombrowski, Keeles, & Birachi, 2011). Photovoice is an active, participant-centred approach which acknowledges that members of a community are experts on issues of importance to them in their everyday life (Spencer et al., 2011).

Participants

Five Cree children were initially recruited for this study, with one child withdrawing due to time constraints before completing the Photovoice stage. (This child's mother still took part in the discussion phase however). I had lived and worked in this community for 20

months at the start of the study, and relied primarily on convenience sampling using personal contacts to recruit eligible students. In qualitative research improved understanding of complex human issues (not generalisability) is the aim, and it is therefore appropriate to use convenience sampling (Marshall, 1996).

Selection criteria included being Cree, living on the reserve, and attending school in the nearby town at the time of research. Two boys and three girls were selected, ranging in age between eight and 11 years of age at the time of the study. Four of the five children were attending an English medium school off-reserve, and the fifth child was attending a French medium school off-reserve.

The second group in this study was family members of participants. Throughout the recruitment process I communicated primarily with the mothers of the three girls and the fathers of the two boys. During the initial recruitment phase, I made contact with the schools attended by these students with the intention of gaining permission for photos to be taken at the school, if students chose to do so. One school was unwilling for this to be the case, as it violated school rules around technology at school. As a result of this, all participants were asked to photograph outside of school only.

Once informed consent had been obtained from the principals of the schools, I recruited teacher participants who were willing to take part in a focus group discussion. As students' confidentiality was of the utmost importance, I made no attempt to recruit specific teachers of students involved. Two elementary school teachers from one school were recruited, but no teachers from the other school were willing to participate. These participants spoke French as their mother tongue but were bilingual in English. Both participants had been working in their current school for around three years.

The following table summarises the participants in the study: students, family members of students, and teachers.

Table 1 Summary of participants

	DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS:	PHOTOVOICE	DISCUSSION
STUDENT PARTICIPANTS	Child 1 *10-year old girl in French-medium school*	✓	✓
	Child 2 *11-year old girl in English-medium school*	✓	✓
	Child 3 *9-year old boy in English-medium school*	✓	✓
	Child 4 *9-year old boy in English-medium school*	✓	✓
	Child 5 *11-year old girl in English-medium school*	**X** *Withdrew from study*	
FAMILY PARTICIPANTS	Mother of Child 1	N/A	**X** *Unable to take part.*
	Mother and Gokum of Child 2	N/A	✓
	Mother and Father of Child 3	N/A	✓
	Family of Child 4	N/A	**X** *Unable to take part.*

	Mother of Child 5	N/A	✓
TEACHER PARTICIPANTS	Teacher Participant 1	N/A	✓
	Teacher Participant 2	N/A	✓

Data Collection

After recruitment, I met with participants and their families to introduce the project more fully. My original intention, in keeping with Wang's (2006) recommendations for photovoice process, was to organize a group meeting and present the information to participants and their families at once. I adapted this to the community in an attempt to work with participants in a more culturally-competent manner. In accordance with local norms of flexible, non-coercive communication (Visser & Fovet, 2014), I suggested an open time period in which participants could come whenever suited them. In the community there are few neutral meeting points available, and so I chose the community ice hockey rink as the most convenient, non-threatening setting. I also visited the homes of some participants if they indicated that was more convenient.

As Wang (2006) notes, gaining parental and youth consent for both participation and the use of photographs is essential. When introducing the project, I explained the written information letter and informed consent form for both participants and their parents, which included details of the purpose of the project, the fact that it is voluntary, and details about the potential use of photos and data (See Appendix A and B for ethics approval and information/consent forms).

Once the project had been introduced and informed consent obtained, participants were disposable Fuji cameras with 27 exposures with a guidelines sheet (see Appendix C).

The cameras were collected between the 6th and 30th of November 2015, which allowed between four and 8 weeks for participants to take photos.

Each of the follow-up student meetings was held individually due to practical considerations. The meeting with the students began by looking at the photographs using Wang's SHOWeD model to promote discussion (see Appendix D for details of SHOWeD and other discussion prompts to be used). Before beginning the discussion, I gave students the opportunity to go through the photographs and take out any that they did not want me or their peers to see. Together we chose a selection of the photographs to be used in focus groups with parents and teachers. This is aligned with the focus on empowering minority groups to craft and present their own identity (Wang, 2006).

When facilitating these focus group discussions, I employed an open discussion structure in which the context of the conversation increases the relevance and values of questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Given the importance of story-telling in First Nations epistemologies, participants' stories were encouraged and valued in the discussions (Wilson, 2008).

The discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded by the researcher and subsequently discussion data was submitted to participants for member-checking to increase reliability of data (Shenton, 2004; Stake, 1997).

Data Analysis

The discussion group data from the three groups—students, family members and teachers—was analysed using inductive coding, in which codes are generated by directly examining the data to identify themes and patterns (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The thematic analysis was conducted across the three groups.

First, I listened to the interviews in their entirety, taking notes in my research journal of any major themes that stood out. Subsequently, I transcribed the interviews and began coding individual focus group meetings, creating memos related to pertinent themes. Rather than simply labelling or categorising statements, I aimed to create essence-capturing codes

that when clustered together based on similarities provided a framework for understanding

how the data fit together as a whole (Saldaña, 2013). I refined the codes by collapsing those

that were conceptually redundant and building hierarchical code systems for themes with

different layers of meaning (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Sipe and Ghiso (2004, pp. 382-383) note that "all coding is a judgment call"

influenced by "our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks". It

is inevitable that this analysis will be shaped by my filter as a non-Cree researcher of New

Zealand Pākehā descent.

To counteract this, I attempted to triangulate across the data, and to remain reflexive

by recording my thoughts in memos as I coded in order to better examine potential biases. I

used low-inference descriptors where possible, including in vivo codes and verbatim accounts

taken directly from the transcripts to allow the language and tone of the participants to take

centre-stage in the analysis (Saldaña, 2013). Quotations are used extensively in the findings

chapter, to ensure that—as much as possible—Cree voices are in the foreground.

The teachers in this study belong to the dominant cultural group of Canada. As the

assumptions and perspectives of this group tend to dominate public discourse around

education, I have chosen to prioritise the perspectives of the Cree participants in my

presentation of the data.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by the Victoria University Research Ethics Committee

and adheres to the university Human Ethics policy (Victoria University of Wellington, 2013).

All participants provided informed consent (Appendix B), which informed them of their

rights. Informed consent consists of complete sharing of information with participants in

understandable language, without time pressure or undue influence from the researcher

(Citro, Ilgen, & Marrett, 2003; Mertens, 2012).

The safety and ethical behaviour of participants during the photovoice phase was of paramount importance. As Fassetta (2014) outlines, moving about a community with a camera and taking photographs of others could place participants at risk. To mitigate this, I chose cheap, easily replaceable cameras and discussed issues of safety with participants prior to giving them a camera, including the need to request permission before taking anyone's photograph. To further protect privacy and safety of the participants, I requested that participants not photograph anyone's face. This decision was made in order to ensure that the photographs would not allow the children to be identified, a factor considered important considering their age and potential vulnerability. Furthermore, given the large number of people with whom the children may be interacting and taking photographs, this simplified the permission process for which pictures could be used in the final report.

As the teacher discussion groups included several participants at once, it was not possible to ensure anonymity between the teachers. Furthermore, the small size of the reserve community and the use of personal stories in the discussion groups increased the likelihood that participants could be recognized. Where anonymity is not possible within a study, researchers must provide confidentiality for participants by not revealing their names or any easily identifiable information (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of participants, including keeping documents in a locked file, having a passcode on the phone used to communicate with participants, and reporting quotations without names of participants. All focus groups also began and ended with a brief discussion of the need for confidentiality with regards to anything shared by other participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or validity of research deals with how "plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore defensible" research is (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). A key

concern with regards to trustworthiness is the tendency of qualitative, exploratory research such as that conducted in this study to confirm researcher biases (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This is exacerbated in cross-cultural research, where researchers and participants may draw on vastly different epistemologies to understand and explain experiences (Cummins, 2001).

Furthermore, even well-intentioned outsider-researchers may lack the "culturally sensitive research skills" that are essential for effective research with diverse communities (Nagata, Suzuki, et al., 2012).. For instance, in some Aboriginal cultures, speakers favour non-verbal communication, and consider it rude or unnecessary to express knowledge that they assume is shared (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). This could be misinterpreted by researchers whose own speech communities use different norms for communication.

Finally, the outsider status of the researcher in cross-cultural research can be problematic, particularly in communities with negative experiences of research (Smith, 1999). Community members may be suspicious of researcher motivations; certainly the relationship with the researcher will affect the data obtained (Nagata, Suzuki, et al., 2012). On the other hand, the outsider status of researchers can be seen as a strength, in that participants living in a very small, interconnected community may feel better able to share their opinions with someone outside of their family or close social circle (Nagata, Suzuki, et al., 2012).

To guard against these validity concerns, strategies such as triangulation of data, member checking by children and adults of interview transcripts and researcher reflexivity were used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Methods triangulation consists of using more than one source of data, in this case the visual data from the photovoice project combined with interview data from three focus groups. Transcripts from the interviews were given to adult

participants to allow them to make any changes. This was done to increase the accuracy of the data and avoid misinterpretations (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Researcher reflexivity was another crucial factor in attempting to mitigate issues of trustworthiness in this study. Throughout the research I kept a personal research journal using Evernote. This software allowed me to jot notes from my phone or computer, and to include photos and voice recordings. Following each interaction with participants, I made notes of the main points and next steps, as well as reflected on any difficulties in communication or concerns I had. These challenges included having trouble contacting parents, children losing cameras, and awkwardness in situations where a cultural divide exists with regard to norms for communication, for example the amount of 'small talk' expected on phone calls, and how best to respond to participants' personal stories respectfully.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the methodology of this qualitative, community-based study. Using a two-stage data collection including photovoice and discussions, I am attempting to prioritise participants' voices in the examination of the research questions. Despite this, significant issues of trustworthiness remain, especially in terms of my role as an outsider-researcher. The following section outlines the findings of the study based on the thematic categories identified in the data, keeping in mind the limitations of interpretation mentioned above.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. I begin with a summary of the thematic organisation of the data, before exploring each category with reference to participants' quotations. Photographs taken by the children participating in the photovoice portion of the research have been included throughout the discussion where considered relevant.

There is a pervasive sense of paradox throughout these findings. Children embrace a modern Canadian worldview alongside traditional knowledge and values; participants affirm the value of Cree culture while simultaneously stating that English and French are the paths to success; families remain cautiously optimistic about the survival of Cree language, but feel concerned about the lack of cultural inclusion at school. Certain aspects are constant, however – specifically, the connection to the land and the high regard for intergenerational teaching.

The largest category produced by coding contained photographs, observations and comments related to Cree knowledge, language and worldview. The protection and promotion of this enormous body of knowledge is the primary topic examined in this research. As a result, I was unwilling to simply place it on the same level as other identified themes as a stand-alone code; instead, this knowledge and worldview is as far as possible inter-woven throughout the more specific and tangible concepts developed here.

The following table presents a thematic break-down of the data based on my coding.

Thematic presentation of the data					
Cree ways of teaching and learning	**Sites of traditional learning**	**Cautious optimism for language and culture maintenance**	**Influence of French and English**	**Two languages, two cultures: a cause for conflict**	**To walk in both worlds**
Watch and Learn	Learning within the Family	If they touch Cree when they're small they won't lose it	It's not a Cree world	I'm afraid there'll be a separation	They come, they do English, then they go home to their real life
Listen and Learn	Learning out on the land	When they're older they'll want to learn	There are no pictures like this in our school	We're gonna lose a point if we speak Cree	We just want a good education for them
Play and Learn	Preparing and eating meechum	The school has some things for Cree people	Sometimes they have guest speakers	I'm shy about speaking Cree	Sometimes I would go in the bush, sometimes in other cities

Figure 1: Thematic presentation of the data

Cree Pedagogy

Family members explained ways in which they shared their knowledge of Cree language and culture with their children.

I believe right now Crees are going to be teaching their grandkids to let them learn Cree language...and we encourage the grandparents to take the grandchildren out in the bush. (Gokum of Child 2)

> *[My wife's] parents are strong in Cree culture. They do a lot with the boys to teach them about that. (Father of Child 3)*

> *For me growing up it was my grandparents who would always teach me so many things, and I remember that they would do the same for my siblings. (Parent of Child 5)*

It is noteworthy that it was usually grandparents, not parents, who were identified as the primary teachers of culture and language. The comments of a community elder, herself a Gokum and great-Gokum, are therefore particularly valuable in identifying the pedagogy used.

Watch and Learn. A key aspect of Cree pedagogy is observation. Adults provide

opportunities for children to observe traditional practices over and over again, before

allowing them to try something themselves when they are ready.

> *Even [my husband], when he sets a trap, he made sure his grandson watches him.
> And he shows him the tracks: rabbit, lynx, marten, so they know the different animals
> from the tracks. (Gokum of Child 2)*

> *They watch and learn [how to skin animals]. Watch and learn. And after they want to
> try. For big animals they just watch. (Gokum of Child 2)*

> *My grandparents [taught] through showing me how to do things. (Mother of Child 5)*

Children also described observing and copying, particularly while hunting or in the

bush.

> *They made this [cabin] after… there's like this pile of … I don't know what it's
> called, but some holes there. And my granddad took the branches and put them on
> top. I saw some people do that at my grandpa's cabin. I helped some. (Child 2)*

Figure 2: "I saw some people do that... I helped some." (Child 2's photo)

The 'watch and learn' approach allows children to work things out for themselves,

learn at their own pace, and have ownership over their learning.

I just learn [about guns] myself, by my dad. (Child 3)

The children in this study, however, were already well-socialized to the fact that waiting and watching is the more appropriate way in their culture to work something out. This child discussed waiting to find out what the half-built structure at her bush camp will become.

When I first came, I thought it was a wrestling match. But then my cousin said to me 'baba's going to make a trampoline.' I was going to ask him, 'cause maybe it's a teepee actually. But we are going to wait and see who's the right one, if it's a trampoline or a teepee. We don't know, it's not finished yet. I think it's going to be a tepee. (Child 2)

Figure 3: "We are going to wait and see who's the right one" (Child 2's photo)

Children also saw Cree language and culture in action around the community. One child described visiting the Cultural Village – a community campsite used for feasts and events – and seeing traditional activities taking place.

[I] just like to walk around, check out the campsite. And sometimes I go to the lagoon. (…) And I already went there when people were goose-hunting. And there was a feast there. (…) I go there with my friends, and sometimes my mom. (Child 1)

Figure 4: The Cultural Village buildings

The back of the main building of the Cultural Village. Inside are two large stoves for heating and cooking, along with tables and benches to allow feasts and meetings to take place (Child 3's photo).

Listen and Learn. Cree children in this study described learning culture and language by listening to information and stories, both intentionally-shared and overheard from their family members.

A few weeks ago out in the bush we were with our two grandsons. Me and my husband we were tired from hunting all day and working in the bush. But the kids were running around, they didn't want to sleep. I told my husband, 'tell them a story.' That's what our grandparents used to do. Well [my husband] started telling them a story, one fell asleep in the middle of the story! And the other was listening, that's the old way. Telling stories, about the ancestors and the histories of our people and where they've been. And then the other one fell asleep too. We have to tell stories to them. (Gokum of Child 2)

Stories are not only entertainment, but also a way of learning Cree history, cultural practices, and ethics. This Gokum considered it essential that schools teach "*legends, stories, traditional way of life. The big teachings.*"

As time passes, however, the stories that are communicated to the next generation change also. There was concern among parents that much of the knowledge of the older people, which ordinarily would have been passed down through far more intensive oral language practices, is being lost as times change.

