

GUARDED BORDERS: COLONIALY INDUCED BOUNDARIES AND MI'KMAQ
PEOPLEHOOD

by

Rebecca Lea Thomas

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
November 2012

© Copyright by Rebecca Lea Thomas, 2012

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled “GUARDED BORDERS: COLONIALY INDUCED BOUNDARIES AND MI’KMAQ PEOPLEHOOD” by Rebecca Lea Thomas in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dated: November 29, 2012

Supervisor: _____

Readers: _____

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DATE: November 29, 2012

AUTHOR: Rebecca Lea Thomas

TITLE: GUARDED BORDERS: COLONIALY INDUCED BOUNDARIES
AND MI'KMAQ PEOPLEHOOD

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

DEGREE: MA CONVOCATION: May YEAR: 2013

Permission is herewith granted to Dalhousie University to circulate and to have copied for non-commercial purposes, at its discretion, the above title upon the request of individuals or institutions. I understand that my thesis will be electronically available to the public.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

The author attests that permission has been obtained for the use of any copyrighted material appearing in the thesis (other than the brief excerpts requiring only proper acknowledgement in scholarly writing), and that all such use is clearly acknowledged.

Signature of Author

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Mi'kmaq people. Their spirit and determination inspire me.

Wela'lin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Bounded Peoplehood: Boundaries, Belonging and Pow-wow.....	11
2.1 Literature Review:.....	11
2.2 Methodology:	32
Chapter 3 Money Matters: Rich Reserve, Poor Reserve	38
3.1 Access: A World of Difference.....	39
Chapter 4 The “Rez”: On, Off and In Between.....	58
4.1 Peoplehood, Identity and Tradition: Where and How are they Learned?	58
4.2 Language: Tied to the Reserve?	62
4.3 Off the Rez: “City Indians”	71
Chapter 5 Pow-wow Potential	79
5.1 The Urban Pow-wow: Performance versus Enactment.....	80
5.2 The Reserve Pow-wow: A Young Hope?	91
Chapter 6 Conclusion.....	97
6.1 Limits of my Study:Future Research Required.....	106
Bibliography	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Peoplehood Matrix (Holmes, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003: 13)	8
---	---

ABSTRACT

Despite vast research on North American Indigenous people and their struggles with sovereignty and autonomy, little attention has been paid to internal conflict within a First Nation. Inter community conflicts affect Mi'kmaq peoplehood and they relate to themselves and each other. This research was conducted in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional Mi'kmaq territory and explored issues surrounding language, financial wellbeing, geography, and Pow-wow. Interviews with 17 self-identified Indigenous people in Nova Scotia, Canada reveal that colonially induced conflicts only run so deep. Pow-wows seem to lesson conflict and become space of political protest, social inclusion and cultural reclamation. Hope lies with the younger generations who are now extending their relationships beyond the borders of the reserve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who contributed to this body of work. I would like to begin by thanking the people of Mi'kma'ki. Without their participation and enthusiasm I would not have been able to complete this thesis. They welcomed me into their communities during times of celebration, were eager to share their stories with me, and answered all of my questions. Their hospitality is deeply appreciated. I was offered places to stay at every reserve I visited. Thank you. I am truly grateful.

I would like to acknowledge my committee, my supervisor Dr. Brian Noble and Dr. Martha Radice for their seemingly unending patience for my stubbornness and willfulness to learn on my own. I want to thank both of them for their guidance and understanding.

I want to thank Neil Forbes, the Director of Education at Lennox Island First Nation, for his hard work to keep me funded. Without his actions, graduate school would not have been possible.

I would like to thank Patricia Glode-Chisholm for her letter welcoming me into the Urban First Nation community. With that letter, I was eligible for my first ever scholarship, one that granted me the freedom to focus solely on my education.

I want to thank Laretta Syliboy, the counselor at the Native Education Counseling Unit. I spent many days and countless hours working, talking with students, laughing, crying, and writing. I am deeply indebted to Laretta. She was always there to

listen to my complaints and problems, personal and academic. I will always remember our many conversations over numerous cups of tea.

I want to thank my editor and friend Nina Hoeschele whose tireless work and kind and humourous comments on my thesis improved me as a writer. Thank you, Nina.

I want to thank my parents. My mother, Patricia Thomas, gave me more strength than she knows. I would not be the woman I am today without her. My father, Tim Redfeather Thomas, gave me more than my Mi'kmaq blood. He gave me the perseverance to pick myself up and continue on even after many falls and stumbles. Lastly, I want to thank my partner, Chris Kennedy, for his emotional and moral support. I would have given up a long time ago if not for him.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I am Mi'kmaq. I grew up off-reserve. I do not speak my language. I am registered with Lennox Island band on Prince Edward Island but I do not know anyone who lives there. I am Mi'kmaq.

I knew I was Native but it only dawned on me that I was Mi'kmaq, or Micmac, as my father would say, when I was in my early adolescence. During the few summer visits I had with my father, he would take me to Pow-wows and reserves to learn about my culture. Kids on the reserve would tease me. They would call me the “little white girl” and I was embarrassed when my father would introduce me by my Native name, Swift Fox. I could tell it hurt my father when I would say “just call me Rebecca”. I did not feel Native and I did not want to socialize with children who picked on me simply because I did not grow up with them.

I was never close with my father. He was gone when I was very young and it would often be months in between phone calls let alone visits. I never knew that my father attended residential school. I was angry with him for leaving when I was only three years old. Gifts and Pow-wows were the only ways he could think to make a connection with his daughter.

I was nineteen when I spent a summer with my father traveling the Pow-wow circuit in Ontario. Most of the reserves we visited were Ojibwa. The dancers and participants would ask me where I was from. I would start to say that I was from Moncton but my father would interject and exclaim that we were “Micmac Indians from Lennox Island reserve on Prince Edward Island!” Later on that year, my father came to visit me while I was at university. He took me to a Mi'kmaq reserve in Nova Scotia. As

we exited the car he told me not to go anywhere without him. I asked him why and he explained to me that this community did not like outsiders. I was shocked. I was Mi'kmaq First Nation after all and this was a Mi'kmaq reserve. I was one of them! However, because I grew up with my white mother, I was different. I did not think the same as them, I talked differently and I did not understand that things were different on the "rez".

Since that experience, I have worked at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, in Halifax Nova Scotia. I have worked on an archeological dig in Mi'kmawey Debert. I worked in the Native Counseling Unit at Dalhousie University. I took every opportunity in university to write papers on Indigenous peoples. I was desperate to know why I was different and if there were other people like me. More importantly, I wanted to know why people from the reserve were curt with me for being a "city Indian". I wanted to know why the Mi'kmaq people from that particular community accepted my father as "one of them" while I was an outcast. During my summer jobs at the Centre and the archeological dig, Native workers were teased or picked on depending what reserve they were from. There were jokes about the "speakers" from "Eski" and the "rich kids" from Millbrook. There were so many discrepancies that my childhood story books about Klu'skap—the mythic guardian of the Mi'kmaq people—never explained. I took it upon myself to find answers.

This is a Master's thesis in social anthropology. It is a qualitative study that examines symbolic barriers that exist between the various communities of the Mi'kmaq Nation. In 2006, First Nations people made up 2.2% of the Canadian Population (Gionet,

2009). Unpacking and analyzing the Mi'kmaq people is a lifetime endeavour and requires more time and space than is permitted in this body of work. As a result I chose a specific part of Mi'kmaq relationships to study. I chose to examine colonially induced social tensions and disruptions between the various communities within the Mi'kmaq Nation. Many studies have examined either urban aboriginals or marginalized reserve communities. However, there is a lack of research that examines the relationship between these two groups.

In 2010 CBC aired a television special, focusing on Aboriginal migration (CBC, 2010). The special focused on aboriginal people who moved to the city and currently spend most of their time away from the reserve. The special did not mention second and third generation city dwellers that had never spent any considerable amount of time on a reserve. Moreover, the special only concentrated on interactions between Natives and non-Natives. The special did not indicate any migration between reserves—a very common experience—nor did it address the relationship between different Native groups and communities.

A recent publication by the Environics Institute, does mention second generation Aboriginal urbanites who feel connected to their community of origin, however, they are more likely to be Inuit than First Nations. Furthermore, second generation city dwellers who remain close with their community of origin tend to be older than 45 years of age and affluent, with a total household income of \$80,000 or more (The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2010: 33). Because my research examines the relationship between Indigenous communities—urban and reserve alike—it is important to consider the

proportion of First Nations people living in a city who are originally from a reserve versus those who are not. Aboriginal Urbanites will be registered to a reserve if they are a “status Indian” but that does not mean that they were raised in that community. First Nations people who have migrated away from a reserve will experience life as an “Urban Aboriginal” differently from Indigenous urbanites that have never lived on a reserve in the first place.

There are thirteen Mi’kmaq reserves in Nova Scotia. Each of these reserves operates independently from one another and each community is known for different things. With almost a quarter of the Indigenous population migrating off-reserve and almost half of the Native population living in cities (Statistics Canada, 2001), tensions appear to have arisen between different First Nations groups. These tensions are fluid and problems can manifest between on-reserve and off-reserve groups or between the various reserves. Furthermore the symbolic boundary that these tensions create can be based on differing cultural, economic, political and social experiences (Chute & Speck, 1999). For example, Eskasoni and Elsipogtog are known for their use of the Mi’kmaq language, while Millbrook and Membertou are known for their economic success. Locality also plays a role in the development of these tensions because it draws attention to community differences. The rupturing of hundreds of Nations at the hands of the Canadian government has created a symbolic boundary between the on and off-reserve communities, keeping them from relating to each other, despite a supposedly shared culture. Traditional modes of learning have been disrupted and values have shifted. In spite of this tumultuous relationship, there are moments when these conflicts appear to be tempered.

The concept of liminality plays into Pow-wow potential. Victor Turner focused on liminality, one of three stages of Van Gennep's theory concerning "rites de passage" (Lehmann & Myers, 2001). The three stages are separation, margin/limen, and aggregation. I would like to focus on the second stage as well and discuss the Pow-wow's ability to create a liminal space that allows for Mi'kmaq people and other First Nations individuals to leave behind or rise above everyday conflicts.

According to Turner, societies are made up of structured and stable positions that have specific meaning in society. An Indigenous person's legal status as a "status Indian" or their position as an Aboriginal urbanite are two such examples. The meanings these positions hold will affect social interactions between those who have the same or different stations in society. During the liminal state, a person or group of people are able to shift their positions within society by undergoing a stage whereby they shed their past structure, but have yet to be bestowed a new social role with its own set of rules. For example Indigenous people who take part in Pow-wow can shed a part of themselves and their social state, leaving room for the restructuring of previously-held beliefs about them or their culture. However, it is worth noting that in Turner's discussion, the former social position is completely shed yet in a Pow-wow it is impossible to completely cast off social identifiers. A person will always be asked where they are from.

Pow-wow has the potential to create a liminal space where previously held assumptions and prejudices can be reorganized and rethought. With that potential in mind I have asked the following three questions:

- 1) In the context of historically scripted boundaries, how are the various enactments of peoplehood articulated within and outside of a ceremonial event such as Pow-wow?
- 2) How do conflicting enactments of Mi'kmaq peoplehood articulate day-to-day life under the pressures of ongoing coloniality?
- 3) How can the reconfiguration of peoplehood—specifically Mi'kmaq peoplehood—address tensions between Mi'kmaq communities?

Partly, I want to answer these questions to fill the gap in the literature that is left by one-dimensional studies of either urban or reserve communities. According to Stratton and Washburn, “the need for a more comprehensive theoretical approach is highlighted by the underrepresentation of Native literary analysis in scholarly journals, both in American literature and American Indian/Native studies” (2008: 51). Furthermore, Annis May Timpson, a leading scholar in Canadian Studies, whose focus is now centred on Aboriginal policy, explains the necessity in having Aboriginal contribution to scholarship. Moreover, she emphasizes the importance of Indigenous storytelling—something that plays heavily in my methodology.

Indigenous storytelling can extend the established boundaries of historical research, generate new resources for archives and museums, broaden cultural understandings of urban space, encourage retention of Indigenous languages, and rekindle community strength. It also demonstrates how these oral traditions mitigate the impact and damage of colonialism by enabling Aboriginal peoples to question research methodologies, reframe historical knowledge, challenge dominant ideas, and, above all, develop agency (Timpson, 2009: 2).

Scholars neglect or misrepresent important aspects of Indigenous epistemology and differing cultural paradigms (Statton and Washburn, 2008). Although this thesis is not a narrative analysis, there is a cultural connection between stories and many First Nations. I have used this connection and gathered stories, narratives, and conversations from both urban and reserve First Nations people in order to tackle my research questions. There are few Indigenous scholars who contrast or lend an Indigenous perspective to the existing research conducted on Indigenous communities by non-Native researchers. Storytelling is the traditional way to share and transmit knowledge among Indigenous peoples. These stories can help fill in the gap in Native studies by addressing issues from an Indigenous point of understanding. In addition to addressing the gap in Native research, I also want to answer these questions because, as an off-reserve Mi'kmaq person, I want to know where I fit into the world of First Nations relations.

Three overarching themes arose during my research conducted in the summer of 2010. Language, territory, self-sufficiency, and economic success were sources of pride for the communities that have them while they were origins of conflict for reserves that do not. In spite of the conflicts and tensions that exist with communities, ceremonies—Pow-wow for example—provided a unique space that challenged these conflicts. Within the Pow-wow setting, the factors of language, territory and economic success will not influence the emotional connection a person has with the sacred fire nor will it affect a dancer's ability to stay on beat. More importantly, as my participants will explain, those factors have little effect on the sense of solidarity felt by those in attendance.

The first chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of this thesis. I introduce the concept of peoplehood as thought out by Robert K. Thomas and Edward Spicer (1986). Instead of using identity theories on ethnic groups, which can be so various in theories and concepts as to lack applicability, I use the concept of peoplehood. The peoplehood matrix, according to Thomas, is made up of four pillars: language, sacred history, territory and ceremonial cycle, all of which affect the aforementioned themes of language, economic development and success, and territory. Because the concept of pillars lends itself to a rigid structure that is difficult to manipulate, I choose to think of the matrix as a web that is flexible and sustainable even when certain threads are broken or removed.

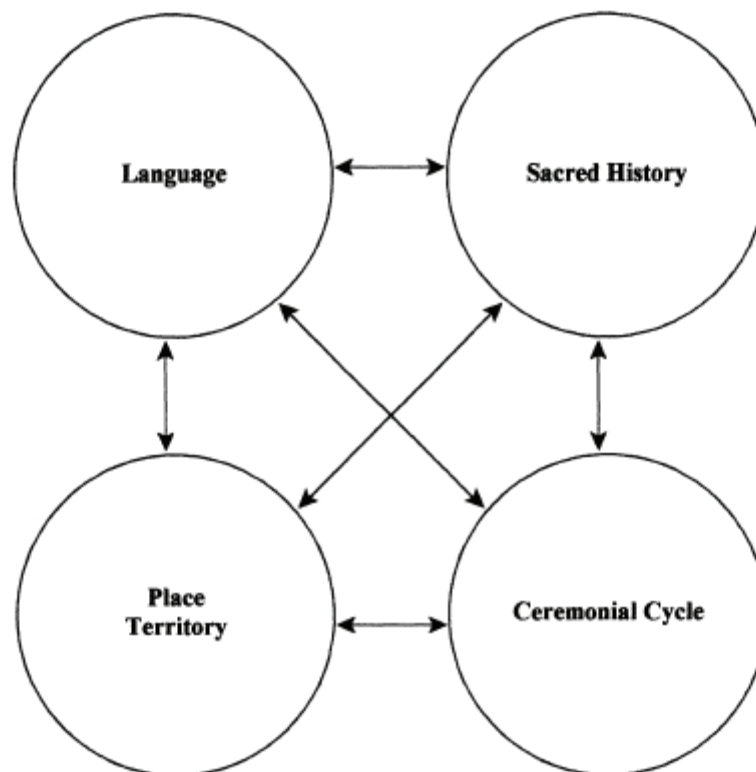


FIGURE 1: PEOPLEHOOD MATRIX (HOLMES, PEARSON, & CHAVIS, 2003: 13)

This diagram is visual representation of Holmes et al.'s explanation of the peoplehood matrix. It is clear why they choose to refer to each feature as a pillar. However, the arrows that connect each pillar intersect and create a web of interpretation. It is the flexibility of a peoplehood web that I will utilize in my analysis.

I examined these themes in a Pow-wow setting. Because of the Pow-wow's inclusive nature, it has aspects of liminality where presumptions and conflicts are reorganized.

My position as researcher and researched, meaning that I am a part of the First Nation that I studied, creates a unique dynamic between myself and my participants. I am a Mi'kmaq woman who is very much a part of what I study. My position as a Mi'kmaq researcher influenced the type of responses I received from Indigenous participants. Several of my participants spoke to me candidly about their lives because I am Mi'kmaq too and they felt that I could be trusted. My position also provides a Mi'kmaq perspective on anthropological literature. Much of the anthropological work that has been published has been by non-Native researchers. There are many Indigenous scholars today but there are few Mi'kmaq scholars studying their own people. My aim is to contribute my Mi'kmaq perspective to the vast collection of anthropological literature.

Chapter two addresses the current political and economic situation within which Mi'kmaq people must operate. I outline the federal transfer payment system and how it creates competition between communities. In addition to inter-community competition, the current infrastructure of reserve communities generates internal conflict whereby

many people are contending for very few employment positions; even if they are not necessarily qualified for them.

The third chapter introduces the on-reserve off-reserve divide. There were many accounts from my participants as to why the two manifestation of Mi'kmaq peoplehood were different. Much of what was said attempted to label on-reserve peoples as the gate keepers of culture by those who grew up there. Not surprisingly, Mi'kmaq people who grew up off-reserve challenged this belief. I utilize the peoplehood matrix to explain why each position that encompasses language and culture is legitimate given the context of the lives of my participants.

Chapter four attempts to reconcile these tensions by introducing Pow-wow as a liminal space that has the potential to contest colonially induced boundaries. I also introduce Pow-wow as a space that unifies Mi'kmaq people by reforming new and solidifying existing social ties and challenges colonially induced tensions. Aspects of sharing are introduced into the matrix while territory is given a heightened significance that complements contemporary Mi'kmaq peoplehood. My conclusion addresses the limits of my study and suggests new avenues of research.

CHAPTER 2 BOUNDED PEOPLEHOOD: BOUNDARIES, BELONGING AND POW-WOW

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW:

In this chapter, I will address the current social, geographic and economic situation the Mi'kmaq people find themselves in today and the history that has led to it. I will also introduce and explain the peoplehood matrix as a theory tailored for research that concerns Indigenous peoples. I also introduce Pow-wow, its functions and role in enactments of Mi'kmaq peoplehood. Following my research framework, I will present the methodology I used in order to address my research questions.

The Mi'kmaq are the Indigenous inhabitants of the Atlantic Canada region. The Mi'kmaq still occupy their traditional lands, if only a fraction of them, and have managed to maintain their traditional language in some areas, while excelling in business in others. However, Mi'kmaq communities are not left without their scars from the ongoing colonial moment. The Mi'kmaq once followed a seasonal pattern of migration. They lived in larger communities on the coast during the summer months and separated into smaller family units and moved inland during the winter (Prins, 1996). Their extensive kinship relations were key to survival in the harsh Maritime climate (Prins, 1996). Kin groups, which included the extended families of the *saqmaw*, the headman of a group or

band, ranging from 30 to 300 individuals (Prins, 1996), looked after one another in a reciprocal manner. If one kin group's territory was compromised, neighbouring groups would allow them to hunt and fish in their territory. Today, each community operates independently without input from other communities in neighbouring regions.

Furthermore, a large proportion of Mi'kmaq people do not live on reserves--such as youth attending university or migrant workers--but instead have migrated to urban centres, creating an ever-expanding population of urban dwelling First Nations people with no ties to the reserve communities.

The government took many measures to assimilate and subsume the hundreds of Indigenous Nations and their peoples into the national identity of "Canadian" (Brownlie, 2006). The Gradual and Voluntary Enfranchisement Acts were two of the most effective methods of assimilation (ibid). Gradual and Voluntary Enfranchisement are both pristine, emblematic examples of a governmentalization procedure resulting in fragmenting collectivity in Indigenous populations and communities. Unfortunately, these Acts led to many of the perceived boundaries between on and off-reserve First Nations people. Voluntary Enfranchisement allowed a First Nations person to apply for Canadian citizenship in exchange for their Indian Status and all the benefits that went along with it. The voluntary participation in this Act by First Nations people is yet another example of the coercive power of coloniality. The First Nations people who opted out of Indian status believed that they were gaining an equal position within Canadian society (Brownlie, 2006: 46). The social reality was different; no amount of Enfranchisement could remove the stigma associated with being Native. The Gradual Enfranchisement Act, which was not voluntary, removed status from women who married non-Native men, and their

children. As no non-status Indian was allowed to live on the reserve, these Acts forcibly created an ever-expanding population of off-reserve First Nations people (Brownlie, 2006: 45). Indigenous peoples, especially those living on-reserve, were stigmatized for the poverty, substance abuse and other social issues that plagued Native communities (Furniss, 1999: 129). Sadly those stigmas still exist and those who live off the reserve are not free of stigmatization either. Moreover, because of the aforementioned Acts, those who had to leave the reserve are stigmatized by those left behind. They “voluntarily” gave up their status and are seen as having turned their backs on their community.

