Re-Centering Community: Exploring Land-based Education for Anishinaabe Learners of Batchewana First Nation

Emilee Bews

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

April 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Arts: Education & Society (Thesis).

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

SOAR Program – Sociocultural and Academic Re-engagement Program

CIT – Critical Indigenous Theory

PAR – Participatory Action Research

FNMI – First Nations, Métis, Inuit

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of Canada)

Abstract

Anishinaabeg pedagogical systems existed long before settler-colonial contact and the subsequent and ongoing occupation of Anishinaabe homelands. These systems are comprised of traditional knowledges rooted in the land, which has been storied and shared across generations of Anishinaabeg intellects. From an Anishinaabe ontological vantage point, Anishinaabeg acknowledge land as our first teacher: land is the basis of all life and, therefore, the basis of all cultural teachings central to Anishinaabe education. Anishinaabeg teaching and learning pedagogies are upheld through land-based education/learning. This positions learners to re-engage with the land as a source of knowledge, orienting ontologies and epistemologies through relational learning models. This thesis centers on the work of GlenOak Academy at the Batchewana Learning Centre and the land-based curriculum through the SOAR Program in Batchewana First Nations, where I engaged in my research in the fall of 2023. As an Anishinaabe researcher, I use methods of observation and pedagogical talking circles to engage in relational learning, and my work looks at land-based learning through the lens of traditional Anishinaabe knowledge systems. By re-claiming land-based practices as a vehicle for sharing traditional knowledge and building our own pedagogies, the impact on educational experiences and cultural identities of Anishinaabe learners for the next seven generations and beyond are augmented and oriented toward cognitive liberation and renewal.

Résumé

Les systèmes pédagogiques Anishinaabeg existaient bien avant les contacts entre les colons et l'occupation subséquente des terres Anishinaabes. Ces systèmes sont composés de connaissances traditionnelles enracinées dans la terre, qui ont été historiques et partagées à travers des générations d'intellects Anishinaabeg. D'un point de vue ontishinaabe ontologique, les Anishinaabeg reconnaissent la terre comme notre premier enseignant: la terre est la base de toute vie et, par conséquent, la base de tous les enseignements culturels au cœur de l'éducation Anishinaabe. Les pédagogies d'enseignement et d'apprentissage Anishinaabeg sont maintenues par l'éducation / l'apprentissage basé sur la terre. Cela positionne les apprenants pour se réengager avec la terre comme source de connaissances, en orientant les ontologies et les épistémologies à travers des modèles d'apprentissage relationnels. Cette thèse est axée sur le travail de l'Académie GlenOak au Centre d'apprentissage Batchewana et le programme d'études axé sur la terre dans le cadre du programme SOAR dans les Premières Nations de Batchewana, où j'ai entrepris mes recherches à l'automne 2023. En tant que chercheur Anishinaabe, j'utilise des méthodes d'observation et des cercles de discussion pédagogiques pour m'engager dans l'apprentissage relationnel, et mon travail examine l'apprentissage basé sur la terre à travers le prisme des systèmes de connaissances Anishinaabe traditionnels. En revendiquant les pratiques terrestres comme moyen de partager les connaissances traditionnelles et de construire nos propres pédagogies, l'impact sur les expériences éducatives et les identités culturelles des apprenants Anishinaabe pour les sept prochaines générations et au-delà est augmenté et orienté vers la libération cognitive et le renouveau.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Professor Geraldine King, for her guidance and mentorship throughout this process. I am grateful for the kindness and patience she extended to me during the challenging phases of this project. Her unwavering support motivated me to persevere and strive for excellence in my academic endeavours.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Batchewana Learning Center and GlenOak Academy. I had the pleasure of working with educators and teaching assistants within the SOAR Program, who inspired me throughout this process. I greatly appreciate their dedication and care for this project.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Indigenous Studies and Community Engagement Initiative at McGill University and the McCall MacBain Scholarship, which financed my research.

Lastly, I'd like to thank my family and friends. I could not have undertaken this journey without their continuous support and encouragement.

I dedicate my thesis to my community, Batchewana First Nations. Thank you for welcoming me home and supporting my learning journey.

Chapter 1: Overview and Introduction to the Study

1.1 Overview

This thesis introduces an Anishinaabe perspective on culturally relevant land-based learning practices within Indigenous education literature. Explored through the lens of traditional Anishinaabe knowledge systems, this study aims to diversify the field with nation-specific teachings, stories, and practices shared at the community's discretion. It also seeks to explore the impact of cultural engagement through a given community's land-based practices on the cultural identities of Anishinaabeg learners. Moreover, this study amplifies Anishinaabeg voices within academic discourse, utilizing research paradigms which center Anishinaabeg ways of knowing and being for the purposes of reclaiming cultural knowledges within academic spaces (McGregor, 2018). Therefore, I will consider: 1) how might community-led, land-based learning empower Anishinaabe learners of the 21st century to embody the traditional knowledge that is key to cultural survival, and 2) to what extent does cultural engagement facilitate knowledge production/sharing among Anishinaabe students. These research questions provide an opportunity to explore the transformative potential of land-based education for Anishinaabe learners through the lens of traditional Anishinaabe knowledge systems, highlighting its role in empowering learners to embody traditional knowledge crucial for cultural survival. By examining community-led, land-based learning experiences and cultural engagement, this research demonstrates how such approaches facilitate knowledge production and sharing among Anishinaabe students, nurturing their cultural identities and resistance through cultural resurgence.

Anishinaabe knowledge systems are built upon relationality, with the understanding that all beings are related to and accountable for one another. Centering traditional ways of knowing and being within an Anishinaabe philosophical context provides a more nuanced perspective on reciprocity throughout the research process (Gill et al., 2012); knowledge is co-created between the researcher and participants through collective efforts to preserve and promote community-based knowledge (Peltier, 2018). Within the context of my research, this participatory approach lends itself to Indigenous methodology (Peltier, 2018), influenced by the specific geographical and cultural frameworks anchored to Indigenous epistemology, theory, ethics, story, and community (Kovach, 2021).

Batchewana First Nation of Ojibways is the focal point of my research and analysis. My research includes educators of GlenOak Academy at the Batchewana Learning Centre in a series of pedagogical talking circles as a method of communicating, understanding, and educating, designed for reciprocal and relational learning (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). Through these conversations, I engaged participants in what they perceive to be the benefits of land-based education, their insights into empowering Anishinaabe students, and the dynamics of Anishinaabe knowledge systems within educational structures to understand the impacts of land-based learning from educators' perspectives. In addition to these critical conversations, I observed three separate land-based lessons for grades four to seven students to better understand the pedagogy and praxis of land-based education in a local Anishinaabe pedagogical context.

1.2 Aims, Objectives and Contributions of the Study

This thesis aims to discuss the role of land-based education in bridging the gap between culture and education to support the development of Anishinaabe learners as cultural beings and intellects throughout their educational journey. The study is framed through pedagogical talking

circles, educational observations, and the literature involving Indigenous perspectives on land-based education as a culturally relevant educational framework. Overall, I seek to understand how land-based learning empowers Anishinaabe learners and the ways in which Anishinaabeg people are keeping knowledge alive to strengthen the next generation of Anishinaabe intellects. Providing a comprehensive overview of land-based education across Turtle Island (otherwise known as North America) will inform educators working with Indigenous populations about the impacts of cultural engagement on learners of the 21st century, embodying the traditional knowledges which are key to cultural survival.

Numbers six through twelve in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015a) highlight educational sovereignty based on educational discrepancies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children across Canada (pgs. 1-2). Call to Action 10 outlines the need for revised Aboriginal education legislation with the participation and informed consent of Indigenous peoples, incorporating the following key principles: developing a culturally appropriate curriculum, protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, and enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability within Indigenous schooling (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015a, p. 2). The Calls to Action reveal systemic and social injustices, addressing the ongoing impact of colonial violence against Indigenous cultures and peoples of Turtle Island in pursuit of reconciliation. The TRC (2015b) defines *reconciliation* as "establishing and maintaining a mutual relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in [Canada]… for that to happen, there has to be some awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour" (p. 113). This study is meant to evoke critical conversations around Indigenous education, including the value of traditional knowledge among Indigenous learners

and re-centering the community within the learning process as a sovereign activity to move toward reconciliation and resurgence.

1.3 Education in Batchewana First Nation

The Batchewana Learning Center operates under the Education Department of the Batchewana First Nation of Ojibways, located on Robinson-Huron Treaty territory near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The learning center provides various educational services and support at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels to Batchewana students living on and off reserve. Additionally, the center functions as the school for GlenOak Academy for elementary-aged students. GlenOak Academy is a not-for-profit independent school system founded in 2017 in Mississauga, Ontario. In 2021, GlenOak expanded with its location in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. GlenOak Academy offers an inclusive and supportive learning environment, with low student-teacher ratios and additional support from educational assistants to foster student success and holistic development (GlenOak Academy, 2024). This is achieved through diverse learning opportunities, guided by the belief that learning can take place anywhere and that developing a love of learning is a critical part of the learning experience.

The SOAR (Sociocultural and Academic Re-engagement) program operates under GlenOak Academy, offering highly specialized and culturally responsive educational programming for Indigenous students enrolled in GlenOak Academy in Batchewana First Nation. This community-based, collaborative learning program is designed to reach and support Indigenous students who are not experiencing success within mainstream education and are at risk of "stalling out" with their education and learning, to re-engage, re-energize, re-connect, and re-empower students to meet the demands of the mainstream school system successfully and confidently upon their return (Goode Learning, 2023). These students require additional support

from educators to boost their skills and confidence to succeed as learners, which the unique schooling structure accommodates with enhanced cultural support through the SOAR program. Programming follows the mandated Ontario Curriculum to ensure students have successfully completed the appropriate learning objectives for returning to mainstream education, with an additional focus on sociocultural learning (SOAR, 2024).

