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THROUGH ANISHINAABE LANGUAGE**

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AMY CHRISTINE MCCOY

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M.S. degree in RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT



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MINOBIMAADIZIWIN:
PERCEIVING THE GOOD LIFE THROUGH *ANISHINAABE* LANGUAGE

By

Amy Christine McCoy

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Resource Development

2007

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ABSTRACT

MINOBIMAADIZIWIN: PERCEIVING THE GOOD LIFE THROUGH *ANISHINAABE* LANGUAGE

By

Amy Christine McCoy

The Indigenous experience of colonization in the Americas presents a significant loss of cultural information. This study seeks to contribute to the decolonization of *Anishinaabeg* people in an overall effort toward healing. Following the advice of the Seven Fires Prophecies, this research is a manifestation of a youth seeking out the knowledge of *Anishinaabeg* Elders in order to find the path which leads to the Eighth and final fire. The path sought is known in prophecy to lead to *minobimaadiziwin*, the *Anishinaabeg* concept of the good life. This study explores *minobimaadiziwin* as it is perceived by six respected speakers of the *Anishinaabe* language. This research employed a qualitative approach and engaged *Anishinaabe* methodologies. In-depth interviews were used to better understand the fluid process of *minobimaadiziwin*. *Minobimaadiziwin* is a living process. Its compartmentalization is beyond the capacity of any research endeavor.

Six major themes emerged that contribute to the body of written knowledge calling attention to the inherent validity of *Anishinaabeg* ways of knowing regardless of any hierarchy of knowledge systems: *Minobimaadiziwin* as Relational, Natural Law, *Anishinaabemowin* (the *Anishinaabe* language), the *Anishinaabe* Educative Process of *Minobimaadiziwin*, Gifts and Helpers, and Change.

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AMY CHRISTINE McCOY
2007

**Dedicated to ninijjaanisag, my children,
Quinn Phoenix, Onnika Faith, and Geezhik Michael McCoy**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am especially grateful to the *Anishinaabeg* participants whose words helped me to stretch, grow, and ultimately transform through the many lessons they provided in talking about *minobimaadiziwin*.

I wish to thank my Committee Chair, Frank Fear, for the unconditional support and guidance he provided for an unconventional thesis based upon *Anishinaabeg* ways of knowing. There are a number of professors who would not have had the ‘overstanding’ to appreciate a study built upon an Indigenous epistemological foundation – especially one which calls attention to the discomforts of colonial effects upon Indigenous peoples.

Gichi miigwech to my parents, who gave the greater portion of their lives to shape me into what I am today; and *nishiimenh*, my sister, who is so intricately connected to my innermost being that even our babes could have been born to the other. *Miigwech aapiji* to Christine Egger, whose unyielding support taught me the true nature of friendship.

My gratitude for the relationship I have with the spirit cannot be overstated. Blessed be that my sacred romance with *Gizhe Manidoo*, *Gichi Manidoo*, the kind spirit, the great spirit, brought me through this study. *Miigwech*, thank you, for my *asemaa*, tobacco, and the ability to use it. *Miigwech* for the *Gete Anishinaabeg*, the old ones from my true home of Sugar Island at *Baawaatig*, the place of the rapids. *Miigwech* also to my Irish ancestors, I have yet to know. Without their collectively ferocious strength pulsing through my veins, I would not have the courage to manifest my dreams.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

What is a good life? This is a fundamental question that transcends groups of people across the globe. Within American culture it seems there is a narrow definition of what comprises a good life. This narrow definition is a product of a consumer society that assumes a homogenized culture: Americans are bombarded with images of a good life associated with wealth and possessions.

However, American society is comprised of a multitude of cultures, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including the many people who helped shape America. There are over 500 sovereign nations within the United States. These nations offer numerous ways of conceiving of the good life. The purpose of this study is to explore one of those ways, namely, the concept of the good life in *Anishinaabeg* culture, which is my culture. With that in mind, I undertake this study in a dual role: as a scholar and as a person dedicated to the culture. In *Anishinaabemowin* (the *Anishinaabe* language) the good life is *minobimaadiziwin*. Exploring the definitions of *minobimaadiziwin* to the *Anishinaabeg* helps us to understand one way of conceiving what it means to live the good life. As Rémi Savard suggests:

The genuine American dimension, to which present day Indigenous peoples urge us towards, is neither English, neither French, neither Indian, nor Inuit; it is found in the Indigenous notion of the Great Circle, in accordance with which the absolute respect of the specificity of each link becomes the indispensable condition in maintaining the whole. We no longer have any choice; it is of this America that we must seriously reflect upon in order to finally disembark. (Savard in Rheault, 1999¹)

¹ Page numbers are not available for this online resource. See the Bibliography for the URL address.

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The Anishinaabeg People

Gichigamig Anishinaabeg (The People of the Great Lakes) consist of the *Ojibwe*, *Odawa*, and the *Boodewatomi*. These three nations also comprise the people of the “Three Fires Confederacy.” All are of the Algonquian language family. According to *Anishinaabeg* history, we are Indigenous to this continent. *Anishinaabeg* people came to the Great Lakes thousands of years ago in a great migration from the Atlantic seaboard of what is now the United States. Previous to the migration, seven prophecies came to the people who were of the Algonquin language-base, people who lived up and down the east coast of North America. Each of the prophecies was called a “fire,” and each fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. The first prophet told the people to move or be destroyed. The people were also instructed to stop when they reach the place where food grows upon the water. This food came to be known as wild rice.

Many of the people followed, embarking on the great migration that would last approximately 500 years. The sacred fire was kept lit for the entire migration. The seven major stops along the great migration were a turtle shaped island, Niagara Falls, the Detroit River, Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron, Sault Ste. Marie, Spirit Island in Duluth, and Madeline Island in the Apostle Islands of Lake Superior. The *Anishinaabeg* people divided into the *Ojibwe*, some of whom settled in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan; and the *Odawa* and *Boodewatomi*, who settled in Northern and Lower Michigan. This was the

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time prophesized as the third fire. The third fire prophecy told the people that “in the third fire the *Anishinaabe* will find the path to their chosen ground, a land in the west to which they must move their families. This will be the land where food grows on water” (Benton-Banai, 1988: 89).

Other *Ojibwe* moved on to settle all over what is now Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, Canada; Minnesota; Wisconsin; and North Dakota. As prophesized, the *Anishinaabeg* settled on land “where food grows on water.” These People of the Three Fires expressed their relationship with one another in family terms with the *Ojibwe* as the eldest brother, the *Odawa* next oldest, and the *Boodewatomi* the youngest in the family (Cornell and Henry, 2004). The *Boodewatomi* are the “keepers of the fire;” the *Odawa* are the “warriors;” and the *Ojibwe* are the “faith keepers” or the keepers of the sacred scrolls and the Water drum of the three fires in *Midewiwin* Medicine Society. The fourth fire was prophesied by two prophets who came as one and told of a time when a light skinned race would come to live with them.

You will know the future of our people by the face the light skinned race wears. If they come wearing the face of brotherhood then there will come a time of wonderful change for generations to come. They will bring new knowledge and articles that can be joined with the knowledge of this country. In this way, two nations will join to make a mighty nation. This new nation will be joined by two more so that four will join for the mightiest nation of all. You will know the face of brotherhood if the light skinned race comes carrying no weapons; if they come bearing only their knowledge and a handshake. (Benton-Banai, 1988: 90)

The other prophet said:

Beware if the light skinned race comes wearing the face of death. You must be careful because the face of brotherhood and the face of death look very much alike. If they come carrying a weapon... beware. If they come in suffering... they could fool you. Their hearts may be filled with greed for the riches of this land. If they are indeed your brothers, let them prove it.

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Do not accept them in total trust. You shall know that the face they wear is one of death if the rivers run with poison and the fish become unfit to eat. You shall know them by these many things. (Benton-Banai, 1988: 90)

The fifth fire was to be a time of great struggle. It was said that there would be a promise of a new way: if the people accepted it as such and abandoned their old ways, then the struggle of the fifth fire would be with the people for many generations, “the promise that comes to be a false promise. All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people” (Benton-Banai, 1988: 90). The prophet of the Sixth Fire said:

In the time of the Sixth Fire it will be evident that the promise of the First Fire came in a false way. Those deceived by this promise will take their children away from the teachings of the Elders. Grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the Elders. In this way, the Elders will lose their reason for living...they will lose their purpose in life. At this time a new sickness will come among the people. The balance of many people will be disturbed.... The cup of life will almost become the cup of grief. (Benton-Banai, 1988: 90)

The Seventh Fire prophesized of the emergence of a new people: the *Oshki Anishinaabeg*.

They will trace their steps to find what was left behind on the trail. Their steps will take them to the Elders who they will ask to guide them on their journey. But many of the Elders will have fallen asleep. They will awaken to this new time with nothing to offer. Some of the Elders will be silent because no one will ask anything of them. The “new people” will have to be careful in how they approach the Elders. The task of the “new people” will not be easy. If the “new people” will be strong in their quest, the Water Drum of the *Midewiwin* lodge will again sound its voice. There will be a rebirth of the *Anishinaabe* Nation and a rekindling of old flames. The Sacred Fire will again be lit. It is this time that the light skinned race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final fire, an eternal fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the light skinned race makes the wrong choice of the roads, then the destruction which they brought

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Problem Statement

We are the people of the Seventh Fire. Prophecy asserts the necessity for a "New People" or "*Oshki Anishinaabeg*" to emerge and seek the wisdom of the Elders. As *Anishinaabekwe* – an *Anishinaabe* woman – I have a responsibility to my children to attain the knowledge of my Elders so that they might live it themselves. As is prophesized, many of the Elders have been "asleep," affected by processes of acculturation through colonization, including extensive political and other attempts by the United States Government to extinguish Native American identities. Also within prophecy is the time to make a choice between two roads: one which leads to the lighting of the Eighth Fire – a time of peace and brotherhood – or the other road which leads to death and destruction. The choice of the Seventh Fire is of how to live. It is imperative to seek the knowledge of the Elders in order to understand which road leads to the good life and away from the path of destruction. The centrality of *minobimaadiziwin* to *Anishinaabeg* culture is clear. It is referenced in the literature; has a place in the stories of oral tradition; and is a cultural value.

The centrality of *minobimaadiziwin* is manifest by its intergenerational continuity. However, *minobimaadiziwin* is not static: it is a dynamic process, not an "it" to be understood mechanistically and practiced through routine. *Minobimaadiziwin* is much richer than that. Understanding *minobimaadiziwin* requires spiritual practice, thought,

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Conceptual Framework

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reflection, interpretation, and re-interpretation. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to inquire about *minobimaadiziwin* and what it means in personal and contemporary terms. To do that, it is necessary to speak with respected members of the *Anishinaabeg* community, asking them about:

- What traditional and contemporary images do they have of “the good life?”
- What similarities and differences are there in these images?
- How does *minobimaadiziwin* in today’s terms compare with interpretations from the past?

Conceptual Frame of Reference

Within the heart of *Anishinaabeg* epistemology resides *Anishinaabeg Bimaadiziwin*, *minobimaadiziwin*. Literally translated in the *Ojibwe* language, *minobimaadiziwin* is the good life. Although *Anishinaabeg* culture is alive and thriving, the process of colonization and living as Nations within a Nation has had a definite effect on the perpetual transformation of the community and its culture. Institutional structures such as education, government, and health systems have changed the community and its culture by means of acculturation through Western paradigms. Nonetheless, tribal values have persisted.

Minobimaadiziwin is a process of transformation. Within this process, familial relationships of respect, humility, truth, bravery, wisdom, love, and honesty – also known

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as the Seven Grandfather Teachings – are developed, renewed, and reciprocated.² Signs found in tribal schools and offices re-affirm that those teachings are essential to *minobimaadiziwin*. Stories maintained through oral tradition tell of the process of *minobimaadiziwin*. The process involves relationships throughout the whole of creation with the definition of life extending beyond the organism. Things considered inanimate objects by outsiders are “members” of the *Anishinaabeg* family, including a rock as a grandfather, the sky as a father, the sun as a brother, the moon as a grandmother, and Earth as a mother. The water, clouds, plants, animals, birds, and fish are “all our relations.” Spirit is inseparable from the whole of creation.

Within this process of *minobimaadiziwin*, each member of the circle of life exists with inherent integrity of spirit and unique intelligence within each tribe’s traditions. Every step of the transformation has inherent meaning within a broader perspective of relationship to spiritual energy. The process that is *minobimaadiziwin* is also said to involve adhesion to “right” moments for various actions, based upon suggestions from a smell, feeling, emotion, or dream that might indicate whether or not to proceed (Cajete, 1999).

The process is also said to involve reciprocity. Giving is an essential component. It also involves communicating with the Creator, the Thunders, and the many spirit helpers on this side and the next. It involves gifts passed through the generations, such as the sacred pipe, which along with *asemaa* (tobacco) is a medium of communication with

² The Seven Grandfather teachings are labeled under different names in different communities. They are fluid and involve more than one English label can provide. The individual teachings themselves are more than the English translation implies. Utilizing the English language to speak about them is limiting due to the loss of meaning in translation. For purposes of consistency, the term “Seven Grandfather teachings” is

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From this conceptual framework, three categories emerge and present us with the following key questions:

- What are the various definitions and meanings of *minobimaadiziwin*?
- What does the practice of living and/or expressing *minobimaadiziwin* involve?
- What relationships are involved in *minobimaadiziwin*?

The Research Design

As *Minobimaadiziwin* is central to the heart of *Anishinaabeg* epistemology, it is essential that we ask the people what it means to them. In this study I identified *Anishinaabeg* participants on the “Pow Wow Trail,” which spans the entire United States and Canada. Pow wows are a contemporary Native American social gathering: they are times to dance, sing, visit, renew old friendships, and form new ones. Pow wows are also occasions to renew the old ways and preserve a rich heritage (Powwows.com).

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People from all corners of *Anishinaabeg* country follow the Pow Wow Trail, and dancing at pow wows has been a central component of contemporary *Anishinaabeg* culture. The atmosphere of pow wows is joyous. In the center of the arena is the heartbeat of the *Anishinaabeg*, the drum. Being an intimate part of the community, my family was seated with a drum group or with other dancers. Immediately surrounding the drums is the dance arena, and encircling the dance arena is a place for spectators. The outermost circle of the pow wow is comprised of “traders” who sell their crafts and other items.

Each pow wow, which spans two to three days in length, was scheduled on the weekends. I drew from the Elders – for they hold the largest knowledge base and are more likely to be fluent in *Anishinaabe* language – and other respected members of the *Anishinaabeg* community. These leaders were found in the stands watching the pow wow dancers. They were dancers themselves, as well as traders selling their crafts to the public and encircling the dance arena.

Because this study will focus on *Anishinaabeg* people, I attended only those pow wows in central *Anishinaabeg* country, that is, in Michigan, Wisconsin, Ontario, and Minnesota. Indigenous people across the North American continent participate in these pow wows; however, only those who self-identify as *Anishinaabeg* were interviewed. The total number of possible pow wows was approximately 18 in the Great Lakes Area during the period of June 1, 2004, to September 20, 2004. I conducted various web searches to obtain pow wow schedule information from numerous websites to create this approximation.

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For practical reasons I attended a sub-set of pow wows, eight in number. Being the sole researcher for this study and funding it myself, the criterion for pow wow selection was based upon the resources available to me for travel expenses and other practical measures. The constraints of my place as a participant of the pow wows limited the time I was able to use for interviewing. As a result, I conducted six interviews. Participants were identified by those attending pow wows; however, in most cases, arrangements were made to conduct the interview at a later time when there were fewer distractions. The emergent nature of this study presented me with scenarios that did not provide the opportunity to conduct an interview. For instance, there were many cases during which an appropriate participant was not available at the pow wow.

I also participated in other *Anishinaabe* community events because there were highly respected members of the *Anishinaabeg* community in attendance that did not attend the same pow wows as me. Including people from more traditional *Anishinaabeg* activities, as opposed to the contemporary pow wow, added value to this study. There were a large number of *Anishinaabeg* people present who are respected members of the community that embrace traditional values and speak *Anishinaabemowin*. The same methods applied for selection of subjects as with the pow wows. I offered *asemaa* to a respected member of the community and ask for nominations of participants.

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The Research Approach

This study is based upon the conscious awareness of the researcher of the need for *Anishinaabeg* people to utilize our own epistemologies as we study our own communities. The study also embraced a naturalistic approach to research. This approach involves carrying out research in a natural setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A pow wow is a natural setting of an *Anishinaabeg* gathering. Qualitative methods were used in this study because they are sensitive to diverse influences and value patterns encountered, all of which are consistent with *Anishinaabeg* epistemologies.

The guiding theory emerged from the data because no *a priori* theory can encompass the multiple realities that were encountered. Grounded theory is more likely to be responsive to contextual influences. *A priori* theory is likely to be based on *a priori* generalizations that are inconsistent with the naturalistic approach of this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This is consistent with *Anishinaabeg* teachings, which hold that the road is a perpetual journey of education. In our humanness, we cannot see what we have yet to experience without the education of the experience itself. Toward that end, Lincoln and Guba reveal that the naturalistic approach involves the legitimization of tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge and propositional knowledge because

...often the nuances of the multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way; because much of the interaction between investigator and respondent or object occurs at this level; and because tacit knowledge mirrors more fairly and accurately the value patterns of the investigator. (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 40)

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This researcher does not believe in grouping Indigenous theories under the umbrella of contemporary Western paradigms. If at all, it is the latter which falls under the umbrella of the former due to the comparative age of contemporary Western and Indigenous paradigms. This study is founded methodologically upon *Anishinaabeg* ways of knowing, and coming to know.

Selecting the Research Subjects

It became apparent to me while participating in each pow wow which Elder would partake in the study. It was also apparent when there was not an appropriate individual available. I requested nominations by offering *asemaa* to gatekeepers, knowledgeable informants, and/or experts in the *Anishinaabeg* community at each pow wow. Neither the number of interviews nor the number of interviewees was known before the research was conducted because it was inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time. As Lincoln and Guba contend, this is

[B]ecause what emerges as a function of the interaction between inquirer and phenomenon is largely unpredictable in advance; because the inquirer cannot know sufficiently well the patterns of mutual shaping that are likely to exist; and because the various value systems involved (including the inquirer's own) interact in unpredictable ways to influence the outcome. (1985: 41)

I presented informed consent orally and requested signatures from the individual community members to be interviewed. It is important to note, however, that native peoples are sensitive to signing documents due to a long history of contractual betrayal. It

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was uncomfortable for me, knowing that requiring Elders to sign informed consent forms may cause discomfort – a feeling that is at odds with the welcoming atmosphere of the pow wow. The fact that I used *Anishinaabeg* methods of offering *asemaa* to each participant established respect in the relationship and served to counteract some of the discomfort of being asked to sign informed consent. The entire study was directed by use of *asemaa* and, as thus, guided by the Spirit. I also explained to each participant in *Anishinaabeg* terms that my study is being conducted “in a good way;” they understood that to mean the *Anishinaabeg* way.

My script explained who I was; what the study was about, and what I will do with the results. I emphasized that their participation was entirely voluntary. Five out of the six interviewees said that it was acceptable to identify them by name. The sixth respondent wished to remain anonymous. It is important to note that a study holds credibility in the *Anishinaabeg* community if participants are identified by name. If community members are unable to place a name of a respected community member with the findings of the study, they question the study’s authenticity. This is due, in part, to the rise of “new age” cultures that have adopted many Native ways and meshed them into what some call “Indian soup.” My approach follows the *Anishinaabeg* tradition that when one has a question he or she is to bring *asemaa* (tobacco) to an Elder or leader in the community to assist with the answer. I approached the interviewees with *asemaa* and respectfully requested their participation.

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The Interview Questions and Approach

The interview questions were constructed based on my personal experience, which includes observations, as well as my reflecting on the topic of the good life. I framed my inquiry into these categories:

1. **Definitions and meaning of *minobimaadiziwin*:** This is the foundation of our understanding what *minobimaadiziwin* means to these contemporary *Anishinaabeg* people in the *Anishinaabe* language.
 - What does *minobimaadiziwin* mean to you? Is there a word for the bad life? Does it mean that life is inherently good? Does its meaning imply that there is but one way to live for life to be good? What does being “good” mean?
 - Are there words in the language for faith? Hope?
 - In the language, is there room for the existence of spirit to be questioned, or are they understood to be given aspects of reality?
 - What is the difference between *gwayak ji bimoseyang*, to walk a straight life, and *minobimaadiziwin*?
2. **The practice of living and/or expressing *minobimaadiziwin*:** *Minobimaadiziwin* is a process of transformation and involves living actions. Therefore, we must address the practice that is *minobimaadiziwin*.
 - What does living *Anishinaabeg minobimaadiziwin* involve? How do you live it? What do you personally do that reflects your commitment to living the good life? What role does ceremony play in living *minobimaadiziwin*? Art?

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Dance? Symbolic meaning of each member of creation within each tribe's traditions? What role do dreams play in *minobimaadiziwin*? Traditionally? Now? For you personally? What role does spirituality have in living the good life? And what do we mean when we say spirit? How does it require the Seven Grandfather Teachings? How does it require using your *asemaa* (tobacco)? *Powaagan* (pipe)?

- What role does the pipe play in *minobimaadiziwin*? What role do you remember it playing when you were a child?
- What meaning is inherent in *minobimaadiziwin* as it pertains to transformation within a broader perspective of relationship to spiritual energy?
- Does living *minobimaadiziwin* involve human existence as related to and interdependent with plants, animals, rocks, clouds, water? Has this changed over time?

3. **Relationships:** *Anishinaabeg* culture is framed by relationships of creation.

Therefore, it is essential that we explore these relationships as they pertain to *minobimaadiziwin*.

- In English, we talk about the land as natural resources, using the context of the land's place on the economic scale. Using *Anishinaabemowin*, how do you speak about the land? What do the meanings of the words you use for trees, lakes, rivers, water, forest and the like say about what the land means to the *Anishinaabe* mind?
- How do the words for tree, water etc convey that they have a spirit?

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- What can you say about *Anishinaabeg* connection to place? Is/was it a component of *minobimaadiziwin*? How?
- Can you remember any of your Elders not acknowledging *Gizhe Manidoo*?

In addition to the above three categories, the concept of change was explored throughout the categories of inquiry because *minobimaadiziwin* is transcendent over time. Due to the nature of this study – in particular, the nature of the respondents – it did not make sense to conduct structured interviews. Each person was asked the questions that they needed to answer based on who he or she was.

It was less preferred for the interview to be administered uniformly because I was more interested in getting at the gestalt of the good life than I was in getting answers to questions that may not need to be asked. The interviews were lead by the respondent. Rather than interrupt them continually with questions, I listened to what the Elders had to say and trusted the process to provide all that needed to be said. Each respondent covered all prepared questions with or without their specific asking.

Pow wows are organized by committees. At each pow wow, the Master of Ceremony (MC) runs the events. The MC works with the Arena Director and committee members to keep the pow wow organized and running smoothly. Talking with the MC, Arena Director, other pow wow committee members, or respected community members provided me with the gist of who the respondent was and what knowledge he or she may provide.

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Recording the Interview Data

I was the only person who conducted interviews. I used an audio tape to record each interview because many Elders are comfortable with this technique; it has become a common practice to record Elders talking about traditional ways. Each interview was taped in its entirety so as not to lose precious knowledge, such as answers given in the *Anishinaabe* language. I transcribed the whole of each interview. I was the only one with access to the tapes and they were kept safe in a box in my home.

Validating the Results

To ensure validation of my research, I shared my preliminary findings with all interviewees and gave them the opportunity of providing feedback. These “member checks” helped to ensure that what I report in this study was verified by those same people (Erlandson et al, 1993: 31). To further assure validity, I bracketed myself by journaling my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual reactions to the research experience. Transferability across contexts occurred because of shared characteristics, but my naturalistic approach did not include the view of applicability in terms of generalizability (Erlandson et al, 1993).

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Analyzing the Data

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985), data analysis began with the very first interview. Proceeding in that matter facilitated the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases. I also used my *asemaa* preceding each time set aside to work on any portion of analysis. Data were interpreted ideographically in terms of the particulars of the case, rather than nomothetically in terms of law (like generalizations) because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities. Furthermore, interpretations depended heavily on local particulars, including the interviewer and interviewee interaction; the contextual factors involved; the local mutually shaping factors influencing one another and the values of all parties (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I did not make broad application of the findings because realities are multiple and different. The findings are also dependent on the interaction between the Elders and me. I included myself as a participant in the findings.

Significance of this Research

This study adds to the knowledge base associated with Indigenous ways of knowing. More specifically it contributes to the preservation of cultural knowledge of *Anishinaabeg* people. Using *Anishinaabeg* ways of knowing to conduct the study serves to emphasize

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the cultural persistence and maintenance of the *Anishinaabeg*. The form of the study itself is a way of perpetuating *Anishinaabeg* values because my seeking knowledge from Elders and other leaders in the community is a manifestation of “the *Anishinaabeg* way.”

I will make my study useful to the *Anishinaabeg* community by offering future workshops and/or discussion panels on the findings. The findings of this study may also be utilized by community members for their own purposes, educational and otherwise.

This study is also a manifestation of the Seven Fires Prophecies. I am *Anishinaabekwe*, seeking the wisdom of my Elders, as is prophesized as necessary for the Seventh Fire’s generation in order for a rebirth of the *Anishinaabeg* Nation and a rekindling of old flames.

Organization of this Study

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review. Various studies, books, and other media are explored regarding their reference to *minobimaadiziwin* and the *Anishinaabeg* people and culture. Chapter 3 consists of a detailed account of the actions and decisions made to collect and analyze the study data. Respondents’ voices are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study design and findings, as well as my reflections about the study process and experience. Study conclusions and recommendations are presented at the end of the chapter. The Epilogue is comprised of a group discussion regarding practical application of research findings. My interpretive interludes can be referenced in Appendix A.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The search for the good life is a journey shared by all of human kind and spans the written and oral histories of existence. From oral traditions in the beginning, through the times of Western Classical philosophers, and through the dominant and marginalized cultural epistemologies of modern times, we have all sought in some way to live various renditions of a good life.

This chapter serves to review the literature pertaining to various cultural definitions of the good life. It explores the literature pertaining to the experience of Indigenous cultures and their common experience with colonization as it has affected their respective abilities to live out the “good life.” It is the author’s contention that the experience of *Anishinaabeg* people with colonialism is shared by Indigenous communities across the globe. The literature presents the context within which this research fits. The problem the research serves to address by design is a direct result of cultural loss through oppressive forces of dominant culture. Presentation of the non-Indigenous interpretations of the “good life” provides relevant worldview of dominant societal definition. Definitions of the good life provide a window into the baseline assumptions about reality that have influenced dominant society and as a result, *Anishinaabeg* society through acculturation. Specifically, the problem *Anishinaabeg* people face in this time of the Seventh Fire is a direct result of colonization and

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acculturation from dominant worldview. A review of the literature pertaining to the good life according to both the colonized and the colonizer situates the context of the study and presents the reader with in-depth understanding of the significance to finding the answers to the questions for research.

Non-Indigenous Interpretations of the Good Life

Young's Interpretation

There exists a large body of literature regarding the Western ideals of the good life. For example, in *Negotiating the Good Life: Aristotle and the Civil Society*, Mark A. Young (2005) explores the struggle to find the good life by looking to the normative foundation provided by Aristotle of 4th Century BC. Young asserts that the present dilemma of America – and the larger context of the global civil society – is how to find a morally defensible balance between *individual freedom* and the *common good* that does justice to the legitimate needs of both enterprises. He explains in his analysis of the US that people here have prospered individually, but have also lost the physical and psychological connections that bind the country as a community and nation. He writes:

Interestingly, the trend away from community seems to be the most pronounced among the best-educated portion of the population. It also seems to be driven mostly by generational change, as older, more community-oriented citizens are gradually replaced by younger fellows with a far less social outlook and level of commitment to others. (Young, 1995: 3)

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We have, in short, become a nation of spectators; financial capital increasingly replaces social capital, and money is expected to do the work that personal engagement used to accomplish. We may still care for others in principle, but often do not take time for one another or even a personal interest in our neighbors. A sense of social responsibility is assuaged by “writing a check to faraway lobbying organizations in Washington that stand for interests with which we identify in the abstract. In the particular, locally, we remain very much alone” (Young, 1995: 3).

Young cites Robert Putnam’s research, work that makes the distinction between “bridging” and “bonding” social capital. Young believes that nearly all the positive developments recorded over the last 25 years in the U.S. are a result of bonding social capital, namely, associations of like-minded people. However, “as we increasingly associate with the like-minded, we fail to be challenged by the diverse” (Young, 1995: 4).

This tension between tolerance and liberty, on the one hand, and solidarity and community, on the other, is central to any philosophical debate about the good life in society. Young asks, “Where is the proper balance and what is the optimal mix between individual liberty and a larger common good?” (Young, 1995: 4). He writes that it seems clear we have lost faith in one another.

Young explains that many contemporary kinds of connections in America and abroad are, in their essence, purposive and ultimately self centered:

I join them in order to meet my own very specific needs, not necessarily due to any particular commitment I feel to another person, place or ideal. In such associations, communications tend to be narrow in focus and

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mutually reinforcing, one-shot and not necessarily lasting. There are communities of limited liability, formed at arm's length and ready to be dissolved at arm-lengths when their benefits to the individual begin to be outstripped by the costs and discomforts of true community commitment. (Young, 1995: 6)

Young also notes that it is not necessarily the case that the “good old days” of intact social capital of 1950s America are the ideal to aspire toward: the social capital of America’s past referred to with nostalgia is one of bonding rather than bridging. It does seem apparent that the unprecedented progress, technology, and the community-enhancing social trends of the late 20th Century notwithstanding, the principle problem of political modernity remains: we are suffering from an acute loss of commitment to one another. The “public sphere” of Jurgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt is shrinking steadily, he contends, and we are each retreating to our own private search for happiness. Our fellow citizens interest us only in so far as they can be used as a means to the end of personal fulfillment. He believes that the forces of globalization, mobility and urban sprawl have taken their toll: families are dissolving and younger self-absorbed generations are replacing older, more communal ones. We have less and less time for each other, and increasingly depend on the government to look after those with whom we do not choose to have personal contact. The underclass must fend for itself, while “the rest of us retreat to the citadel of the individual search for happiness” (Young, 1995: 6).

Young calls attention to the foundational philosophy of Aristotle regarding the definition of the good life. He explains that Aristotle’s definition seems antiquated in terms of purposive structure and meaning of the universe and the required rejection of his views on slavery and roles of women in a “well-ordered” society. He asserts that Aristotle

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has much to teach us about happiness and the neo-Aristotelian template of helping lives improve can provide as good a normative foundation as any he knows.

It is important to note, however, that the foundational philosophy of Aristotle is foundationally specific to the line of epistemologies which evolved from his root. Young expresses that in order to address a definition of the good life we must first determine what is meant by “good”:

Are we looking for a prescription for proper or right living in the normative sense? Or are we rather seeking to understand just how man is most likely to be happy, and to enjoy the “good life” (in the sense of fine wine and cigars) as he judiciously pursues all the pleasures and riches that life has to offer? (Young, 1995: 16)

Young asserts that there is a dual question involved in seeking the good life. The first involves the current domain of virtue ethics, in which many have proposed competing criteria for governing the search for proper direction and guidance of “the good man.” Second, the question involves the question of what is “good for man.” Specifically, the “good for man” involves focus upon the goal of happiness.

How is man, given his unique nature as a rational being, to most profitably spend his days on Earth? What is it that makes us truly happy, and how can we structure all the different aspects of our lives so as to maximize that sense of well-being? Young explains that in many schools of philosophical thought these two questions regarding the “good man” and the “good for man” are seen to be in tension with each other. He asks:

If my highest aim is to seek only to further my own well-being, what is to prevent me from doing that at the expense of my neighbor (assuming I can safely get away with that)? Surely ethical imperatives must act as constraints on my pursuit of happiness. Kant’s Categorical Imperative will prevent us from acting on our natural inclinations, for instance, and the Christian Divine Law will rule many of life’s pleasures out of bounds. All

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Young asserts that it is Aristotle who attempts to resolve the apparent tension between the two questions argued to form the meaning of the good life. He writes that, for Aristotle, the question of the good *of* man and the good *for* man are inseparable matters. He argues that happiness is found primarily in “the proper exercise of man’s natural facility for practical and theoretical reason guided by the question of the Right as well as the Good” (Young, 1995: 17). Young cites Aristotle in saying that “happiness is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue” (Young, 1995: 17). Further, happiness and a good life are governed by the ethical and non-ethical virtues which have “objective normative force” and derive that force from the very happiness they impart:

In the end, we only live well (eu zen) by doing good (eu prattein). Happiness, or the good life, is nothing more than the naturally emergent byproduct of consciously living a life in pursuit of excellence and in accordance with both what is rational and what is virtuous. There is no further law beyond that of man’s nature, nothing that we must artificially impose from outside in order to prevent us from doing as we like. If we only reflect and train ourselves to consistently behave in accordance with the results of that reflection, we will learn to be good and thus, necessarily, also to be happy. (Young, 1995: 17)

Western Classical philosophical roots take shape with Aristotle, Plato and others; the evolution of *civil* society as defined classically regarding the good life. And while Aristotle and Plato may have set the stage for the evolution of *civility* to run the course of Western thought, there are infinite current realities of Western means of living the good life. For Aristotle, the key for the good life is the ultimate goal of happiness. Also, a good constitution of the soul is a prerequisite for “eudaimonia,” simply because human beings

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Aristotle's philosophies do not support modern theories of (subjective) utility or egoistic gain. Aristotle's concern is the general flourishing of man in the context of a balanced life in which the individual fully lives up to her naturally endowed potential. Young explains that to Aristotle, happiness is not about pleasure; yet pleasure is a byproduct of the good life. Further, that happiness is not about feeling at all and is not pursued for the sake of good sensations. "Rather, it is about the substance of a life, and is constituted by the objective facts about what is lived, regardless of the ways in which those facts are perceived and experienced by the individual" (Young, 1995: 18). He argues that happiness is not about the fulfillment of desire. Instead, Aristotle believes that there is a right way to be happy, an objective reality, which must be discovered by the individual agent. For Aristotle, getting what we want is not the primary criterion because we can so often want the wrong things:

Desire, or preference, is a notoriously unreliable guide to good living, and must always be reviewed and tempered by the conclusions of practical reason. In order to be properly satisfied with the results of our lives, we need to become aware of all the alternatives we could have had. If we do not know we could do better, we could settle for less than we could.
(Young, 1995: 18)

Young makes it clear that this is not to say that happiness is a universal concept, "a platonic form waiting to be discovered and participated in" (Young, 1995:18). He explains that Aristotle acknowledges that there are many different ways in which the objective concept of happiness can be interpreted and actualized in an individual life. He writes that as we strive to find the right end of our actions, we have much freedom to

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specify that end in ways that are unique to our individual circumstances. Young reveals that the universal finds a wide variety of valid expressions in the particular. Young speaks further of the inclusion of economic wealth as an important component in the good life, albeit one of which “we often have little control” and notes that it is but one dimension of truly good living. Furthermore, he writes that a happy human being involves living well economically, physically, mentally, and spiritually: “A good constitution of the soul is a prerequisite for eudaimonia; it is valuable as a constitutive part of that eudaimonia, simply because human beings are made that way, and must be true to their natures” (Young, 1995: 18).

Russell’s Interpretation

In *Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life*, Daniel C. Russell (2005) explores the centrality of pleasure in the good life, and draws from the works of Plato. Russell explores the nature of pleasure and what kind of place it should have in a good life. He makes the distinction between pleasure as a *sensation* and pleasure as an *emotion*. He writes that pleasure is an important part of how we live and it helps us to accomplish things well. Further, the ways a person experiences pleasure can tell others much about that individual. Pleasure changes for people as the people change themselves. Russell writes that pleasure is likely to be a part of any good life, at least in so far as living a good life will involve having deep commitments and values. He explores dialogue between

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Socrates and other classic philosophers on the nature of virtue as it pertains to pleasure and the good life:

Socrates claims that some pleasures are more real and genuine than others, and that only the philosopher experiences these real pleasures. For while most so-called pleasures are merely a matter of escaping from pain, the philosopher scales the true heights of pleasure, by satisfying the greatest part of the soul with the understanding of reality. Moreover, when the whole soul accepts the leadership of reason – as it does in the virtuous person – each of the parts of the soul enjoys its own greatest pleasures. (Russell, 2005: 110)

Attention is also given to the question of reason vs. pleasure in the good life. He explains Plato's classification of reason as the cause of everything.

Since it causes limit to come about in 'unlimited' things, making them into good, orderly products. He arrives at this verdict about reason by arguing, first, that the orderliness of the universe must be due to reason, which is king over heaven and earth; and second that the human soul is dependent on the soul of the universe, the universe's soul must be responsible for the wisdom of humans; so the soul of the universe must be wise, and this wisdom of the universe's soul manifests itself in the ordering of years, seasons, and months. (Russell, 2005: 146)

Rubin's Interpretation

In *The Good Life: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Love, Ethics, Creativity and Spirituality*, Jeffrey B. Rubin (2004) explores the good life as its dimensions may enrich the discipline of psychoanalysis. Exploring the good life from the perspective of love, ethics, creativity, spirituality, and the life well-lived, as well as the obstacles to experiencing them, helps us live with greater meaning and vitality. Rubin points to the centrality of the human search for the good life across the ages:

The quest to live a good life has a venerable history. The central concern for Lao Tzu, Buddha, Socrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, Jesus, the Prophets, Montaigne, Thoreau, Nietzsche, Marx, and Schweitzer, among others –

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those individuals Fromm calls “masters of living” – was how humans should live. Two ways of thinking about this broad and important topic dominate contemporary thinking: a secular, materialistic ideal and a spiritual one. (Rubin, 2004: 87)

He speaks to the images conjured with the mention of a good life in contemporary times including *having it all*, namely,

the unlimited freedom to purchase and accumulate; the ability to obtain ceaseless pleasure, luxury and ease; and the power to shape one’s life and segregate oneself from noxious external impingements, including any unwanted obligations and constraints. (Rubin, 2004: 87)

Rubin explains further that the media exalt this kind of life via film, television, books, magazines, and newspapers. He speaks of the large percentage of people in dominant mainstream society that prescribe to this ideal and judge themselves by the standards that lie therein. Rubin explains the prevailing counter-ideal of a spiritual perspective on the good life being several formulas with “compatible common features such as the attempt to discover and embody our essential, authentic self, the idealization of selflessness, and the belief in an uncontaminated realm that it is humanly possible to experience permanently beyond ego” (Rubin, 2004: 88).

Rubin also points to the contemporary reality of dominant mainstream American culture in that there are numerous “misguided substitutes” for the good life:

Egocentricity, hedonism, popular psychospiritual quick fixes, and self-anesthetizing and addictive behavior serve for too many people in Western culture as misguided substitutes for the good life. These bleached out versions of a life well-lived leave us spiritually hungry and cast adrift without any guiding direction for action and desperate for solutions to address the malaise and alienation that plague us. (Rubin, 2004: ix)

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virtue in Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. He writes that the good life for psychoanalytic existentialists, such as Fromm, involves authenticity and self-realization, creativity and concern, compassion, and interpersonal intimacy. He also points to Kohut who stressed the role of empathy and attunement to the other:

We are always and inevitably connected to others. The Good Life, according to Kohut, involves relationships that are empathetic, mutually respectful, affirming, and enriching. He also emphasized living with greater self-coherence, wisdom, humor, and awareness of transience. (Rubin, 2004: 98)

Rubin defines a good life in terms of psychoanalysis, adding that it involves adapting to the changing conditions we confront rather than working toward a concrete and preconceived endpoint. To Rubin, it involves self-multidimensionality, integrating and balancing complementary qualities (such as honesty and compassion, rationality, and ecstasy) rather than cultivating particular virtues. He adds that this also involves the need to live creatively and to strive to be free even as one must continually confront how one is determined.