However, in 1985, an amendment to the Acts was passed that allowed First Nations people who had lost their status to regain it—and those who had never had status to apply for it (Napoleon, 2001: 119). But still a division has arisen characterized by two spheres of post-amendment Aboriginality: the “real Indians” who live on the reserve and the “inauthentic” ones who live off the reserve. I will discuss the reserve dilemma at length, but there is a common belief among the people I spoke with that one “learns the ‘Indian Life’ on a reserve” (Lawrence, 2004). These prejudices are not necessarily malicious in nature. They may stem from the fear of further dilutions based on the eliminatory tendencies of Indian status.

Bill C-31 created two types of First Nations persons: those who can pass on status and those who cannot. It is crucial to note that the women who lost status due to the Gradual Enfranchisement Act have the same Indigenous heritage as First Nations people who possess band membership, yet their status classification does not meet their band’s requisite conditions for membership (Napoleon, 2001). This arbitrary condition,

born of patriarchal colonialism, created by the government of Canada and adopted by on-reserve band membership conditions, allows federal legislation to dictate who is “Indigenous enough” to earn band membership. Furthermore, the criteria for Indian status were determined by a non-Native political body (Lawrence, 2003: 9). Not only does this create strained relations between on- and off-reserve groups, but it can significantly alter a Native person’s perspective on their own Mi’kmaq peoplehood (ibid: 12). Since only federally recognized status Indians can access Aboriginal and treaty rights, First Nations people are coerced into participating in this dialogue because they believe that they are asserting their Indigenous right as the First Peoples of Canada by doing so.

The Mi’kmaq people now find themselves in a situation where disagreements over authenticity, occupation rights and rights to culture and language have become major issues, resulting in social barriers that are currently interfering in relations among Mi’kmaq. There is a symbolic boundary, symbolic in that it is not a physical barrier but rather a classification of “Indian Status,” that exists in Indigenous groups. The boundary is not a “thing”. It is a reference point that influences the opinions, interactions and understandings of the Mi’kmaq people who encounter it. This boundary is complicated by the concept of coloniality as introduced by Noble (2009).

Coloniality differs from colonialism on two levels. First, coloniality includes colonialism as well as the oppositional relationship that the colonial Self has with an Other. The oppositional Self asserts its dominance over an Other by inserting its boundary coordinates— such as knowledges, territory divisions and normative practices—over the previous knowledges, practices and relationships that were held with

the land by the Indigenous Other (Noble, 2009). In this way, many, but not all Indigenous ways of being were disrupted by European settlers. Mandatory residential schooling is a prime example of how the Self can assert its beliefs over those of the Other.

The second difference between coloniality and colonialism is that coloniality partially invites the Other into this arrangement, only to have the Other remain subordinated, subjugated and inscribed as Other (ibid) because the participation of both parties naturalizes this lopsided arrangement to the point of normalcy. Noble writes:

Crucial here, is the way that coloniality appears to sustain the other and maintain a dialogue between the self and the other, while always ensuring by whatever flexible means, that the other remains other, partially welcomed into the arrangement, but necessarily in a subordinate position, subjugated, inscribed as other by self (Noble, 2009: 1).

The Indigenous peoples “co-exist” with the rest of the population to the point where their existence does not encroach on the existence of the non-Native populace (Asch, n.d., Chapter 6). Ongoing coloniality have broken whole Indigenous Nations in an attempt to form new communities in the place of pre-existing ones. Ania Loomba explains that “the process of ‘forming a community’ in the new land [colonization of the new world, for example] necessarily meant *unforming* or re-forming the communities that existed already [such as First Nations communities], and involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions” (Loomba, 1998: 2). For example, colonization of the Maritimes included trade with the French, the introduction of alcohol (which wreaked havoc on the Indigenous populations), and later, residential schools that “unformed” families and communities. Such colonially induced fractures are just a few examples of coloniality’s ongoing

influence on Indigenous communities via an imbalance of power. This imbalance of power has the potential to limit Indigenous freedoms. However, even in residential schools, there were micro rebellions. Many students would speak their traditional language out of earshot from the administrators in an attempt to maintain it (Knockwood, 1992). During the residential school era, the Mi'kmaq people were left with no choice but to speak their traditional language and practice their ceremonies in secret. Coloniality also ties in with what Biolsi called subjection, echoing Foucault:

Subjection is the construction by the powerful of spaces in which human beings are enabled to participate in the social life of public institutions, in the economy, and in the body politic of the nation. It involves the official promulgation of fundamental social classifications through which individuals are to be known (by themselves, by other individuals, and by the officials) and allowed to act. Subjection also involves the linkage of these social classifications to power, both negative and positive: not only can individuals be punished by the officials for violating the social classifications, they quickly come to find that abiding by them opens up avenues of enablement. Thus, subjection is not absolutely imposed from above; it also seduces the subaltern to live by its rules, and thereby shapes new and predictable self-interests, outlooks, and behaviour pattern (Biolsi, 1995: 30).

The non-reciprocal relationship between the Government of Canada and First Nation groups is perpetuated by the participation of Indigenous peoples in top-down control methods such as the Indian Act. As a result, Indigenous peoples cling to what is left of their indigeneity because under the 'regime' of coloniality, non-Indigenous peoples have sought to replace indigeneity with their own presence and with other colonial forms (Moses, 2010). Coloniality is the overarching context that Indigenous groups, including the Mi'kmaq Nation, operate under. It is also a complex set of practices that influence non-Native and Native groups' interactions. Sadly, it is also how some First Nations groups contextualize themselves and other Indigenous communities.

However, this unequal relationship between the Native and non-Native arenas extends into the on-reserve/off-reserve sphere. The idea of coloniality—a dominant Self and subordinate Other—has been demonstrated in contemporary Indigenous communities through arbitrary geographical points of reference such as living “on-reserve” or “off-reserve”. Each Indigenous person has to negotiate relationships within these historically scripted categories of Self and Other—the on-reserve Self, the on-reserve Other, the off-reserve Self, and the off-reserve Other. The categories under which Indigenous people are classified are not necessarily chosen by the members of those categories. However, stories told from the Mi’kmaq perspectives maintain the conversation of coloniality. On-reserve First Nations people maintain categories of “authentic” and “real,” while off-reserve First Nations people default into categories of “inauthentic” or “wannabes” (Gagné, 2004: 173). In other words, the participation of both on- and off-reserve groups in this conversation perpetuates convoluted notions of “authentic Indians” who live on the reserve and “wannabe Natives” that live off the reserve.

The controversy that surrounds Indigenous “authenticity” is a major aspect of my research. I use the language of “authenticity” here because it is the way my participants understand themselves and those around them. What complicates this language is that the term “authentic Indian” would not have existed centuries ago. “Authentic” is a word that has been shaped by the colonial apparatus to somehow bisect First Nations groups. Robert K. Thomas hinted at this in his work in the late 1960s: “White Indians” were Indigenous people who “cooperated” with non-Native officials and assimilated into mainstream society (Thomas, 1969: 39-40). Their cooperation was not necessarily by choice but rather it was the only way to support their families and eke out

a living in a poverty stricken community. Unfortunately, because these individuals “chose” to participate in government supported initiatives, they were then socially isolated from their communities.

Coloniality has set the stage for a complicated story about Indigenous relations. It is the operational setup that most Indigenous people find themselves in. As an anthropologist and Mi’kmaq person, I find the multiple theories that surround Indigenous studies to be one-sided with little attention paid to Indigenous researchers looking inward their own cultures.

The ideas of being “Native,” “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal” or “First Nation” are all born out of a colonial moment. That is to say that Native people are only considered Native because they are not of European descent. These ideas of locality and Aboriginality are ingrained into the minds of First Nations people through top-down control methods such as the Indian Act. Where the Mi’kmaq people were once known as *L’nuu* they are now categorized under the titles of “on-reserve First Nation” or “Urban Aboriginal.” Thus *colonially bestowed locality* becomes one of the major boundaries that cause friction between varying Indigenous populations because it clashes with *Mi’kmaq bestowed locality*. Traditionally the Mi’kmaq territory, also known as Mi’kma’ki was divided up into several districts. The districts were often named for the geography of the area, Cape Breton being named “the land of the fog”, for example (Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq, 2007). The seven districts are as follows: *Unama’kik aq Ktaqmkuk* (Cape Breton and Newfoundland); *Epekwithk aq Piktuk* (Pictou County and Prince Edward Island); *Eskikewa’kik* (Guysborough and Halifax County); *Sipekni’katik* (Lunenburg,

Hants, Colchester, and Halifax County); *Kespukwik* (Queens County to Yarmouth); *Siknikt* (South Eastern New Brunswick); and *Kespek* (North Eastern New Brunswick and part of the Gaspé of Quebec) (ibid: 11). Unama'ki, one of the seven districts of Mi'kma'ki, encompasses Cape Breton Island, but there are five colonially appointed reserves in Unama'ki, each with their own specific characteristics.

These colonial fault lines do not just exist in the on/off-reserve context. They also exist between the various reserves of the multiple Indigenous Nations. That is to say that the concept of the reserve serves to fracture whole First Nations groups, such as the Mi'kmaq Nation, into separate, circumscribed communities. As a result of the concreteness of these geographical boundaries, connections with neighbouring Indigenous groups have gradually been worn down. For example, Brian Thom, who assisted in the Hul'qumi'num treaty negotiations, had one of his interviewees comment on the broken nature of his Nation's kinship ties. He explains, "Indian Affairs brainwashed the young people that they only belong to one band. This wasn't the way it was before" (Thom, 2007: 19).

This system of reserve allocation not only created social tensions between Indigenous groups, but it also created individual social boundaries by designating each First Nations person to a specific band. These boundaries have fashioned allegiances to precise, and often arbitrary, colonial allocations of land. Districts had a political representative or *keptin* that would sit on the Grand Council (Chute, 1999: 512). Concepts of trespassing as an offense were minimal in the Atlantic region. Neighbouring kin groups often allowed hunting in their territory by Mi'kmaq members who were

experiencing hard times on their own tracts of land. Contemporary loyalty to specific reserves has drastically affected kinship relations among the various groups. For example, an individual is not simply Mi'kmaq. They are, instead, a Millbrook Mi'kmaq, a Lennox Island Mi'kmaq or an Elsipogtog Mi'kmaq. This should not be viewed as inevitable, but as a product of ongoing conditions of coloniality.

According to Appadurai (1996), locality is relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial. Individuals in spatially and socially defined communities, such as the reserve or urban communities, use certain rites of passage—be it naming ceremonies, tattoos or social events—in order to inscribe that specific locality onto the bodies of the community (Appadurai, 1996). Once a person has been settled somewhere new for a long enough period of time the manner in which they understand and enact their Mi'kmaq culture will change. They will begin to relate to their new locality in a manner that best suits them. If they have children, those children will operate based on the context they grew up with. When individuals enact these relational contexts in other areas their understanding of ritual, language, ceremonial cycle and place will differ from the understanding of those in the area they are visiting. Differences in social experience, economic standing, political beliefs and experience of “clash of cultures” arise when Indigenous peoples are conditioned in different localities, even if they are part of the same Nation, such as Mi'kmaq. These varying cultures can make the study of a people all the more complex.

Indigenous studies is comprised of many different disciplines, such as anthropology, history, political science and literature. (Holm, Perason & Chavis, 2003).

Because Indigenous studies has so much input from so many disciplines, it can be difficult to pin down a useful paradigm for research in this eclectic field. The first question, indeed, is how to name, define or conceive of Indigenous peoples. Edward Spicer developed a conceptual framework in order to understand what he called “enduring peoples” (Stratton and Washburn, 2008). Stratton and Washburn further developed his framework when they applied the term peoplehood “as a means to ‘transcend notions of statehood, nationalism, gender, ethnicity, and sectarian membership,’ freeing it of the epistemological compartmentalization endemic to Western thought, to make it into a useful analytic tool for practically any Native community” (ibid: 55). A resolution passed by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) explicitly states that ““only Indigenous peoples could define Indigenous peoples” (Cornassel, 2003: 75) Robert K. Thomas also built upon Spicer’s work by not reducing Indigenous group identity to a matter of ethnicity. George Pierre Castile and Gilbert Kushner attempt to separate ethnicity from “enduring peoples”. Holm et al. quote Castile who wrote:

The notions which swirl about the amorphous term *ethnic*—ethnic group, ethnic identity, ethnicity, and the like—need to be dissociated from the concept of a people. The same ethnic label has been used to refer to co-religionists, racial isolates, linguistic groups, castes, and person of common national origin, a range of meaning so vast as to be useless. We intend the term *people* to label a limited and clearly defined social type (Holm, Pearson & Chavis, 2003: 11. Original italics).

Prior to Thomas’s death in 1991, he and Spicer worked together to theorize Spicer’s concept of “enduring peoples”. Together, they came to the conclusion that,

minority peoples who had survived difficult circumstances over long hauls had four features in common: 1) A unique language—sometimes a

language of the household, but at least a holy language. 2) A distinctive religion—even if it is a distinct version of a world religion. 3) A tie to a particular geographic area—a homeland and often holy land. Finally, 4) a sacred history, which defined the group as an enduring people, a chosen people, and often with a sacred destiny (Thomas, 1986: 1).

Together, these four criteria form the peoplehood matrix, which is comprised of four pillars as defined by Holmes, Pearson and Chavis using Thomas's concept. Again, I will apply the matrix as a web. Each of the strands depends on each other and none of them are more important than the other (Holm, Pearson & Chavis, 2003: 12). When one strand is removed or broken the rest of the web stays intact.

Although some strands are representative of individual and group identity, what they call the peoplehood matrix makes up a complete system that sets out the modes of conduct for a people (ibid). How the Mi'kmaq people enact their potential for freedom in the on-going colonial moment is heavily dependent upon the peoplehood matrix. Land, specifically attachments to geographic labelling, will feature prominently in the chapters to come and language will be discussed at length later, but for now I will use it to illustrate the interdependence of each strand.

The Mi'kmaq language, with its unique characteristics, gives meaning to a sacred history, which dictates the use of the land, which is crucial to the appropriate execution of the ceremonial cycle, which in turn, is incarnated through the language that many ceremonies are performed in. Even foreign elements, such as Christianity and English, have entered the dynamic peoplehood matrix (Holm, Pearson & Chavis, 2003). For example, many ceremonies are now conducted in English, but that does not diminish

their importance. English has been appropriated by the Mi'kmaq, filtered through the peoplehood matrix and is now part of its dynamic, as we will see in Chapter 3.

Thomas's peoplehood framework is useful because it extends beyond the presumed identities of ethnicity, nationalism and so on that are often coupled with colonized Indigenous groups. Peoplehood differs from identity in that it can incorporate an entire people, such as the Mi'kmaq, and yet still have enough flexibility to afford each territorial set of Mi'kmaq—such as on-reserve or off-reserve—an equal sense of legitimacy in relation to the other categories. Because the peoplehood matrix is woven by the people's understandings of its strands, it grants a sense of authority to each group to weave something that they see as appropriate for their community.

Prior to colonization, the greater Mi'kmaq collective may have had similar social, political and cultural traditions across traditional Mi'kmaq territory. However, presently there is great variation between the Mi'kmaq people that is not always acknowledged or, worse, framed as a matter of varying levels of “authenticity”. However, as Mohawk scholar and activist, Taiaiake Alfred points out, “[d]emands for precision and certainty disregard the reality of the situation: that group identity varies with time and place” (Alfred, 1999: 85). Each enactment of Mi'kmaq peoplehood has a differing past that influences their present expression of peoplehood. So, although every Mi'kmaq person is considered *L'nuu*—the term designating Mi'kmaq peoplehood—their understanding of what that means changes from community to community.

According to anthropologist Dirk Moses, Indigenous peoples may have been seduced by coloniality to operate within a non-Native framework, but instead of being

stripped of their status as Indigenous, they have “produced a doubleness whereby Indigenous subjects can ‘perform’ whiteness while being Indigenous” (Moses, 2010: 19). Iwama, Marshall, Marshall & Bartlett (2009) refer to this doubleness as “two eyed seeing”. This encompasses the strengths of both western and Indigenous knowledges to create an overlapping perspective that gives a “wider, deeper, and more generative ‘field of view’ than might either of these perspectives in permanent isolation” (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009: 4-5). Although Iwama et al. express the balanced nature of both western and Indigenous views, the tendency to emphasize the Indigenous perspective may influence of the rest of the matrix and its other features.

To reiterate, Indigenous peoples can operate within a colonial framework and have differing expressions of their peoplehood, and yet they do not relinquish their Indigeneity. For instance, the master of ceremonies at a Pow-wow may do all of his narration in English, but it does not alter the fact that he is the voice of a Native event. The vast majority of Mi’kmaq people do not speak their traditional language. English—a colonial language—is the primary means of communication at many Pow-wows but instead of delegitimizing the event this makes it more accessible and understandable to both non-speaking Mi’kmaqs and non-Native individuals. Certain nuances are changed with the use of English. However, this process does not debase the ceremonies either.

English¹ can never replace Mi'kmaq in the peoplehood matrix. Instead, English works with all the strands of the peoplehood matrix in order to fill in the gaps that have resulted from cultural eradication. Since the Mi'kmaq language cannot fully explain the ceremonies, which in turn are, dictated by the history that takes place in Mi'kmaq territory, to non-speakers, English works with the other aspects of the matrix to ensure that all the characteristics stay connected.

Peoplehood is an innovative model for the study of Indigenous peoples; however, it does have its limits. Although peoplehood can filter non-Indigenous elements and incorporate them into an Indigenous world, it neglects the relationship *between* the Native and the non-Native world. This is a crucial relationship. Many Mi'kmaq people work, live or interact with the non-Native arena every day; they are not isolated from it and many First Nations people challenge the way that world interacts with them. Furthermore, many First Nations people have mixed heritage with family and friends encompassing both worlds. Mi'kmaq peoplehood is currently being lived under conditions of on-going coloniality; I am therefore adapting the peoplehood concept in order to address situations where “enduring peoples” interact with others who have a very different understanding of how Mi'kmaq people belong to the larger Mi'kmaq Nation.

¹ English has been adopted as a first language by many Mi'kmaq people. As a result their first encounters with ceremonies were in English. So although ceremonies may have been altered from their original format, because most Mi'kmaq people are English speaking, English ceremonies are the only versions they know and understand. For an English speaking Mi'kmaq person, an English ceremony is just as meaningful as a Mi'kmaq ceremony is to a traditional speaker.

There are a number of arenas in which First Nations people are able to examine and redefine themselves. Pow-wow is one such example. Pow-wow provides a unique opportunity to examine the social and cultural boundaries among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. A Pow-wow is an annual gathering where the various populations of First Nations people gather to celebrate, socialize and practice and exhibit cultural traditions. This space can be the catalyst for a political movement because of the sense of solidarity this sort of event creates, as we will see in chapter 4. Large social gatherings were illegal in the Native community for decades. Therefore, the event itself is a political stand against oppression. As Turner theorized, old social roles can be cast off and new ones acquired in a liminal space. If they shed their role as a subjugated people, then in the liminal space created by and provided by the Pow-wow, Indigenous peoples can challenge their everyday oppression.

This space provides an arena where on-reserve and off-reserve Indigenous peoples congregate. I believe that it is very difficult to escape coloniality's apparatus, but I also believe that the Pow-wow space may be able to lessen the effect it has on Indigenous peoples. According to Tara Browner, ethnomusicologist at UCLA, a Pow-wow is "an event where American Indians [and First Nations] of all Nations come together to celebrate their culture through the medium of music and dance" (Browner, 2004: 1).