The SOAR program is unique to the Batchewana location, developed collaboratively between the GlenOak Academy team and Indigenous community members, including Elders and knowledge keepers, to ensure the content being taught focuses on culturally relevant, authentic experiences (GlenOak Academy, 2024; SOAR, 2024). The program adopts a holistic approach to education that focuses on core curricular competencies alongside social-emotional and cultural learning to reinvigorate a student's love for learning. This is achieved by consciously interweaving Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into daily learning to ensure content is meaningful to students, rooted in the belief that fostering a sense of cultural pride and understanding is integral to student success. Educators strive to embed Anishinaabe culture into daily teaching and learning practices that align with the goals of the SOAR program.

A daily dedicated ‘culture block’ period engages students in culturally relevant learning opportunities developed in collaboration with the community as part of the SOAR program. Some noteworthy activities within the culture block have included drumming, beading, ribbon skirt making, going on medicine walks, and listening to stories and teachings from Elders. These activities are not always focused on land-based education; however, each grade level participates in land-based learning during the culture block at least once weekly. The land-based curriculum is designed to re-engage learners with traditional ways of knowing and being within Anishinaabe-Ojibway cultures; land-based education is vital to the SOAR program, offering

students the opportunity to learn from and with the land, embodying Anishinaabe intelligence. Led and governed by Anishinaabe intellects, this land-based component is specific to the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory in Southern Ontario.

1.4 Self-Locating

As a matter of protocols of Indigenous relationality, I begin by positioning myself within the context of this research. I am Anishinaabe from the Batchewana First Nation of Ojibways, although I grew up on Treaty Seven territory and currently reside on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka. As an Anishinaabe-Ojibway person, I have experienced the negative impacts of the Euro-Western and Eurocentric education systems that have proven detrimental to my people, culture, and traditional knowledge systems. My perception of Indigeneity had previously been shaped primarily by history textbooks and teachings within mainstream schooling, presenting colonial-driven narratives of Canadian history that sought to obfuscate the historic atrocities of colonialism (Simpson, 2011). I was taught a version of history which stereotyped Indigenous people and culture, perpetuating the historicization of Indigenous nationhood. These teachings instilled a sense of shame surrounding my cultural identity. Leanne Simpson (2011) places the imposition of shame at the center of 'cognitive imperialism,' an insidious form of colonization which aims to disclaim and ultimately erase Indigenous knowledge by imposing Western ways of knowing onto Indigenous people (p. 32). Growing up, I did not understand how to challenge these narratives. Since this was being taught in school, I figured it must be correct, and my parents never said otherwise. These narratives remained unchallenged until I began my undergraduate degree, where I met an Indigenous professor who embodies Indigenous brilliance. Under her mentorship and with the support of several other Indigenous women, I began the long process of learning and unlearning, in which I continue to undo the shame I felt for so long. In

doing so, I have learned that the cultural disconnect within my family has spanned generations; countless stories have been diluted or lost completely across three generations of cultural disconnection. Shame manifests when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our families and communities (Simpson, 2011, p. 14). Therefore, I have committed to reclaiming the stories and teachings of my ancestors throughout my educational journey.

I often think about the Seven Generations Teaching, which offers Anishinaabe people the strength to embody Anishinaabeg culture. Emphasizing the importance of recalling the past seven generations, this teaching encourages the honouring of those who endured colonial efforts to dispossess our knowledges. With the understanding that Anishinaabeg can only endure seven generations of oppression, it is our responsibility to reclaim traditional teachings and ways of being to preserve our cultural identity for the subsequent seven generations (Anderson, 2002, p. 294). Simpson (2011) writes: "Through the lens of colonial thought and cognitive imperialism, we are often unable to *see* our ancestors" and their plan for resurgence (pgs. 15-16). However, the Seven Generations Teaching is upheld by relationality, connecting us to those who came before and those who will come after as Anishinaabeg peoples. This teaching signifies the importance of coming to know as a facet of cultural survival through generational connections. It offers Anishinaabe people the strength to embody our culture despite continued colonial efforts to disclaim our ways of knowing and being.

I am a learner in this research, acknowledging that we are informed by our lived experiences, which contributes to our ontological premise and ways of coming to know. For many Indigenous scholars, research is about finding our way home (Absolon, 2022), and that is exactly where my learning journey has taken me. I recognize how settler-colonialism has impacted my cultural identity and individual educational journey, yet this project is helping to

guide me home. This research journey embodies Margaret Kovach's (2019) concept of "researcher-in-relation," solidifying my conviction to ground my work in relationality, storytelling, and my identity as an Anishinaabe person (p. 132). My work is a form of cultural reclamation generated from Anishinaabeg intelligence (Simpson, 2014) as I continue (un)learning through reconnecting with my culture and community. I hope to honour my ancestors by reclaiming traditional Anishinaabeg ways of knowing and being and asserting our knowledges within educational discourse.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The structure and content of this thesis are distributed through seven chapters.

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the overview, aims, goals and contributions of the study, as well as an overview of education within Batchewana First Nation and my position as the researcher.

Chapter 2: Chapter two outlines the conceptual framework generated from Anishinaabe intelligence and influenced by Critical Indigenous Theory (CIT).

Chapter 3: The methodological approach to the study engages with Indigenous research methods, underpinned by Participatory Action Research (PAR) and storywork methodologies to ensure the research process and outcomes are beneficial to the community and remain in line with Anishinaabe research paradigms.

Chapter 4: Through a comprehensive literature review, weaving together the voices of prominent Indigenous scholars within the field of Indigenous education, this study develops discourse involving historical and current understandings of Indigenous education and land-based learning across Turtle Island. Furthermore, the literature review explores Leanne

Simpson's understanding of land as pedagogy through an Anishinaabe lens and a decolonial framework that nurtures Anishinaabeg intelligence.

Chapter 5: This study engages with narrative analysis of the data collected to respond to the proposed research questions.

Chapter 6: This chapter critically examines the results of the narrative analysis within the broader context of Indigenous education and moves toward cognitive liberation.

Chapter 7: The final chapter reviews the results and concludes the study, discussing the transformative potential of land-based learning to support the cultural and intellectual development of Anishinaabe learners.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

In this study, I utilize Anishinaabe intelligence as a conceptual framework to understand the role of land-based learning in bridging the gap between culture and education, with the understanding that learning is a holistic, relational experience enacted by practicing culture (Cluderay et al., 2022). An Anishinaabe research paradigm deploys distinct conceptualizations of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology, reflecting Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being (McGregor, 2018). Employing a nation-specific approach to the research process honours the diversity among Indigenous cultures. While there are similarities between Indigenous paradigms, there is no singular, pan-Indigenous paradigm that can be taken up in research due to the distinct ways of knowing and being that exist across Indigenous nations (Kovach, 2021; Patterson et al., 2023; Wilson, 2008). Kovach (2021) attributes the unique aspects of Indigenous cultures as emergent from ancestral interrelationships found in place (p. 38); therefore, attempting to homogenize Indigenous cultures and identities through a pan-Indigenous paradigm disregards the significance of place in shaping Indigenous epistemologies.

Patterson et al. (2023) emphasize the role of the researcher in reflecting on "their cultural beliefs, assumptions, and values... shaped by their respective knowledges [and experiences]" to shape a research framework grounded in nationhood (p. 2). I will be following Anishinaabe traditions because that is my cultural affiliation. As a researcher returning to my community, I hold a very privileged position with the opportunity to ground my work in personal experience, familial connections, nationhood, and identity (Graveline, 2000; Kovach, 2019; Weber-Pillwax, 1999). All of these aspects have shaped my process of coming to know and influence how I make

meaning as an Anishinaabe researcher. Ignoring the impact of my connection to this research project rejects the premise of an Anishinaabe theoretical framework anchored by our distinct ways of knowing and being.

Grounded in Critical Indigenous Theory (CIT), my research framework merges critical and Indigenous frameworks to uphold Anishinaabe intelligence and disrupt existing power structures to un-privilege Western worldviews (Garcia et al., 2012; Wilson, 2008). CIT is theoretically grounded in critical methods that resist colonial injustice and oppression and support the preservation of Indigenous cultures and identities (Garcia et al., 2012, p. 80). Understanding the purposes for engaging in culturally relevant research becomes integral to the Anishinaabe research approach, providing a nuanced perspective on knowledge production and reciprocal research relationships. Under these conditions, Anishinaabe research can be understood as a form of cultural reclamation (McGregor, 2018) centering traditional ways of knowing and being within Anishinaabeg philosophical contexts.

Invariably, Anishinaabeg identities are grounded by relationality: the concept of existing in relation to all aspects of creation and being accountable for those relationships (Bell, 2013a; Kovach, 2021; McGregor, 2018; Wilson, 2008). All beings, human and more-than-human, are connected and reliant on one another. However, I see these relationships extend beyond our immediate surroundings, linking our present selves to our ancestors and to our future generations (McGregor, 2018, p. 5). Anishinaabe knowledges are informed by the past; our ancestors are our original sources of information shared through the stories, teachings, and ceremonies that have been passed generationally to nurture Anishinaabeg intelligence (McGregor, 2018; Patterson et al., 2023). Engaging with stories as a form of knowledge-sharing places our cultural values at the

critical center of the research. Placing this study within the context of our traditional knowledges as Anishinaabe people provides a culturally relevant lens to explore the liberatory promise of land-based learning for Anishinaabe students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Since this research is inherently Indigenous (i.e., researcher, topic, theory), viewing land-based education through an Anishinaabe lens is relevant. This research takes an Indigenous methodological approach framed by Anishinaabe knowledge systems and land-based pedagogical praxis to explore how community-led, land-based learning empowers Anishinaabe learners of the 21st century to embody the traditional knowledge that is key to cultural survival and, further consider the extent in which cultural engagement facilitates knowledge production/sharing among Anishinaabe students. The methodologies provided a framework for data collection and analysis methods to examine the impact of integrating culturally relevant knowledge into education through land-based learning practices, as well as outlined the participation and ethical considerations of this study.