Tuan's Interpretation

In *The Good Life*, Yi-Fu Tuan (2003) speaks to the multiplicity of ways of knowing about the good life via differing cultural lenses. He writes that how it is perceived varies from culture to culture and in complex modern societies, it varies further from individual to individual. Tuan writes that in Western life *good* is conceived of in a number of ways, including environmentalism, which sees the good life as a consequence of the physical setting. He writes that another example is the humanized version of nature, "pleasure

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gardens.” This way of thinking calls attention to the way a physical setting, say, environments of houses, streets, or city squares, can in some sense generate a sense of the good life. A second way of perceiving the good life according to Tuan is to focus on the activity rather than on the physical environment. A third way is to envisage it through the lens of philosophy. It is in this realm that questions have been raised by Western thinkers since classical antiquity regarding human nature:

What is it that distinguishes human beings from other animals? If human happiness requires the full development of human faculties, what social arrangements best promote such an outcome? What is the relationship between the good life and the virtuous life?” (Tuan, 2003: 5)

Tuan writes that questions raised by classical Western thinkers are rarely concerned with the personal rewards of specific occupations, and they neglect the role of the physical place in promoting either individual happiness or the efficient operation of the economy.

Tuan explains that Utopian thinkers offer a fourth way to envision the good life. They perceive a strong discontent with society as it exists in their time and wish to conceive of institutions that will improve social harmony. They pay attention to the physical environment and envision hygienic and beautiful houses, streets, and squares that also encourage human communication. As for nature, “Utopia is willed into existence by visionaries, not a natural Eden” (Tuan, 2003: 5).

Tuan winds two major themes throughout the book. First, direct experience is too limited for the good life to be confined to. Much that is good about a life may be inaccessible to the casual observer because the joys of glimpsing truth and successful

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communication pass invisibly from mind to mind, as during deep conversation, in the quiet of the library, or in a lecture hall. The second theme is the idea that the good life implies choice and a habit of reflection. He writes that modern society encourages both. The “choice” he refers to means the ability to explore a range of experiences, most of which are indirect. He writes that the idea of progress presents people with more opportunity to live in different places and follow different careers than was possible at any time in the past:

Even if this point is still moot, we must yet grant that a mind – our mind – can now dwell in more places and empathize with more lives than could readily occur in any other historical period. Those moments of the past that have been rescued from oblivion are now ours to assimilate and enjoy.
(Tuan, 2003: 11)

Bridging to Indigenous Interpretations

Writers of Western discourse, such as Leopold, Thoreau, and Emerson, have called attention to the rest of the natural world to be included in our thoughts on how we *should* live. The calling could be considered an expression of Western thought on the place the rest of nature has in the good life. However, the literature presents an indirect definition of nature’s role in the human good life. This is also seen in the literature termed the *ecological approach* – distinct from Indigenous word views in reference to ecology.

A great amount of current literature regarding the good life expresses what it is not, as well as describing the dominating cultural practices that prevent its experience from manifesting. I have yet to find adequate documentation of the current practice of the

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good life. Much of the literature speaks to ancient practices and current dilemmas with hope for a future evolution of human behavior. It brings to mind the trend of focusing more on the past and abstract future than the present.

The fact that the majority of available literature on the good life expresses a Western epistemology is representative of the dominant stance the culture has experienced over the last few centuries. Literature on the good life as perceived via Indigenous epistemologies worldwide can be seen scattered throughout the growing body of literature that pertains to decolonizing Indigenous peoples. This body of written knowledge implicitly states that colonization of various Indigenous peoples prevents them from living well in terms of their own definitions. In other words, oppression of the colonizing culture prevents many Indigenous people from living the good life by their own definitions. Much of the literature speaks to how the reality of colonization has hurt Indigenous communities. It speaks to decolonization as the way to heal the people. I see this as an implicit statement of what the good life is for these Indigenous communities in that the literature states what the good life is not. The good life is not the life of the colonized. Furthermore, the indirect notion is that the good life lies in a more widespread resurgence of traditional cultural epistemologies and ontologies.

Hart's Interpretation

In *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping*, Michael Anthony Hart (2004) explores the *Anishinaabe* good life as it pertains to the field of social work,

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and how utilizing *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing can heal *Anishinaabeg* people. Hart discusses the colonialistic impediments to *Anishinaabe* well being. He argues that cultural oppression via colonialism has a detrimental effect on the lives of Aboriginal people on all levels – nation, community, family, and individual. His reference to the oppression of Aboriginal systems of economics, spirituality, recreational institutions, social networks, education, medicinal practices, and land relationships have lead to their desecration, degradation, and destruction. Hart alludes to Aboriginal lifeways as the good life by arguing that Aboriginal peoples' healing can only come from their traditional institutions.

Peacock and Wisuri's Interpretation

The Good Path: Ojibwe Learning and Activity Book for Kids by Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri (2002) explores the good life as viewed through nine traditional *Anishinaabe* values. They argue that the *Ojibwe* story, which combines history with cultural stories, introduces the reader to the *Ojibwe* "good path".

In their book *Ojibwe Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions*, Peacock and Wisuri (2001) explore the land-based culture of *Anishinaabeg* people based upon the stories of *Anishinaabeg* people themselves. The book calls *Anishinaabeg* people to *jimisawaabandaaming*, which Earl Otchingwanigan (formerly Nyholm) describes as the "process of sort of positive window shopping for your future" (LaDuke in Peacock and Wisuri, 2001: 10). In her forward, Winona LaDuke writes that the book is about recovering our *Anishinaabe* knowledge and, in so doing, recovering ourselves. She

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explains that the process of “recivilizing” and making *Anishinaabeg* people conform to the dominant society through boarding schools, television consumerism, and the colonialism of the bodies of our relatives – through land thefts, removals, and loss of biological diversity – has fragmented our psyches, our essence. She writes that *Anishinaabeg* people are in the process of remembering. Further, that only through ceremony, language, feasting, dancing, and listening, will we recover ourselves. She explains that the retelling of these stories nurtures that process. LaDuke also speaks to the global experience of Indigenous peoples. She writes:

Native peoples, not unlike Indigenous species on a worldwide scale, have been isolated to islands of land within a sea of the industrial dream. Often that which is left to us and our relatives renders our cultural and biological community virtual paupers, compromised in our ability to live full and vibrant lives. (LaDuke in Peacock and Wisuri, 2001: 10-11)

This speaks to the experience colonialism has on Indigenous peoples worldwide: prevention of Indigenous experience of the “good life” from their respective definitions due to the definitions imposed by colonial mindsets of dominant cultures.

LaDuke also speaks to the commonalities between the teachings of Western science and that of Native communities, specifically, the agreement about the state of the environment. She explains that the challenge is not uniquely *Anishinaabeg*.

It is to transform human laws to match natural laws, not vice versa. In order to do that, we must close the circle. The linear nature of industrial production itself, in which labor and technology turn natural wealth into consumer products and waste must be transformed to a cyclical system. (LaDuke in Peacock and Wisuri, 2001: 11)

Furthermore, many Indigenous teachings recognize this as a time of change. She speaks to the *Anishinaabeg* teaching of this time being that of the Seventh Fire. She refers

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to *Anishinaabeg* prophecy, which tells us there are two separate paths for *Anishinaabeg* and the “light skinned race” to choose between: the road to technology and the road to spirituality. In this regard, she quotes Edward Benton-Banai, Grand Chief of the Three Fires *Anishinaabeg Midewiwin* Society:

[The Elders] feel that the road of technology represents a continuation of head-long rush to technological development. This is the road... that has lead to a modern society, to a damaged and seared earth. The other road represents a slower path that Traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again. The earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there. (LaDuke in Peacock and Wisuri, 2001: 11)

Benton-Banai refers to the traditional ways of *Anishinaabeg* people as the ways in which we can carry the future into a *green* path. Implicitly stated, this is *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, the good life.

Thematically, *Ojibwe Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions* speaks to the language, lifeways, ways of knowing, and the values and gifts involved in *Ojibwe* past, present, and future. The authors present various angles from which to view *Ojibwe* experience in the words of *Ojibwe* people themselves. They speak to the traditional values of *Ojibwe Anishinaabeg* people as evidenced through our own history. Peacock and Wisuri stress the importance of *Ojibwe* language as key to *Ojibwe* worldview and to the educative process that is the experience of trying to live in a good way. In this good way, members of Creation learn from one another the lessons of gentleness, courage, and keenness of vision. Lessons come from silence, from the wind, the lapping of water, and sound of birds regarding the depth and beauty of music.

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Toulouse's Interpretation

In her doctoral dissertation through the University of British Columbia, *Bimaadziwin (The Good Life): Sharing the Living Teachings of the People of Sagamok Anishnawbek, Implications for Education*, Pamela Rose Toulouse (2001) explores the *Anishinaabe* good life according to her own community, *Sagamok Anishnawbek*. Toulouse combines *Anishinaabe* orality with material documents and “other-than-human experiences” to explain “ourstory.” She explores *bimaadziwin* through an *Ojibwe* eye and relates the good life as being encompassed by traditional *Ojibwe* teachings, ways of knowing, cycles of life, ways of educating, and language. Toulouse contends that the good life involves the need for change and a return to our traditional values through decolonization. The study contributes to the body of knowledge intended to enrich *Anishinaabe* educative practices in an overall attempt to combat the daily effects of colonization.

Toulouse defines *Bimaadziwin* briefly as “goodlife” and “living teachings.” She expands with the words of Deputy Grand Chief of the Union of Ontario Indians, Nelson Toulouse:

Bimaadziwin, well I mean the obvious, the first thing is ah ‘my life’, and ah [pause] but it could, I mean ‘my life’ probably means a lot of things, ah and you um probably talk about a whole range of things, certainly would be about experiences, your, your beliefs, ah your health, um, you know all those life experiences that you have, how you identify yourself, you know how are you, why are you the way you are today. (Toulouse, 2001: 3)

Toulouse explains that the word “worldview” is symbiotic of *Bimaadziwin*.

Further, *Bimaadziwin* as worldview encapsulates the “simplicity, complexity and interconnectedness in relations that is often characteristic of *Ojibwe* people” (Toulouse,

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2001: 3). She explains that *Bimaadziwin* is a powerful word. It includes the “goodlife” we aspire to, the way we think, and the measurement of our behavior. Toulouse cites Peter Owl, a respected teacher of *Anishinaabeg* clans, in stating that *bimaadziwin* is carefully sharing with others your gifts and doing so respectfully from the truth of your spirit.

Further, that there are consequences if not shared properly:

The information that we give someone, it's got to be untainted, it's gotta be pure, it's gotta, you can't mix, you're not gonna mix it up because if you do, then you're gonna frustrate individuals, somewhere along there's frustration that's gonna set in, and people become disillusioned, because they've heard the truth, but because this, there was ah, the adulterated word may have been intermingled in with that eh, and it sort of causes a problem, it'll create doubt... the teachings within a community, within a nation have to be pure and they have to be sincere, very sincere, *bimaadziwin* is just a continuation of one's learning... we all become responsible to another or to somebody else, the more I know, the more responsible I become, the more you learn, the more responsible you become... it's life and it's sharing life. (Owl in Toulouse, 2001: 3-4)

Toulouse relates her research to the creation of “ourstory” as distinct from “history” and explains that its creation relays the *debwewin* (truth) of generations from time immemorial. “Ourstory” in her research is created by the knowledge and experiences of her ancestors as relayed by material representations, private narratives, and her presentation of archival documents combined with the testimony of community members.

Toulouse explains that *bimaadziwin* always had, and continues to have, a practical and living application. She calls attention to the concepts of life, sharing, values, worldview, experiences and learning as central to its meaning. She explains that a broader application of *bimaadziwin* involves the responsibility that members of the *Anishinaabe* culture have to one another and to the coming generations. Her research and creation of

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“ourstory” as *bimaadziwin* began to unfold the potential for practical application of curriculum change at her local on-reserve school. Toulouse created a study with practical application as a curriculum project with “*bimaadziwin* as praxis; theory (ideas, philosophy) that is manifested in practice” (Toulouse, 2001: 6).

Toulouse speaks to the importance of decolonizing our communities in an effort to heal *Anishinaabeg* people. She explains that the telling of stories by community members is important because they can convey the experience of being and existing as colonized subjects. Furthermore, telling of such stories is a healing step towards understanding how to decolonize ourselves and grasp what was lost. This also speaks to the central role traditional *Anishinaabe* teachings have in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

Rheault’s Interpretation

Anishinaabe Mino-bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy Concerning Knowledge, Identity, and Ethics by D’Arcy Rheault (1999) examines *Anishinaabe* philosophy based on traditional teachings. His research is informed by *Anishinaabe* epistemologies, including but not limited to dreams, fasting, use of *asemaa* (tobacco) and Elders as experts, and *Anishinaabe* oral tradition. Rheault’s method of inquiry used for his book is “Primary Experiential Knowledge.”

Primary Experiential Knowledge is set out as an epistemic system that finds its source in various aspects of knowledge. It is primary since it is the most basic form of knowledge upon which all other understanding is based; and it is experiential since knowledge comes out of one’s interaction with the world. It is a process-oriented philosophical method interested in the theoretical and practical meanings of the metaphysics,

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Thus, Rheault utilizes *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin* as a methodology with which to explore *Anishinaabe* philosophy. He recognizes his own perspective as a critical source of inquiry and means of knowing. The sensing of the “self” and his cultural intuition are what necessitate a different approach because, in *Anishinaabe* philosophy, this method is a fundamental way of knowing. It is a fundamental epistemology the absence of which, he argues, would render his study invalid. His method is about coming to objective truths through a subjective method of inquiry and analysis – a method explicitly characteristic of *Anishinaabe* culture. He explains the impossibility of separation of self from the world: “I am a spirit walking in this world.” His method is “a qualitative inquiry built on a blending of participant observation and participant participation” incorporating his thoughts, reflections, emotions, spirituality and actions in his personal learning. He explains that this is a system of interconnection; consequently, any discussion of theory and practice is artificial in its categorization.

Rheault presents the following example of the difficulty of categorizing interconnected ideas and concepts. He draws on the work of Paul Bourgeois (*Ojibwe*) in his examination of the drum as a source of knowledge and the role the drum plays in teaching:

Emphasis on the individual’s lived-ethical concerns in relation to the cosmos makes Odewegewin [the way of the drum] an “*Onto-axiological Anishinaabe Epistemology*,” that is, an Anishinaabe system of knowledge that is based on the existential imperatives expressed by the quality of Creation. Nevertheless, there is a difficulty in creating these conceptual

³ Page numbers are not available for this online resource. Please see the Bibliography for the URL address.

abstractions for various aspects of Anishinaabe worldview for the simple reason that terms like epistemology, philosophy and religion do not specifically exist in *Anishinaabemowin*, as we understand them in English. Yet, the concepts do exist, but not in isolation of each other due to the interconnected nature of the philosophical system. (Rheault, 1999)

Rheault explains the *Anishinaabeg* hold the idea that spirit precedes culture, language, and thought and even time as fundamental knowledge. He writes that when we refer to *minobimaadiziwin* it is understood that the spirit is the essence and the way of being. “I am a spirit having a human experience,” Rheault writes. He explains that it is “onto-axiological,” as Paul Bourgeois (*Ojibwe*) asserts. Furthermore, the term onto-axiology explains the quality of existence, i.e., the good:

The Way of a Good Life is more than a process or way to live. It is the underlying reality of existence that the term onto-axiology attempts to express. The *Anishinaabeg* are the Good Beings and they trace their ancestry back to the First Good Being, created from nothing and lowered down to Turtle Island. But it is also a construct that does not refer to anything. The spiritual perception asserted here only comes from a physical apprehension of reality. It is outside the scope of possibility, from a static physical perspective, for me to describe this dynamic spiritual way. (Rheault, 1999)

Rheault speaks to ways of educating central to *Anishinaabeg* philosophy and *minobimaadiziwin*, which include:

- *Bzindamowin* (way of learning from listening): Acquired Knowledge
- *Anishinaabe Kendaaswin*: Traditional Knowledge
- *Gnawaaminjigewin* (to witness): Knowledge from Observation
- *Manidoo-waabiwin* (seeing in a spirit way): Revealed Knowledge, Dreams
- *Naanaagede'enmowin* (visions)
- *Gidisi'ewin* (intuition)
- *Kiimiingona manda Kendaaswin* (instructions from Gzhe-mnidoo): Original Instructions
- *Eshkakimikwe-Kendaaswin*: Mother-Earth knowledge
- *Manidoo-minjimendamowin* (Spirit Memory): Spirit Identity

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Rheault further identifies the following stages of knowledge learning: Feeling, Watching and Listening, Reflection, Doing, and *Manidookewin* (Ceremony).

Grim's Interpretation

Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community, edited by John A. Grim (2001), presents the human and ecological costs experienced by Indigenous peoples via globalization. It also paints pictures of various ecological ethnicities and their respective forms of resistance. It presents the reader with various views of the pressures on Indigenous lands and traditions and the commodification of Indigenous lands by corporate and government powers. Grim presents an entry written by Winona LaDuke, *Anishinaabe* leader, in the book introduction as one which “foreshadows several of the problems raised by any study of Indigenous religious traditions and contemporary ecological concerns” (LaDuke in Grim, 2001: xxxiii). She writes:

The ethical code of my own *Anishinaabeg* community of the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota keeps communities and individuals in line with natural law. “*Minobimaatisiwin*” – it means both the ‘good life’ and ‘continuous rebirth’ – is central to our value system. In *minobimaatisiwin*, we honor women as the givers of lives; and we honor our *Chi Anishinaabeg*, our old people and ancestors who hold the knowledge. We honor our children as the continuity from generations, and we honor ourselves as a part of creation. Implicit in *minobimaatisiwin* is a continuous habitation of place, an intimate understanding of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem and of the need to maintain this balance. (LaDuke in Grim, 2001: xxxiii)

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gender, ecological knowledge of local place, and religious awareness of a relational balance the pervades the constantly changing world. As a coherent and central conversation, minobimaatisiwin does not emphasize rational development for humans exclusively. Nor does it posit a transcendental self that autonomously gathers objective sense data so as to know the world. Nor does it present a transcendent realm of the sacred beyond the circle of human-animal-earth habitations. At the heart of this statement, and, indeed, a primary agenda in this volume, is the effort to express the coherence of diverse Indigenous discourses about lifeways and ecologies. Each particular lifeway is an ongoing creative practice that is simultaneously rational, affective, intentional, and ethical. (Grim, 2001: xxxiv)

The volume presents various works that speak directly to the experiences of Indigenous peoples in resisting colonial pressure. For example, Javier Galicia Silva – a Nahua scholar – describes how Nahuatl agriculture has been a recurring example of resistance to colonial exploitive practices. He further explains how maize agriculture transmits a majority worldview despite oppressive forces.

Each of the works included in Grim's volume serves two functions, speaking to the experience of Indigenous nations under oppressive colonial forces and exemplifying experience with working to retain an Indigenous worldview. Implicit in each experience is a community's perception of the good life. Analyses include tribal peoples of India, Borneo, East Malaysia, Hawaii, Mayan peoples, Maori, West African tribes, Igorots, Papua New Guinea, Nahua of Mesoamerica, Warao, James Bay Cree, Swaraj, Australian Aborigines, Kumarak, Yup'ik Eskimo, Melanesian peoples, and Andean peoples.

Grim highlights the continuing experience Indigenous peoples have with resisting intrusive life-ways that seek to colonize and erase them. He writes that there is not one

definition of “Indigenous ecology.” Grim speaks to the environmental imaginaries among Indigenous religions that open contemporary dialogues between Indigenous traditions and contemporary intellectual currents. Many intellectual currents have been linked to Indigenous movements, including post-colonialism, post-structuralism, legal and literacy theories, gender studies, critical theories of science, environmental history, political economy, and political ecology. He explains further that:

It is crucial that these interpretive discourses not be simplistically used to make native epistemologies palatable for non-Indigenous readers. Indigenous peoples are not well served if a term such as ‘environmental imaginaries’ becomes a language-oriented re-inscription that writes over their authentically lived and experienced world. (Grim, 2001: xlii)

Grim’s point speaks to the Indigenous experience of being defined in terms of another cultural way of knowing. Consider this expression:

My Grandfather was a Quantum Physicist

I can see him now
smiling
in full dance costume
with other men
in front of the roundhouse
on a sunny afternoon.

Scientists have finally discovered
that the intimate details
of our lives
are influenced by things
beyond the stars
and beyond time.

My grandfather knew this

(Peacock, 2002: 111)

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Colomeda and Wenzel's Interpretation

In Medicine Keepers: Issues in Indigenous Health, Lori A. Colomeda and Eberhard R.

Wenzel (2000) speak to the state of Indigenous peoples today and the threat to survival of their respective worldviews. They write:

From the Sami in Scandinavia to Amazonian Tribes in South America to North American First Nations and Australian Aborigines, traditional lands and life-ways are being altered in the name of economic development by non-traditional enterprises such as logging, mining, dam building, and various other development projects (Young 1995). Families of Indigenous peoples are being disrupted, brought to settlement, and made to move from traditional homelands, from the ashes of their grandfathers, from their traditional hunting grounds, from their traditional fishing territories. The activities are carried out without consensual agreements of the Indigenous peoples and the projects are affecting social, mental, spiritual, and physical health (Indian Health Service 1997, Kelm 1998, Kuletz 1998, Sandefur et al. 1996, Waldram et al. 1995, Young 1994). (Colomeda and Wenzel, 2000: 243)

This is one among many works in current literature that implicitly express the struggle for Indigenous nations to live a good life according to their own definitions. Documentation of their experience with colonization is seen as having a detrimental effect on their overall well-being. Colomeda and Wenzel discuss the central tenet of many Indigenous peoples' worldview: that is, knowledge of the land dependent upon contracts with the "invisible" spirit world, "which plays its own crucial part in ensuring health, reproduction of society, culture, and the environment" (Colomeda and Wenzel, 2000: 244). They reference the difference between non-Indigenous environmentalists' conception of the relationship of human beings and "nature." To Indigenous peoples, knowledge of this relationship is both spiritual and conceptual, and human beings are not

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separated from what some non-Indigenous peoples view as the “natural world.” This conception of Indigenous relationships to the rest of creation speaks to their experience of a good life.

Colomeda and Wenzel explain that colonization of Indigenous peoples by Europeans has presented a cultural conflict in cultural values, beliefs, and practices – a “collision of cultures” that has carried through to present times. For Indigenous peoples, good health and implicitly good life includes practicing cultural ceremonies, speaking the language, applying the wisdom of their Elders, and learning what has been handed down from generation to generation (including songs, beliefs, healing practices, and values). The authors also speak to the problematic nature of utilizing the English language and Western conceptions of words such as “environment.” Specifically, that term does not convey the spectrum of meanings that the word “Earth” connotes in Indigenous cultures: “Environment” lacks emotion and spirit that Indigenous peoples so attribute to their earthly home. The land generously gives plants, animals, and a life that contributes to good health.

Colomeda and Wenzel present the concluding tenet that there is a need to understand that all of our life-ways are dependent upon the life-ways of our collective planet: “No one is independent, no one is superior, and no one has more rights than others” (Colomeda and Wenzel, 2000: 253).

There are numerous collections of the stories of our *Anishinaabeg* Elders in addition to collections of Elders of other Native nations. This is due to a collective movement of Indigenous communities to seek out the lifeways that are threatened with

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extinction. This study is another example of the works to collect the precious knowledge of the Elders and acknowledge that they are the true “wisdom keepers.”

Kegg and Nichols’ Interpretation

In *Portage Lake: Memories of an Ojibwe Childhood* (Kegg and Nichols, 1993), Maude Kegg recounts stories of her upbringing in her *Ojibwe* language with *Ojibwe* and English transcriptions provided by John D. Nichols. The book reveals the seasonal activities of *Ojibwe Anishinaabeg* people as it takes the reader through her memories as organized by nature’s progression. The great meaning lost in translation from *Ojibwe* to English cannot be overstated; exact translations do not exist. It is the *Ojibwe Anishinaabeg* worldview encapsulated by the *Ojibwe Anishinaabeg* language required for our complete understanding of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, the good life.

The English translations offer the reader a glimpse of Kegg’s experience of the *Anishinaabeg* good life at a time when her family confronted Euro-American settlers in the early decades of the 20th Century. Her stories encapsulate *Anishinaabeg* teachings via the experience of an *Ojibwe* child.

Bergstrom et al’s Interpretation

In *The Seventh Generation: Native Students Speak about Finding the Good Path*, Amy Bergstrom, Linda Miller Cleary, and Thomas D. Peacock (2003) present the experience of 120 American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nations youth from across North America

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with regard to finding the “good path.” Their research is in accordance with *Anishinaabe* prophecy of the time of the Seventh Fire, when the people face a choice between two roads. This is the time of the Seventh Fire, the authors contend, and they set out to speak with youth about finding that “good path,” including the road blocks present in North America today.

LaDuke’s Interpretation

In her book *Recovering the Sacred* (2005), Winona LaDuke asks: “How does a community heal itself from the ravages of the past?” She says that she found an answer in the multifaceted intergenerational process of recovering that which is “sacred.” LaDuke writes that religious colonialism is a wound from which native communities have not yet healed

The notion that non-Christian spiritual practices could have validity was entirely ignored or actively suppressed for centuries. So it was by necessity that Native spiritual practitioners went deep into the woods or into the heartland of their territory to keep up their traditions, always knowing that their job was to keep alive their teachers’ instructions, and hence, their way of life. (LaDuke, 2005: 12)

LaDuke says that Native spiritual practices are frequently based upon the reaffirmation of the relationship of humans to the Creation; and that many of our oral traditions express human beings as the “younger brother” to larger Creation. She writes:

Our gratitude for our part in Creation and for the first given to us by the Creator is continuously reinforced in *Midewiwin* lodges, Sundance ceremonies, world renewal ceremonies, and many others. Understanding the complexity of these belief systems is central to understanding the societies built on those spiritual foundations – the relationship of peoples to their sacred lands, to relatives with fins or hooves, to the plant and animal foods that anchor a way of life. (LaDuke, 2005: 12)

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Summary and Interpretation

Our ways are still here, our way of life. Here we are in the dying moments of the Twentieth Century, almost into the Twenty-First Century, and we say the reality that we live within is totally different from anything we have ever known. It is just a different environment, a different context. Not a very good one, not a very harmonious or balanced one, not a very healthy one, but this is the environment that we live in today. The lifeway that spoke to our people before, that gave our people life in all the generations before is, is still the way of life that will give us life today. How it will manifest itself and find expression in this new time, comes as a part of the responsibility of how we go about the revival and renewal. (Dumont in Peacock and Misuri, 2002: 10)

As evidenced in the literature, there are different cultural perspectives, definitions and perceptions expressed through respective languages with which to feel or experience the idea of the good life. Many of the Western theories on the good life in the United States remind the reader that the country experiences similar social ills as a whole with regard to seeking happiness as do *Anishinaabe* communities. It is not the intent of this study to explore the society whose dominance directly altered the ability of *Anishinaabe* people to live a good life via their own definitions. It is the author's contention, via an *Anishinaabe* epistemological lens, that the common problems with regard to seeking the good life, respectively defined, may sprout from a parallel root disconnection from original instruction from the Creator. Though there is a common human denominator of seeking the good life, there are foundational differences in worldview perception of what constitutes a good life. Global common denominators with Indigenous peoples are evidenced by the literature. Some of these include pressures experienced by Indigenous peoples worldwide due to corporate, governmental and/or colonial powers and the

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resultant struggle to live a good life according to their own Indigenous definitions rather than the definition held by those in power.

The literature presents the context within which the research is based. The search for the good life is common to the human experience. Definitions of the dominant culture hold common threads with that of Indigenous cultures. At the same time, dominant paradigms have served to stifle the ability of many Indigenous nations to seek the good life from their own definitions. Indigenous cultures share this experience on a global scale and find themselves in similar situations as societies in danger of cultural extinction. The literature situates the *Anishinaabeg* experience in a global context and further explains the critical need to seek out the definitions of the “good life” from the remaining Elders as experts.

The literature presents various components of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. Of major significance are the detriment of colonial impact on *minobimaadiziwin* and the now essential practice of seeking decolonization for communal healing. Also of significance is the incongruence of man-made and natural law as well as the need for the former to match the latter rather than the reverse. It is clear within *Anishinaabeg* literature on the good life that it is viewed within a cyclical system centralized upon traditional *Anishinaabeg* values, language, and educational process all encompassing the natural world. As Owl says with eloquence, the good life involves carefully sharing with others your gifts and doing so respectfully from the truth of your spirit (Owl in Toulouse, 2001). In so doing, *minobimaadiziwin* is about life, sharing life, and reciprocal relations – a construction of one’s learning with a practical and living application. The literature

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explains the responsibility involved in *minobimaadiziwin* that *Anishinaabeg* people have to one another and to the coming generations. It also speaks to the importance of decolonizing our communities in an effort to heal *Anishinaabeg* people. Literature on the *Anishinaabe* good life also demonstrates the importance of relationships with the rest of Creation in accordance with natural law to live out *minobimaadiziwin*. The literature also acknowledges cultural intuition as a fundamental way of knowing in *Anishinaabe* philosophy and *minobimaadiziwin*. *Anishinaabe* worldview involves spirit as a precedent to culture, language, thought, and even time in reference to *minobimaadiziwin*. The foundational understanding involves spirit as the essence and the way of being. The literature illustrates the significance of the *Anishinaabe* prophecies in this current time of the Seventh Fire. It highlights the current and significant choice between two roads – that of the spirit and that of industrial or technological “progress.” It also reveals the need for *Anishinaabeg* people to recover that which has been culturally lost due to the prophesized coming of the light-skinned race. As evidenced by the literature, *minobimaadiziwin* is central to the *Anishinaabe* value system, and an exploration via the remaining Elders as experts is crucial.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Anishinaabe prophecy holds that this time of the Seventh Fire involves the youth seeking knowledge of the Elders that remain cognizant to the teachings and traditions of our *Anishinaabeg* culture. As a young *Anishinaabekwe*, I seek the wisdom of my Elders on how to live *minobimaadiziwin*, that good life. Talking with *Anishinaabeg* Elders about *minobimaadiziwin* is part of the process toward creating “*Oshki Anishinaabeg*” or the new people that will choose the path of living that does not lead down the road to destruction. The choice between two roads is prophesized to lead us to the eighth and final fire.

Three categories emerge from the conceptual framework upon which this study is based and present us with the following key questions for research:

- What are the various definitions and meanings of *Minobimaadiziwin*?
- What does the practice of living and/or expressing *Minobimaadiziwin* involve?
- What relationships are involved in *Minobimaadiziwin*?

This study involves interviews with Elders fluent in *Anishinaabemowin*.

Respected members of each community were identified with the help of informants at pow wows and community events across *Anishinaabeg* country. Fluency in our *Anishinaabeg* language was preferred because of the difference in epistemologies

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between thought in English and thought in *Anishinaabemowin*. I offered prospective respondents *asemaa* (tobacco) to respectfully request their participation. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the data collection and analysis process. Issues and difficulties that arose from the process will also be explored. These issues involve the Catch-22 of selecting respondents in a setting such as a pow wow, difficulties in being directed toward female *Anishinaabeg* respondents, and the cultural mismatch between academic interviews and conversations with Elders – *Anishinaabe* style.

Data Collection

The data collection process spanned approximately ten months from June 2004 through March 2005. My children and I traveled the Pow Wow Trail to the fullest extent that my budget allowed. We attended pow wows in Michigan and Wisconsin. At each pow wow, I offered *asemaa* to the emcee or member of the pow wow committee, explaining my study and requesting direction to a respected member of the community that would be appropriate for an interview. With the direction provided, I followed up with *asemaa* to each individual community member to whom I was referred. Each interview took place in a different setting and under different circumstances due to the spontaneity of pow wow atmosphere. I had to be ready to complete the interview on demand and when the respondent had a slot of time in between dancing, visiting, and other pow wow activities. For the majority of the interviews, this meant relocating to their home or other place when the pow wow was not in session. *N'donis miinawaa N'gwiss* (my daughter and son)

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as my perpetual helpers on the Pow Wow Trail also added a priceless dimension to the process. Though their presence made focus harder to achieve, and also served to add an additional layer of background “music” to the interview tapes, and the fact that they are integral to my journey rendered their participation necessary. It was only natural for them to be a part of the process.

Despite the fact that my budget only allowed for travel within Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario, *Anishinaabe* people travel the Pow Wow Trail from the whole of *Anishinaabe* country, which includes Minnesota and Manitoba as well. For this reason, respondents were included from other geographic regions than those to which I traveled for this study. I attended eight pow wows, a language conference, and three other *Anishinaabe* community events. A total of six respondents agreed to participate and consisted of three *ininniwag* (men) and three *ikwewag* (women). The respondents were from *Wiwemikong*, Manitoulin Island, Ontario; Garden River, Ontario; Mille Lacs, Minnesota; Lac Du Flambeau, Wisconsin; Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan; and *Chimnissing* (Christian Island), Ontario. Only one interview actually took place on the pow wow grounds in a teaching lodge. Other interview locations included a language conference break out room, the homes of two respondents, a respondents’ office, and one interview was conducted over the phone.

Use of *Asemaa* (Tobacco)

The practice of offering *asemaa* in exchange for stories and ways of pursuing knowledge and truth has been central to *Anishinaabe* epistemology for millennia. Offering *asemaa*

reinforces the essential ethic of reciprocity in a cosmological understanding of interdependence, balance, and harmony. One does not take without giving back. This concept is central to the study and speaks to the relatedness of all of creation, as well as the fundamental ways of respecting interconnectedness and balance:

Stories reveal the cultural significance of tobacco as a spiritual and sacred entity that helps us to remember the importance of our reciprocal and interdependent relationship in the web of creation. (Michell, 1999: 1)

The ethic of reciprocity allows the researcher to conduct a study based on mutual respect and cultural sensitivity. The act of offering *asemaa* provides the reality of the respondents as equal and respected members of the research process. It is a recognized way of seeking approval from participants before conducting a study. Elders will only accept the tobacco if they feel they can help. There is no element of coercion involved (Michell, 1999).

This study involves the Indigenous method Jo-Ann Archibald of the University of British Columbia refers to as “storywork” (Archibald and Kirkness, 2001). Storywork involves engagement of the story, storyteller, and listener, which creates a synergy for making meaning through the story and making one *work* to obtain meaning and understanding. Regarding the nature of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing, consider these words from Archibald:

Khot-La-Cha often said, “Sit down and listen, that’s the thing our Ancestors used to say.” He learned to listen to his Elder relatives. For him this listening included showing respect to Elders, spending time with them on the land, and learning cultural values. (Archibald and Kirkness, 2001: 5)

Absolon and Willet offer Cole and Knowles' suggestion that "researchers (because they usually initiate such relationships) must do all they can to challenge the hierarchical principles and practices that traditionally define the relationship between researchers and those whom they research" (Absolon and Willet, 2004: 11). Absolon and Willet further contend these hierarchical principles must be completely rejected that when it comes to the study of Aboriginal cultural phenomena. In fact, this study involves the Elders as experts and the researcher as *Anishinaabekwezens*, young *Anishinaabe* woman. The researcher in this study is not in a position of power, rather a youth seeking the knowledge of her Elders. The relationship between the researcher and respondent can be further classified as one of a niece or granddaughter seeking knowledge from her auntie, uncle, grandmother, or grandfather. My introduction to the respondents as *Miskwaanakwadokwe* – from *Baawaating* or Sault Ste. Marie – and the way that I conducted each interview was such that the relationship was not the classical definition according to Western methodology. The relationship was one rooted in *Anishinaabeg* epistemology of "all our relations." All in creation are our relatives. Elder human beings are my aunties, uncles; rocks, thunders, sky, planets, and moons are our grandmothers and grandfathers; and plants, animals, fish, and birds are my brothers and sisters.

Qualitative researchers might consider themes of collaboration, community, and power differentials in relationships with informants, but an Indigenous methodology must go beyond this and connect the inquirer to an ancient sense of the journey for knowledge. (Marker, 2004: 106)

Humility is an important Aboriginal value (Marker, 2004). In this study, the *Anishinaabeg* value of *dabasendamowin* (humility) was embraced for each interview.

Traditional Western interview techniques were not employed. Times when I attempted to follow the interview schedule strictly felt wrong; and I let go and went with the flow provided by my Elder. I embraced *dabasendamowin*, asked loosely-scheduled questions, and let my Elder – the informant – guide where he/she would go with the storywork.

As a validation technique, I assembled a group to have a conversation about key themes that emerged from key quotes of each interview. This is a key *Anishinaabeg* methodology of community consultation. The interests of the community must be met in every endeavor. This is also what Maxwell refers to as “feedback” (Maxwell, 1996). I tried to include quotes that were representative of all the issues that came up in the interviews. I contacted Mindy Morgan, professor of anthropology at Michigan State University, and offered her *asemaa* to ask who I should include in the discussion. She suggested five individuals. Due to scheduling conflicts, only three were able to attend. I sent the participants nine pages, single spaced, of interview quotes a week in advance. We met over a big pot of chili that I cooked up that morning. Holding a “feast” for the event is consistent with *Anishinaabe* methodology. One of the participants was also an interview respondent. The group discussed themes they found and the respondent commented further on her personal view on each matter.

Elders say we know
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through direct experience
observation
face to face with the event
person
life force
we experience its Essence.
We learn what we need to know
what we each need to know

what we are open to
depending on our life path.

(Graveline, 2002: 16-17)

Data Analysis

This study engages in analysis using *Anishinaabe* methodologies, values and epistemologies to the fullest extent. This study is for the benefit of the *Anishinaabe* community and will indirectly benefit the human community as well. Research on Indigenous people, framed by non-Indigenous “paradigms,” has been useless to the Indigenous world because they speak through the lens of another worldview (Steinhauer, 2002).

The fact that much research does not confront ideologies of oppression prevents the application to research of critical knowledge regarding traditional culture, colonial history and racist structure. This results in research which does not use appropriate concepts as variables and defines ones culture using the cultural beliefs of another.” (Gilchrist, 1997: 76 in Absolon and Willet, 2004: 9)

Within my research, I have resolved to be explicit about the reasons behind my use of Indigenous methods. This is a part of the process of my own decolonization as well as contribution to the body of scholarly works which defines *Anishinaabe* culture using *Anishinaabe* beliefs. As Marker contends:

Although Indigenous modes of gaining knowledge can also be systematic, they usually involve connecting diverse points of reference that defy disciplinary or methodological boundaries and draw on an individual’s relationships to people, animals, the landscape, and an oral tradition framing a time-space arrangement. Dreams and meditative states can factor into knowledge acquisition. This is not to say that Indigenous research is not empirical, only that it is not narrowly empirical toward ends that are isolated from the concerns of the community: a community made real by the stories from ancestors who established a sustainable presence on the land. Commonplace approaches to research usually push the inquirer to go

relentlessly to get the information and bring it back to the academy where it is processed and made acceptable. This approach resembles an industrial model of resource extraction. An Indigenous approach is opposite to this, with the knowledge-seeker spending time in preparation and rituals that produce a state of humility, sensitivity, and openness. The knowledge in this method seeks the student rather than the other way around. (Marker, 2004: 105)

I did not just gain information from respondents; I shared through my experience with their storywork and how the experience of research fit into my lifelong relational journey of learning. In so doing, the following principles were taken into consideration throughout the research process:

1. The interconnectedness of all living things
2. The impact of motives and intentions on person and community
3. The foundation of research as lived Indigenous experience
4. The groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemology
5. The transformative nature of research
6. The sacredness and the responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity; and
7. The recognition of languages and cultures as living processes. (Steinhauer, 2002: 73)

In preparation for research and analysis, I offered *asemaa* to *Gichi Manidoo* and asked for guidance, openness, and humility. I asked for everything to occur in a good way and for my actions to be guided by the Spirit. Throughout the process I also used cedar to “smudge” or cleanse my mind, body, and spirit to operate in a good way.