At Pow-wows, the hosts invite spectators, visitors and Indigenous peoples from all over the Pow-wow grounds to dance together in an open and inviting environment, in dances such as the intertribal dance or round dance. Non-Native observers and consumers

are encouraged to ask questions and participate, and although Indigenous peoples are often held up to non-Native participants' expectations of "authenticity" during the event, ultimately, the "event is an Indian one, with Indian rules" (Gelo, 1999: 48). Pow-wow is a distinctly Native space where 'the preservation of ritual order and respect for elders and warriors is inculcated with the tag 'this is our way'' (ibid). Not only does this phrase promote feelings of togetherness, it also justifies traditional adopted practices of Pow-wow and Mawio'mi.²

There is more to the Pow-wow than just celebration; there is an intersection of the colonial past and its influence on the Native present. At Pow-wows, a sense of Indigenous community is, "out of political necessity, constructed," especially for Native communities that are constantly renegotiating their relationship with the non-Native society (Sanchez, 2001: 51). According to Taiaiake Alfred, the Native voice has been excluded from larger contemporary social and political discourse (Alfred, 1999). The Pow-wow emerged in the 1900s as a practice that was considered allowable by the government of Canada, and it soon took off as a celebration of freedom as well as ceremony. Although Pow-wow is not a traditional Mi'kmaq practice, it has been appropriated by the Mi'kmaq people and has thus become an important aspect of Mi'kmaq culture and ceremonial cycle. Victoria Sanchez argues that Indigenous people have the ability to adopt non-Native aspects and make them culturally significant in Pow-wow:

² The Mi'kmaq word "Mawio'mi" refers to a gathering of people or a place of meeting.

Affirmation of community ties and articulation of traditional values are especially important within the context of contemporary American Indian [and “Canadian” First Nation] life...seemingly incompatible elements of the non-Indian world...are incorporated in ways that are consistent with Indian values. Although this cultural process is potentially troublesome to spectators insistent upon judging “authenticity,” it is highly consistent with the understanding of tradition as a concept of the past which is always constructed in the present (Sanchez, 2001: 53).

The exact origins of contemporary Pow-wows are not well documented but nevertheless they are still an almost exclusively Native expression of Indigenous voices. However, as many First Nation communities are financially challenged, these events often are funded by donation or sponsorship by non-Native organizations or business. These funders may include caveats in exchange for their assistance, such as banners that advertise their company at the event.

Pow-wow creates a unique space that fosters a sense of unity within the Indigenous community. And although the Pow-wow is a celebration of freedom, its practitioners continuously live in the colonial apparatus. It may be an Indigenous celebration but it is still taking place in the nation state known as Canada, often in a colonial language (English) with consumer capitalist overtones. However, it is the *social* and *ideological* atmosphere that challenges colonial infringement on Indigenous ways of being. The organization of the Pow-wow is one example of the ideology that challenges the colonial paradigm.

The Pow-wow’s physical layout and spiritual essence is based on the circle (Sanchez, 2001). Furthermore, the circle metaphor is a feature that is often prominent in Pow-wow programs and is in direct contrast to the western ideal of linear progression (ibid). The circle, “is sacred, and when people enter that circle, it’s a spiritual thing, it’s a

sacred thing...that circle represents a prayer that my people have: it's '*Mitakuye Oyasin*'. And that means all my relatives. It doesn't mean all my Indian relatives; it means ALL my relatives, all my relations" (Sanchez, 2001: 57). Much like a simplified understanding of Foucault's *dispositif* (Agamben, 2009), the circle is the network of interactions between the Indigenous peoples and themselves, their interactions with the non-Native spectators and the land on which the Pow-wow takes place, and so on. Although this is a space where all things are considered equal, it is still only a fragment of what Indigenous communities, ceremonies, and celebrations used to be. Today, the Pow-wow is practiced by Indigenous Nations from coast to coast. Perhaps the adoption of Pow-wow as a means for public expression of Mi'kmaq peoplehood, is a response to the centuries of colonial oppression. And, what happens after Pow-wow has finished? This is an important question that I will attempt to address in the upcoming chapters.

Indigenous Nations may congregate together for Pow-wow but they come from all walks of life. According to Val Napoleon's work, policies and laws passed by the Federal government of Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs have set the stage for contemporary First Nations peoples' positions (Napoleon, 2001). Bill C-31 is one example of the many federal control policies. Bill C-31 created arbitrary conditions of "Indian status" without any understanding how Indigenous peoples enact their unique expressions of peoplehood. This bill determines who can and cannot pass on status and with it, any treaty rights. These positions have been challenged by the recent cultural revival of Indigenous people, and expressions of their cultural freedom—such as Pow-wows—have been transformed into islands of Aboriginality that are challenging the dominant institutions.

Pow-wows challenge negative stereotypes by showcasing positive images of Indigenous expression. Pow-wow has another function. It invites non-Indigenous participants to observe and participate in the often censored or secretive world of Indigenous culture (Sanchez, 2001). Asserting themselves in via Pow-wow, fighting for greater recognition, seeking compensation for those who were sent to residential schools and creating the surge in Indigenous scholarship are only a few of the ways in which First Nations people are asserting themselves in the colonial present. However, it must be acknowledged that many of these things are federally funded. In this thesis, I will examine the various enactments of *L'nuu*—the term designating Mi'kmaq peoplehood—by using the peoplehood matrix. I want to see if the historically scripted boundaries of on-reserve and off-reserve conflicts are challenged by the peoplehood framework in a Pow-wow setting. Through situated enactments of peoplehood by *L'nuu*, does Pow-wow operate as a decolonizing set of practices, especially in regard to on and off-reserve personal, political, social, kin, community and personal relationships? If so, in what ways, and through what kinds of practices?

The revival of Indigenous knowledge among Indigenous people has spurred many of them on to challenge the injustices they faced while being “civilized” by the aforementioned laws and policies. These “returns of knowledge” are what Foucault (2003) described as an insurrection of subjugated knowledges. These knowledges may consist of varying perspectives on historical events; however, they may also be a form of cultural knowledge, such as the Pow-wow and the Mi'kmaq *mawio'mi*. Foucault explains that “functional coherences or formal systematizations” mask and omit certain historical material or moments (Foucault, 2003: 7) that would damage the popular understanding of

a nation-state's history. The addition of Indigenous perspectives to these histories would allow for a critique of dominant political discourse – but it would be to the advantage of the dominant power to mask any information that criticizes their exercise of power in the present.

The divisions that establish social boundaries are built on a historical foundation and although these boundaries may be symbolic in nature, the very real feeling of them is concretized in the mindset of each population. Anthony Cohen writes that “these boundaries may be thought of... as existing in the minds of their beholders” (Cohen, 1985: 12). Because of the often mixed heritage of many Indigenous peoples today, insecurities over authenticity can significantly alter a Mi'kmaq's person sense of peoplehood. However, Furniss explains that most Indigenous people deny that white ancestry diminishes one's “Indianness”, and claims that, instead, it is an ability to speak the language, a knowledge of the land, and a hold on a set of cultural values that determines a person's “Indianness.”

And yet, in spite of these denials, I was still labeled as the “little white girl” because of my upbringing. These values, “such as sharing, generosity, and respect for elders that ... define the *reserve community ethos*” (Furniss, 1999: 120, italics added) are acquired under specific circumstances. It is worth noting that all of these features are part of the peoplehood matrix but the reserve boundary limits access to this knowledge. In other words, the geographical boundary reinforces the symbolic boundaries such as a certain sense of cultural exclusivity the view that off-reserve First Nations people do not meet the standards of “authenticity” to live in reserve communities. Therefore, off-

reserve First Nations have had to filter their environment and understanding of culture through the peoplehood matrix independent of the reserve. But if, as I explained above, notions surrounding “authenticity” are so controversial and ambiguous, why are reserve-dwelling Mi’kmaq people seen as the “authority” on Indigenous knowledge? And can Pow-wow lessen this knowledge gap?

2.2 METHODOLOGY:

The information for this Master’s thesis was gathered using a variety of qualitative research methods including interviews, participant observation, informal conversations and simple web based research. I gathered most of my information from short interviews. My position as a Mi’kmaq woman researching my own people was crucial to my methodology and I explain it here.

In the previous section, I explained only a few of the historical policies that have created the divisions between Indigenous peoples. Pow-wows are an important setting for this research precisely because they seem to be one of the few events where Indigenous people socialize, share and come together in friendship and celebration without necessarily abiding by the aforementioned symbolic and geographical boundaries. The “compartmentalization [that] is endemic to Western thought” is bypassed through the Pow-wow (Stratton and Washburn, 2008: 55). That is to say, in the supposedly welcoming environment of a Pow-wow, an individual’s place of origin does not factor into social interactions the same way it would in a different social setting. A person may ask where someone is from out of curiosity and friendship instead of using it as a

reference point for difference. However, asking still implies that there is a difference even if the importance of this difference is lessened in a Pow-wow setting. I asked participants a series of questions in an attempt to start a conversation that yielded me stories about Indigenous relationships. The Pow-wow setting became even more important because the welcoming environment offsets the often guarded nature of individual communities. The themes that arose in these conversations structured my upcoming chapters. The chapters are framed by the comments and stories of my participants.

In order to tackle my research question I conducted 17 interviews from First Nations people attending Pow-wows. While the majority of my interviews took place during the Pow-wow itself, I conducted some pre-arranged interviews after the Pow-wow had finished simply because the participants were either dancers or vendors and were too busy for an interview at the Pow-wow. I gathered these narratives at Pow-wows that are held annually at various reserves across Nova Scotia: the Pow-wows on the Millbrook and Eskasoni reserves, which took place on the weekends of August 13th, 2010 and July 2nd, 2010, respectively. In addition to the two Pow-wows held on reserve, I conducted research at the Halifax Commons during the Grand Chief Membertou 400 mawio'mi, which was held on the weekend of June 24th, 2010. The year 2010 marked the 400th anniversary of Grand Chief Membertou's Baptism into the Catholic Church; which meant that the urban Pow-wow was an international event with thousands of First Nation people coming to the Halifax commons. This Pow-wow was different because it was organized by urban dwelling First Nations people and held in an urban environment. Moreover, given the unique circumstances of this event, there was a blend of many Indigenous Nations present, and not simply the Mi'kmaq of Atlantic Canada.

I talked with a variety of First Nations attendees, from dancers and drummers to observers and consumers, as well as Pow-wow organizers, who ranged in age and differed in gender. I interviewed a wide variety of participants in order to garner a wide range of perspectives on the aforementioned boundaries. Every participant was comfortable with using their real names during the interview and in this thesis with the exception of certain subjects. When I asked about corruption and nepotism, a few participants wished to remain anonymous for fear of community backlash. I abided by this request by referring to them as “participant” in the upcoming chapter. The interviews lasted between 9 and 25 minutes, due to the busy and often chaotic nature of the celebrations. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw explain that recording tales and episodes that are often recounted “will enable the ethnographer to find patterns of behaviour and connections between people’s actions through many different fieldnotes” (1995: 89). In other words, instead of relying on long interviews with a select few, I can gain equally salient ethnographic information with short stories and narratives from a large variety of people. I understand the content of these interviews consist of experiences and stories that First Nations people have had with these historically scripted boundaries, as well as reports of which sets of scripts hold sway in the conduct of lives and relations. While conducting these interviews, I asked about language, land, ceremony and history. Each of these is but a thread in the peoplehood matrix and each participant readily pointed out the importance of each. The stories were digitally recorded, transcribed and coded for themes.

In addition to recording narratives, I conducted participant observation. Wright and Hobbes (2006) note that participant observation is specific; it is conducted in a

precise geographic and contextualized location—and time—by a researcher with a very specific biography. During each Pow-wow I sketched the layout of the grounds, the weather, the atmosphere, etc. I recorded these notes by hand in a notebook that I later transcribed and coded for themes. I observed how individuals interacted with one another as well as with the Pow-wow events and settings—both the social and ceremonial aspects of them. For example, the public dances, the drummers' circle, the MCs and the various vendors are areas that are more focussed on the social, whereas the sacred fire, the honour song and opening prayers are more ceremonial. One man was very vocal with his prayers at the sacred fire. He prayed to the Creator above, the Mother Earth, the women and their power to give birth, and the warriors. After he was finished, he explained what the fire meant to some non-Native women who were watching. Another man was silent as he offered tobacco to each of the four directions before walking away.

The manner in which the attendees interact with these settings can be indicative of their level of comfort. Because Pow-wows, by and large, are held on a reserve, individuals whose reserve experience is limited may have a different experience of the event simply because they may be unfamiliar with the community or location of the grounds. Also, the regalia worn by the dancers can be a blend of different styles from different First Nations people. Furthermore, the different styles of dance are unique to each particular dancer. These sorts of observations helped guide my conversation with each person. Overarching themes of language, culture, economics, government, and the “Indian Life” were consistently mentioned as major concerns for my participants. These issues were used by my participants to differentiate themselves and their community from other Mi'kmaq communities. After recording notes and interviews, I researched each

reserve. I looked at the 2006 Statistics Canada census information on population, language and average household income in order to contextualize each Pow-wow and each conversation.

I am a Mi'kmaq person and an anthropologist. All of this plays a part in the dialogue I have with other Indigenous people as well as with my research. I worked with the Mi'kmaq communities through a reciprocal relationship of respect and understanding. Reserve-based prejudices or conflicts are not the only thing burdening Aboriginal communities. Indigenous peoples have been a major focus for anthropology over the centuries. The terms “researcher” and “anthropologist” are often laden with negative connotations for Indigenous groups, with many Indigenous communities being wary of those outsiders who come to study them. I have tried to bridge the gap between researcher and Other by being aware that I am not the first, nor will I be the last, researcher to approach a reserve community in hopes of hearing a few stories.

I am situated within my research as part of what I study, as an Indigenous person wrapped up in many layers of colonial conditions. But that does not mean that I can begin this project without acknowledging the jurisdiction the Mi'kmaq have over their lands. My position as an urban First Nation person and Indigenous anthropologist has affected the kinds of narratives and stories I received, as well as the willingness of some participants to talk with me. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine refer to this challenge as the “‘triple representational problem’ . [As social scientists,] we ponder how we present (1) *ourselves* as researchers choreographing the narratives we have collected; (2) the *narrators*, many of whom are wonderful social critics, while some, from our perspective,

are talented ventriloquists for a hateful status quo; and (3) *'others'* who are graphically bad mouthed by these narrators” (Weis and Fine, 2000: 53). As researcher, narrator and Other, I have taken on the role of storyteller, and I have approached those whom I interviewed as storytellers as well. Shawn Wilson explains that this position is an important part of an Indigenous research paradigm because it is more “culturally appropriate for Indigenous people to...take on the role of storyteller rather than researcher/author” (Wilson, 2008: 32). Storytelling and oral narratives are a major part of Indigenous culture. Therefore, by adopting this method of research, I can maintain the cultural integrity of the individuals I study and hopefully ease the concerns of my participants by emphasizing my position as storyteller over researcher.

It is very easy to point out successes and failures in reserve economies. On the surface, one can point out a wealthy reserve, in relation to a poor reserve, and evaluate them superficially. It is no secret the Indigenous peoples in Canada are faced with raging poverty, substandard housing and other economic woes. Popular media often place reserve poverty as a forefront issue in popular media. In the upcoming chapter, I will discuss the role wealth plays in establishing boundaries.

CHAPTER 3 MONEY MATTERS: RICH RESERVE, POOR RESERVE

The Indigenous peoples of Canada are consistently poorer, sicker and less well-educated than other Canadians. Their reliance on federal transfer payments, as well as the problems of institutional racism and a lack of infrastructure, have contributed to this situation (Helin. 2006). However, some reserve economies have managed to thrive, which has resulted in social strain between Mi'kmaq people from poor, mismanaged communities and those from more affluent ones. In this chapter I will discuss the economies of several Mi'kmaq reserves. Some of these reserves have managed to succeed in spite of the marginalized status faced by most Indigenous communities, while others have fallen deeper into poverty. These divides only highlight and exacerbate existing boundaries between reserve communities. I would argue that discrepancies in reserve economies is a significant boundary to overcome. It is also a superficial boundary that distracts Indigenous people from deep rooted institutional problems. Furthermore, because "status" off-reserve First Nations people are registered to specific reserves, their respective reserve's economy affects their opportunities for education, financial support, etc.

However, before beginning this chapter, I want to make it clear that I am not trying to write a sensationalist piece on corruption and nepotism; I approach mismanagement and corruption as sincere concerns reported by my participants. I will also use certain controversial theorists who make accurate and astute observations of the problems, although I do not agree with their solutions. The economic rivalry introduced

by the federal government has placed communities in direct competition with each other for financial stability and not every community comes out a winner. The financial success of some communities has affected relationships within the Mi'kmaq Nation. Even ceremonies, such as Pow-wow, are affected by financial competition. Why do some communities remain poverty stricken while others excel financially and how does this tie into their notion of Mi'kmaq peoplehood? And why have some communities' members not only lost faith in the federal government, but in their own band governments as well?

3.1 ACCESS: A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Mike: "People aren't stupid and whether or not you tell them they are all the same, if one person is getting more money than, and more access to things than another person, then both of those people are going to realize that they are different in the form of access."

The above excerpt is from Mike, a young Mi'kmaq man in his mid-twenties. Mike told me that he was made "very aware of the differences between people growing up."

Generations ago, Mi'kmaq people supported themselves through hunting and gathering, however, those practices have diminished in the current political and economic climate.

There are still older generations that continue with a more traditional lifestyle, but cannot fully support themselves with this way of life. However many receive assistance via the federal government in the form of housing, healthcare and other forms of financial aid.

For years, most aboriginal groups have become dependent on federal transfer payments and many communities see no end in sight to this way of life (Santin and Comeau, 1995).

From 2004 to 2005 “the federal government spent just over \$8 billion on projects and programs for reserve housing, health care, education, and economic development” (Binkley, 2009: 129). Although \$8 billion is substantial, it is finite each year; meaning that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) portions it out to reserve communities who apply for its use. Each band must apply to AANDC for financial aid in two ways: Comprehensive Funding Arrangements (CFA) and Financial Transfer Arrangements (FTA). CFAs are annual payments, the amount of which band councils cannot exceed in their spending. Also, any CFA money that is not spent by the end of the year must be returned to the federal government (ibid). FTAs are five-year funding agreements between the federal government and band councils that allow a band to spend surplus amounts of money on programs of the band’s choice (ibid). FTAs give bands greater freedom in their spending, but they also run the risk of accumulating a deficit. Therefore, in order to receive an FTA, councils must draw up a complete application for submission to AANDC that includes accountability measures for spending and demonstrates management of a budget. Finally, if a band council runs a deficit of more than 8% of their revenue, defaults on its CFA or FTA agreements, or compromises the welfare of its community, or if the band council’s auditor issues a denial of opinion, the band’s financials can fall under exclusive third-party management (Binkley, 2009: 131).

These payments have become an everyday reality for Mi’kmaq people. Even in the face of this way of life, Mi’kmaq people manage to hold on to their senses of humour. During the 2010 Eskasoni Pow-wow, the master of ceremonies joked with the crowd while testing his microphone by saying, “Check, check, welfare cheque, GST cheque.

Everybody loves those cheques!” As he said this, the crowd laughed and many attendees nodded their heads in agreement. Although this was done with humour—which in itself questions the current social reality—it still conveys the dependence that the Mi’kmaq people now have on the federal government. However, there are some communities that have managed to break this cycle of dependence and become self-sufficient by combining modern business practices and strategic planning with Aboriginal rights.

Traditionally, Indigenous people lived off the land, foraging for plants that would provide medicines and food, and hunting for game as a source of meat and material for clothing (Wuttunee, 2004). In the contemporary moment, Mi’kmaq people have to work within a colonial, capitalist system in order to provide for their community members because as it stands, hunting and gathering practices are not enough to sustain the current Mi’kmaq population (Campbell, 1996).

Two communities have been consistently highlighted throughout my fieldwork as having managed to succeed in this capitalist framework: Membertou First Nation, located in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; and Millbrook First Nation, located in Truro, Nova Scotia along the province’s busiest highway. Millbrook is known for its commercial Power Centre, located just off of Highway 102. The Truro Power site “is owned, developed and managed by the Millbrook Mi’kmaq First Nation recognized nationally as *a Model First Nation for Aboriginal land management and economic development*” (www.truropowercenter.ca, 2011, italics added). Similarly, Membertou First Nation incorporated their community to be a register business. As a business the community collectively owns properties and income establishments outside or the reserve borders.

Calvin Helin, an Aboriginal lawyer and businessman, dedicated a section in his book *Dances with Dependency* to Membertou's success. In his chapter, "Economic Models to Build On," Helin praises the community's strategic planning, which has gained international recognition. In 2001, "Membertou achieved official International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2000 certification, making it the first Indigenous government in Canada, and likely the world, to meet internationally recognized business standards" (Helin, 2006: 231).

These two communities are no longer solely providing for their members via hunting and gathering. Instead, their understanding of the land as a source of nourishment has shifted. Millbrook has used advantageous federal taxation policies to attract business to their community while Membertou has begun to establish businesses outside of their reserve, but still in traditional Mi'kmaq territory, as a means to generate income. Membertou and Millbrook are at end of the spectrum. Unfortunately, there is a majority of Indigenous communities that are unable to support their members using these strategies, due in large part to their remote locations.

The reserves in my work are located in Mi'kma'ki, with multiple reserves situated in each district. In this respect, the reserves are the key locality for peoplehood negotiation because each reserve operates independently of the others, regardless of the other communities that share the district. However, districts and relationships with the land seem to influence peoplehood on an individual level. Tony wished to be called "Tony from Unama'ki" and Judy and Joseph still make a living off the land by hunting

and selling hides, drums, and other animal skin products. How does this layered relationship influence their understanding of territory and peoplehood?