3.2 Methodology

Indigenous methodologies refer to the distinct approaches, frameworks, and research methods rooted in the cultural and intellectual contexts of Indigenous people. The methodology involves the thinking and doing aspects of research, where the philosophical underpinnings (thinking) and practical methods (doing) are guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Kovach, 2021). The contributions of Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008) have resulted in various models that embody the principles of Indigenous methodologies. This methodological approach has been shaped and reshaped within the context of specific geographical and cultural frameworks, remaining anchored to

Indigenous epistemology, theory, ethics, story and community (Kovach, 2021, p. 42). Within the context of my research, Indigenous methodologies are framed by Anishinaabe knowledge systems and land-based pedagogical praxis, informed by Participatory Action Research (PAR) and storywork to enhance traditional teachings and amplify Indigenous voices within scholarly discourse.

Indigenous methodologies are situated within the broader framework for Indigenous research. The Western research domain is dominated by a history of institutional practices and paradigms which have objectified Indigenous cultures, inherently dehumanizing Indigenous identities under the gaze of Western sciences (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, p. 140). Indigenous methodologies challenge the axiological concerns of Western research models, reframing the ways in which Indigenous people are engaging with research. Tuhiwai Smith's (2008) understanding of decolonization underlines the importance of critically understanding the assumptions, motivations, and values that influence research practices. Rejecting the imposition of Western philosophy, instead, drawing knowledge from ancestorial teachings and the wisdom of Elders reclaiming space for cultural knowledges within academic structures (Kovach, 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; Weber-Pillwax, 1999). However, the application of Indigenous methodologies does not mean the total rejection of Western knowledge but rather "coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspective and for our own purposes" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2008, p. 39). Emerging as a form of resistance against colonial-driven research practices, PAR involves participants as researchers to engage in collaborative research. This creates a shared sense of responsibility and authority among the collective, providing a voice to those typically oppressed and marginalized within the research process (Duncan-Andrade &

Morrell, 2008; Gill et al., 2012; McHugh & Kowalski, 2009; Sinclair, 2007). Rather than viewing participants as the object of research, PAR enables participants to view themselves as experts capable of contributing to change (McHugh & Kowalski, 2009).

Within Indigenous research contexts, disrupting harmful researcher-participant dynamics predicated on observing people as research objects (Smith, 1999) is critical to engaging in responsible community-based work. Facilitating research which privileges Indigenous voices and knowledge transforms the activity of research; "questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms" (Smith, 2008, p. 193) as community members become actively involved in the research process. These conditions frame PAR as a culturally relevant and empowering research method for Indigenous peoples in its reflection of community-based, traditional knowledge. Re-defining and re-positioning the researcher aligns with Indigenous methodologies; the Indigenous research agenda is rooted in relationality and prioritizes self-determination through the preservation and promotion of community-based knowledge (McDonald, 2023; Peltier, 2018; Snow et al., 2016; Tuck 2009).

Shawn Wilson (2008) grounds Indigenous methodologies in relational accountability: "The methodology needs to be based in community contexts (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (p. 145). Enacting these principles is critical to community engagement and are the moral and ethical foundations of this study. Wilson refers to the "4Rs," which represent *respect* for Indigenous ways of knowing and being, *relevance* to cultural perspectives and experiences, fostering *reciprocal relationships,* and maintaining *responsibility* through participation. "4Rs"

lend themselves to the storywork model, which empowers Indigenous storytellers to use their lived experiences as teaching stories, like we draw upon traditional stories (Archibald, 2008, p. 112). Storywork positions storytelling as a valid form of teaching and learning and expression of Indigenous identity and culture. As a research methodology, these principles guide our treatment of storied knowledge and the meaning-making process concerning stories: Indigenous cultures recognize and honour oral storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, upheld by relationality.

Braiding Indigenous methodologies together with PAR and storywork bring traditional ways of knowing and being together, honouring Anishinaabe knowledge systems. Grounded by the principles of Indigenous methodologies, I challenge the historical objectification of Indigenous cultures within research by centering Indigenous knowledges. Embedding storywork upholds the significance of oral storytelling in transmitting knowledge, allowing storytellers to share their lived experience as teaching stories. Incorporating PAR further disrupts traditional research practices, positioning participants as co-creators of knowledge. In disrupting the researcher/participant binary, an empowering and collaborative research environment emerges that resonates with traditional knowledge and obfuscates rigid Western paradigms. In embracing these intertwined methodologies, this research amplifies Indigenous voices within scholarly discourse, contributing to the broader endeavour of reclaiming space for cultural knowledge within academic structures.

3.3 Methods

In asserting Indigenous methodologies, a qualitative approach to data collection is engaged, and a holistic view of land-based learning is centered and informed by Indigenous

perspectives. To ensure my research was multifaceted and robust, I employed three methods for data collection purposes: literature review, observations, and pedagogical talking circles.

Literature Review

I first conducted a comprehensive literature review, weaving together the voices of prominent Indigenous scholars within the field of Indigenous education (Chartrand, 2012; Kovach, 2021; Peltier, 2021; Simpson, 2017) to understand how land-based learning is defined and practiced across Turtle Island (Cajete, 1994; Claxton, 2020; Cluderay et al., 2022; Snow & Obed, 2022; Styres, 2011; Styres et al., 2013). Examining the pre-existing literature on land-based education across Turtle Island helped establish my foundation, allowing me to narrow my focus on pedagogies of the land within Anishinaabe cultural and educational contexts (Bell, 2013b; Chartrand, 2012; Ineese-Nash, 2021; Peltier, 2021; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017). As a method, the literature review invites researchers to engage with emerging topics and themes, considering different directions of thought and any gaps that influence the field, thus informing our own research practices. We can use pre-existing literature to establish connections, generate ideas, and draw conclusions in pursuit of understanding and expanding on critical conversations within the field. Absolon (2022) posits literature reviews as integral to the research landscape: "Making meaning is meaning making from all the information gathered" (p. 68). This synthesis transforms the knowledge gathered into meaningful and purposeful knowledge, which nurtures and nourishes the research.

Observations

I observed two land-based learning sessions with grades four and five students and one session with grades six and seven students of GlenOak Academy. Both sessions were facilitated by the Land-Based Specialist, whose role involves leading the planning and teaching of the land-

based component of the SOAR program. The Batchewana Learning Centre backs onto a forested area of diverse ecologies, often called the ‘bush,’ where land-based learning occurs. In the sessions I observed, students participated in fire-making and preparing spruce roots for future lessons on basket weaving. I was primarily concerned with the pedagogies of land-based education based on content, teaching practices, and student engagement during the process. Pedagogies of the land include the stories of inherent historical or cultural connections that have shaped these practices: these aspects make each teaching unique and meaningful to Anishinaabe culture and nationhood. Observing these sessions helped shape my understanding of the traditional teachings and practices students engage with through the land-based curriculum.

It is important to distinguish my observations from Western ethnographic methods, which have historically imposed harm onto Indigenous communities. Framed by Anishinaabe knowledge systems, educational observations encourage our consideration of not only what knowledge is being shared, but how, and the importance of reclaiming educational practices for cultural purposes (Chartrand, 2009). I journaled my experiences on the land, guided by a series of prompts (found in Appendix A), which encouraged me to critically reflect on different aspects of the experience. Observing pedagogy and praxis from this ontological standpoint will offer initial insight into key takeaways, like the effectiveness and importance of culturally relevant education through learning with the land.

Pedagogical Talking Circles

I facilitated three separate talking circles with a total of nine educators involved with GlenOak Academy and the SOAR program to gain an understanding of their experiences with land-based learning. Talking circles, sometimes referred to as sharing circles, are valuable

methods for reflection and knowledge sharing, rooted in non-normative frameworks of storytelling and holistic knowledge (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021; Booker & McCook, 2018). As a research method, pedagogical talking circles are grounded in traditional practices designed to bring people together to pass on cultural knowledges, practices, and values (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021, p. 21). Each group gathered in a private space to create a safe and respectful environment conducive to openness and sharing; organizing ourselves in a circle signifies connectivity and maintains equality among the collective. We began with introductions, coming together in a good way and proceeded with our discussions, moving clockwise. Every member of the circle had the opportunity to respond to the questions and share their stories uninterrupted.

I prepared a short guide (found in Appendix B) with questions relevant to the themes of this project to guide our conversations. However, I could not pre-determine nor limit what participants might share, recognizing further discussions as a by-product of talking circles. The conversational method honours orality as a means of transmitting knowledge, upheld by relationality necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition (Kovach, 2019). This practice frames oral tradition, or story, as a relational process co-created between the speaker(s) and listener(s). Barkaskas & Gladwin (2021) assert that learning comes from storytelling, reflecting, observing, and listening, emphasizing the relational dynamics of talking circles (p. 22). Engaging in pedagogical talking circles to produce and share knowledge transforms meaning-making from an individual to a collective experience, orienting research work towards the “4Rs.”

3.4 Participants & Recruitment

With support from the GlenOak Academy administration team, I invited educators of the SOAR program within Batchewana First Nation to participate in this study. For the purposes of

this study, educators can be understood more broadly as knowledge sharers within the community: they may include the program directors, teachers, teaching aids, program facilitators, or Elders and traditional knowledge keepers. Participants were asked to commit sixty minutes to participate in one talking circle designed to generate discussions on topics of culturally relevant learning, Anishinaabe knowledge production, and land-based learning. Initially, I put a call for participants who identified as Indigenous; however, I amended this in consultation with two Indigenous educators who are heavily involved with the SOAR program.