I explored theoretical concepts that I experienced through the storywork and grouped them into broader themes and issues grounded in the data from which the categories emerged. In order to prevent what Maxwell calls “context stripping,” I made sure the explanation of such concepts were linked to the data that gave rise to them – so as not to lose the original context from which they were comprised (Maxwell, 1996). I did

not separate the categories independent of their context. Rather, I looked for relationships that connected the statements within the context into a coherent map to link the categories. Storytelling has always been a way of coming to know. It is the telling of a story, and then the sharing of related stories, which begins to build and define the teachings that are held in the stories.

There stands a fundamental difference. *Anishinaabe* epistemologies do not break an idea down to look at the smallest elements. We take our simple understanding and find connections to build understanding that exists at this point in our eternal journey for knowledge. As our bundle of knowledge grows, and as we begin to see the many aspects that are a part of the teachings, then we walk more confidently in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

Instead of coding, I connected the stories. We do not need to "compare between." Rather, we need to "witness the unfolding of the petals of a blooming flower" of *Anishinaabeg* people – as they see that we have great epistemological ways of knowing and that we can do it within our *Anishinaabe* framework. As my *Anishinaabe* auntie advised me, "We have our own way of knowing and we must write from that place – just what you are doing." Put in academic terms:

Location of self in writing and research is integral to issues of accountability and the location from which we study, write and participate in knowledge creation (2002: Said 1994: Tierney 2002). As Aboriginal researchers, we write about ourselves and position ourselves first because the only thing we can write about is ourselves (Allen 1998: Monture-Angus 1995). (Absolon and Willett, 2004: 5)

This study cannot reflect *Anishinaabeg* peoples' voice; I am just a human being and can only write, speak, and act from my own position, experiences, and perspectives. The only voice I can represent is my own (Monture-Angus 1995 in Absolon and Willett, 2004). In order to offset this reality, I have consulted *Anishinaabeg* Elders as experts as to the validity of my analysis. There are a multitude of alternative explanations that could be explored within the data of each interview. I am only capable of discussing the depths of the information through my own experience as a human being. I cannot even attempt to explore all possible explanations and to claim so would be ridiculous. There are infinite ways of knowing about the knowledge contained within the interviews. Operating from an *Anishinaabe* perspective of non-paradigmatic thought, learning is eternal. Therefore, as time passes, there will be infinitely new ways of perceiving and explaining the same old stories. The explanations within this study represent my own transformation as *Anishinaabekwe* within various transformations of my *Anishinaabeg* community.

An Indigenous theory will inevitably collide with the academy's insistence on separating the sacred from the secular because the story has a power to affect not only the consciousness of the individual, but also the spirit of the person. The transformation going on in the story often reproduces itself in the transformation of the individual who hears the story. (Marker, 2004: 108)

This is another element of the methodology of "storywork" used in this study. I have included explicit explanations of my own transformation be it mental, emotional, spiritual, or otherwise through the storywork engaged by each informant. This transformation also involves the input from "blood memory."

We have memories. Our ancestral memories are in our blood, they're in our muscles, they're in our bones; they're in our hair.' As the late Lionel Kinunwa said, many of us do not pay attention to these memories because we are too busy

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paying attention to what's going on in the modern world. We don't pay attention to our historic memory. This is why when we hear the drum, our spirit is moved. The vibrations of the drum stir old memories – our ancestral memories. These memories come out of the molecular structure of our being. This is also why when you hear someone speaking your language, your molecular structure picks up those vibrations, because each language has its own peculiar patterns, and you feel good that somebody is speaking your language. (Wilson in Steinhauer, 2002: 76)

This connection to our past – blood memory – is an ability to tap into revealed knowledge through our dreams and visions and speaks directly to *Anishinaabe* epistemology (Steinhauer, 2002). This *Anishinaabe* epistemology is embedded in the way in which I absorbed the data through collection and analysis. Also embedded is the *Anishinaabe* epistemological foundation of an unseen but knowable spiritual realm. The Seven Grandfather teachings were also embedded in my approach to the entire research process. They are respect, love, humility, truth, bravery, wisdom, and honesty.

Our community prospers when the work that each member performs is in alignment with the Earth and is a direct and sacred expression of Spirit. In Aboriginal Traditional forms, the spiritual infused a person's entire existence within the world. A spiritual connection helps not only to integrate our self as a unified entity, but also to integrate the individual into the world as a whole. (Steinhauer, 2002: 77)

I sent transcriptions as well as initial findings back to respondents – what Maxwell refers to as “member checks” – as a technique of validation (Maxwell, 1996). This is also an *Anishinaabe* method of “validation” in that one must *always* consult the community to ensure the activity will benefit not only the person, but the wishes of the community also. A wise *Anishinaabekwe* advised me when she said: “You must remember that your work must go back to the community in some meaningful fashion. The ideas shared by the Elders have already been minimized by society. Your work must

not follow suit.” Research on Indigenous populations will only make a meaningful contribution to the community being researched if researchers change their approach so that it becomes a process of decolonization (Menzies, 2001).

I prevented a major threat to valid description of what I heard by tape recording and verbatim transcription as to assure the accuracy and completeness of the data (Maxwell, 1996). I proposed not to transcribe the interviews in their entirety due to time constraints and being the sole researcher. However, when the time came to transcribe, I listened to the tapes each one time through, taking notes; and a second time through, transcribing key quotes. I found there to be too much significant (or possibly significant) information for me to only transcribe what appeared through initial analysis to be “gems.” I decided that though it would be more difficult and time consuming for me to transcribe all tapes verbatim, it was necessary in order to have all information to review again and again. This provided me with the opportunity to work harder to acknowledge my own bias as a researcher, and dig into the quotes that did not jump right out at me. This was done to assure that I gained their perspective to the highest degree possible and to keep from projecting my own framework onto the data. I needed to see the interview written in its entirety to understand the importance of data that might now have seemed most important to me at first or second read. This was also a decision I felt would help to assure that I could see more clearly whether or not there was discrepant data collected; and consider alternative explanations or understanding of the good life (Maxwell, 1996). I continually explained my own personal biases and how I dealt with them.

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Previous to the study, my existing theory on *minobimaadiziwin* was that there is not one single road that is the only good life. In my mind there are multiple paths. However, I felt the need to speak with these Elders to gain insight into the tools and priorities that I might need to take particular notice of while my children and I are taking our twists and turns through our own journey of *minobimaadiziwin*.

I worked to choose common themes within the data because they were common and not simply because they spoke to me. However, I did write about the themes and main points that spoke to me because my experience of the storywork is important. This study is me, and it would be ridiculous to try and separate from it my mind, emotion, and spirit. As an *Anishinaabekwe* conducting an *Anishinaabe* study and seeking to present the findings from *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing and perceiving, I found a discrepancy between the Indigenous way of knowing and the Western academic requirement of actions being justified by previously published material. That requirement relates to the idea of working within paradigms. *Anishinaabe* epistemology is non-paradigmatic; in operating through such ways of knowing, one perceives the journey of knowledge as eternal. It is in perpetual transformation and never fits in one particular box to be captured and labeled on a display that will only be perceived via a particular right and wrong way of perceiving.

In each interview I listened intently and asked additional open-ended questions from the interview schedule only after the respondents' stories were told. This is what Maxwell refers to as "reactivity" (Maxwell, 1996). The person I am, and the respondents' perceptions of me, had a direct influence on what each one of them shared. The

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inferences I can draw from the storywork cannot be separated from my past, present, and future experience because those are the filters through which respondents processed me and decided what to share as well as the filters through which I was capable of processing what they taught through their storywork. Maxwell also writes about the researcher's influence on the interviewee's responses affecting the validity of the inferences the researcher can draw from the interview. I state clearly throughout the study that the study engages me as I engage the study; we transform each other through the experience and I cannot be taken out of it. I am explicit about this bias of mine. However, the issue of "validity" itself is problematic as it pertains to this *Anishinaabe* study. This Indigenous methodology involves relational accountability.

As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking, "Am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship?" The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (Wilson in Steinhauer, 2002: 72)

I have also engaged in the process that Linda Smith (in Absolon and Willett, 2004) calls "Re-membering," a research method that facilitates a full reconnection. Reconnecting is also healing to our Indigenous recovery; recovering stories, experiences, teachings, tradition, and connections is what "remembering" facilitates. In the process of "remembering," Absolon and Willett request that aboriginal researchers consider

journeying through ceremony and tradition into the ancestral memory banks in order to reconnect and remember who you are. As Indigenous scholars put our knowledge, experiences, and values into written text, we need to do so with the presence of our connection to the community. I have done so by going beyond the library to talk consistently with other *Anishinaabeg* aunties and uncles throughout the process to ensure that my study comes from a context based on current reality and reflect representations of that reality.

I also discussed how the storywork that emerged from the interviews relates to the cluster of concepts the Seventh Generation Institute provides as the core of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

1. *Anishinaabemowin*

Language

Anishinaabemowin is our original way of speaking, our way of processing and expressing thought. It is our way of communicating with the creation, with the spirit and with one another.

2. *Anishinaabe Inendamowin*

Thinking

Anishinaabe Inendamowin is our way of thinking, our beliefs, and our way of perceiving and of formulating thought. *Anishinaabe Inendamowin* is the foundation of our *Anishinaabe* philosophy and world view.

3. *Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin*

Knowing

Anishinaabe Gikendaasowin is our knowledge and way of knowing. It is the knowledge of our origins, way of life, way of being and our world view.

4. *Anishinaabe Inaadiziwin*

Being

Anishinaabe Inaadiziwin is our behavior, our values and our way of living our life, and being *Anishinaabe* in the fullest sense. It is the development of the highest quality of *Anishinaabe* personhood, connected to the earth and in relationship to all creation.

5. *Anishinaabe Izhichigewin*

Doing

Anishinaabe Izhichigewin is our *Anishinaabe* way of doing things. It is our way of taking action and the life skills we need as *Anishinaabe* to live effectively in the world and contribute to building quality of living and quality of community.

6. *Anishinaabe Enawendiwin*

Relating

Anishinaabe Enawendiwin is our way of relating to each other and to all of Creation. It is an all-inclusive relationship that honors the interconnectedness of all our relations, and recognizes and honors the human place and responsibility within the family of Creation.

7. *Gidakiiminaan*

Connecting to the land

Gidakiiminaan is our connection and relationship to our land and the total experience of connecting to and relating to the Earth and the environment. This connection is the primary shaper of *Anishinaabe* identity, and it is this total relationship with Creation that informs our environmental ethic.

To us exemplary teaching is life
life changing
bigger than one life, our lives together.

Indigenous teaching is planted like a seed,
then nurtured and cultivated through the
relationship of teacher and student until it
bears fruit.

(Cajete in Graveline, 2002: 16)

Requires being in touch with our human powers
our senses
our gifts to see
hear
smell
taste
touch.

We write – think and feel – [with] our entire
bodies rather than only [with] our minds or
hearts. It is a perversion to consider thought
the product of one specialized organ, the
brain, and feelings, that of the heart.

(Minh-ha in Graveline, 2002: 16)

Issues Associated with Data Collection and Analysis

Pow wows are cultural celebrations and as such, participants and spectators are very involved and occupied by the event. The benefit to attending pow wows in search of respondents was that there are a large number of *Anishinaabeg* gathered in one place and thus it is likely that one will find participants for the study. However, the busy nature of pow wows and pow wow participants posed an issue as far as time available to speak with possible respondents.

I also experienced difficulty with the gatekeepers, who only suggested male respondents for the most part. I resolved to specifically ask for men and women suggestions. The gatekeepers seemed to have a harder time pin pointing a woman speaker for the study. It was not clear as to whether the problem is a lesser number of female speakers in Michigan area pow wows or if the tendency was for those that I asked to

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suggest men for participation.

Also worthy of mentioning is that all pow wow emcees and committee members that I spoke with were male (besides the family members in Sault Ste. Marie that I requested suggestions from). It is not clear as to whether or not this played a role in the majority of them suggesting male respondents. One emcee did suggest a woman as his first choice for the study.

Being on my 'moon' (menstrual cycle) during one of the pow wows I intended to include as a place to find participants was a point where intention deviated from reality. While on my moon, I cannot offer *asemaa* to others. The sacred life-giving power that women have during their monthly cycle is greatly honored. Out of respect for other persons' vulnerabilities to that power, we refrain from participating in certain ceremonial practices. In retrospect, I wish I would have kept better track of my moontimes so as to plan ahead and look for area contacts before the pow wow.

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CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESPONDENTS' VOICES

In this chapter it is the author's intent to share the words of each interviewee as a tribute to the respondents who participated in this study – incredible individuals in our *Anishinaabe* community. The information presented enables the reader to experience as much of the interviewee as possible, and for people in the home communities of each interviewee to experience the voice of their friend. Each interviewee is introduced via his or her own choice of introduction.

Bob Williams

Bob Williams is *Ojibwe Anishinaabe* currently residing on the Lac Du Flambeau Reservation, Wisconsin. He explains that *minobimaadiziwin* is a way of life that the Creator intended for all of us to live. Further, the Creator provides us with tools for all of creation to use for *minobimaadiziwin*. He says that we may look to our brother, *Wenaboozhoo*⁴, to teach us how to use them. He advises that in using these tools, you need balance and harmony with everything around us. Further, when you have harmony and balance, everything that the word *minobimaadiziwin* means in *Ojibwe*, your life will be good.

⁴ Respondents speak differing dialects of the *Anishinaabe* language and different dialects are evidenced throughout the study and, as a result, spelling also differs to a large degree.

He also explains that the Creator will bring you gifts to show you that you've done a good job – whether it is raising your kids or working with your immediate family and the rest of your relations. He cautions that it takes a long time: “We call that *izanagatazid bimaadiziwin*. It's a long hard way. It's a long time and it's hard to keep the balance in your family.” He explains the past of his hard, long road involved four years in the United States Army and nearly 15 years in the United States Armed Forces. He stresses that he brought his original language, *Ojibwemowin*, all the way along his road. Another part of his road was 17 years of foster care. He reminds us of the importance of our *Anishinaabe* language and adds that he retained his language through all the hard times of his journey: “My uncles and my aunties and my grandfathers, my grandmother, they said you've got to save that. Someday you are going to use it – because you're going to have to clear the way for me. Don't forget it.”

He speaks to the loss of language in the *Anishinaabe* community and refers to the present reality of five fluent speakers living in the Lac Du Flambeau (LDF) community in which he resides. He explains the hardship involved with having few people to speak with in the *Anishinaabe* language. He reminds us that *Minobimaadiziwin* is a hard way to live. Furthermore, “it takes a lot of hard work and biting your tongue a lot of times.” However, he says there are times when it becomes necessary to speak up regarding right and wrong. He explains that if you are consistent in the way that the Creator intended us to live, the Creator gives you a big, extended family – one full of friends and many relations. He explains further that the Creator intends for all of his creation to have the fullness of relations in their lives.

He sees the drum as a big part of *minobimaadiziwin*, and that it holds the community together. It left for a while but has returned along with other cultural life ways as part of *minobimaadiziwin* in LDF. He explains that the community's "Big Drum" ceremonial dances and *Anishinaabe* language have returned to the community's experience of *minobimaadiziwin* over the past seven to eight years.

Williams tells the story of his role in bringing language back to the community. About eight years ago, Williams received a telephone call from the Chairman of LDF requesting his return home to teach language. He came back to his community to help with language revitalization efforts. After some time, he developed a physical condition and was advised to retire for medical reasons.

But during that time I met a lot of families, a lot of families have come here. I helped a lot of people with naming ceremonies, funerals...a lot of questions that people have, they always come here...to this house with their tobacco. I've always told them that, wherever I go, that the tobacco is the only important thing that they have to have. The spirits don't understand without it. With that tobacco they understand and they will listen to you. When you come with your tobacco, I do the best that I can. I was always taught that if you've accepted that tobacco and you can't do that or you can't help that person with what they ask, it is up to you to go find someone who can. That's what I was taught. So that's what I've been doing.

He explains his fortunate history of experience with uncles that held fast to their ceremonies and that he sat and listened to them for many years. “I sat and listened. I didn’t do anything, but I listened. And that’s how I learned all of these things.” His father taught him the songs and dances of Big Drum ceremonies. He speaks of the large responsibility in carrying an eagle whistle for the past 21 years. That it is an example of what his father taught him regarding the reality that the gifts the Creator gives come with responsibility. He explains that one of those responsibilities is staying sober, and that he has been sober for over twenty years:

And they come with questions on how to stay sober: How do you do that for so long? Well, I am so busy I don’t have time for that. It is something that was in my life at one time and it isn’t there anymore. I don’t think about that anymore. I think about my people; how they are going to live; and how I can help them. You never know if somebody is going to come through that door – and they’re going to need some help. If you’re sitting there at the table, drunk, how are you going to help that person? And I think about that all the time: How am I going to help these people here?

He explains that this *minobimaadiziwin*, that life is given to us by the Creator as a gift. What we do with this gift enables us to find our way back home on that eagle. Williams stresses the importance of having your Indian name for *minobimaadiziwin*: “That’s your ticket. That’s your ticket to get in. Without it, you walk through this whole life not knowing anything, not being able to help yourself when you need it.”

He explains that those who have the ability to find Indian names go through a dream process and that the amount of time it takes for that name to come through the dream process varies greatly. He adds the importance of recognizing your spirit helpers as well: “Once you recognize your helpers, then you can start.” Williams explains that everyone has their own *minobimaadiziwin*:

My cousin's might not be the same as mine; he might have a different path. His path might be harder than mine. That's when he comes to me for help. I went to the other side in 1983. I was over there with those Seven Grandfathers. And in talking with them, and being with them over there across that river, they gave me seven gifts to bring back and that's my job. I'm last in the feast line; and I'm last in the bottom, I'm not at the top of the totem pole, I'm at the bottom. That's what my uncle told me he said when you get in line: you're the last one, you wait. Everybody else is fed first. You wait for everybody else to go ahead of you, that's your job – for the people. You got those seven gifts – your language, your humility, the respect, and the love. Compassion is the key to all those. You have to have compassion for everyone that you see. It doesn't matter what color that person is, the four colors of that medicine wheel. So I think about them, I think about all those people. I think about my uncles, I think about what we have to have when we go to try to help someone. We don't look at their physical form, we try to look at what their spiritual form is; what they are

lacking. If I have something here that will help that person, then I will help. If I can't, I will take that person to someone that can. That's my job.

He explains that the spirits will help as well and, further, if you come to the spirits in a good way, they will help you every time. This is not to say that they will give you what you want, but, rather, what you need:

Mino aayaajig, always to do that in a good way. The spirits will help you every time. Put your plate out; offer them food; and maybe they want a type of color. Offer them that color; put that tobacco down. If you have a pipe, smoke with them; sing with them; and make them feel good and they're gonna help you. But you've got to have that compassion to be able to know what to do.

Williams stresses the importance of tobacco in *minobimaadiziwin*. He explains that a long time ago, he (tobacco) was a man:

He gave up his life for the Anishinaabeg people so that they have something to give to the Creator. He gave up his life. In that respect Wenaboozhoo gave us the pipe; he gave us the stone; and showed us where that was. He put that sumac out here – that tree that is hollow in the center; he showed us how to do that. Those things – in the order I said them – that's the way they are used. That tobacco, that powaagan, that stone – are used to help the people understand what they are doing, where

they are going, what they want, and what they need. There is a difference between what you want and what you need. Sometimes I want something more than what I need. But the spirits will only give you what you need. Sometimes they won't give you what you want, but they will give you what you need. When they see that smoke and when you offer that tobacco, in a good way, you are ready to sacrifice, and give up for them. They are going to help you. You have to have something to offer or give away. Gaamiigiwe we call that to give away: give something away.

Williams explains that the act of giving is foundational to *minobimaadiziwin*. As Indian people we didn't have much, but...

When it came to somebody who was sick or something we had to go down the road to Sam Whitefeather's house. She took a blanket right off our bed or she made a soup; she took that down to him. He would come over, do what he was supposed to do to help our family, and he would leave. Always, always gaamiigiwe: Give thanks to the people that help you – to the spirits.

Williams explains the importance of responding with care to everyone who comes your way.

You have to tell them because you never know; it might be the Creator you are talking to. That's why you always talk to the people, whoever they are.

It can take a form of anything. That's why you really have to have the compassion, the humility – really look at that person eye-to-eye. You never talk about somebody; always talk to them eye-to-eye.

Williams explains that there is no single word that means hope or faith, but that the concepts are inseparable from the *Anishinaabe* way of being. He speaks to the first part of the word used in the name of the Creator as closely related to the inherent faith and hope of *Anishinaabe* worldview:

They have what they call that word "Gizhe Manidoo" that we use for the Creator. The first part of that word means the kind, uncreated spirit. When you talk about something that's gizhe, you're talking about something that hassles with the mind. There's no one word for faith and hope. Our hope lies in faith. This is what he gives us all here. Our hope is in the tree, a rock, an eagle, a bear. He gives us that. There's all your hope and your strength for your life. Our faith is our brother (the sun); everyday he comes up to show us all of those things. That's what the Creator gave us.

Williams explains that the day the sun doesn't come up is the day that people have stopped using the drum, their language, and engaging in ceremonies; in stopping, they will have turned their back on the Creator:

That's when he's gonna call that spirit of destruction back to that gizhe, part of his name – kind uncreated spirit. He watches that all the time.

That's something that goes on everyday, all the time. When you get up in the morning, you walk by your son's or daughter's bedroom; you look inside there and your child is sleeping. That's something that's gonna be in your heart. And they're gonna get up because the Creator gave them that life. Gave them that breathe of life inside them; that's how he gave it to us. That's our faith, that this way of life is not gonna die, that this is the way of life till there is no breath in me anymore. I am going to be telling people – you need a name.

Williams says that your name is your ticket home to the spirit world. Knowing your Indian name is one of the most important things in this life, regardless of what you have done between the time you were born and the time you walk on. The spirits are going to know you when you get there.

He then spoke about the difference between walking a “straight life” and *Minobimaadiziwin*:

There are a lot of things that people talk about walking straight, Gwayak bimoseyaan. To walk a straight life to me isn't right – that if you can't go to explore what is over here, like that bear does. He goes over here, and over there, the next day; rolling things over, asking questions. If you walk straight across all these things, you have not learned anything. When you get to that river, your soul along with your body is going to be empty. You won't know what to do when you get there. The spirits will tell you, “Oh

you need to do this and you won't know how because you've never seen it and you've never seen anyone else do it." Gwayak jibimoseyaan if you haven't seen and you keep walking straight, you'll never learn anything.

That's why when people they say you need to explore each flower.

(Williams asks in Ojibwe for someone to hand him an eagle feather and he holds it up straight). On these feathers is our whole life; our whole life is on these feathers. If you walk straight down this road you get to a part where you can barely see where you are walking. My uncle told me if you walk straight Gwayak bimoseyaan, you're gonna walk right off the end and what's out here there is nothing. But if you go through each one of those doorways, each one of these doorways is a day in your life – a day in your life. And you start learning in time you put them together – all them days and you learn something. You get a little bit older and you are a teenager, you're an adult; you become a mother or a father, you become an uncle or an auntie, and you become a grandmother or a grandfather at the end. And you're going to look back and you're going to see that your life is a beautiful thing. That's why these are so important to Indian people (feathers). That's why I talk about – it's nice to know people that (inaudible). But have they learned anything? Have they done anything important in life? What kind of stuff have their children come to them with? Or their nieces and nephews? Yeah, they're gonna be doing a lot of

stuff – these kids. How are you gonna help them if you've never been over here or over here? How are you going to know how?

Williams speaks to the role of dance in living *minobimaadiziwin*. He says that dance is the way we celebrate our life.

When you look at somebody dancing you are looking at how they live their life, what makes that person tick. Okay, that's what you are looking at when you watch a dancer: how they celebrate themselves, how they celebrate their family, and how that person is dressed. They are presenting themselves to the community to the other people. Saying this is who my family is. This is who I am; and this is why I do this. That is their way. Each one of us has our own way to dance. There are people who sit in the crowd that still dance. But they dance only with their eyes when they watch. We have to respect those people also. I always think about that – the way that the drum makes us feel – how to think of our mother and what that does to our children. Those little girls, little boys – real young. They just came from there, and they know what that is all about already. But what the Creator brought them here for is to learn the hard way. This is not an easy life. This is one of the hardest lives to live, an Anishinaabeg person. It's the hardest life to live. That's why we have to learn to walk in two worlds.

Williams speaks to the *Anishinaabe* reality of having to live in two worlds. He explains that his children, nieces, nephews, and the rest of the children on the reservation must attend a non-native school.

My girls, my kids, my brother's kids and everyone here: they live on the reservation, but they go to the Zhaaganosh school over there. They know. I told them that this is where I tell them you have to think and learn their way, just for a little while. After that's over, you can come back here and use what you learn for your own people or to help yourself out. That is the only time I ask them to Gwayak bimoseyaan, walk straight and learn. That's it don't go over here and over there, and there's a lot of things to distract and they've done that so far. Luckily. (we laugh)

Williams stresses the importance of dreams in living *minobimaadiziwin*, and speaks to their ability to help you in this life:

Dreams are noomiwin bawaajigewin to have the power to dream, to ask. Anybody can have a dream. But a certain dream. Okay, izhinikakaazod bawaajigewin, to dream a name or dream something, that's gonna happen ahead of time. There is a different power there. The Creator gives only certain people the right to do that. He opens that window only a little bit to certain people. And it ain't open that wide to those he gives it to. That's one of the things; when you offer tobacco to have somebody give a name to someone... that person doesn't go to a book. Those names don't come

from books. There's a man we used to say he lives in a pond. And when our kids are born, this is where they come from. There are little sparks that come from that pond. And that old man – he sits there. He names every one of them sparks before they go in this world. He names each one of them sparks. When you offer tobacco to someone that can dream that name, that completes the circle. Because that person now has to go to that window and ask that old man: Which one of those sparks is this one? It might take a long time. It might take three days and it might take a year. It's up to that old man. It's up to the spirits to give the dream. If you've done your homework, they will give you what you need. Not what you want, but what you need. They will help that person out. Dreams are an important part of our life for many, many things. For guidance, they use them for protection and they also use them for helping. Wiidookaw, to help someone in their life, that's what they're used for.

What people call spirituality comes from how and what you have done to spirits. What you've seen and actually felt from spirits. There are a lot of people around, but they are not spiritual people because they have never seen them they've never dealt with one they've never had to hold one off; they've never had to invite one; and they don't know their names. They don't know what colors; and they don't know what kind of food to use. That's the difference between someone who is spiritual and somebody who

is just a person. Do you know how to help somebody that is sick? Then you are a spiritual man or a spiritual woman. You know how to help that person – that person gets a lot. That's a strength, that's a power and the spirits have given you that. You can't go gloating about yourself. Like I've said there are people on this reservation saying "I am this, I'm that," they are telling you that they don't know anything. That's what my dad used to say, "When you run into people like that, then you know they don't know anything." Because if they did, one of the first things that the Elders tell us is this: If you do know ceremonies and if you do know how to take care of somebody or do something, you don't do anything until they ask. You don't go in and start taking charge of everything, you just sit back. Traditional people, in a traditional way, sit back until they are asked with that tobacco – then you help.

He explains how living *minobimaadiziwin* involves the relationships of interdependence with other beings of creation, plants, animals, thunders, clouds:

Those things are brothers and sisters of the natural world. They look out for us as much as we look out for them. They are used to help our people. That is what the Creator put them here for, for us to use. We ask in the springtime for the thunders to come to clean our mother; we ask in the summertime for the berries to be ripe; we ask that the clouds come every once in a while to cleanse our mother again. And in the fall we ask that

the thunders leave that the blanket be put there so our mother will be warm for the winter. Our animal brothers out there are highly respected in that they're almost like your own child. You can have that feeling inside of you when you see those types of animals, like an eagle or bear; you have that type of feeling inside of you and the Creator and his helpers are going to feel that also. And they're going to give you a gift to help you, and to help your brother and your sister. You will feel that. Weweni go, you have to be careful. And all that life out there, everything, that's where the minobimaadiziwin – you are in harmony and balance with what's out there. And you know a lot of people think that Anishinaabe people, human beings, are at the top. We are not at the top of the chain. We are at the bottom! And we depend upon them for our life. If they leave, we are the first ones to go. That's how I think; that's how my uncles and my dad and them always told us. We are at the bottom of everything that is here. Without them, you will not survive. You have to have respect for what's out there. You have to give thanks to the Creator, what he gave you out there. For that eagle, watching out for you everyday, taking that message to the Creator that we are still doing these things: for that bear, for his strength that he gives you, to turn around from a fight or to stay there. If something is wrong, it's wrong; if it's right, it's right. There is general illness that goes along with that. You don't always have to strong arm

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everything. Sometimes it takes just a little nudge to get something done.

Williams speaks to the change in *Minobimaadiziwin* that he has seen in his lifetime. He says that many *Anishinaabeg* have adapted to new ways, but that he wishes to keep the old ways alive. He advises that we should spend time with the Elders that are still with us. He says that, for *minobimaadiziwin*, we need to continue the ceremonies we've brought through the times. He explains that he was told not to change the ceremonies – and to do them again and again with consistency.

All those things that they need to have are the ceremonies that were given to us a long time ago. Changes that I see other people doing – they've shortened them, them ceremonies, to where it is a time thing. To where, oh, we only have so much time to do it. Well, the spirits don't have a clock – they don't have a watch – and they don't go by any time but their own. My uncle, he used to say it's gonna take as much time as it's gonna take. And my aunties, they always said, "It starts when it starts and it ends when it ends." There's nothing in between and there's no set time for it. And that's what I always go by, what they used to tell us. And they always said that if you keep it that way that you and your life (the one that's doing the ceremony) gains strength and a good life from that. You'll live that much longer. That's one of the things I've seen change around here anyway, that the people have, really, "oh gee, we only have an hour for this" or "we got an hour for that." When they come here, I don't have an

hour – maybe it's gonna take a day to do that, or two days. So I'll do that.

I'll do that in them two days.

He also explains that it is not right to give an Indian name from a book. Indian names must come from dreams. “You give that Indian name to somebody out of a book you haven’t given them anything. That name might not belong to them. It might belong to someone else.”

He explains some of the changes he has seen:

What they've been doing with the zhoonyaa, that money, they've been charging people, our people, for the things that are theirs already. When something belongs to you – was given to you by your Elders – you don't turn around and charge your people money for that. I've seen that come around and it's something that, for me, I don't accept that. That tobacco and that gift, whatever that family has to offer, whatever they can give that's what they're gonna give you, that's what the old people used to say, that's it. That's what you accept and that's all. Like I said before, when they say you don't ask for anything, you take what is given to you and that's it. The ceremonies that were given to you, that's it; you're grateful for that – for that family that came to you to begin with. That tobacco that they're gonna help you – through that tobacco. When you pray with that tobacco, that spirit's gonna help you to live a long life. They have on this

reservation they have what's called a ceremonial fund. For people that come from a long way.

That's alright if they want to help people out that way. but a long time ago when they asked someone to come from a long way, they were given a place to stay, they were fed, they were kept warm, their children were taken care of and that's all it was. Nowadays, they have to have that money. Otherwise they don't show up. To me, that isn't right, and it's not going by what we were taught and what we were given a long time ago.

Those are the kind of changes that I've seen. Those are what they call the shortcuts. And that isn't right for that name or whatever you are doing with that ceremony. They are taking short cuts and it isn't right. Those Elders – it took a long time to learn those things, and it took a lot for them to give them to us, and now you want to short cut your Elders' teaching? That's what I see. And to me, it's wrong, and I'll call it wrong because that's what it is.

You wouldn't short cut your grandfather. You wouldn't cut him off in his talk and say, okay, we got enough, grandfather. That's all we want. You might miss something that's not only going to help you – maybe it's going to help somebody else standing next to you. That's what I think about when those people talk, giving invocations. I think about the people that

are standing next to me. I think about them little ones that are coming up. Them little ones, they run around. They might look like they aren't listening, but they are listening. They hear everything. They understand. They understand a lot more than what we think they do. When we listen to them people talk, they're listening. They are listening to what them old people are saying and one day, they're going to be there, doing that. That's why I say that when you shortcut a lot of things you shortcut not only that Elder but also them ones that are coming behind us. That's one of the things I see a lot people doing, and it's not fair to our little ones who are coming behind us.

The people that carry the pipes, you know they talk about, "He's a pipe carrier. He owns that pipe." My auntie told me nobody owns that pipe. That pipe belongs to the people. They are the ones that decide, when it comes out, what it is used for. The person that's taking care of it, that's all he does; he's just taking care of that for the people. And I've seen that abused a lot of times, just because that person has a pipe – they want to make themselves into something they are not. And I've seen many, many people do that and I've seen many, many people get hurt because of it. Understanding what that pipe is, what it is used for, when you use it, and why. I say why – is because that pipe, it can heal. It can take away a lot of bad feelings from people. And it replaces it with good feelings and

replaces it with strength. When people are weak in their physical way, that pipe can help them – find healing for them. That pipe – not the man that carries it, but through the pipe itself. And that's a big mistake. I see a lot of people, "Oh gee, that guy he's carrying two or three pipes." it only takes one. It only takes one. That's what my auntie used to say a lot of times. You know pipe ceremonies, they have all these pipes there – yeah, it's nice to have them, but it only takes one. Those changes that have happened with our people – everything is in a circle, they used to say. And if you do something to someone, it might not even be you that it comes back to – it might be one of your children who suffers. That's why we're always what they call weweni go, careful with things. Always watch things. And my uncles and them, they always said: "Weweni sa go izhichigewin," be careful what you do, there is always people watching. There are always people out there whom you don't know who you are helping. Maybe it's not even that person sitting in front of you that gave you that tobacco. Maybe it's somebody sitting behind them that you are helping.

There was a man today that came to me. He saw those lightning bolts on my outfit and he wanted to know how to say that. And I told him Waasimo, Waasimogiizhig, when that goes across the sky. There's different names for lightening that goes straight up and down. There is lightening that

goes across and there is lightening that goes and stays in a line and they all have different names. They all have different jobs to do, just like each one of us. We all have a different job and the Creator, when he put us here, that job might not be the one you're at; it might be up head of you and how you change your life. How you go about your life to get to that spot – you'll know when you are there. That's what he put us here to see. Experience everything around you. Everyday them changes happen. We have to be ready for them. We have to prepare our family for them. Some changes are good some changes are not so good. We have to take, like my uncle used to say: "You have to take the fleas with the dog." That's how that is. There is a left and a right to our life, a good and a bad. There are things that we need to have to survive. And one of them is that compassion for our people. Number one. Through that pipe, that's the first thing that I was taught – compassion for the people. And when you are compassionate with your people, they will keep coming to you because you understand how to deal with them and how to make them happy. They go away saying, "Oh, I didn't learn anything." Then you haven't done your job and that person will have to come back. I try to do that with all the people that I even meet on the pow wow circuit or that Big Drum ceremony. Talk to everyone; try to be nice to everyone that you see because you never know. Like I said before, the Creator might take the form of that person. You never know, so if you talk good to that person, make them feel comfortable

even in your own home. You never know who it could be coming through that door. That's why you always feed them. That's why you always make them feel comfortable – make them feel welcome while they are there. Treat them good. My dad, he always used to say that, "treat them good." Because they are going to remember that, and if you go over there by them, they are going to remember you. And maybe you won't be in a good way that day. Maybe you'll have to be looking for a place to stay and that person's going to welcome you into their house. There is that circle; it comes back around again, in a good way. It always does. And some of the changes that I used to see – my mom, she used to send us next door for certain things. Lard, bread, salt, sugar, and the other day we ran out of sugar or something, coffee, I believe it was coffee. And I sent my daughter over here; there is an old man that lives next door over here. I sent her over there with a cup. I said, "Go get enough just for coffee." And she came back and says, "Geez, dad, I feel cheap. Nindizewag, I feel cheap. And then she come home with that coffee, and then later that old man he came over and said that really made me feel good to see that. "I haven't seen that in years, where people come next door to borrow stuff." He said, "Well I'm gonna have a cup of coffee." It made him feel good to see that because he didn't see that since his childhood, and we used to do that when I lived in the village, we used to do that all the time. That's how you got to know people. That's how you know when – if your kids were

misbehaving or if they were doing good. You got that complement or you got that message from your neighbors. And that's how we watched each other. That's how we took care of one another. Now, she don't feel like that anymore. I send her over for a loaf of bread or a couple pieces of bread, she'll go over there. And that old man, he'll come over here. He knows that he come here and do that. That's one of the old ways that I brought back, and I showed these kids. Now that isn't going to change, and they are going to be able to do that. I said, "One of these days you are going to have to go to your neighbor's house. Maybe you ain't gonna have no money." When you do that, they'll come over, maybe you'll have something they will need. And I hadn't done that in I betcha 30 years. It made him feel good. And it made me feel good to have him come to the house – to see that smile on his face – and to see that laughter that he had when he came to the house. He said jeez that really made me feel good when that little girl came to the door with that cup and asked me for those things. That's something I don't know if I'm the only one that does it or what. That's how they used to do things long ago. The kids – that's how they get to know your kids and that's how you get to know their kids. And pretty soon, that's how you become an extended family. You'll go over to their house and make wood, they'll come over to your house and make wood. Maybe you're gonna make syrup that year and they don't know how – they just want to watch. And you've taught them something by what you

make. And the next thing you know they're making syrup and bringing that syrup back over to your house, saying, "Here, this is what you taught us."

This boy over there, he likes to wewewenabi; he likes to fish and once in a while I take him fishing. He's learning a lot of things from me, just by watching. Just by coming over and hanging around. These kids do it here at the house they'll come here and sit and watch for a long time, just waiting for me to do something. We'll go fishing or – and pretty soon here come their parents. "Geez, that really made us feel good that you did that for our boy, took him fishing, and took him hunting. We're too busy to do it." When you take that time with them kids, they'll always remember that. I've got kids today, who come up to me from when I was teaching, "How come you're not teaching no more? I learned so much when you were there. We miss you. We wish you would come back. The Chimookman, they have a different idea. But where I'm at here with our ways – because I sacrificed a lot of things. And that's one of the things Anishinaabeg people do. Sometimes we do it without even knowing. We sacrificed our time with our families to help someone else out. We overlook that part of it. Sometimes I hear from my family. "Gee, you don't spend time with us dad. Why don't you do this with us? We know you're busy." But they overlook it also sometimes.

I haven't sat out at a fire like this in a long time. Especially when my uncle was alive we used to do it all the time. It's a good feeling to sit here and listen to everyone laugh. Feels good. That's what it's all about here.

That's part of that first part of what they call "Anishina" that first part of Anishinaabe. He put us down here. The "inabe" of that ending word, a lot of people don't know what that word means, inabe, to live in a circle. To live together, gakina a'aw Anishinaabe bimaadiziwin, to live in a good way together. But that first part, Anishina. He put us down here, the Creator, inabe, to live together. And how he did that, he put everything here for us first. He gave us everything here, all around you; to live a good life. And that's what we're doing. That's what we're doing.

But you've got to be sober to do it because you can't have that cloud. You can't have a cloud behind your eyes and in your mind. You've got to be able to see. You've got to be able to feel. You have to know what's ahead a little bit, in order to live the good life.