If examined through a capitalist framework, reserve infrastructure is largely inadequate and unable to support growing populations (Campbell, 1996). It was once thought that there were 2,000 tracts of land for individual families to hunt and gather from as their own little niche of Mi'kma'ki (Speck, 1915). Today, reserve communities simply do not have enough land to support any kind of agriculture nor a strong enough infrastructure to attract many businesses.

Territory is a significant strand in the peoplehood matrix. When Speck's work is examined, relationships to the land were less complicated (1999). That is to say, the processes of hunting and gathering were more straightforward. A family and kin group needed to be provided for, so the hunters of the community would gather a party while women would gather what plant sustenance they could (Prins, 1996: 27). Today, free enterprise, ecotourism, hunting and fishing rites, unceded territory, etc, complicate the territory aspect because of the many layers, laws, regulations, and responsibilities that influence First Nations people in how they interact with the land and non-Native people.

At their conception, reserves were not designed to support aboriginal communities long-term; instead, they were created to assimilate Indigenous people into the rest of the non-Native population (ibid). Millbrook's and Membertou's successes are great feats of capitalism in the face of ongoing coloniality. That is to say, those communities have learned to operate in a colonial setup quite well as a departure from other form of subsistence such as hunting and gathering. But it is important to note that these two

communities are still not entirely independent of the government. Furthermore, embracing a capitalist ideal shies away from a greater sense of community that supports one another and exacerbates existing boundaries by widening the financial gap between communities.

Both Millbrook and Membertou apply for federal transfer payments each year. Therefore, in an attempt to maintain their success, these two communities have placed tight restrictions on band membership as a way to ensure that resources are not spread too thin. For example, Millbrook band members receive financial assistance cheques twice a year. If Millbrook were to grow in population, these cheques would quickly deplete their resources. Embracing a purely capitalist model for success erodes existing kinship ties and relationships between reserves because communities are all competing for finite resources.

Millbrook does exercise the sharing ethos by dividing its assets among the people of the community. Colonial notions of free enterprise and accumulation, which have altered territory and locality, may influence why they do not extend this ethos beyond their reserve borders. There are several Mi'kmaq reserves that share the same territorial district as Millbrook reserve. Bands do what they can for those in the same reserve but not the same district because they may not perceive other reserves to be under their territorial responsibility. The conversations I had with my participants do little to dispel this setup.

When I began this research, I was under the assumption that an Indigenous person could not change their band registration. If a person was registered with one band (I am

registered with Lennox Island First Nation, for example), I believed that they could not change their membership, ever. I was politely corrected by several of my participants who explained to me that it is possible to transfer communities. One couple, Judy and Joseph from Whycocomagh, insisted that I could *easily* change my band number. All I had to do was put in a request with the band I would like to transfer to and sooner than later I would be accepted. This process, however, is not without its caveats.

According to several of my participants, each band has a different set of criteria that has to be met in order for someone to be accepted into the community. Communities that are more affluent are harder to transfer to. Because of the financial stability that wealthier communities provide, membership to these communities is more frequently sought after. In order to maintain their financial standing, these communities need to be very strict regarding the amount of people they accept as members. The following are three excerpts from three interviews that I conducted at three different Pow-wows. All of these interviews seem to reinforce the symbolic boundary between communities.

Rebecca: Are there reserves that are more difficult to transfer to?

Bella: The reserves with money. Like Millbrook or Membertou, that's hard. Last summer, [a woman I know] transferred from Eskasoni to Indian Brook and it was like two weeks. And then she transferred from Indian Brook to Membertou and it took her a month or two or three. It took her a while. It's really hard to transfer to reserves with money, even when her mom is from Membertou and has been living there the last couple of years. And Millbrook would be hard too, especially if you're under 19, because those reserves, if you're registered with them when you turn 19 you get money, so those ones are hard. Other than that, transferring is easy. Broke reserves, it's easy.

Lauretta explained to me the troubles her sister has had with trying to transfer to Millbrook:

Rebecca: Why couldn't they just transfer reserves? To Millbrook? That reserve is talked about by a lot of interviewees because it's the rich one.

Lauretta: It's a hard thing to do... My sister lived there for 35 years and she bought her house. And they wouldn't let her in the band, they wouldn't let my mom in the band and my mom's brother is the chief!

Rebecca: Why wouldn't they let her in the band?

Lauretta: Well they have to do a vote and they have to take around a petition and everyone has to sign it, then they have to have a meeting. They are very fussy about who they let in. You used to be able to just transfer. Like my niece. She's from my reserve. Now she's part of the Whycomagh reserve. And my other niece, she belongs to the Membertou reserve. And she can transfer, but some reserves, they won't allow that to happen.

Glenn continued the pattern with a very similar explanation to that of Lauretta and Bella:

Rebecca: I heard that because each reserve has different by-laws that it's very hard to transfer to Millbrook.

Glenn: Yeah, it is. You have to live on the reserve for a certain amount of years; you have to prove that someone has been on reserve that is your family. There's a lot of work you have to do in order to transfer to Millbrook.

Rebecca: But if you wanted to transfer to Indian Brook or Afton? [Both of these reserves have considerably less wealth.]

Glenn: Bing! Like that! [he snapped his fingers to emphasize his point.]

These are only three excerpts of the many interviewees who spoke about the difficulties of transferring to wealthier communities. Although these conversations happened at a Pow-wow, they discuss the conditions that exist outside of Pow-wow. At a Pow-wow all Mi'kmaq people are welcomed regardless of reserve or urban origin. What is interesting to note about these interviews is although they talked about the guarded nature of communities, the interactions during the interview were quite the opposite.

Judy and Joseph are respected older members of their communities. During the event, the younger volunteers of the Pow-wow brought them food and water to ensure they were comfortable and taken care of. Elders, who had a special tent set aside for shade, tea, treats and countless volunteers, shared prayers and stories and anyone and everyone were welcomed to smudge themselves at the sacred fire. Complete strangers who saw me as L'nu and not as a researcher offered me room and board at every Pow-wow I attended. Even my participants' eagerness to talk to me and share their experiences is counter to the nature of the above conversations.

Guarding membership to a community is the reality in the 21st century because it allows for strict control of the reserve's resources. However, it does not correspond with the sacred history that many Mi'kmaq people quote as a reason for their people's survival. Even though the above-mentioned actions are small, it demonstrates that there is still a sense of caring and sharing for other Mi'kmaq and kinsmen needing assistance outside of their locality.

Furniss writes that "sharing, generosity, and respect for elders ... define the *reserve community ethos*" (Furniss, 1999: 120, emphasis added). Moreover, Wuttunee (2004) quotes Grand Council Member Kep'tin John Joe Sark, who said "[o]ur survival depended on our wise use of game and the protection of the environment...*Sharing and caring for all members of the society...were important values of the Mi'kmaq people.* Without these values, my people would not have survived for thousands of years" (15, emphasis added). Pow-wow promotes this sense of sharing. Again I draw from Laurretta, who tries to articulate the significance of sharing and Pow-wow.

Me: Now when a Pow-wow takes place in a community, do [these tensions] not matter anymore?

Lauretta: Yeah. It kind of goes away.

Me: Why is that?

Lauretta: I don't know. They just kind of...they don't think about that stuff, like who is better than who. Who's this and that and who has more. They don't even think about that. They all just start helping each other. More friendlier [*sic*]. I think it's because of the way it used to be at one time. Like our traditional people, like our ancestors lived their lives. Like my aunts and uncles. They used to live their lives like that. Live you know, in the summer time, they lived by the water. They relocated into the woods. They all try to help one another with food and clothes and things.

Sharing is touted as an integral part of Indigenous culture and is a significant of the upcoming chapters. According to these beliefs, the Mi'kmaq survived the harsh climate because they shared what little they had.

Every Mi'kmaq reserve is located in traditional Mi'kmaq territory. To clarify, no reserve is located in another Nation's territory. There is not a Mi'kmaq reserve on Mohawk or Penobscot land. My second research question seeks to address conflicting enactments of Mi'kmaq peoplehood articulated in day-to-day life under the pressures of ongoing coloniality. While savvy economics benefit one community, it clashes with long held beliefs of sharing and support. Therefore, one would think that each Mi'kmaq person is entitled to a fair share of Mi'kmaq wealth. So, why is it that affluent bands do not share their wealth and resources with the rest of the Mi'kmaq Nation?

This shift in values is due to financial competition. Roger, a Mi'kmaq man in his fifties and an ethnologist at the Nova Scotia Natural History Museum, gave me his take on community tensions and boundaries. Roger explained that communities now must

compete with each other for a limited amount of resources, which has compromised previously held values of sharing.

Roger: Because the world kind of opened up so much, transmission of information now, you see a lot of communities; there's a lot of competition for dollar [*sic*]. We've become, for years, we've become dependent on dollars. Now there are competitions in communities for limited dollar[s]. You know like this thing here is a good example. There are tensions between organizers in this thing here, this Pow-wow and another community who wanted to have the same celebrations and didn't get the money these people realized. So there's competition for limited funding for these events. They seem to kind of split rather than all coming together and making this truly a Mi'kmaq thing. A solid Mi'kmaq decision for all the people in Mi'kma'ki.

Roger was referring to Membertou First Nation when he referenced the “other community”, which was named after the Grand Chief, the same man that the mawio'mi on the Halifax Commons was celebrating. The reserve did not receive near the same amount of money for their celebrations as the Membertou 400 operations committee and many Membertou community members boycotted the Halifax celebration and held their own. This is just one example of the financial competition Roger refers to. Furthermore, there is competition and massive deficiencies in the basic needs of Indigenous peoples let alone funding for celebrations. For example, MacTavish et al., who write about Canada's participation in First Nations housing, draw attention to financial shortcomings in the housing crisis currently Canadian First Nations communities. They write:

Due to impoverishment on reserves, most communities rely on government funding for housing construction and maintenance... Current government funding allocated to band housing (housing owned or operated by the band council) is inadequate. In 2005, the government of Canada and First Nations representatives negotiated “The Kelowna Accord” which committed the federal government to an investment of \$1.6 billion over 5 years to reduce housing shortages by 40% by 2010. However, in the three fiscal years since the Kelowna Accord, the federal government committed

only \$300 million to on- and off-reserve First Nation housing improvements, only 42% of that committed in the Kelowna Accord. After inflation, the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (AANDC) budget dropped by 3.5% between the fiscal years 1999–2000 and 2004–2005. Obtaining the limited funding available can be bureaucratic and burdensome for communities (MacTavish, Marceau, Optis, Shaw, Stephenson & Wild, 2011: 3).

Indigenous communities scramble to meet deadlines imposed by AANDC. The Kelowna Accord promised more money than Canada has given thus far. Simply put, “The Kelowna Accord” was negotiated in 2005. In 2006, the Progressive Conservative Party came into power and the government never followed up on the Accord. If aboriginal communities are applying for financial assistance based on what was promised, and not what was realized, then every community is going to face shortfalls in their own budgets and programs resulting in education claw backs (something that I have faced) and other program cuts. Band money would need to be reallocated or else communities could face extreme housing shortages—a current reality for many reserves. A recent CBC article published in November 2011 outlines the dire housing situation in many First Nation reserves. Communities depend on the federal government to follow through on their commitments.

When they fall short, as McTavish, Marceau, Optis, Shaw, Stephenson & Wild (2011) illustrate, reserves are left to fend for themselves. In order to repair houses in one community, budgets for another are cut. The article explains, “When an injection of cash does come, it's often not enough to fully tackle a problem and usually comes out of the budget of some other community, which creates tensions between different First Nations and regions of the country” (CBC, 2011, para 27). Many First Nation communities rely

on social welfare for survival—community provided housing, for example—instead of traditional forms of hunting and gathering. However, this is not always the case.

There are some Mi'kmaq people who still work and live off the land. Two of my participants, Judy and Joseph, still hunt and prepare skins for drums, and hide and leather in a very traditional manner; though they have added a few technological updates for efficiency and safety. However, most First Nations people rely on welfare or jobs that are not in tune with traditional hunting and gathering practices (Dore & Kulshreshtha, 2003: 149). Many Indigenous peoples depend on the federal government to support themselves and their families because there is virtually no way to earn a living in their community. How have these changes altered their relationships with the land? Millbrook and Membertou nations have carved out a niche amidst these dependencies by adjusting their outlook on the land. It still provides for them, but not necessarily in the same manner as it did for their ancestors. Whether or not it is a positive realignment varies from person to person.

AANDC has tight control over reserve communities and their financial wellbeing. Furthermore, due the setup of the system, band councils have no choice but to appeal to AANDC in hopes of bettering their communities, which results in stiff competition for CFAs and FTAs. Because the 614 First Nations communities across Canada are governed under the Indian Act, any decisions made by band councils are “subject to the ultimate approval of the Minister of Indian Affairs” (Helin, 2006: 142). This leaves elected officials with no responsibility to those who elected them; it also sets the stage for community conflict because each reserve is now in direct competition with each other

because each one is vying for a limited amount of resources. Furthermore, Council Chiefs are no longer accountable to the people who elected them, but instead must answer to Ottawa (Bedford, 1994). Because of this inverted system of accountability, many communities are taken advantage of by a few corrupt individuals.

Calvin Helin and Tom Flanagan both have a Eurocentric view on how to “fix” aboriginal communities. That view focusses on capitalist ideals and privatization—something that some communities have embraced. That being said, it should not be considered the best option for all Indigenous communities just because it has been adopted by a few. Moreover, the reserve communities that have been exceptionally successful at expanding free enterprise economic activities—Millbrook and Membertou, for example—are better situated with a ready market nearby to consume their products.

The majority of Mi’kmaq communities are in remote or isolated areas with little outside traffic and small community populations. To apply such short sighted solution to every community is unrealistic. Also, it sets a Eurocentric ideal of success and failure. In other words, the current system in place emphasizes the acquisition of wealth and free market enterprise over Indigenous solidarity and strength. Helin and Flanagan have set standards according to a form of linear progression where free market success is the sole end result. This is problematic for a couple of reasons. Given their vulnerable state, many communities fall victim to the belief that they need to be financially rich in order to be successful and healthy. By setting free market enterprise as the only successful outcome for communities, those that are unable or unwilling to take part in this system are considered failures or deviants for not conforming to colonial ideals. This linear model of

progression, as touted by Flanagan and Helin, is contrary to the understanding and execution of the peoplehood matrix.

As I explain in the introduction, the peoplehood matrix can be understood as a web. The strands are connected with continual expansion outward, much like the concentric circles of the Pow-wow. Theorists like Flanagan and Helin attempt to replace the peoplehood matrix and its components with the culture of capitalist enterprise and wealth accumulation, all of which is done in a straight line from A to B, e.g. poor to rich.

I want to emphasize that I do not wish to write a damaging piece about band corruption. There are very well-run band councils out there—such as Millbrook and Membertou—and many, if not most, bands do the best they can under the circumstances presented to them. I am only bringing forth the concerns of my participants. Because of the current economic and reserve system in place, as many as 80% of adults are welfare recipients. This is most often the case because the only jobs available in these isolated communities are band council positions (Flanagan, 2008). Not only does this force a community to be even more dependent on federal transfer payments, it can cause unnecessary internal conflict because many people are competing for very few jobs. Moreover, those who obtain council jobs may not be qualified to be there, thus further hindering their community and widening the gap between them and other reserves.

The current reserve system in place, along with a colonial imposed value system of wealth accumulation and free market enterprise creates a dichotomy where a community is either financially wealthy or poor welfare recipients. This does not have to be the only options for communities. Sadly, I do not have a third option to present and

accounts from my participants do little to dispel this dichotomy. As mentioned by Laretta, the social relationships of those in Pow-wow are quite positive. However, once Pow-wow has finished, the internal conflicts of individual communities are still present. One woman I interviewed—she requested to stay anonymous in respect to this topic for fear of community backlash—has dealt with these sorts of problems in her community's band council. Furthermore, participants were more apt to criticize their own councils over other communities'.

Rebecca: Are different reserves known for different things?

Participant: Well, umm, I think economically. They have different things going on with available resources. Some reserves are more organized, they have more organizations, businesses, things like that. They get more funding. They get more people in office that are more qualified and can write proposals for all this different funding.

Rebecca: So there are people working in places that aren't qualified to be there?

Participant: Oh, not at all. They are in there because of family, nepotism or whatever it's called. They don't have no education, they don't have no experience. They have family. Our reserve has family in [its band council] that have no idea how to write a proposal. How to apply for funding. And any little job that comes up, they [take it. People] have like five jobs and they are trying to do all these jobs because they want all the money. And they aren't even qualified for any of the jobs.

Many Indigenous people are hesitant to speak out for a number of reasons. Band members are often afraid of community backlash; this participant is an apt example. She did not want to be named while she discussed these community problems for fear of negative consequences. Don Sandberg, a columnist for the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, wrote about the massive community backlash he experienced after exposing the corrupt actions of a Chief. He was sued, forced off the reserve and blacklisted from

community programs (Sandberg, 2004). Even well-run communities are hesitant to come forward and feel compelled to defend such actions because they do not wish to be “tarred with the same brush that does not apply in their particular circumstances” (Helin, 2006: 157). These communities are not speaking up because they are fearful for their reputations but rather, they are afraid of the potential fallout that could devastate their own community. This way of thinking goes against what John Joe Sark said about sharing and caring for others, and it promotes feelings of distrust in communities.

Almost every reserve in Nova Scotia has a community website that highlights Mi’kmaq culture, creation stories, histories and community events. But only Millbrook and Membertou First Nations have their financial records, along with band council salaries, available to see at the click of a mouse. This complete transparency creates a relationship of trust and respect between the council members and their community. Transparency allows community members to hold their governing members accountable for their actions. It also sets the stage for total community involvement with regards to resource allocation.

Just because there are a limited number of council jobs that does not mean that the community, as a whole, cannot participate in its own governance. Having communities understand and assert themselves in their communities, as they do in Pow-wow, on an everyday level can foster positive expressions of peoplehood. Participation as a whole can change a reserve from a passive members to active people in charge of their futures.

Some communities’ economies are well run and others are not when looked at through a capitalist lens. As a result, many Indigenous bands look to the federal

government to sort out the problems brought on by failed policies through the implementation of new programs, development strategies or policy initiatives to spur economic development (Flanagan, 2008: 227). Relying on a capitalist framework for community advancement is problematic given their small sizes and remote locations. Therefore Flanagan's and Helin's propositions or privatization will not work. The government should not be considered the solution to these problems; it should be seen as the source. Calvin Helin—who is cold and mechanical in his solutions for Indigenous dependency—aptly explains why the federal government does not intervene in these problems.

Effectively, by making Aboriginal people reliant on welfare and transfer payments, and with Band Councils as gatekeepers for the only wealth coming into communities, a natural tension has been created between those in government and their community members. This technique of colonization was employed by the British Empire throughout the world and serves the brilliant purpose of distracting populations that might cause trouble externally by redirecting that aggression internally. (Helin, 2006: 152)

If Mi'kmaq communities are too busy arguing amongst themselves, they cannot question the overarching powers that suppress them. In today's consumerist culture it can be very easy to be distracted by monetary inequalities. Economic disparities between Mi'kmaq communities are an undeniable reality and are felt by band members every day. However, money matters should not define a Mi'kmaq person, community or sense of peoplehood. Economic disparities between communities in conjunction with band restriction on membership establish a clear boundary between reserves. My participants talked about economic issues as a significant divider between Mi'kmaq groups. However, it is only one dimension the serve to separate reserves. Eurocentric systems of

development may not be part of the peoplehood matrix, but they certainly affect it. For example, language immersion or cultural revival initiatives need to be funded. Pow-wows need to be financially supported in order to pay drum groups or offer prize money. The latter being something one participant takes issue with and will be discussed at length in the later chapter. In the next chapter, I will discuss the reserve and the notions of authenticity that are seemingly attached to it. Rights to language and culture are forefront issues with my participants and will be the focus of the next section.

CHAPTER 4 THE “REZ”: ON, OFF AND IN BETWEEN

When a person refers to the “rez”, they are referring to the reserve. The “rez” means home to some while to others, it is an intimidating or violent place. In this chapter, I will discuss the reserve in several dimensions. Some reserves are singled out as exclusive and others are labelled as intimidating. Reserves are often known as places where “tradition” is learned because of the elders who reside in them. Furthermore, language, rights to culture, modes of learning and financial independence are also thought to be linked to the idea of the reserve in some way. Sadly differing histories have severed many inter-community kinship relations resulting in a breakdown in communication between reserves. The prejudices rooted in “place” have created marked differences in the Mi’kmaq people. However, if these “differences” are analyzed using the concept of peoplehood, they are transformed into legitimate enactments of Mi’kmaq peoplehood.