> *[My grandparents] would tell stories of them growing up and how it was for them, and how times have changed. For my grandfather he's always going to talk about never having the machines like chainsaw and skidoo, but then the stories start changing with my dad. It's a lot of change, in three generations. (Parent of Child 5)*

Participants in this study were also aware that listening to grandparents and parents was an important way to learn Cree language and culture.

> *My granddad speaks Cree to me. We call him 'Joomshoom' or sometimes 'baba'. (Child 2)*

> *My dad teaches me about hunting. [He talks to me] in Cree. A lot of the time he talks in Cree. (Child 4)*

> *Yeah every time when I touch [my Gokum's] stuff she tells me "don't touch it," in Cree! (Child 1)*

Gatherings with extended family were identified as an opportunity for children to listen and learn Cree language in use, often mixed with English using translanguaging practices.

> *[The people in this photo are talking] sometimes Cree, English. When my Gokum talks to me she talks in English but sometimes Cree too. (Child 3)*

Figure 5: Family gatherings: hearing Cree language in use (Child 3's photo).

The Cultural Village was named as an important site for the teaching for teaching language and culture. In addition to the opportunity to observe cultural practices, as discussed above, the children discussed hearing Cree language spoken there.

We eat over there sometimes when there's a feast (Child 4)

[Describing the Cultural Village] This is the Cree culture. (…) That's where I learned Cree language. (Child 3)

Children demonstrated having internalised Cree cultural norms for listening and responding. This child showed an understanding of the need for patience and respect for her elders, important Cree values, in her description of waiting to learn how to hunt.

I've never shot a gun before. My dad said, 'someday you will shoot a gun'. I said 'OK'. But I have to be patient. I didn't even ask him again. (…) [I will be patient] until he says 'you're able to use a gun.' (Child 2)

Figure 6: "That's where I learned Cree language" (Child 3; Child 4's photo).

Note: The structure on the left is a 'shaputuan', which in summer is covered in canvas and used for ceremonies. The building on the right is for cooking traditional food.

Do and learn. The Elder participating in the discussions described the role of play and action in Cree learning.

> *Our parents played with leaves and made a smoke rack. They made a rack and pretended the leaves were fish and it was like they were cutting the fish, drying them, smoking them, cooking them. This is just playing but this is how we learn to do things in our culture.*

> *Also with birds. Boys would make a slingshot and shoot little birds. Then they'd pretend it's a geese by cleaning it, they're playing and they're demonstrating how to clean the animal. (…) They're practicing how it will be cut. (Gokum of Child 2)*

Some of these practices – such as boys learning to hunt geese by killing small birds – appear to be no longer commonplace due to the more limited outdoor play time of children that comes with formal schooling. Other aspects of active learning were still evident in the comments of children and family members, however.

> *I skinned a beaver the other day. Gokum showed me how. (Child 2)*

Another participant, who described her love of moving and dancing, recounted the challenging experience of learning traditional powwow dancing at home with her mom.

I don't like it anymore. […] I kept jumping and got mixed up. (Child 1)

For this child, the freedom to move and explore in her home and around her home

community was identified as an important aspect of how she experiences her Cree identity

and a feeling of belonging.

[My favourite place in the reserve is the] bushes. […] You know where people live
way at the back? That's where I always love to go [for] hiking. Practice throwing
rocks at the trees. I love doing that. And throwing snowballs. (Child 1)

Figure 7: "I like walking, running, dancing, jumping...exercising!" (Child 1)

Children were most able to identify moments where they are learning about Cree

culture and language when these moments were actions or games. The two boys spoke about

hunting with their father or Joomshoom. Children talked about acting as a 'side-kick' close

enough to the action to observe and listen, and to do small things to assist.

I usually help my dad. I help him reload his gun. I unzip where his thing protects his
gun, and I give it to him. (Child 4)

As active learners taking part in an activity alongside a more experienced person, children are able to receive on-the-spot feedback and suggestions to help them develop mastery of a skill.

> *You didn't have a choice, you had to do it. And through doing it whatever it was, like plucking a goose, then at that spot they would tell you, maybe it's going to be easier this way, or you shouldn't do this part. (Parent of Child 5)*

Sites for traditional learning

Cree children and family members emphasized the ongoing importance of traditional teaching methods for transmitting language and culture. In particular, the value place of time spent with family engaged in activities on the land shows that these two sites of learning remain crucial to a Cree education.

Learning out on the land.

Cree ways of teaching and learning is used to protect and promote Cree language and culture through learning "out on the land", on hunting and fishing trips, at bush camps, and through food preparation.

> *[The traditional way of life is] living off the land. Respecting the land. Eating what you kill. Only killing what you can eat. (Father of child 3)*

Hunting and fishing. Hunting has been described as the cornerstone of Cree culture. The yearly calendar is based on the migration of animals, including 'Moose Break' and 'Goose Break,' two important holidays when Cree go in the bush with their families. All of the children and their family members discussed the prominence of hunting and fishing as part of their Cree culture in their daily life. Both boys were taken hunting regularly by fathers and Joomshooms.

> *My brother, he killed a moose. (Child 1)*
>
> *[My uncle] he likes to hunt. He hunts moose, I dunno what else. I think only moose. (Child 2)*
>
> *I saw a ptarmigan. So I shot it. (Child 3)*

[My Joomshoom] killed a bear. He takes me hunting sometimes. (Child 3)

This is when we went hunting, me and my dad. (…) We were hunting a moose. (Child 4)

Figure 8: "This is the time we saw a moose" (Child 4)

The children also demonstrated considerable knowledge of animals and the guns used

to hunt.

[Looking at a photo of his friend hunting] Maybe it's down already, maybe it's dead. There's some partridge you can shoot (…) and they can still move their head. (Child 3)

I'm going to try [to shoot a goose]. Mostly I used a .22. (Child 3)

The children all spoke positively of hunting as a healthy activity, and several

discussed feeling peaceful and happy out on the land.

[Describing photo of a child hunting] He's good, healthy. (Child 1)

There's this camp, it's like my favourite. There's this little beach. Some of my cousins we tried to catch some fishes, these little fishes, it was really awesome. (Child 2)

One child described not personally enjoying hunting and fishing.

> *I only went fishing but I don't like it. (…) I didn't catch any fish because I'm allergic to it. (Child 1)*

This same child, however, described the peace and happiness she feels when in the bush.

> *I like the view [of nature]. I just feel like there's air inside me (…) I feel good. (Child 1)*

Children's positive views of hunting and life out on the land tied in with the comments of the family members in the study. The isolation of a bush setting was also seen as an ideal place for learning, away from the distractions of modern technology. The main obstacle to this may be finding the time to ensure children have enough immersion in this setting.

> *Kids that are going out in the bush, it's very peaceful for them. It's like when you're out on the land you're at peace. You can think about anything. That's where Native people get their strength. (Gokum of Child 2)*

> *The culture it's pretty easy to get her into it because we're out in the bush in the middle of nowhere, there's no TV. It's pretty easy. It's just having the time to do it that's the hard part. (Mother of Child 5)*

Figure 9: "He's good, healthy" (Child 1; Child 4's photo)

Bush camp life. Linked to hunting and fishing as experiences with Cree culture is the bush camp, a site of much learning and fun for children and family members. Three of the four children talked enthusiastically about visiting specific family bush camps.

The children's experiences of bush camps seemed to be heavily play-based, and involved spending time with friends and family members. Ample time was provided in the bush for children to play freely and unsupervised, exploring their environment. In this situation, the environment acts as the teacher.

> *I get to catch another [fish] when I get to go back to that camp. It's my Gokum and Grandpa's." (Child 2)*

> *"I think I know where is this [fish camp]. [We went by] water plane, we slept there at least 2 days. (...) Playing around the fire. (Child 3)*

> *[At the camp] I just fool around! (Child 4)*

> *Sometimes we play outside. (...) [This is] a picture of an old tent that I found with my cousin. So we use it as our clubhouse. (Child 2)*

Figure 10: "We use it as our clubhouse" (Child 2)

One mother participating in the project spoke fondly of her own memories playing

around her grandparent's camp, an experience she feels fewer children have enough time for

these days.

> *Nowadays I find it's so rare for kids to have that experience. (…) I notice for my*
> *daughter that it doesn't happen that often. It happens sometimes, like when it's Goose*
> *break, and during the summer when they go for one weekend if we're going to go*
> *partridge hunting, but it's rare these days. (Parent of Child 5)*

Similarly, parents commented on the negative influence of technology, in particularly

video games. These were seen as promoting bad language and taking children away from

healthier activities that are more in line with a Cree way of life.

> *There's too much technology now. (…) My son he learned some bad words from X-*
> *Box, and from playing with older kids. So we had to take away the games. We told the*
> *kids that it was a good thing. And now they play more outside. And they play inside*
> *together. I hear them laughing more. It's not just quiet. (Mother of Child 2)*

At a bush camp, children were traditionally expected to work hard to contribute to the running of the camp. Over time, the tasks assigned become more complex, resulting in a gradual release of responsibility to the child.

> *Even when we were young kids like these we would be told to bring the wood inside. Then [after] more time, we cut boughs, get wood. Then when you're a teen, time to learn tanning moose hide, hunting beaver. (Gokum of Child 2)*

> *For the past two years she's helped my dad put up a tent, so she's enjoyed that. She looks forward to it now every Goose Break. She knows what practices she'll be doing. (Mother of Child 5)*

Although some children in the study shared examples of the work they do at bush camps, this did not appear to be as significant a part of their bush camp life as it was for children in the past.

> *I saw some people [making a cabin] at my grandpa's cabin. I helped some. (Child 2)*

> *In the bush we get water. And I forgot what else. (Child 4)*

The Gokum saw children working as an important way of them learning the wisdom of their elders.

> *My grandparents told me, 'you worked so hard, one of these days I will leave you with my white hair.' (Gokum of Child 2)*

Preparing and eating meechum. Preparing traditional food was another area of life out on the land identified as a time for learning Cree culture and language. Meechum means 'meat,' however the term is used to describe food in general, particularly that made using traditional ingredients and cooked in traditional ways.

If hunting is the cornerstone of the Cree culture, eating traditional food is the natural end-point of this activity. Children and family members in this study expressed a sense of ownership over their traditional meechum.

The Cree experience of meechum begins with preparing the animal. Several of the children talked about seeing their family members skin animals to prepare them for eating.

> *This is my uncle and his friend cutting the moose (…) You can see the moose skin and all the blood. (Child 2)*

My mom [skins the animals] and she cooks it. She makes different foods, sometimes she goes on the internet [to find out] how to make it. (Child 1).

One child had been deemed old enough to begin to learn how to skin animals herself, with assistance.

I skinned a beaver the other day. Gokum showed me how. (Child 2)

Figure 11: "This is my uncle and his friend cutting the moose" (Child 2)

Several of the children named dishes of traditional meechum as their favourite meals.

[My favourite meechum is] moose, beaver, rabbit, um partridge, whatever. We ate it yesterday, it was so good. (Child 1)

[indicating photo] "That's when I was eating goose. (...) And I like bear [meat] (Child 3)

I like beaver and rabbit. (...) Sometimes we eat geese. My Joomshoom says 'eat the heart, it's really good.' And it is good. (Child 2)

In summer, picking wild blueberries in the woods around the community or at bush camps was mentioned as a common traditional activity.

It looks like they're going hunting or to pick blueberries. I go with my mom or [Gokum]. But sometimes I don't like going blueberry picking because [of] mosquitos. (Child 1)

One teacher discussed how asking for help to make bannock—a traditional fried or baked dough similar to scones—helped to build a closer relationship with the family of one of her students.

I asked [the mom] for her recipe for bannock because I wanted to make bannock. And she was laughing, 'I'm going to taste your bannock.' (...) And a couple of weeks later when it was blueberry season, [my student] brought me a big thing of blueberries. (Teacher)
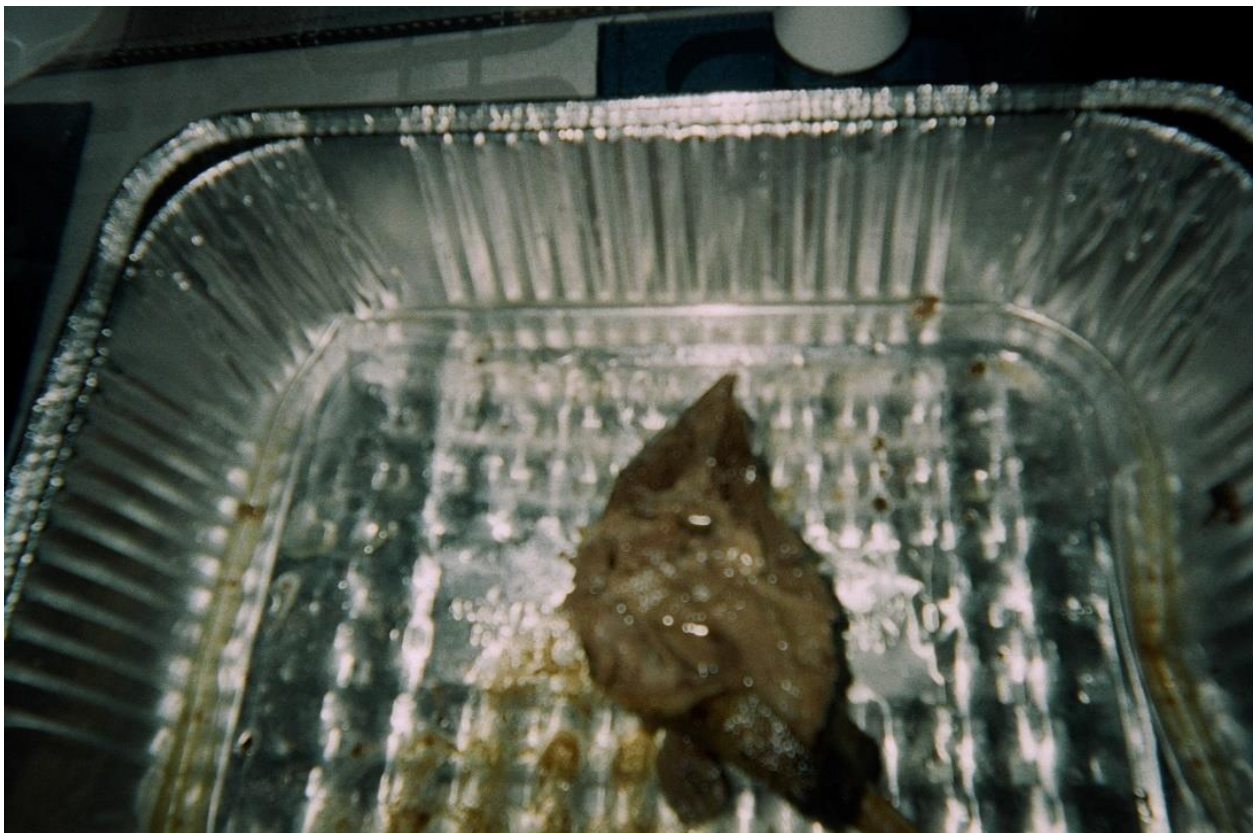

Figure 12: "That's when I was eating goose" (Child 3)

Enjoying traditional food is an important part of expressing the Cree identity, and was seen as part of a healthy diet. As the father of Child 3 noted, a Cree lifestyle means

Eating what you kill. Only killing what you can eat.

Family members discussed encouraging their children and grandchildren to eat traditional food, using it as an opportunity to talk about traditional practices and to share information about healthy living.