The early design of my research was oriented towards an entirely Indigenous complement of Indigenous teachers and support staff for the SOAR program. In further stages of my research, it became evident that my plan would have to be amended to include non-Indigenous educators involved in the SOAR program to gain a fuller understanding of Indigenous student experiences in the land-based portions of the program. The SOAR program is comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators with additional qualifications in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) education. These educators work collectively to provide culturally relevant learning opportunities to their students. The hybridity of resurgent and reconciliatory education is evident in this model, which involves Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators supporting Anishinaabe youth. Resurgence is inherently Indigenous, rooted in our lands, teachings, stories, and community, whereas reconciliation involves the actions of non-Indigenous teachers, the school board, and policies and procedures to support Indigenous cultures. The Calls to Action highlight this relationship between resurgent activities and reconciliatory mechanisms in orienting educational practices toward educational sovereignty (TRC 2015a; TRC, 2015b). Therefore, to have a full understanding of the implications of this program, it became imperative to amend the research

design to include non-Indigenous educators whose perspectives can provide an enhanced understanding of the students' experience with land-based education. I acknowledge that non-Indigenous educators should not be the arbiters of resurgent activities, and certainly, Indigenous resurgence is an exclusive space intended for Indigenous peoples. Yet, as educators, non-Indigenous teachers are responsible for *reconciliation*, as indicated in numbers six through twelve in the Calls to Action (TRC, 2015a).

A call for participants under this new criterion was distributed among the staff via email, and I proceeded with nine participants across three talking circles. All participants demonstrated a strong connection to and knowledge of Anishinaabe cultural perspectives, working directly and consistently with students regularly participating in land-based learning. Meeting this criterion helped to ensure that all participants were familiar with the land-based programming and recognized the importance of localized Anishinaabe-Ojibwe knowledge within the nation. Their regular involvement indicated familiarity with one another as educators, helping to promote respectful and honest sharing and storytelling throughout the various talking circles.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Discussing various aspects of Indigenous education and reclaiming culturally relevant educational practices could potentially inflict psychological or emotional distress/discomfort on participants, as education has been an avenue to inflict assimilative policies on Indigenous communities through Residential schooling and other means. Therefore, the study presented some risk of psychological and/or spiritual harm. I am aware that personal reflections could bring negative memories or emotions forward, but the questions guiding the talking circles had not been designed to extract stories of trauma and harm. To mitigate these risks and participants'

vulnerability, I structured talking circles with respect for traditional and ethical protocols to maintain a safe and respectful environment.

Before beginning each circle, we reviewed the signed participant consent forms, outlining all participants' collective ethical responsibility to create and maintain a safe, confidential environment, adhering to the expectation that the details discussed within the circle are not revealed afterward. Participants were informed of their right to exit the circle and, if necessary, withdraw their participation in the study at any point up until the data is anonymized, which is estimated to be three months after the final talking circle takes place. All data is anonymized to maintain confidentiality; these measures are in place to preserve the identity of all participants in the broader dissemination of information while respectfully and responsibly conveying the knowledge shared.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected, specifically through talking circles and land-based learning observations, offer insight into personal experiences and events through narrative and story (Parks, 2023). Donald Polkinghorne (2007) identifies the two ways narrative can be analyzed: the analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. The former analysis produces typologies or paradigmatic categories, whereas the latter analysis produces stories (as cited in Parks, 2023). I engaged with the second activity, identifying and analyzing the narrative themes within the data collected. The method involves examining and interpreting narratives – accounts of events, experiences, and stories – to uncover patterns, themes, and structures that provide insights into one’s lived experiences and perceptions of the world (Baker & Germain, 2020; Parker, 2023). An inductive approach allows these patterns and themes to emerge throughout the analysis

process. Indigenous cultures emphasize oral tradition, using storytelling as a knowledge-sharing vessel. Since data collection methods involve actions, events, and happenings, narrative analysis offers an effective way to make meaning with these findings (Parks, 2023). Narrative analysis aims to provide a holistic understanding of the narratives, considering the stories' context as well as the cultural, spiritual, and historical contexts that shape them. Within the context of Indigenous methodologies, this form of analysis contributes a more nuanced and respectful understanding of traditional practices of producing and sharing knowledge, and the cultural significance of stories and storytelling.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

Educational frameworks are never neutral and are based on the educating authorities' ideologies, worldviews, and codified pedagogical systems (Simpson, 2011). Within the Canadian education system, most students are subject to schooling influenced by settler-colonial sensibilities, leaving many Indigenous students to negotiate their cultural values with Eurocentric teachings (Simpson, 2017), which are incommensurate. Patrick Wolfe (2006) articulates settler-colonial sensibility as the "logic of elimination," which constitutes settler colonialism as an ongoing system of erasure, not a historical event (pgs. 401-402). Premised on securing and maintaining territory, this logic positions settler-colonialism as inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal (Wolfe, 2006, p. 402). As a structure, settler-colonialism normalized the continuous settler occupation of Indigenous lands obtained through violent and genocidal practices. The TRC (2015b) defines *cultural genocide* as "the [destruction of] political and social institutions of a targeted group" with the goal of elimination (p. 5). For over a century, the central goal of Canada's Aboriginal policies has been to eliminate Indigenous peoples' sovereign ways of knowing and being through the process of assimilation (TRC, 2015b). In this way, settler-colonialism perpetuates the repression of Indigenous peoples and cultures, preventing the transmission of cultural values and identities across generations.

Founded on the grounds of cultural genocide, Western educational institutions across Turtle Island have functioned as a vehicle for assimilation, effectively undermining the intellects of Indigenous people and devaluing traditional knowledge (DeGagné, 2007; Wildcat et al., 2014). This has resulted in current educational structures and programs perpetuating the dominant societal values, privileging written narratives and colonial-based mathematics,

sciences, and technologies (Battiste, 2011; Simpson, 2017). Formal educational structures are typically not designed to accommodate Indigenous knowledge, including its oral modes of transmission. The oppressive nature of colonization embedded within educational systems prevents cognitive liberation through the continued disclaiming of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Battiste, 2011).

The call to decolonize educational systems has occurred for some time. Schools are not culture-free environments, and although the current standards for teaching and learning across Turtle Island contend with Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous students remain subjects of the colonial education system imposing the dominant cultures ideologies. Thus, to meet the educational needs of Indigenous students, diverse learning opportunities reflecting our cultures, knowledges, and values must be made available and formally instituted. Scholars and educators continue to develop strategies to support the transmission of traditional knowledge (Chartrand, 2012; Claxton, 2020; Luig et al., 2011; Styres, 2011) and establish culturally relevant learning opportunities for Indigenous students through land-based education/land-based learning (Bell, 2013b; Cluderay et al., 2022; Snow & Obed, 2022). Land-based frameworks are upheld by traditional ways of knowing and being that have been shared generationally: Indigenous learning has always been inherently connected to our lands (Simpson, 2014, p. 9). Therefore, a vital aspect of decolonizing education comes from honouring the land as a valid source of knowledge, space and place for learning and invigorating intellectual paradigms.

This literature review explores land-based learning across Turtle Island with a particular focus on pedagogies of the land within Anishinaabe culture and education: different nations learn through and with the land within the context of their communities. Within an Anishinaabe framework, land-based pedagogies shift toward a specific set of ontological (perceptions of

reality), epistemological (ways of knowing), and axiological (set of morals or ethics) concepts founded on Anishinaabeg worldviews, anchored to relational ontologies (Ineese-Nash, 2021; Patterson et al., 2023). Initially examining land-based pedagogies as a response to the overarching call for decolonizing education across Turtle Island, I aim to establish a foundation for the subsequent exploration of land-based education as a culturally relevant approach to learning for Anishinaabeg learners.

4.2 Decolonizing Education Systems

Historically, Canadian systems of education have been an avenue to inflict assimilative policies on the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. Indian Residential schools began operating in 1831 as a partnership between the Government of Canada and Anglican churches to repress Indigenous cultures through violent assimilative tactics targeting Indigenous children (DeGagné, 2007; National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation [NCTR], n.d.). These institutions were rooted in the widespread belief that "Aboriginal people had to be liberated from their savage ways in order to survive in a modern society" and upheld through genocidal practices which forcibly separated, re-socialized, and absorbed Indigenous children into Western society (DeGagné, 2007, pp. 49-50). While the last federally run residential school closed in 1996, the traumatic legacy of the residential school system is felt intergenerationally. For many Indigenous people, the psychological effects of subjugation within the residential school system have manifested intergenerationally, perpetuating a lasting sense of shame surrounding Indigenous identities and cultures, as well as a heightened suspicion of formal educational systems (Luig et al., 2011). It is impossible to disentangle the current education system from the racist ideologies it is founded upon. As Hare and Pidgeon (2011) pose, "institutional racism takes form through ethnocentric curriculum and mainstream pedagogies that serve to reinforce the knowledge and

experiences of [the] white, middle-class learners" within academic spaces, imposing the dominant cultural discourse onto all students (p. 96). Such educational practices mirror assimilative tactics to repress Indigenous peoples and cultures through efforts to disclaim traditional ways of knowing and being.