4.1 PEOPLEHOOD, IDENTITY AND TRADITION: WHERE AND HOW ARE THEY LEARNED?

The concept of identity complicates the research process because of the many representations of identity that exist within one community. Poliandri (2011) attempted to draw out these complexities when he studied Mi’kmaq notions of identity in many of the same communities where I conducted my own research. Mi’kmaq identity, according to Poliandri, is tied to the convoluted notions of “tradition.” Tradition is often grouped together with varying ideas of “culture.” Poliandri’s work highlights the difficulties in

defining what is Mi'kmaq tradition and culture. The following is an excerpt from one of his interviews with a Mi'kmaq woman.

What is Mi'kmaw tradition?

'It is Native Spirituality, traditional spirituality. It is the Mi'kmaw, and only Mi'kmaw, ceremonies. It is a mixture of imported elements from other Native groups. It is the Mi'kmaw language. It is the values that we live by: respect for elders, respect for the land, and so forth. It is things like drumming, some songs, the game of *Waltos*. It is a way of life. It is non-Catholic. It is the Catholic Church' (Poliandri, 2011: 101. Italics in original).

All of the things mentioned above are linked via the peoplehood matrix, either as part of a sacred history, ceremonial cycle, territory or language. All these things have been adopted into Mi'kmaq ways of being and incorporated into their expression of peoplehood. Because peoplehood is complex and fluid, it allows for movement and change. For example, Catholicism was introduced to the Mi'kmaq by the French 400 years ago and has been adopted as a significant part of Mi'kmaq peoplehood. Instead of replacing an entire ceremonial and sacred historical context, Catholicism compensates for those who have renegotiated their understanding of spirituality, religion or ceremony.

Although many Mi'kmaq people are practicing Catholics, the Church played a major role in destroying Indigenous belief systems, rituals, and ways of life. Therefore the adoption and insertion of Christianity into the Mi'kmaq peoplehood matrix needs to be situated. There are generations of Mi'kmaq people who have been born into the Catholic faith. However, Catholicism was forced upon communities at one point in time and that historical act will affect individuals who accept, reject or blend their religious practices.

There are many Mi'kmaq people who smudge and attend Catholic Mass. Introducing Catholicism does not present an “either or” scenario, but instead allows the individual, community or Nation to express Mi'kmaq and Christian elements as the Church allows. Religious events, ranging from drumming to Catholic Mass are included in Thomas and Spicer's second pillar of the peoplehood matrix: “a distinctive religion—even if it is a distinct version of a world religion.”

Although I did not ask “what is Mi'kmaq tradition?” during my interviews, many people brought up language or ceremonies as integral components of Mi'kmaq traditions, as well as ideas of territory and place. Even though urban centres such as Halifax are still on traditional Mi'kmaq territory, the land known and understood as the reserve is still understood as the place where culture is learned. Many of my participants explained that the reserve is where Mi'kmaq culture is learned because it is where most elders reside.

Oral histories are understood to be one of the most important ways of transferring knowledge to the younger generation. The act of sharing knowledge between an elder and a youth is far more cherished than other ways of learning. This is illustrated in one of the interviews I conducted. Sharon is a Mi'kmaq archaeologist working on a project to build a new Mi'kmaq cultural centre in central Nova Scotia. Throughout our interview, she emphasized the importance of having elders guide them through the construction of the centre.

It's very careful planning and we have our elders that we meet with once a month and they guide us through everything. They are a very capable group of people. Educators and councillors. They've seen a lot and done a

lot. Our oldest elder is 93. She just got the Order of Canada last week. She's the first Mi'kmaq teacher. She got a teacher's degree in 1931. First Native teacher to teach in a non-Native School in Unama'ki [Cape Breton]. Her father was an infamous guy. He's met everybody. She's learned a lot from him. She's wonderful. She still drives up from [name of the reserve].

Sharon not only discussed the importance of the elders' knowledge for the centre, but she also mentioned the inter-generational teachings between the elder's father, the elder and the elder's knowledge and guidance for the centre. The interpretation centre may not be a "traditional" place for passing on knowledge but through guidance from elders during its construction, it embodies the "elder-to-youth" way of learning that is so cherished. The building of this centre serves to bring Mi'kmaq people together in another manner.

Elders from different communities come together to share their knowledge with people from differing reserves. They are overcoming boundaries by sharing their knowledge and expertise. Often, interaction with elders is the only way to learn traditional knowledge, including language—one of the strands of the peoplehood matrix. However, with the passing of many elders, who only live on reserve, access to this knowledge and language can be limited. I interviewed one of the cultural demonstrators at the Millbrook Pow-wow. She explained to me that many Mi'kmaq people who make traditional works of art have to learn by taking something apart because there are not enough elders to teach traditional knowledge anymore. She said that it was "sad that we have to learn that way." Laretta echoed Sharon's sentiment when she spoke about the importance of learning from elders. Laretta, who does not speak Mi'kmaq, said "[we need] Elders or more qualified people teaching our language."

As I discussed earlier in my introduction, every aspect of the peoplehood matrix is connected and dependent on the others. Learning from an elder is not only cherished, but when it is done in a traditional language, that language will influence the manner in how those teachings are understood. However, if English is the only language used and understood by both the teacher and the student, then the significance or understanding of the ceremony is not diminished. Boundaries are more apparent when each party speaks a different language especially when there is often no direct translation for words, meanings, and colloquialisms..

Indigenous languages were considered roadblocks on the path to civilization because the language embodied the Aboriginal world view that colonizers were desperate to eradicate (Keeshig-Tobias, 2003). Furthermore, Indigenous languages are fundamental to many First Nations people as a defining aspect to their peoplehood; something that many of my participants acknowledged despite their lack of knowledge of how to speak it. But what is considered culturally relevant in one community—such as the language—may not exist in another community. Mi'kmaq is spoken, often as a first language, in Eskasoni and many other Cape Breton reserves but not in Indian Brook or Millbrook, reserves located in mainland Nova Scotia.

4.2 LANGUAGE: TIED TO THE RESERVE?

Rebecca: I've never learned the language.

Tony: Your language.

Rebecca: My language.

Tony: *Our language*.

(Interview with Tony, June 25th, 2010 at the Membertou 400 Mawio'mi in Halifax, NS)

The above dialogue is an excerpt from an interview I conducted in June, 2010 at the Grand Chief Membertou Mawio'mi. During my interview with Tony, a young Mi'kmaq man and woman pushing a baby stroller walked by the table where we were talking. Tony immediately called out to the man and a brief conversation ensued before ending in laughter. The entire exchange took place in Mi'kmaq. Both men were from Eskasoni; a well known Mi'kmaq speaking community. Out of the 17 self-identified aboriginal people I interviewed for my research, Tony was only one of two who is a first speaker of *our language*.

Unama'ki is one of the seven districts of Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki is the Mi'kmaq territory, while Unama'ki specifically refers to the Cape Breton district. Tony was the first person I interviewed to mention a specific district in Mi'kma'ki. This is something that was quite interesting given the fact that the cultural village during the Membertou 400 Mawio'mi was representative of the seven districts in Mi'kma'ki.

Frank Speck did a lot of work in the area of Mi'kmaq territory and hunting lands (Chute, 1999). A council of local Chiefs governed districts, and that council was headed by a district Chief (Chute, 1999: 483). Although the districts were and are boundaries created by Mi'kmaq, they were never mentioned by any of my participants, with the exception of Tony. Instead, they spoke of reserves as reference points of for boundaries and divisions. In addition to reserves, other features, such as language, played a part in

dividing up the Mi'kmaq people where the more specifically Mi'kmaq historical divisions of districts were left out.

Language is considered to be crucial to the survival of a culture, as it is one of the four strands of the peoplehood matrix discussed above. Tony was one of only four people I interviewed whose first language was Mi'kmaq. Language in general shapes the context and lens through which we see the world, and without Native languages, the world we experience as Indigenous peoples is significantly altered (McCarthy, Romero and Zepeda, 2006). Often, there are no direct translations for Indigenous words in English. If ceremonies were formerly described in Mi'kmaq, English versions may not convey the original context.

The peoplehood matrix is a complex and fluid set of practices; English alongside the traditional language can still contribute to an Indigenous way of being. If English is the only language known to a Mi'kmaq person and their first encounter with ceremony is in that language, the significance is not lessened because it is explained in a manner that makes sense to them.

After centuries of colonization, the Mi'kmaq language has managed to thrive in some places while becoming nearly non-existent in others. Sadly, the latter is more commonly the case. So what happens when a community loses their language? Does the Mi'kmaq language play a role in urban areas where many Aboriginal people reside without it? Is the use of the Mi'kmaq language rooted on the reserve? The thirteen people I interviewed who do not speak their traditional language do not feel a diminished sense

of peoplehood. I will begin this section by discussing the role that the Mi'kmaq language, or lack thereof, plays in community relations.

During my fieldwork, language was consistently mentioned as a defining characteristic for Mi'kmaq culture by *those who could speak it*. Language, however, is only one of the four strands in the peoplehood matrix, the other three being sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and place or territory (Stratton and Washburn, 2008). The interviewees who did not speak the language would instead use one or all of the other strands as an articulation point for their Mi'kmaq peoplehood. Furthermore, non-speakers would cite their experience or connections to the reserve itself—although part of Mi'kmaq territory, the concept is still a colonial construct and will be discussed at a later point—as a defining characteristic for their peoplehood. Unfortunately, many, if not most, Mi'kmaq people no longer speak our language—myself included. This has resulted in strained relationships between the communities that can and those that cannot.

On July 2nd, 2010, I attended the Eskasoni annual Pow-wow. While in Eskasoni, I could hear Mi'kmaq being spoken all around the Pow-wow grounds. In contrast, when I attended the Millbrook Pow-wow on August 14th, 2010, almost everyone spoke English with the exception of a few elders who spoke Mi'kmaq. Indian Brook, located 30 minutes south of Millbrook, has also lost the everyday use of their language and residential schooling is directly to blame. According to a recent CBC article published in September, 2010, “it takes only two or three generations of this sort of education before people

subjected to it begin to use their language less and less often, to the point where they stop using altogether it with their children” (CBC, 2010)³. According to Mary-Jane Norris,

As of 1996, only 3 out of Canada’s 50 Aboriginal languages had large enough populations to be considered truly secure from the threat of extinction in the long run. This is not surprising in light of the fact that only a small proportion of the Aboriginal population speaks an Aboriginal language. Of some 800,000 persons who claimed an Aboriginal identity in 1996, only 26% said an Aboriginal language was their mother tongue and even fewer spoke it at home (Norris, 1998: 8).

This is the sad reality that many First Nations people face coast-to-coast today.

A conversation during participant observation with one young Mi’kmaq man revealed his decision not to teach his children Mi’kmaq because he failed to see its importance in today’s modern world. The CBC article continued on to say that there are virtually no child speakers of Mi’kmaq or Maliseet—the languages of the two Nations that occupy the Atlantic Provinces (ibid). Nathiel, a young Mi’kmaq man in his early twenties, says he is chastised by his grandmother for not speaking Mi’kmaq even though he spent most of his childhood in Edmonton, Alberta with his father. Furthermore, the often isolated nature of Mi’kmaq-speaking communities has resulted in some regional discrepancies in the language.

Eskasoni is the largest Mi’kmaq reserve in Nova Scotia with just over 3,000 band members (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to Statistics Canada, 1,865 of the 1,890 people who have lived at the same address on the reserve for the past five years

³ Although CBC is not a refereed academic source, it can act as a community perspective. CBC has greater resources than myself and is able to capture a broader community perspective because of it. When used in conjunction academic source material I am able to expand my theories beyond that of my 17 interviews.

speak an “other language,” neither French nor English, most often at home (Statistics Canada, 2006). From my interviews and my experience on that particular reserve, I would assume this to mean that they are speaking Mi’kmaq.

For the Mi’kmaq people living in Eskasoni, having maintained the use of their language in the face of residential schooling is no small feat. However, the everyday use of their language may also be a factor in the strained social relations between Eskasoni’s members and Mi’kmaq who do not speak our language. Lairetta, a middle-aged Mi’kmaq woman who grew up in Indian Brook, Shubenacadie and now resides in Dartmouth, explains her hesitancy to visit Eskasoni.

Lairetta: Well, it depends. If I went to Eskasoni, they would say hi and stuff but because I don’t speak the language, they were kind of like or they would look at me like “oh she’s from Shubie.” [We] don’t speak our language, even though it’s not our fault. Right? But we’re kind of treated differently because of our lack of our knowledge of our language. I feel kind of uncomfortable.

The Shubenacadie Indian residential school was one of the few residential schools in the Atlantic Provinces. Millbrook reserve is located less than 30 kilometres from Shubenacadie village. Eskasoni, however, is located in Cape Breton, hundreds of kilometres away from the school. Although this is not the focus of my research, based on my interviews, the farther away a reserve was from the Shubenacadie residential school, the more people continue to speak the Mi’kmaq language there. Prins made a similar observation in his ethnographic work on the Mi’kmaq: “[a]mong the slowest to change were the Cape Breton Mi’kmaqs, who were more isolated and conservative” (Prins, 1996: 180). Whycomagh is also a Mi’kmaq speaking reserve and it is also located in Cape

Breton. Bella, a young Mi'kmaq woman I interviewed, also mentioned Eskasoni's isolation.

Rebecca: Why do you think Eskasoni is like that?

Bella: I don't know. Maybe because they are too culturally sheltered. At least that's what some people think.

Perhaps because they were located so far away, on an island disconnected from the mainland, Cape Breton communities were able to maintain the use of their language. Today Cape Breton has the largest Mi'kmaq community, Eskasoni. Given their geography and numbers, the Cape Breton Mi'kmaq may have been better situated to oppose assimilative methods by the state than their smaller counterparts on the mainland. Mi'kmaq communities in central and northern New Brunswick were also able to keep the use of their language. The "choice" to adopt English does not diminish the "legitimacy" of a community because it was often necessary for the physical wellbeing of the children in residential school. Yet, even with the decline in Native languages, communities such as Eskasoni have managed to maintain the everyday use of the Mi'kmaq language. Because of this, Eskasoni has often been referred to by non-band members as a more "traditional" reserve. This label, however, can be a sore spot for many other Mi'kmaq people who are not part of this community.

The language barrier does not just exist between Eskasoni and the rest of Mi'kma'ki. Because I attended Pow-wows in communities in Nova Scotia, the majority of my participants were from the province. However, I did get a chance to interview Mi'kmaq people from other parts of Atlantic Canada who had travelled to the Membertou 400 mawio'mi. One interviewee, Barbie, is from northern New Brunswick but now works

in Halifax. She, like many others, did not grow up speaking her language but instead took the initiative to learn it as an adult. But that did not change her belief that her community, Eel River Bar, was looked down upon by other reserves that had retained the use of the Mi'kmaq language. Barbie explains:

Barbie: We have Restigouche right across the water, it's always been something; that rivalry. We're both Mi'kmaq, but one has kept the culture and language and the other didn't. I don't think that it was by choice but by assimilation. They didn't have a choice to keep their language. It was beaten out of them. The other one; they weren't assimilated [in the same way]. So you have to go back by history. I found because of that, one culture kind of says to the other: "well you don't have your language." It's like my mother, for her, she doesn't [speak her language]. I think for her when she was younger it was a bit harder. But now whatever, I learned my language and I just move on.

Barbie tries to explain that her community, Eel River Bar, was more aggressively assimilated than Restigouche. Yet many in Restigouche hold fast to their beliefs that they somehow have more of a right to their language than those in Eel River Bar do. But both Laretta and Barbie acknowledge colonialism's role in eliminating their language, and Bella supports Prins (1996) hypothesis that Eskasoni's situation within Mi'kma'ki was vital in preserving the language.

Noel Pearson, cited by Moses (2010), developed a framework that acknowledges the pan-Indian experience Indigenous groups have shared in relation to ongoing coloniality. He specifically acknowledges the history of conflict for Indigenous peoples that Barbie alludes to in relation to the Mi'kmaq people.

[P]eoplehood underlines the existing pan-Aboriginal sense of common identity and history. At the same time, it is a sufficiently open concept to admit of layered identities for Aborigines, an approach inspired by the philosopher Amartya Sen. Rather than the stark and rigid opposition of

black and white and its ‘illusion of singular identity’, Pearson urges a complex amalgam of layers based on cultural and linguistic groups, religion, place of birth, residence, professional group and so forth. (Moses, 2010: 24).

Pearson’s concept of peoplehood allows for the complex ideas of culture and tradition that exist in varying degrees in the separate communities in that it affords each person the right to practice ceremony and language in a manner they see fit. This is an obvious source of conflict because those who practice differently could clash with other community members.

Those who were not able to learn their language for reasons beyond their control are not any less Mi’kmaq according to their execution of the four features. For example, two out of the three Pow-wow I attended were in English speaking communities—Millbrook reserve and the Membertou 400 mawio’mi in Halifax. Yet both events advertized traditional food, music and dance and welcomed participants to Mi’kmaq territory. Even more important, Millbrook’s Pow-wow set up and schedule was nearly identical to that of Eskasoni’s with the exception of a Mi’kmaq speaking master of ceremonies.

In other words, separate communities can be culturally diverse—and, as in this example, linguistically diverse—and yet still maintain a sense of unity as part of the larger Mi’kmaq Nation (Croucher, 2006). English and other post-contact elements such as Catholicism and the adoption of the Pow-wow were also filtered to become a significant part of Mi’kmaq peoplehood. For Barbie, it was important that she learn her language as an adult. But there are many Mi’kmaq adults that have managed to hinge their Mi’kmaq peoplehood to other aspects of the culture as a way to compensate for the

loss of their language. Laretta, who does not speak the language, grew up on a reserve, but now she lives in a city. Barbie, on the other hand, grew up off-reserve, like many other Mi'kmaq people (including myself), yet she constantly returns to the reserve to help take care of her grandmother. No matter their diverse upbringing, both women strongly declare themselves to be part of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Unfortunately, there are other conflicts besides the loss of language that also separate the Mi'kmaq people.

4.3 OFF THE REZ: "CITY INDIANS"

There is an enduring notion that Indigenous people who live on-reserve are considered to be "more Indian" than those who grew up off the reserve (Lawrence, 2004). This is a sentiment that was prevalent in many of my interviews with Mi'kmaq people who did not live or had never lived on a reserve. Not only is it a running theme in my interviews, it is a personal experience that I have struggled with my entire life. An acquaintance of mine once told me that she considered herself to be "more Native" than I am simply because she grew up on a reserve. I grew up off-reserve with my non-Native mother. On the few occasions in my youth when my father was around, he would take me to a reserve and I would always feel different from the rest of the kids there. When faced with the question "is there anything different between on-reserve and off-reserve First Nations besides geography?" many of my participants were quick to point out the differences between the two groups. These perceived differences, such as "they talk differently; they don't have the same sense of community as we do; they just are [different]," are used to draw a line in the sand between "us" and "them." This boundary consists of mental checkpoints that help define where "we" end and "they" begin

(Coucher, 2006). In this instance, the checkpoints can be as simple as the reserve limit, a Native accent, or a figure of speech.

In 2001, nearly a quarter of the Indigenous population in Canada had migrated to the cities and almost half already lived off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2001). As I have explained before, many First Nations people leave the reserve for a myriad of reasons such as employment opportunities or education. But what about First Nations people who were never part of a reserve community to begin with? People, especially First Nations groups, have always been mobile and as a result constructions of personhood and peoplehood are more fluid than anthropologists have traditionally suggested (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). First Nations people who either migrated or were never part of a reserve community in the first place still live in their ancestral lands but their connections and relations to the land have been severed or significantly diminished. Mi'kmaq people who migrated to Halifax still live in their ancestral territory but because they no longer live on-reserve, their "relation to place ineluctably change[s], and the illusion of a natural and essential connection between place and culture [is] broken" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 10). However, if migration to the city is viewed through the peoplehood matrix, it becomes a relevant understanding of Mi'kmaq territory and place for those who reside off the reserve.

The reserve has become a major reference point for an individualized understanding of peoplehood for those who live there. Unfortunately for those who live elsewhere, the reserve can often be seen as a place where confrontation and violence is inevitable if a person is labelled an outsider. I found evidence of this when I interviewed

Indigenous people at the Membertou 400 Mawio'mi. This ideology extends beyond the Atlantic Provinces. Jamie is a Native man of mixed heritage with a Ukrainian father and Ojibwa mother. He grew up in Toronto, Ontario, with very little exposure to his Native roots. Occasionally he would return to the reserve with his mother. His experiences were less than positive.

Jamie: I grew [up] off-reserve in Toronto. My mother is a residential school survivor. She left the residential school when she was a teenager. She married my father and left the rez and never looked back and moved to Toronto. She had me and my sister and we were raised in the east end of Toronto until I was 13 years old. [We] never had a dream catcher in the house. There's no culture in our house whatsoever. My father is Ukrainian and my mother is Ojibwa. We grew up in the east end and all my friends called me Chief. Every once in a while we'd go back to the rez and visit family. We'd go up for a funeral or for summer vacation. I always got beat up by the boys on the rez. Because I was different, I was from the city; even though I was with my cousins I'd be the little city boy. I'd get beat up often.