> *We encourage parents to feed the little ones traditional food. Yesterday my one-year-old grandson was eating dumplings and rabbit. And fish. We tell them how important it is, how healthy. (Gokum of Child 2)*

Learning within the family

Relationships with parents, grandparent and cousins were discussed by all participants and shown to be sites for the sharing and promotion of Cree values and knowledge.

Gokum and Joomshoom as teachers. Many grandparents in Cree communities are primary caregivers of their grandchildren either full- or part-time, and almost all children spend considerable time with their Gokum and Joomshoom. Grandparents are an important source of Cree language input for children.

All the children and family members in this project had examples of learning about Cree culture and language at their grandparents' side, as evidenced in the quotations provided above.

Parents expressed confidence that the time spent with grandparents provided a good learning experience of Cree culture and language:

> *They take [our children] marten-hunting (…) and they speak to them in Cree (Father of child 3).*

> *This is a house. My grandma, my Gokum [lives there]. She likes moose meat. (…) In the bush we get water. And I forget what else. (…) [She talks to me] in Cree. And I talk Cree too. (Child 4)*

In line with the section on Cree ways of teaching and learning discussed above, children described watching grandparents engage in traditional activities, such as making the canvas for a teepee, as Child 2 explains below.

> *My Gokum, she takes some of that canvas, she dumps it in water and she twists it around. Then she takes that out and she turns it around, makes sure that there's like a little doorway. (Child 2)*

Other grandparents may live further away and only see grandchildren occasionally, despite family efforts to maintain regular contact.

> *My Dad … only has a Mum. She's alone, and sometimes I go and visit her. And sometimes she comes down, like she's going to come down at Christmas. She lives at [northern Cree community]. And we send her a letter and ask 'is there snow there?' (Child 2)*

While many grandparents were heavily involved in traditional activities, others may be less so, or may have differing attitudes to Cree language and culture.

> *The Gokum from [northern Cree community], she speaks good Cree, but her parents spoke English to her, so when she speaks to my kids she always speaks in English. (Mother of Child 2)*

> *My parents are younger; they aren't so much involved in traditional activities. (Father of Child 3)*

Other grandparents chose to speak more English with their grandchildren to avoid making the child struggle to understand them. The potential difficulties of this language gap are discussed further in the 'Bilingualism: a source of conflict' section.

> *My parents speak Cree and they speak Cree to us (..) but when it comes to my daughter she has them wrapped around her finger. And right now (…) she always speaks English. (Parent of Child 5)*

Furthermore, the time children spend in school and the size of many Cree families – the Gokum in this study has 36 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren – may make it challenging to find the quality time with grandparents necessary to learn Cree skills and language in the traditional way.

Figure 13: "This is a house. My Gokum [lives there]" (Child 4)

Mom and Dad as teachers. Children and families reported efforts to maintain Cree language and culture at home, with parents as teachers and role-models. The Elder participating noted that parents are now primary caregivers and must therefore be more involved in cultural and language maintenance.

> *We're encouraging parents to take kids out on the land. If parents do that, the Cree culture is gonna be strong." (Gokum of Child 2)*

> *But we do a lot of [Cree cultural activities] at home and in our own time. And in the summers, spring, summer, fall. So they see a lot of our culture, the things that we do. (Father of Child 3)*

> *And I agree with [my husband], for what he says, you know, we can teach [Cree language and culture] at home. (Mother of Child 3)*

Some children talked about regularly learning Cree language and culture with their parents, in particular through hunting.

I usually help my dad [with hunting]. He teaches me (…) in Cree. A lot of the time he talks to me in Cree. (Child 4)

The parent-child teaching relationship seemed to be less straightforward than that with grandparents, however, with several families expressing frustration at the difficulties of promoting Cree culture and language within the nuclear family.

Several of the parents commented that speaking Cree language at home with children was difficult, due to the busy nature of daily life, interruptions from technology, and unwillingness of children to make an effort to understand and speak Cree.

Right now even her language, she always speaks English. And me talking to her in Cree there's only going to be the basic certain words she'll understand. And she doesn't want to try talking in her language. Even though we ask her to. It's pretty hard I guess. (Mother of Child 5)

Parents discussed wanting to put in place structures to ensure Cree language is being passed on. Children's reluctance to engage in speaking Cree with parents was mentioned frequently by parents.

We're going to put an evening aside where we're going to speak only Cree at home. You know if you're not going to speak Cree then I won't say anything. Because we need to push them to learn the language. (Mother of Child 3)

I told myself after the holidays I would try with her to talk to her in Cree and try to get books in the Cree language. So I brought home books and she hasn't really taken the time to look at them. (Mother of Child 5)

Language maintenance in the nuclear family was an area of anxiety for some parents, who felt like they were not managing to preserve their mother tongue within the family. The emotional impact on parents of children's unwillingness to speak Cree language was felt keenly.

We're not doing a very good job. We have to try harder. (Father of Child 3)

That has a big impact as a parent to see your child not want to learn their own language. (Mother of Child 5)

An additional factor that impact upon this transmission of knowledge was intermarriage with other people from Canadian First Nations or non-Aboriginal people.

[A few of my grandchildren] don't speak much Cree because their mother is Algonquin. (Gokum of Child 2)

Cautious optimism for language and culture maintenance

The previous section concluded by discussing some of the challenges for transmitting traditional knowledge and skills within the family, particularly for parents. Despite these challenges, there was a feeling of cautious optimism among many participants regarding the ongoing maintenance of Cree language and culture.

When a child touches Cree when they are small, they will not forget it. The Elder taking part in this study expressed her view that the Cree language will be successfully transmitted if local efforts to sustain it are maintained, because children who are surrounded by Cree language when young will develop an awareness of the language that will remain with them.

I'm not worried about Cree language. It's taught in the [on-reserve Cree] schools. It's spoken by elders and parents. Here we are closer to a non-Native community so there's more influence from French, English. But when a child touches Cree when they're small, they won't lose it. (Gokum of Child 2)

It is worth noting that the Elder named the fact that the Cree language is being taught in the on-reserve schools as an important aspect of language and culture survival. This was a learning opportunity not available to the children in the study. The belief that early contact with Cree will support future learning, however, was echoed by a number of participants.

All of the families in this study chose to place their children in the local on-reserve school for Pre-K and Kindergarten (ages 4-6). Within the Cree School Board these classes are Cree language immersion. Prior to that, most of the children had been in the community day-care, where many of the educators are Cree. Families hoped that this early exposure to the Cree language would give them a language base for future learning.

That decision was just for her to get the basics of colours, months, numbers, and she does remember her numbers in Cree and those small basics. (Mother of Child 5)

One mother expressed concern that the traditionally more Cree-based day-care was becoming more influenced by French staff, and this early immersion was no longer as effective.

> *What I notice now is at the day-care there's a lack of Cree staff. There are not enough Cree employees, so now there are more French people. (Mother of Child 2)*

Optimism for children's immersion in Cree language and culture within the community was also justified with relation to the increasing use of Cree place-names, for instance to describe traditional hunting grounds. The grandmother described the return of Cree place-names as the community moves away from the French and English monikers that were applied during colonisation.

> *That's another thing, we're going back to Cree names. That happened way back when the Europeans first came to Canada. The priests came, and they changed the names. Like our hunting ground, Waposite, in Cree it's [Cree word]. It means 'rocks on top' because that's what it looks like there. (Gokum of Child 2)*

Figure 14: "We're going back to Cree names" (Gokum of Child 2; Child 4's photo)

When they're older, they're going to want to learn their language. Several of the children seemed to take it for granted that they would speak Cree when they grew up. One

child felt it was obvious that just as the grown-ups in her life spoke Cree, she also would use it when she became an adult.

> *It's important when you're older, you're going to remember words. (...) [I will talk Cree] with my friends (Child 1)*

Two of the parents discussed hearing from other parents of children in off-reserve schools that teens will begin to develop an interest in their language and culture as they age.

> *One parent I spoke to they had children at [off-reserve school], in Sec 3. They told me at the start you think they've lost it, that the kids don't speak Cree anymore. But in high school they will pick it up. Their son is in English school in Secondary 4 [age 15] but he speaks Cree very well. (Mother of Child 2)*

> *And when I spoke to other parents about it that have taken their kids out they told me 'when she's in high school she'll want to learn her Cree, you shouldn't worry about it.' (Mother of Child 5)*

One parent also described his belief that culturally-inclusive curriculum content was not important for the maintenance of the Cree language and culture, as the child and family's motivation to speak the language was sufficient. While he stated that he found it difficult to motivate his children to learn Cree, he hoped that over time their interest would change, and was confident that teaching Cree would be a relatively simple matter if the interest were there.

> *I find that my boys are a little more behind [in Cree language]. But then there are other kids that go to school in town that speak good Cree. It's just a matter of practising at home. (...) [My wife] could speak to them in Cree and they would pick it up. (Father of Child 3)*

Several participants expressed confidence in community opportunities for learning Cree language and culture. One father in the study grew up partly in an urban setting in the south of Canada, in a family where the Cree language was not spoken. He moved back to the community and attended the local reserve school in his late teenage years. This father learned Cree language as a teenager after being encouraged by his Cree Culture teacher, coincidentally the husband of the Gokum who took part in this study. They both described this event and its impact.

Back when my husband and I were Cree Culture teachers [at the on-reserve school, his boy speaks always English. My husband told him, 'when you grow up, you're going to be ashamed if you can't speak your language, if you can't translate for people and understand things.' That's what he told this young man. Now he's the [important community position] He speaks Cree now. (Gokum of Child 2)

[After hearing the above extract] Yes, I came here not able to speak Cree. I grew up in an English speaking home. (…) So I lost that. I was able to barely understand and barely speak it. (…) I picked it up myself. I learned from friends, and I usually don't say things right sometimes. But I have an idea. I find that my tongue turns on some words, but I have an idea. I understand well. (Father of Child 3)

For this father learning Cree language from his peers, and from the Cree Language and Cree Culture class at school was a positive experience. From this the father concluded that

There's an opportunity to learn it, if you want to learn. I wanted to learn so I took the opportunity.

Notably, of course, the opportunity to be encouraged to learn his language came during a Cree Culture class, taught by a Cree elder, which was not available to students in the off-reserve schools.

Two participants did note, however, that locally-taught Cree Literacy courses are available to all in the community. These courses were specifically for reading and writing Cree syllabics.

There's also the Cree literacy courses that are done. (…) In the future if they want to learn how to read and write [in Cree syllabics] they can pick that up because there's these courses that are taking place. (Mother of Child 3)

A participant also felt that there were increasingly more opportunities for people to learn traditional skills in community events and courses at the Cultural Village and the museum. This was in contrast to her previous experiences living in the community as a teenager, where she found there was little to do.

Well, right now there is the moose-hide [tanning] workshop. I found I don't know, maybe these last two years it's changed, they offer more programs. I heard the museum was doing beading and sewing. Before I never saw that, when I lived here. (Mother of Child 5)

The increase in the amount of opportunities to learn and practice traditional arts such as preparing and sewing with moose-hide was mentioned by several participants. All the children described close female family members doing beading, embroidery and earring-making.

> *My aunt sews gloves and slippers. (Child 2)*

> *My mom likes to sew earrings. (Child 3)*
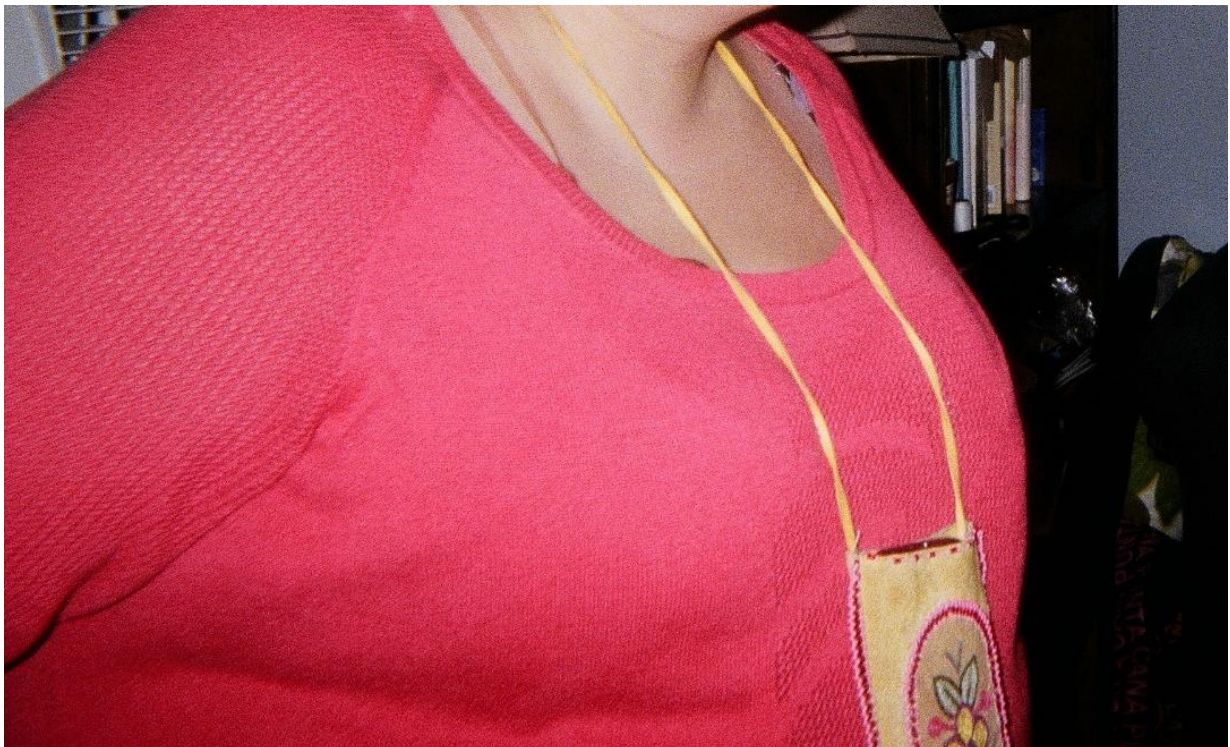
Figure 15: "It's made of [moose]hide and beads. My mom sews sometimes" (Child 3).

The school has some things for Cree people. The parents in this study were all fairly happy with the off-reserve schools their child or children attend. In particular, the higher reading levels, the more rigid structure and discipline, and the breadth of opportunities led them to conclude that their child was receiving a better education in town than they would in the on-reserve community school.

Some family members felt that the school made an effort to be inclusive of Cree culture, which contributed to their cautious optimism that Cree culture and language is being

maintained. One mother gave the example of the respect for the hunting calendar, which allowed children to continue to take part in traditional activities.

> *They have some things for Cree people. Like they make a place for Goose Break. The first two weeks of May, they give light work, so students don't miss as much. The same in Fall because especially the boys in high school are going for moose hunting. But it depends on their marks, how well they're doing at school. (Mother of Child 2)*

The dependence on strong marks as a requirement to miss school for hunting ran opposite to a comment of the Gokum, who believed that students struggling at school were most in need of time out on the land.

> *Some high school students who are not good at school, we need to give them the chance to go out in the bush. […] Even the kids who are not able to learn in school, who aren't doing their homework, we need to get them out on the land to learn their culture. (Gokum of Child 2)*

A teacher discussed another way in which her school sometimes makes space to recognize Cree hunting traditions:

> *They go hunting and they have their first kill, sometimes we put [a photo] up. (Teacher)*

The parents of Child 3, who were very happy with their children's education at the off-reserve school, explained that they believed Cree children were "harder to control" when together in a group. The father felt that the school made an effort to accommodate the culture of Cree children by arranging classes for maximum discipline.