A Boodewaatomí Elder

This respondent, a Boodewaatomí Elder, chose to remain anonymous. He expressed that there is not a single *minobimaadiziwin* – there are many ways to have that good life and those ways speak to all dimensions of experience, be it emotional, physical, spiritual, or

psychological. The depth of inner searching and seeking that *minobimaadiziwin* involves requires the possibilities of it being taken in many directions. The path that we each travel is unique – it is a lifetime of searching for the truth. What may be the truth for me may mean nothing to someone else; the crux of the quest is finding ones’ own inner peace.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder believes that the quest for *Anishinaabe* *minobimaadiziwin* has nothing to do with material goods. That is not the way that was given to the *Anishinaabe*. However, the effort to explain what *minobimaadiziwin* means to him is flawed by the fact that he has to explain it to me in English. Significant substance of meaning is literally lost in translation. It involves a different way of thinking and being than what can be expressed in English language: *Anishinaabe* *minobimaadiziwin* is inseparable from the beautiful realm of thought involved in the *Anishinaabe* language.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that *Anishinaabe* words speak to the spirit or power of the being the words refer to. He gives multiple examples and expresses those examples via storywork. He explains that the word that comes close to meaning buffalo is “a man who runs across the plains.” He is seen as a human being. However, when translated into English, it becomes “buffalo.” The being is no longer seen like a human being. He adds that the word for Elk follows with the same loss of meaning through translation and expresses, also, that in *Anishinaabemowin* the name refers to “his spirit.” Again, when we translate to English, the being becomes an “Elk.” He stresses that when speaking English the words do not provide for the understanding of the spirit of the being. The understanding in *Anishinaabemowin* speaks to the spirit, “what keeps it strong, what

keeps us strong.” He brings the same point to the larger picture of perceiving the whole of creation. When we perceive the rest of creation with the spirit of each member in mind via our perception in *Anishinaabemowin* – and then break it down to what another can understand in English using the English language – we lose a tremendous amount of meaning.

Another example the *Boodewatomi* Elder provides is *keknozhwe*, “coming daylight.” He adds that if a group of people were sitting outside together around 4 o’clock in the morning they may all differ on how they would express the dawning light in *Anishinaabemowin*. One might say, *keknozhwe* (coming daylight) and another might say *odanaakenh*; still another may say, *waaseyaabinwinoo*, which refers to the keeper of the light: “When you break that down to English you would probably say, ‘Well, its daylight,’ with no mention of the keeper.” The translation from *Anishinaabemowin* to English involves a loss of the great meaning. He explains that people would differ on that because the name of what happens at that time is a power name. Furthermore, as human beings we are incapable of wrapping our minds around something that immense. “It’s beyond our capability and of what we can agree on,” as the *Boodewatomi* Elder says. The completely different understanding of reality in *Anishinaabemowin* vis-à-vis English goes along with the *Anishinaabe* good life.

He explains that there is not a hierarchal social order when you understand the Native language; the past involved speaking in terms of “we” in the understanding of *Anishinaabe* language. Today, we speak in terms of “I” and this is a result of the system at play that divides us. One example is the encouragement to compete against one

another. “There’s a big difference in how we have become educated. We are becoming educated and we are dividing ourselves.” The *Boodewatomi* Elder continues

It’s got to be win, win, win. What about those little boys and girls? What happens to them when they cannot make that first team? They are completely left out. There is nothing designed in this system for those types of children – as well as adults. You can see what this system has done to all people – not only to us.

He also explains that there is a lack of understanding in that we are not required to divide ourselves the way we do. He explains that part of this division we experience in contemporary society comes from our loss of being able to perceive in our *Anishinaabe* language. English is what we use to understand each other. The great loss in translation is directly related to the spiritual aspects of *Anishinaabemowin*. “It is a beautiful place to be – to live in that realm of that thought – what it means to be a spiritual person,” he says. The *Boodewatomi* Elder argues that sometimes we have to prepare ourselves to think in the *Anishinaabe* way because of the way we are raised in contemporary American society. The “certain way” of thought the *Boodewatomi* Elder refers to is what goes with *Anishinaabemowin*. There is a way of being that goes along with the language. He says that it has to become a habit – to think that certain way of the *Anishinaabe* language as a spiritual person. The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that the spiritual realm of thought that accompanies the language does not come automatic. He adds that it is easy to live in that realm once you acquire the habit of being. Your thoughts will revolve in that way in your

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waking life and in your dreams. Furthermore, the way you think creates your home, and the spiritual perception that goes along with *Anishinaabe* language will create your home. “If you think negative, or you think positive, that’s exactly how that home is going to be.” He adds that *Anishinaabe* people grow with the negative thought behind us of what happened to our people and how we survived. Furthermore, somewhere along the way, *Anishinaabe* people realized that God gave the greatest gift of all to human beings – the ability to have dreams and visions. The gift shows us that there can always be a better life. He explains a story within his own story, of a time where he was not satisfied with his way of life. He says that he had to start searching, and that this searching goes with every stage of life. We follow through stages of growth in the cycle of the human being. For example, when we are teenagers it is a time of fun and play; there is so much for teenagers to explore. However, once you pass that stage of life you move into young adulthood.

Changes take place throughout life because journeys are constantly beginning and ending. All the while, the *Boodewatomi* Elder explains, we never know what we are being prepared for. “We never know the trials and tribulations are preparing us for something to come until the exact moment – the wake up call – I’m supposed to be doing this. I’m going to start a new journey, maybe leaving another one behind.” The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains the absolute beauty in that and adds that it is an endless journey that is exciting throughout. He says honestly that he can never quit learning. If he ever reaches the point where he thinks he knows everything, he is also telling you that he quit learning. He says that it is a grave mistake for one to declare that they do not need to

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know any more than they already do. He questions how persons can enjoy life if they aren't going to learn anymore. "Life is one of learning and experiencing. It don't stop. It don't even stop when you die. It's just another journey starting over."

He says that there is so much to the journey of life and how it changes. Also, for *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, it is important to allow the stages of the journey to happen. He says that we are not to rush babies into growing up – that we should allow babies to be babies. Even a five year-old remains a baby. We are supposed to let them be babies as long as they can and should not rush them off to school. "They reach a point when they want to ask a question. It may be a serious one for the first time. That's when we used to start teaching them." He says that they did not rush them like the protocol of today. He adds that not all of them are ready for school at a standard time in their life.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder speaks to the generosity involved in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. He remembers that even during WWII (and previous to the war, in the 1930s), when money was scarce, people were generous with what they had.

Neighbors would come for sugar or some ziitaagan, salt, or maybe several cups of flour to make some bread. I remember my mother would give away half of what she had.

He speaks of his mother sending him and his siblings next door to borrow various things. Through it all, there was not an expectation of retribution. No one was expected to pay anyone back. It was all a part of the very important duty of helping one another. "No one ever paid each other back, we just borrowed

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The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that *minobimaadiziwin* has changed over the years with the loss of perceiving in terms of "we." He explains that it was a clan village, and the whole tribe spoke in terms of "we." Soon enough, children only chose to stay with their own parents, but they belonged to "us" as a people. He asks that we question what we are missing by not having grown up viewed that way, unable to view others that way, too. He expresses his wish for all races of people and stresses the core of the relationships as always being ready to help. The *Boodewatomi* Elder says that in order to find that "we," we have to start over again. He calls our attention to the beautiful thought of putting that way of being back in place. He also speaks to the changes in concepts of ownership. It used to be that if you moved out of one house and into another home, someone else could move into the house you had just left – there was no rent or the ownership that exists in minds today.

Today is totally different. We think we own things. Those things are still going to be here when we leave. How can we own them? How can we own each other? We are not slaves. And, really, when we are living the right way we don't have to answer to anyone. Man-made laws do not affect us if we are living in a good way. They are only meant for those who are not living a good life. They don't pertain to you if you are doing your best to live in a good way.

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The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that there are infinite teachings that go with every phase of life. He stresses that we are the ones that are going to have to admit it. It does not do an individual any good for another to point out to them what they have done in their life. Also we have to admit it to ourselves and no one can speak for us. “That is an absolute – we have to learn to speak for ourselves in a good way and hope not to offend anyone in the process. So to me that is all part of knowing oneself – of having the ability to go inside of yourself and see what exactly is there. A lot of people don’t have any idea what you’re talking about when you’re telling them that.”

He says that I have all the ability right now to understand everything I am asking him about, and that I am just looking for another opinion to add to my own. Furthermore that I have to be able to explore my own self, my own feelings, and my own emotions – as do the rest of creation.

To me, that’s all part of being a human being. We don’t have to talk about a whole nation of people – we can talk about one individual who could represent all of us. We could be that person ourselves. It’s so easy. It’s just as easy to come to terms with ourselves, you know, to put ourselves right with creation. Once we do that, we actually become a gift to this creation instead of a burden.

He looks back to see that he was a total burden on everything. “That’s what comes from exploring things about your self, coming to terms and realizing and knowing what a good life is.”

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He speaks to the natural law that guides all of creation, including mankind, and that we are taught to go against natural law in many ways. He gives the example of baby boys being taught not to cry because it signifies weakness. Adults assure young boys that they do not want to be considered a “sissy” and therefore not to cry. The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that the ability to cry is a natural gift that we are supposed to experience and nothing to be ashamed of. This is also an example of one of the things we may come to terms with on our journey in contemporary society. He explains that it is not easy to explore life, and that there is always a sense of direction that we are walking toward. That sense of direction the *Boodewatomi* Elder speaks to is directly related to natural law. He explains that natural law guides all things. It determines the seasons and the growth of all things, as well as where we go and in what direction. He explains that sometimes natural law tells us not to go here or there. Furthermore, he reminds us that at times we fail to listen. “We go anyway and get in trouble. So, in a way, that natural law also guides all of mankind.” Your conscience is how you connect with natural law. The *Boodewatomi* Elder advises that we do not have to hear words. In fact, we will not hear a human voice when we are instructed. He adds that part of this natural way is helping and healing – they go hand in hand. Helping is part of who *Anishinaabe* people are and what *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder calls to the natural way of healing that can be seen in the cycle of the seasons. He says that it is all a part of the way we live today. He gives the following example. In the early spring months there is a word, *shaawanaayen*, for the female gentle south winds and *shaawanaash*, the male wind that comes from the south.

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The warmth of that wind starts thawing the frozen earth. If the warm south wind did not come in gentle at the beginning thaw time, there would be no green grass. Once the green grass grows, other plants will follow.

We're not going to know what they are as they first peek through Mother Earth. Some of them are going to be wild vegetables. Some of them are gonna be wild berries. And as we see them grow and bloom, and we recognize what those are, maybe we will recognize that strawberry plant – maybe we will recognize that blueberry plant and that red raspberry, and we start thinking from memory. Maybe from all the way back when we were children "this is what I ate one time. It was on the table and I ate it and I really liked it." We start thinking, "I wish I had a mess of that again, I would feel better." So you start thinking about that as the seasons progress, it gets down further to the south to where we are today (August) and a lot of things are ready now, the strawberries, some things are not ready yet. But, when you look at all of that – the wild vegetables, as well as the ones in the garden that we plant – we will be so glad to have that meal again. Say, "I will not be satisfied unless I get to eat at least one mess of that" – that berry is a natural healer – because all things are medicine. I don't care what it is – it is a medicine way. That is what the Creator put in those plants – healing. It was a blessing, a gift that he gave that plant world. Whether it's the tame variety or whatever – the tame

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ones are nothing more than a change from the original form – hybrid. So the sweet corn we eat today is not as sweet as the original corn was, nor is a pumpkin – a squash.

All of those things have been changed; even corn has been changed by crossing them. And now we have different varieties of corn, none of it is really sweet. What is it doing to the animals – the change from its original form? Take for instance whole wheat flour. What is that? Where did it come from? And, then, for us to use that white flour – they take everything out of it. It's just a filler and does nothing for your body. You just become so used to eating it.

He explains that everything is connected. For the good life, we must hold ourselves accountable for our actions and remain cognizant of the effects our actions have on the present and future generations. He says that is a major problem affecting the human race today. The majority lack the conscious awareness of the impact of our actions – collectively and individually. He explains further that we have to take responsibility to correct our wrongs.

Everything ties in together. You know earlier, when I spoke about having dreams and vision? What did that mean to have dreams and visions in the beginning of time? That was the only gift that was given to mankind. Nothing else was given to mankind but that ability to have dreams and

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visions. And how has that ability been used? We don't have to look very far in today's reality to realize that the ability was used to create weapons of mass destruction. And that threatens everyone on this earth, not only the ones it would be used against. How do we fix something once we do that? How will we ever come to terms with using that atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Nagasaki? That was an inhuman thing that we've done, that was totally inhuman to kill that many people with one bomb. Is that the right way to use a gift from God? To use that dream in that way, to have that vision of creating something like – you see, there has to be accountability there. That's all of us as human beings. We have to come to terms with that. You know we can no longer go with that kind of destruction. There's got to be a better way to create a better life – than totally destroying people. The gift was never meant for that.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder highlights the need for each *Anishinaabe* to have their Indian name. Being ready to help comes with the *Anishinaabe* way of being that he has accepted for his *minobimaadiziwin*. He tells the story of two baby girls that he named the morning of our talk, and although they did not have sponsors at that time, he explains that he will be the one to help them along. He explains that one of the names that he gave came from a long time ago – maybe that of a clan leader. The name means that the child will have a voice that people will listen to. That name will help in her journey.

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The *Boodewatomi* Elder also speaks of the importance of sponsors for those children being named. Sponsors are to help their namesakes along the way when the time comes that they have questions in need of answers. He says that a sponsor's role is to be available to help his/her namesake grow throughout life. He says that it is a big "responsibility," but adds that he would prefer to use another word. The English word "responsibility" has a negative connotation.

I don't even like that word, responsibility. It's just a love of doing something. What happens to whatever it is that we are trying to attain – that we are trying to reach a goal, when we start viewing it as a responsibility? That word responsibility denotes a weight. We become overloaded. Responsibility – it's a bad word. The right way to look at it is having a love of doing it. There is no such thing as a responsibility. You see what I'm talking about when I say there's a thought that goes with the last: you know we accept everything as a responsibility, we're gonna weigh ourselves down. It is not just wanting to do it because it makes us happy to do it – there's no responsibility when we look at it like that – just a love of doing it.

Like when I first got my medicine drum, one of my uncles spoke. He said these boys have been doing some wonderful things, so now their responsibility is going to become even greater because they're gonna be able to do more for the people. You know when he used that word,

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responsibility, how much weight was placed on me! It wasn't just the love of singing. It took that away completely. I just loved to sing. That's what it was.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder refers to the crux of the change in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* as the way that *Anishinaabe* people were “changed around – to thinking different.” He recalls that in 1959 his tribe was still lead by a tribal form of government. Leadership was appointed on the basis of their character. They were not appointed by their deeds or by a level of competition. He further explains that they were respected by the community. He tells a story of a man who attended a tribal council meeting. The man tried to speak from his seat and council members told him to stand up: “*Aaniish ezhinikaazoyin?* What is your Indian name? He said, “Oh, I don't have one.” “Sit down,” they said. “You have no voice here.”

He explains that the *Anishinaabe* way of being involves being seen as that Indian name you are given. If you have given up on being seen as that *Anishinaabe* person, then you have given up your voice as an *Anishinaabe* person. Likewise, with the land – if you sell your land, you also are saying that you have given up your *Anishinaabe* way of knowing that land because you would think of selling it to another human being.

See this goes further back, a lot further back than today. So you can see the importance of us carrying those names today. We are through with our way if we have no land to stand on. We have to have a place to stand because we are tied to Mother Earth. We can't sell it. How can we sell the

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place where we stand and sit? It's totally wrong. That's why they had no ownership, no concept of ownership at one time. It was so easy to rip them off, you know, to take that land because they had no concept of ownership. The way they thought, we just need a place to stand – where they were willing to share that land. So even that is a part of the importance of having a name, going back to how they thought at one time, you know, but still I saw that as a negative thing. But that's the way it was back then. That you already chose another way of life, you have no voice here. The same way that, say, you and I inherited, say, 80 acres. For whatever reason, equally, it was both of ours. Now, just say that I would sell my 40 acres, my share of it, and go back later and try to tell you how to live on your own land. I lost my voice when I sold that place. I have no more voice there. All them things were somehow tied together. That train of thought. It was always there. It was also the same way with even receiving a name. Those same ones I'm talking about – down home. In the spring and fall at our ceremonies – we had spring and fall ceremonies – that was supposed to be the time they would name children. And they would call for all the newborn children to be brung before them – so they would bring their children. A couple old men would be sitting there on the ground like you (cross legged). Racist. Maybe another one would come around – mixed races. They would not recognize them because of mixed marriage, and I don't agree with that, but yet that's the way it was at one time. It's

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got to be a man-made rule. Why would we treat another human different because they look different?

There is this story; I used to hear this a long time ago. It was the story of the animal kingdom and the bird kingdom. They say that Oshkaabewis, a runner, was sent down by the bear. "Go gather all the fur bearing animals to come in a certain time – season. We're going to have a huge talking circle." So time went by and all the animals started showing up – some big, some small, but hey all had fur. The last one that came in that circle, each one as they entered that circle would find a place to sit. The last one that came in was a bat. He was looking for a place to sit. He found a place and everyone was staring at him. The bear said, "Why are you here?" And he said, "Well, I heard that all the fur-bearing animals were having a gathering so I came." And the bear said, "Look at us!" And the bat did. What he saw when he looked at each one of them – they were all covered with fur. He said, "Now look at yourself! You're all covered with skin. You don't have fur. You don't really belong here." He looked at himself and said, sure enough. He left. He was sad. Later on, the eagle sent for the bird kingdom. All the birds came for a gathering. Again, that little bat showed up – the last one again. They didn't even stop to tell him he just heard. Where all the others were told, they didn't tell him – he just heard. He just showed up because he heard there was a gathering of the bird

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kingdom. So he showed up. Again they were all looking at him. The eagle asked him, "What are you doing here?" He said, "Well, I heard that the bird kingdom was having a meeting so I came. Here I am, I showed up. The eagle said, "Look around, we've all got feathers. Look at yourself. You have skin – you have no feathers." So he left again.

See this was an old story that was handed down from one generation to another on not to do those things. It's not who is supposed to be here or there because they look different. We can say that about the four races of man. The prophecies tell us that there would come a time when the four races of man would sit down together and talk. Otherwise, there could be no understanding until that is done. It's useless, until that is done, to expect a change. We should be able to sit down anyway – to talk. We should be able to sit down with anyone to eat together. We can do that. What's stopping us to talk with all the other races? If they wanna talk we should welcome them, not be choosy of who we wanna speak to. We've got to help each other. And our prophecies tell us that time is gonna be here. We're just waiting.

He explains that worldwide conferences are bringing people together presently, but that there are larger gatherings to come. "We cannot go there as 'I'm a Catholic,' 'I'm a Christian Indian.' We only can go as human beings – and leave that hierarchy outside. Sit down and talk as human beings. That's the only way that will ever promote peace."

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He speaks to the current war in Iraq. “What’s happening right now in Iraq is not promoting peace. There are babies over there that are going to remember what’s happening to their parents, uncles, brothers.” He says that as a human race we have yet to progress, that we are spinning our wheels in one place. He explains that we are stuck in one place and one of the things that keeps us there is that we think we need to control:

We don’t have to be in charge of anyone. That’s a negative thing when we feel like we’ve got to be in charge of someone else – which is a total negative thing. It’s like I was telling my wife, “I cannot own you. Nor can you own me.” Because once we start claiming ownership we are also slowing up spiritual growth. We have to be free of that and let each other grow. Whatever way that person was meant to grow, it has to be that way. It would be so wonderful if there was a model – us all jumping in a melting pot and come out the same – no diversity at all. We would be like robots. It would be like there would be no more roses. No more flowers – to lose the beauty of the things all around us. We can’t afford to do that. I always think around those lines, praying that these things will come about. Maybe not in my lifetime, but it’s a prayer that I’ve put there many, many times. Like all things, it’s the beginning of a transitional stage where nothing stays the same. There’s always a transition taking place. Maybe we may never recognize what that transition is, but yet it is in place and working today. You know, there are peace conferences taking place today

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all over the world. I used to think when I first started learning that I could be in contact with all the peoples of the world. So I could tell them how I think. Twenty some years later, I had an opportunity to speak with people from South America, people from Hawaii and Australia. Their line of thinking was the same. So that told me then, that as human beings, we are all striving. But there is something holding us back – preventing that from happening. And it's these colonial forms of governments. It almost seems like it's got to be a total collapse of all things before they will understand that. Because regardless of the different events, our prophecies tell us that as time goes by, the natural destructions of hurricanes, tornados, different eruptions from volcanoes, will increase the intensity that there is something wrong. It has something to do with the global warming. Because here in this state, some of the armadillos were spotted even though their main home is in Texas. How come they are so far north? They survive better down in Texas where they have all that warmth. How come they're way up here? Little armadillos – they're telling you that something is happening. But the system would say, "Prove it!" How do you prove that there is a transition in place? It's something beyond human understanding. I understand it. But for some, it's beyond their understanding. They were trained different. Everything that I know, that I follow is a natural way, a sense. There's a reason why we were given the senses. They say that when God created all things, he gave all things the

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same senses as us before we were ever put here on Earth. Then he created us in that image of the way he saw us and he wanted us to have that respect for his creation. And the way that that could be accomplished was to give us the same sense of feeling, taste, and everything so that we would have that great honor of respecting his creation. Not to destroy it, but to respect it. In just that thought alone, there is something great. What has happened to us as human beings? I always tell people, if I was the only one that believed and followed the way that I follow, I would not stop – I would continue on. If I was the only human that does what I do – I would not stop simply because no one followed me. Because I know that I have the true way of the Creator. I don't have to be taught from a book. There is a natural law that guides all things. It will guide us if we let it.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that living by natural law involves recognition of what happens with each season. He asks us to think about what takes place in winter, summer, spring, and fall. Likewise, what takes place in the cycle of each day? He explains that each day follows like the cycles of the seasons. And with that guide, our days follow as well. He explains that morning, when we awake is like springtime of the year. In the morning, we get up and get ready for the day. Summertime corresponds to the noon-time of our day as does evening with the fall:

That season works in the same accord as we do as human beings. We get ready to have dinner, lunch. What do you do in the evening time, which is

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the fall? You go gather things to put them away for the night, for that long winter that's still coming. You start putting things away from the table in the evening, getting ready to go to sleep and return to bed. The same way, it is no different. Do you see how all things are connected? We look at that year as a long time. It began like one day. I do the same thing every day. I do the same thing every season, there's no difference.

The *Boodewatomi* Elder explains that human beings have vast potential with the gift of the ability to have dreams and visions. He says that if one works hard in that way of being, they may be able to grow into the ability to see disease and sickness via the color spectrum of heat in bodies. He tells the story of his own experience with that gift of vision. He explains further through another story that though his son exhibits that same gift, he will not push him to develop it. He says that it has to be of one's own choosing. "I'm not going to say it's his responsibility, but it's got to be his choice, because once you start that journey, there's no stopping. You can't say 'I'm not going to do this no more.' It will always be there."

The *Boodewatomi* Elder tells a story of a woman in a wheelchair who came to him for healing. He explains that when she followed up with her doctor, there was no sign of her previous condition:

It was gone. How do you explain that? There's no evidence on how that came out. There are no marks. It is something that is beyond our understanding. You cannot charge for that either. Otherwise, if you start

charging, you misuse that gift – it will be taken away from you. You don't try to gain from it – it wasn't meant that way.

Larry Matrious

Larry Matrious is *Ojibwe Anishinaabe* from Mille Lacs, Minnesota. He currently resides on the Hannaville Potawatomi Reservation, Michigan. Matrious says that the way we learn is central to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. He explains that the act of teaching and of learning, and the way we do so directly, affects our ability to live *minobimaadiziwin*.

I watched my father, not even knowing he was showing me, telling me anything. I never knew I was being taught those things. I was never told nothing. I was shown those things. So that's how I grew up you know. The language was used to me constantly – day in, day out – all the way up till I was five years old. When I was five years old, that was the first time I started out with the English language.

Matrious emphasizes the importance of sound.

Wanting to learn to know anything – sound, that's the thing to know.

There are so many different sounds that you catch – to be able to identify

that sound – to be able to know what that is and where it's coming from.

That's why sound is so important.

He speaks to the changes in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, and how, in the *Anishinaabe* language, an Elder means more than the common perception of a “senior citizen” today.

Today we ask people – Elders – you try to ask them things you're told.

Ain't too much who can't tell you nothing too much. Around here on this rez people don't depend on their Elders here because – what is an Elder, you know? An Elder should be a person that can tell you anything from the way back beginning of time. Now it's just an older person, just a burden, just an age, 60, 65. Can't tell you nothing, you know? About a lot of things – about what life is about. What is the purpose of life, hmm? I learned these things and I still learn these things throughout the day. By knowing everything there is to know here in this universe: the trees, the grass, the sky, the water, and the things around you. That's life, you know, to know those things. And knowing those things – how they live or how they grow or whatever – that's life. And their life is almost similar to ours. Just because they're a flower – they're no different. The trees – they're no different. The animals – they're no different. Their lives are almost the same as ours. But how many people stop and realize and think of those things? Nobody. Not even the older people, the Elders they're called

around here, they don't know those things. Those are the things we're losing, you know? So that's why children are the way they are today. Teenagers – don't know how to listen – don't know how to do any kind of work or anything. They're so lazy. They're so – I don't know, unthoughtful. They hardly learn anything, you know, just day to day from TV and games.

Matrious says that there are certain ways to live by for *minobimaadiziwin*. “Well when you know those things and live those things and live these ways, it's a good life, you know?” He explains further that parents should try to instill in children the seven gifts of love, humility, respect, truth, bravery, wisdom, and honesty.

Some of these children got to go and find these things out for themselves. A lot of people – people are so, I don't know, you can't even talk to their children or explain anything to them about sex or you know? Kids today, you gotta go out and look for that, you know? And on the reservation, you can't find too many things going on for kids you know? And what is the people in the community doing for the kids, you know? They wander around through the roads, you know, and walkin' and talkin' and doing things they aren't supposed to do because there's not nothing else for them. And when you do try to give them something else to do, a drop in center or whatever – that stuff don't last long because they don't know how to take care of it. And I was first back to teach the language here in

Hannahville in '85 or '83. I went in their schoolhouse and, you know, I had to see their schoolhouse – holes in the walls, crayon marks, marks on the wall, kids walk around with a crayon, paint marks. No respect for their school or anything. They didn't know how to listen too well. And we began to teach the language. Those are the types of things we had to teach right off the bat. "You want respect?" I said. "You aren't going to get it here." It starts from home. It took a few years, getting all the kids, bringing them up to level, you know, to where we were – those that know this language and what this life is about. It took a while and pretty soon, they began to learn what is ceremonies, what is tobacco, what does it mean? We told them everything of these things. And that's how I taught the language. I was never a teacher, but I said, "Well, I'll try everything once." So I'll just have to teach it because I know how and my experience and what I was taught back home. And so that's how I taught the language then because I knew all of my culture and everything about my culture. I still remember those things that they never told me that this was on this Earth. Kids today, even though they see it they don't pay any attention to why they do it. They don't know what purposes. Other communities, other reservations, they had Big Drums, Big Drum doings, songs. What are they doing for their kids, you know? Same bunch go to those Big Drum doings, learn them songs, and everything that goes in that ceremony. Some of these people just go in there – that's their thing. But what about it are you

teaching your kids? They're out there wandering around not even being told nothing about it – not even participating or whatever. Here, kids ain't being taught nothing. Parents at bingo – where are the kids? Out in the street running around. Going to bingo, busy doing other things, and some of them don't even have no ceremonies, some don't even go to church – and what is that? What makes them keep on going? Living from day to day? Clean the house – on time for work – you know?

Matrions speaks to the loss of knowledge regarding identity of the rest of creation having a major impact on living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*:

When you lose those things, not being told what it is – a rock's a rock. To them a rock is just a rock. Asin and, so, they're never told what it is. A flower is just something pretty nice. And so when they go to make regalia, even them older people, they make their regalia just so it looks pretty. So, today, when you look at regalias, how many people can get up and tell you what it means to them? It looks pretty and it looks nice. But then you look at my regalia and everything has a meaning. Everything represents a flower, the colors, designs – many things. All my feathers I replace for my family, daughters, kids and children. The feathers I wear on my roach are the two warriors – the two soldiers I was with in the army – got killed. My regalia represent all these things. And so I don't dance for myself out there, I dance for all those things that are in the design of my regalia. So

when I dance out there, in my style, it's just like I'm there all by myself, just going through the motions, dancing for those things. It's a good feeling, you know.

So many things people don't know about. So again today a lot of people don't even know, like people today – education, you know, me as an example. I fell off of the track of being educated. I was very interested in being educated, but I fell back so far behind for different purposes and reasons. I just quit, I was so far behind. I tried to catch up in the ninth grade. I started working and I was never lazy to work. I've done all kinds of work in my lifetime – hard work. But, again, because of lack of education – that's how it is with people who lack education – you try to sit down and talk to them about these things – how important education is. If you want an easy life, go get that education. Get to know many different things – learn. And, if you're lucky, you can have the things you want. If you have a good education, you can get a good job. But, if you don't, you're going to work hard and wish for many things. "Oh, I wish I had this! I wish I had that!" There we go again, lack of education. The whole society today is, you hear a lot of people complaining about this and that, this and that: Why are they always complaining for? Why don't they grow up there and get smart – understand what it's all about. Like the people that try to run this world, this state, the United States, the government, the

President or the senators and the governors, their jobs – again, it's the lack of education in the ones who complain about taxes, about prices, many different things, you know? It's because they are not educated to know, but they yak, yak, yak and complain and whatnot, you know. All it takes is common sense, you know; stop to realize, go get an education, that's when you can be up there with society and quit the complaining. Learn how this life is. This whole life is not just having good cars, good homes, good clothing and – that's not the life you know? It's knowing what is around you. What they mean – to identify each and every one of those bushes – those trees, those flowers. I can name all these flowers, all these trees. Everything around, I can name all these things, in English and in Indian – both languages. I have to learn to walk those two roads, you know – the Indian's way and the White Man's way – to understand both ways. So that's a lot of things.

Matrious says that in the *Anishinaabe* language “faith” is just knowing, *Giindaasowin*, whereas in English the word “faith” holds religious connotations that are held or not held depending on the person. In *Anishinaabemowin* there is no questioning the Creator. He elaborates:

So many people are brainwashed so many different ways, so they come up with questions, different kinds of questions. When you try to teach language or culture, that's why they come up with, all kinds of questions

about this and that – language, culture. Nobody ever told everything to these people. When they do have these things, they don't take the time to explain it to those folks. They're just supposed to learn it. And, so asking all kinds of questions, and wanting to learn and know – those are the kinds of things that stand in the way of wanting to learn and speak the language. They just want to learn so much about what this culture is about. So many questions go through the mind. When they go through ceremony, a dance – whatever – they explain about these things, you know? Because what you're seeing is what you believe – that's my knowledge – my way of thinking. I have to see it before I believe it. Tell me there was a wreck down the road, but I don't really know it unless I go around down the corner and go see it for myself. Then I know it's true. So I traveled this world over so I could go learn. I didn't go around asking questions. I watched, I observed – I had to learn for myself. So when I teach everything I try to hand it back down to the people. Teach them, you know? I explain everything about this lodge, the ties, and how to put them in the ground, and put tobacco down. Ties – you need 28 ties, 16 poles to the lodge. I talk about the poles and what they mean – what saplings you use and what kind of wood you're using and for what purposes. There's a lot of people that are afraid, you know, and these lodges are healing lodges. A lot of people, "Oh, I can't go in. I got a heart problem. I can't go in that sweat." People don't understand. These lodges are healing

lodges. You gotta go in it. Don't matter what kind of sickness it is. Ask those people that run the lodges. "Give me a healing lodge. I got a bad heart or whatever – lung or kidneys" or whatever. Build a lodge for them with different kind of poles and different kinds of medicine. Four nights a week or four nights – every night, you know, for days – using different kinds of medicine, whatever kind of healing you need. You go in society and these people run lodges. How many rocks do you use – 40, 50, 20? What gave them the right to – the lodge was given – it was seven rocks. They say "Well, I had a dream. I was supposed to use 15 rocks." I say, "Well, can you tell me in the language about your dream? Can you speak the language?" You know, you've got to use the language in those lodges. You've got to learn the language to invite them spirits into the lodge when you ask them, "Help me! Wiidookawishin!" What do you want help for – for what purposes? The spirits, they aren't gonna understand you if you say help me, that I got a bad liver or whatever. So I tell the people that come into my lodge, whatever language you're gonna be using, I'll be sitting in that eastern door. I'll be translating for you so the spirits will know what you're asking for.

He says that our *Anishinaabe* language is the language that the rest of creation understands.

*Oh they understand. Talk to any one of these plants in the language;
they'll understand you. Talk to any one of these animals – they'll
understand you. You have to use it – the language – and use your tobacco.
It's got to be a number one priority. But you have to use it, you know?
Every time you leave your house, put tobacco down. Tell the spirits where
you're going – what you're going to do. Life is so simple. People make it
so difficult, you know? People make it so difficult. This life isn't such a
struggle. Knowing these things – knowing them and living them.*

Matrious speaks to the role of the pipe in living Minobimaadiziwin:

*The pipe that I carry is my teacher. Any time I need to ask any questions I
sit down with that pipe and talk to them. Ask them what that is and what it
means, and how should it be used or whatever, you know. So I get shown,
you know. I have so many young guys go "Well, I'm going fasting
tomorrow." When they come out they have all kinds of good stories of
what happened to them out there. That's crazy – that don't happen. You
have to go learn of yourself, your emotions, your feelings – you get to
know yourself. Fast is all about how to respect things. Get out and respect
food – don't waste it and water. Sacrifice yourself for those things – to
know what this world is about. They come back with these crazy stories of
happenings. There are many things I was told in my lifetime. And so I have
that belief. And so, today, I run lodges and walk these ways. I can hear*

these spirits talking and where's that voice coming from? I want to see who is talking, so I ask that pipe to show me them things. They speak to you, you know, but those things don't happen unless you have the real belief and the language – and that you ask in the language.

Matrious speaks to the reality today that *Anishinaabe* has lost so much due to the distractions of the dominant society. Furthermore, he believes it is a threat to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*:

Even I got caught up in that society from the time I left when I was seventeen. I got lost in it same as everybody else – in the crowd of that society. I did a lot of terrible things – disrespected a lot of women, cars, and all that. One day, I got tired of it. I had a good job. I was representing my people back home. I was a representative and I'd go to their big meetings – sit in their big meetings – about how I can help my reservation. I had to sit there and learn it – how I can help my people and everything else. So I had a good job, bought a good home, Wausau home, and bought a chunk of land. Turned it into the tribe and they paid the taxes. I had two new cars and a boat. I used to drink – always had money in my pocket, a three piece suit for every meeting. The main representatives for the tribe were assigned to something. I was sitting on education – wherever the meetings were about education, that's where I went. In '77 or '76 I went into a treatment center. I was going to lose my car, my license for seven

years, my home. My wife was going to divorce me, take all my kids, take what kids I had. So they said you either go to treatment or we'll take everything, and you don't have to go. So I thought about it and I said, well, in order to keep them I'll take the treatment center. So I took the treatment center. And I knew how to play the game they played. One Sunday morning after breakfast they said you're going to be free today. I went back and laid in my room – thought about myself. What makes me drink? And, all of a sudden I felt a presence of somebody being in there. I looked beside me and there was an old man standing there. He didn't have no shirt on – had buckskin pants and he had braids. And he started to speak to me in Indian. "Look around you – empty beds. Is this what you want out of life? If this is what you want, this is where you will be off and on all through your lifetime. But if you want to walk the ways of your people, you'll never be in another place like this." I want to walk the ways of my people. And I looked up and thought, "Well, where'd he go? I didn't even hear him leave. Where'd he go?" I thought to myself, "What's happening? Is this a mirage or? What happened here?" You know? That was that spiritual awakening I had. So I come out of that treatment center and they said, "Well, you've got to go about two times a week to AA meetings." So I went to one meeting and I said I'm not learning nothing from these meetings. All they have is twelve steps and you gotta go by and learn them. I quit going there and I started to ask myself, "What is it that

man meant when he said starting to walk the ways of my people?” So I started going out to different reservations and looking at different Indian people – how they walk. So I learned about many different ways the Indian walks. Never saw anything about how to walk the ways of my people. So I came down here in ’78 or ’77.

He explains that what he learned from that vision is to use his tobacco for *minobimaadiziwin*. “Putting it down for everything, anything before you start. That’s what that old man meant – put down my tobacco, and walk the ways of my people.”

Matrious says that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves exploring everything in creation and that in doing so, one discovers himself. “It took me a long time to go around that circle, found about different things about Larry. So I put all those things together into one word. What is that word? Love. So, today, I tell people, I love you.”

Gloria King

Gloria King is an *Ojibwe Anishinaabe* Elder from *Chimnissing* First Nation, Ontario. She currently resides on her home reservation. King explains that the good life is up to the individual. She says that each person has a choice of whether or not to actively engage in a good life. She says that some of the things we can do for a good life are eat well, exercise, and embrace moderation. She adds that, for a good life, one should stay away from alcohol and other drugs. She explains that *minobimaadiziwin* also involves helping.

She advises to spend days helping not only yourself but your community as well. “I help my community by going out and helping with the things that they are doing – performing ceremonies.” She also stresses the importance of our children and what they are seeing in our actions.

I want my children and my grandchildren to remember me as a woman, a mother, and a grandmother, that taught them things – the good memories that they will have. Because I can remember my daughter saying to me one time, she says, “You know all the memories that I have of my father when we were growing up. I can remember him drinking all the time and not spending time with us to go out and do things.”

She explains that she wanted to change that for her children. She stresses the importance of paying attention to the kind of memories we are creating for our children and grandchildren:

I was looking at a video last night and we have Johnny six teeth over here and every year we celebrate it. And we all agree to get together, and the Chief and the Council serve the community members the supper. They take all the plates and you know, they line up in rows and each table that’s full, they finish eating and another comes in. At this one they honored one of our past Chiefs. What he brought to the community was uh, “hydro” and a telephone company. And this one lady was showing video that she remembered as a little girl, going with her mother down the shores of

Georgian Bay, our community store, and they were selling birch bark baskets and quill boxes. I could see my memory as I started seeing these birch bark baskets because I used to sit with my brother and my mom and my grandmother. And we used to help them make little canoes and we used to watch them doing the birch bark baskets. That's how I remember my mom and my grandmother – doing all that work. And that's the kind of memory I think would be good for my grandchildren – seeing and helping with things you know. Christmas Day, I got my little grandson and I to make little gingerbread men. We cut them into shapes and we baked them. And then, afterwards, he sat there and ate them – here. That was such a cute little thing. And his father, standing there making Italian bread. (We laugh). Those are the kind of memories I'd like to see. Now, that's the good life for me! Doing things with grandchildren – doing things with the community – that makes it a life where you are going to remember. I think now that all the time that we were drinking at our younger age, I can't remember some of the things that happened. So a good life would be all those good fond memories, you know?

King explains that living *minobimaadiziwin* does not mean being a “goodie, goodie,” so to speak. She gives the following example:

Being a good role model, doing things “in a good way” and in a good way, meaning, I tell myself that I'm doing it properly – not necessarily

being a “goodie, goodie.” There’s a – even though, like when I’m sewing, you try and do your best to do perfection on things but you are gonna slip. You are gonna slip and make a little wrong curve, and maybe something is going to be different. Even when you are beading – it’s the same thing. You might add – if you’re doing all black – then all of a sudden you’re beading along and all of a sudden a blue one pops up – it’s nothing. I remember a teaching so well that Eddie did in the lodge one time and he talked about, you know, that there’s nobody greater than the Creator. Even the people – there is no such thing as being that good, because if you are better than the Creator, then that’s saying something right there. You have to make a mistake because even the Creator makes a mistake – little mistakes, aye? I remember that teaching so well. I just kept it in my heart because it sounded so good. And when I do think like that, if I make a mistake when I’m sewing or if I’m beading and I see it, I think, “Oh that’s okay, it doesn’t have to be perfect, but it just has to be a well done job or a good job.”

King explains that she does not question the existence of spirit, and alludes to dreams being one example of how the spirit works.

I’ve had dreams of things that have happened, and that actually did happen, but it doesn’t have to be – if I had a dream today, it doesn’t have to happen tomorrow or the next day, it seems like they come in sequence.