Decolonizing education means confronting educational forms of settler-colonialism to learn through paradigms that reconstitute Indigenous ways of knowing (epistemologies) and being (ontologies) (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021; Kovach, 2021; Peltier, 2021; Simpson, 2017). This is achieved by actively challenging the colonial frameworks of teaching and learning and the knowledge systems upheld within mainstream education through the embodiment of Indigenous teaching and learning practices. Decolonizing knowledge fundamentally shifts these paradigms: "Integrating Indigenous methodology and pedagogy in both the academic and practical aspects of education intervene in the normative violence of education," observed through an ethnocentric curriculum (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021, p. 25). The importance of cultural resurgence through Indigenous education cannot be overstated. Chartrand (2012) broadly defines Indigenous education as learner-centered, holistic, and animate. In practice, this process is experiential and built on respectful relations, which allow space for knowledge production through storying within a self-governance philosophy and natural world context (p. 153). The framework for Indigenous education is strongly connected to pedagogies of the land, actively centering Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

4.3 Land-based Learning Across Turtle Island

Indigenous education existed long before settler-colonial contact and subsequent occupation of our homelands. Stories and traditional teachings have been passed generationally to sustain culture; our ancestors shared knowledge to nurture land-based intellectuals as

philosophers, theorists, medicine people, and historians (Simpson, 2017). Indigenous pedagogies center the land as the first teacher; land is the basis of all life and, therefore, the basis of all cultural teachings central to Indigenous education (Simpson, 2017; Styres et al., 2013; Styres, 2011). Sandra Styres et al. (2013) describes the land as follows:

> Land encompasses all water, earth, and air and is seen simultaneously to be an animate and spiritual being constantly in flux. It refers not only to geographic places and our relationships with urban Aboriginal landscapes but also gestures to the ways that discourses within places inform and are informed by our vision, pedagogies, and teaching practices. (p. 37)

This understanding of land in a verb-centered context recognizes the relational dynamic between all living things. Relationality is the concept that all beings are related to each other and to the natural and the spiritual worlds. We, as humans, exist in relation to and are interconnected with one another and to the land beyond its geographical spacing. Knowledge is held through the stories of every rock, tree, seed, animal, pathway, and waterway, and intelligence flows through the relationships held between these living entities (Simpson, 2017; Styres, 2011).

Traditional knowledge and ways of being are rooted in the land, offering its inhabitants different philosophies which cannot be found in Western classroom settings. That is not to say that land-based learning may be deduced to outdoor education, a common misconception among educators who alter their learning environment to take place “on the land” (McDonald, 2023). Engaging in outdoor activities without consciously centering Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies is not land-based learning (Cluderay et al., 2022; Snow & Obed, 2022). Similarly, *place-based learning* includes outdoor educational methodologies to encourage and support students in connecting with the world around them (Cluderay et al., 2022; McDonald, 2023).

Place-based models emphasize local community engagement as a part of education but remain dominated by Western perspectives and pedagogies (Calderon, 2014; Luig et al., 2011). It is important to distinguish land-based learning from other educational models which present similarly but do not occur within an Indigenous context or using Indigenous processes. Land-based educational paradigms are informed by Indigenous philosophies to help re-establish Indigenous thought to place and strengthen Indigenous self-determination (McDonald, 2023).

Indigenous land-based education can look like hide-tanning, canoeing, snowshoeing, harvesting and processing foods and medicines: any activity which centers Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies of the land (Cluderay et al., 2022). As a framework, Snow and Obed (2022) assert that Indigenous land-based learning is "learning that supports the development of cultural competencies, language, and skills in relation to traditional learning underpinned by the cultural values of relationship-building with the land" (p. 7). Under this definition, land-based learning broadly encompasses the reclamation of traditional knowledge and values within educational contexts. Learners on the land have come to understand the vitality of the land as a knowledge keeper (Calderon, 2014; Styres et al., 2013). Similarly, Cajete (1994) argues that the multidimensional and relational understandings of Indigenous education directly challenge the objective approaches and ideas upheld within mainstream education (p. 19). Indigenous knowledges do not fit within standard academic models. In its emancipatory element, land-based education is a form of resistance, acting in direct contestation to the epistemic and ontological consequences of settler colonialism and oppressive structures which remain in place (Calderon, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014).

4.4 The Land as Our Teacher

Central to Anishinaabe creation stories is Nanaboozhoo (Nanabush), a being who shapes our understanding of land and human relations. As the first being (both human and spirit) sent to Earth from the Sky World, Nanabush's initial walk around the Earth profoundly shaped Anishinaabe knowledge systems. In one story, accounted by Edward Benton-Benai (1988), Nanabush is instructed to walk the entirety of Earth with the responsibility of learning everything about creation, and offering each animal, plant, and being a name (as cited in Ineese-Nash, 2021, p. 15). These names come from ceremonial practices, relational participation, and intentional observation by Nanabush to understand how each aspect of creation exists within the entirety of the universe (Ineesh-Nash, 2021). On his second trip around the earth, Nanabush visited with the plants, animals, mountains, and bodies of water. Within Anishinaabeg intelligence, visiting means "sharing oneself through story, through principled and respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being" (Simpson, 2014, p. 18). At one point, Nanabush must learn to build a canoe and paddle to cross a large body of water. After observing a beaver swimming in the water, he constructs a canoe and carefully crafts a paddle in the shape of the animal's tail. Throughout these stories, Nanabush teaches us how to exist within the context of Anishinaabeg intelligence and embody *land as pedagogy*.

Land as pedagogy refers to the learnings which come through the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of land (Styres et al., 2013). It is founded on longstanding pedagogies upheld by Anishinaabe epistemology and relational ontology, which positions land as the first teacher (Haig-Brown, 2005). Therefore, to consider land as pedagogy is to consider land as an active participant in the teaching and learning process. In Anishinaabe epistemology, all aspects of creation are connected through the understanding of land as the source of traditional

knowledge (Chartrand, 2012; Ineese-Nash, 2021; Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2017; Styres, 2011; Wildcat et al., 2014). Not only understanding but valuing the land as a teacher is critical to embodying land as pedagogy – as Nanabush demonstrates with careful consideration and appreciation for all aspects of creation and, therefore, how to behave and exist in relation to all beings.

Teachings of the land have been shared generationally through stories and the act of storytelling. Traditional stories are foundational to Indigenous education (Archibald, 2008), framing oral narratives as essential vehicles for transmitting knowledge and sustaining Anishinaabeg culture (Chartrand, 2012, p. 152). Within the context of land-based pedagogy, storytelling can enhance the learning experience; the ability to hear, feel, smell, touch, and see is experiencing the story (Claxton, 2020). Archibald (2008) asserts the significant impact of "learning stories… about the land, while being on the land," emphasizing our connections with, and responsibilities to the land (pp. 74-75). Land-based pedagogies exist within educational paradigms which encourage learners to re-engage with the land as a source of knowledge within an Anishinaabe context and using Anishinaabe processes (Simpson, 2014), embedding Anishinaabeg intelligence into everyday practice. For Anishinaabeg people, our ontologies extend beyond abstract philosophical thoughts into daily practices which enact our beliefs (Ineese-Nash, 2021).

4.5 Nurturing Anishinaabeg Intelligence

As a leading Anishinaabe scholar in the field, Leanne Simpson poses land-based education as the most decolonizing form of education: "[land-based education] takes place outside of institutions; it takes place in families, and it takes place out on the land and in our communities" (as cited in Coulthard, 2014). She adds, "[land-based education] is not recognized

as education," referring to its informal nature compared to Western education standards within classroom settings. However, these formal learning spaces are not designed to adequately address the needs of Indigenous learners. Western school systems do not explicitly reflect the traditions and values of our cultures and communities, preventing Anishinaabeg learners from establishing a strong sense of cultural identity (Bell, 2013b), vital to the survival of Anishinaabe cultures within contemporary society. Under these conditions which stifle Indigenous identities, land-based learning is a vessel for cultural resurgence. Land-based education allows Anishinaabeg learners to connect with, practice, and embody their cultural practices to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and pedagogies that heal our nations, lands, and relationships (Bell, 2013b; Claxton, 2020). Much of Anishinaabe culture is premised on teachings from the land with an understanding of learning as a relational process between all aspects of creation, dependent on reciprocity, humility, honesty, and respect (Chartrand, 2012; Ineese-Nash, 2021; Peltier, 2021; Simpson, 2017). Land-based education nurtures the development of Anishinaabe intelligence: the context is the land, and the relationships between all beings flow from that context (Simpson, 2014). This relationship begins when we understand ourselves as learners first.

Anishinaabe knowledge is inextricably tied to the land. Land-based learning enables learners to recognize and respect our lands as knowledge bearers and embody our traditional practices as Anishinaabeg intellects. Based on this understanding, I weave together three aspects of understanding and embodying land-based pedagogies within an Anishinaabe context: centering aki (land) (Simpson, 2017), storying (Ineese-Nash, 2021), and honouring relationality (Peltier, 2021). Informed by the works of Anishinaabe scholars, educational paradigms are grounded in the land to reflect our ways of knowing and being as Anishinaabeg peoples. As Dr.

Leanne Simpson (2017) writes: “We cannot carry out the kind of decolonization our Ancestors set in motion if we do not create a generation of land-based, community-based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations” (p. 159). This call to create a generation of Anishinaabeg intellects underscores the importance of fostering a deep, reciprocal relationship with the land as a foundational element of Anishinaabe knowledge systems.

4.5 Conclusion

The impact of settler colonialism and Western education systems on Indigenous cultures has been profound and devastating, and therefore, the need for culturally relevant learning opportunities across Turtle Island is critical for healing and cultural survival. This involves decolonizing educational paradigms with the goals of cultural resurgence and knowledge revitalization among Indigenous learners. Specifically, land-based learning is readily available to be deployed in gestures toward educational sovereignty as a decolonial framework. It distinguishes land-based education from other models, emphasizing its role in reclaiming traditional knowledge and values within an educational context. Land-based learning emerges as a powerful form of resistance against the epistemic and ontological consequences of settler colonialism, offering a pathway for cultural resurgence and identity development among Indigenous learners.

Through the lens of traditional Anishinaabe knowledge systems, Anishinaabeg people have come to understand the world from the teachings of the land, in recognizing that learning is a relational process between all aspects of creation and respecting the land as an active participant in the teaching and learning process. Re-positioning the land as our first teacher within educational contexts upholds traditional Anishinaabe knowledge, actively challenging hegemonic frameworks and paradigms which have, and continue to fail, Anishinaabe learners.