> *The teachers, the school has gotten to know our children. And they know which ones not to put together. They keep them separated. (Father of Child 3)*

One teacher expressed her view that Cree children must automatically feel at home in the school as they constitute the majority of students, though she acknowledged that more could be done to include them.

> *They feel just as much at home as my French [Canadian] students. (…) There's many natives here, so I don't feel… I don't think they **don't** feel at home there. There could be ways to make them feel more at home, sure, but they are the majority after all. (Teacher)*
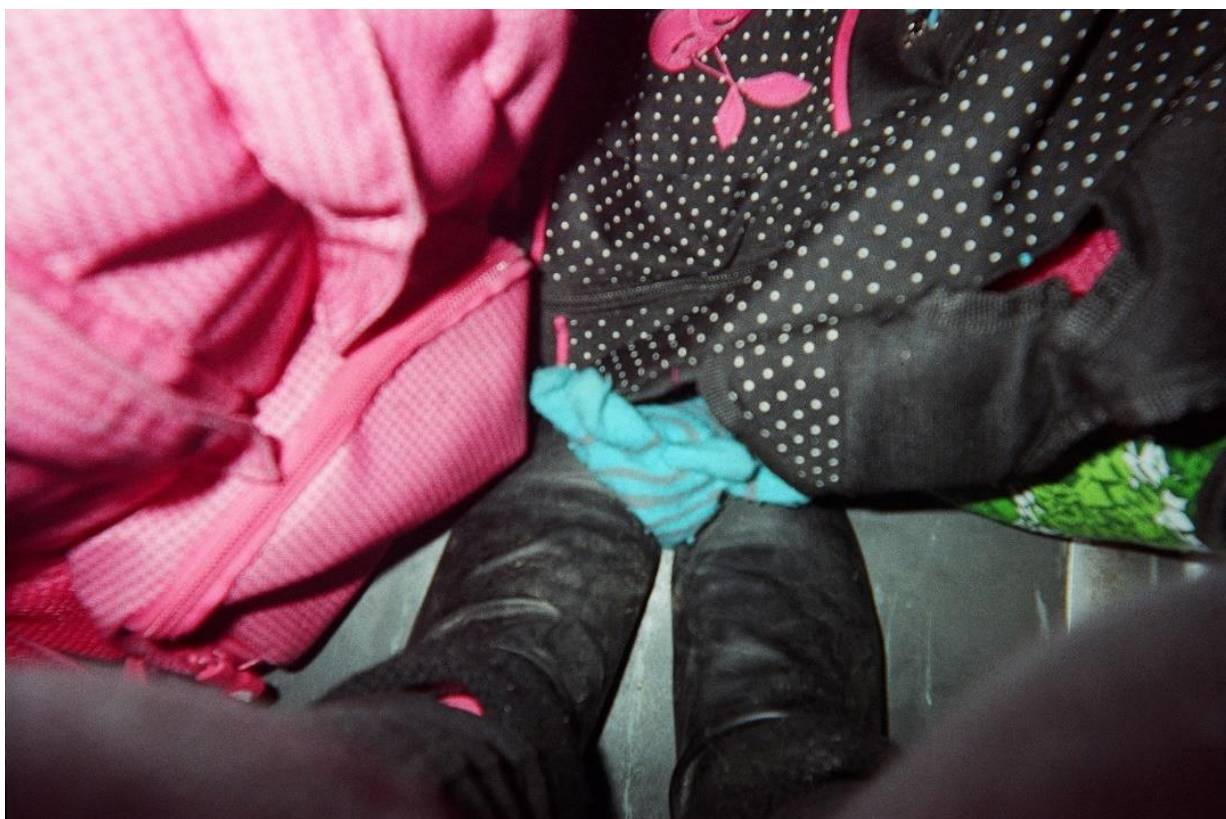
Figure 16: Schoolbags on the bus (Child 1's photo).

Two languages, two cultures: a cause for conflict

I'm shy about speaking Cree. All the Cree participants reported frequent

opportunities for children to hear and understand Cree language. One child in the project

stated he felt confident speaking to his parents and grandparents in Cree. The other three

children and their families, however, described the reluctance of children to speak the

language. These children had receptive skills ranging from limited to quite proficient for

understanding oral Cree language input, but lacked confidence and fluency in their output.

> *A lot of kids, they understand Cree but they don't speak it. [...] But they understand it very well. (Mother of Child 2)*
>
> *There's only going to be certain words she understands. She doesn't want to try speaking her language. (Mother of Child 5)*

The primary reason children reported for this was their feeling of shyness when

speaking Cree. Some children felt a lack of confidence in their abilities, and had been

embarrassed in the past when a family member or friend did not understand their efforts to communicate in Cree.

> *Today I did [speak Cree] a little. But they don't understand what I'm saying. […] Yeah I did [feel shy]. (Child 1)*

> *My Joomshoom speaks Cree. […] Yes, [I understand him]. But I speak English. I'm shy to talk Cree. I never speak Cree. (Child 2)*

> *Sometimes [I understand my Gokum in Cree]. […] But I don't really talk Cree that much. I'm shy. (Child 3)*

A fear of disappointing or angering parents and grandparents may be a factor in this. Several participants mentioned a situation where grandparents became frustrated or annoyed that their grandchild was unable to understand and communicate in the Cree language with them.

> *My parents speak Cree with [my sons]. But they get annoyed sometimes that the kids won't reply to them in Cree. (Mother of Child 3)*

> *Once when I was away [my daughter] was staying with my parents. She phoned me and she was upset. She told me it was very frustrating for her now because Grandpa said he wouldn't answer her until she spoke in Cree. And that's when I started to change back to speak Cree. (Mother of Child 2)*

For the mother in the latter quotation, the described conflict between her child and father encouraged her to take a more active role in teaching the Cree language, and to revert to speaking Cree at home, which she had stopped several years ago after being advised to speak English at home by the Kindergarten teacher at her son's off-reserve school.

Parents' disappointment in their children's lack of Cree language output may also be felt by children. Several parents expressed their sadness that their children were not competent speakers of Cree, or not interested in Cree culture.

> *Sometimes I feel regret that they can't speak their language. (Mother of Child 2)*

> *It's mostly the language. It's pretty hard, I guess. […] What I'm most afraid of is that she might think it's not really meaningful to her. (Mother of Child 5)*

Figure 17: "What I'm most afraid of is that she might think it's not really meaningful to her." (Mother of Child 5; Child 4's photo).

  We're going to lose a point if we speak Cree. While at home children risked the disapproval and disappointment of parents and grandparents if they were reluctant to speak Cree, at school they could be punished for doing so. Both of the off-reserve schools from this study, one English, one French, prohibited the speaking of Cree language at school at all times, including among children at recess breaks.

> *[We are] not allowed to [speak Cree]. They only know English. (Child 4)*

> *You're not allowed to speak Cree at our school. Only English. We're going to lose a point if we speak Cree. (Child 2)*

Both Cree and French were prohibited during all times except French class in one of the schools in the study. In this English-medium school the majority of the children were second language English-speakers, with either Cree as their first language, or French in the case of the students from the Francophone town in which the school is located. The dominance of English in the classroom was justified as necessary for children to become

capable speakers of English, which for many parents is a primary aim of sending their child
to this school.

> *Some students at home will probably speak only Cree. Other students at home speak
> only French. That's for sure, I know that. I have parents here in the class that don't
> even speak English. Obviously they don't get the chance to practice English as much,
> so being in the school, well it's the time. (Teacher)*

The teachers confirmed that they reinforced the 'No Cree' rule in the classroom and
playground, usually in what they considered a gentle and encouraging way.

> *The school yard is big, so if I'm not beside them I can't do anything about it. For sure
> if I do see them I'm not going to yell at them. I just say 'you're supposed to be
> speaking English.' (Teacher)*

One teacher in the study commented, however, that she had heard other adults in the
school reprimanding children forcefully for speaking Cree.

> *I was in a room one day, and two children at the secondary level were speaking to
> each other in Cree. And it was during recess, and I know we're an English school (...)
> but the way the children are told to speak in English is very aggressive, and
> just…very aggressive. (Teacher)*

It was also raised that in a school where the adults are all French-speakers, there was a
bias towards allowing some French, despite the ostensibly equal rule of 'No Cree, No
French.'

> *We're already a bilingual school—we're an English school but there's a lot of
> French. You can hear French a lot of the time in the hallways between teachers and
> colleagues. It's because it's their mother tongue. (Teacher)*

Children were undoubtedly aware of this double standard. Furthermore, in accordance
with the education laws of Quebec, there were French language periods scheduled in the
regular timetable.

> *We only do English and French at school. (Child 1)*

> *We can't speak French when we have other stuff, we can only speak French when we
> have French class. (Child 2)*

> *It's English all the time. [..] But yeah [we speak French] in French class. (Child 4)*

I'm afraid of separating the two. A primary reason raised by teachers for limiting the Cree language and culture included in the school was fear of creating a division between French Canadian children and Cree children.

The extension of the 'No French, No Cree' to the playground and all school events was aimed at preventing conflict, based on a belief that allowing children from different language backgrounds to speak their own language would cause misunderstandings and disagreements, or be used as a tool for bullying.

> *Because the Cree students wouldn't really be able to come and communicate with the students who speak French, and the other way around. The French students wouldn't be able to understand what the Cree students were saying. It would be a cause of conflict. (Teacher)*

The teachers were all mother tongue French-speakers who are bilingual in English. One of the teachers in the study knew some basic Cree words but was not able to follow a conversation, while the other spoke no Cree. An additional concern for them, therefore, was that if children were to speak Cree in class the teachers would not understand what was being said, which could allow for conflict or insubordination.

> *With Cree students, if they speak Cree, well more people are going to understand, but there's going to be 5 or 6 that won't. And I probably won't. I might but I'm not that good in Cree to understand what's going on. So it's mostly just for that. (Teacher)*

Teachers were also concerned that explicitly teaching Cree content or differentiating between students on the basis of their cultural background may create a division between them. For some teachers, the 'colour-blind' approach of treating all students identically regardless of their background was seen as the fairest and safest way.

I really don't make that distinction in my class. (Teacher)

Some teachers also attempted to keep the curriculum free from difficult racial issues such as colonisation, for fear of creating a division between the students.

> *Yeah, it is [a fact of history that Cree were here first], but I don't want to start a whole debate because that could start racism here too. Because I have English students in the class, I have French students and I have Native students. I don't want*

anyone pointing fingers, either, like you're the bad person who came and stole our
land. That's not how I want them to see the issue. (Teacher)

The influence of English and French

A theme across all participants was the influence of French and English language and culture. It was notable that as this is one of the most geographically accessible of the James Bay Cree communities, this influence was felt to a greater extent than elsewhere in the Cree Nation.

Here we are closer to a non-Native community so there's more influence from
French, English. (Grandmother of Child 2)

As Cree communities become wealthier, the increase in the amount of technology in the communities also grows, and the influence of these Western games—often at odds with traditional values—can be an additional challenge for busy parents to deal with.

Everyone thinks it's important to keep the Cree language. But now there's the
influence of games and TV. (Grandmother of Child 2)

Participants seemed to feel that French and English language, culture and technology were dominant in most aspects of children's lives, and often overshadowed Cree practices, traditions or values.

It's not a Cree world. Several children and parents in this study expressed the view that the off-reserve schools, the French town in which they are situated, and the wider society of Canada is 'not a Cree world'. The children in the study considered it normal that Cree language was absent from non-Aboriginal spaces such as the school and the school bus, ascribing its absence to lack of knowledge of Cree outside of the reserve community.

So much of the people doesn't know about Cree. (Child 1)

They don't know Cree over there. (Child 4)

Children felt that their non-Aboriginal teachers were probably unaware of Cree traditional skills or knowledge. Some teachers' efforts to build rapport by talking about their personal connections to Cree communities did not seem convincing to students.

No I'm not sure she does [know about Cree things]. She has a Native friend, she told
us that. But, yeah… [trailing off] (Child 2)

Some parents feel that the schools in town made an effort to include aspects of Cree culture in the school calendar or decorations. Others, however, saw this as simply surface-level inclusion, and believed that Cree knowledge and traditions were not really incorporated or valued in the curricula, which could lead children to discount or become uninterested in their own cultural heritage.

No I don't think [the school supports Cree language or culture]. When I speak to [my daughter] about school and what she did, she won't mention anything. [...] I think it should be brought into the schools because for my daughter everything that she wants to learn comes from the school. (Mother of Child 5)

Figure 18: "So much of the people doesn't know about Cree." (Child 1)
Note: Child in Halloween costume on the school bus, with bilingual French-English signage.

The dominance of French and English in Canadian society was a key factor which pushed several parents in the study to consider sending their children to an off-reserve school. They believed that while Cree is an important part of family life, for students to achieve success in the wider world a knowledge of English or French language and history was more useful.

I went to school in [a Cree reserve]. [...] We were learning all of that Cree, time was taken away that we could have been learning English. And therefore my English is not as strong as [my husband's]. When you graduate from high school on a reserve, you tend to struggle when you're in college. I know that because I've lived that. (Mother of Child 3)

The lack of opportunities for Cree speakers makes some question the value of devoting time to this language in school. This father described his opposition to the Cree School Board policy of providing Cree language immersion for Pre-K and Kindergarten (4 to 6-year olds), a program he described as "narrow-minded".

They're going to be leaving school to an English world, not a Cree world. If it was French, teach French, they'll leave school and they can use their French. They'll leave school and they can't use their Cree language. People say "Cree should always be taught" and I don't think so. [...]. Yes, they learned their mother language, but they lost out in the bigger world. (Father of Child 3)

Even when teachers were interested in promoting local cultures and languages, the legislation and resourcing from the province leaned towards promoting province-wide interests.

At school we have to promote the Quebecois culture. (Teacher)

For sure, the French, since we're in Quebec, well French has to be taught. We don't have a choice with that. (Teacher)

There are no pictures like this in our school. A teacher volunteered the opinion that pictures like those from the photovoice section of this study are not found in the school, indicating to her that the Cree culture was not visible.

So really the way they preserve their culture is where they live. Their culture is not present in the school, because I don't see pictures of anything like this in the school. (Teacher)

Changes in schools' decoration to promote and display Cree culture were felt by some participants to be small and tokenistic.

They're in an environment where there are no pictures of Cree people, there are no signs of Cree culture. Really there are none. We just recently got a book case where it has Cree books in it. That's new this year. It's like things are changing slowly. (Teacher)

Another parent found that there was some basic evidence of Cree culture in the school because of a shared experience of living in the north, though she felt it was taken for granted, not specific to Cree culture, and not openly discussed or celebrated.

> *People know of Crees so there's a bit incorporated in the art and the posters that they put up at school, but I find it's not…it's not really talked about or something. (Mother of Child 5)*

Figure 19: "It has a picture of a moose and I kinda liked it." (Child 2)

Teachers who wanted to be more inclusive of Cree also expressed frustration at the difficulty of finding culturally-relevant materials for use in the classroom.

> *It's really hard to include visually in the things in our classroom and in our materials. (…) It's really difficult to get materials that don't contain only white people. (Teacher)*

Even with the growing amount of Aboriginal content available online, teachers' lack of knowledge of Cree culture and language made it challenging to select appropriate resources.

I want to [be inclusive], but then it's the resources. I'm stuck because I go on a computer and there's so much stuff. […] Just finding what to teach about, because I'm not an expert, it's not my culture. (Teacher)

A prescribed social studies textbook focusing on colonial as opposed to Aboriginal history was a challenge for one educator, and in the rush of busy teacher life, extending beyond the scope of what is offered in such limited resources was not realistic.