It doesn't have to be that week, but I know that the reason why we have dreams is that it foretells you of things that are going to happen. They bring you messages – the dreams. And for me, when I see those dreams, especially when somebody has gone on to the spirit world – I have dreams of my brother, my youngest brother, and he, uh, actually the day before he died, he put his hand on my shoulder and told me it was gonna be okay. And actually seen him in the casket a few days later, and I didn't remember that dream then, but it was only a week or two later that I remembered and I said, "Oh jeez, that's what it was telling me and that he was going to be okay when he goes on to the spirit world." That tells me that, you know, not to worry or not to grieve over him because I know where he went.

She stresses that dreams play a very important role in living *minobimaadiziwin*.

They play an important role – very important. When those dreams – you can make those dreams happen – or you can't. But if you don't even try to make them happen, if it's meant to be that way, it happens that way. You'll recognize it later and it just seems so real. It's like you're standing in front of a TV and watching a TV and these images come at you and they show you things. And I'm like, "Oh, wow," you know? When I wake up in the morning and think, "Oh, wow! I dreamt this." I immediately tell one of my teachers (I have so many teachers out there) and I tell them my dreams

and they translate them back to me. That was before when I first started. But now when I recognize those dreams, and when somebody tells me about their dreams, I can answer them and tell them what I see in it. It's totally up to them if they want to see it unfold the way it does – just leave it or they can make it happen. Dreams are really important. I think they are very important.

For King, ceremony has become an essential role in living *minobimaadiziwin*. Ceremonies have been a key to helping her through times of loss – being engaged in *Anishinaabe* ways of life include ceremonies that provide immense healing.

Without them (ceremonies), I think I would have been down that other road where I could have been more pitiful. I could have picked up that bottle and made myself more pitiful. I picked myself up and started helping others. I actually believe that these ceremonies, these songs are medicine songs – they help the people. I've actually witnessed that these songs can help people. The sweat lodges can help people. At my age – I'm 57 years old – I didn't want to say that but, uh, (she laughs) when I meet people and they ask me how old I am and I tell them and they look at me, "You're that old!" Although my body is not as great as it would be with a younger person, I don't look that old. Some say I look ten to fifteen years younger than I am, and I owe it all to living the good life: following the ceremonies, going to the four ceremonies and the medicine lodge, getting

that healing from the jingle dress dancers, and going into as many sweats as I can. I truly believe that they work and all that letting go of all the junk that you carry. If somebody says something to me, I just come home, put my tobacco down, and pray for that person because they don't know that they hurt me. And, also, releasing that and forgiving that person – you know, you are feeling good because you're not going to carry that around. You've let it go already by putting it into your tobacco and putting it out. You know, praying for that one, asking the Creator to forgive them.

King explains tobacco has an important role in *minobimaadiziwin*. She believes that tobacco is one of our helpers.

I always say this to my children, you'll often hear my daughter talk about this, she says, "Yeah I know, mom, you always tell me: Put your tobacco in your hand and pray. Your tobacco will always let you know things. It may not work today. You might not get that answer today, but you'll get that answer eventually and you'll know what that answer is. If you're stuck, even if you're doing your schoolwork, or somebody argues with you, I say put that in your asemaa and you'll get your answer." I said "Always remember that tobacco helps you."

King explains that her relationships with the rest of Creation play an important role in *minobimaadiziwin*. Along that line she relates this story:

I'll tell you. I guess I'll just have to tell you my experience I had the first time I ever went fasting. I went fasting ten times, I mean ten days since I started walking this road back in 1989. I put in things because life is totally different now than what it was a long time ago when our people didn't have anything to worry about, like having a hard time with – where am I going to get the money to pay for this, to pay for that? Our life was simple back then, but nowadays it's become much harder. And so when I went out fasting, I really, I didn't think about this till after. I never thought about it until a couple weeks later, after I went fasting, what happened to me. I was lying on the ground and I fell asleep. I didn't know what time it was – I figure it must have been about midnight because when I looked up inside my little lodge, I could see the moon, where those bars, where those little saplings folded over. It was sitting right on top of there. It just seemed like it was right on top of that – I felt such closeness to the moon. I said, "Thank you!" That was the first time I'd ever done that – say thank you. And then when I lay back down I felt as if I was thirsty, but I wasn't going to drink any water. When I passed tobacco to go out fasting, I was told you're to have no food and no water for two days and two nights, and I'd never gone without, but this time I said, "Okay." But I passed that tobacco over early and because they told me to meditate each morning, noon, and nighttime to put my tobacco down. Tell the spirit world that I'm coming out there and for them to take pity on me when I was out there.

And I didn't feel it but, um, for some reason, early in the morning – it must have been really early in the morning because as I'm lying there, I could feel that dampness. If you can see the dew early in the morning and it has little spots of water on it, if you can imagine, well, that was on my blanket up on top. And, anyway I went to, for some reason, it felt like it was picking itself up and putting itself in my mouth. But as soon as that coldness touched my tongue, I started spitting it out, spitting and spitting, and I said, "Ahhhh," you know, ha-ha. I don't know who I was talking to, but I said, "You know that I'm supposed to be out here fasting. I can't be drinking the water." And I laid back down and I started listening, and all of a sudden I could hear breathing. I looked around, "Who's breathing?" There's only me in here and, uh, laying there. But, you know, it was Mother Earth's breath. I could feel it and I could hear it. It was like unnuh huuuh – like this – uh. And I'm going, "Oh my ghhhad!"

She speaks to the loss *Anishinaabeg* have experienced and expresses regret about the loss of the gift of hearing, and how important that was in the past.

Some of our treaties were made on the sound of how far our people could hear that rifle going in, and when that little ball of lead would fall to the ground. They knew exactly where that fell and they said where that land is how far we own. You know how we can hear and that was quite a distance. The treaties from here (Christian Island) there were some that

were made like that. Because of modern – the modern age – people don't hear as far anymore, but you can if you really take the time to cut out all these TV's and all these other things. If you shut those off you can hear quite a long ways. We are listening to too many different kinds of things these days.

King explains that food can help us to live *minobimaadiziwin*. Furthermore there are significant changes in *minobimaadiziwin* as a result of the food eaten now as compared to the food that was eaten generations before.

Well, as a young girl I used to watch my parents. And they had gardens right out our back door, you know, down by the pond, close to the pond. They grew everything. My dad used to go out, I guess in a way, he picked medicines and he'd bring them home. He called the one medicine Anishinaabe – little Anishinaabe's medicine. It was good for the heart. He looked like a little – if you look at that little root – he did look like a little Indian. You could always see him chewing it and it was good for his heart. All the things that they used from the land was good for their bodies. They were healthier and they didn't suffer as much as, uh, I don't believe, not too many people really got too sick where I come from on the island because it's hard for us to get off the island because we live, uh, we have to travel on a boat, aye, to get back and forth. But they mostly did all their uh, you know, growing their own vegetables and stuff but because as

things go along, and we come to depend too much on store bought things, and it's much easier for people to go out and buy things from the store, people are getting sicker. Diabetes in our community is very, very high. And the heart problems that we have because people are not working for the things that we need nowadays, and to go out and pick their medicines. Our people have our own medicine people that know the medicines and they know what ails you. Some are uh, some can use medicines. Some people can see through you, you know they have that gift of being able to see what's wrong with your body. And there's those people that work with the mind – the spirit. But, sometimes, all of them nowadays have the same gift. But, today, all this stuff that we are eating nowadays from the store, it's killing us.

King tells a story of the local gravesites being evidence to the length of an *Anishinaabe* person's lifespan in the past vis-à-vis today. She gives an example of a grave from the 1800's marked with a lifespan of 117 years. She argues that if we were to live off the land (as in earlier generations) we would have less "poisons in our bodies." She relates ingesting chemicals from our store-bought foods to various cancers, diabetes, and other diseases on the rise. King also speaks about how far away we are from "living off the land."

What I notice around here is there is a lot of apple trees. And those apples stay on the tree all year long. They have their bloomin' early in the spring.

Then they turn to lil wee apples then they grow, grow, grow. Come August, September, those apples are there. Come November, December they're still hanging there. You see them all winter long – they turn all brown now. It's so much easier for the people here to go out and get um – and it's not only here, it's all over – they go out to the grocery store, they don't even get them off the trees anymore. You know? That's exercise, you know? Doing things like that, exercising and living off the land. Nobody does that. But one of the things that still amazes me around here is that we, uh, is back in May around here, around Mother's Day, you should see the tons of people that are out there, um, picking morels. I used to DJ on the radio station over here and, uh, I talked about morels one day and the things that are coming from the ground; and I was telling the people over the air that some of these things are meant for us to eat when they start coming out like that, you know, even the fiddle head. Those things coming out of the ground, you know, those young shoots – they bring something into our system and we need it for our body. And (she laughs) ever since I told that story, the people go out looking for those morels because they know it's good for their systems. You've just got to remind them once in a while.

She says that everything about the land, including food, is medicine. She gives examples of tree bark tea that her uncle taught her to make to address her high blood

pressure. She adds that there are specific things our bodies need from the plants that remain wild. She sees a big change between the past and present in that less people know the plants in contemporary times. "That's another thing they used to do – they knew the plants, they knew the medicines you needed to help build your system up, you know, keep yourself in control, you know, that was your life." She speaks to the intricacy of plant knowledge. She says that the Creator gave the plant world the gift of healing, but that there are two sides to every plant being:

For every medicine, they say, for every plant there is out there, there is a good and a bad. But you always know the good one and always, uh, and it comes in, uh, medicine people. I know one man in our lodge. I went down to Hannahville one time and we got their early, me and Erica – this is before she had the kids – and, uh, we got down there early. We were the first ones that arrived and we could see, well, we go there early enough to see Eddie going off, but they hadn't even built the lodge then. So we stayed there all night. So he came by in the morning. We went out for breakfast and came back in our little tent. I was walking around there and I happened to meet him. And he says, "Oh, Gloria," he says, "have you seen the sweat lodges yet?" I says, "No, I haven't." And he says, "Well I'll show you because I know you like to sweat." He laughs, he says, "Aye, yep." So he took me out on the other side of the road and we walked through the bushes, and wasn't too far from camp, and they had the four

sweat lodge areas, and he was telling me about the different ones that were there. As we were walking along, he's talking, then all of a sudden he stops, and he raises his one finger up to his lip and for him to say shhh, you know, be quiet for a minute. So, anyways, I just stood there and watched him. Then he turns to me and he says, "Watch this," he says. So he bends down and, uh, he pulls away some moss off this tree and he picks up the little roots and says to me, "This medicine told me to pick it up and tell you what this is," he says. So I looked at him and then he says, "This medicine told me this is good when you have a cold," he says. "All you've got to do is just rinse them out and boil them." But he says, "Always remember to be careful of how much you use because it's a hallucinogenic drug – you can see things, he says, and other people use it that way. But for you this is what it's meant, for you, you can use it for a cold, he says. I was so impressed. And I actually do believe when you hear the other part of nature, how creation is so close to us, um, this reminds me of a story that I have with my brother and I. I'm always with my brother. And, uh, over here, 'cause, we used to help each other with the lodge and go up the hill and clean the lodge, cut the grass and do things up there and get the sweat lodge ready and prepare the, you know, clean out the sweat lodge and him do the other work so we were getting ready for a sweat. He says, "C'mon, you get the cedar and I'll go get the rocks," he says. So we went out. So, anyway, he calls me down to the shore, he says, "Come here," he

says. "I don't know if I'm hearing things," he says. So I went down, I was right close to the edge, to the water, just as he was; there was a lot of rocks there, aye, so I looked at him. I says, "I never question my teachers because I know what they are gonna tell me is something I need to learn." So he says to me, "I put my asemaa down." And I'm listening to him. "I put my asemaa down," he says, "and I ask that tobacco to guide me, to show me which of those rocks are the ones going into the sweat lodge. I use that tobacco like that, and I walked around," he says. "And then I put it down and I told them what the rocks were going into that sweat lodge to help our people that need that healing," he says. "You know what, I'm looking down," he says, "and I'm about to pick up this one and another one speaks to me and says, 'Let ME be that one that goes and helps the people,'" he says to me. And I said, "Really?" And he said, "Yeah! I wanna see if you'd hear it," he says. So as he was bending down. He says, "There's one over there," he says. So he had his tobacco in his hand as he walked over and then I thought I heard something, and I looked and he went to get one but he moved his hand and I said, "I thought that's the one you're gonna pick," I said. He told me it was the one and he said, "Oh, so you heard it, too." And I said, "Yeah." (laughs).

See that's quite amazing what happens to our people. I've never heard of anybody, you know, going through that. I've heard of similar stories with

our people, but other cultures... I've never heard that happen. But it's truly our Anishinaabe, the belief that we have in the Midewiwin Lodge about how the Creator – how we sat with the Creator longer than anyone else. You could see how amazing, how that belief that's so strong when you hear things like this. Even when you sit there with Eddie and the initiates with that first teaching, that's what it reminds me of.

King tells of the importance of the pipe for her *minobimaadiziwin*. She tells a historical struggle to care for a pipe in her family. She says that her relative carried a very old pipe to his deathbed. From there, her uncle cared for it, and before he passed on, he gave it to his wife. She explains that his wife was afraid of what she called the “blackrobes” (missionaries) and she brought the pipe to a respected teacher whom she trusted to hide and protect the pipe. The teacher kept the pipe in the family for a long time and then gave it to this museum.

Then they called here and they told him about this pipe, and who carried it and then it was my brother that went to get it. And it's been in our family since. And I got the chance to carry that pipe, not to be a carrier of it, but to be a keeper of it for a year. Because they didn't, uh, at the time after my brother died, the one that was lookin' after it, I didn't know where it was going, but it was said that the spirit would decide on where it was gonna go. Eddie, um, passed it over to me and he said, “You're to carry this for a while, until it knows where it's going.” And he told me to bring it to every

ceremony. Me and my children, my children are so proud, you know, they carried the pipe in that bag and they treated it just like a little baby. They carried it just like that. It would be the first thing they would grab when we stopped the car. And they'd take it to the lodge and hang it in there. I kept it for a year; and, then, when it was asked I brought it forward and it was passed to the brother that I go with. He still carries it to this day.

King explains that our *Anishinaabe* life, *minobimaadiziwin*, the life that was given to *Anishinaabeg* people is good for them. That way of life she speaks of involves sobriety. She believes that *Anishinaabe* way of life is good for *Anishinaabe* people and that if they want the help, living that life will help them.

King explains that natural law is a part of living *minobimaadiziwin* and involves the seven teachings *Anishinaabe* was given by the Creator. She tells a story to illustrate the change in perception of those Seven Grandfather teachings from the way they were given to *Anishinaabe* by the Creator, and the way that people perceive them today.

They have to learn those words, humility. What does it mean to you? – Being humble about the things that you do. Love, love is, to me is a very sacred word to, uh, for family. There's a difference between a family member and your partner but it doesn't, love, doesn't mean sex you know. It has a totally different meaning – how you feel for that person and how grateful you are to be with that family and bravery – how that means to me, to stand up. I think over here, my family, would be called brave to be

standing up to the people here because they have no understanding about Anishinaabeg way of life, and they have ridiculed us. But no matter what they have said we're still here and we're still giving these teachings and having those sweat lodges. And everyone told me not to have the sweat lodge in my yard because people are gonna come over, and they are gonna burn it down and everything. If you're gonna have it in the village. I don't live close to the village. I still live in the outskirts on the west end of the village. And then when my son died, my young son died this summer, we put a big lodge in my backyard. My son didn't like churches, he was not a Catholic, although he was baptized Catholic. But he didn't follow that way and, uh, he didn't belong to the united church. He used to say he was an atheist. And he was just teasing me. "What do you believe in, anyway?" I told him one day. "Aww," he said, "I don't believe in nothing. I'm an atheist," he says, aye. He was always the one that was standing outside our house. You know, he'd go to work, come home, and there was a sweat going on. He'd be the one standing out there, taking care of that fire. If we needed help building the sweat lodge, he'd be there, putting his hands on it. That's why we took him into the lodge. There's a lot of people that put us down for being Midewiwin here, for being traditional. They call us traditionalists – "Those traditionalists and traditions," you know, following that way. I know what I have gotten from it and I will never forget. That has become a good part of my life, and to be this sober, to be

this clean without alcohol and drugs, and to have a clear mind and a good heart and a good faith. I love this way of life and nothing could turn me away. That's what I call "bravery," to stand in front of your people even though they ridicule you. To stand there brave, all those teachings have a different meaning for each person, and those are the things that come from learning them and walking in a good way.

King explains that the concept of time in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is different than that in contemporary and dominant society. She laughs and says, "especially on a reserve because many people don't run on time as much as the outside world." She adds that another difference is the meaning changes between *Anishinaabemowin* and English. For example, the names for trees, clouds, and other members of creation don't translate exactly from *Anishinaabemowin* to English. She adds that, from where she sits, she can see the trees all around. She would like to tell me in *Anishinaabemowin* about that view but it would be totally lost if she said it in English. She explains further how important the trees are in *minobimaadiziwin*.

Oftentimes when I travel on the boat, I look across and I look back here and I see the island – coming from the island or coming home, after traveling for so long and you go to places like Toronto. That's a big city, you hardly see any trees anymore though because there's been so much development and it's gotten so big. And then, uh, from about, because we're about an hour and fifteen minutes away from Toronto, or something

like that, probably more. But as you go along the highways all you see is buildings. Sure the buildings are beautiful, some of them. But where are the trees? I've gotten so used to living here at the island and seeing all these beautiful trees, and you walk amongst them, you can touch them. When my daughter had her baby – when McKenzie was born – I took him out into the bush. I put his hand on the little bark and he'd touch it and pull his hand away you know? (laughs). He felt the roughness. But when I told him about that tree and what it does for us, he just looked at me. I told him all in the language. I know that someday when he grows up he'll be able to say, "My grandma took me out and told me these things in the language." I think he'd have a better memory of that than anything else.

Helen Roy

Helen Roy is an Elder from *Wiwemikong* First Nation, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. She currently resides in East Lansing, Michigan, where she continues her lifelong dedication to *Ojibwe* language revitalization. Roy explains *minobimaadiziwin* as a way of life and being. She tries living that way herself and incorporates the components of *minobimaadiziwin* that she has learned from childhood through adulthood. She offers the following story as an example.

When somebody does something to you, try to overlook it because people do some things sometimes just without thinking. It's not excusing what people do, it's just thinking in that way; you know not to take it serious. When you take it seriously it creates, you know, bad feelings. One thing I remember about growing up, and I still do – in fact, I said this to somebody when I used to work in Mt. Pleasant – I remember the words my dad used to say. Not just my dad, but anybody. You know, sometimes you come home, crying, somebody's teasing you, or somebody said something to you, or somebody called you a name or somebody said something – because the way kids do things, just to tease people – I just remember those times where I would or somebody else in my family would come running home or tattling you know. I always remember my Dad would say "Manor" Maanoo wiindamooge and maanoo, which just means, "Let it be," you know. And wiinaamooge, it just means – it's really hard to translate. It just means, "Whatever that person is doing to you, it's like their own doing. One of these days they'll wise up." So I always remember those, "Oh, Maanoo!" You know? So I remember one time when I was working in Mt. Pleasant and I said to somebody, "I think I'm the Queen of Maanoo." And it sounded like that sickness, (laughs) you know, mono. But I said, "I think I'm the Queen of Maanoo." If somebody does anything, I never say, I never antagonize, anybody. I never argue,

you know, I just kinda "okay." I'm not always in agreement. I'll say something when it's something I don't agree with, but I'm not always like that. I'm not, you know, so much of an idiot that I let people walk over me or anything, control me, or whatever. But it's those things that I remember growing up, and I tried to tell that to my kids when they were growing up. Sometimes when they'd come home from school, "Aw, they did this to me," and they said, uh, "Oh, they called me a stupid Indian." And I said, "Just let it go – are you?" I'd say to them, "No!" Well then, that's exactly the way that I try to live, you know, that good life and just doing – for my own self, you know, growing up in not such a good life with the alcoholism, you know, and all that you know. My dad drank a lot and my mom died. So it's just my own personal, the way that I understand the good life. For myself, I am going to have a good life, you know. I'm not going to be, I'm not going to do, the same things that I saw growing up, you know. And that's exactly what I did. I told George one time when we were getting married. I said one time, you know, on the day we got married, I said my own vows to somebody, you know, God or whomever, of course I was – we got married Roman Catholic so I guess I was talking to God that day (laughs). You know, I said to him one time, I said, "I was talking to God, myself in my mind and I'm thinking, you know, I want to have a good life. I wanna take care of my kids, you know. I wanna do the best that I can, you know, stay with the man that I marry and never, uh,

you know, look for anybody else. It's just natural for me. I don't even have to try, you know, and I think people know sometimes. They just know the type of person you are so nobody's gonna try and, you know, break that. Not that, you know, when I talk about that, staying with one man, you know. I've never experienced anybody, you know, trying to come on to me or anything. And that's what I mean when I say, when you live a good life, people know. I think people recognize. I'm not saying I'm the best, you know. I'm not saying that at all, but I think people recognize, certainly, I recognize what kind of person they are just by the way they look at you; by the things that they say, by the way they react to things, you know, what irks them. Everything, you know. So, to me, a good life is just livin' your life without expecting this other person to be just like you, because only you can control your own. You know your own – you can't expect your husband or your friend to be exactly the good person that you want them to be because you can't control that. The only thing that you can control is yourself. So, to me, that's what the good life is in simple, because I'm simple (laughs). No, I'm not simple, dumb, or anything. I just have the simple life, you know.

Roy explains her belief that it is probably a “given” that life is inherently good simply by the evidence that there is so much life out there.

When you step outside, you're stepping on grass that's alive, you're looking at leaves that's alive. You're looking at the birds. There's life out there. And I think a lot of people just think that life is just in human beings. You know, in today's thinking they don't really recognize that there's life everywhere, even in the water. Everywhere, you know?

She explains that *Anishinaabemowin* provides us with an understanding of life that is not understood in English. She tells a story of a drive she took with her sister.

As we were pulling back into where we were, we saw somebody walking up – ahead a ways – and my sister said, "Is that Julie?" And I said, "No, it doesn't look like Julie – that looks like Tom" because it was a man. And then I said "Nininse Tom," like that, right, "Toming nininse," because that's the way you have to say that, right, "Nininse, Ahhh, nini" (like a man). Because man is the only one that walks on twos, and when I saw that, and when I heard that, it just clicked. "Nininse, nininse, I'm walking like a man." And you kind of have to go back, to the first man. You know, like way back, Adam. Because a lot of people don't like to, uh, don't like to compare "Indianness" with religion, or anything like that, they don't like to. But, in my eyes, it's all the same. In my mind, it's all the same. So that first man walked on twos. And our language says that, you know?

Our language is so old, so that sometimes – you know, I spoke my language all my life. And I say, you know, since I've been teaching, I say that I've kind of taken it for granted because I've never really looked deep into what everything meant. But now that I'm teaching, I'm really hearing it more and sometimes it brings tears to my eyes when I hear those words, what they really mean, and it's a shame that we don't know, that not all Anishinaabeg know that. It's very sad, you know, not really understanding. Not knowing that there is life everywhere. In our words, there is life. Everything. That's why they say, our Elders, our teachings, say that our language is the Earth. You know keepers of the language and stuff like that, but keepers of the Earth are the Elders, supposedly. They are the keepers of the Earth. And that is everything. That is your language. That is your way of life. Because in that language it tells you how you should live. Those words tell you. I'm not saying it makes you a better person, but you understand a whole lot differently, if you can understand, you know, your language. So, to me, that question that you asked me, that's what I would say to that. So there is life everywhere, not just in things that grow, but in our language. And without our language, we really do not have life that was meant for us.

Roy says that her concept of what it means to be good is not to think one can be perfect but to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

And that's exactly, you know, what good means. You know, if I speak to you in a certain way, you know, I wouldn't like that if you did that to me so I'm not gonna do that to you. And that's kinda like the way that we were brought up, um, you know, going back to my dad saying "wiindoomooge" – whatever he does, that's him, it's not you, you know, kind of thing. So I dunno, good is just, going back to that phrase again, you've got to do your best to be. You can't be perfect, but I guess you can be at a certain level, you know, just to have that good life – be at that one level. If you're up like this, or down, you're just creating something – creating something that shouldn't be there.

Roy offers the following examples to express how *Anishinaabemowin* words encompass spirit.

In the language basically everything, most of our words, would have something about a life. You know when I talk about in the language like once you understand something, if you hear that word again, used in a different way, you're gonna understand where that word comes from. Just like when you say zaage'igan, somebody that comes out. Like maybe you see somebody walking, coming out from the woods, zaage'igewag, they do it, so zaage'e anything that comes out of the Earth. So water comes out of the Earth, in the form of a lake or river. I mean people don't make those. They just do it on their own. So when you see that, when you hear that

word, you just know, it's coming out of something that's already living.

Aki, anything that's, right off the bat, you know, thinking about what thing has spirit, right off the bat would be, um, o'de is one. Because that's really, well, the heartbeat, right? Everything has a heart, really if you think about it. People have hearts. Animals have hearts and they have different ways that they beat. So, when they talk about the clans, it came to me one time when I was teaching, about, uh, ndoodem. Everybody says ndoodem, and it's spelled "doodem," and a lot of people don't recognize that o'de is in there. But it should be nda' o'dem: nda is "I am" kind of thing. When you say "nda yekoz," I'm tired or I'm scared, so you use that nda' odem. That's really what that should be, nda o'dem. And a lot of people don't understand this – every person, human's heart beat beats a certain way. You know, it has a number with it. Birds have supposedly a very fast, you know, heart beat, and every animal based on their own survival and their own environment have their own heart beat. Bears, you know, they go to sleep in the winter because more than likely they wouldn't survive that winter so they crawl into a cave somewhere and live there. Whereas the deer, and all these other animals, live during even the hardest, coldest winters. Different animals, even fish – I don't know about their heart but they have a certain, you know. So based on those animals, and based on what those animals do, their survivals and everything about them, um, that's, people's traits, you know, the way that you live. I would

have to know the way that you live. So that's, "Oh, you probably belong to the turtle clan," just based on the way that you live. So that's where your heart, your heart is like that animal right there. So when you say "ndodem," my heart is like that animal. And that's what that word really means.

Roy also speaks to the role of ceremony in living *minobimaadiziwin*.

It kind of goes back to where I talked about religion and Indian people are so afraid – "Oh, I'm traditional. Oh, no, I don't believe in Catholic religion even though I used to be one, believe in the Catholic ways." But I think ceremony or the way that you show or celebrate, whatever, sometimes it's a celebration or the way that you live; that's the things that you do. Like if you eat, there's a certain way that you do things. Okay, all the girls are going to set the table and all the boys are going to wash the dishes; that's a ceremony, that's a way to do things. And I think a ceremony is just a way that you do things in your life. So you can't say, "I don't do it that way. We do it this way." Well, yes, of course, everybody does it. That's why there's so many faiths, religions, out there, you know. I don't think that one is better than the other because supposedly we believe in only one. Whether we call that person, or being, God, Gichi Manidoo, Mohammed, whatever you call that person, that being, you know. I guess I saw that growing up because like a lot of my own family, I became born-

again Christian. My dad was a devout Catholic and then there were some other different ways, different, I guess you could say, followers of other ways. There was maybe four or five different beliefs back home. Like when my dad was dying, my brother is traditional, you know, he goes to ceremonies. He goes to pow wows. He doesn't drink and smoke, and he used to, you know, but he's kind of changed his ways so now he's a very traditional person. He wears his hair in braids. He wears his hair long and all of his boys, you know. And women wear dresses, traditional. And then we have the two of my other members of my family who were born-again Christian. And then my dad's woman at the time was a Roman Catholic. So when he was dying, my brother came in and said some prayers, you know, did some thing from the Bible. And, then, my brother – traditional man – came in and did some smudging, and my dad took it, you know, received it in good faith, you know. And then his woman came in and did the Rosary and we all did. Not to say we, I'm getting out of here. So he respected everybody's beliefs. Because, you know, if I go into your home and you do things a certain way I'm looking at it, like okay, that's your ceremony to me, you know, ceremony is not anything that you put way up there, it's just the way of life. Like your clothes, sometimes you might wear something really nice, sometimes you might just wear a t-shirt. It's all just the way different people live their lives. We put different words to it, you know, like these highfalutin words. (We laugh.) [Amy: I don't

think I'm going to know how to spell that word! (We laugh.)] That's my biggest word! (more laughing)

You know, I think people just tend to overdo everything. And, by overdoing it, it creates division. I mean, what happened to our people, right?

Division. And who brought that? English. Other languages, other things that were brought to our people have created that. Okay, well, we do it this way. I don't believe what you do because "these" people over here, that came from across the water, said that this is the way. Okay, so I'm gonna do this now. So, all of a sudden, I'm a changed person, you know? Because I used to be this, you know, one way of thinking and that way of thinking was very, it had a lot of wisdom, and for somebody to come along and change that... and you believe it.

Helen explains that there is more than one type of dream. There are dreams you seek out and must work hard for in our *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. She says that there are also dreams that you receive and there are also messages.

I think that dreams are goals that you set for yourself, you know. And you make up your mind that that's the way you're gonna do it or the way that you're gonna try to do it. It may not happen the way you want it, not right off the bat. You have to work for them. You have to work at something – you know, a dream. You have to work at it, you know, like a relationship.

You have to work at it – a dream that you want. And like I said, you have to be, you have to do it. You can't expect, oh, I want you to you know maybe a boyfriend or husband or your work, boss, you know, you can't expect them to treat you a certain way; you have to also treat them a certain way, you know, for anything to work. Did I ever tell you about my dream? It was a dream or vision or something. Because I'm not a swimmer even at my age, you know, I can't touch bottom. If there's people around me, I get panicky, you know, because if I'm by myself I can stay afloat, try things in the water that I see people doing. I'm kind of afraid of water, swimming. But, uh, I remember even when my mom was still alive that I'm swimming, and I'm kind of a good swimmer, but the water is like a mirror, I'm not splashing, but I'm swimming and the water is just endless. I don't see any land anywhere. Swimming. I used to have this dream off and on. And maybe when I was about, maybe about twenty years ago, off and on throughout my whole life I had this dream. But about twenty years ago I had the same dream and I see this like a, you know, how a ripple has the circle around. I am swimming but I see this water move, like a ring around me, you know, movin'; but it's still not splashing like, you know, like a splash, if you were swimming. And then another time, I don't know when, I think it was a dream, maybe it was – had a vision or something I don't know what happens, you know – but the next dream I had I dreamt about, you know, that, I guess you call it a

Cornucopia, in the fall, this thing where all the vegetables are. So I dreamt about that, not that, but it's shape and outside of it, from inside, this water was coming out of it, just gushing out. I knew it was water just from the way it was comin' out. But in that water I saw these Anishinaabe words pouring out. It was just like water, and in that water was all these Anishinaabe words, just all these words flowed out like Niagara Falls. I thought about it when it happened and then sometime later, I don't know when, I dreamt about this lady. I saw this lady standing in front of me, but her back was towards me. I could see the color and everything and I never really dream of color that I know of. Maybe I do, but I don't remember it, but I saw this lady and she had this kinda like that orange, yellow, that yellow orange there and green and I could see the details of the flowers there and the jingles all over the dress. You know, I could see her standing there and I went like this to see her standing there, who it was. It was me. It was me. And I just, I didn't wake up thinking about it; I remembered it later. I remembered that dream. It just kinda made me think, "Why am I having these dreams?" All my life. So I talked to my brother about it and, uh, I told him everything. And he said, you know, you should make that dress. He says because all those dreams that you had all your life, as a little girl, you know you teach language and that movement you've seen on the water, because there was never one before is, uh, you're starting to make a difference to our people. And healing is not just an illness. Healing

is healing the people so that they get their language again. That's the biggest healing that you could ever get, you know? So he said those colors you saw, those are our clan colors. So what I did the next day, after I had that dream about the dress, I drew it. And the way that I saw it was, the cones were in a circle around what I saw – the dress. So he said that I should make that dress. I have the jingles but I, I'm emcee for the pow wow this weekend in Marquette. But I could wear it at times like that, times when I, uh, you know, about language and times like that, workshops, whatever, I could wear the dress then. Even if I don't dance. He said what you're doing is starting to make a difference. So that was my dream. My whole life I've had that. I mean. And when you're put on this Earth, there's a reason.

Roy speaks to the role of spirituality in living *minobimaadiziwin* with the following explanation.

Well, spirituality like I said is everything you do. Whether you're a dancer, there's some of that in there because you have it in you because not everyone knows how to do this. If you look at how it may take them a while, if you look at, you know, how sometimes people, "Oh, look at those kids at the pow wow," you know, and they're dancing. They're just learning. They say that we have everything. Because, you see this ballet dancer – "Oh, I wish I could do that." You just have to know that you

have it. And, you might say, "Oh, I wish I could sing." I say that all the time. I wish I could sing because I could use it in my teaching, you know. Somebody said, "Well, don't just talk about it. Do it." And then there's always that "time," right, stopping us from doing all that we can do. So I think that's what that is, the way that I understand it anyways, you know, that spirit. You're given a spirit that can do just about anything that you want to do. Whether you dance or whether you're, I'm a teacher, whatever you want to do. That's what that spirit is.

She also speaks to the differing perceptions of time. The perception of time involved in *Anishinaabe Minobimaadiziwin* differs from how time is conceived in the contemporary, dominant American culture.

Well, time in today's world is measured with that clock. Time, you have to be to work by a certain time. These things that are set for you outside of, well not just outside, but at noon I want to watch, at 12:30, I want to watch "The Young and the Restless." Well, in the morning I only have a little bit of time before I do that but if you, uh, where was I going with that? You know how they always talk about Indian time? I listened to an Elder one time saying, "Time is what's given to you" – I don't really like to use the word "time" again, but that's the word we have to use – "time that you're given to do what you have to do." Whether that's twenty years of your life, some people die young, whether it's 100 years whether it's 60,

whatever. And, uh, you should be able to – and again you are put there for a reason, and you may not know it, you know, but you've accomplished what you, usually they say well they've accomplished what they're put out there for. And some people it's just like growth, children, teens, adults, some of us don't ever grow up till we're 30 or 40 to know the things that some people might get at 20 or 16 years old. So I guess time doesn't really matter as long as you get what you are supposed to. Make sense? You know, we have some people say, "When are you gonna grow up?" Well, when it's time. That's all it is. It doesn't say that, okay, when I'm 21 that I'm supposed to be an adult or 18, right? Some of us take longer. Some of us are still 50 and we're still acting like we're 20. You know? But that's okay because that's what it's meant to be unless it's over excessively too much. You know how some people are utterly lazy, you know, can't even motivate anybody? But at least if the person is trying....

Roy explains further that all members of Creation have important roles in ensuring *minobimaadiziwin* for all.

Well, I think that we all help each other. That life that I talked about earlier, grass, everything, in one way we're all one. Even though some of us may walk on fours, some of us may fly, like the birds. Some of us may only live in the water, like the fish, and some of us can only walk on land, like human beings. But I think that we are all helping one another. You

know, the animals give up their life so that we could live, all of those things. We are all one because we all live on one Earth. And I think that's just the way it's meant to be. You know? I think, if I could think like an animal, I probably might think the same way. How they're all one kind. They stick together, the deer, they all stick together. You never see a deer that looks like a moose. You know that cross breeding. And my dad said one time, animals are smarter than humans because at least they stick with their own kind. We were meant to stick with our own kind. When we were growing up he used to say, "When you get married, stick with your own kind." And he always told us, and one time I look back, to help our people. My sister, she makes regalia – not regalia, but clothing, like ribbon shirts, all kinds of appliqué kind of things. She's done that for years and years. My older brother is a principal for an Anishinaabe school back on our reserve. I teach language. My next sister, the one that died, she worked for the Native friendship center in Toronto where she helped the homeless people on the streets. That's what their job was. The next one down, she worked for Aboriginal Magazine with Gary Farmer in Toronto. And she worked in Barry at the Friendship Center. Sophie, it was always with Indian people. My younger sister was an actress with the Native American stage. All of us, my brother worked at the band office back home. All of us, all the way down the line, we worked in, having something to do with, Indian people. And I think we didn't do it just

because our dad expected us. That's just the way it happened. I didn't, you know, I used to work for the State of Michigan when I first came here. It just happens that every single one of us has. And that's what he said.

"Animals are smarter than humans; at least we stick with our own kind." I think we were meant, you know, all of the life that's put on Earth – everything out there, even the grass – and everything helps something else.

Roy explains that the language is integral to understanding *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and the roles the rest of Creation plays in *minobimaadiziwin*. She says that each member of Creation's name speaks of the Earth; speaks to what the being does, its use, its purpose, and its place as a member of Creation. She also believes that the Seven Grandfather teachings have the following role in *minobimaadiziwin*.

We have gwaakaawin – wisdom; dibaadendizowin – that's, uh, humility; miinwaa debwewin – truth; and you have minaanendiziwin, which is respect; and then we have zaagidiwin – love. We have akode'ewin, which is bravery. And then we have one more, uh, kinda like the seven dwarfs, you never remember the seventh one. (We laugh). Wekwadiziwin, that's what it is. It's similar to this (gwekwaadiziwin). I don't know how to say it in English -- that's it, honesty! So of the seven, I talked about these one time. If you looked at, actually I questioned, some kids that I was speaking to about the seven and I talked about this thing that you're asking about,

this good life. "What would you say would be the most, would be the number one thing that you would need to do to have a good life?" They said, well, they picked, uh, you have to respect. I said, well, I think that would come in close to the last because you have to be brave enough to walk out there and do aabdeg wii aakwidenh, you know, when you're put on this Earth and you have to face your own challenges and whatever's out there. Even as a little child, you know, when you wander off. You don't know what to expect out there. Later on, you know about that bravery. So aakidenh could be one of the first. Wouldn't have to be the first, right? So aakidenhiwin. Then you have to be honest with yourself, truthful, those kind of go hand in hand, right? You have to be honest with yourself and other people. So wekwaadiziwin, aabdeg kwii debwe kwii wekwadiziwin. If I said something to you, you may not believe everything because there's a certain way you believe, right? But, I may give you a little bit of something. It's like when you go to workshops, at language workshops, right, I know all about language, right? So everything that they talk about I already know, but there might be that one thing that I don't know or the one thing that says oh, yeah, I've never done it that way. So they're teaching you something even though you already know everything about certain things. So being honest and truthful, debwewin, this is just my own thing, alright. And then you have to respect, mnaademdiziwin or mnaademdiwin. Dizo is, like, to yourself. Mnaademdiwin would be all

around respect, right? Mnaademdiwin would have to come in next because I respect what you have to say and I respect everything out there. You're not gonna throw garbage out on the road.

I was taking some kids at CMU one time and we were taking a walk out in the woods, and they said, "Helen, how do you say trash?" You know there were cans and all kinds of potato chip bags and things like that and they said, "Helen, how do you say garbage?" I said there's no word for it; in our language there's no word for it because there was never any garbage – we used everything. Of course, there were no bags, paper bags, or plastic bags. There were bags from animals, right, their insides and stuff like that, those were our bags. Or anything like we made boxes and we sealed them with the gum from the trees. There was no glue that was made in the factory where, if you throw that glue away, now it's going to do something to the Earth. Everything was natural, so there was no garbage. So, I didn't know the word for garbage, so there was that respect. You have to have respect for everything. And then you have to do this one next, Dibaadendizowin. So all of these things, remember that level that I talked to you about earlier? This line where you live like this like a roller coaster, if you live to learn straight – I don't really like that word either, because of what's out there (laugh) in this world. If you live level, straight, and you carry all these things and you use those teachings, and remember

all of them where you don't put yourself way up there thinking that you're better than anybody else. So you have to be humble enough to remain just like anybody else because we are all equal. You know that humility, dibaadendiziwin. And, then, once you can do that, you've acquired all the wisdom, gwekaawid, and then once you've acquired all that wisdom, then you've learned how to live, although you've already probably done that in each one of these. All of these teachings are intermingled, these teachings. There is not, you know, if you look at truth and honesty, so that's kind of the same thing. If you look at respect, you have to respect. You can't think that you are better than anybody else so you have to be humble at the same time. So all of these are basically one – connected.