Jamie's experiences are not unique. Glenn, a Mi'kmaq man in his late twenties, used to get beaten up on the reserve on a regular basis, including a time where he was held down while other Mi'kmaq kids wrote on his face with permanent marker. He lived on-reserve when he was young but because he was different—he dressed in gothic clothing and was overweight—he was often picked on by other youth from the reserve. Jamie, on the other hand, explained that while his reserve experience also stemmed from his difference, in his case it was more a matter of what was considered “authentic”. Jamie was not considered a “real Indian”; he was labelled “city Indian”. This divided mentality is something that Glenn was constantly exposed to by his older brother.

Glenn: [My brother] is very prejudiced against city Indians. He's always had that feeling. I don't know if he has that now. But, as long as I've known him, he's had that perspective, that he has more of a right to Native

culture than city Indians. [According to him,] city Indians don't understand Native culture. I don't understand that, I don't. When he moved away, I adopted that mentality but it just never sat well with me because I believe that being Native isn't just about living on-reserve.

According to Evelyn Peters, there is a “long history in western thought that sees urban and Aboriginal cultures as incompatible” (2009: 158). Peters explains that this is untrue. Since 1959, 117 Friendship Centres have been opened in urban centres across the country (ibid). The centres host cultural events, provide employment services, and also provide resources for counselling and addiction services. But regardless of how well-equipped a Friendship Centre is, some individuals still deem the reserve to be the only space where a complete Aboriginal ideology can be fostered. In other words, it's the only place where “real Indians” live.

Bella: My little cousin and her mom moved to Dartmouth the past few years because their house got stolen in family drama. So she took her daughter to a [Native] day-camp and when she was done her mom asked her if she had fun. And her daughter said, “Mom, I think I was the only Native kid there.” And her mom laughed and said, it's ok *Tùs*⁴, they're city Indians, that's all.

Bella's cousin's mother had her home taken from her by band officials. The urban community assisted her cousin's mother in finding culturally appropriate childcare, albeit it may not have been interpreted in that manner by the daughter. The day-camp was organized and run by urban Aboriginals but those in attendance failed to escape the labels of “city Indian” and inauthentic. The belief that authenticity is rooted on the reserve is widespread among young Mi'kmaq but it is not all encompassing.

4 Pronounced Douce, *Tùs* is a Mi'kmaq term of endearment for a young girl.

The Mi'kmaq language is in serious decline, and with it one of the four pillars of Stratton and Washburn's peoplehood Matrix. Instead of using all four strands—sacred history, language, ceremonial cycle, and territory or place—to construct a balanced representation of *L'nuu*, some Mi'kmaq youth tenaciously cling to the reserve, perhaps as a way to make up for their lack of language and to separate themselves from those who grew up off-reserve. If neither group has fluent use of their language, then the reserve becomes important for Mi'kmaq people who feel it necessary to separate themselves symbolically. However, the reserve is a colonially constructed space. Yet it has somehow been transformed into a significant place for the Mi'kmaq people.

George Stanley (1950) writes about the first “reserves” in Canada. He explains that in the broadest of terms, an Indian reserve is an area of land set aside from the general European community with differing laws than the dominant institution (Stanley, 1950). This view of the reserve resonates within many Indigenous people. The reserve sets aside Mi'kmaq culture from the “general European community.” As one young man aptly put it, “the reserve is kind of like a separation, like an apartheid [of] Native information, Native knowledge and culture and then the rest of the world.”

The reserve, thus far, has been built up to be the space where “real Indians” live—the people who possess the key to Mi'kmaq culture. That being said, many Mi'kmaq youth who reside in cities are beginning to reject this idea. Glenn made mention of this when he questioned his older brother's view of “city Indians.” Another young man, Mike, a Mi'kmaq in his early twenties, refused to view the reserve as a requirement for his Mi'kmaq peoplehood. The reserve, according to Mike,

...becomes this hub for all things Native. Even though the reserve is a construction of the government, it's existed long enough for people to see the reserve as themselves, as a representation of their identity. And so, not just some people but a lot of people. It's this traditionalized space. Where if you don't live on the reserve then you cease to possess a quality which we, as the people of the reserve, define as necessary to call yourself Native, in some capacity. In like a reserve capacity. To not be on reserve is in some way disengaging from your culture or your community or to be disengaging what you're supposed to see as something that represents you. You're supposed to see the reserve as who you are, in a really fucked up way.

Mike laments that he has to hinge a part of his Mi'kmaq peoplehood to the reserve. It is here that many First Nations people find themselves. They are caught between a rock and a hard place, so to speak. For those who wish to reject the reserve as a factor in their sense of peoplehood risk losing their Aboriginal and treaty rights that are linked to it. For example, rights such as education, health care, and housing are linked to a person's Native status and their registry number, which in turn is connected to a reserve. In order to be granted status, a person must have a reserve affiliation. That affiliation then generates revenue via federal transfer payments, based on community registration numbers.

The notion of 'being Indigenous' is a very contentious issue in contemporary Canada (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Much of Indigenous peoplehood is caught up in the notion of the "reserve" where the "Indians" live. Currently, the political turmoil over power, title, and treaty is wrapped up in land claims to extend Aboriginal territory outside of the reserve or broaden the reserve over an area of greater resources in order to support the growing Aboriginal population. The politics of recognition have created a type of Aboriginal whose sense of peoplehood is no longer tied to their culture and the land but, instead, to their relationship with the colonial state (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005).

Indigeneity via incidence is the idea that an Indigenous person is Indigenous because the government of Canada has issued them a status card, band number, and registry number and not because of their cultural understanding and expressions of peoplehood (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). This identity of “indigeneity via incidence” (ibid) has the potential to create a capitalist-driven group of First Nations who are no longer influenced by their ancestral obligations to their people and the land but instead are more influenced by the colonial culture of accumulation (Coulthard, 2007). This is frightening to consider. In this sense, the concept of the reserve is needed as an anchoring point for the modern mobile Aboriginal as it is a constant reminder of the land that was appropriated under racist attitudes and expressions of power.

The concept of the reserve—as an interpretation of territory--, however, is only one thread in the peoplehood matrix. Stratton and Washburn discuss three other components of peoplehood within their work. With the increase in Indigenous peoples’ mobility, the reservation is no longer the ultimate defining characteristic of who a person is in their sense of peoplehood. Furthermore, social scientists have begun to explore urban Indigenous populations as legitimate First Nations communities independent of the reserve. After all, as Monture-Angus explains, “the reserve is not a good Indian idea. Any plan or model that accepts without question the reserve as a basis for government powers entrenches colonialism” (1999: 30).

The concept of peoplehood is made up of four aspects and the transmission of these aspects can and will vary. In the eyes of many who live there, the reserve can play a

big role in how they reconcile their Mi'kmaq peoplehood. Their understanding and practices of language, ceremony, and history are strongly connected to place; in this case, the reserve. The Mi'kmaq language, although diminished in mainland Nova Scotia is still alive and vibrant in several Cape Breton reserves. Therefore, Mi'kmaq people from other reserves, who no longer possess their language, assert their understanding of peoplehood by assigning a heightened importance on the reserve as a means to geographically separate themselves from those who grew up off-reserve. In spite of language loss and use, wealth and poverty, and urban and reserve occupation, communities still come together to celebrate.

Every single one of my participants believes that there is hope for mending tensions and eliminating conflict between Mi'kmaq communities. By “lowering the bar” for one another, Mi'kmaq people can put aside the competition, conflict and exclusivity that fractures the Mi'kmaq Nation. This also acknowledges that not every Mi'kmaq person is going to have an identical—or even similar, for that matter—expression of peoplehood. In my upcoming chapter, I will move away from discussing the problems of conflict and begin to focus on the solutions to these problems. Ceremony, celebration and the younger generation may hold the key for healing and social revolution.

CHAPTER 5 POW-WOW POTENTIAL

I have written about the social conflicts that plague Indigenous communities. These conflicts, both internal and external, stall communities economically and socially, and inhibit their potential for freedom within an ongoing state of coloniality. Throughout my fieldwork, my participants were quick to point out what was wrong with Mi'kmaq communities. Yet, in spite of these issues, each one acknowledged ceremony—including Pow-wow—as a way to come together as a nation and stand up for their rights as Mi'kmaq people, effectively tempering these conflicts. Many see Pow-wows as social gatherings or celebrations. Pow-wows can be a showcase of Indigenous culture or a political stand against oppression. With such a young population in Mi'kmaq communities overall, many youth are latching onto traditions such as Pow-wow as a way to enact their peoplehood and come together as a Nation. From a critical outside perspective, Pow-wow can be seen as “Bread and Circuses” (Waitt, 2008), meaning that Pow-wow acts as a release valve for the social and political pressure that builds in Indigenous communities but enacts no real change. In other words, if the state permits the occasional “festival” with culturally appropriate emblems, it will keep a marginalized and oppressed group of people satiated – fed with bread and entertained with circuses – without having to address any systemic failures. From a critical insider's perspective, however, Pow-wow can also be seen as a space that challenges the everyday oppression and subjection that aboriginal people live with on a daily basis. Why is it that social boundaries are bypassed and conflicts are lessened in a Pow-wow context? Through the eyes of my participants, Pow-wow is a chance to see friends and family, and to reform

old kinship ties—and strengthen existing ones. It is a chance to set aside differences, come together as a Nation and give hope to the new generation of Mi’kmaq people.

5.1 THE URBAN POW-WOW: PERFORMANCE VERSUS ENACTMENT.

In the summer of 2010, I attended three Pow-wows held in three different Mi’kmaq communities. I attended one in the isolated reserve of Eskasoni, also known as “Eski,” located in Cape Breton; and I attended the annual Millbrook Pow-wow, which was held in one of the wealthiest Mi’kmaq communities in Atlantic Canada. Before either of these events, however, I attended the international urban Pow-wow held in central Halifax. These three Pow-wows can be interpreted in a myriad of ways.

During the summer months, the Halifax Commons are usually speckled with softball players, people lying in the grass enjoying the sunshine or individuals playing with their dogs. The large, green park is situated in the middle of Halifax, Nova Scotia and is usually quite quiet, with the exception of a few summer concerts. However, in the afternoon of June 25th, 2010, the Commons were dotted with teepees and drum music filled the air. June 24th, 2010 had marked the 400th anniversary of Grand Chief Membertou’s baptism—the first aboriginal person to be baptized in Canada.

The Membertou 400 Mawio’mi, also known as the Membertou Pow-wow, was the only large Native gathering I attended that was not held on a reserve. The Membertou 400 mawio’mi was not hosted by any particular reserve community, but rather was

organized by many people from several different communities as an exhibition of Mi'kmaq culture. The Membertou 400 mawio'mi lasted over four days and was the first of its size held in Halifax. It was an over-the-top, grandiose event with nearly 80,000 attendees (www.halifaxpowwow.com, 2011). It featured four different areas, each with a different purpose.

The first area was the dance arena, located in the west end of the Commons. It consisted of a circle of grass surrounded by a dozen or so drum groups. Surrounding the drum groups and the circle were bleachers for observers to watch the dances taking place in the arena. This area was where “traditional” dances took place, including the Grand Entry (which signified the start of the mawio'mi each day), the Honour song and the Tribute to Veterans. It was here that dancers, drummers and singers showcased their talents.

The second area was located at the north end of the Commons. This was where the performance stage was situated. It was here that “non-traditional” performances took place, including the headliner, Buffy Sainte-Marie. The stage was also used for other performances, such as other rock shows, speeches and awards, all of which contributed to the performative aspect of the event as well as providing an interesting space for a political stand. Waitt explains that a cultural “performance”—such as a pow-wow—can often be done as a “quick fix” solution to a city’s image problem (2008:519) And although Halifax may not have been trying to fix their “image” with regards to Indigenous peoples, the Membertou Mawio'mi was certainly framed in a manner that promoted an idealized aboriginal-settler relationship. Therefore, the performance stage,

where songs of protest took place, became significant in challenging this idealized relationship.

The third section of the mawio'mi consisted of dozens of vendors. This area was located in the south end of the Commons. The vendors sold a variety of wares, from dream catchers and woven baskets to drums, regalia and food. Many of the vendors would advertise their crafts and artwork as "traditional" Mi'kmaq crafts even though the vendors themselves were not necessarily Mi'kmaq or First Nation. The position of the vendors at Membertou 400 differed from the usual orientation of vendors at every other Pow-wow I have attended. Typically, vendors are situated around the dance arena so they can watch the dances and events that take place without having to leave their booths unattended. However, the vendors at the Membertou mawio'mi were moved away from the arena, most likely so that they would fill more space on the vast event grounds. Several people complained about this orientation because it forced individuals to leave their booths in order to participate in ceremonies.

Finally, the fourth area of the mawio'mi grounds consisted of the "cultural village." According to the panels erected around the grounds, a person could learn about "traditional Mi'kmaq culture" in this village. The cultural village was located in the east end of the Commons and consisted of seven teepees. Each symbolically represented part of the seven districts in Mi'kmaq territory and had a specific Mi'kmaq cultural demonstration taking place inside or around it. The demonstrations ranged from porcupine quillwork and basket weaving to storytelling and hide tanning. These demonstrations focused on seven clear and definable aspects of Mi'kmaq tradition, which

were neatly displayed on informational panels outside each teepee. For example, there were teepees that had basket weaving, traditional medicine, hide production, traditional shelter construction, the game of Waltes, an archeological exhibit with Mi'kmaq tools, and traditional myths and legends. According to Poliandri, Mi'kmaq culture is not so easily defined—yet there it was, in paragraph form, outside each teepee.

Given the scope of the event (three days), it would be impossible to accurately demonstrate the complex nuances of Mi'kmaq history, territory relations, subtle language differences, etc. Therefore a certain amount of reductionism is unavoidable. Bramadat explains that festivals are a chance for stereotyped cultures to showcase how they see themselves (Bramadat, 2004). Though Pow-wow can be interpreted as more than just a “festival”, Bramadat writes that “it would be unwise to ignore these decades-old festivals, many of which remain the contexts within which members of ethnic communities can interact with formal, even reified images of themselves and their communities” (Bramadat, 2004: 88).

The Membertou Pow-wow was an exhibition of Mi'kmaq culture that welcomed everyone to partake in “traditional Mi'kmaq” ceremonies, eat “traditional Mi'kmaq” food and buy “traditional Mi'kmaq crafts.” Bramadat cautions, however, that what is going to be publically demonstrated as aspects of a culture—in this case Mi'kmaq culture—are pre-planned (ibid). What was intended to be showcased as “traditional” had to have been discussed beforehand and probably was met with differing views by the various organizers who may each have a different understanding of what it means to be Mi'kmaq.

In other words, what was demonstrated may be significant to some or many Mi'kmaq attendees but is not encompassing of all Mi'kmaq people.

The Membertou 400 mawio'mi was advertised for weeks leading up to the event with a campaign including the use of social media websites such as YouTube and Facebook. Commercials invited people to “come celebrate with the Mi'kmaq Nation” (YouTube, 2010) while official and unofficial Facebook groups sent out invitations to the event. The event also had federal, provincial and municipal sponsors as well as several corporate sponsors. A great deal of publicity preceded the event. According to Waitt, urban festivals can be strategic attempts by policy makers to boost a city's image and enhance economic conditions (2008: 516). Those who participated in the pow-wow, or simply watched, stayed at a hotel, bought food at restaurants, went shopping or spent money in a myriad of other places within the city. Hype is part of Waitt's three-part categorization of how urban festivals have been understood in recent scholarship: as cases of hype, helplessness or hope.

Hype refers to place building in order to attract tourists and/or boost local economies. Helplessness, according to Waitt, raises important questions as to why festivals are being held in the first place and who are the true beneficiaries of the event (2008: 515). Finally, urban festivals can be reconceptualised as “sites for contestation, negotiation, and hope” (Waitt, 2008: 527). As a result, some festivals, such as the Membertou Mawio'mi, can be rethought as sites of insurgence (ibid). The sensationalism of the event was not lost on my participants and each person I interviewed during the Membertou 400 mawio'mi remarked on the size and scale of the event as well as the

advertising. In all of my interviews at this event, I asked the question, “What makes this Pow-wow different from the one put on in your community?” The following are excerpts from four separate interviews.

Bert: This is obviously a bigger one. This one is a huge one, the biggest in Atlantic Canada in quite some time. The differences are the call to dancers, the entertainment and the intense cost that has been put into this. I mean, this cost a lot of money and there is no way aboriginal communities, mine or others, could ever afford to do this. (June 24th, 2010)

Joseph: It’s bigger. I’ve been to other Pow-wows but there have never been something like demonstrators like that. Nothing to this level, anyway. This is a great Pow-wow... most of them are minor. Not only because it’s in Halifax, but the publicity, the publicity is better than any other because it’s in Halifax and because it’s happening on the weekend of the Membertou celebrations. (June 24th, 2010)

Bella: So anyway, it was huge. Someone said it was the biggest on the east coast. (July 14th, 2010)

Glenn: The size is different. That fact that all communities... I guess it’s a given that all communities are welcomed to all Pow-wows but it was open to the general public in a way that I hadn’t seen it before. I know the Pow-wows on my reserve are open to the general public but the general public doesn’t go.

Rebecca: Why do you think that is?

Glenn: It’s out of the way. Um, it’s not as widely publicized. I mean the Membertou Pow-wow was insanely publicized. (July 14th, 2010)

Me: What made that Pow-wow different from the one your community put on?

Mike: (Laughs). Uh...! The amount of people, background of the people attending, the entire scale and scope of the event! The fact that it was in downtown Halifax and not on a baseball field on a reserve!

Pow-wows tend to rely on word-of-mouth to instead of advertisements to draw in participants. If the majority of reserve communities tend to be exclusive, or at least limited in their interactions with the non-Native populations then the chances of the general public knowing about and then attending these events would be lower. Also, if the nature—that it is indeed public—of these events is not clear, then the non-Native community may not feel welcomed.

The Membertou Mawio'mi was massive. However, it was not only Indigenous communities who paid for it. Inside the cover of the Mawio'mi program, there were numerous corporate sponsors for the event, including banks, federal, municipal and provincial donations. The money provided by these sponsors—in exchange for advertising opportunities—allowed the planners more financial freedom to hire big acts, like Buffy Sainte Marie.

The Pow-wow/mawio'mi that took place on the Halifax Commons in June of 2010 was tied to the baptism of Grand Chief Membertou. Once the anniversary passed, the hype all but disappeared and so did the money. The newly renamed Halifax Pow-wow that took place the following year was much less performative and more in tune with a traditional Pow-wow. The Halifax Pow-wow, although still quite large, was less about showcasing Mi'kmaq culture to a non-Native crowd and focused more on “the preservation of ritual order and respect for elders” (Gelo, 1999: 48). Even the physical setup of the Pow-wow was more traditional, using concentric circles instead of a sprawling theme.

Gail Valaskakis (2005) explains that Pow-wows are unique to the community hosting them. She writes that “for Native Americans and Canadians themselves, each pow wow reflects the cultural specificity of a tribal nation, a unique community, a particular ceremony” (Valaskakis, 2005: 152). The Pow-wows I attended were uniquely Mi’kmaq because they were held in Mi’kmaq territory and hosted by Mi’kmaq communities. The Membertou 400 mawio’mi was an extreme representation of a Mi’kmaq Pow-wow. It was also closely tied with the baptism of an important, influential and historical Mi’kmaq man.

Pow-wow can also be interpreted in a myriad of ways. I have discussed Pow-wow as a place where oppression, social injustice, and the colonial rule can be challenged. However, Pow-wows, if interpreted simply as a festival could downplay these issues. The Member400 Mawio’mi was a grand affair with a lot of entertainment, and in fact some of my participants believed that the emphasis on entertainment overshadowed the political potential and cultural significance of the event. One of my participants, Tony from Unima’ki, refused to formally participate in the event because of the financial incentive to dance; he disagreed with showcasing culture for money.

Rebecca: What makes this Pow-wow different from the one in Eskasoni?

Tony: It’s competitive. It’s a competition Pow-wow which I’m not participating in. Just observing.

Rebecca: Is there a problem with having a Pow-wow being competitive?

Tony: Yeah, it depends how you look at it. I don’t believe in dancing for money. If you’re going to dance, dance competitively [that is, you] dance for honour, you dance for friendly competition.

Glenn also took issue with the Pow-wow because, to him, it lacked sincerity.