I find social studies a very touchy subject because [textbook] is all about the English and the French, it talks a little bit about the Natives, but not much. […] Honestly I can say that I am [following the textbook], just because it's my first year teaching [current grade]. I'm doing my best (…) but I'm not going 100% out of my way to find other things. (Teacher)

Figure 20: "I like seeing the [tepee] right there." (Child 2)

Note: An upturned boat at Child 2's bush camp.

The lack of Cree content extended more widely than simply schools; finding books and art with an emphasis on Canadian Aboriginal culture or individuals could be challenging, leading parents to despair that their child may not consider their culture relevant in the modern world.

She's very artsy and very into music and art and books and all of these I find are more of the non-Native type. I try to get her to see Cree artists or somebody but I don't think it's really a big deal for her. (Mother of Child 5)

They go to the museum sometimes. The school's efforts to include Cree culture and language centred primarily on guest speakers and rare visits to the museum on the reserve.

You know we're going to be going to [Cree reserve]. For sure, we got a grant, we got money, we're going to go to the museum. We're going to go do cultural activities. We are more than happy to do these kind of activities. (Teacher)

While the museum is an architectural landmark in the reserve, it is notable that none of the children chose to photograph it when they were taking pictures of spaces that are important to them in their community.

Teachers described the visit of a previous guest speaker, who had discussed Cree spirituality and residential schooling. The teachers found it unusual that this speaker operated within Cree norms for communication and teaching, where a calm, quiet leader presents the information to those willing to listen, but does not coerce all students into taking part.

Well yes, he has a good charisma, but then again he's very Native in the way he acts. He never talks loud. We needed to be very quiet if we wanted to hear what he was talking about because he wouldn't speak loud, he didn't have these big gestures. (…). Right now I'm speaking louder than he was speaking. (Teacher)

To walk in both worlds

Children and family members expressed the fact that both Cree and non-Aboriginal influences were hugely important for their lives. The children were influenced by and drew upon both traditions in the way they spoke and acted, and in what they knew and valued. Family members who found the loss of some Cree knowledge and tradition difficult remained realistic that life today requires a knowledge of both worlds.

Figure 21: Sport, technology, school. (Child 3's photo)

We just want the best education for them. For parents, the drive to ensure children have access to a high quality of life led them to choose schools where the skills to succeed in modern Canada were taught. It became clear in the conversations with parents and grandparents that despite their desire to have a strong Cree component included in their children's education, potential for success trumps all.

> *When I came back to [the reserve] I debated whether to send her to school here. You know, just for her to have Cree culture and Cree language. But then I compared with what I knew she knew, what I knew she could do, with the kids in her grade here [on-reserve]. And I realized that it was a big gap. (Mother of Child 5)*

Even the Gokum – who was involved in creating Cree-focused content for the Cree School Board (CSB) schools – acknowledged that the education levels off-reserve are perceived as higher.

> *Maybe they are more educated in non-Native schools. (Gokum of Child 2)*

Several parents echoed this, mentioning the far higher reading levels at the off-reserve schools, which many believe are influenced by starting English language instruction at an earlier age than in the CSB schools.

I guess the main decision was for education. You see the book my son is reading in Grade 3, that's very different from the [on-reserve] school. (Mother of Child 2)

Off-reserve schools were also seen as offering better discipline and a wider variety of activities in which children could take part. One parent even expressed the view that a school with only Cree children would always be chaotic, as Cree children en masse are difficult to control.

I just found the [off-reserve] schools had more structure to them. (Mother of Child 5)

When they go to town, they know 'at this time, you sit down, you read, you stay quiet.' Whereas here when there's a whole bunch of Cree kids together, you lose control. It's hard to control them. (Mother of Child 3)

Parents' own experiences struggling in the education system after going to school on the reserve led them to seek schooling for their child that would better prepare them for post-secondary education in the south of Canada.

It was harder [going to college from the reserve], the vocabulary was harder, writing was harder, I had to use a lot of tutors. But I managed to pull through. So I'm thinking and I'm trying to avoid that for my boys. I just want the best education for them. (Mother of Child 3)

They come, they do English, then they go back home to their real lives. For some parents there seemed to be a feeling that off-reserve schools were a resource that served the purpose of maximising children's chances of success in modern Canada. They are not, however, the limit of their child's education; Cree knowledge and language continue to be highly valued, and taught in traditional ways within the family and on the land, as discussed in the sections above.

We feel that they're learning more in town. If I wanted my son to have Cree and to have a bit of culture, I would send him [to the on-reserve school]. But we do it at home and in our own time. So they see a lot of our culture. (Father of Child 3)

One teacher suggested that Cree children may not wish to feel at home in off-reserve schools. Instead, she felt there was a transactional relationship, where children and families took what they needed from the off-reserve schools without seeking to fully integrate.

> *Maybe they don't want to feel at home here, either. Maybe for them this is not home. (…) It's a theory I have—they resist our school here, getting fully gung-ho about it. They come, they do English, they do their studies and then they go back home to their real life. Because there's a resistance and a mistrust still, and understandably, because their parents, grandparents, might have been at residential school. (Teacher)*

While the idea of a transactional approach does seems reflected in the comments of parents, it was also clear that for some families, supplementing this off-reserve education with genuine Cree language and culture learning at home was a challenge. Indeed, children's motivation to learn is often initiated by the school:

> *I find the school has a lot of impact on what she wants to learn, and what she wants to find out about. When I bring it up it's like "yeah okay..." (Mother of Child 5)*

Including Cree content was also felt to develop confidence in one's identity.

> *It's about knowing your students and sending out the message where everyone is important. (Mother of Child 5)*

Sometimes I would go in the bush, sometimes in other cities. The clearest indication of the desire and ability to walk in both worlds came from children, who during our discussion showed the ability to move seamlessly between the interests and values from the Cree and non-Aboriginal worlds they inhabit. It is noteworthy that this seemed not to be shared by the schools; one high school offers a Native History course but students electing to take this may not also take High Math or Science. The implication here is that succeeding in one or other of these areas forecloses the desire or ability to succeed in the other.

In contrast, while children remained passionate about hunting and life on the land, they were also members of a modern Canadian society, and the influence of media and technology shapes their identity as well.

> *Yeah I do [understand my Joomshoom in Cree], I don't really talk Cree that much. But I know how to say Japanese 'hi'. I saw it in YouTube. (Child 3)*

Figure 22: An ice hockey-themed birthday present (Child 3's photo)

It is clear that traditional pursuits retained a central importance for many children, and were not seen as mutually exclusive from a modern life. Children expressed with equal vigour their passion for ice hockey and moose hunting; watermelon and bear meat; Justin Bieber's music and traditional drumming. This biculturalism was also clear in their aspirations for the future.

> *I like [Cree reserve]. [And being] in the bush. Walking around with my friends. [...] And what I really want is to go at New York. It'd be like I was going on a trip. I would buy clothes for my mom. (Child 1)*
>
> *I dunno [where I want to live when I'm older]. Maybe here. Maybe somewhere French. (Child 3)*
>
> *[When I grow up] I wouldn't stay in [Cree community] all the time. Sometimes I would go in the bush. Sometimes in other cities. (Child 2)*

Figure 23: "Sometimes I would go in the bush. Sometimes in other cities." (Child 2)

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the findings, showing diverse experiences of off-reserve schooling and beliefs about the role of Cree language and culture. Central to most children's and family members' comments, however, was the connection to the land, and the role of intergenerational teaching – using traditional pedagogy – to maintain and promote Cree ways of knowing and being. It is clear from this chapter that a clash exists at times between this worldview and the non-Aboriginal sphere of off-reserve education.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

        This chapter will begin by discussing the findings in relation to academic literature. This discussion will be framed by the Medicine Wheel, a powerful Aboriginal symbol used to place concepts in a holistic context. Following the discussion, a section on implications and recommendations identifies what the data can offer families, educators, and school administrators in practice. I then outline the limitations of the study, before providing some suggestions for future research directions based on unanswered questions from this study.

The Cree Medicine Wheel: A holistic framework

        The findings of the study can be interpreted using a holistic model such as the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel is a circle divided into four quadrants representing the cardinal directions and the seasons, and is used to show other concepts such as stages of life (Favorite, 2004). It is growing in popularity as a revived symbol for the holistic, cyclical nature of life and learning (Battiste, 1995). The Medicine Wheel allows us to show connections between stages of human development, patterns of thought, concepts of time, movement of the natural world and understanding of metaphorical and literal relationships (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010). Penetito (2009) notes that the metaphors of many Indigenous cultures, such as *Papatuanuku* for Maori and the Medicine Wheel in North America are designed to "convey life processes as a seamless whole of symbiotic relationships" (p. 21).

Figure 24 Oji-Cree Medicine Wheel (Wikwemikong Anishinaabek, n.d.)
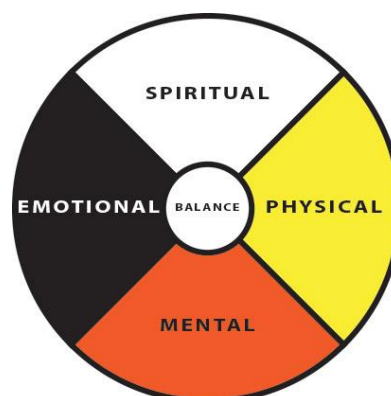
It should be noted that Eurocentric concepts produced by Westerners cannot be completely integrated into a Medicine Wheel, nor can it subsume Aboriginal teachings (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010). It should also be acknowledged that the Enlightenment ideals imported by colonialism have denigrated knowledge systems such as the Medicine Wheel as myth (Penetito, 2009).

There are different representations of the Medicine Wheel, each valid and meaningful for those who use it (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010). The Medicine Wheel used as the basis for this discussion has been included in instructional materials prepared by the Cree School Board for use throughout Eeyou Istchee, leading me to believe that it is an acceptable and relevant symbol in the eyes of most James Bay Cree. It is based on the 'Cree Medicine Wheel' described by Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996), which uses traditional Cree teachings of the Four Sacred Directions in terms of two aspects of life, internal and external.

Figure 25: Cree Medicine Wheel (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996; Wenger-Nabigon, 2010)
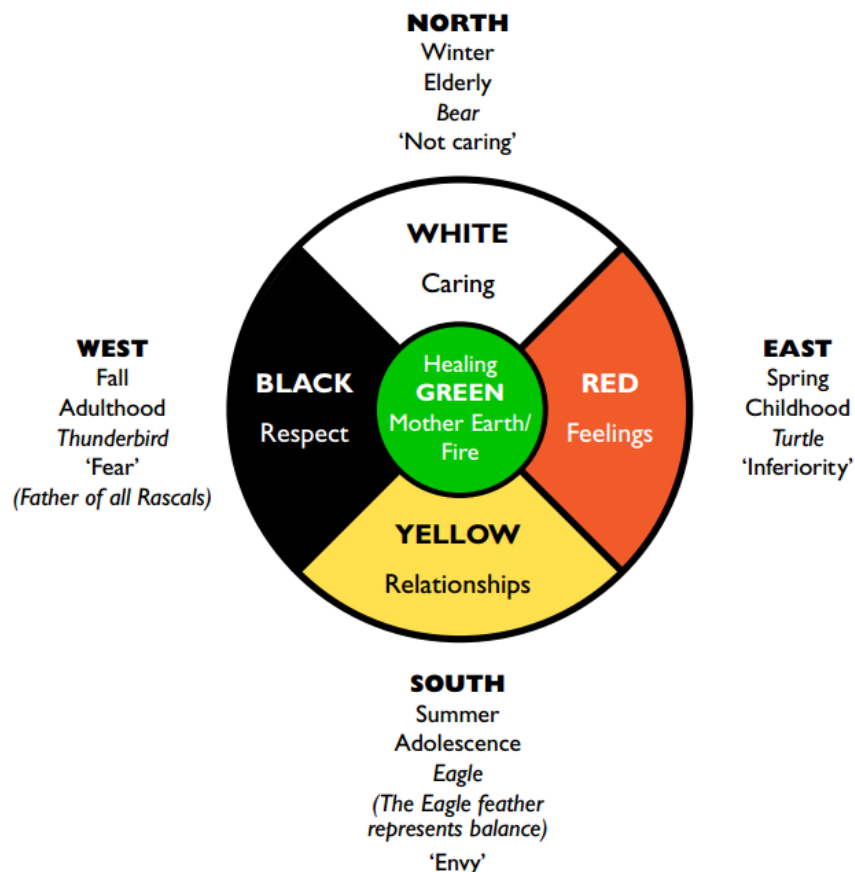
Adapting the model in Figure 25, I have placed key categories and concepts drawn from the thematic analysis of the Findings chapter into the Medicine Wheel shown in Figure 26. Within each direction, in accordance with Nabigon and Mawhiney's interpretation, I identify both the positive notion associated with that direction and the "rascal", the negative side of the concept (1996, p. 22).

Figure 26 Interpreting the data through a Cree Medicine Wheel
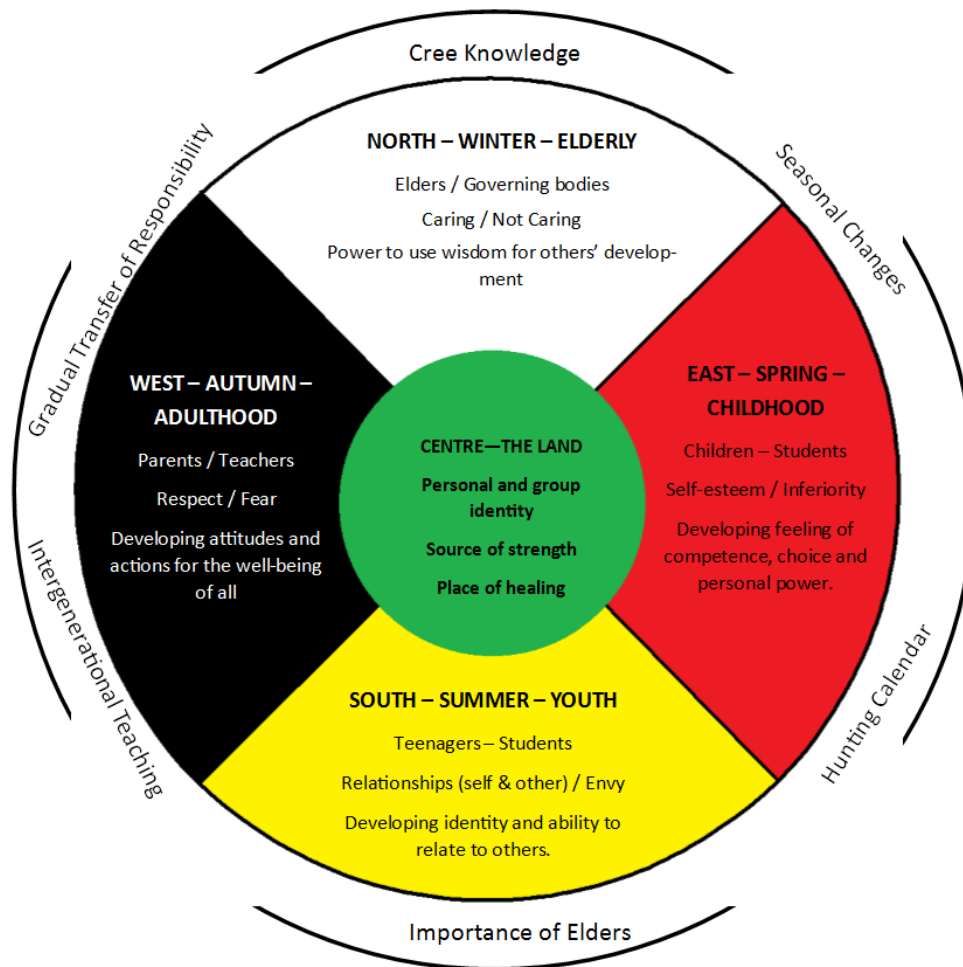
The Outside Circle. I have added an outer circle to Nabigon and Mawhiney's Medicine Wheel to represent certain important notions that emerged from this research as overarching categories, present at all stages of development, and moving fluidly between different seasons and ages.