Guided by Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being, land-based learning highlights Anishinaabeg intelligence, creating a generation of learners equipped with the knowledge to embody cultural survival and intellectual renewal.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Narrative Analysis

This study aims to explore the role of land-based education in connecting culture and education to support the development of Anishinaabe learners as cultural beings. In addition to a literature review designed to understand land-based educational paradigms across Turtle Island, this research utilizes pedagogical talking circles which encourage educators to critically reflect on and share their knowledge of and experience with land-based learning, and observations of land-based learning to understand how learners engage with and embody land as pedagogy within an Anishinaabe context. As a result of these methods, critical narratives have emerged, conveyed both orally and through actions. Given the selected methods, narrative analysis is an appropriate method for analyzing the data collected throughout this study: It is my responsibility, as a researcher, to re-story (represent) these narratives with care (Baker & Germain, 2020; Park, 2023).

I begin my analysis by revisiting my journal reflections from the land-based learning observations and reading through transcripts from the talking circles to gain a rich understanding of the knowledges shared and stories conveyed. Throughout this process of working with individual stories, I identified common themes which position land-based learning as a valid and enriching form of knowledge sharing within educational structures. What emerged are: 1) knowledge production and sharing among students, 2) nurturing the learner's spirit, and 3) resistance through cultural resurgence, are the basis for interpreting the core narrative and understanding how it relates to the research questions. The following stories are shared to illustrate the narratives conveyed throughout the data collection process.

5.2 Theme 1: Knowledge Production and Sharing Among Students

Throughout the talking circles, several educators emphasized the generational gaps observed concerning cultural connectivity among the student population. Many Anishinaabe students at GlenOak Academy are experiencing the effects of settler-colonialism in the form of cultural disconnection. This disconnect is evident in the initial hesitation that educators observed among the students when the SOAR program introduced cultural engagement into their daily learning. One educator described the hesitation as if there was a sense of fear surrounding culture and ceremony. Under these considerations, land-based learning functions as a means of producing and sharing traditional knowledges, and making culture accessible to Anishinaabe learners. The land-based curriculum is that of our ancestors, engaging with the ways of knowing and being that are vital to cultural preservation. As one educator noted, "even though we've seen in past the horrific attempts to squash culture, it's empowering for Indigenous students to be able to learn their traditional ways and the ways their ancestors survived and thrived. It's so important that doesn't go away – it was attempted to be destroyed before, but it's powerful for us to take it back."

Over time, educators have watched land-based learning transform student engagement, witnessing a tremendous amount of growth within their classes. As students have acquired knowledge from the land, they have developed a shared sense of responsibility as recipients of these teachings and understand the importance of their role as learners in the knowledge production and sharing process. Students are more receptive to the lessons that infuse culture and demonstrate their desire to continue learning, strengthening their cultural ties. As their confidence develops, educators have witnessed learners becoming leaders; they are practicing

positive communication and collaboration skills, taking the initiative to support their classmates as co-producers of knowledge.

5.3 Theme 2: Nurturing the Learner's Spirit

The wisdom imparted demonstrates that the traditional knowledge gained through land-based learning has supported students in establishing their cultural identities and nurturing their spirit as Anishinaabe learners. Educators who participated in my research, cite cultural engagement as intrinsic motivation for their students: their spirits are driving them to learn and re-engage with their culture. With many land-based activities, students learn by doing, building skills and knowledge through cultural production. I observed grades four and five students during two fire-making lessons, in which they gathered materials, assembled the fire bed, and lit and maintained a fire in snowy weather. This activity was anchored to teachings of respect and reciprocity with the land, only taking what we need and offering our thanks to the earth. In other lessons I did not witness but learned from educators, students have made and filled medicine bags with traditional medicines: students can identify different plants, respectfully harvest medicines, and engage in ceremony. These hands-on activities are enriched by the stories and teachings passed intergenerationally, connecting all aspects of the learner to our ancestors.

Land-based learning has generated interest among students at the Batchewana Learning Centre. When students demonstrate a desire to learn, educators are responsible for nurturing that passion to develop the learner's potential. Educators at the Batchewana Learning Centre underscore the importance of interweaving culture throughout the curriculum, finding opportunities to uphold pedagogies of the land and making learning practical and relevant in local and cultural contexts. Engaging with the land as our teacher can help bring meaning to what we are learning as Anishinaabeg people. Coming to know within Anishinaabe knowledge

systems supports the cognitive liberation of Anishinaabe learners, nurturing their spirits as cultural beings.

5.4 Theme 3: Resistance through Cultural Resurgence

The narrative surrounding land-based pedagogies is grounded in resistance and cultural resurgence. Several educators commented on the structure of mainstream education that centers on Western knowledge. Under these conditions, access to culturally relevant education has become a privilege, not a right. One educator discussed the reality of teachers being tasked with delivering Indigenous content with limited time, budget, and resources. Several educators have observed advancements made within Indigenous education but acknowledge the present risk that Anishinaabe students are falsely learning their culture in Western educational institutions. Land-based education promotes cultural engagement, resisting Western standards that seek to separate culture from education further. In the context of the SOAR program, traditional knowledge is leading education. Educators embed Anishinaabeg intelligence into classroom content, consciously creating cultural connections in daily practice. These efforts include integrating the Anishinaabe language, Anishinaabemowin, during morning announcements, smudging opportunities, and the dedicated culture block mentioned previously, which is reserved for culturally relevant learning opportunities through the SOAR program, which includes the land-based curriculum.

Several educators emphasized the Seven Grandfather Teachings throughout our conversations. These teachings outline the principles of character that Anishinaabe people should live by: love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility, and wisdom. Cited as the ‘backbone’ of the school, educators rely on these traditions to help guide daily practices. Throughout the school year, each of the seven values are centered with different teachings to help learners understand

and embody these values. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are embedded into all aspects of learning, anchoring culture to education.

5.5 Conclusion

In examining the role of land-based education in bridging the gap between culture and education, this analysis of the narratives gathered reveals profound insights into the transformative potential of Anishinaabe land-based pedagogies. The narrative shared by educators and learners underscore the importance of engaging with traditional knowledges within educational contexts. Prominent themes of knowledge production and sharing among students, nurturing the learner's spirit, and resistant through cultural resurgence emerge as central to understanding the impact of land-based education. By nurturing cultural identity, fostering holistic learning experiences, and embedding Anishinaabe traditions into daily practices, the land-based educational model serves as a powerful tool for revitalizing Anishinaabe culture and empowering future generations to embody Anishinaabeg intelligence.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Through the lens of traditional Anishinaabe knowledge systems, this study investigates how community-led, land-based learning can empower Anishinaabe learners of the 21st century to embody the traditional knowledge that is key to cultural survival and the extent to which cultural engagement facilitates knowledge production/sharing among Anishinaabe students. Framed through pedagogical talking circles, a series of land-based learning observations, and a comprehensive literature review, a narrative emerges that re-orients land-based education on the critical pedagogical stance required for Anishinaabe ontological futurity. In understanding how land-based learning empowers Anishinaabe learners and the ways in which Anishinaabeg people are keeping knowledge alive, three key themes emerged: knowledge production and sharing among students, nurturing the learner's spirit, and resistance through cultural resurgence.

6.2 Making Meaning

The results of this study indicate that land-based learning effectively bridges culture and education to support Anishinaabe learners in succeeding as Anishinaabeg intellectuals when empowered to embody Anishinaabeg intelligence. My analysis aligns with the works of other prominent Indigenous scholars within the field of culturally relevant (Battiste, 2011; Bell, 2013a; Simpson, 2011; Smith et al., 2019) and land-based education (Claxton, 2020; Peltier, 2021; Simpson, 2014; Simpson 2017; Styres 2011; Styres et al., 2013), who understand vitality of land-based pedagogies. Much of Anishinaabe culture is premised on teachings from the land with an understanding of learning as a relational process between all living things. I want to reiterate that land as pedagogy refers to the learnings which come through spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of the land (Styres et al., 2013), and to consider land as pedagogy is to

consider land an active participant in the teaching and learning process. Upheld by Anishinaabeg epistemologies, our traditional teachings are framed within the context of our relationships, and the land is our source of knowledge (Simpson, 2017). In one session, I observed students in grades six and seven preparing spruce roots for sewing for a future basket-making project. Since the roots were harvested beforehand, students were instructed to strip the bark before splitting it into two pieces. This lesson demonstrates how our cultural knowledge is embedded in our lands and transmitted through our relationships; the dirt-covered roots offer this lesson, which the facilitator interprets and shares the teaching.

One educator described the land-based curriculum as ancestorial knowledge that has been passed generationally: the land-based program is led by a Land-based Specialist, an Anishinaabe educator who is teaching the land-based traditions, practices, and stories learned from their parents and grandparents to younger generations of Anishinaabeg intellects. They said, “I think my life is the bush; it is speaking with others, learning from my Elders, and teaching our ways.” Engaging with the traditional practices that allowed our ancestors to thrive is powerful, orienting land-based paradigms toward self-determination through the preservation and promotion of intergenerational, community-based knowledge (McDonald, 2023). Land-based paradigms hold immense potential for nurturing the next generation of Anishinaabeg intellects; the land-based curricular framework for the SOAR program is designed to empower Anishinaabe learners to engage with traditional ways of knowing grounded in community. Given the continued effects of colonial efforts to dispossess Anishinaabe traditions and knowledge, opportunities for cultural engagement among Anishinaabeg learners are key to cultural survival.

In further discussions with educators, it became clear that the students were not always receptive to land-based learning. When the SOAR program and accompanying land-based

curriculum were first introduced, students were resistant to learning on the land and were hesitant to engage with Anishinaabe cultural practices; however, I did not notice any discomfort among the students during my observational sessions. In fact, the students were excited to be on the land and remained engaged with the teachings throughout the lesson. While students prepared spruce roots, they asked questions, shared stories, and laughed with one another. The students thrive when the collective is open to learning and sharing, to not only keep knowledge alive, but contribute to the production of knowledge. More importantly, students demonstrated the utmost respect for the knowledge being shared, taking the responsibility of holding knowledge very seriously. Engaging in cultural practices has become an intrinsic motivator for the students to participate in the learning process, to which I attribute their enthusiasm and engagement. At the time of my observations, the land-based component of the program had been established at the Batchewana Learning Centre for over a year. The significant shift in student engagement is a testament to how transformative land-based education can be for Anishinaabe learners.