Glenn: For me the celebration is about Membertou's christening and that doesn't sit right with me. I don't like how the Catholic Church won't apologize for the wrongdoings. So for us to celebrate that is messed up in my own mind. I just don't think that should be. So that made me feel like it was a show. And one of the things I talk about is that First Nations people are considered a myth. Like we...um, me and my brother used to joke about it all the time, the mythological Indian. People know that Natives exist in Canada and they see us as living in teepees and if we don't fulfill that stereotype than we aren't really people and we don't deserve the respect that most people attribute to Native people. So it's kind of like... It felt like the whole process, I mean the Pow-wow itself, I could let go and enjoy all the people. I got to listen to Buffy Sainte-Marie. But the whole process was kind of like, "let's put Native people on display." So I was a little off-put by that.

Tony and Glenn's comments were personal disagreements with the Pow-wow itself and were not directed at the people participating in it. In spite of their negative feelings towards the Pow-wow they expressed positive feelings for the event's cohesive social atmosphere. The negative comments were intended to challenge colonial values—such as capitalist ideals of money in exchange for culture, as well as the introduction of Catholicism that superseded many Indigenous ways of being. Although Catholicism has been adopted to be meaningful to many Mi'kmaq communities—as a part of their Mi'kmaq peoplehood, the tensions between Catholics and “traditionalists” did not manifest as a conflict during the Pow-wow as they sometimes can outside of the event. (For example, the brother-in-law of one of my participants continually harangues her to be baptized.)

There were other moments in the Membertou mawio'mi that further challenged the current Indigenous-state relationship in the form of speeches and prayers. For instance, many prayers spoken at the sacred fire asked for the return of traditional lands in order to provide for the Mi'kmaq Nation. Prayers were done in silence for some while others

spoke candidly about their hopes for a better future. Many of those who prayed at the sacred fire were older or dressed in regalia and that may symbolize a more traditional lifestyle. The importance of the prayers for some was obvious, with some attendees sounding very emotional in their pleas. These moments were very individualized and personalized with individuals approaching the fire one at a time. The events stage, where many contemporary music acts took place, provided a larger space where the collective could sing, dance, and discuss their thoughts on issues facing Indigenous peoples.

Most of the music that was performed on the stage had lyrics that referenced the poverty, sickness and subjugation that Indigenous peoples have faced over the centuries. The songs performed by Buffy Sainte-Marie and the other contemporary acts were often laden with political messages that contested the current political establishment. In an attempt to reach a wider audience, Indigenous people have adopted contemporary music genres as a way to express their concerns for their peoples, and many of these songs are about reclaiming a cultural space (Lehr, Bartlette, & Tabvatah, 2006: 79). Glenn—who I interviewed—had acknowledged Buffy Sainte-Marie’s performance as being outside his negative feelings towards the event. Her song “No, No Keshagesh” concisely sums up the exploitative history Indigenous peoples have had with corporations and governments.

Ol Columbus he was lookin good
When he got lost in our neighborhood
Garden of Eden right before his eyes
Now it's all spyware Now it's all income tax

Ol Brother Midas lookin hungry today
What he can't buy he'll get some other way
Send in the troopers if the Natives resist
Same old story, boys; that's how ya do it, boys

No, no keshagesh
You can't do that
No more, no more.
(<http://www.creative-native.com>, 2011)

According to Sainte-Marie's website, "Keshagesh" means "greedy guts" and her song demands that resource extraction on Native lands be stopped. Although the Membertou Pow-wow celebrated a decisively colonial event, the magnitude of it allowed for "big-name acts" like Buffy Sainte-Marie, who would likely not perform at smaller Pow-wows held throughout the province. Her songs, however, symbolize "hope" and her songs drew a lot of attention to issues plaguing Aboriginal communities. In comparison to the Membertou 400 Mawio'mi, the Pow-wows I attended in Eskasoni and Millbrook were much smaller affairs.

In his interview, Mike once again articulately explained his thoughts on financial inequalities. However, he also alluded to the unifying qualities a ceremonial cycle has in spite of the tension that money can cause.

It's not really where you're from that causes the tensions but how you perceive yourself and your own identity. Like how you project your identity into the things you've been told that represent you. I don't know if that makes any sense. So it's not necessarily where you are. At a Pow-wow people have this more unified sense of community where we're all Canadian, North American, Aboriginal, Native, whatever you folks want to call us [as he said this, Mike waved at an imaginary figure watching us talk]. Whatever people end up saying. But uh, if you're in your community, maybe it's different, because there's very real structures of power within the reserve system that legitimately do separate your identity from other people in a legal context and you're very aware of it growing up. And very real structures of money and the flow of money. For example, if you're from Millbrook there's lots of money going in but if you're from Chapel Island there's not so much money. And so there can be some animosity and tension from one space [to one that] feel[s] unified because of their commonality in not being directly descendant from western colonialism.

Mike's answer points out the obvious differences in scale and money that Roger had mentioned earlier. The Membertou 400 mawio'mi was an international event showcasing Mi'kmaq history and culture on a much larger scale than any other reserve's Pow-wows. However, a cultural showcase is only one facet of ceremonies such as Pow-wow. Roger and Mike both talk about the healing potential of ceremonies and the younger generation of Mi'kmaq people.

5.2 THE RESERVE POW-WOW: A YOUNG HOPE?

The Millbrook and Eskasoni Pow-wows were typical Pow-wows. Each Pow-wow's setup was the same. Both Pow-wow weekends were sunny and warm. In the centre of the dance arena, sat the arbour. The arbour is a large covered structure, like a gazebo, where the drummers sat, contrary to the Membertou Pow-wow where the drum groups sat around the dance arena. The dance arena was surrounded by vendors who could watch and participate in the dancing. Both Eskasoni and Millbrook were set up in this fashion. Millbrook had more vendors and was slightly larger; however, the physical setups of each Pow-wow were the same. Every single Pow-wow that I have ever been to was organized in this manner with the exception of one competition Pow-wow in Ontario. That particular Pow-wow had stadium seating to observe to dancers. The reserve-hosted Pow-wows are less regimented and more relaxed, and they see fewer non-Native participants. According to Waitt, during festivals—and in this case, Pow-wows—daily routines and qualifiers are blurred, creating a liminal space (Waitt, 2008). This space allows for the contestation of preconceived notions of Mi'kmaq peoplehood held

by differing Mi'kmaq communities or the non-Native populous such as preconceived notions of identity or culture. And although the Membertou 400 mawio'mi was surrounded with hype, it too provided a space for challenging the current position that First Nations people find themselves in.

Kevin Fox Gotham explains that festivals are “a horizon of meaning” where there is a constant shifting of the hierarchy of significance (2005: 236). A people such as the Mi'kmaq are a group whose political standing will change given the context. Pow-wow is more than “just a festival” with its layered meanings and contexts. Although it has many celebratory aspects, it is also deeply political. For example, if a reserve is placed under third party management, an issue discussed in chapter 2, their autonomy is jeopardized. However, because the hegemonic powers that be struggle to articulate “particular content to serve their ideological end” (Bahnisch, 2002: 8), political signifiers—in this case, the Pow-wow- can return a sense of self-determination back to a community via song, speech, etc. Because, Pow-wow can be interpreted and defined in a myriad of ways, temporary labels—Pow-wow as a political space that unites Mi'kmaq people, for example—can foster a significant argument against the deteriorating social network between Mi'kmaq communities.

Mark Bahnisch (2002) writes about Derrida, Schmitt and the essence of the political in his paper presented at the Political Theory Stream Jubilee Conference in 2002. He writes about spaces “where a range of theoretical discourses are placed in tension with each other but nevertheless a strategic decision is made to impose a partial fixity on some concepts in order to construct (provisionally and strategically) an argument about the

political” (Bahnisch, 2002: 3). In an everyday setting, there are numerous conflicts that antagonize different Mi’kmaq communities. Language, geography and financial stability have all played parts in fracturing the greater Mi’kmaq Nation. However, as Mi’kmaq people come together in Pow-wow, there is an opportunity to mend these fractures, or lessen them at the very least. The mantra “this is our way” plays into the partial fixity Bahnisch discusses by bypassing presumed identities and conflicts. As one of my participants explained:

It’s possible to mend those things, but at the same time, nothing is impossible. So it is possible. I just don’t see like a social method being capable of really mending those differences because I see those differences rising out of legislation. People can reconcile and be happy and not fight each other based on the differences that they have no control over... So yeah, I think it’s possible, Pow-wows do that, celebrations do that. We kind of just lower the bar for each other, we’re all just hopping over together. And it’s this good, happy, collective Native time. And that’s possible. The thing, the fertilizer, the solidification of those boundaries, even though they are mental boundaries, [they] are very real in what they do to people’s lives. I don’t know. You kind of have to look at it that way too.

The Pow-wow is a liminal space where social conflicts are suspended, while in this space. The Mi’kmaq people are sharing ceremony in shared territory influenced by the peoplehood web where inter-community conflict is not a significant portion of any strand but outside of it. Furthermore, with an increase in mobility, people are able to visit with each other more often; attend more Pow-wows; and take part in other social events, mainly sports. With continuous positive interactions while practicing ceremony, in Mi’kmaq territory can help heal old wounds and superficial conflicts as long as the parties that are participating have the same goal: to better the Mi’kmaq people for the

next seven generations. All of my participants were hopeful for the future of their communities.

Rebecca: So, you were mentioning the tournaments and other reserve projects. What else is there?

Bella: Volleyball and basketball, but those are newer. It used to be just hockey. And then there's youth conferences, like the one that [name] put on. There's...they put on a lot of them. Pow-wows and stuff too.

Rebecca (Interviewer): Do you think there is hope to mend these tensions?

Becky: I think [by] following what I call the "red path." Being traditional, going to Pow-wow, dancing. You know.

Rebecca: Do you think, with being made very aware, as you said, of these divides, would it be possible to mend them?

Mike: Yeah, I think they are being mended. The Pow-wow is a living example. A living environment or ecosystem. Reconciliation, the community and capacity for each other. At the same time, I think it's totally possible.

Each of these people speaks of the Pow-wow as a place of reconciliation. As well, the social healing has extended beyond the Pow-wow circuit. Bella, a young Mi'kmaq woman, mentioned hockey and volleyball tournaments as a way to stay connected with other communities. Barbie, from earlier chapters, also mentioned sports events as a way to bring communities together. More specifically, it is the youth in these communities that are becoming closer.

Bella: Yeah, definitely. There are more inter-reserve projects now. Indian Brook only got big like 50 years ago, right? It wasn't that long ago. Maybe it was more segregated then but there's been more initiative to bring people together. There's NAHC, the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships. So team New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and PEI all go

so it's a bunch...and everybody plays hockey. And it's a bunch of youth who all makes friends so they want to visit each other on other reserves. And they take a carload of people to go party up there and then they all come down. So there's a bunch of hockey, volleyball, basketball tournaments that go. So you start to make friends on all the different reserves.

Sporting tournaments may not have the same ceremonial aspect that a Pow-wow has. However, they do provide a social space for communities to come together.

Ceremony takes place collectively. Sweats, Pow-wows, and smudging predominantly take part in groups. That aspect helps solidify kinship, create new friendships and bring communities closer together. Extracurricular activities make lack some aspects of ceremony but they encompass an important feature: collectivity.

With the onset of technology and an increase in mobility, Mi'kmaq youth are better able to keep in contact with one another than the older generations who may not be technically savvy. Pow-wow provides a space where youth can solidify online social connections—and a space that blends the various enactments of Mi'kmaq peoplehood. I asked Roger if there was hope to mend the tensions that exist between communities.

Roger: I think you're seeing that happening now. You see it with young people especially. Which is good. You see, young people now are, they're better informed, they're better at making informed decisions and all those things. You got a good bunch of kids coming up now who see, not the errors of our way, but the pitfalls. You see young kids now grab culture. Culture means a lot. They're taking that culture. You see it in young artists here. They grab that culture, they take that past and they want to incorporate it into contemporary art. You see that in education as well. Kids thinking beyond now. Looking more to the future rather than today. There's hope. There's hope walking around in all these young kids today.

The youth are the key to redefining and rerouting the future of Mi'kmaq people. Pow-wow is a space where youth can bypass prejudices of language, geography and economics in order to come together. As Waitt explains, "crucially, it is suggested that urban festival spaces offer creative possibilities through temporarily suspending social relations and sustaining playful practice that may challenge established geographies" (Waitt, 2008: 526). Pow-wow, a significant part of the ceremonial aspect of peoplehood, provides a place to reconcile the troubled history that Mi'kmaq people share; one of the strands in the peoplehood matrix. Festivals and celebrations open up social spaces to "radical (re)makings" (ibid: 528); they have the potential to be safe spaces for the rearticulation of Mi'kmaq peoplehood if they keep in tuned with ceremony in addition to celebration.

Ceremony is emerging as a significant movement to mend tensions within the Mi'kmaq Nation, and its importance in the peoplehood matrix is rising above the others. Following the Pow-wow section I will conclude with a reorganization of the peoplehood matrix. Through this thesis, all the strands played important roles in the rearticulation of historically scripted boundaries within the Mi'kmaq Nation but they are rigid and inflexible. It is time to expand upon peoplehood so as to provide flexibility to the concepts. Peoplehood has aspects that intertwine and play off of one another. At times, one aspect is going to be more prevalent than another. In the conclusion, I would like to propose territory as a defining aspect and contributor to Mi'kmaq peoplehood. .

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Before writing this thesis, I visited two reserve communities and attended the Membertou Mawio'mi in Halifax, Nova Scotia during the summer of 2010. I listened to 17 self-identified Indigenous people, 15 of whom were Mi'kmaq First Nation. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the origins of Indigenous communities and demonstrated the symbolic boundaries that exist between and within them. In this conclusion I will first address the limit of the peoplehood matrix as it stands. The ways in which peoplehood is enacted will vary from community to community. Therefore, the peoplehood matrix, as a balanced concept for the study of "enduring peoples," needs to be recalibrated in order to address the current cultural variation in communities. The concept of pillars is rigid. Community and individual enactment requires a flexibility that the pillars do not afford. Pow-wow provides a space where this variation can be addressed and the boundaries rethought. Secondly, my research questions could not be answered in their totality within the scope of this short work. I sought to answer the following three questions: 1) in the context of historically scripted boundaries, how are the various enactments of peoplehood articulated within and outside of a ceremonial event such as Pow-wow? 2) How are conflicting enactments of Mi'kmaq peoplehood articulated in day-to-day life under the pressures of ongoing coloniality? 3) How can the reconfiguration of peoplehood—specifically Mi'kmaq peoplehood—address tensions between Mi'kmaq communities? With the actions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Indigenous communities becoming more vocal and proactive about their rights, living conditions and loss of culture, the ways in which they enact their

potentials for freedom in conjunction with their peoplehood will inevitably shift. Finally, I will suggest future avenues for research.

I would like to begin by addressing my second research question, by explaining that Mi'kmaq communities have diverged and in the process have found niches in which they excel or are hindered. The ability to speak the Mi'kmaq language is empowering for certain Cape Breton reserves, the most discussed of which is Eskasoni. However, it can be difficult for those who do not speak Mi'kmaq, who may be hesitant to visit because of the language barrier. Laretta expressed her regret over not learning her language; something that makes her self-conscious when she visits Mi'kmaq-speaking reserves. Exceptional economic success has made Millbrook one of the more difficult reserves to join and the Halifax Mi'kmaq and Indigenous communities are labelled among those whose peoplehood is considered incomplete by reserve communities' standards. This is due, in part, to the on-reserve Mi'kmaq people's attachment to the reserve as an aspect of their peoplehood. Mike reluctantly acknowledged that the reserve—one of the current symbols of Mi'kmaq territory—is needed for his sense of peoplehood because he cannot access his treaty rights if he does not belong to one. In generations past, the four features of the peoplehood matrix were weighted equally. That is to say, prior to colonization there was a time when language use was prevalent, ceremonies were clear and distinct, sacred history was passed down via oral traditions and understandings of territory were less complicated. I have demonstrated that this is not the case today. Holm, Pearson and Chavis explain that each strand in the matrix is weighted equally and no strand is more important than another. However, each strand is no longer equally established in in most communities and, according to Robert K. Thomas, few Indigenous Nations show all four

of these features today (1990). It is for this reason that the peoplehood matrix needs to be altered.

If all the aspects are weighted equally, communities that lack certain aspects, such as language use—due to assimilation policies, etc.—could be considered incomplete or unbalanced. That is, it is unrealistic to expect every community to have all four peoplehood components—language, territory, ceremony, and history—balanced and untouched by historical boundaries. Furthermore, the idea of pillars, as presented by Thomas (1986) evokes a sense of rigidity.

Instead of using pillars, I have conceptualized the matrix as a web where the prevalent components weave in and out with the other aspects of the web, with prevalent threads filling in the gaps where necessary. Edward Spicer attempts to address this by deeming sacred history as the most important feature. Although Robert K. Thomas and Edward Spicer worked on this concept together, Spicer believed that sacred history stands out above the rest because it is the most explicitly about “identity and destiny, and because a sacred history most reflects a people’s determination to survive” (Thomas, 1986: 2). However, sacred history cannot be deemed the most important aspect for the Mi’kmaq people as a whole because much of that sacred history varies significantly between the districts of Mi’kma’ki. There are numerous creation myths that demonstrate this point. Each community or district in Mi’kmaq territory is certainly entitled to their own histories. However, multiple histories have the potential to cause conflict should communities adhere to the teachings of one while completely disregarding the legitimacy of another. The following are two creation myths that demonstrate the diversity in

teachings. One creation myth taken from Ruth Holmes Whitehead's book based on Mi'kmaq history reads as follows,

Before the earth was new, the sun was all that existed in the great universe. The sun divided the earth into several parts separated by many great lakes. In each part he caused one man and one woman to be born. They bore children and lived for many years. Wickedness pervaded in this family, and slowly they killed one another. The sun wept and wept with grief. The tears became rain that fell from the skies until water covered the entire earth. The family had to set sail in bark canoes to save themselves from the flood. A violent wind overturned their boats. All perished in the sea, but the old man and the old woman, who were best of all people, and it was they who populated the earth (Holmes Whitehead, 1991: 3).

While this myth strongly resembles that of Adam and Eve, and Noah's Ark—a clear Christian influence--another Mi'kmaq creation myth, compiled by Kep'tin Stephen Augustine of Big Cove, New Brunswick differs significantly in how the Mi'kmaq people came into existence reads:

Kluskap told of the Great Council Fire that would send seven sparks, which would fly out of the fire and land on the ground, each as a man. Another seven sparks would fly the other way in and out of these seven sparks would arise seven women. Together they would form seven groups, or families, and these seven families should disperse in seven directions and then divide again into seven different groups (<http://www.nlmikmaq.com>, n.d.)

These are only two of the many creation myths told by Mi'kmaq elders. The variation of Mi'kmaq origins throughout Mi'kma'ki is fascinating but it is not consistent. Perhaps then, instead of specifying sacred history as the most important aspect in the web, each community may have any one dimension as the most relevant for them. Thomas explains that many Indigenous peoples will focus on one component which then “dovetails” with the remaining characteristics into this one prevalent feature (ibid: 2). Or

to think of the matrix as a web, one dominant strand will weave its way through the holes in the matrix strengthening what is already there. This is a more realistic way to approach Indigenous communities because it eliminates any processes or practices by which communities can judge themselves or others as “authentic” or “legitimate” if they relate differently to the peoplehood web. For example, Eskasoni’s capacity for the Mi’kmaq language is a great source of pride for the community. While in Eskasoni during the 2010 summer Pow-wow, I had several conversations with band members that had learned Mi’kmaq as a first language and rarely spoke anything but. Those I did officially interview all emphasized the importance of maintaining language first and foremost. They felt that the other threads would be supported if the language continued to survive. Although language is important to members of Eskasoni and they may consider it to be the most important strand that weaves its way through the other aspects of the web, I would like to suggest, instead, that territory should be altered to be central to the other aspects of peoplehood.

Although I discussed language as being the most prominent feature in Eskasoni, its survival was highly dependent on its location in Mi’kmaq territory. In conjunction with Prins’s theory of isolation, several participants believed that Eskasoni’s location within Unama’ki—one of the seven districts of Mi’kma’ki—protected the language. In other words, their location within the territory sheltered their language. Furthermore, ceremonies such as Pow-wows, Sweatlodges, and Sun Dances are not traditionally Mi’kmaq. However, when they are held and practiced by Mi’kmaq people in Mi’kmaq territory, they are appropriately modulated to be significant enactments of Mi’kmaq peoplehood. In these contexts, they are brought into a Mi’kmaq space.