Within the study there was significant variation of opinion between participants on important issues. As Deyhle (1995) notes, within the 'cultural constellation' of a community there is much variation, although some specific values are consistently reflected (p. 425). In this study, the points that emerged as non-contentious were primarily place-based—Cree knowledge of the land, the hunting calendar, seasonal changes—or related to Cree ways of teaching and learning—importance of Elders, intergenerational teaching, gradual transfer of responsibility. By placing these in an extra circle I am attempting to express that these are year-round, life-long aspects of a Cree way of being and knowing.

Academic writing on the culture of James Bay Cree supports these six points as central to Cree culture (Carlson, 2008; McAlpine & Herodier, 1994; Visser & Fovet, 2014). Elders have outlined the importance of knowledge of the land, hunting as a life-style, learning from older generations and achieving mastery over time, all points encompassed by the principles of the outlying circle (Cree School Board, 1997). Carlson (2008) has also written about the Cree connection to the land and its animals, as well as highlighting the importance of intergenerational teaching in traditional Cree society.

The Cree connection to the land is consistent with the tenants of place-based education (PBE). This approach foregrounds the connection of people and communities to the physical and social environment, and engages them in interacting with and caring for the places in which they live (Gruenewald, 2003). It has been suggested that many Indigenous cultures have a well-rehearsed traditional and historical affinity for PBE (Penetito, 2009). Penetito (2009) describes how for Indigenous peoples, a connection with the land is a fundamental human need, and the relationship between people and land is seen as a relationship of reciprocity and co-habitation. This was evident in the fact that the majority of the photos children took were of natural features. Furthermore, almost all the Cree participants spoke about their camps and traditional hunting group during the discussions.

East Door: Childhood. Beginning at the East Door (Spring) with childhood, the Medicine Wheel highlights the need of children to experience competence, choice and personal power. The positive emotion associated with this stage of development is self-esteem, while the 'rascal' is inferiority.

Freedom and nurture. The freedom to self-direct learning and the support of a nurturing environment emerged as central to Cree pedagogy among participants in this study. A feeling of competence is gained through achieving mastery of small challenges. This links with the theme of Cree Pedagogy, in which over time students take ownership of increasingly more complex tasks in a gradual transfer of responsibility An important comparison between Cree Pedagogy and the school environment in the study is the freedom of choice and exploration available when learning on the land and with the family, compared to a more restrictive and controlled school environment (Visser & Fovet, 2014).

Nurture is important as learners develop a sense of self-esteem, and several family members talked about the necessity of teachers providing love, affection, and personal warmth. According to some Indigenous scholars, the idealisation of professional, distant relationships between staff and students in many Western schools is a challenge for Aboriginal children (Delpit, 1995; Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007). Studying Alaskan Native schools, Delpit (1995) noted the centrality of humanity and emotion in the classrooms, and the focus on building rapport with all students.

Food—both physical and spiritual—is emphasized in the Medicine Wheel for this stage (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010). Participants talked about the importance of Meechum (traditional Cree food) in developing Cree identity. Similarly, stories can be seen as a kind of spiritual food, with storytelling feeding the imagination of the child and providing sustenance to their growing sense of self. While family members described story-telling as an effective way of teaching children, it is clear that it is highly appropriate for use with adults also.

Cannon (2011) notes that stories often deal with weighty issues such as "governance and nationhood, as well as the responsibilities of men and women within a society" (Cannon, p. 130).

Lifeworlds and flexible identities. In the early years of formal education children face challenges adapting to a context with different cultural and linguistic norms than those of their home community. Lifeworlds (Nakata, 2002) are more than simply ethnic identities, encompassing ways of communicating, learning and interacting with others. Children from subordinated communities are often denied any connection to their distinctive lifeworld and even asked to reject it (Cummins, 2001). The clash between lifeworlds may be evident in the fact that several children in this study have been diagnosed by the school as having Attention Deficit Disorder. While such a diagnosis may be correct, and it is clearly beyond the scope of this study to speculate on this, another consideration raised by family members is that these children have been raised learning in the Cree way, where freedom of choice, movement, and time frame are the child's prerogative.

In the context of increasingly globalisation, lifeworlds must incorporate the local and the global, the real and the virtual, and the boundaries between the lifeworlds of diverse members of a community seem to be fading and becoming irrelevant (Yelland, Lee, O'Rourke, & Harrison, 2008). Youth identities in particular are complex, fluid, and hybrid (Hynds, Faircloth, Green, & Jacob, 2014). Participants in the study noted an increase in non-Aboriginal influences through technology and media in recent years. Children's references to video games, internet websites, contemporary pop singers and so on demonstrated that while their lifeworlds may remain Cree at the core, they also incorporate knowledge from a globalized youth culture. Cultural theorist Susana Maira (2005) uses the term 'flexible citizenship' to describe the identity-building of children from cultural minorities, who construct a "flexible, merging and contextual" identity based on influences from their home

culture and the dominant culture of the wider society (p.23). Crucially, deviations from a Western perception of 'traditional' Aboriginal culture among youth are often viewed as an indicator of societal or cultural dysfunction (McIntosh, 2005). This is problematic as what counts as legitimate identities for Aboriginal youth must be open to diverse and hybrid ways of being.

Receptive language skills. One aspect of this identity is the ability to understand and, for some children, speak the Cree language. Of the four children in this study, all described understanding at least basic Cree language, several stated they understood well, and one identified himself as a confident speaker of the language. This aligns with the literature; productive mother tongue language skills are often found to lag behind receptive skills for children educated in a dominant language setting (Verhoeven, 2007). This phenomenon has also been found in other Canadian First Nations communities, where community-wide knowledge (ability to comprehend) is often greater than community-wide use (Meek, 2007). These children often engage in 'dilingual conversation,' where older family members speak to them in their mother tongue, and they respond in the dominant language (Austin, Blume, & Sánchez, 2015, p. 80).

As Meek observes in a Kaska-speaking community in the Yukon, rejecting the heritage language reflects how children interpret the sociolinguistic environment. With Elders recognized as the primary speakers of what is now seen as a specialized knowledge domain, children and youth believe that "[language skill] comes with age," rather than relating it to linguistic competence (Meek, 2007, p. 34). This was evident in the comments of children who found it self-evident that they would speak Cree when they were older, as all adults in their community do.

Some family members similarly expressed confidence that children would begin to speak the language as teenagers and adults, citing anecdotes of other families where this shift

had occurred successfully. The feeling among these families was that the high degree of exposure to Cree language through early childhood and the ongoing through interaction with grandparents would be sufficient to maintain language proficiency.

In contrast to the statements of participants, research on language attrition shows that active use is more important for maintenance than simply exposure (Noguchi & Fotos, 2001). From this perspective, receptive bilingualism among children is the first step to language loss (Wyman, 2009). It is noteworthy, however, that a few recent studies have challenged this traditional assumption of language attrition theories, and demonstrated that receptive bilinguals classified as minimal speakers in fact have a greater knowledge of language structure than their production would suggest (Austin et al., 2015).

South Door: Adolescence. In the South Door (Summer), youth learn to form positive relationships with self, family and community, and cement their values and identity. The "rascal" of this direction is envy, defined here as wanting something without being willing to work for it (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996).

Education as identity-producing. At this stage, identity can be perceived as being developed through interactions with members of their culture, and the opportunity to learn about and process – alone and through discussion – their developing thoughts and values (Ball, 2004; Banks, 2008). Here the absence of Cree content and language in schools can be seen as particularly concerning. Education is transformative and identity-producing (Banks, 2008); when youth developing their sense of self encounter situations such as the need to choose between Advanced Math/Science and Native History, they may feel that a strong Aboriginal identity and academic achievement are mutually exclusive. This can lead to educational success being synonymous with "acting White" and relinquishing aspects of a minority culture identity (Ogbu, 2004).

The value of critical reflection and discussion in the development of a sense of self is an area of conflict between best practices identified in Aboriginal education research (Battiste, 2013; Regan, 2010) and current practice in many schools. Teachers noted their fear of creating a conflict within the classroom if issues such as colonization were debated. While avoiding such topics may give teachers a false sense of peace within the classroom, in fact many, such as Paula Regan (2010), contend that the only way for settler nations like Canada to truly reconcile with their colonial past and to forge a future collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples is through 'unsettling,' a process of being confronted by the facts and stories of colonialism, and reflecting upon their own relationship with this historical legacy (p. 19).

Family members in this study expressed the view that knowledge of one's culture aids youth in developing a strong sense of self, which is in line with the Medicine Wheel framework and matches academic research on the topic. Self-confidence and the development of a positive sense of identity for Aboriginal youth has been closely linked in research with their access to teachers, language and activities from within their own culture (Deyhle, 1995; Wyman, 2009). Conversely, the more alienated from traditional culture, the less likely Aboriginal youth are to succeed (Deyhle, 1995).

The value of Elders and traditional teachers is also key at this stage, as was evident in the data analysis, where several parents talked about their experiences of learning from grandparents and Cree teachers at their reserve school; for one father, the encouragement of a Cree Culture teacher was enough to push him to learn his own language. The presence of these adults in the lives of youth is therefore extremely important.

The impact of restrictive language policies. In the absence of this validation of their culture, Ogbu (1998) notes that youth from involuntary minorities may forcefully reject the norms of the dominant community in acts of rebellion. This ties in with the language policies of the schools attended by Cree children in the study. Bilingual children in classrooms with

restrictive language policies use translanguaging (codeswitching) to rebel against linguistic dominance, and to express pride in their identity (Sayer, 2013; Wei, 2011). The decision of non-Aboriginal schools to restrict children's use of their mother tongue forecloses this opportunity for expression of identity, and provides an obvious way of rebelling against school rules and the hegemony of English and French which these rules represent.

Krauss (1996) states that "no one today is actively punishing people, as far as I know, for speaking their language in school" (p. 15). Yet, the Cree language is forbidden in the schools of this study, and children are reprimanded and disciplined for speaking their mother tongue. Restricting language use to the target language during class-time does provide for maximum input in the target language, which is supported to some extent by second language research (Krashen, 1989). There is also a significant body of work, however, which decries restrictive language policies which forbid natural, normal ways of expressing oneself using a mother tongues, including translanguaging (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011).

Linguists and language education scholars note that being bilingual is not the same as being monolingual twice; instead it is a state of being dynamically bilingual, where one's language practices are complex and interrelated, and switching between codes is just one way of expressing oneself (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Preventing children from doing so is therefore closing off a major opportunity for self-expression. Furthermore, the academic advantages of allowing first language use during classroom activities are well-documented (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2007; Darder & Uriate, 2012; García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). Cummins (2007) argues that allowing bilingual practices in multilingual classrooms can help to promote identities of competence among language learners from socially marginalized groups.

Furthermore, forbidding both French and Cree, but continuing to teach French in the curriculum (and subtly promoting French by allowing Francophone teachers to communicate

in their first language in front of students) is a clear example of one first language being valued over another. This echoes with Kanno's (2008) observations that mother tongues from culturally-privileged communities are valued over those from traditionally oppressed minorities.

West Door: Adulthood. Parents and Teachers from the study are located in the West direction (Fall/Autumn) of the Medicine Wheel. This is seen as an age of respect and reason, where people become able to influence others through their actions to improve the well-being of all (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). The "rascal" of this direction is fear, which prevents individuals from showing true respect for themselves and others.

Parents: teachers and decision-makers. This direction relates to the importance of parents as teachers, which was raised in the data analysis. I also discuss the challenges faced by parents, including concern for their children's language and culture maintenance, and decision-making about educational priorities.

The parents in this study were not alone in their concern—and mixed feelings—about the ongoing maintenance of the Aboriginal mother tongue and culture. Research demonstrates that communities worldwide struggle with this issue (Austin et al., 2015; Cummins, 2000; Darder & Uriate, 2012; Hinton & Hale, 2001; Marmion et al., 2014). Among other challenges, parents must work within the confines of what they themselves had access to during their lives (Cannon, 2011). One parent expressed lack of confidence in his own language abilities, and a fear that he might not be able to teach his children to speak Cree fluently. During the IRS era, many adults chose to avoid teaching their child their mother tongue in an attempt to spare their child the pain they had experienced as non-English speakers in oppressive institutions where speaking an Aboriginal language resulted in harsh punishment (Milloy, 1999). In the face of racism and assimilative policies, the ancestors of today's adults made difficult decisions about what to transmit to their children, and

Aboriginal communities today must live with the fact that today their people may not have the knowledge (or the skills to access the knowledge) that they would otherwise wish to pass on (Cannon, 2011).

While all parents in this study stated that they wished their children to maintain their traditional language and culture, several expressed concerns about the relevance of Cree knowledge in modern Canada. This was evident where children and parents both expressed the view that "it's not a Cree world". Indeed, while Cree continues to be valued as a family and community language, these participants believe that only English and French have the prestige and inherent worth necessary for business, higher education and professional life in general. This view reflects the assimilationist agenda of residential schools and other colonial policies, and shows that linguistic oppression has been internalized to some extent, with parents adopting the viewpoint that an education rich in Aboriginal language and culture will hinder children's chances of success (Cannon, 2011; Cochran et al., 2008).

An obvious manifestation of this viewpoint is the fact that families in this study have chosen off-reserve schooling—despite the financial burden and two-hour daily commute for children—over on-reserve schooling, where Cree language and culture are central to the curriculum. There are diverse reasons for this decision, as discussed in the introduction and findings chapters, however one perspective is that in addressing the twin challenges of culture maintenance and the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal achievement gap, families are placing priority on students' academic success. From this standpoint, parents saw the inclusion of Cree culture and language as desirable, but not sufficiently important to warrant risking students' potential for achievement in areas valued by the dominant education system.

Rather than seeing this as surrendering to the ideological assumptions of the dominant culture, this can be viewed as parents engaging in a transactional relationship with the non-Cree world, and taking what suits them to adapt to their own purposes. There is historical

precedent for this perspective; historians note that for the centuries of the fur trade era, Cree moved back and forth "between their land and the island of European culture," taking what was useful to them and adapting it to Cree purposes (Carlson, 2008, p. 15). This perspective gives perhaps greater credit to Cree agency and acknowledges the ability to Cree to pick and choose from the full range of cultural, social and economic products available to them as Aboriginal Canadians.

This view of Cree agency is resonant with the comments of teachers who felt that some students and families did not truly wish to feel at home within the school; they came to do English and then return home to real life. They perceived students and families kept an emotional distance from the school, reinforced symbolically by the physical distance involved in the two-hours daily bus commute. This might therefore be interpreted as a subversive response to the pressure from the dominant culture to not only conform to the mainstream education system but to embrace it.

Teachers' fears. Fear is also highly relevant to the opinions expressed by teachers in this data analysis. Teachers described their fear that children speaking their mother tongue, identifying French/English dominance, or discussing of the history of colonialism in Canada might provoke conflict between students and with staff. Furthermore, teachers expressed their concern that they did not have the knowledge to teach about Cree things, and feared that they would not understand children speaking in Cree. Teachers also felt justified in avoiding these difficult issues by the policies of the local school board and provincial government, in which Aboriginal culture and language is invisible (Ouellette, 2011).