Land-based education allows Anishinaabeg learners to connect with, practice, and embody their cultural practices to develop a strong sense of cultural identity. Engaging in land-based activities has helped students to establish and strengthen their cultural identities. One educator identifies culture as the connection point that drives their spirits to (re)engage and (re)learn. The cultural foundation of the land-based model supports a more holistic approach to learning: holistic learning looks beyond strict academic development to nurture the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of the learner. In connecting with the land and engaging in traditional practices, students are engaging with learning to develop their whole person: wholism is embedded in Anishinaabe thought (Peltier, 2021). With consideration for the

whole learner, affective components can enrich the conventional subject matter curriculum with our own values and educational goals as Anishinaabeg people (Chartrand, 2012, p. 152). The results build on our foundational understanding of Indigenous education, which Chartrand (2012) describes as learner-centered, holistic, and animated. Our understanding of Indigenous education is strongly connected to pedagogies of the land, actively centering traditional ways of knowing and being throughout the learning process.

Within our talking circles, a few key themes emerged surrounding the land-based learning methods. First, we discussed the significant impact of story and storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge. Story is the cornerstone of many Indigenous ways of teaching and learning (Archibald, 2008; Chartrand, 2012; Peltier, 2021); the land-based curriculum is derived from stories of our ancestors, passed through generations of Anishinaabeg learners. Educators at the Batchewana Learning Centre recognize that much of our traditional teachings have been communicated orally and maintain a collective responsibility to share stories to sustain culture. Without the conscious effort to share knowledge, we risk diluting or losing the valuable teachings our communities are founded on.

Next, we discussed the hands-on approaches to learning, which a land-based educational model can offer students to support their learnings from story. Within the talking circles, educators shared stories of different lessons which I did not get to witness during my visit. One noteworthy activity was making and filling their own medicine pouches. After sewing the medicine pouch, students completed a medicine walk to identify and gather the medicines, learning about the plants on our land; the land provides the context and meaning for this activity. In doing, the students have come to embody the traditional knowledges that are vital to cultural survival. As one educator noted:

> They are developing a confidence in their Anishinaabe roots and heritage. They can carry [that] with them and they live that pride. It is not a false [sense of] pride because it's become part of their identity through these cultural activities and these cultural learning opportunities.

This analysis supports the theory that land-based education allows Anishinaabe learners to connect with, practice, and embody their cultural practices to develop a strong sense of cultural identity and pedagogies that heal our nations, lands, and relationships (Bell, 2013b; Claxton, 2020). A land-based model is more conducive to different types of learning and offers the flexibility to effectively meet student needs, creating opportunities for learners to shine, inadvertently building their confidence as Anishinaabeg people.

Anishinaabe scholars have identified barriers within mainstream schooling which prevent Anishinaabeg learners from learning and participating as cultural beings within the Western school system. The literature suggests the disconnect between culture and education prevents learners from establishing a strong sense of cultural identity, vital to the survival of Anishinaabe cultures within contemporary society (Bell, 2013a; Bell, 2013b). Affirmed in our talking circles, one educator questioned: if the Catholic school system can exist to teach attendees what is relevant to them for their benefit, then why do Indigenous learners not have that? At least as widely accessible as other faith-based institutions, adjacent to the Western education system. Unlike these mainstream systems, Anishinaabe pedagogy is not subject-centered. As Chartrand (2012) posits, "[Anishinaabe pedagogy] is learner-centered, subjective, and relies on relational management" to uphold Anishinaabeg episteme (p. 152). The Calls to Action have generated discourse on reconciliatory actions to address the barriers preventing Indigenous learners from accessing and engaging with their culture because of ongoing colonial violence against

Indigenous cultures and people. Recognizing and addressing these barriers is crucial to ensure that Anishinaabe learners can fully engage and thrive as cultural beings, fostering a strong sense of cultural identity essential for the preservation of Anishinaabe cultures.

At the Batchewana Learning Centre, the Seven Grandfather Teachings are the foundation for learning. Also referred to as the seven original or ancestorial teachings, Nicole Bell (2013a) outlines these guiding principles for "the way in which individuals are to treat each other and can be articulated in relation to how individuals are to treat the natural environment" (p. 94). Within the context of the SOAR program, these teachings are embedded into everyday educational practices. For example, the students begin their mornings with a smudge to prepare for the day in a good way. This part of their daily routine affirms their cultural identity, encouraging students to engage in ceremony as part of their education. The data contributes a clearer understanding of the significance of traditional knowledge and the ways in which educators are embedding Anishinaabe philosophies into schooling to empower Anishinaabeg identities. These results should be taken into account when considering the significance of traditional knowledges on the holistic development of Anishinaabe learners.

Land-based educational models provide a culturally relevant approach to learning that disrupts the norms of mainstream schooling. Claxton (2020) poses that cultural resurgence comes from creating teaching and learning opportunities for Indigenous youth to "grow up intimately related to and strongly connected to their homelands... and practicing and embodying their cultural practices and traditions" (pgs. 54-55). As Anishinaabeg people, we embody land-based learning as a vessel for cultural resurgence. We have always known the value of our traditional ways of knowing and being; however, our ways are not always acknowledged or considered valid within Eurocentric discourse. Western philosophies are bound to objectivity

through scientific, rational, and logical thought (Peltier, 2021, p. 4). That is not to say that our ways of knowing are not scientific, rational, and logical. In fact, Anishinaabeg intelligence is central to maintaining good relations with the earth and all that the world encompasses, including metaphysical spaces. This care for creation is evident in our relational ontologies, which indicate how to engage with the earth respectfully. During the land-based activities I observed, every aspect of the teaching upheld the 4Rs: responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and relationality. Particularly during the fire-making sessions, students understood how the 4Rs were embedded within the lesson. A certain responsibility comes with holding traditional knowledge and engaging in respectful learning with and from the land. Anishinaabeg intelligence demonstrates how to live harmoniously with the land, which one educator believes to be a powerful lesson that everyone should learn, given the inherent human connection to the land. Land-based learning connects participants to the land, facilitating relationships between human and more-than-human beings, which encourages Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners alike to develop a mutually respectful and reciprocal relationship with the land (McDonald, 2023).

Positioning non-Indigenous individuals within the context of land-based education speaks to the reconciliatory aspect of the relationality of resurgence. Indigenous intellectualism is not reliant on reconciliatory action; rather, it is an advancement of resurgence. The nuances of resurgence within the context of land-based education are more static, found in the land and those connected to the land, cultural teachings, stories, and traditional languages, whereas reconciliatory education is found in non-Indigenous allies, the school board, and other standard procedures and policies which aim to support the facilitation of cultural knowledge. This dynamic offers a hybrid learning environment (i.e., land-based programming) in which reconciliatory mechanisms honour the activities that lead to resurgent outcomes. The hybrid

framework encourages Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to engage learners in cultural production, with critical consideration for one's positionality and their responsibilities as an educator. Hybridity is powerful, looking toward a static state of educational sovereignty and the futurity of Anishinaabe ontologies.

This study illustrates the transformative potential of land-based education; the integration of Anishinaabe philosophies into schooling empowers learners to succeed as Anishinaabeg intellectuals, contributing to the preservation and promotion of intergenerational, community-based knowledge. Through pedagogical talking circles and land-based learning observations, the research highlights three key themes: knowledge production and sharing among students, nurturing the learner's spirit, and resistance through cultural resurgence. The findings underscore the importance of cultural engagement in facilitating knowledge transmission and fostering a strong sense of cultural identity among Anishinaabe students. The results of this study uphold my previously proposed concept for understanding and embodying land-based learning within an Anishinaabe context: centering aki (land), storying, and honouring relationality. Grounding educational paradigms in the land reflects our ways of knowing and being as Anishinaabeg people, helping to foster future generations of Anishinaabeg intellects, which undermines settler colonial logics of elimination.

6.3 Limitations

The results of this study are contextualized within a nation-specific approach. I worked intently with participants to explore land-based learning within the context of Anishinaabe knowledge systems. Although the ideas discussed might be similar or applicable to other nations, the stories shared are specific to learning within Batchewana First Nation, as the land-based programming is designed to nurture Anishinaabeg intelligence. My decision to limit the scope of

this study is twofold. First, the project timeline spanned approximately six months for data collection, analysis, and writing. During this time, I was committed to fostering my relationships with participants to maintain a respectful partnership throughout the research process. It is important to engage meaningfully with the school community to uphold the central values of Anishinaabe research paradigms. In building these relationships, I determined that excluding the perspectives of non-Indigenous educators would significantly impact the findings due to the limited number of participants who met the original selection criteria. Therefore, conversations surrounding resurgence and Indigenous intellectualism broaden to include reconciliation, reflecting the current hybrid state of the learning environment.

Second, I hope to diversify the field with a nation-specific focus on Anishinaabeg teachings, stories, and practices shared at the community's discretion. In doing so, this study has the capacity to amplify Anishinaabe voices within academic discourse, using paradigms which centre Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being. The demonstration of Anishinaabe brilliance is not lessened by the inclusion of non-Indigenous perspectives; however, the dynamics of resurgence and reconciliation highlight the power of hybridity as we move toward educational sovereignty. The relationship between resurgent and reconciliatory action altered the conversation about cultural resurgence within education, and further discussions limited strictly to Indigenous perspectives would add to this ongoing dialogue.