Roy believes that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* has changed with the change in lives of *Anishinaabe* people through acculturation into dominant society. She says that the Grandfather Teachings became like a roller coaster and that core change was a change in thought. She says that if we can understand the old way, in our *Anishinaabe* language, we can be a different people than we are today. And if we operate from our *Anishinaabe* way of being via our own language, we can have *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

I was sitting at a doctor's office one time and I was looking at this lady, Zhaaganoshikwe. Picked up a magazine, right, and she started – she picked it up and put it in her lap – and she started flipping pages, right? Well, I picked up a book where I was sitting. I picked it up and I started

from the back. And that got me thinking, "Why do we do that?" You know, if you look at people, if you observe things.... And I started observing from that point. Just because a book is opened, doesn't mean you have to start at page one. But in our thinking, when you look at English, you start from the back and translate. So it's that thing that's inside of us that makes us do the things that we normally would do anyways. Those are the things that you get from knowing the language, but it's this new way, which is totally, you know. Sometimes when I say to you students, "You kids," I say, "don't worry if you don't know the language right away, because it's gonna take you a long time to learn everything. Yeah, you may learn how to speak in five years. You might be able to, you know, have a conversation with anybody who speaks, no matter what dialect. It's just gonna keep getting better." Like in English, I still don't know all the words in English. I've been learning and I'll be 57 years old this year. I still don't know all the English, so don't feel bad. You can't know everything right away. But once you know, once you know, then you start understanding those things that happened, like English happened. You know, in my opinion, Western thought was something that we didn't understand. What happened to that good life? English happened.

Barbara Nolan

Barbara Nolan is an *Anishinaabe* Elder from *Wikwemikong* First Nation, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. She currently resides in Garden River, Ontario, Canada, where she continues to dedicate her life to *Ojibwe* language revitalization. In her own words, “Barbara Nolan *ndizhnikaas, tigaanziibiing ndodaa, ndoominising gibinjibaa. Wenesh manda minobimaadiziwin ezhikidong dimaagenii minobimaadiziwin mii manda wa dibaaticmaa.*”

Nolan says that in our *Anishinaabe* teachings there are two sides to everything, a “good life” as well as a “bad life.” She says that the Creator gave us the gifted ability to choose our own path. Furthermore, each of us has the power to choose, to be able to live with the consequences of our own actions.

Good life is shown to you when you are born, although some individuals do not experience the good life when they are born. It depends on how we are raised. Sometimes in a family there's family violence. There's alcoholism. There's abuse. That child does not experience the good life. Therefore, that child may lead a not so good life because of his anger then. He has to unlearn what he has learned of the not-so-good-life before he can break that cycle. That's how I look at it. I was fortunate to be raised in a good life. Um, my grandparents raised me and they taught me, or they lived all of the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers as we know

them today. Honesty, wisdom, love, etc. We lived those. We weren't taught them. We learned everything by experiencing. We learned the good life by experiencing the good life. I remember my parents were very Christian. They were Roman Catholic, but yet they practiced the Native traditional ways on top of that, underground, uh, giimooch. But they were very strong believers of the spirits and the spirit world, and we saw that and experienced that as we were growing up.

Nolan explains that part of *minobimaadiziwin* for her is not separating *Anishinaabe* spiritual ways from that of the church life she experienced growing up.

We walked two roads and today I still do that. I don't separate the two of them because I think it makes me a stronger person to walk the both. Um, I used to see my grandmother, my mum, use asemaa all the time. When the thunders rolled by yesterday morning, the first sign of spring when the thunders come to wake up Mother Earth after her sleep during the winter, we offer asemaa. I used to see my grandma do that. I used to see my mum do that, offer asemaa into the stove or outside. She used to offer asemaa in the morning or at night before going to bed, at different types of activities, like if we were going to pick berries or if we were going to pick sweetgrass or even if we were going to go fishing. They would offer that asemaa – always dependent on that. Always give back something before you take something from the Earth. Aabdeg gego kwii miigwe naanaap, before we

take. I think I've carried that on, that part of the good life, myself, because if I take something, I always give something back. Even with, uh, say if you get paid for something, I always buy something to give something back, either to that individual or to somebody else. The pipe, my dad always smoked the pipe, and I remember him especially smoking the pipe at thunder time, during the summertime. When the thunder beings rolled by he would always sit outside no matter how hard it was thundering and lightning. He would be outside with his pipe, and they used to have gatherings at every turn of the season. There would be gatherings at our house.

Nolan explains that the *Anishinaabe* language is integral to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, that the ways of knowing the world via *Anishinaabemowin* are key to *minobimaadiziwin*.

I have spoken the language all my life, although there was a period of four years when I went to a residential school, where we learned English pretty fast because we were severely punished if we spoke our Anishinaabe language. But, somehow, I managed to keep my language, and now I work very adamantly in passing it on. I studied the language when I first got involved with teaching it to the students at the elementary school. When I began to work with the language, that's when I realized how much spirituality there is in the language. It is built in, into our language. Our

way of life is built into the language and you cannot separate that. If we lose our language, we are going to lose that way of life. And that's very scary. We will not be Anishinaabe people anymore. So when I was looking at the language, how it's, um, how it's made up, I began to notice that there are qualities or not – criteria, I guess, or ways that you describe certain words – and I notice that like there's animate and there's inanimate. Uh, French have masculine and feminine and Anishinaabe people have animate and inanimate – things that are alive and sacred and things that are not alive and not sacred. Some words that fall into those categories – trees are sacred and are alive, considered alive – rocks, anything that does something for us were considered sacred and alive. The sun gives us heat. There are some things that are neither, like water, biish, and wind. So they're, like, not for every single word, you won't find; sometimes it's neutral. And when we have our language, we tend to see beyond a lot of things, I think – for myself, anyway – because we tend to understand life through our language.

I began to study our language and how it relates to the four directions at one point. And when I was looking at that that's when I began to see that there are a lot of words that, say, derive from the Eastern direction and all the words are very, very connected; same with the south and the west and the north.

Nolan speaks to the perceptions of “faith” and “hope” in the *Anishinaabe* language and how they are integral to *Anishinaabe* worldview of the good life.

Bogosendamowin, bogosendam asaaganiin daapigosendam *hope*. Apane gego gwayak daapigosendam. *Always have hope, everybody, always have hope. Always have faith. Aabdeg wii aamanwi izhitoo-awid gaamamdaa iwii nitoon na niish. You have to have the both. Aabdegoo wiinendamin gego gezhitooaanba aaniish maanda gezhitoonyaanh bimaadiziwin. How am I going to put my life? Or how am I going to live my life? How am I going to arrange my life? And the way I look at it is this: we always used to put our life in the Creator's hands. We put our life in the Creator's hands. You do with my life what it is your wish to do. That's the faith our people had. We didn't try to control everything in our lives. We knew what we had to do every season. We knew that we had to work hard during the spring, summer, and fall in order to survive the winter. In the spring we had to plant. If we didn't, there would be no plants in the summertime and nothing to reap in the fall. Therefore, you'd go hungry. We had to put away a lot of things – preserves, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, any kind of berries. We planted potatoes. We'd have potatoes. We planted carrots and turnips, and we put them in the cellar and we'd have that all winter. And my father did a lot of fishing and hunting. We grew up on fish, partridge, deer, sometimes, uh, beaver, and he would also do some*

trapping, a bit of trapping. So I think that hard work is required to have a good life. It – a good life – is not just carefree, being carefree and having freedom. It's good to have that, too, but I think good life is when you have that peace of mind, when you have that peace of mind that the Creator intends these things to happen, even if they are very challenging to us sometimes. When we say, "Creator has put that in front of you," we mean to learn from it somehow. Sometimes we don't know what we're learning till much later on.

Nolan speaks to the role of ceremony in living *Minobimaadiziwin*.

I heard one time an Elder say that your life is your ceremony. And I tend to believe him because I think it should not be separated to certain times of the day, to certain places. I heard that very same person say that all you have to do is go outside and you are in Creation. You see the stars. You see the moon. You see the trees. You see the blue sky. You see all of Gichi Manidoo's Creations, and you enjoy that. And you experience that we are only a minute part of Creation. Anishinaabe, or human beings, are only a minute part. If we weren't here, everything would live, the plants, they wouldn't miss man, the animals, everything. And we were put here for some reason as well. So I think like when you have a good life, you are dancing your ceremony. You are dancing a good life by leading a good life.

But, then again, you've got that choice. Everybody has that choice to make. You are given that power. You have to celebrate your rarity because Creator didn't make anything useless. He made each and every one of us a unique individual. All with our beautiful gifts, different gifts, and we have to celebrate that. When we live life, we have to go that extra mile in our life. You know, don't just settle for that much, do extra, go that extra mile. And always, always know that you have the power to make the choice. You have to love yourself, love who you are as a human being. I think that, when you do that, you will love everything else outside of you.

She offers the following perspective on the role our relationships with the rest of creation have in living *Minobimaadiziwin*.

I mentioned the use of the asemaa. We have to. And I think there's one word that will describe the relationship between human beings and the rest of the universe, which includes plant life, animal life, etc. It's respect. We have to have respect for everything that is exterior of us and not to interfere when it's not our place to interfere with that exterior. Um, scientists do a lot of the interfering. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad. But, uh, my belief, my own personal belief, is that you leave it alone because the Creator made that to be that way. So respect them, respect the animal kingdom. We respect the plant life, um, the fish and the birds, we respect all those. By respect, we mean that we don't go out and spoil

things. We don't go and pick blueberries – a big pile of them and not do anything with them. If they go into waste in a basket, then you're not respecting that. Uh, we don't go and chop trees for the hell of chopping trees and not doing anything with them. There is a purpose or you must have a purpose for everything that you take. If it's sweetgrass from the Earth, if it's whatever it is, you have to need it for something or use it for something. Fish, you just don't go fishing for the sake of fishing to say I caught this 20-pound whatever. You know, just to say that, you know. I know there's lots of sport fishing now a days, but no I don't think it's in our culture. So I know the way that we were raised, we were raised that you have to have a purpose when you are taking something that is exterior from your being, which is the plant life, the fish, the four-leggeds. If you are taking any one of those you have to have a purpose for it.

Nolan explains that dreams play a role in *minobimaadiziwin*. She says that dreams bring messages. She explains further that a person's dreams are messages for themselves, not others.

Sometimes we don't understand our dreams. Um, I know some people run to somebody like a dream interpreter. They run over there, tell them their dream and that dream interpreter tells you, well, this is what's going to happen or your dream meant this. What I believe is that dream is only going to be understood by yourself. It's only meant for you. It was brought

to you so you have to figure it out. Sometimes you might need the help of an Elder, though, but that Elder is not going to tell you, "Well, I think that that dream meant that you are supposed to go and do this and that and every other little thing." Okay, that Elder will probably just agree with you and listen to you, but that's about all that Elder will do because I know that the dreams are meant for you and only for you to understand. Sometimes you don't understand it right away either, but they are messages.

Uh, messages and dreams, I find, usually are something that is going on around your life at the present moment, whatever that may be, and the state of your being at the present moment, the dreams come to you to warn you or to teach you something – to guide you in your life. That's my own personal belief in dreams.

Nolan says that spiritual life is integral to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. It is that part of the self, of one's spirit, which helps with living *minobimaadiziwin*.

When I talked about challenges or obstacles, you know those are put in your path. You know, sometimes we get a little too arrogant at something, or a little too confident at something. Something will happen in your life that will slow you down. That will teach you, hey, look it, you're getting a little bit too much that way. And it's up for us to find that out. Some of us

never do, we keep on living that arrogant life. But something does happen eventually that will teach us a lesson. Uh, so spirituality then, I think, goes along with both. I don't think I follow strictly Catholic and I don't follow strictly traditional, I mix the both. Whatever is happening in my life I'll go to that one. Maybe I'll go for a sweat if I need. Maybe I'll go to church if I need to, you know. It's not an every Sunday type of thing and, if I don't go this Sunday, I'll commit a mortal sin. I don't believe in that way. But I do believe there is a Creator who is greater than us.

Nolan offers the following regarding our connection to the land and living *minobimaadiziwin*.

There, again, our teachings are that we came from the Earth and we go back to the Earth. Our teachings, Anishinaabe teachings, are very similar to Christian teachings, I find. Everywhere in the Bible there are similarities. The Anishinaabe people, I think, the biggest difference between the Anishinaabe people and the non-Native was a long time ago before the Europeans even came; our concept of land ownership was much different than it is today. We didn't own the land. The Creator gave us the land to live on – or we were given to the land to live on and live off the land for our survival. That concept has changed, like society is a constant change. It changes all the time. Today, land ownership – because we were placed on Indian reservations – that concept of, okay, this is

where WE live – before we didn't have that. You could go anywhere, you'd just move. You moved in the springtime to where the sap ran. You moved in the summertime to where the fish were running, where you could catch fish and pick lots of berries. And then in the wintertime you moved somewhere else for the winter season. That's how we lived, no matter where. The only think that was territorial was the different, um – like the Iroquois-an people, they had their own, and the Cree up north – but every tribe, I think, stuck to the basic area and did all the living in that basic area. There was no concept of land ownership within families, even. And that concept didn't come in until the Indian reservations were brought in, uh, and then lots were given out to people. And then that's when that concept came to people. So, that's my interpretation of it. But one thing that might have significantly stayed with people is your roots, your connection to where you were brought up and raised or where you were born. Those are your roots, wherever that is. Even if you were adopted out and raised away from your home area, eventually that person will go and find where they came from. You have that special connection to that place. That connection to that place, home area, it provides a sense of belonging; it provides a sense of peace for you. Okay, how I connect to the land where I grew up and was raised is not where I live today. Sometimes I feel the need to go there; I feel the need to go home, that's what I call home although my home is over here. I feel the need to go there and walk, and

put my asemaa down and just walk around in the area where I grew up. I need that. It's like going to see your mother and have her hold you, and you can hear her heartbeat as she holds you by her chest. That's the connection that I make – that's Mother Earth. So your home area where you were brought up and raised. That's the heart of your mother. That's how I see that connection.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

This study seeks to explore *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* according to the teachings given by six respected members of the *Anishinaabeg* community, who perceive life through *Anishinaabemowin*, the *Anishinaabe* language. The teachings come at a time significant according to *Anishinaabe* prophecy and are essential to the process of my own journey of learning to live *minobimaadiziwin*. Analysis involves the exploration of the following three major research questions:

1. What are the definitions and meaning of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* to these community members?
2. What does the practice of living or expressing *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involve?
3. How does living *minobimaadiziwin* involve relationships with the rest of creation?

In addition to the above three categories, the concept of change is explored throughout the categories of inquiry because *minobimaadiziwin* is transcendent over time. The first section in this chapter presents a summary of the major themes that emerged from each respondent. Also included are the minor themes from each interview that relate to the major themes presented in the words of another community member. Following individual analysis is an exploration of how the data connect, as well as what the researcher is learning through this *Anishinaabe* experiential study of *minobimaadiziwin*.

This analysis is consistent with *Anishinaabe* methodologies engaged throughout the rest of the process. It is embodied by the researcher's experience, learning experientially from her Elders. This study encompasses an underlying *Anishinaabe* assumption that there is more than one way to express any and all teachings, and states clearly that the researcher's experience of the data is but one view, albeit a view supported by the Elders and community members through which the analysis was fed back.

Interpreting the Respondents

Barbara Nolan

Barbara Nolan expresses the power of choice, given to us by the Creator, as a major theme of *minobimaadiziwin*. She also highlights the core tenet of learning by living and experiencing with attention to the cycles of nature, the human roles in those cycles, and the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers and the four directions. All of these are encompassed by attention to our roles in the cycles of reciprocity. She speaks of dreams as messages of teachings and emphasizes the importance of the *Anishinaabe* language; use of *asemaa*, tobacco; and the inseparable existence of spirit. She also stresses the role of the Creator and reminds us that we should not to try and do the Creator's job. She expresses the impact of the dominant culture as a major theme as well, giving special attention to the Native Boarding School experience and how the dominant mainstream culture affects the ability to live out our *Anishinaabe* concept of relationship with the land

for *minobimaadiziwin*. She believes that living *minobimaadiziwin* continues to involve our conscious connection with the Earth as our mother and the central role of nature's cycles in *minobimaadiziwin*. She speaks of attention to purpose of self and the rest of creation, which involves a conscious awareness of the purpose of our actions as well, and mentions that all of Creation is diverse and given differing gifts for varied purpose.

Helen Roy

Helen Roy discusses the importance of the power of choice and conscious recognition of the actions of self and those around us. She also stresses the importance of trying to maintain balance of emotion and working toward the skill of letting things go. She uses her memories of what she learned growing up to help her teach her own children how to live the good life. She emphasizes the importance of not trying to control others; rather, do the best you can and refrain from expecting others to be what you wish them to be. She speaks about the importance of what you teach your children. Roy explains the significance of all of creation in *minobimaadiziwin*: that life is more than just human beings. This is the understanding one has when speaking the *Anishinaabe* language: the language *is* the Earth. We see in our *Anishinaabe* language the importance of our relationships with the rest of Creation. She explains that, without our *Anishinaabe* language, we do not have the life, the *minobimaadiziwin*, that was meant for us. Within the framework of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, healing is not just for the common understanding of illness, but involves helping the *Anishinaabe* people to our language. She says that the *Anishinaabe* language involves an understanding of beings as defined by

their action, being, and/or purpose on this Earth and that other native languages are similar to that of *Anishinaabe*.

Roy explains that there is no separation between “Indianness” and religion – that the way of *Anishinaabe* good life is inseparable from “God” or label of choice for the spirit. She believes that the message of religion or spirituality comes to people through various teaching methodologies: some understand the *Bible*, some understand the sea, while still others understand via various other methods. She extends this thought to the definition of ceremony and explains that the *Anishinaabe* good life does not involve a hierarchy of ceremonial protocol. Rather that there are many ways to engage in ceremony and the way that you live and celebrate life. Ceremony, in fact, is the way you live, the way you carry out your actions, and there is not just one way, but there are many ways. She says that we put certain words or labels on things, like “ceremony,” which make them seem superior to that of other people. In addition, the contemporary tendency to overdo things creates divisions that impede the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. Furthermore, the coming of English brought division in the thought process of doing things in a single, superior fashion. English brought the “my way is better than your way” line of thought and that carries on today, impeding the *Anishinaabe* ability to live *minobimaadiziwin*.

To Roy, the good life involves working hard to maintain balance; it is not a life of perfection. Rather we need to work toward maintaining an even keel so as not to create things in one’s life that should not be there. More so, time is not a linear measure of years or that of a clock, but is measured by growth and action. People are not their age in

number, but in the actions they live out. People do not age according to a pre-measured scale with standards that exist with each passing year. She says time is what is given to you; further, that our lives have purpose and our time is what we have to fulfill such purpose. She also explains through the storywork of her own experience that dreams can be messages to teach you about your purpose; and that one must work hard to accomplish them. Also, each of us is given a spirit that has everything it takes to accomplish our purpose on this Earth.

Roy says that all of Creation is here on this Earth to help one another. Furthermore, we must learn from each other and our respective gifts. She explains through the example of her own family that her *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves helping the Native community. We are given gifts that serve to help us fulfill our purpose and experiences gift us with abilities that help us to pursue dreams and purpose as well as to help each other. She points out that other animals “stick to their own kind” and that we should learn from that. Earth is the same kind of mother that we are to our children and Earth’s body acts in much the same as our own, and this way of relating to all of Creation is apparent in our *Anishinaabe* language.

She stresses the importance and interconnectedness of the Seven Grandfather teachings in living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and that they help us work toward balance. This balance does not involve hierarchy in Creation, as we are all equal. There is no hierarchy of either being or doing or living. She says that the influence of the dominant culture turned those teachings into a roller coaster, and that prevents our experience of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. She advises us to learn to live those teachings via those

Seven Grandfather teachings as they are understood in *Anishinaabe* language to live *minobimaadiziwin*. She says that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* requires a different way of thinking than that of dominant mainstream society.

Gloria King

King explains that each person has the power of choice on how he or she will live. The actions we engage in determine whether or not we live a “good life.” She says that *minobimaadiziwin* does not involve perfection; rather, it is doing the best we can.

Mistakes are par for the course in life; even the Creator makes small mistakes. To think of oneself as perfect is to think of oneself as better than the Creator. She says that it is important to pay attention to the memories we create in our children, and she pays attention to the memories she has in her life and what she has learned from those experiences. She maintains the importance of having a conscious awareness of one’s own actions and the life created accordingly. She advises that *minobimaadiziwin* involves helping one’s community. She also says that sobriety is important for *minobimaadiziwin* as is not overdoing.

King explains that dreams bring us messages from the spirit world. We have a choice to listen and act accordingly, but we are not in total control and what is meant to happen will occur. She utilizes her many teachers to help her understand her dreams. She also serves as a teacher to help others understand their dreams. She says each person has a choice to allow the messages to unfold on their own or to act upon the message they receive.

King believes that traditional ceremonies are an important aspect of her *minobimaadiziwin* and essential to healing. Traditional *Anishinaabe* ceremonies have helped her and, in turn, she has been able to help others. She says that the lodges and songs are medicine and help the people; they help with letting go of negativities that we carry with us from our experience. She says that tobacco is a major helper in *minobimaadiziwin*. Tobacco helps with communication with the spirit world. She says using tobacco helps you achieve the understanding and forgiveness needed as a result of our experiences. Through storywork, she explains her experience with fasting and how the ceremony serves and has helped her understand relationships within Creation.

King explains that the dominant culture impedes the ability to experience the sense of hearing and use of listening meant in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. She explains that the dominant cultural way of eating and feeding also impedes *minobimaadiziwin*. She says that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves knowing the plants that grow wild and the gifts and possible burdens each one has for us. Besides, the practice of gathering such wild foods provides the exercise we need for *minobimaadiziwin* (e.g., as evidenced by apples rotting on trees because people would rather drive to the store to purchase them).

King explains that food from the earth is medicine. She explains that cycles of nature offer wild medicines. Each season has nutrients our bodies need that are not found in store-bought food. She says that everything about the land can be used as medicine. She says that the plant world communicates with us if we really listen; rocks, too. The food in the stores is “killing us,” shortening the lifespan of *Anishinaabeg* people.

She explains the importance of the pipe in *minobimaadiziwin*; the pipe is treated with the same care as a baby, a being whose carrier is determined by the spirit. She says that communication through the pipe facilitates healing and offers help for the people. Her storywork regarding “hiding the pipe” reveals the judgment of the church and “blackrobes,” the impact of the dominant culture on living *minobimaadiziwin*.

King says that the natural law or teachings given to *Anishinaabe* by the Creator long ago can help *Anishinaabe* people, and the Seven Grandfather teachings are significant to the natural way given by the Creator. Additionally, the teachings have different manifestations of meaning for different people. She also explains that time in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is what it takes to do what needs to be done, and is not determined by the clock of dominant society today. She says that for *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* things happen in their own time, and she gives the example of use of tobacco for knowledge-seeking. She explains further that one does not determine when the answer will come and may not provide instant gratification. However, she says confidently that use of tobacco (in a good way) always provides the answer needed eventually.

King explains the importance of the understanding provided by thought in the *Anishinaabe* language for *minobimaadiziwin*. She says that a lot of beauty in meaning is lost when we translate from *Anishinaabemowin* to English. To explain what she sees when she looks out her window at the trees in *Anishinaabemowin* and, then, to translate to English, would lose all meaning of what she was trying to communicate.

Larry Matrious

Matrious explains that he learned via the experience of watching his father, who taught by doing rather than by telling. He says that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves knowing life around you because the rest of Creation experiences life in a fashion similar to that of human beings; knowing how the rest of Creation lives and grows leads to self-knowledge. The loss of such relational knowledge due to the impact of the dominant culture is an impediment to *minobimaadiziwin*. Also, the change provided by the dominant culture impedes the existence of Elders as they are understood in the *Anishinaabe* language.

Matrious says an Elder used to be someone who could tell you anything from the beginning of time. He says that societal change presents us with a perceived reality that becoming an Elder has come to mean being an old person and a burden – a person who cannot tell you much about anything involved in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. He gives an example of questioning the purpose of life. He says he has learned these things and continues to do so throughout each day. Knowing the rest of Creation and the universe is to know life. He also explains that the cultural loss of such teachings, due to dominant cultural impact, is the reason children and teenagers do not appreciate hard work or know how to listen today. He explains that children and adults alike are lazy, thoughtless, ungrateful, and hardly learn anything of *minobimaadiziwin* from a life of television watching and video game playing. He says when you know the *Anishinaabe* teachings and live them out, it is a good life. Also parents should try and teach their

children the Seven Gifts: love, respect, honesty, truth, bravery, humility, and wisdom. He says that cultural change impedes the experience of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. There is nothing for *Anishinaabe* children on the reservation. They have neither their language nor their *Anishinaabe* teachings. He explains the need to teach those things and has tried in his life to bring them back to his community. He says that children today do not know the purposes involved in understanding *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and that change involves a loss in conscious awareness of the experiences of our children. They are losing the understanding that goes with the language and *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and that to those who have experienced such loss, a rock is just a rock and a flower is just something nice. He says the great loss in meaning bleeds into dance regalia and that the less people display in their regalia the purpose for which they dance, the more they focus on making regalia look good. For him, everything in his dance regalia has significance. He retains the great meaning in dancing involved in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. He says that many *Anishinaabe* people do not understand their teachings. Many of them are not furthering their education and therefore do not understand the way that dominant society works. It is necessary to obtain the education required by mainstream society to have the “things” one wants in contemporary society according to Matrious. He explains that the good life does not involve complaining about current conditions or obtaining an education that will provide you with an easy life. He says that living *minobimaadiziwin* in a contemporary context involves knowing the *Anishinaabe* teachings of the life around us – knowing the meaning and identity of every

being around us. He adds that there are a lot of things to learn, but that life is simple and people complicate it. The good life is about knowing and living the teachings.

Matrious says that the pipe is his teacher, and that anytime he has a question, he asks the spirits through his pipe. His pipe teaches by showing him and that the teachings from the spirit via the pipe only come if you have genuine belief and the *Anishinaabe* language. He says that the modern tendency in educational practice to ask numerous questions impedes the ability to learn our language. He says that we are brainwashed in so many different ways, and that reality leads to our asking many questions that get in the way of learning our *Anishinaabe* teachings. According to Matrious, we need to see it for ourselves to believe it – not to ask various questions, but to learn via the experience of listening and observing life as opposed to asking and having someone tell us the answers as they understand them. He adds that ceremonies like fasting are teachers, too; they teach us about ourselves and the rest of Creation. Fasting teaches respect, and ceremony teaches you about your emotions and feelings, as well as what this world is about. He adds that use of tobacco (in a good way) is a necessary part of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

Matrious presents his storywork regarding his experience searching to understand *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, to understand the walk of an Indian. He explains that he followed a message from the spirit and traveled to Indian country to seek out the way of the Indian. He learned many different ways that Indian people walk. In his own time, he came to learn what the spirit meant. He says that it took him a long time to walk around the circle to find out different things about himself in his experience of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. He says that he can wrap it up into one of the Seven Gifts – love.

Bob Williams

Williams explains that *minobimaadiziwin* is a way of life that the Creator intended for all of us to live. He says that there are tools the Creator gifts us to use for *minobimaadiziwin*. Our brother, *Wenaboozhoo*, is the one who teaches us how to use them. He tells us that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is a long, hard way, and adds that though it is difficult, the Creator rewards us with a large extended family and a lot of friends. He says it involves consistency of living out the teachings provided by the Creator. Helpers, like the drum, ceremonies, and the pipe help to hold the community together and teach the people for *minobimaadiziwin*. According to Williams, the use of tobacco is essential to living *minobimaadiziwin* and he learned the ways of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* by watching and listening to his uncles. It requires sobriety because being able to help others is key to living *minobimaadiziwin*, and one must be sober when the need for help arises. He says that we all have our own path in *minobimaadiziwin*. Some paths are harder than others, but we are here in this gift of life to help each other. The spirits can help us, too, if we use our tobacco. Giving is essential to *minobimaadiziwin*, as is being thankful for the gifts we are given. Further, *minobimaadiziwin* involves living out the Seven Grandfathers in the way we treat everyone as well as in using our language. He also says that it is essential to pay attention to the spiritual form of beings rather than the physical appearance in living *minobimaadiziwin*. The traditional ceremonies, teachings, and language of *Anishinaabe* from the Creator are essential to living *minobimaadiziwin*. He explains that this involves learning through experience and exploring life to understand

all that you can before you reach the spirit world. He reveals that it involves learning all the things that come with going through the cycle of the human being from birth to Elderhood. Watching others and actively “doing” is important. When we get to the spirit world, we will know what to do because we have learned it. His advice is to explore every flower and to experience what it means to learn so that we can help teach children.

Williams explains that *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* today means walking in two worlds: to learn and respect the dominant way and to learn to walk the *Anishinaabe* way. He explains that dreams are an important part of *minobimaadiziwin* that can be used for protection and help in this life. He says that there are varying degrees of spirituality involved in *minobimaadiziwin* that are directly dependent upon how and what one has done with spirits – from what one has actually seen and felt from spirits. Our spiritual existence is dependent upon the relations we have with the spirits and the gifts bestowed upon us from the spirit world. Above all, spiritual people are not those who gloat about themselves and what they know. Williams also stresses the importance of having our *Anishinaabe* names. He says that it is essential to going home to the spirit world as well as helping us learn throughout our journey of *minobimaadiziwin*.

Williams explains that the whole of Creation is a family, and that the plants, animals, birds, and fish are brothers and sisters of the natural world. We are all to help each other and have roles in relation to the seasons and cycles of nature. Human beings are not superior to the rest of Creation in the way of life that is *minobimaadiziwin*. Human life depends on the rest of Creation for subsistence. The family of Creation is

such that we *feel* for other animals like we feel for a human child, and further, that the Creator feels that way as well.

Williams explains that a major problem of contemporary times, resultant of the impact of dominant society, is the implementation of shortcuts. He explains that shortcutting ceremonies is not *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* nor is shortcutting Elders or basing anything on the concept of time associated with clocks. He explains that things are done when they are done because the spirits do not have a clock. He says that when you shortcut an Elder you also shortcut the children. The children are listening and watching and miss out on whatever teachings were not conveyed due to time constraints. Another shortcut he mentions is seeking out spiritual knowledge like *Anishinaabe* names from books. He explains that it is not possible and that giving a name in such a way does not mean the person has their name.

The impact of monetary value from the dominant culture has a negative impact on the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin*. *Anishinaabe* teachings suggest that your tobacco and whatever you have to give is all that is needed in exchange for a ceremony. Williams explains that it is wrong to place monetary value on a ceremony and to charge money for something that was given to you by your Elders. He says *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves a conscious awareness of these things. We are always to be careful in this *minobimaadiziwin* because everything happens in a circle. We are unsure of who or what our actions will affect within the circle and how these actions will come back around. He explains that for *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, all members of creation have their jobs

to do, just as all human beings have their different jobs to do. He gives the example of lightning and that different kinds of lightning have diverse jobs to accomplish.

According to Williams, there are two sides to everything in *minobimaadiziwin* – a good and a bad. He emphasizes the importance of compassion and teachings in relating to others while remaining conscious of the circles through which we move; as everything moves through cycles. Williams says that an adverse impact of the dominant society yields a decrease in the *Anishinaabe* way of taking care of one another. A large extended family is created by giving in reciprocity as part of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

A Boodewatomi Elder

This Elder explains that there are many ways to live *minobimaadiziwin*. There is not one way – it is one of deep inner searching for the truth that comes to different people in different ways. It involves a journey toward knowing yourself and finding inner peace. He says that the dominant system creates division and does not allow for the diversity that the Creator intended for various purposes. Furthermore, we are becoming educated in Western ways and, in so doing, dividing ourselves. He explains that this is an impediment to living the *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and that the good life involves speaking in terms of “we” and less in terms of “I.” He explains the centrality of the *Anishinaabe* language to living and understanding *minobimaadiziwin*. Language is intertwined with life as a spiritual existence and living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* requires a different way of being and thinking than that of the dominant paradigms of today. He explains that the *Anishinaabe* language provides an understanding of the spirit and power of each

being, and that the great meaning of the language is lost in translation to English. He explains that living *minobimaadiziwin* involves using the greatest gift given to human beings: the ability to have dreams and visions. It involves a conscious awareness of how our actions in utilizing that gift affect the rest of the circle of life. He explains that living *minobimaadiziwin* involves circles and cycles of growth and experience according to natural law. He says that the natural law is what guides all things in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. Every member of Creation has its role in the natural law that guides the cycles of existence. We are all gifted with senses with which to understand – to feel in order to experience the great honor of respect for Creation.

According to the Elder, living *minobimaadiziwin* involves recognizing what happens in each day, season, and other cycles of natural law in order to live accordingly. There are teachings that go with every part of each cycle. Experience is a perpetual journey of learning through the various cycles of existence. He says that there are many things that are beyond our human capability of understanding in existence. He explains that there is no standard for learning or being – that the Creator intended the diversity of life for varied purpose of being.

He speaks of the impact of the dominant culture and how it changed the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* via the different ways of thought that the new culture brought. The new way of thinking involved adhering to man-made laws, such as ownership of land and life and of not accepting “mixed-blood” people. He gives an example through storywork of how leaving out a being because of physical appearance is not a part of *Anishinaabe* teachings of how to live *minobimaadiziwin*. He also explains that *minobimaadiziwin*

involves connecting to and following the course of natural law. He says that *minobimaadiziwin* has always involved helping each other, exhibiting generosity through neighborliness, and demonstrating a conscious awareness of being able to teach the children what they need to know.

Interpretation of Respondents' Voices

Participants span a range of representation of differing levels of assimilation with and impact from the dominant society. Having said that, all participants retain their ability to think in *Anishinaabemowin* (*Anishinaabe* language). However, each participant lives with colonization and decolonization. Some participants possess healing abilities, providing them with a more in-depth perspective on the spiritual experience of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* according to traditional teachings imbued with the spirit. Others exhibit the same themes, but to varying degrees. Whereas some respondents make powerful points and others make the same points but to a more subtle degree, the connection between the respondents is significant.

It is the explicit bias of the researcher, as *Anishinaabekwe* and a firm believer in our traditional *Midewiwin* way of life, to perceive the world through the filter of traditional *Anishinaabe* teachings. As Williams explained in his interview, there are different levels of spiritual existence dependent upon the spirit-given power of each individual to communicate with the spirit realm. Due to the varying abilities of respondents of communication in that realm, they presented their views of the spiritual

reality of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* in different ways. Being *Anishinaabekwe*, I understand the intense significance of teachings given by those who remain strongly connected to communication with the spirit realm. The reality of cultural loss due to the impact of dominant society presents *Anishinaabe* people with the critical need to seek out those gifted in our ways of knowing and to pay closer attention to what they show us.

There are instances where a large amount of energy is given to the words of certain individuals. This is due to their conscious connection to the spirit – and their existence as a *Gichi-aya'aa*, Elder, great being, who has retained the capability to tell you many things from the way back, to the beginning of time. Therefore, the data presented by Elders that have retained an ability to connect with the spirit world (spiritual existence being a central tenet of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*) is precious. The analysis appears to form a stem sprouted from the data presented by *Gichi aya'aag* (Elders) upon which blossoms the petals of other respondents' knowledge to form a flower for exploration as a whole.

Attention is given to the effects of change on *minobimaadiziwin* throughout the research questions. The findings suggest that there has not been a change in *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*; rather, there has been a change in the ability to fully experience *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* as a result of the influence of dominant epistemologies in contemporary American society. Analysis is organized to address each of the major research questions as they weave throughout each other in meaning via the major themes that emerged from interviews. Major themes consist of the following: *Minobimaadiziwin*

as Relational Natural Law, *Anishinaabemowin* (*Anishinaabe* language), *Anishinaabe* Educative Process of *Minobimaadiziwin*, Gifts and Helpers, and Change.

It would be a farce to compartmentalize *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* into a one-paragraph definition. The magnitude of its meaning is greater than one is personally capable of perceiving as a whole. Therefore, it is not possible to find a concise definition of *minobimaadiziwin*. According to respondents, such definition can only come from within the self. Though this study led to deep inner exploration, it did not create an ending definition. It created a new beginning of how I perceive the personal process and journey that is particular to my *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

A Glimpse of *Minobimaadiziwin* as Relational

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin is founded upon the Seven Grandfather teachings common to the human experience: Respect, Love, Humility, Courage, Truth, Honesty, and Wisdom. They are guidelines for how to approach all our relations and, inadvertently and eventually, ourselves. It further involves an infinite number of teachings that come from Anishinaabe oral tradition. The Creator blessed each of us with the power to choose the life we shall lead. In every challenge we face, we have a choice on how to act and react. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves duality. There is a balance; there is a good and a bad to every being. For example, each plant has a gift; however, if not used properly, each can also be a danger. Just as with every being, when we do not live with the Seven Grandfathers, the other side of each teaching has room to manifest. The way that we think in our home manifests to create our dwelling in that our thoughts create our perception of

reality. The language we have to use is detrimental to our ability to perceive *minobimaadiziwin* in its true sense of a habit of being. We have been given the power to choose the kind of life we want to lead and to create the life we will pass on to the coming generations.

Minobimaadiziwin involves conscious awareness of our relationships with the rest of creation as well as the purposes for each being in relation to the whole. The Seven Grandfather teachings instruct us on how to relate with the rest of Creation. It is important to maintain a respect for all Creation and partake in the reciprocity required for balance and harmony in existence. It involves the love we learn to experience in all our relations. It involves the humility of knowing that we are never *better* than any other being, most notably the Creator, and therefore are not in control of life and the rest of Creation. It involves the understanding that we can never be perfect or the best, but we do what we can do without expecting anyone else to live by our idea of the good life or what it means for us to be good people. We are neither the judge of another person's existence nor are we to disrespect other members of Creation by taking life in a wasteful manner. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves respect for the value of each life. The beings that give their lives as the food that gives us life are respected. *Minobimaadiziwin* includes the courage to engage in the work required to live by the teachings, and to have the honesty to face yourself by engaging the deep inner search for truth. In so doing, we may experience and pass along wisdom to the coming generations.

The Creator has gifted us all with infinite manifestations of the Spirit in the form of teachers. Each one of us travels through our own experience of the circle to learn about

who we are. The inner searching involved brings us to the truth we feel is just.

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin is not about adhering to the inner truth of another. It is not about blindly accepting a package of preconceived beliefs that are standardized with such specificity that there is no room for growth. In doing so, we will be living a lie, because in our innermost self it will not feel true to us. The journey involves a process of learning what the innermost truth is for each of us. There is no standard way for the spirit to manifest truth. However, inner truth, knowing, feeling, and conscience are vital to connecting to the natural law that guides us.

Minobimaadiziwin is a non-linear way of living and being. It is a way of life to work hard on. It involves remembering and is a conscious creation of memories for self and others. It involves acknowledging the Earth as our mother and the rest of Creation holding a place in an enormous family that is the universe as all our relations. Thus, *minobimaadiziwin* involves awareness of self and those that surround us. We know the other members of Creation by the way that they live their lives and by our relationships with them. It is the same way we know a human being, by the way that s/he lives. We see the way that a person treats others, the way of life that s/he chooses to embrace.

Ultimately, knowing the rest of Creation leads to understanding oneself. Furthermore, each being acts as a helper or teacher to others in the journey toward the truth within.