Physical territory is immovable. The land can be appropriated, sold, mined and forested for resources, but it will still be a part of traditional Mi'kmaq territory with an unbroken history of occupation by the people. Residential schooling and the reserve system attempted to eradicate language and ceremony in order to assimilate the Mi'kmaq. Even the strand of sacred history, which Spicer elevated above the rest of the features in importance, is intertwined with territory. Unlike the reserve, which was designated and cordoned off by non-Native governments to confine the Aboriginal population, the districts were named by the Mi'kmaq according to their understandings of sacred territory, creation myths (sacred history) and ceremony. According to yet another creation myth, "Mi'kmaqs held that different peoples descended from different ultimate ancestors and that theirs had come into existence within the maritime territories" (Prins, 1996: 20). The Mi'kmaq are also known as the "People of the Dawn" because they are the most eastern people in mainland Canada; this slogan is prominently displayed on a large sign on the side of Nova Scotia's Highway 104. Appadurai explains that locality—Mi'kmaq territory; a reserve; Pow-wow grounds—is a property of social life (1996). He writes, "This produces an unproblematized collaboration with the sense of inertia on which locality, as a structure of feeling, centrally relies" (ibid: 182). , Mi'kmaq territory is a setting where social structure, both negative and positive, is created. The tensions that exist are a result of the colonial setup. Two communities may feel equally connected to Mi'kma'ki, but one community feels they have more of a "right" to the land because they have kept the language or because they provide for themselves in a more "traditional" manner than the other. For example, the language strain between Eel River Bar and Restigouche that Barbie mentioned. However, positive relationships are also fostered

during Pow-wows. These aforementioned conflicts are superseded, or at least temporarily suspended, during Pow-wows held in Mi'kmaq territory.

My first question addresses the issue of boundaries within and outside of a ceremonial setting such as Pow-wow. On the surface, it appears that traditional social ties are in a fragile state. However, if the surface is scratched a little deeper, introduced and adopted ceremonies—Pow-wow, for instance—provide a space where healthy social relationships can be and are being fostered. The Pow-wow setup is replicated nearly identically from community to community. It provides continuity where those from other communities, in attendance for the first time, can feel at ease in the familiar environment. This extends beyond Mi'kma'ki. Every Pow-wow I have ever attended whether, Mi'kmaq, Mohawk, Ojibwa, Maliseet, and Cree, were arranged in this manner. Moreover, Pow-wow creates a liminal space that allows for the reordering of social hierarchy. Pow-wows are strategic in the battle against colonial forces because, as Sanchez explained, they are exclusively a Native event. Also, Pow-wows are “an important opportunity to negotiate the relationship between [First Nations people] and non-[Native people]. That this re-negotiation is on [First Nations] terms is an important rhetorical move” (Sanchez, 2001: 53). Through a reordering of social hierarchy, Indigenous people are approached in their territory, during their events, when otherwise they are socially fractured and politically fluid.

Three out of the four strands of the peoplehood web have drastically changed. Language, ceremonial cycles and sacred histories have all been altered. Only territorial occupation has remained unbroken; albeit significantly altered. Peoplehood is not the

absolute standard for which Mi'kmaq self-determination should be measured or considered. The political systems in place, inter-Nation and inter-cultural relationships are all going to factor into the Mi'kmaq experience and existence that are not included in the peoplehood web. The Mi'kmaq people have withstood the test of time, by surviving residential school, disease, and relocation (Prins, 1996). Yet in spite of this, the majority of Mi'kmaq people stayed in Mi'kma'ki. It is here that I would like to address my third research question. How can the reconfiguration of peoplehood—specifically Mi'kmaq peoplehood—address tensions between Mi'kmaq communities? With this in mind, I would like to introduce another dimension of peoplehood that ties into the rest: sharing. Sharing has been significant in the past; something Joe Sark had emphasized as crucial to the Mi'kmaq's survival in his address. Frank Speck's work on territorial hunting grounds included the Mi'kmaq's sharing and support clauses for alternate territorial kin groups. One territory owner could gain permission “to hunt on neighbouring tracts, should forest fire, animal disease, or other vicissitudes of the northern boreal forest prevent one from hunting in one's accustomed locales” (Chute, 1999: 490). Neighbouring kin groups would never allow kinsmen to starve during the harsh winters in the maritime territories. Furthermore, to show their gratitude, those who hunted outside their territory would often leave the pelts from a successful hunt for those whose land they hunted on. This lifestyle reciprocity was crucial to the survival of the Mi'kmaq in the harsh climate and it continues to be important. Davis et al. capture this idea perfectly,

The principles of sharing and reciprocity are of fundamental importance to Mi'kmaq culture and social relations, principles captured by the Mi'kmaq word *utkunajik*. Mi'kmaq as a rule do not hoard food, and usually when they have more than the family needs they share with others in the community... With the Mi'kmaq, ‘The sun shares its warmth; the trees

share their wind; and the Mi'kmaq share in the same spirit, be it in their material goods or in their life experiences' (Davis, Prosper, Wagner & Paulette, 2004:361).

Davis et al. (2004) write about the continued reciprocity of community members to outsiders who travel to an event.

In another illustration of sharing Johnson's essay mentions the process a Mi'kmaq person undergoes when travelling abroad to resettle. Within Mi'kmaq communities welcoming involves offering of a place to stay until the individual is able to obtain their own place. This is done in the spirit of sharing and not, for instance, as a method of repayment for favours owed. Salite is also mentioned as a method of sharing, and it still is practiced. Sharing of Ka't, as one from among a variety of resources important for food, medicinal and ceremonial uses, has been a notable feature of Mi'kmaq life and relationships (Davis, Prosper, Wagner & Paulette, 2004: 351-2).

In addition to language, territory, humour, stories, and food, people open their homes to Pow-wow attendees from afar. Rebecca, a woman I interviewed at the Eskasoni Pow-wow who is from Eel River Bar in Northern New Brunswick, said that she never reserves a hotel or motel room to stay at when she travels to a Pow-wow because she knows she will be offered a place to stay by a community member. During the Eskasoni Pow-wow, I inadvertently offended one woman who told me I could stay with her when I said that I had already paid for a room at a local bed and breakfast. I acknowledge that sharing can be "rose tinted" and it is not exclusively Mi'kmaq. Other Indigenous communities share and care for one another too. It can also contradict the exclusive nature of some of the communities I have discussed. However, it is a significant part of an Indigenous wellbeing. Had Mi'kmaq communities and groups not shared with each other, they ran the risk of perishing in the harsh Maritime climate. Sharing was

fundamental to survival. The threads that tie peoplehood together are steeped in need to care for another. Millbrook is still the most difficult reserve to transfer to and Millbrook and Membertou's business practices go against the sharing dimension I suggested; however, implying that every community requires a complete execution of sharing in every capacity would be just as unrealistic as Holm et al.'s understanding of the perfectly balanced peoplehood matrix. Although that does not mean that exclusive communities do not care for their community members. Millbrook's gaming revenue is set aside and then equally distributed amongst community member throughout the year to ease financial burdens.

6.1 LIMITS OF MY STUDY:FUTURE RESEARCH REQUIRED

The Mi'kmaq Nation consists of tens of thousands of members. I only interviewed 17 people. Two of the people I interviewed were Ojibwa and Cree. Therefore, out of a Nova Scotian Mi'kmaq population of approximately 24,000 (Statistics Canada, 2006) I only interviewed 15 Mi'kmaq people. Additionally, I only conducted research in Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaq occupy all of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, and parts of Maine. Those in New Brunswick and Maine share territory with other Indigenous groups, such as the Maliseet and Penobscot. The context of their social interactions is different than those in Nova Scotia—an issue which I have not addressed in this work. Furthermore, my research questions are complicated and would require a career's worth of work to answer. While writing the draft of this work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission completed their Atlantic Canada

National Event. Additionally, in past two years, the Unima'ki College in Cape Breton established itself and several research programs funded by the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program (AAEDIRP) have emerged. The Aboriginal Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APC) also actively engages with the Indigenous communities of the Atlantic region. These programs and initiatives are educating and training Indigenous peoples with Mi'kmaq wellbeing in mind. For example, I had to submit my works through the Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch to ensure that my research would not harm or exploit Mi'kmaq people and communities. I am Mi'kmaq, yet I am still held to a certain standard to protect and “do right by” my people. All of these are significant to the future of the Mi'kmaq people, but they could not be included in this short work.

The Indigenous population of Canada is young. Many Indigenous youth are attending university. With a boost in education, they have a chance to alter the future of Canada's First Nations population. This is a crucial time for First Nations people. More research will be needed in order track the changes that educated aboriginal youth will bring to the table in respect to Indigenous freedom. Every youth I interviewed had some form of post-secondary education, with several already having achieved a bachelor's degree. As it stands now, there are significant boundaries that are interrupting social ties within the Mi'kmaq population and which interfere with potentials for freedom. These boundaries are affecting the environment where multiple expressions of Mi'kmaq peoplehood attempt to coexist. Furthermore, an emphasis on capitalist economic growth has hindered communities by placing them in direct competition with one another. However, in addition to my 17 interviews, my casual conversations with many more

respondents lend hope to a healing nation. Bella and Barbie both brought up youth sports tournaments, in addition to Pow-wow, as current examples of positive socialization. These sporting events not only provide a place where youth can spend their time in a healthy environment, but they are often coupled with culturally significant happenings.

Every Mi'kmaq community is different. As it stands now, communities are forced into financial competition with one another. Some communities are still heartbreakingly poor while others are financially wealthy. In a capitalist society, it is difficult to escape the influence of monetary might. Language is coveted by those who no longer speak it and is a source of great pride by those who still do. When I first started along this path, I was desperate to discover where I fit into the world of Indigenous peoples. What I found was a thriving and complicated realm of family, friends, and foes. In spite of Pow-wow and other events that bring communities together, there are those who simply do not get along. Joseph and Judy explained there are families that have been feuding for years. However, if the community as a whole were threatened, those feuds would be set aside or at least paused,

Judy: But if anyone interferes, you turn around and defend your husband. You fight but you still love each other. That's how it is on the reserve. People fight but they still love each other. They would do anything to help you.

I was overwhelmed by those who wanted to share their stories with me. I was touched when my interviewees explained that they were telling me things they had not told any other researcher because I was one of them and I would understand. Many of the boundaries that I have discussed are there in order to protect communities. Indigenous communities have been researched and exploited to the point where they have erected

symbolic boundaries out of necessity in order to preserve what little privacy and agency they have left. Some participants were extremely hesitant to sign a consent form. They asked me if they were “signing their life away.” One woman gave explicit oral consent to be interviewed but refused to sign anything, while another woman said the only reason she agreed to be interviewed was because I was “one of them” and would not take advantage of her. The current political system and governing policies, such as the Indian Act, do not promote trust and friendship in the Indigenous-settler relationship. Once I established trust with my fellow Mi’kmaq, they were more than willing to share. The Mi’kmaq people are renegotiating their peoplehood by taking charge of their education, the Unama’ki college and AADIRP, being only two of the many examples.

Peoplehood is not a singular understanding, but rather, it is fluid and dynamic. It is affected by relationships that are locally diverse experiences. . . And by doing so they are challenging boundaries that have developed as a result of ongoing coloniality. Communities that have lost aspects of their peoplehood are reasserting themselves in ceremonial spaces full of political potential. More importantly, they are inviting other communities to take part. Head dancers and lead drum groups are often from other reserves and I have never been to a Pow-wow that was for “members only.”

Pow-wows “lower the bar”, as Mike explained, for Aboriginal communities. That does not mean that they are lowering the expectations of what Mi’kmaq culture should be, because there is no right answer for that. Instead they are accepting multiple expressions of peoplehood. In closing, I do not want to tout Pow-wow as a “cure all” for everything that ails Mi’kmaq communities, but do think it is a giant step in the right

direction. Pow-wow provides a space where Mi'kmaq people can interact, socialize, pray, dance, consume, challenge presumed identities, establish and express their own sense of peoplehood. All of which challenges the political powers that be while suspending, at least temporarily, boundaries that hinder communication between groups.

Lauretta speaks of Mi'kmaq pride. Something that is strong during Pow-wow, according to her. Roger, Bella, and Barbie believe hope rests in the hands of the younger generation. Judy and Joseph say family will always come first, ahead of any conflict. Nathiel and his brother travel across the country and return to Mi'kma'ki every summer for the Pow-wows. Bert and Jamie are not Mi'kmaq yet they feel welcomed in our territory. Mike says that Pow-wow is a "living example" where tension can be mended. Sharon explains that her project in Mi'kmawey Debert wants to promote healing among the Mi'kmaq. Rebecca says the "red path" will heal communities and finally, Glenn believes there is something "hidden" within our culture that will help mend tensions.

I would like to end this thesis on this note: My name is Swiftfox and I am a Micmac Indian from Lennox Island reserve. I am a Mi'kmaq woman who grew up in Moncton, New Brunswick. I do not speak my language. I have white ancestry. I am teased by my friends from reserve. I am all of these things. I am L'nuu. I am proud.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alfred, T. & Cornthassel, J. (2005). "Being Indigenous: Resurgence against Contemporary Colonialism" *Government and Opposition*. Vol. 40 (4). 597-614.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Asch, M. (2005). "Levi-Strauss and the Political: The Elementary structures of Kinship and the Resolution of Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Settler States." *Royal Anthropological Institute, N.S.* (11). Pp 425-444.
- Augustine, S. (n.d.). *A Mi'kmaq Creation Story*. Retrieved February 27, 2012 from <http://www.nlmikmaq.com/english/PDF/Creation%20Story.pdf>
- Bedford, D. (1994). "Marxism and the Aboriginal Question: The Tragedy of Progress." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 14 (1). Pp 101-117.
- Biolsi, T. (1995). "The Birth of the Reservation: Making the Modern Individual among the Lakota." *American Ethnologist*, 22 (1), Pp 28-53.
- Bramadat, P. A. (2004). "Mirror and mortar: Ethno-cultural festivals and urban life in Canada". *Our diverse cities* (1). Pp 87-91.
- Browner, T. (2004). *The Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Powwow*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Brownlie, R. (2006). 'A better citizen than lots of white men': First Nations enfranchisement – an Ontario Case Study, 1918-1940. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 87. Pp 29-52.
- Campbell, T. (1996), "Co-management of Aboriginal Resources", *Information North* 22 (1). Pp 1-9.
- CBC. (2010, April 6). *Aboriginal urbanites* [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2010/03/31/urban-aboriginal-peoples-hope-city.html>.
- CBC. (2010, April 6). Hope in the city: most urban aboriginal people opt to stay in city. *CBC News*. Retrieved April 6, 2010 from <http://www.cbc.ca>.
- CBC. (2011, November 2011). Shacks and slop pails: infrastructure crisis on native reserves. *CBC*. Retrieved from www.cbc.ca
- Chavis, B., Holm, T. & Pearson, D. (2003). "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies". *Wicazo Sa Review*, 18(1). Pp. 7-24.
- Chute, J. & Speck, F. (1999) "Frank G. Speck's Contributions to the Understanding of Mi'kmaq Land Use, Leadership, and Land Management." *Ethnohistory*, 46 (3) pp. 481-540 Published by: Duke University Press.

- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood.
- Comeau, P. & Santin, A. (1995). *Canada's First Peoples: A Profile of Canada's Native Peoples Today*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Ltd., Publishers.
- Cornthassel, J. (2003). Who is Indigenous? 'Peoplehood' and Ethnonationalist Approaches to Rearticulating Indigenous Identity. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9 (1). Pp 75-100.
- Croucher, S. (2006). "The Politics and Perils of Peoplehood". *International Studies Review*, 8 (1), pp. 77-89.
- Davis, A., Prosper, K., Wagner, J. & Paulette, M. J. (2004). The Paq'tnkek Mi'kmaq and the Ka't (American Eel): A Case Study of Cultural Relations, meanings, and Prospects: *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*. 24 (2). Pp 357-388.
- Dore, M. & Kulshreshtha, S. (2003). The Labour Market and Rural-Urban Differences Among First Nations: The Case of Saskatchewan. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*. 32 (2). Pp 147-159.
- Eigenbrod, R. & Hulan, R. (2008). *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory Practice Ethics*, Fernwood Publishing: Halifax & Winnipeg.
- Emerson R.M., Fretz R.I. & Shaw L.L. (1995) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL.
- Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. Retrieved from http://uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/UAPS-Main-Report_Dec.pdf
- Flanagan, T. (2008), *First Nations? Second Thoughts*. (2nd ed.). McGill-Queens University Press.
- Fortes, M. (1987). "On the Concept of the Person among the Tallensi." Reprinted in his *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on Tallensi Religion*, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, M. (2003) *Society Must Be Defended*. Picador: New York.
- Friesen, J. (2010, April 6). Canada's urban aboriginals feel politically unrepresented, poll finds. *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved April 7th, 2010 from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com>
- Furniss, E. (2000). *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the frontier myth in a rural Canadian community*. UBC Press: Vancouver.
- Gelo, D. (1999). Powwow Patter: Indian Emcee Discourse on Power and Identity. *The Journal of America Folklore*. 112 (443). Pp 40-57.

- Gionet, L. (2009). First Nations people: Selected findings of the 2006 Census. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2009001/article/10864-eng.htm>
- Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond "culture": space, identity and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1), 6-23.
- Helin, C. (2006). *Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success through Self-Reliance*. Vancouver: Orca Spirit Publishing & Communications, Inc.
- Hiller, H. (Ed.). (2009). *Urban Canada*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobbs, D., Wright, R. (2006). *The Saga Handbook of Fieldwork*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Holmes Whitehead, R. (1991). *The old man told us: excerpts from Micmac history, 1500-1950*. Nimbus Publishing: Toronto.
- Howard, H. (2003). "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975." *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3/4). Pp 566-582.
- Iwama, M.; Marshall, M.; Marshall & A. Bartlett, C. (2009). "Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-Based Research". *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 32 (2), pp 3-23.
- Lawrence, B. (2003). "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview". *Hypatia*, 18 (2). Pp 3–31.
- Lawrence, B. (2004). *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native People and Indigenous Nationhood*. University of Nebraska Press and UBC Press.
- Lehmann, A. & Myers, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: An Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*. London Toronto: Mayfield Publishing.
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- MacTavish, Marceau, Optis, Shaw, Stephenson, & Wild, P. (2011). A participatory process for the design of housing for a First Nations Community. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. 26 (1). Pp 1-18.
- Mi'kmaq Health Research Group. (2007). *The Health of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Population*. Retrieved from http://aahrp.socialwork.dal.ca/files/Report_RHS%5B1%5D.pdf.
- Moses, D. (2010). Time, indigeneity, and peoplehood: the postcolony in Australia. *Postcolonial Studies*. 13(1). Pp 9-32.

- Napoleon, V. (2001). "Extinction by Number: Colonialism Made Easy." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*. 6 (1). Pp 113-145.
- Norris, M. (1998). "Canada's Aboriginal language." *Canadian Social Trends*. 51(unknown). Pp 8-16.
- Noble, B. (2009). Tripped up by Coloniality: Anthropologists as Agent/Tools of Indigenous Autonomy? *American Anthropological Association Meetings. November 2009*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: American Anthropological Association.
- Poliandri, S. (2011). *First Nations, identity, and reserve life: The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Prins, H. (1996), *The Mi'kmaq Resistance, Accommodation, and Cultural Survival: Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology*. Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Prout, S. (2011). Urban Myths: Exploring the Unsettling Nature of Aboriginal Presence in and through a Regional Australian Town. *Urban Policy and Research*. 29 (3). Pp 275-291.
- Sanchez, V. (2001). Intertribal Dance and Cross Cultural Communication: Traditional Powwows in Ohio. *Communication Studies*. 52 (1). Pp 51-69.
- Sandberg, D. (2004, July). *Hefty personal price writing about Aboriginal Politics: Given the consequences, would you speak up?* Retrieved from: <http://www.fcpp.org/publication.php/779>
- Speck, F. (1915). The Family Hunting Band as the Basis of Algonkian Social Organization. *American Anthropologist*. 17 (2). Pp 289-305.
- Stanley, G. (1950). The first Indian reserves in Canada. *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*. 4 (2). Pp178-210.
- Statistics Canada (2001) *Aboriginal peoples of Canada*. Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/canada.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2006). *Aboriginal Population Profile*. Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=12&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=nova%20scotia&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>
- Stratton, B. & Washburn, F. (2008). The Peoplehood Matrix: A new theory for American Indian Literature. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 24(2), 51-72.

- The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. (2007). *Kekina'muek - Learning About the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia*. Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq: Millbrook, Nova Scotia.
- Thom, B. Hul'quim'num Treaty Group. (2009). "The Paradox of Boundaries in Coast Salish Territories." *Cultural Geographies*. 16, 179–205.
- Thomas, R., K. (1986, December). *Position Paper for the 1986 Tavertet Spain Colloquium on Cultural Resistance*. Retrieved from http://works.bepress.com/robert_thomas/12.
- Timpson, A. M. (Ed.). (2009). *First Nations, First Thoughts*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Valaskakis, G. G. (Ed.). (2005). *Indian Country: essays on contemporary native culture*. Wilfred Laurier Univ. Press: Waterloo Ontario.
- Waite, G. (2008). Urban Festivals: Geographies of Hype, Helplessness and Hope. *Geography Compass*, 2(2), 513-537.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wuttunee, W. (2004). *Living Rhythms: Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience and Vision*. McGill-Queen's University Press.