6.4 Future Directions

Avenues for future research should include a more in-depth look at the impacts of land-based education from the perspectives of learners. My findings are based on my interpretation of land-based learning observations and educator experiences with the land-based program. While adult perspectives have proven valuable in understanding the impact of land-based learning for

Anishinaabe learners, I believe engaging directly with the learners within a talking circle would effectively build on the foundational knowledge established in this study. Additionally, this type of study (including adult and/or youth perspectives) could be replicated within different communities to explore land-based learning within the context of other nations. Every nation maintains a distinct ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological approach to Indigenous education, reflective of their brilliance as a nation. Employing a nation-specific approach to research honours the diversity among Indigenous cultures, rejecting a pan-Indigenous view of land-based education across Turtle Island.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study explores the role of land-based education in bridging the gap between culture and education to support the development of Anishinaabe learners as cultural beings and intellects. By analyzing the impacts of cultural engagement on the cultural identities of Anishinaabeg people, my thesis has shown how land-based learning is an act of self-determination which empowers learners to re-engage with traditional ways of knowing and being that are key to cultural survival. Using qualitative methods of pedagogical talking circles, land-based learning observations, and a comprehensive literature review, three key themes illuminated the potential of community-led, land-based learning within Anishinaabe knowledge systems: the significance of knowledge production and sharing among Anishinaabe learners, the nurturing of learner's spirits, and the resistance through cultural resurgence. These themes underscore the importance of cultural engagement in preserving knowledge among Anishinaabeg people.

Mainstream education remains at odds with resurgent ways of life – the ways necessary to ensure the survival of Anishinaabe culture. Without action, Anishinaabe identities remain vulnerable under colonial structures. Engaging with land as pedagogy directly connects students to culture; this holistic approach to learning aligns with Anishinaabe frameworks for teaching and learning. Although this study focuses on the community of Batchewana First Nation, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the significance of traditional knowledge in the holistic development of Anishinaabe learners. It highlights the transformative potential of land-based education in strengthening cultural identities, thereby empowering Anishinaabe learners to embody the traditional knowledges that are key to cultural survival, and advocates for the adoption of culturally relevant educational models that honour traditional ways of knowing and being. In regenerating traditional practices within educational spaces, we, as a community of

Anishinaabeg peoples, actively engage in the decolonization process, continuously celebrating and demonstrating Anishinaabe brilliance.

References

Absolon, K. E. (2022). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know: Indigenous re-search methodologies* (2nd Ed.). Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Archibald, J. A. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.

Baker, B., & Germain, J. (2020). Narrative Inquiry as Praxis: Examining Formative Assessment Practices in a Nature-Based Indigenous Language Classroom. In M. E. Poehner & O. Inbar-Lourie (Eds.), *Toward a Reconceptualization of Second Language Classroom Assessment: Praxis and Researcher-teacher Partnership* (pp. 107–127). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35081-9_6

Barkaskas, P. & Gladwin, D. (2021). Pedagogical talking circles: Decolonizing education through relational Indigenous frameworks. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *15*(1), 20–38.

Battiste, M. (2011). *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. UBC press.

Bell, N. (2013a). Anishinaabe Bimaadiziwin: Living spiritually with respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility. In Kulnieks, A., Longboat, D., and Young, K. (Eds.), *Contemporary Studies in Environmental and Indigenous Pedagogies: A curricula of stories and place,* (pp. 89–107). Brill.

Bell, N. (2013b). Just do it: Anishinaabe culture-based education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 36(1).

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*. Kivaki Press. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=eD375993

Calderon, D. (2014). Speaking back to Manifest Destinies: A land education-based approach to critical curriculum inquiry. *Environmental Education Research*, *20*(1), 24–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.865114

Chartrand, R. (2012). Anishinaabe pedagogy. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, *35*(1).

Claxton, N. X. (2020). Indigenous land-based healing pedagogies: From the ground up. In Harper, N. J., and Dobud, W. W. (Eds.), *Outdoor therapies: An introduction to practices, possibilities, and critical practices* (pp. 54-65). Routledge. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9780429352027

Cluderay, R., Mainville, R., Simpson, L. B., & Wrightson, K. (2022). "Learning like before": Continuous resistance in land-based education. *Xàgots' Eèhk'ǫ̀ Journal*, *1*(1), 50–66.

Coulthard, G. (2014, Nov. 26). *Leanne Simpson and Glen Coulthard on Dechinta Bush University, Indigenous land-based education and embodied resurgence* [Audio]. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society. https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26

DeGagné, M. (2007). Toward an Aboriginal paradigm of healing: Addressing the legacy of residential schools. *Australasian Psychiatry*, *15* (S1), S49–S53.

Duncan-Andrade, J. M., & Morrell, E. (2008). Youth participatory action research as critical pedagogy. *Counterpoints*, *285*, 105–131.

Gill, H., Purru, K., & Lin, G. (2012). In the Midst of Participatory Action Research Practices: Moving towards Decolonizing and Decolonial Praxis. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology*, *3*. https://doi.org/10.7577/rerm.357.

GlenOak Academy. (2024). *About Us*. https://glenoakacademy.com/about-us/

Goode Learning. (2023). *SOAR Program.* https://goodelearning.ca/soar-program

Graveline, F. J. (2000). Circle as methodology: Enacting an aboriginal paradigm. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13, 361–370.

Hare, J., & Pidgeon, M. (2011). The way of the warrior: Indigenous youth navigating the challenges of schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, *34*(2), 93-111.

Ineese-Nash, N. (2021). Ontologies of welcoming: Anishinaabe narratives of relationality and practices for educators. *Occasional Paper Series*, *2021*(45), 4. https://doi.org/10.58295/2375-3668.1388

Kovach, M. (2019). Conversational method in Indigenous research. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 12(1), 123-139.https://doi.org/10.7202/1071291ar.

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (2nd Ed.). University of Toronto Press.

Luig, T., Ballantyne, E. F., & Scott, K. K. (2011). Promoting well-being through land-based pedagogy. *The International Journal of Health, Wellness and Society*, *1*(3), 13.

McDonald, M. (2023). *Indigenous Land-Based Education in Theory and Practice*. Yellowhead Institute. https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/YI-Land-Based-Education-Special-Report-2.2023-1.pdf

McGregor, D. (2018). Toward an Anishinaabe research paradigm: Theory and practice. In McGregor, D, Johnson, R, and Restoule, J. P (Eds.), *Indigenous Research: Theories, Practices, and Relationships* (pp. 243-257). Canadian Scholars Press, 2018.

McHugh, T.-L. F., & Kowalski, K. C. (2009). Lessons learned: Participatory action research with young Aboriginal women. *Pimatisiwin*, *7*(1), 117–131.

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. (n.d.). *Residential School History*. http://nctr.ca/education/teaching-resources/residential-school-history

Parks, P. (2023). Story Circles: A New Method of Narrative Research. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *7*(1), 58-72.

Peltier, S. M. (2021). The child is capable: Anishinaabe pedagogy of land and community. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*:689445.

Peltier, C. (2018). An application of two-eyed seeing: Indigenous research methods with participatory action research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1).

Simpson, L. B. (2011). *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. Winnipeg, MB, Canada: Arbeiter Ring Pub.

Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, *3*(3).

Simpson, L. B. (2017). Land as Pedagogy. In *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance* (pp. 145-173). University of Minnesota Press.

Sinclair, R. (2007). Participatory Action Research and Aboriginal Epistemology. *Teaching and Learning*, *4*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.26522/tl.v4i2.28

Snow, K., & Obed, D. (2022). Toward Inummarik (well-balanced humans): An investigation of the role of land-based learning programs in public education. *Polar Geography*, *45*(4), 260-274.

Smith, L.T, Tuck, E., & Yang, K. (Eds.). (2019). *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view*. Routledge.

Smith, L. T. (2008). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. (Twelfth Impression). Zed Books.

SOAR. (2024). *About Us*. https://gosoar.ca/

Styres, S. (2011). Land as first teacher: A philosophical journeying. *Reflective Practice*, *12*(6), 717–731. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2011.601083

Styres, S., Haig-Brown, C., & Blimkie, M. (2013). Towards a pedagogy of land: The urban context. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *36*(2), 34–67.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015a). *Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to action*. Accessed February 25, 2024.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015b). *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation.* Accessed February 26, 2024.

Tuck, E. (2009). Re-visioning Action: Participatory Action Research and Indigenous Theories of Change. *The Urban Review*, *41*(1), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-008-0094-x

Wildcat, M., McDonald, M., Irlbacher-Fox, S., & Coulthard, G. (2014). Learning from the land: Indigenous land-based pedagogy and decolonization. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *3*(3).

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony. Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of genocide research*, *8*(4), 387-409.

Appendix A: Observation Reflections

This appendix consists of guiding questions used by the PI to reflect on the land-based learning sessions they participated in and/or observed.

1. What was the session like? Describe the activities students participated in or observed, the session goals outlined by the facilitator, and other unique aspects of the session in detail (i.e., time frame, location, class size, etc.).
2. How do you think the session went? Consider how the students reacted. Think about their engagement or disengagement with the subject matter/activity and why they might have responded that way. Were you surprised by the students' reactions in the session? Why or why not?
3. What type of skills and knowledge does the session instill in its learners? Consider how these specific teachings support knowledge production and knowledge sharing among Anishinaabe youth.
4. How did you feel before, during, and after the session? Reflect on your learning as an observer (or participant) and consider your understanding of the teachings throughout this process.

Appendix B: Talking Circle Prompts

This appendix consists of questions which guided the series of talking circles conducted with participants.

1. Can you speak to your involvement and overall experience with the land-based program? Consider your role, the activities you've been a part of, or why you're involved in this program.
2. In your experience, how are Anishinaabe people keeping knowledge alive?
3. How important is it for Indigenous students to access culturally relevant educational opportunities? What does culturally relevant learning look like? Can you describe the intersection where Indigenous and Western knowledges meet?
4. In what ways do the culturally relevant teachings of this program support and empower Indigenous learners *as* Indigenous learners of the 21st century?
5. What does it mean for Indigenous youth to engage in knowledge revitalization for current and future generations?