Natural Law

Natural law is embodied by the Spirit and manifests itself as the living processes of the cycles through which power moves within the universe. Without the warm southern

winds' place in the seasonal cycle, the grass would not grow and all things connected to that life would be altered. Living *minobimaadiziwin* involves the guidance of natural law, which is lacking in human dominion and control. We are dependent upon the rest of nature for continued survival. *Minobimaadiziwin* is a medicine way that follows natural law. *Mashkiki*, the *Anishinaabe* word for medicine, can best be translated to English to mean that which comes from the Earth. The Earth being our mother, all of our relations come from the Earth and as such all of life has medicinal properties. In the language, Earth is perceived as our mother whose body acts much like our own. Her body knows how to care for us as part of her. She knows what we need, just as our bodies know what we need. She has parallel experience with *nibiibii*, a blister of infection, water that needs to come out of her the same way we experience a blister. Just as a mother knows what to feed her child, so she (Earth) knows what we need; she helps all her children and we give back to her in reciprocity. We give back using our *asemaa*, offerings of food and gifts, and treating her, as with all beings, according to the Seven Grandfather teachings.

Many of Creation's members have a heart, *ode*, and a unique rhythm based on their own survival. Our clan system predisposes our hearts to be like that of the animal clan to which we belong. We say "*nindoodem*" – *nin*, referring to self – or "I am" – *ode* meaning heart. "*Maa'iingan nindoodem*. My heart is like the wolf." Furthermore, we know other members of Creation by the way that they live. Each animal's heart beats according to the speed necessary for its particular life. Bears hibernate because they could not survive the winters, yet birds and deer survive the coldest of winters. The difference is

that each follows the natural law as prescribed to them by the Creator with the original instructions.

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin involves pre-eminence of natural law to man-made law. The baseline unit of value is life in all its diversity. Trying to force ourselves into a standard – whether it pertains to the way we approach our academic process, the way we bead, talk, physically appear, sing, dance, or perceive – prevents our lives from flowing with natural law. Doing so prevents us from opening up to our own spiritual presence and stunts our individual, natural growth potential. Though we have similar threads of growth, just as a tree develops buds in its own time, human beings flourish according to their relational existence in the cycles of natural law. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* does not involve a linear or “efficient” time line as defined by the standards set by mainstream society today. Time flows via the actions of spirit in all of creation and events occur as they unfold according to natural law – not to the laws and desires of man. According to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, there is a place for all life in its diverse forms and adhering to a rigid standard dismisses the unique gifts that each member contributes to the whole. Without a place for all members of Creation, as occurs with standardization, someone is always left out. There is no healing for members of Creation that are shunned because of inability to adhere to man-made laws of standardization. It fosters the belief that there is one right way to approach any element of life and in so doing, creates division.

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin is a medicine way. Equality in life worth, central to *minobimaadiziwin*, facilitates healing. The *Anishinaabe* epistemological perception of

the good life involves the knowledge that power belongs to the spirit and follows natural law. We do what we can to be our best according to the teachings we receive from the Spirit along the way. The stories of our Elders and the stories of our experience – all encompassed by the underlying faith, hope, and understanding that living the way the Creator gave us, according to our teachings as *Anishinaabeg* people – will assure us our way home, from whence we came, via coming to know the truth within. They involve the understanding that comes from our Creation story. The Creator gave all Creation instructions on how to walk this *bimaadiziwin*. Each animal, including the four races of man, received instruction and *Anishinaabeg* were told not to judge other beings' experience of how the Creator spoke to them. There is a place for all of Creation in the circles and cycles of the universe. Adhering to a standard defined by an alternate civilization – based on man-made law and with a respective baseline value system alien to the instructions given to *Anishinaabe* – implies that a human perception of life's ideal is superior to that of the Creator. *Anishinaabe* oral tradition evidences those original instructions. To accept an ontology provided by human authorities incongruent with those instructions implies that human capability to know better than the Spirit. That line of thought is not consistent with *minobimaadiziwin*. Consciously or otherwise, adhering to the standards of dominant society and thus striving to be or operate from an ontology other than that given to us by the Creator is to say that we know better to have created us than *Gichi Manidoo* did. One operating from a Western-based epistemology might say that 'progress' and growth lead to changes in the original instructions given at the beginning of creation. However, the dominant, Western ideal of progress is not congruent

with that of the *Anishinaabe*. This is an area where great change in the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* has occurred.

Anishinaabemowin

Participants say that to experience *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* you need the genuine belief, the sincerity in belief, and the thought that goes with *Anishinaabemowin*, the language. It has to become a habit of being, so that you begin to see all of life through that spiritual lens.

The English language and the *Anishinaabe* language are two systems of knowing and perceiving, and one cannot adequately use the language of one to pertain to the other. In other words, you cannot superimpose the definition of “progress” maintained by a culture imbedded with a core unit of measurement of economic advancement upon that of a culture imbedded with a core unit of measurement being a matrix of spiritual experience and teachings. There is not a single core unit of measurement in *Anishinaabe* epistemologies. Rather, there is an interaction of intangible values that interact in a process or journey of learning *minobimaadiziwin*. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves the deep meaning and history-packed teachings in a sacred language. A significant change in the capability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is the loss of language comprehension. As Roy says, it “brings tears to the eyes” to realize what some of the words really mean. The loss of language comprehension has a direct effect on the loss of perception about the expanse of life. As Roy says, “In our words there is life. Everything. That’s what they say. Our Elders, our teachings, say that our language is the Earth.” In *Anishinaabemowin*

words are gendered not according to masculine and feminine, but according to all things animate or living and inanimate or non-living. The language tells us how we should live the good life. “And without our language,” as Roy says, “we really do not have the life that was meant for us.” Contemporary *minobimaadiziwin* involves healing for *Anishinaabeg* people that some respondents feel only the language can bring back.

Spirit is evident in the language and essential to *minobimaadiziwin*. When speaking of members of Creation, names for other beings refer to their power, spirit, and/or purpose. Spirituality is inseparable from living *minobimaadiziwin* because it is inside us and therefore everything we do. The *Anishinaabe* names of any being, human or otherwise, speak to the spirit of that being because according to *Anishinaabe* epistemology, spirit is what keeps us all strong.

The acculturation resulting from forced Christianity and boarding schools changed the experience of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and created the present day spectrum of varied degrees of assimilation to the dominant culture. Throughout this change there remains a root foundational importance of spiritual existence that persists in *Anishinaabe* first-language speakers, which shows that deeply rooted spiritual existence is alive in our language. *Minobimaadiziwin* means more than the English translation of a “good life.” Nonetheless, English is the language that most of us understand and use to communicate with one another. Our *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is a spiritual way of being built into our *Anishinaabe* language. If we lose our language, we lose some of the spiritual way of being that is given to us by the Creator. As Roy says, “What happened to the good life? English happened.”

The *Anishinaabe* Educative Process of *Minobimaadiziwin*

Living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves experiential educative practices. The educative setting has no limit. It is one that can take any mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, or psychological form. In the *Anishinaabe* language, the word is the same for teaching as is for learning. The teacher and student engage in a symbiotic process via the senses we are given as human beings and learn via our experience with life. Our senses are gifts that assist us in the journey of conscious awareness. Respondents stress the importance of sobriety in order that we may truly use the gifts of our senses to live this *minobimaadiziwin*. We then connect with the truth inside via our conscience-connection to natural law. This perpetual process of growth has no end. Even death is but a beginning to another circle. This life is our opportunity to live *minobimaadiziwin* – our opportunity to experience *minobimaadiziwin* is here until we cross over into another level.

Minobimaadiziwin involves experiential learning, learning by doing, and ceremony with more listening and less questions. Watching, listening, and doing are measurable objectives that are not achievable by reading or writing answers to questions but by surviving, building a lodge, securing our dinner, modeling *minobimaadiziwin* for our children and succeeding in completion of a useful activity. This *Anishinaabe* way of learning and teaching is not one with standardization. It has great room for diversity with endless possibilities and creativity. As the *Boodewatomi* Elder said, “Babies should be allowed to be babies. We aren’t to rush them, push them into a place of learning, and rather let them explore their way into the questions.” Not every child is the same at five

years old. Within this educative process is a place for everyone, a place for different kinds of people. Lack of standardization provides room for different kinds of people to fit in, to develop and learn at our own pace. The *Boodewatomi* Elder further explains, “It is different than what we learn in school. It is the system that divides us. We are becoming educated [by a standardized system] and we are dividing ourselves.” The social ladder that we strive to climb in contemporary times is not a part of *minobimaadiziwin* where every member of creation has its place. The view we see when we look at the *Anishinaabe* educative design involved in *minobimaadiziwin* is the non-linear life perception provided by our beautiful language, *Anishinaabemowin*.

Living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves a perpetual process of experiential educative practices whereby all of creation participates in an active process of eternal learning and teaching by doing. Traditional categories of teacher and student do not co-exist in separate positions of linear hierarchy. Rather, every member of creation flows through cyclical processes of teaching and learning in a matrix of activities according to natural law. The *Anishinaabe* approach involves teachings, often transmitted through the practice commonly referred to as storytelling. An Elder once told me that they are not stories, they are not legends or myths – they are teachings. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is a living process, a journey through stages and cycles of being that coincide with the stages and cycles of the planets, stars, seasons, and moons.

Minobimaadiziwin is a process of growth through the circles and cycles within which power moves. We move through stages of growth in a non-linear fashion. We rise like the sun in the east with our birth. Again, with each day, we experience a similar

morning of our being that changes according to the growth we experience. Our movement toward youth is much like the movement of the sun from east to south and from spring to summer. It is like the movement of a day from morning to noon.

There are limitless teachings to experience throughout our movement around our life cycle of *minobimaadiziwin*. These teachings manifest in a vast multitude of dimensions and forms according to the needs of each precious member of Creation. No one standard exists. We move through various manifestations of the cycle of the great medicine wheel. All things are medicine with *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. It is a medicine way. We hold the power to choose the way in which we will walk around the circles and cycles of our being throughout the great medicine wheel of Creation. There is opportunity for healing or sickness in all our choices. We have the choice of fostering the development to either end.

Living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves growing toward the ultimate Elderhood. The definition of an Elder according to *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000) is one who is greater than another in age or seniority. According to *Anishinaabe* epistemology an Elder is one who knows the plants and animals and him or herself through a lifetime of experience, which is enabled through the teachings passed down through the generations since that original man was first given instructions from the Creator. An Elder is one who can bring the teachings forth from the beginning of time. An Elder is one who knows *bimaadiziwin*, life, by learning about how other members of Creation grow through the cycles within which power moves. Attaining the status of

Elder according to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is not through reaching an age. Elders are not social or economic burdens but are revered sources of intergenerational wisdom.

Gifts and Helpers

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin involves a meaningful matrix of helping relationships as opposed to the concept of random interaction. Through *Anishinaabe* oral tradition, it is understood that these interdependent relationships were intentional and not random. Living *minobimaadiziwin* helps us to stay healthy and eases the aging process. This is because it involves treating the self and others with the foundational teachings of the Seven Grandfathers. Respecting our bodies means engaging in exercise and feeding ourselves whole foods that retain the medicinal gifts the Creator gave them. Treating the rest of Creation with the same teachings, including respect, means that we do not seek to contaminate the waters or disturb the natural system to its detriment. The Earth engages to cleanse the waters essential to our survival. In so doing, we are able to live longer and healthier lives without the poisons that we ingest back into our bodies via the poisons that we create and put into the environment.

Our experiences help us navigate the future. We may not understand why any certain event takes place, but there is a reason for it all in the great design that comes together like a portrait that only the Creator can see in its entirety. We are gifted along the way with helpful relational experiences through which members of Creation have opportunities to share their gifts in reciprocity. Thus the Creator provides us with many helpers for living *minobimaadiziwin* as tools of growth and learning toward

understanding the Seven Grandfather teachings. These gifts are not intended for use and abuse, but rather are to be respected through living the teachings. All of Creation is here to help each other with our varied gifts from the Creator through *Wenaboozhoo*. The Creator sent *Wenaboozhoo* to give us our names and teach us of our gifts. Someone is always giving so that another might live. The act of giving, sharing, and helping are all crucial to *minobimaadiziwin*.

Asemaa is our most important medicine and was gifted by the Creator through *Wenaboozhoo* to help us with this learning journey. He (*asemaa*) gave up his life for the *Anishinaabeg* people so that they have something to give to the spirit world. *Asemaa* provides help in all human endeavors. As Bob Williams says, “With that tobacco [the spirits] understand and will listen to you.” Of the many gifts *asemaa* brings to us, understanding and attainment of knowledge come to us through the Spirit. Our *asemaa* can help us let go of negativity if we use it in the way it was given. Letting go of negative emotion, pain, and suffering is part of living *minobimaadiziwin* and involves the important teaching of forgiveness, which involves praying for, rather than wishing ill will against, those who hurt you. We use *asemaa* in prayer to give thanks and to carry our prayers to the Spirit. *Asemaa* is a vital medicine used in all ceremonies central to living *minobimaadiziwin*.

Anishinaabe traditional ceremonies are tools of healing in the medicine way that is *minobimaadiziwin*. They can be engaged to bring us to a place where we are more able to help others and help us know ourselves and the rest of Creation. These ceremonies, the drum, the songs, dances, and the pipe further serve to connect us to the Spirit at the core

of *minobimaadiziwin*. Fasting connects us intimately to the teachings and helps us to grow through them in order to experience a deeper sense of respect, humility, truth, love, bravery, honesty, and wisdom. The experience also helps us learn about ourselves, our purpose and vision for the future. Our songs are prayers that facilitate healing in the medicine way. The drum is the heartbeat of Creation and holds the community together. The pipe is another gift we have been given to carry that helps us connect with the Spirit.

Many kinds of dreams also help us in this good life. We are encouraged to work hard toward manifesting dreams and maintaining reciprocal relationships.

Minobimaadiziwin is a long hard way. Everything we need is inside us and our spirit makes it so that we can do anything we dream and work hard toward achieving. Dreams bring us messages from the Spirit for our lives and may bring old or new stories, connecting us to blood memory or ancestral teachings. The varied messages may tell us of the past, present, and/or future. They are a carrier of teachings. They are also a medium to help those gifted with the ability to find *Anishinaabe* names. Part of living *minobimaadiziwin* is listening to your dreams. Sometimes they repeat themselves, returning as many times as it takes for a person to understand the message. Sometimes dreams pertain to the reasons you were put here on this Earth. Much like the Creator manifested his/her own dream or vision of Creation, the greatest gift was given to man, and that was the ability to have and manifest dreams and visions. Just because the Creator gifted us with the awesome ability to manifest dreams and visions does not make us any more than a human being. As with the rest of the gifts in this medicine way, we have the power to choose how we use them – toward healing or illness, domination or control. We

can use our gifts to find and fulfill purposes for our place on Earth in a way that makes a positive difference or we can choose to use it to manifest negative impacts on Creation. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves a conscious awareness of how such choices will affect the rest of the circle.

Change

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin has not changed per se; its foundational principles of value and teachings remain constant. It is the ability for one to live *minobimaadiziwin* that has changed with great magnitude. A major change is in the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* in light of a decrease in the prevalence of *Anishinaabe* values, namely the foundational *Anishinaabe* Seven Grandfather teachings of Respect, Honesty, Humility, Bravery, Love, Truth, and Wisdom. The contemporary problems to which the respondents spoke are an effect of not living the way the Creator intended for us to live. For example, a lack of respect can be seen throughout in today's society; people aren't living respectfully and, therefore, children are not learning to live respectfully. The cycle continues and a lack of respect is what we bring forward to the coming generations. Respondents say that *minobimaadiziwin* involves conscious awareness of the effects of our actions in all that we do. It is important to question the kind of memories we are creating for our children. That is the reality they will bring forth for their children and the cycle that will ensue for coming generations.

One of the most significant and tragic changes in the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* is the loss of language that yields a decreased possibility for perceiving

the universe through *Anishinaabe* epistemologies. An example of the perceived reality in an *Anishinaabe* language world view is the spiritual power of each being encompassed by their name. When translated to English, acknowledgement of such power is gone.

Omashkooz becomes an “Elk.” The English language-defined concept of “Elk” takes the place of the spiritual perception of the being involved with the *Anishinaabe* name. The meaning and perception of the being is cut short. This is because communication is only as good as what becomes understood by those engaged in communication. English is what we have to understand each other, so the *Anishinaabe* perception of being has a greater chance of loss because we are losing the language that encompasses such perceptions. A second example of meaning loss is with the *Anishinaabe* defined experience of what occurs alongside the dawn. In English, one might say, “It is daylight.” In *Anishinaabemowin*, there are multiple ways to speak about this time of day. There are various ways in which to name the occurrence, all of which speak to the spirit or power of the being involved with the dawn. In that *Anishinaabe* realm of perception there is room for differing experiences of that power. There is not a single “right” description of that power. To the contrary, there are many ways to talk about the power of the dawn. However, the common denominator is that each way speaks to the power or spirit of the being. There is room for multiple perspectives on that power in *Anishinaabemowin* because *Anishinaabe* epistemological foundations include the assumption that, as human beings, it is beyond our capacity to pin that power down. All of which is lost when translated to English as “dawn” or “daylight.” The *Boodewatomi* Elder says that in

translation there is no mention of “the keeper of the light.” The translation simply implies a time, rather than a spirit-based range of interaction.

The dominant pressure of competition in mainstream society is also a change that affects the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* in a contemporary context. The competition required to achieve dominant definitions of “success” in the modern capitalist society assures division. Division is an impediment to the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. The divisive acts of competition are encouraged by the institutions that shape our perceptions that lead to our actions. Dominant, mainstream, public education has been one such institution. According to the *Boodewatomi* Elder, “We are becoming educated and we are dividing ourselves. No one has to do that. People don’t understand that.” The prevalence of standardization is another impediment to living *minobimaadiziwin*. It creates the illusion of division in that beings begin to believe they have no place in society. Through acculturation we lose the *Anishinaabe* way of knowing that every member of Creation has unique gifts to offer the whole. Many of us acquire the commonly perceived need to fit into the “status quo” or standard and, as a result, internalize an identity of “sub par” existence, lower in social hierarchy.

With all things medicine in *minobimaadiziwin*, the internalization of a negative self-concept from exclusion has potential to be as detrimental to our health as does the food we eat. According to *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing, food is medicine. Due to a dominant mainstream value and the prevailing definitions of efficient modes of production, machine processing and genetic manipulation yield foods that are largely stripped of their medicinal value and become “fillers.” These fillers, stripped of their

medicinal properties and pumped with chemicals by the process ensued for “efficient” mechanical production, comprise the majority of foods purchased in grocery stores today. Efficiency is defined via a baseline economic unit of value. The storywork examples that domesticated strawberries do not match the intensity of flavor of the wild *odemini*, or strawberry, and that of *mandaamin*, sweet corn, speak to the loss in medicinal value of domesticated foods. *Minobimaadiziwin* has changed with the rise of diabetes and other sicknesses attributed to the change in diet from wild whole foods imbued with medicines to processed government-provided commodity and store-bought foods. Whereas the process of obtaining the wild foods of the bush involved physical exercise, today’s dominant method of driving to the local supermarket does not involve physical exercise essential to *minobimaadiziwin*. Furthermore, there is a loss of relational experience with Creation in the reduction of growing and/or gathering your foods/medicines out in the bush. We are removed from the process of taking life and as a result we do not offer *asemaa* for the life we receive when we purchase food from an establishment.

The majority of foods bought in grocery stores today are simply fillers, stripped of their medicinal properties and pumped with chemicals by the process ensued for “efficient” mechanical production. “Efficiency” is defined via a baseline economic unit of value. Because of this change in *minobimaadiziwin*, *Anishinaabe* people rarely live into their 100’s as was the case generations before when *Anishinaabe* people cared for their bodies in the way that was given by the Creator via *Wenaboozhoo*. There is a natural progression of foods that grow according to natural law through the seasons and provide our bodies with the necessary nutrients or medicines we need to remain in good health.

There are nutrients in these wild foods that have yet to be measured and defined via the standard vitamin Recommended Daily Allowance of contemporary times. This is an impediment to living *minobimaadiziwin*.

The concept of time in dominant mainstream society is not that of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. This is a major change in the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* via the acculturation of colonial impact. Time is not measured with a clock. For *minobimaadiziwin*, time is what is given to you to accomplish your purposes in this life. The measurement is not in numbers but in events, actions, and growth. Ages do not signify growth; numbers are not used to measure or determine growth. Actions and events determine time and growth. This difference in perception of time between the mainstream and *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing presents great difficulty, in that acculturation has lead to implementation of various “short-cuts.” Bob Williams expressed “short-cuts” as a disservice to the Elders that spent a considerable amount of time gaining the wisdom of the teachings. When an individual places the dominantly perceived constraints of “time” on any particular ceremony, components are left out of the process. This alters the ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* for the coming generations in that the children present for the ceremony are cut short of the teaching and will learn that acculturated form of approach. In turn, the next generation will only learn the knowledge presented and not the teaching in its entirety. Placing the dominant construct of time on life further impedes *minobimaadiziwin* in that it encourages standardization in order to meet the imposed “time” constraints. This leads to a reality where we rush our babies to perform by standard perceptions of time constraints and thus are not permitted to experience the

growth specific to them. Respondents mentioned that there are those that are 50 who act like they are 20. For *minobimaadiziwin*, time is measured according to natural law, by the events through which power moves within life cycles. This is exemplified by perceiving the coming of “the keeper of the light” as opposed to the dominant time perception of “daylight.” *Minobimaadiziwin* involves time as the movement of the power and Spirit through the cycles of growth experienced by Creation.

According to *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing, *minobimaadiziwin* involves the sacredness of ceremony throughout the gift of our lives. It is characteristic of *Anishinaabe* ontology (science of being) to do our best and act the sacred ways we were instructed by the Creator, in our original Creation Story, for all our days, not only during certain specified times. There are specific ceremonies that are vital to the medicine way within the larger ceremony of our lives and, at all times, we are to do our best to live out those Grandfather teachings with all our actions. Roy discusses the way in which we perceive ceremonies and that they are not something to be put on a separate pedestal as a slice of life or elevated from daily existence, but are an essential part of life itself. *Anishinaabe* epistemology is not to manifest linear hierarchy, whereby certain life compartments have superior and inferior placement. A time and place for everything exists in a greater sphere of relational existence. This includes guidance of the power of the spirit embodied by the life force of all our relations.

Ceremonies are ways in which we are all provided dreams, visions, and other communication with the spirit. Ceremonies are purposeful and connect us with the Spirit. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves striving to live out the Seven Grandfathers as a constant; not

something reserved for ceremony alone, but to be lived throughout the journey of our life cycle. Ceremonies for particular purposes are necessary throughout the life cycles within the medicine way of *minobimaadiziwin*. However, creating a category for a certain way – “the only way” to perform an all exclusive definition of ceremony – yields a large quantity of wrong ways, and one right way, depending on position. This results in division. Division is a major theme of change in ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. The coming of the English language brought division to the way of thinking and perceiving in English via Western educational methods. It brought division to *Anishinaabeg* people. The Christian boarding school experience had a large impact on changing the thought processes *Anishinaabeg* people had. Children were beaten for speaking *Anishinaabemowin*, using their own names, or practicing any form of their *Anishinaabe* culture. It was beaten into them that there was but one way to worship and connect with the Creator. It was beaten into them that there is but one method of ceremony.

To a people deeply rooted in spiritual existence, this was taken rather seriously and the effects are lasting. The mode of humans as judges of other’s spiritual worship came from outside *Anishinaabe* teachings on relating with other members of Creation. This mode of judging appears to be internalized in contemporary times and projected by our own *Anishinaabeg* people. The coming of English language and belief systems laden with messages of *Anishinaabe* inferiority formed how *Anishinaabe* children viewed themselves and the world. The internalization of the judgment imposed upon *Anishinaabe* has bled into contemporary *Anishinaabe* culture to the extent that it often distracts from

our own teaching of not trying to do the Creator's job or to think of ourselves as superior to any other being. According to *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing, only the Creator determines the afterlife. The way that we live brings us to the life beyond and death is not a mere end but also a new beginning whereby everything is cyclical. *Anishinaabe* teachings hold that we are not to judge the Spirit-based beliefs of other cultures because we do not know what the Creator instructed them upon creation. Judgmental lines of thought are not part of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, and are by-products of colonization and acculturation to an alternate civilization. Inter-generational experiences with violent judgments regarding *Anishinaabe* cultural and spiritual practice have been internalized and shape the way that we treat others in the present. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves the thought process that the Creator is the only able judge of determining the afterlife.

The gift of an Elder's presence is something that *Anishinaabeg* people are losing on an increasing basis and is a detriment to *minobimaadiziwin*. In contemporary times we view Elders as simply old people, often considering them burdens. They are often placed in nursing homes where they are separated from their families and thus are not as available to pass on their acquired wisdom. They furthermore are often disrespected. Change in thought precipitated by acculturation and adaptation to the English language and dominant culture have contributed to the great loss in *Anishinaabe* perspective of both the definition and experience of an Elder. The loss of meaning of the word, "Elder," that participants describe can be seen in the various definitions of Elder in both *Ojibwe* and English dictionaries. In *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (Nichols and

Nyholm, 1995), the definition for an Elder is *Gichi-aya'aa*. Conversely, *Gichi-aya'aa* is taught to simply mean “Elder.” Definitions of the word’s individual components in the same dictionary differ vastly from those of the dominant culture. *Aya'aa* is defined as a “being, someone” and *Gichi-* is defined as “big, great, very.”

It is possible to perceive a different sense of what an Elder is in the *Anishinaabe* language – a big, great, or emphasized being. It is equally possible to equate a great being with age, an old person in which case the *Anishinaabe* meaning in the *Anishinaabe* language is lost in translation to that of the English language. As participants explain, we are losing the great meaning of our *Anishinaabe* language that is essential to our *minobimaadiziwin*. We are not only losing the *Anishinaabe* perception of Elderhood, we are also losing the existence of such Elders.

Participants relate this back to the noise of the times. The flashiness of television and video games keep youth and adults alike from learning to really listen. With attention affixed upon technologically advanced entertainment, we depend less on our own senses and more upon a remote controlled level volume. *Anishinaabeg* people used to be able to hear a great distance and even based treaties on how far the sound of a rifle could be heard. There is so much constant noise in contemporary times that we do not listen and we do not know how far we can hear. We spend much of our time in buildings or cars cut off from the outdoors with a steady hum of household appliances. Furthermore, we do not have much opportunity to really use our ears to hear any great distance of sound because our immediate surroundings are equipped with the technological advancements of the

present day. We do not have to really listen for anything because there is constant distressing noise.

We were gifted with senses and language through which to experience *minobimaadiziwin*. Learning to live *minobimaadiziwin* is inseparable from the process of learning the Seven Grandfather teachings. Furthermore, understanding those teachings via *Anishinaabemowin* provides the process with the *Anishinaabe* epistemological foundation. As Roy says, when we understand the language, the absence of a word for garbage follows the epistemological basis of reasoning within the *Anishinaabe* world view of respect for all of creation. To respect is not to waste or to create waste to leave piled up upon our mother the Earth. Garbage is a concept foreign to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* and its contemporary existence is a barrier to living the *Anishinaabe* good life today. This is not to say that *Anishinaabe* people do not waste or produce garbage; they are consumers alongside dominant mainstream society. However, the adoption of disposability has changed the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. The *Anishinaabe* good life involves the seventh grandfather teaching of humility and being humble enough to know that you are no better than any other member of Creation and thus have not the right to trash, poison, and destroy the earth for our individual gain over the rights of other beings. We are equal. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves interaction and acknowledgement with all Creation, the water, rocks, etc. A change in *minobimaadiziwin* resultant of acculturation and colonization is the adoption of the idea that human life is valued above the rest of Creation. In other words, it is not characteristic of *minobimaadiziwin* to perceive human life as superior and other life forms inferior.

Furthermore, we are to respect all beings. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves embracing the Seven Grandfather teachings. To fully embrace one of them is to embrace the rest because they are all interconnected. One cannot fully respect without the other six teachings coming into action.

Conclusions

The ability to live *minobimaadiziwin* has changed because of a change in ways of thinking and perceiving for *Anishinaabe* people following adaptation to non-*Anishinaabe* epistemologies and ontologies. The adaptation of Western thought via the English language changed the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* – the teachings became a “roller coaster.” This roller coaster was created by the conflict that arose from trying to walk two different roads in the same life. If we could understand life through our *Anishinaabe* language, we would move closer to the ability to live *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

What are the various definitions and meanings of *minobimaadiziwin*?

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin is a fluid process of transformation that is personally specific. Spirit and spiritual existence are the heart of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, best understood in *Anishinaabemowin* (*Anishinaabe* language). *Minobimaadiziwin* is a journey of growth and healing, commonly referred to in contemporary terms as educative practice. It is a medicine way, whereby learning and healing are symbiotic. It is also an

educative experience of limitless creativity and possibility. In *minobimaadiziwin* there is no single, rigid standardization of practice. It is the process of growth through the circles and cycles through which power moves and is measured in a non-linear event based time. The core unit of measurement involved in *minobimaadiziwin* is non-economically-based and is embedded with a matrix of spiritual experience and the Seven Grandfather teachings.⁵

What does the practice of living and/or expressing *minobimaadiziwin* involve?

To truly experience *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, one needs the spiritual tap provided by the epistemological foundation in *Anishinaabemowin*. Without the lens of understanding provided by the ability to perceive through *Anishinaabemowin*, *Anishinaabeg* people really do not have the good life that was meant for us. It requires a different habit of thinking, being, perceiving, and feeling. Living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves a conscious awareness and perpetual growth in the purpose each member of creation holds in the circles of being. *Minobimaadiziwin* also involves being engaged in the perpetual process of learning such purposes and intricacies of this life, that is, our place in those circles and via knowing the rest of creation, knowing ourselves. Within the *Anishinaabe* good life, a rock is a grandfather, a grandmother. It is a living spiritual being with inherent value of its own. Again, *minobimaadiziwin* involves conscious awareness of the circles of power in and around us – conscious awareness of our roles in said cycles of being. We must question our motives and the effects of our

⁵ See Appendix A for the author's interpretive interlude.

actions. Furthermore, as evidenced by natural law and *Anishinaabe* oral tradition, there is a place for every diverse life form and the contemporary practice of standardization is not a part of *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*. Living *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves experiential educative practice whereby all life serves to help each other utilizing the gifts we have been given by the Creator. It involves a significant shift in perception where spiritual reality takes on a prioritized importance. That is not to say that spiritual is hierarchal to physical, rather that they each hold symbiotic status integral to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*.

We all have the opportunity to operate from our own inner truth as best we know it on our own journey. This relates to each person having his/her own conception of God or the Creator. We cannot follow another person's belief. We must discover our own truths which must come from within. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* involves knowing our true beliefs and living them. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves a conscious awareness of the circles of power within which we move. It involves a conscious awareness of the medicine, good or bad, that our actions evoke in the circle. It is a medicine way whereby all things are medicine and can be good or bad depending upon what we do with the spirit given power of free will. We choose the memories we will create for our children, grandchildren, and the next seven generations by the way of being we choose to embrace and engage in today.

What relationships are involved in *minobimaadiziwin*?

Experience of “the good life” is relational and all members of creation have significance in the learning/educating process it entails. We are all helpers to each other and are gifted with various tools with which to learn and teach in this *minobimaadiziwin*. The teachings themselves are tools gifted to human beings from the Creator. The Seven Grandfather teachings are foundational guidelines for how to approach our relations and ourselves. We are also given the power to choose the way in which we will walk our own road. All of this is guided by a greater natural law embodied by the spirit which manifests itself as the living process of the cycles through which power moves within the universe. We are given a connection to natural law via our conscience and have the ability to listen if we so choose. A major tenet of the rule of natural law according to *Anishinaabe* epistemology is the understood lack of human dominion or control. All of creation serves to present gifts to one another in reciprocity. We are all here to help each other and are provided with an infinite number of gifts with which to perceive and grow through the perpetual educative process of the good life. We all have an active role to play in crafting and maintaining *minobimaadiziwin*. *Minobimaadiziwin* involves the collectivity of our respective communities with all the circles of life interacting and connecting into the greater circle of being. We can create, maintain, or destroy the existence of community.

Questions for Future Exploration

- From the storywork within this study, *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* appears to involve going “feral,” that is, connecting with the inner voice of conscience as communicative of natural law. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000) defines feral as “existing in a wild or untamed state or having returned to an untamed state from domestication.” Living *Minobimaadiziwin* in a contemporary context requires decolonization, which suggests a likeness to un-domestication and calls us back to our original *Anishinaabe* system of values?⁶
- An exploration of current efforts to foster the development of *Anishinaabe* values in *Anishinaabe* youth for a future *minobimaadiziwin*.
- What are the community specific needs to affect decolonization and intergenerational healing?
- How are *Anishinaabe* communities currently addressing the communal healing process?
- What efforts can be made to effect more cohesive community development based on the *Anishinaabe* values *minobimaadiziwin* necessitates?
- An exploration of best practices on teaching the *Anishinaabe* language to affect the cultural understanding of the language so as not to lose the *Anishinaabe* worldview in equating *Anishinaabe* words to that of English definitions.

⁶ See Appendix B for more in-depth exploration.

- Exploring whether the concept that “everyone has their own *minobimaadiziwin*” comes from acculturation with the Western ideal of individualism or whether the concept of everyone having their “own” *minobimaadiziwin* is perceived differently when thinking in *Anishinaabemowin* as opposed to English. Alternatively, with a spiritual way of being, regardless of the language we use, would we understand the statement to mean something less individualistic or separate?

EPILOGUE

The following individuals convened with the author to explore possibilities for practical application of the findings:

Brian McInnes is an *Ojibwe Anishinaabe* from *Wasauksing* Reserve, Ontario. He is a Doctoral candidate and Faculty member in the Department of Education, University of Minnesota Duluth. He has been teaching *Ojibwe* language for the past ten years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education, a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, and a Master of Science in Environmental Science. He is a member of the *Midewiwin* Medicine Lodge (Traditional life healing society of *Anishinaabeg* people) and exemplifies a lifelong commitment to *Anishinaabe* language and cultural revitalization.

Katherine (Fournier) Marson, a biracial *Ojibwekwe* grandmother, grew up near Detroit and later raised three daughters in Northern Michigan. She holds an Associate of Arts, a Bachelor of Arts in History Education and Psychology Education, a Master of Education in Education/Indigenous Epistemology and Research, a Secondary Education Certification, and has completed a considerable amount of other coursework. She has worked in the public educational system for over 35 years, teaching students from kindergarten through college level. She moved to Northern Wisconsin in 1999 and taught at Lac Courte Oreilles *Ojibwe* Community College for five years. She did her graduate

work on the loss of fluent *Ojibwemowin* speakers, *Ojibwe* identity loss, and the need for *Ojibwemowin* educational materials and curriculum. She considers herself to be a lifelong learner.

A Conversation on Practical Application of the Findings

Amy: We've come together to discuss what came from the findings – an analysis of practical ways to apply them in Native Communities and what's involved in working towards that.

Brian: So kind of, then, how to take some of these definitions and meanings you have established for *minobimaadiziwin* and think about that concept in a community context. Is that sort of what the objective is?

Amy: Yeah, how to make it practical but at the same time with the understanding that there is not one static definition of *minobimaadiziwin*, that it's a dynamic living process.

Katherine: I like that, “a dynamic, living process.” It's a process that is powerful, meaningful, natural, and that evolves with each generation.

Brian: I think one of the things that was really apparent in some of the analysis that you did, and just that from the various perspectives that you captured in your field study, were

I think some of the major or maybe all of the major pieces collectively come through and that was one of the beautiful things of the different personalities that you spoke to. From their collective experience, you get an idea of what *bimaadiziwin* has come to be fully defined as, and it was interesting that with working with the crew you worked with, first language speakers sort of articulating their reality into English terms, but by doing so, it does open up that as one practical way today of reaching people – talking to people and introducing to people – that the concept exists and that so many times in our communities in a practical perspective indeed if we simply translate it as “the good life,” that’s a difficult concept for people to grasp. That life is in fact good. That life can be good. So the fact that you’ve worked with these speakers to develop that collective understanding, that’s what the traditional life is all about. That was an important thing. I’m not sure if it was one of your original intentions but certainly it’s a very nice result.

Amy: Well, I think that that was part of my original intention. I wanted to explore the ways that first language speakers think about *minobimaadiziwin*, knowing that I’m not a first language speaker so I wouldn’t be able to determine that because I think in English and I’m working on how to think in *Ojibwe*. I also wanted to find a definition but what came out of it was that it’s more than a definition of a process and not something that can be defined or put in a box, but more of a process that involves *Anishinaabe* education as life itself. And so one of the initial things that was suggested in my thesis defense was to work toward creating a teaching model based on what the participants said in interviews to be a practical application for what they said collectively about coming together and

teaching and learning and process and creating good memories for the children to basically raise communities surrounded by the Seven Grandfather teachings. Logically the way we think now is to create a teaching model because we are part of the academic structure. We create a teaching model, then we create lesson plans and follow that structure but now that we're in the process of trying to create a teaching model it's really hard because we're dealing with apples and oranges. We're trying to grasp something through a different lens that might not be graspable the way we're trying to do it as far as making a solid definition or a different form of structure. It will take more research to be able to determine the best way to filter that through the education system – if we can even do it as is.

Katherine: Yeah, “*Anishinaabe* education as life itself” – Wow! That’s it exactly. It’s the intent of applying Indigenous epistemology or First Peoples’ (of any nation of peoples) ways of knowing life as human beings interacting in good ways with other aspects of Creation. I think being a part of an academic structure is counterproductive to learning. It confines us to artificial limits that we place on teachers and teaching. It excludes traditional, Mother Earth-based, language-based knowledge, and dictates an agenda that is beneficial primarily to the dominant culture. Filtering the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers through the lenses of such exclusive, restrictive, structured, and essentially foreign teaching methods, curriculum, and content dilutes and distorts knowledge. I mean, in terms of our cultural ways as we are able to know them through our language, it discourages memory of the real experiences of our grandfathers. It replaces truths with

information that is deemed acceptable to dispense, it assesses priorities in terms of benefit to a certain group of people, and it often is not contextually-based or connected to other bodies of knowledge and experience over time and space. With all that said, your question of whether or not we can create a teaching model compatible with *minobimaadiziwin* is a good one.

Brian: I really like what Amy just said there, about whether or not we can even do it as a teaching model and I think it's one of the habits we fall into today. And I really like the way she framed it in terms of a lesson plan, it's kind of the mini example of the big macro concept we're dealing with here regarding this teaching model. With a lesson plan, you have your objective and your ways of teaching that objective. You have certain activities that are assessed certain ways and at the end of it you see how well the student learned and then if the students were successful when you end in that half hour or fifteen minute space or however long you have to do it. I think with this concept of *bimaadiziwin*, ideally it would absolutely be something that we simply could just teach our people again. And just through a series of defined activities you will learn about *minobimaadiziwin*, the good life, the balanced life, the whole life and you know when you think about what that means, *minobimaadiziwin*, you know, not to say that linguistic breakdown is always helpful, but the way of goodness, the way that things continue on for a long, long projected period of time. *Bimaadiziwin*, the way of your character, the way of your nature, the way of your action and being – so the good sustained way of your character and your being over a long period of time, that is *bimaadiziwin* and it's about all of your life. I

think all of your interviews were reflective of that point and what began a long, long time ago throughout the history of our people and our life and experiences that we have and the things that life teaches us in its totality – all the while trying to focus on the good values that guide life and the good principles that guide life and the humility and all the things that are so central to our people historically. Also that life actually becomes something that you focus on. You don't just do, but you focus on trying to do it very deliberately, hence in a good way, I guess. So it's nothing that you can just teach in a lesson, or even a series of lessons. It's something that is experienced fully and as part of your interviews, it's part of that whole total experience for us as a people, yes, it's very much a community experience. So, really, I don't know if there really is just one teaching model that we could ever create. I think what it does, the work that you've done brings us back to a community understanding that this was the life that we had and it was very much that, *minobimaadiziwin*. What we have today may not be *minobimaadiziwin* so how is it as a community – what intentional decisions do we have to make as a community, not just in one simple isolated area like education, but life. This is a total life approach, a total life change for a community to engage in and re-institute values and traditional frameworks of understanding. And as all of your informants talked about, seeing the world again through language and that it's going to require a total shift of being in order to get back to an Indigenous sensibility of a life. That's kind of a really glaring thing here, I think.