This profile of fear and uncertainty is consistent with research about the attitudes of teachers from dominant cultures in schools with significant numbers of minority culture students (Delpit, 1995; Landsman & Lewis, 2006). While many teachers are caring individuals who make an effort to include children from diverse cultural backgrounds, many

lack the knowledge to be critical of their own biases. Even well-intentioned attempts may be hindered by a lack of structural support for cultural-competence within schools (Landsman & Lewis, 2006).

Ineffective inclusion: tokenism and romanticism. When teachers do attempt to include Aboriginal culture—for instance through a museum visit—there is a risk that this is in itself tokenistic and harmful. Treating Cree knowledge as the 'Other,' exotic material fit only for guest speakers or museum trips, reinforces a Western notion of Aboriginal cultures as static and historically-based (Cannon, 2011; Deloria, 1969; St Denis, 2009). Furthermore, museums themselves are not neutral spaces, but Western constructs where objects, photographs and videos can create a distorted image of Aboriginal peoples, safely sealed in the past (Crosby, 2007, p. 219). This idea of Aboriginal people as a historical group who have faded away in the enlightened modern state is even reflected in the Dewey decimal system used in many school and public libraries, where books about First Nations people are classified under "History" (Cherry & Mukunda, 2015).

The tendency of settler societies to romanticise Aboriginal cultures risks creating a caricature of Indigeneity (Cannon, 2011). As Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (1999) comments, "the state celebrates paint and feathers and Indian dancing, because they reinforce the image of doomed nobility" (p. 137). One result of this settler fascination with the material trappings of Aboriginal culture has been the development of the stereotype that Aboriginal peoples are "of culture, not mind," (St Denis, 2009, p. 164). This conveniently allows settler society to make a show of including Aboriginal content through tokenistic displays, while avoiding discussion of colonialism and critical race analysis. Seen from this perspective, some of the ostensibly innocuous efforts at inclusion that were discussed in this study, such as Aboriginal-themed arts and crafts lessons, can work to maintain—or leave unquestioned—

oppressive practices within institutions of Eurocentric power such as non-Aboriginal schools (Ball, 2004; Cannon, 2011; St Denis, 2009).

North Door: Elders/Government. In most Medicine Wheel models, the North Door (Winter) represents Elders. The opposing forces of this direction are Caring / Not Caring. This can be defined as the action of being willing to make choices and enact change in order to benefit all, rather than thinking only of the self, or one (dominant) group (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996).

The role of Elders. The Gokum in this study represents the value of 'caring' aptly. According to her, there must be relationships of love and respect between students and teachers before learning will occur. This Gokum had been involved in hiring teachers for the local on-reserve school in the past, and noted the importance of caring as a criterion for teachers' success with Cree children.

In this context the cyclical nature of the Medicine Wheel lends itself to understanding how the caring and nurturing provided by Elders is channelled back into the experience of growing confidence discussed above in the Eastern Door. In return, the respect and love shared by all the students and families in this study for their Gokums, Joomshooms, and other community Elders, indicate that the relationship is reciprocal (Carlson, 2008).

The role of Elders in culture maintenance is not without challenges, however. As Meek (2007) notes, there is a risk that in celebrating Elders as holders of traditional knowledge, they have been relegated to this domain only, with their sphere of influence reduced to only that matters that pertain to a narrow selection of traditional skills. This links with the concern that youth will associate Cree language and culture with Elders only, rather than seeing it as relevant, dynamic, and equally legitimate when owned and adapted by their generation.

The influence of governing bodies. I have chosen to supplement this notion of the North representing Elders by placing government—meant in the sense of federal, provincial and school board governing bodies—in this same direction. This is because in many traditional Aboriginal societies, Elders are the decision-makers whose wisdom is used to make choices influencing the whole group, whereas in modern Canadian society, government represents the decision-makers of policy affecting all citizens. The apathy of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population and government was demonstrated in the literature review by the absence of policies supporting Aboriginal students in Quebec, and was also evident in the data analysis through the feelings of parents that Cree culture was more or less absent from the school.

While individual teachers can have a significant impact upon students' experiences and success at school, systematic change requires policies enacted and enforced by the governing bodies of institutions; the relative success of British Colombia compared to other Canadian provinces shows that including Aboriginal content in the curriculum and Aboriginal leaders in policy-making pays dividends in terms of student outcomes (Richards, 2013).

The Centre. The centre of the Medicine Wheel represents the natural world, to which the Cree participants of this study frequently returned when describing their identity and connection to their culture and identity. This constitutes the core of all stages of development represented, and shows the ongoing importance of Cree experiences with—and grounded in—the land throughout the life cycle. The centre can be a place for healing, a point echoed by the Gokum in this study who stated that for Cree people, the land is the source of strength.

The centrality of the land for Cree people relates to place-based pedagogies, an approach concerned with context and the value of learning from and nurturing specific places, communities, or regions (Gruenewald, 2003). This approach, and others that tie in

with the concerns and priorities for Aboriginal education discussed in this chapter, will be further examined in the following chapter, where implications and recommendations are drawn from the data.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the findings of the study through the use of a traditional, holistic organising framework, the Medicine Wheel. This presentation of the data highlights the interconnected nature of the factors at play in this research context. Receptive language skills and the challenge of traversing lifeworlds was discussed in the Eastern direction, where young children develop their first sense of belonging and competence. The pervasive impact of colonialism, and the dominance of French and English language and culture, were evident particularly in the Southern and Western directions, where adolescents build their sense of cultural identity, and adults – both Cree parents and the non-Cree teachers – grapple with what they feel children must know to succeed in modern Canadian society. The Northern direction emphasizes the guiding role of Elders and governing bodies, and suggests that the latter has failed to adopt a 'Caring' role with regards to Aboriginal aspirations for education.

Around the outside, core values related to intergenerational learning and the importance of place move fluidly between stages, while the centre of the framework, where 'Balance' is represented, is a symbol for the land to which the people of Eeyou Istchee are connected.

The following chapter summarises this research, and draws from this discussion to consider implications for communities, schools, and wider Canadian society.

CHAPTER SIX: Making space for Gokum: Cree language and culture going forward

Introduction

This chapter will begin by summarising the research and findings, examining the limitations of the study, and outlining some issues with transferability. Following this, I describe possible implications of the study by drawing on my data and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, and by proposing questions for off-reserve schools with Aboriginal students to reflect upon. Finally, I suggest areas for future research and conclude.

Summary of research

Aboriginal communities in Canada currently face the twin challenges of maintaining their language and culture in an increasingly globalised society, while also attempting to reduce the significant disparity in academic attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Bearing in mind these wider concerns, this research has asked, "How do four Cree children attending off-reserve schools, and their families, make space for their Aboriginal culture and language in daily life?" Additional questions that have emerged in relation to this initial enquiry are:

- What factors at school and at home promote or hinder efforts to maintain Cree language and culture?

- How do children, family members, and teachers perceive the role of the education system in supporting the aspirations of Cree communities?

The findings of this study were that Cree families maintained their language and culture through place-based, intergenerational teaching and learning. Time spent hunting and in bush camps was a major source of exposure to Cree knowledge, skills, and beliefs for the children in this study. Children and family also described the importance of intergenerational teaching, with grandparents responsible for much of the cultural transmission.

Language maintenance was a particularly emotive issue for adult Cree participants. Most described youth in the community as primarily receptive bilinguals, with many children

expressing that they felt shy speaking their language. Some parents experienced feelings of insecurity about their own level of Cree, while others felt regret or disappointment that their children were less competent speakers than themselves. Yet, a degree of optimism for language maintenance still prevailed, based on a belief (not entirely supported by the literature;) that children would embrace their language as teens.

While committed to the maintenance of Cree language and culture, families also felt driven to ensure children receive an education preparing them for success in post-secondary education and wider Canadian society. They felt that this was unlikely to occur at the local on-reserve school where Cree language and culture play a larger role in the curriculum. A common thread running through students' and family members' comments was that "it's not a Cree world." It appears, therefore, that families were prioritising the potential for academic success in mainstream education, and its ongoing benefits, over the chance of a more Cree-focused education. Internalised colonial ideas about the worth of Aboriginal language and culture may have played a role in forming these viewpoints.

The two non-Cree teachers in this study had differing views on the degree to which their school was successful in including Cree language and culture. They were wary of allowing children to use their mother tongue within the school because of a commitment to the Quebec government policy of prioritising Quebecois language and culture. Concern about the potential for conflict between Cree and Quebecois students was also a factor. For similar reasons—and due to the lack of inclusive materials—instruction in history and social studies appeared to be highly Eurocentric.

The efforts of schools to include Cree content tended to be limited to rare visits to the on-reserve Cree culture museum and the occasional guest speaker. This aligns with the concerns of some Indigenous scholar (Cannon, 2011; Deloria, 1969).

Limitations

There are some important limitations to consider with regards to this study. Firstly, as a non-Aboriginal, non-Canadian researcher, I am an outsider in the community where I conducted this research. Furthermore, as a Pākehā New Zealander raised in the dominant culture of another settler state, I have no personal experience of the ongoing effects of colonisation, marginalisation, or discrimination. These two factors will certainly have influenced the way which I interacted with participants, and how I interpreted the findings of this research. They may also have impacted upon what children and families felt comfortable sharing with me, not to mention my ability to understand the non-verbal communication and social cues of participants.

On the other hand, while having lived on-reserve for two and a half years at the time of writing certainly does not make me an 'insider', it may have limited my ability to conduct research with minimal biases. For one thing, as a teacher at the on-reserve school eschewed by the families in this study, I am associated with the local education system, which may have affected what families felt they should share with me.

An additional limitation to consider is the fact that children, parents, and teachers, were all—to a greater or lesser extent—involved in discussions in their second language. The language barrier may therefore have made it difficult for participants to express themselves truly, and for me to interpret their statements accurately.

Transferability

This research was conducted on a very small scale, and while it may deepen our understanding of some children's, families' and teachers' perspectives, it is not generalizable to the Cree Nation as a whole, nor even to the whole community where this research was conducted. Furthermore, this study can only represent the views held by the participants at the time of writing. This study must therefore be seen as a snapshot of the experiences of

some small number of stakeholders in education in a specific community at a specific time. As such, it may have some value as exploratory research which raises further questions for consideration, and provides points for schools to reflect upon.

Implications

As an exploratory study of limited scope, this research does not provide a foundation for making substantive recommendations for communities, schools, or government. The findings are, however, consistent with other research on Aboriginal language and culture maintenance, and on Aboriginal education. The data collected from children and families in this study, along with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a) are used to support these implications.

This section begins locally and works outwards. I focus first on implications at the level of individual teachers, followed by school-wide measures, before finally making connections with several relevant TRC recommendations for provincial and federal government.

The role of individual teachers. Individual teachers have a significant impact upon the children in their classrooms; all the Cree participants in this study mentioned specific individuals from their schools who had impacted upon their experiences of off-reserve schooling in various ways.

Teachers can become more culturally-competent by adopting a self-critical, reflective stance, and considering how their own culture and identity shape their practice as teachers of Aboriginal students. In the traditional education paradigm, teachers hold power over children as the arbitrators of what knowledge is important and valid. When the children are from a marginalised minority culture, this power imbalance can be even more significant.

Teachers can mitigate the effects of this power imbalance by seeing themselves not as the *holders of knowledge* but rather *learners of culture*, in particular Aboriginal cultures. Teachers who adopt a learner stance will be open to and accepting of a range of ways of knowing and being, for instance by acknowledging diverse languages, dialects, and communication norms as valid and valuable. Learning from a child's community and culture is also a powerful tool for building relationships and shifting the traditional power dynamic between home and school. One example in this study was when a teacher had success in building rapport with families after seeking to learn about traditional Cree meechum such as bannock and blueberries.

Questions for schools. The children in this research experienced their identity as flexible and contextual, and moved between Cree and non-Aboriginal worlds daily. The children were mostly positive about straddling these two worlds, and family members expressed optimism for their ability to continue to do so. Participants' comments hinted at some cultural collisions, however, such as differences in the amount of independence learners experience in Cree and non-Aboriginal settings, and the restrictions on language use. Schools can play an important role at the local level by reflecting on their policies and adapting to better serve the community. Schools are a cultural interface, where diverse languages, worldviews, and ways of knowing and being interact.

If schools develop awareness of their role as a cultural interface, they can implement practices informed by the diverse cultures of students. Keeping in mind the perspectives of the children and family members who took part in this research, I propose ten questions for off-reserve schools serving Aboriginal communities to reflect upon:

1. What formal and informal consultation and communication takes place with the community(-ies) of our Aboriginal students on an ongoing basis?

2. To what extent are the beliefs of our staff and community members aligned in terms of the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and aspirations of our Aboriginal students?

3. How are staff members supported to learn and use culturally-competent modes of communication with our Aboriginal students and families?

4. What evidence is there of the language and culture of our Aboriginal students in artwork, signage, and displays around our school?

5. How are teachers supported to incorporate the Aboriginal language into classroom routines and interactions in an authentic and appropriate way?

6. Recognising that bilingualism is dynamic, what policies are in place to encourage our students to draw on their Aboriginal mother tongue for learning and self-expression?

7. To what extent do our curriculum and materials reflect Aboriginal knowledge, values, and culture, both traditional and contemporary?

8. To what extent are our teachers willing and able to engage students in thinking critically about Canada's colonial history and the ongoing effects of this?

9. What strategies are in place to build the capacity of students and staff for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect?

10. How do we as a school actively gather and act upon feedback from students, parents, teachers, and the wider community?

It is outside of the scope of this project to propose detailed accounts of pedagogical approaches that may be successful with Aboriginal children. Place-Based Education (PBE), however, is an example of a pedagogy that is already evident in traditional Cree ways of teaching and learning (Gruenewald, 2003; Penetito, 2009). The inclusion of this approach could be one possibility for schools who are seeking to align their curriculum with the values and knowledge of the Aboriginal community.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. The concerns of children and families at the local level, as explored in this study, are greatly affected by the federal

and provincial level. The TRC's historic final report (2015a) made several recommendations for Canada's governing bodies that directly impact upon the issues during this research,

Committing to solving Aboriginal education issues.

The TRC outlines steps which provinces could take to include Aboriginal culture and language in the education system, including developing K-12 curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b). This recommendation is relevant to the findings of this study. The concern of family members about the lack of appropriate Aboriginal content, in particular Aboriginal history, could be addressed by creating a thorough, age-appropriate curriculum on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history. As the lack of learning resources was a concern frequently cited by the teachers of this study, it would be crucial to support this curriculum with resources that scaffold teachers who lack confidence in their knowledge.

Honouring and integrating Aboriginal languages. Children and family members in this study expressed commitment to their mother tongue, despite the challenges of language maintenance. Schools' restrictive language policies appeared to adversely affect Cree children and their families by devaluing the language and reducing opportunities for natural interaction.

The recommendations of the TRC are consistent with these concerns, and advocate for acknowledging the inherent value and status of Aboriginal languages as treaty-protected, calling for federal funds to support language revitalisation and preservation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b, p. 2). This implies that responsibility for Aboriginal languages must be borne by the whole country, and schools, as the intellectual inheritors of a system in which Aboriginal culture and language have been ignored and devalued, hold a particular responsibility to contribute to preservation efforts.