Amy: I really like that way that you spoke to the collective of the interviews. It seems that many angles came up from different people to create the whole and then one presented another way of explaining points explained by another like the way that you explained your understanding of *minobimaadiziwin* enriched the different ways the respondents defined it in a way that now we see another angle of the same apple, the same being that we're looking at from all different ways. Trying to put it into a teaching model is to try to say that, in this one way of defined education as public or academic, is to say that one view of the apple can do justice to the whole thing. How can we do that successfully when everyone is at different places and everybody has something to offer of their unique gifts and different positions? Actually, it does go back to what participants were saying about gifts and helpers in our world and everybody has a place and a role, and the importance of diversity because we need all those different angles to work together to have a total experience. So how do you make that, to grasp or wrap your mind around finding one single way to spoon feed it to people when it's personal experience? It's growth that you can't control in another person, and that even if we told people that this is how it is, as in my experience, I don't really understand what they're saying exactly unless I experience it for myself. So how do you reflect that? I guess the practical application that I work towards is to someday be helpful to any community, but I don't know – I can't determine what that is. It has to come from each community and what they want because their angle on that life, that apple, per se, is that this is the important view that comes from *my* community or *your* community. It has to come from within so how can I determine what would be practical or applicable with my role – as the respondents

brought up and I learned from interviews – to help each other and to utilize the gifts that we have been given and at the same time without telling someone else what they need?

Katherine: It occurred to me when I listened to what you and Brian just said that just *speaking* about *minobimaadiziwin* evokes a positive response. Amy, did you notice how my response to what you said about teaching models, academic structure, and filtering knowledge through the dominant culture's educational system brought a negative reaction from me even though, and maybe *because*, I've taught in that system for so many years?

Amy: You bring up an excellent and very interesting point, Katherine. It reminds me of some of the literature review in that there are problems in seeking the good life in the mainstream as well as our *Anishinaabe* communities. Those problems are manifest in our mainstream institutions and affecting the teachers themselves. It's so ironic, though, because it is our educational institutions that serve, in part, to disseminate the knowledge preferred for an "educated" public. So the problems influence the teachers who carry it forward to the students... with or without the cognizance of it. On that note, practical application can be working toward an alternative teaching model of some sort that involves the teacher, the community actively pursuing life through *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing *minobimaadiziwin*. But again, when I say "teaching model" I automatically think of the timed lesson plans I write for my teacher education courses. That's not what I mean when I talk about working toward some alternative teaching model. It would

require an alternative format in order to foster *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing the good life in children.

Brian: One thing with part of the work that Amy has done is that before we can apply something, we need to know what it is, what it is that we're talking about in the first place. And this concept of *minobimaadiziwin* from the *Anishinaabe* understanding of it is something that we are trying to construct today. And unfortunately our lives today have become so rigidly defined. And whether that's just a government classification of what kind of Indian you are, or what kind of lifestyle you have, or what occupation you have – and everything is so rigidly defined and isolated. I think that's one of the things you see about a concept of *minobimaadiziwin* which is in and of itself such a complete holistic sensibility that it's not just anything that can be narrowly isolated or removed from people's experience. In fact, it's almost like the old analogy they use, "Does a fish know it lives in water"? Even a lot of individuals you spoke to in your fieldwork, for them, they've grown up with this concept of *minobimaadiziwin*. It's been everything which was around them growing up in their traditional communities and in their families. But for those people who you had the experience of interviewing there, they've also had several other life experiences in a very different society – learning to speak another language, learning another people's and another society's values and customs. And it's interesting because all of the respondents identify that there was a difference, and that's hugely important in terms of identifying that, yes, there is absolutely a kind of indigenous sensibility, or an indigenous perception, or experience of life that's truly culturally

authentic because there's something to contrast with. So we begin to make those definitions that there is a difference in life and from that place in life a definition and we begin to think then how does that apply? And I think what was interesting about the definitions that you were getting from people was that it was very clear that they were not struggling. And it's almost like when you read all of the interviews together, you get a sense of what it is, but I don't know if any of the interviews in isolation completely captured that sort of full view of what *minobimaadiziwin* is because it's something that no one has ever had to define before. So in that, there is no textbook definition, you can't open any dictionary actually and even just read, "The good life. And really it's not even just a direct translation in that there are not even just two words that can say it all. It's a lived philosophy of being and it's everything in how you relate to the spirit, you relate to yourself, relate to the natural world and live your life with every step of your life's walk – through your whole life. And again with an idea of goodness at the heart of it all. To live your life, to be good, but in order to do that, you are good. You remember those values that guide life absolutely. And for some of the people who very literally followed ceremonial protocols, those things which we know as the seven grandfather teachings are very carefully articulated and each of those teachings is very well-defined and comes with its own protocols of ceremonial application and expression. But even for the people who did not necessarily grow up with the formal and traditional values, their communities maintained those things, however undefined they were, even if they didn't exactly know what those seven key traditional principles of *minobimaadiziwin* were, they continued to live them. But it was almost like at that point you no longer had to identify them – they

were all part of life. So defining *minobimaadiziwin* is as ridiculous as asking a fish to try to define water because it's all that you are and all that you strive to be and all that is around you. But in today's context, it makes a lot of sense to do that because our community life has changed so dramatically that the activities that we did as a people – that's everything that your respondents talked about, from gardening, to picking apples, to knowing plants, to hunting, to showing respect through tobacco and prayer, of humility, of kindness – all of these lessons together gave you that *minobimaadiziwin*. Today, with so many of those activities of life removed from us, how can we expect people just to have *minobimaadiziwin* when everything that builds up is gone from communities? So the practical application is then in many ways re-familiarizing ourselves with “what is *minobimaadiziwin*?” and re-familiarizing ourselves with the fact that our people actually did live good lives. People actually had good lives – they were not just unlearned savages. They were actually very learned, very well valued, very moral people. And from that place, you can develop a sense of historical pride. You begin to want to identify with that kind of work ethic, that kind of life ethic, that kind of experience, and it's something that you then, for yourself, begin to want instead of the mass-rejection which our communities have made of our traditions. And we've found no benefit from that. We have not found *minobimaadiziwin* from abandoning our teachings, from abandoning our language, from abandoning anything that we as a people were given to do. We've learned that the hard way. So now, what is equally important is that we know that there is something of value for us – through our language, through our ceremonies, through our teachings – that there is a good life there potentially for us if it's something we want to work at. Something that

we, as communities, can make decisions about at this time – that this is our traditional way, to have a good life. So let's make a concerted effort as communities to bring that back to our communities. Bring that back to our people kind of broad scale. That as we talked about here, one of the hugely foundational things that you've done in this work is to help make some initial definition of that and to help identify that for people and to know that it exists. That's the first thing that needs to happen before any practical application can ever be made.

Katherine: To me it makes sense to “live” *minobimaadiziwin* but no sense to try to get the idea of what it is through a structured definition. To define it, we would have to isolate its properties – in essence, dissect it. To live it entails connecting to it in all we do and think and feel and sense or experience in any way. If we're able to do that, I can only see or envision a positive result for ourselves and for anything and anybody we come into contact with. As a part of our experience, or preferably as the whole of our experience, we authenticate this reality of our existence. But this is where the problem is for me – it seems almost impossible to connect with *minobimaadiziwin* on so many levels if we attempt to perceive it or understand it through an educational system that has historically and even contemporarily denied it the very right to exist. Your respondents are so much more qualified to teach about the meaning of *minobimaadiziwin* than any of us who have not grown up knowing or living *Ojibwe* language no matter what academic accomplishments we've achieved. My Masters is in education, specifically Indigenous epistemology and research, and yet even as an *Anishinaabe* woman with society's

accepted educational credentials, I don't consider myself to be anywhere near as knowledgeable about the good life as the Elders you interviewed. I would not be qualified to teach about *minobimaadiziwin*. I would be honored, though, to listen to those Elders and to learn from them. It would be the most valuable part of my educational journey. Unfortunately, my first language is English, and I was indoctrinated from when I was a kid into the Western way of knowing about the world. I fight with that every single day. As I learn more *Ojibwe*, I perceive things differently. I get more insight into or get a more accurate perspective of the Seven Grandfather teachings. I really want to live *minobimaadiziwin* but I struggle with it because there is so much I still need to learn and internalize.

Amy: Yeah, it's kind of the way of the times – the way that we're defining things, and labeling things, as part of a categorizing dominant mainstream, because we've learned and been trained to think that way. I approached the search for the definition of *minobimaadiziwin* with those skills – utilizing those skills. And the community members I that spoke with kind of brought me back out. I thought that I was supposed to narrow and come to this point strictly from a wide triangular base but began to realize during the analysis that I needed to back up in general, in the broader positioning of life and realize that not much can be pinpointed and defined as a static definition in a vacuum. Not to look for a box that contains *minobimaadiziwin*. It's kind of like I realized that we needed to back up, not to pinpoint or attempt to find a position of dominance as we so often do in this mainstream society, not to define *minobimaadiziwin* as something we have

pinpointed and thus are able to control as if we were some sort of *supreme life-form*, but to gain some kind of understanding from the pitiful position we have as human beings and somewhere in that understanding lies those Seven Grandfather teachings. Namely, humility – that the understanding gained involves the absolute significance of the humbling nature of *minobimaadiziwin*. That it is so much larger than anything we, as human beings, are even capable of completely defining. I think it brought me a realization of the need to reverse myself from the learned tendency to *box* but at the same time gain understanding – to grow.

Brian: Absolutely and I think that's one of the signs of any successful investigation is that it taught you something that you didn't expect to find – that you really helped to learn something from the experience of doing it. So as they say, the old adage is that we learn from our mistakes, but in some ways, that's not necessarily what it's about. It's almost an expansion of perspective. That you realize that the first way you approach a situation is perhaps not the best. And I think that what became of it was a sort of an authentic, culturally-based and holistic way of thinking about life and experience. And sometimes we know that we can be notoriously guilty of doing that – of trying to look for all of the variables or look at everything in terms of being variables and everything in terms of isolation as opposed to many things perhaps working together in-sync and coordination and in cooperation – that sometimes it's actually impossible to take away one variable and expect everything else to be able to exist because sometimes that cannot happen. So it's interesting when we think about life in terms of a number of very unique variables,

identify what some of those things are as you have done – and that’s everything from our original values of being to the work ethics that go along with them – the sense of relationships that people developed within communities and bring them back to that original sense of spirit that can only be individual. Those are all of the things that need to come together to bring about the sense of fulfillment of *minobimaadiziwin* as opposed to simply looking at one very isolated concept that, in fact, might be very difficult to isolate.

Katherine: Yet in Western society, so much is isolated. I think that’s partly why so many people don’t feel that sense of fulfillment. Without it, and without community, how can anyone achieve understanding, let alone living *minobimaadiziwin*? Individuality has been stressed since the Sixties in spite of the attempts to *commune*. People intuitively want a *good life* but there is a difference in how people of different cultures view that concept or that goal. People don’t even know how to maintain relationships anymore let alone achieve a cohesive sense of community. There has been a movement toward returning to the concept of community in recent years as some people, actually a small percentage of the population, realize that survival depends on it. Yet many *Ojibwe* and other Native people seem to never have totally lost the feeling of community in spite of all the massive attempts to assimilate us, though for others that knowledge of connectedness got lost with acculturation into the dominant society just as it got lost on most non-Native people with the rise in industrialization, urbanization, technological development, and consumerism. Society doesn’t view the world holistically anymore. Families spend their days, even their lives apart from each other. Children spend their school days isolated by age and grade

and in so many other ways. It's funny how in academia we talk about teaching holistically but very few teachers actually do, and the very system is not set up to achieve a sense of oneness. Community requires cooperation, and survival really depends on cooperation, but academia encourages competition. What is holistic about that? We don't teach children anything close to living that aspect of *minobimaadiziwin*. When I say "we," I'm referring to the dominant culture's educational system. Though I taught within it, and was taught those ways, they never felt right to me even when I was growing up. My family and friends often told me I was born in the wrong place in history. It felt like that to me, too. I felt like I didn't belong. I think I benefited from a lot of introspection and curiosity. I really wanted to learn from the natural world around me. It was always what I felt closest to. I did learn from it, I think even more than I learned from my formal academic schooling. When I started teaching within the school system, I taught using what I instinctively knew and what I learned from the natural world around me and from Elders that I sought out over the years. I tried to teach holistically. I have tried to know *minobimaadiziwin*, but there is so much I do not know yet. I constantly strive to "expand my perspective" and encourage my students to do the same. I like the way White Earth Circle of Life School in Minnesota incorporates perceptual learning styles in their teaching methodology. They also teach each student how to recognize his or her own way of knowing. That's a huge step toward effective educational practice. Though it is not an immersion school, Circle of Life School gives priority to learning *Ojibwemowin*. They try to make the educational environment conducive to learning. They personalize it. They make it culturally relevant. They use natural and full-spectrum lighting. I learned a lot

from just briefly observing at the school when I was in graduate school.

Minobimaadiziwin becomes possible for children being taught in that way. It recognizes the whole child, the whole world of each child. It is a more holistic way of teaching.

When I first introduce the concept of holistic learning to students, it's like I'm talking about something completely foreign to them, something they've never heard of. I often use the example of working a jigsaw puzzle to explain how a holistic view can facilitate learning. I tell them to picture trying to work a puzzle without ever seeing the picture on the box. Each puzzle piece would be isolated and meaningless. It would be nearly impossible to work the puzzle. One needs to be presented with an image of the whole and then be introduced to the pieces as they relate to the whole. I see my role as an *Anishinaabe* woman, an older woman, a teacher, a mother, and grandmother, as being a little of everything to everybody. I am part of life on Mother Earth. I want to live "the good life" and help those that are younger than me to know what that is as much as I can know it given my own life experience and the education I've had, especially in the school of life. Sometimes in life it feels safer to isolate ourselves, especially after we've been hurt in some way, but we need each other. We need community. We need family. We need to develop our spirituality. We need the whole Earth and Universal family from living beings to rocks and soil, to sun and moon. We need purpose. I see that I have purpose by using my life's experience and my accumulation of knowledge to help younger generations to find *minobimaadiziwin*. That means I must continue to seek a deeper understanding of what it is as well.

Amy: So it's just like the example of the *Anishinaabe* reality of having to walk two roads. I find that same example right now. I have the personal value of the study and then I have the value of the study for the people, and I wonder how it will help and basically my role as a woman as part of the *Anishinaabe* community. There is this big twisted part in my mind because I am a part of both worlds, and I start to think for a minute that my growth is benefiting the study and my community because I'll raise my children with those teachings and the fact that all my nieces and nephews, and all the children that I work with anywhere will benefit from my informed position. I believe that itself to be practical application – that the person I've evolved into by absorbing the teachings from the community members I spoke with *is* actually practical application. My experience with their “storywork” evidences the growth that I will pass on in shaping the next generation. I'll do it through my role as a relative and in my role as a teacher aide in the present and as a certified teacher soon enough. The things that I learned from the community members will be practically applied in how I approach shaping the children I role model for. I think that it is also practical application manifested in such a way that propelled me on to get my teaching certification. The experience of this research solidified for me, you know, that, that quote from Gandhi, that you must be the change you wish to see in the world. It solidified for me that being the change I wish to see in the world rooted in the Seven Grandfather teachings as defined by thought only the *Ojibwe* language can provide – creating memories for the children that are good, helping them to learn by doing, helping them to see the world *Ojibwe*, helping them to view our relational world and understand their important place in helping and the gifts Creator gave them

that they have to offer, you know, the rest of Creation. The teachings they gave to me personally, in conversation, in storywork, because they said what they said because I was the recipient. The dialogue would have been different had they been looking at any other person, speaking to any other person. Because of that, I find that my personal reflections are evidence of practical application in the *Anishinaabe* world. But that doesn't seem good enough. Not according to that other road I must walk – my place in the mainstream and academic location which this research is also rooted in. It doesn't seem valued enough or seem like enough of a contribution to try to be the best person that you can be in academia. My personal reflections were as much a part of the analysis as anything else but in the academic world, they are perceived as not "essential" to the findings and needed to be placed in an Appendix. So, this being a thesis, it feels that I'm supposed to do something in line with academic definitions of what constitutes practical application of the findings. I feel like my grandmas are really proud with just that I'm trying to take responsibility for myself and find a place in my community where I can help heal our families – that the coming generations might live *minobimaadiziwin*.

Brian: I think one thing, too, that kind of struck me about work as I look at the analysis – of all of the perspectives of all of the people that you did your fieldwork with, all being first language speakers with first cultural experience reinterpreting that through English, with trying to have that happen, but at the same time as they did that, as they reinterpret that experience to English, as they articulate what they knew in their first language through the lens of the English language and talked about the experience of that, the

experience of *minobimaadiziwin* and identified how they saw it – one thing which I came to realize, this is sort of, I don't know, an unintended practical application, but also gives us some insight into the instruction of our native language that we presently are doing in our schools – one of things that is very tempting whether it's a second language program which teaches vocabulary lists or perhaps even an immersion program that tries to teach more conversational language and structural patterns and dialogue – is that the language itself is enriched by the experience of *minobimaadiziwin*, that cultural experience is vital for the full understanding of the language. That's one of the things I read into the piece as I looked at the comments of the first language speakers that you interviewed. So it tells us something very poignantly in terms of how we do native language instruction today: that instruction which is separate from a cultural experience cannot give that same sense of meaning in the language that all of those first speakers felt when they thought about the words that they knew. That if we do not teach cultural experience to build the value of the words, then we're not teaching our language authentically, and it's not going to carry with the same meaning, the same impact, the same sense of duty that those first language speakers had that connected them to the past and to all the good values of *minobimaadiziwin*. I know people aren't going to get that sense unless we restructure our programs to incorporate those experiences to help them understand values, to basically make that whole-language instruction more life-based. So to me that was kind of an intended complication, but definitely very, very revealing of what we need to do if we are going to keep the language meaning *something* as opposed to just an activity in memorization.

Amy: Yes, when learning the language of an *Ojibwe* to English dictionary, the meaning is lost and we speak English with *Ojibwe* words.

Brian: Oh, absolutely so! That was actually very profound to think about it in that way in that, you know, words are about values, are about stories, they're about history, not just lexical equivalent in another language.

Amy: Right, or something to be compartmentalized in an illusion of not inter-dependence from the whole, because according to *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin*, inter-dependence is a given. At the same time we have this practically as we realize and recognize and learn from it. But again, going back to my place, I don't feel I have the rite or the right to go to tell anybody else/any other community what is culturally speaking. Just because I've written a thesis doesn't give me the rite or the right to go out and tell other people what to do. So it comes back to the cultural conflict of practical application. What is practical application and different ways of thinking about even the meaning of the word, "practical?" What does that mean in an English context versus an *Anishinaabe* definition of *minobimaadiziwin*? I don't even know.

Brian: What you just said there was actually absolutely realistic and absolutely practical in terms of where our communities are today, because you know that there is no single community that you can go into and say, "You know, I have this degree which is

recognized in academia but which will not necessarily be recognized in our communities as a source of valid, authentic knowledge, and at the same time we also know it is not by any means our way to go into communities and tell people what to do." That's not something that we've lived our life way by at any time in history. But what we have done very practically, if we have to think of this in terms of practical applications, you are offering to people an alternative way of seeing the situation. You are offering to people another way to take action on something, another way to view something that might not otherwise be accessible to them. And that's extremely important because we know that in all of our communities, we are losing Elders who have first speaker perspective anymore. So in a way what you have done by working with first speakers from various communities, you've got an interesting triangulation of perspective and not only in itself, but it was interesting in that all of those things came to say the same thing about *minobimaadiziwin*. But you've extended that voice to places where those voices might never be heard A) because there are no longer Elders who hold that perspective in those communities, but also the fact that people often do not listen to Elders in communities anymore and that practically speaking, by putting it into a publishable form, a paper form, you have in many ways validated that knowledge. And even though that wasn't your intention to do, the effect of that is extremely important and valuable and reachable and accessible to people who either A) no longer have Elders, or B) no longer know how to talk to Elders because that in itself is a huge skill which a lot of our people don't have anymore. And if you don't know how to talk to Elders especially in traditional protocols, being able to communicate with them, how can you learn from them? So in many ways

you're offering practical application to these people in identifying that there are Elders out there and there are people who they can talk to and who can give them advanced perspective. It is extremely validating of the Elders' place in our communities as well. And that in itself is highly applicable and meaningful and valuable.

Katherine: Yes, and what you've done has been validating to those Elders who hold back from passing on *Ojibwemowin* with its cultural teaching because their boarding school experiences taught them that using *Ojibwemowin* or even expressing in *Zhaaganaashiimowin* (English language) any of our traditional practices, beliefs, ceremonies, or anything we honor including our values themselves was a punishable offense. I've spoken to Elders in *Ojibwemowin* in public places and have seen how uncomfortable it made them feel. They sometimes refrain from teaching their children and grandchildren about our ways in order to protect them. Amy, by providing perspectives from Elders who feel comfortable speaking about *minobimadiziwin* you have in essence given permission, so to speak, to others who may have knowledge that they are afraid to pass on.

Amy: I agree. Also just bringing attention to the fact that there are different definitions of the validity of thinking that don't necessarily apply to another, and that *Anishinaabe* Elders have their own inherent validity. But I completely agree with what you said, Brian, about being put in this format of a paper – something publishable – the format opening

the knowledge up to different audiences. A thesis opens up a view to people that otherwise would never have seen it, possibly because they want to see it in certain form.

Brian: Or it's the only form by which we know how to learn today as a community. That we've lost our ability to listen. We've lost out ability to really to go out and really talk to people and connect with Elders. So in many ways it's almost like a map. That's kind of how I saw this as. It's a map leading you to where you might want to go to find out more.

Katherine: That's a good analogy – like a map to direct us to where we can find our authentic selves. People can arrive at common destinations by following maps from different starting points and taking different roads.

Amy: Yes, and in doing so each person reads the map according to their own understanding and it's completely something that no one else can define for them, do for them, or spoon-feed it to them.

Brian: And like, one of the things that was said about *minobimaadiziwin* from the Elders that you interviewed that nor is *minobimaadiziwin* something that can be planned out exactly – that different life stages, different things mean different things to different people. But someone engaging in an investigation of a certain aspect of *minobimaadiziwin* may do it very early, one may find themselves doing it very late, but at the same time nor does that exclude anybody from participation. That there's something



for everybody wherever you are. And I think that's a very validating concept for many of our people in our communities who have felt very excluded based on that they did not fit into a certain category, whether it was a status or a blood quantum qualification, or a gender qualification, or an age qualification, or an education qualification – that those things are not a priority to participating in this kind of life-way.

Katherine: I can relate to that feeling of exclusion having grown up off-reservation, having been a single mother thirty or so years ago, having been a woman, or even, until I got society's *prized credentials* (and I don't mean prized by me) and having not had the required initials after my name earlier in my life. I had to earn those initials to gain "status" or get hired for certain jobs, yet I already had the qualifications and experience – often much more than those who *had* the credentials. I hate it that status is a prerequisite for respect as well. Exclusion in the dominant culture is based on pieces of paper that may or may not reflect who you are or what you know or are capable of. Reading the interviews with your respondents was healing for me. I think they will be healing and maybe even emancipating for other *Anishinaabeg* people too. I think a lot of people, myself included, appreciate respect and validation more for our attempts to live "the good life" than for any credentials we may hold.

Amy: So do you think that distributing the final product to communities is something that is practically helpful?

Katherine: That's true, but it's encouraging to see schools like Circle of Life putting the philosophy into practice and modeling that for other educators.

Brian: Well again, with an act of distribution, or just putting it out there so to speak as we do with academic knowledge, we do put it out there and it's very much in that way a similar process in that it gives people the potential to read it. It is not an imposition of knowledge, but it is a knowledge alternative. It is a perspective offered and I think if we've succeeded in whatever academic task that we've engaged in from the beginning, that if we've done that well, then indeed we will capture people's attention. We will capture people's interest and focus, and we will in some way affect a change, but the difference is that we are not forcing this knowledge on anyone or this perspective on anyone, but we're offering it as a perspective if they so wish to engage with it, if they so wish to learn about it, then here it is, that it's available to them. And if anything then, what this is, is an act of availability, of making available to them which was not available before which is A) any kind of a definition of *minobimaadiziwin*, and B) they did not have accessible to them before any type of understanding of how to come to that knowledge or how to come to that definition of understanding through life experience through *Anishinaabe* language, through community connections, through reconnection with traditional values. So as I mention, it is kind of an identification of some of the facets of that life that they may have had no clue, or no clue that it existed in that kind of relationship.

Amy: Well, we still have the problem that we're philosophizing, in that when it's in a paper form it's philosophy and not practical application. It's a revolving problem.

Katherine: That's true, but it's encouraging to see schools like Circle of Life School putting the philosophy into practice and modeling that for other educators.

Brian: But I think, you know, with any philosophy I think history has shown us that things begin with a philosophy, and they become practical application through experience. So until that philosophy is articulated, until that philosophy is shared, people cannot act upon something they don't know. Once they begin to know and understand and understand that implicit value in that approach to life, and begin to then, therefore, move their own life towards that kind of expression in being then do they start to, I guess, practically apply it, but that first step always in that experience is to seek it out. It's almost like that practical application or that, you know, that Praxis that Paulo Friere talks about, acting on thought through life and therefore getting that much closer to that original goal that you had.

Amy: At this point I would say, *Miigwech* (thank you) very much Katherine and Brian. I really appreciate your input on working toward practical application of the findings.

Mii'iw (that's it).

Katherine: *Mii'sa'iw* (that's it)!

Brian: *Mii'sa'iw.*

APPENDIX A: INTERPRETIVE INTERLUDES

This Appendix includes my personal reflections as I grew through the research process.

The storywork engaged between respondents and I connect at multiple points and bring together a mosaic from which I learn about living and raising my children in *minobimaadiziwin*. These connections are inseparable and are not the sum of parts. While one examines the rarest form of one, there are in the background of vision, other related points awaiting exploration.

It reminds me of one of those days where you curl up on the sofa and watch the snowflakes fall...take the children outside and show them how precious and rare each little snowflake truly is as they fall on our hair. How seemingly separate, depending on the language with which you speak and perceive, and on your worldview or conceptual framework. There are infinite mosaics that may manifest from a trip outside in a snowfall, just as there are infinite mosaics that may manifest from a trip to listen to our Elders. Outside with my children, i feel the greater magnificence of the collective activity of that *nibi*, the water, in it's cycle, traveling its way back to Earth – all snowflakes having collective origin and destination – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the will, thought and intention involved in crafting each lil' crystallized form is beyond my pitiful human comprehension. i am humbled by the omnipresent magnificence – and grateful. As if each lil' crystal were the words of my Elders, sharing mutual origin and destination and traveling to the rhythm of natural law

...zoogipoo....

it's snowing

...like water for words...crystallized...

it's foolish to think i can even wrap myself around the whole...all i can do is explore the mosaic i'm personally capable of seeing

from where i am in this moment

on this journey of perpetual growth

and not worry about some stagnant sense of perfection

i regress

shed my previous understanding of what it means to be academic

i am born of the academy
am....*megwizi*

anishinaabe style – and thus, i am that i

Writing writing

All the while

2yr old son climbing up on my lap
head butting my face
drawing on my computer screen
testing my patience, compassion and priorities

calling me to make quick decisions in moments of frustration
of how i wish to teach him
by my actions
and his respective experience of them,
what to do with anger and frustration

how to deal with frustration
how to choose priorities
teaching him how to love

and by doing so
how to really love

by doing what's best
ipso facto
he learns via his experience with me

not because i tell him how to be
because i show him via who i am
and i learn via my experience with he

his experience with me

so somehow i write
headbutting 2 year old fun
to write and rock his lil body on my lap

type through the madness of his
somehow i bring myself
because he matters

and i kin do this without putting him second
because i operate from the heart

contrary to popular belief
from my conscience

strive more n more to connect to the natural law

therein lies my ultimate bias

i'm engaged in a great love affair with the spirit

and my faith is strong

shatterproof

i'm grateful and proud of my conscious connection to the spirit
i semi-expect attempts from some operating from more widely accepted
definitions of "scientific" epistemologies to use that against the study
because that's a pattern of HISstory
replays like a broken record
but i say bring it
assumptions explicitly stated

this is a study based on a set of
just as any study is based on a

perceived set of assumptions about reality
from a non-dominant epistemology

mine just happen to be
and what is the academy?

What is a scholar?

American Heritage Dictionary: Description of **scholar**

NOUN: 1a. A learned person. b. A specialist in a given branch of knowledge

Like an previously undiscovered flower of the amazon

wild and free

defying the perception that "we've" catalogued and colonized all of creation

or maybe one that's been seen infinite times

but not in the same light

and thus overlooked er disregarded as a weed

weed: /

American Heritage Dictionary: Description of **weed**

NOUN: 1a. A plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome, especially one growing where it is not wanted, as in a garden. b. Rank growth of such plants.

Maybe my growth is rank
but this is niminobimaadiz
this is the way i grow

according to the standard
this is my good life
the way i shine

the way i reflect the light of my experience
reciprocity that which the academy has given

the way i give back in
i'm like the weed so

tough n gritty that even cement will give
concrete will move because that's the way i gro

the seemingly
with the spirit

based on Anishinaabe baseline assumptions about reality
chamomile peeking delicately from the sidewalk crack

i'm like the
maybe
a dandelion too

i am a gift i am a burden

it's a matter of perspective
it's a matter of language

of definition
feel about it

of perception

of culture

Maybe i'm like the RAW sugar that people don't wanna adapt into their coffee
drinkin' habits cos i require a different pace of absorption than the processed
white stuff

despite what i may have to offer holistically

i nonetheless cannot hang with status quo absorption

pun

i'm not perfect

never will i claim to be

never better or worse than any other being

it's something i'm unlearning
the idea that anything can be
perfect
or maybe it's the definition of perfection that i'm replacing
hmf – language

er, maybe i'm like the moth, so entranced by the flame
that i can only get close enough
upon ignition of my very own wings
'til i float in the wax melted before me

it's not western science per se but the dominant paradigm accepted by western
individuals in power and their expectations of western science
the perceptions of superiority of fact and perfection
it's not science it's people
it's not the law of science it's the man made perception

it's a living process of human experience
not a stagnant group of superior
epistemologies and ontologies

Am i revolutionary?
evolutionary
allusionary
illusionary
and who has the power to decide?

It's a matter of perspective of definition of perception of culture
it's a matter of language feel about it

i continually ask myself
How can i really do this

without compromising myself out of it for the sake of someone else's definition of
what it means to be an academic???

How to succeed without conceding to an unjust norm?

How to walk the line how to be a boundary crosser

the soundtrack to my life continues and i hear her echo through my head

"Buildings and bridges are made to bend in the wind, to withstand the world that's
what it takes. All that steel and stone are no match for the air my friend, what
doesn't bend breaks, what doesn't bend breaks"

Ani Difranco wails my point and pertains to me as well as the academy

from
which
i sprout

what doesn't bend breaks

what definition of a "scholarly" work are we to exhibit?

what it comes down to is the definition that matters to those who have the power.
It is not the existence of an abstract definition of an "Academy" that determines
the fate of my thesis. It is held by those with the power to determine whether my
study fits into such definition. Likewise, it is not "Western Science" that deems
itself based upon unyielding "facts" existing in linear hierarchy and unparalleled
supremacy of knowledge systems. It is the people with the power to assert their
own definitions of such. The question of the hour remains: Do i hold enough
power to achieve my degree via my own definitions of scholarly works? Or do
those who have the power hold definitions that bend enough for the growth
required by acceptance of this study? What are such definitions? What are the
baseline assumptions about reality from which they sprout? If they do not involve
room for works based upon differing knowledge systems, why?

It's a matter of perspective of definition of perception it's a
matter of language feel about it

i said it before and i'll say it again: i am what i am...and, as such, i am only capable of seeing what i see from who, what, and where i am in this sacred moment. minobimaadiziwin involves deep inner searching. It is a journey of discovery and exploration that has no standard method.

This is all just a glimpse of minobimaadiziwin...just an afternoon, drawn outside by the magnificence of a snow fall.

And this is me,
spinning around
catching flakes on my tongue.

a taste of minobimaadiziwin

it is larger than my human capacity of perception, i can see but a glimpse of how those cycles intersect and repeat infinitely.

in this moment of growth i have come to know a very minute,
albeit general sense and feel of these cycles at this stage in my journey, this summer of my being, i understand a sliver of the cycles of natural law based upon the teachings of these Elders and others before me.

i watch my daughter through the window	talking with the neighbor girl
who eats white bread and enriched pasta	they come in for a
moment and i catch the girl's response	
to quinn's talk of her teddy bear	
i don't care she sez	

i remind the neighbor girl	that wasn't very nice
the disrespect	
'oh' she sez	
quinn smiles at the defense	
i wonder to myself	

what other negative influence is the neighbor in this moment
they want to go to her house cos they have video games
they don't let the other neighbor inside because quinn's "friend" doesn't like him

they don't let quinn's other friend inside either	same reason
i can't shelter her from it all	the division
	noise
	fillers



i can limit exposure but i can't keep her from dominant society
try as i might it's enormous
at least she uses her asemaa and talks with the spirits

hopefully she follows them
hopefully she knows how to really listen for their call

(((hope))) (((faith)))

fight the big words that conflict wit the underlying connection to an ancient sense
of the journey for knowledge.
the knowledge seeks me, not the other way
around

Explanations of my own transformation tap into ancestral roots thru blood
memory

surrounded by ol' photographs grandmas speak to me

i kin see it in their eyes n the only way to decode their solid
message

is to learn my language use my asemaa

& remain conscious of my dreams.

Her voice echoes words of wisdom

musta stuck throughout those turbulent teenage years

Go after it my gurl

that's the one thing they can't take from you
– they can't take away your knowledge

and i realize now through the stories in this study
the magnitude of nookomis' (my grandmother's) lasting words
knowledge in its many shapes and forms

is foundational to anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin

each of my Elders speak to that in various dimensions.

to know ourselves is to know the rest of creation.

it could be argued

the current state of immense cultural loss faced by

Anishinaabe is evidence that knowledge can in fact be taken away
i resolve to call attention

to the status of our continued survival as Anishinaabe people.
Despite overt and covert efforts to assimilate Native American people –
we survive.

nokomis is right
no one can take your knowledge from you

we have our asemaa our roots our relations wit the rest of creation

to remind us of anything we may have overlooked or skipped

in the hustle and noise of contemporary times.
the knowledge is in our bones
it's in our blood

we have our spirit helpers, Gichi Manidoo too – the kind uncreated spirit and

elders who are not merely “old” but those who have engaged in the perpetual

journey of learning of anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin

Those whose lives exhibit emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth

in this medicine way

of relations between all of Creation
they are the ones who see in a snow storm the knowledge which i can only hope to
grow to understand. i can only hope to be blessed enough to live to see the day
when i can give back to my community youth
as gichi-aya'aa, an elder

the knowledge they hold cannot be captured in its richness.
no book can compartmentalize the teachings
as they are without limit

they cannot be contained within any book
thesis
other still life frame

er any other linear measure of
time

I've never been one to "go with the flo" outside myself though i must admit
recent years of single momness
finds me in more instances of temptation

for what appears to be the "easier" choice

Just like snow in a storm
hustle and bustle

as we're carried along by the mainstream of our era

it's a matter of perspective of definition of perception of culture

it's a matter of language feel about it

n as i sit i watch the flakes with increasing intention
i see variation of direction

& realize noodin (wind) comes from at least all 4 directions

we have about as much (((power))) on our own

as each one of those snowflakes
but we have our asemaa
and the spirit is listening

APPENDIX B: AN EXPLORATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Minobimaadiziwin is a medicine way. In all good medicine, there is opportunity for healing. Food is medicinal and what we choose to eat determines our health. Without manipulations that may strip nutritive value, the gifts that other beings have to offer the rest of Creation include medicinal properties. In a relational existence, those beings give their lives so that we can live. The food we eat comes to comprise our bodies.

According to *Anishinaabe* ways of knowing, undomesticated varieties of plants are those that grow as the Creator instructed upon their creation. The undomesticated variety has yet to be manipulated and controlled by man. This is evidenced by the *Boodewatomi* Elder's discussion of wild strawberries tasting sweeter than the genetically modified varieties as well as the medicinal value loss with genetic manipulation. Hybridization occurs consistent with natural law and applies to both the plant and animal worlds. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000), a hybrid is defined as the offspring of genetically dissimilar parents or stock, especially the offspring produced by breeding plants or animals of different varieties, species, or races.

Domestication is the result of human domination and control of another living being for its ethnocentric desires. As the issue pertains to the plant world, it appears that domestication changes the potency of the fruit rather than naturally occurring

hybridization. There are multiple varieties of wild strawberries. There are so many varieties, in fact, that according to the *Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia* (2005), it is almost impossible to trace the origin of every genetic species. This is due to naturally occurring hybridization. The taste of wild strawberries is more intense beyond comparison to the domesticated variety in the store. Domesticated animals do not exhibit the same intense qualities of behavior as those that remain “wild.” The intensity of flavor or disposition of one wild strawberry is greater than that of a carton of the domesticated variety in supermarkets. Thinking in line with the *Anishinaabe* epistemology that human beings are not separate from the rest of Creation leads one to wonder what could also be said of the domestication of human beings. Comparing the relative experience of altering wild foods and animals for purposes specific to dominant cultural needs leads one to wonder if human beings have domesticated other human beings for their own purposes of control and domination. The Western culturally-constructed definition from *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000) presents domestication as a phenomenon whereby a wild biological organism is habituated to survive in the company of, or by the labor of, human beings. Domesticated animals, plants, and other organisms are those whose collective behavior, life cycle, or physiology has been altered as a result of their breeding and living conditions under careful human control for multiple generations.

According to physiologist Jared Diamond (*Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia*), animal species must meet six criteria in order to be considered for domestication: flexible diet (not too cumbersome or expensive to humans); reasonably fast growth rate (to permit human breeding intervention and to match

human interests); ability to be bred in captivity; pleasant disposition (to humans); temperament which makes it unlikely to panic (when something humans do startles); and modifiable social hierarchy so that it will recognize a human as its chief.

This may lead one to ponder whether humans in power have fit other human groups into the above criteria for domesticated domination and control. Commodity foods provided to Native people and the poor certainly are not too cumbersome or expensive to the humans in power. Human breeding intervention that matches interests of the humans in power is achieved via the status quo of family size and ideals of which countries experience rates of birth that exceed the acceptable limits of those in power. Institutions craft the *Anishinaabeg* populace into individuals who strive toward man-made law of acceptable temperament and political correctness, thereby assuring that we are unlikely to “panic” when those in power do something to startle. Further, this acculturation could be thought to assure we will fall into modifiable social hierarchy and that we recognize a particular human as our “chief.” There appear to be similarities between the experience of domestication and the process *Anishinaabeg* people ensued to obtain and maintain “civilized” status. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000), the description of civilization is an advanced state of intellectual, cultural, and material development in human society, marked by progress in the arts and sciences, the extensive use of record-keeping, including writing, and the appearance of complex political and social institutions. *Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin* is a way of life that requires a different conceptual framework of “civilization.” From the storywork within this study,

Anishinaabe minobimaadiziwin appears to involve going “feral,” that is, connecting with the inner voice of conscience as communicative of natural law. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2000) defines feral as “existing in a wild or untamed state or having returned to an untamed state from domestication.” Living *Minobimaadiziwin* in a contemporary context requires decolonization, which suggests a likeness to un-domestication and calls us back to our original *Anishinaabe* system of values. *Anishinaabemodaa!* (Let’s speak *Anishinaabemowin!*)

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