Future directions for research

Further research is required to better understand how Aboriginal children and their families make space for language and culture while receiving an off-reserve education. This study has been conducted in a relatively isolated area, but still within driving distance of a non-Aboriginal town; so replicating the study in a more isolated fly-in/fly-out community further north, and in an urban setting in the south of Canada, would provide interesting comparisons. The perspectives of teachers could also be explored in greater depth, and with a wider range of participants. By conducting in-school observations of teachers' language use and methods of instruction over an extended period of time, a researcher might be able to verify some of the comments of participants from the study with regards to the cultural inclusiveness or lack thereof.

Research into the process of language shift in Aboriginal communities would provide essential information for Aboriginal and provincial governing bodies, including perhaps the motivation and rationale necessary to set up or increase language revitalization efforts. Specifically, as more statistical information becomes available regarding the language practices of Aboriginal communities in Canada, it would be useful to identify whether there is truth in the belief of community members that the children will naturally become more interested and confident in producing Cree language output as they become young adults.

Conclusion

This study has explored the question of how Aboriginal students attending off-reserve schools, and their families, make space for their Cree language and culture. The findings demonstrate that while families continue to use traditional place-based, intergenerational learning for effective transmission of knowledge and skills, the support of schools and the wider Canadian society is necessary. It is clear from the comments of participants that much

work remains to be done. With the cultural, social, linguistic, and economic well-being of Aboriginal Canada at stake, however, it is clearly worth the effort.

Indeed, reconciliation and inclusion will benefit Canadian society as a whole. By fostering multilingual, multicultural schools, we can work towards transforming "a standardising education into a diversifying one" (Hornberger, 2002, p. 30). Such a shift would affect all stakeholders positively, most especially those children and communities who need it the most.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Confirmation of Ethics Approval

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Phone   0-4-463 5480
Email   susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz

MEMORANDUM

TO	Lucy Castle
COPY TO	Carolyn Tait
FROM	AProf Susan Corbett, Convener, Human Ethics Committee

DATE	6 September 2015
PAGES	1

SUBJECT	**Ethics Approval: 22231** Making Space for Aboriginal Language and Culture; the experiences of six Cree students in Canadian provincial schools

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 31 October 2016. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards
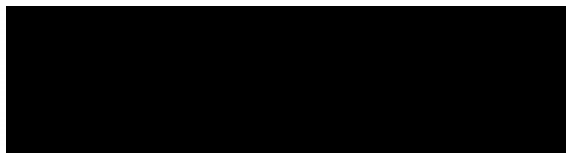
Susan Corbett
Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Information and consent letters

Information and consent forms for students:

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
TE WHĀNAU O AKO PAI
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 17-310, Donald St, Karori, Wellington 6147, New Zealand
Phone +64-4-463 9500 Fax +64-4-463 9649 Email education@vuw.ac.nz Web www.victoria.ac.nz/education

Information letter for students

Wachiya / Bonjour / Hi!

You are invited to take part in a project to find out how Cree children who go to a non-Native school experience their language and culture. My name is Lucy King and I am a teacher at Waapihtiiwewan School. I am from New Zealand, but I have been living in Ouje Bougoumou for 18 months.

What is the project about?
There are lots of Canadian children like you, who are Native but go to school outside of your community. Keeping Native culture and languages like Cree strong and alive is really important to a lot of people. This project is about how Ouje Bougoumou kids who go to school in town feel about Cree language and culture. I want to find out how you and your family find time to speak in Cree and do cultural activities. I will use this information to write a report as part of my university studies.

What will happen during the project?
There are two parts. I will ask you to take photos showing times in your day when you get to do Cree activities and speak Cree. We will talk about the photos together.

1. **Photovoice:**
   First we will have a meeting, with snacks, then I will give you a disposable camera. You will have about two weeks to take photographs of moments in your life when you speak Cree the most, or do Cree cultural activities. At the first meeting, we will talk about how to stay safe when taking photos, and how to respect peoples' privacy. You will get to keep your photos after the project.

2. **Discussion circles:**
   o Once you have taken the photos, we will have discussion circles, at the youth centre. We will talk about your photographs together with other children from Ouje Bougoumou who are taking photos as well. If you don't feel like talking, you can just listen. I am going to record the conversation on my phone. There are no right or wrong answers. If you give permission, we will choose some photos as a group to show your families to see what they think about protecting Cree language and culture.
   o I will also be talking to teachers at some schools in town to find out what they think about how children and their families can keep Cree language and culture strong. It won't necessarily be your teacher, and I won't tell any of the teachers who took part in the project, or what was said.

How will my privacy be kept safe?

I will do everything I can to make sure your privacy is looked after. In my report, I will not use your name or any information about you that makes it obvious who you are. You will be asked to not take photos which show anyone's face. I will only use your photos if you say it is okay. I will ask the other children in the discussion circle to keep what you say private, but I cannot promise that they will do so.

Are there any risks to this project?

Even though I'm not using your name, sometimes people can tell from a story who said something. It's possible that if someone reads my report, they might be able to guess that you took part.

Are there any benefits to doing this project?

I hope that the project will celebrate how you and your family practices and looks after your language and culture. It might be helpful for teachers who have Cree children in their class to understand more about what is important to you and your family.
At the end of the project you will get a disposable camera for you to keep and use.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

It is your choice to be part of the project or not. If you decide to be part of the project, you can stop at any time, for whatever reason, up until the end of October 2015. If you pull out, tell me or tell your parents and they will tell me. You won't get in any trouble, and I won't use any of your photos or ideas if you don't want me to.

How do I find out what was learned in the project?

In February 2016 I will share with you and your family the main ideas of what I found out. You will be able to add any comments or say if you think anything I have written isn't what you meant to say. When I'm finished with my report, I will give you a summary of what I've written. I hope to have this done by October 2016. The information from the report might be published in my thesis, a conference paper, or in a journal article.

Ethical Approval

This from research has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. For more information about the Ethics process, contact Susan Corbett, email ☐_____☐. My supervisor, Carolyn Tait (email ☐_____☐, can discuss the project with you if you want.

Any questions?

If you have questions, you or your family can get in touch with me at any time:
Cellphone☐_____☐

Thanks for thinking about being part of this project!

Yours sincerely,

Lucy King

Consent form for students

Giving consent:

- o I have read the information letter asking me to be part of a project by Lucy King of Victoria University of Wellington.
- o I agree to be part of the research project.
- o I have had a chance to ask questions about being part of this project and to find out anything I wanted to know.
- o I agree to take photographs for the project.
- o I understand that I should always ask permission if I'm taking a photo of someone.
- o I know that I should not take photos which show people's faces.
- o I agree to be part of a discussion circle with other children from the project.
- o I understand that if I agree to be part of this project I can still stop at any time by telling Lucy or my parents.
- o I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Information and consent forms for parents/guardians:

Information letter for parents / guardians

Wachiya / Bonjour / Hello,

You and your child are invited to take part in a project about how Cree children who attend a non-Native school protect and express their language and culture. My name is Lucy King and I am a teacher at Waapihtiiwewan School. I am from New Zealand, but have been living in Ouje Bougoumou for 18 months. I am studying part-time for a Masters in Education degree at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

What is the project about?
80% of Canadian Aboriginal children attend school off-reserve, where their Native language or culture is usually not part of the curriculum. This project will explore the experiences of James Bay Cree children who live in a Native community and attend a provincial school in a non-Native town. Through photographs taken by the students, and discussion circles about the topic, the project will show how these children and their families find space to maintain and protect their Cree language and culture.

What will happen during the project?
There are two parts to this research.
1. **Photovoice:**
   You and your child will be asked to come to an introduction meeting, with refreshments provided, where they will be given a disposable camera. Your child will be asked to take photos over the next few weeks showing moments in their daily life at school or at home when they are able to use the Cree language or express their Cree identity. Children will be told to always ask permission before taking a photo, and not to photograph people's faces, to respect their privacy.
2. **Discussion circles:**
   o A few weeks later when the photos are printed, we will have discussion circles at the youth centre. There will be one discussion with the children who participated, and another with the parents/family members of the children, held at different times. The discussion will be about what it is like for Cree children in a non-Native school, and how children and their families feel about maintaining the Cree language and culture. Snacks and refreshments will be provided, and the discussion will probably take about one hour. I would like to audio-record the discussion, with your permission. If you or your child doesn't want to answer a question or speak during the discussion circle, you don't have to.
   o I will also be interviewing teachers in Chibougamau schools to find out how they believe Cree language and culture are maintained. These teachers will not necessarily be from your child's school, and I will not share any information with the teachers about which families participated in the project. If you and your children give permission, some of the photographs the children took may be shown to the teachers as part of the discussion.

How will my privacy be protected?
Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your or your child's name or any information that would allow you to be identified. Children will be asked to not take photos which show anyone's face. Photographs will be included in the final report only if you and your child give

permission for them to be used. Opinions, stories or ideas you share at the discussion circle will be confidential and will not be linked to an individual. I will ask all participants to keep what is said at the discussion circle private, but I cannot guarantee that they will do so.

Are there any risks to this project?
Although names will not be used, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Because Ouje Bougoumou is a small community, it is possible that someone reading the project might be able to work out who took part, even without the use of names.

Are there any benefits to doing this project?
I hope that this research will celebrate the efforts of Cree children and families who are maintaining their language and culture while also working to succeed in a provincial school. This research could show non-Native teachers what matters to Cree families and how they can better teach and support their students.

There will be a prize draw of a digital camera for the children participating. All families taking part will also receive printed copies of the photos taken for you to keep, and a $20 Maxi voucher.

What if I change my mind about taking part?
It is your choice to be part of the project or not. If you decide to be part of the project, you can stop at any time, for whatever reason, up until the end of October 2015. If you or your child decides to withdraw, there will be no consequences to either of you. If you or your child withdraws before this date, any photographs or information you shared will not be included in the project.

How do I find out what was learned in the project?
I will share with you a written summary of the project by February 2016 at the latest. You will have the opportunity to add any comments or say if you think anything I have written is wrong. I will give you a summary of the final report when it is completed, probably around October 2016.

Who else will read about the project?
Once the report is written, I will share it with my university who will keep a summary of it in an electronic database. It is possible that in the future I may write an article for an academic journal about the project, or present the information at a conference. If this happens, every effort will be made to make sure it is not possible to identify anyone from the report.

Ethical Approval
This research has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. For more information about the Ethics process contact Susan Corbett, _____). Carolyn Tait, my supervisor(_____) can discuss the project with you.

Any questions?
If you have questions, you or your family can get in touch with me at any time:
_____ .

Thank you very much for considering taking part in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy King

Consent form for parents

- o I have read the information presented in the information letter about a project being conducted by Lucy King of Victoria University of Wellington.
- o I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this project and to find out any more information.
- o **For my child:**
    - o I give permission for my child to participate in the photovoice research project by taking photographs with a disposable camera.
    - o I give permission for my child to be part of a discussion circle talking about the photos. I understand I can be in the room during the discussion.
- o **For myself:**
    - o I agree to participate in the research by being part of a discussion circle for family members.
- o I understand that if my child and I agree to participate in this project, either of us may withdraw at any time up until the end of October 2015.
- o I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant's child: _____

Name of participant: _____

Information and consent forms for teachers:

Information letter for teachers

Wachiya / Bonjour / Hello,

You are invited to take part in a project of how Cree children who attend a non-Native school protect and express their language and culture. My name is Lucy King and I am a teacher at Waapihtiiwewan School in Ouje Bougoumou. I am from New Zealand, but I have been living in northern Quebec for 18 months. I am studying part-time for a Masters in Education at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

What is the project about?

80% of Canadian Aboriginal children attend provincial schools, where their Native language or culture is usually not part of the curriculum. This project will explore the experiences of James Bay Cree children who live in a Native community and attend a provincial school in a non-Native town. Through photographs taken by the students, and discussion circles about the topic, the project will show how these children and their families find space to maintain and protect their Cree language and culture.

What will happen during the project?

There are two parts to this research. I am asking you to take part in a discussion circle in the second part of this project.

1. Photo-Voice:

A group of children who live in Ouje Bougoumou but attend school in Chibougamau have been asked to take photographs representing how they and their families express and protect their Cree language and culture. The photographs will be taken in the community, and some schools may have given permission for students to take photographs during the day at school.

2. Discussion circles:

o After the photographs have been taken, the participants and their families will take part in discussion circles about what it is like for Cree children in a non-Native school, and how children and their families feel about maintaining the Cree language and culture.

o To understand the perspectives of different stakeholders in these students' education, I would like to also interview some teachers from schools attended by the students in the project. You are invited to attend a discussion circle at _____ in Chibougamau on _____. Snacks and refreshments will be provided, and the discussion will probably take about one hour. Selected photos from the Photo-Voice project will be shared, and we will discuss how Cree students experience learning in a provincial school, while also maintaining their language and cultural identity. I would like to audio-record the discussion, with your permission. If you don't want to answer a question or speak during the discussion circle, you don't have to.

How will my privacy be protected?

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use name or any information that would allow you to be identified. Opinions, stories or ideas you share at the discussion circle will confidential and will not be linked to an individual. I will ask the discussion circle to keep what others say private, but I cannot guarantee that they will do so.

Are there any risks to this project?

Although names will not be used, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. It is possible that someone reading the project might be able to work out who took part, even without the use of names.

Are there any benefits to doing this project?

I hope that this research will celebrate the efforts of some Cree children and families who are maintaining their language and culture while also working to succeed in a provincial school. Your perspective will enrich the discussion and help to build understanding between home and school.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

It is your choice to be part of the project or not. If you decide to be part of the project, you can stop at any time, for whatever reason, up until the end of October 2015. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences for you.

How do I find out what was learned in the project?

I will share with you a written summary of the project by January 2016 at the latest. You will have the opportunity to add any comments or say if you think anything I have written is inaccurate. I will provide you with a summary of the thesis when it is published. I expect to complete by September 2016.

Who else will read about the project?

Once the report is written, I will share it with my university who will keep it in an electronic database. It is possible that in the future I may write an article for an academic journal about the project, or present the information at a conference. If this happens, every effort will be made to make sure it is not possible to identify anyone from the report.

Ethical Approval

This research has been approved by Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. For more information about the Ethics process contact Susan Corbett, [   ]. Carolyn Tait, my supervisor [   ] can discuss the project with you.

Any questions?

Please get in touch with me at any time if you have a question or concern about the project:
Cellphone: [   ]

Thank you for considering taking part in this project.

Yours sincerely,
Lucy King

Consent form for teachers

Giving consent:

- o I have read the information presented in the information letter about a project being conducted by Lucy King of Victoria University of Wellington.
- o I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this project and to find out any more information.
- o I agree to participate in this research by being part of a discussion circle for teachers.
- o I understand that if I agree to participate in this project I may withdraw at any time up until the end of October 2015.
- o I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Consent form for principals:

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Consent form for principals

Giving consent:

o I have read the information presented in the information letter about a project being conducted by Lucy King of Victoria University of Wellington.

o I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the possible involvement of teachers employed at my school, and to find out any more information I wanted.

o I give permission for Lucy to ask teachers if they are interested in taking part in a discussion circle.

o I understand that if teacher agree to be part of a discussion circle they are able to withdraw their contribution up until the end of October 2015.

o I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Appendix C

Use this camera to take photographs of moments in your daily life when you:

- Practice your language or culture
- Spend time with special people who help you learn about being Cree
- Feel proud of who you are

Remember:

- Don't photograph anyone's face
- ALWAYS ask permission before taking a photograph of a person or their property
- Talk to your parents or guardians about the photos you plan to take

Appendix D

Wang's (2006) SHOWeD framework

- What do you *S*ee here?
- What's really *H*appening here?
- How does this relate to *O*ur lives?
- *W*hy does this situation, concern, or strength exist?
- What can we *D*o about it?