

**THE MUSKRAT AND THE GLOBAL TURTLE:
LOOKING INTO THE PHENOMENON OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH'S SUICIDE IN NORTHERN
CANADA USING THE LAND DETACHMENT THEORY**

By

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Dedicated to the late Steven Leger, Georgina Mousseau (M'mere), Uncle George Mousseau, and my Dad (David Rice) who all passed away during this academic journey. To the rest of the family – thank you for your patience and encouragement. Special thanks to my Mom for allowing me to sway through a tunnel and to my son Isaac whose innocent eyes fueled me to also continue. Finally, thanks to all my Instructors.

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Abstract

Suicide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is an increasingly global epidemic. Research advises that a person commits suicide every 40 seconds and within the last 45 years suicide rates have multiplied by a staggering 60 per cent. In Canada, CTV's "The Silent Epidemic" warn viewers that a suicide occurs every 11 seconds. Most of these suicides are from among the original people of Canada; in particular, the Indigenous people who reside in the northern regions. There are a multitude of theories that offer reasons why suicide is so rampant on some of the northern reserves in Canada. Yet, the tragic incidences continually occur and leave communities in despair. As an Indigenous educator who has taught for 13 years on 7 different reserves, I lived the experience, I suffered with the communities and I mourned the loss of youthful lives because of the tragic acts of suicide. I made a promise to one of the reserves where I taught, that I would research into the phenomenon of Indigenous youth's suicide who live in the extreme northern regions of Canada. "The Muskrat and the Global Turtle" introduces the "land detachment" theory as an explanation for these suicides. It stresses that Indigenous knowledge of the sacred connection to Mother Earth is a real part of Indigenous existence. However, this sacred knowledge has slowly dissipated in the northern regions of Canada due to various reasons with devastating effects of high rates of suicide among the Indigenous youth.

Key Words

Culture: is the heart of identity resisting and jiving with knowledge, beliefs and values over a geographic space and time. Due to contextual elements of age, race and ethnicity culture can be fluid.

Creator Spirit: Synonymous with the Creator, God, Great Spirit, Thou, the mystery of life. The Creator Spirit is the energy, air, wind, breath that initiates life.

Indigenous (First Nation, Native, Aboriginal, Indian): The term *Indigenous* refers to the First Nation people, Aboriginal, and Native. John Grim defines *Indigenous* as “the thousands of small scale societies who have distinct languages, kinship systems, mythologies, ancestral memories, and homelands” (Grim 2009: 1).

Global Turtle: Earth, nature is intimately involved also; therefore Earth and nature are synonymous.

Suicide: the deliberate act of taking or attempting to take the life of the self as expressed by Emile Durkheim, “Suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself [herself], which he [she] knows will produce the result” (1951: 44).

Identity: “The knowledge that each person is responsible for his or her actions In-Relation to the larger community is a fundamental shared belief. Self-In-Relation is linked to a tribal worldview and is very important in the formation of an Aboriginal identity. According to the Traditional view, an Aboriginal identity provides a framework of values upon which one views life, the natural world, and one’s place in it” (Graveline 1998: 57). The natural world includes Mother Earth and the cosmos.

Original Instructions: laws given by the Creator at the birth of time and life.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

The Earth cannot be separated from the actual being of Indians. The Earth is where the continuous and/or repetitive process of creation occurs. It is on the Earth and from the Earth that cycles, phases, patterns – in other words the constant motion or flux – can be observed and experienced (Little Bear, 2000, 78).

Suicide is a raw, emotional topic to discuss let alone studying the phenomenon. In understanding the phenomenon of high suicide rates among the northern First Nation youth, a researcher must keep two things in mind. One, there is not one isolated risk factor that stimulates the act of suicide. Two, information added to the repository of knowledge regarding suicide will open possible preventative measures to assist on decreasing the rates of suicide among the First Nation youth in the northern regions of Canada. My research was interested in how traditional relationships with the land have any effect on the Indigenous youth's suicide rates in northern Canada. The mandate for the final project was to read literature that was exclusively about the relationship between the Indigenous identity and the land and how this relationship affects suicide rates. However, I could not find one paper or book totally on the topic I was interested in. Therefore, after sifting through over 600 articles in the Library and Archives Canada on the topic of suicide I ended with reading intensively seven dissertations concerning Canada's Indigenous People of the north. This literature review will demonstrate that there are gaps between scholarly works regarding the Indigenous youth's relationship with Mother Earth and how it affects suicide rates.

The research methods applied in the final project were chosen because of my personal bouts with the thoughts of suicide while I was a teenager and a young adult. My professional

and academic experiences lead me to culturally analyze through the lens of the social constructionist and critical theories. I believe hybrid methods can produce hypotheses, theories and reliable information.

A 1998 suicide study was examined by Michael Chandler and Christopher Lalonde which displayed evidence between the relationships of cultural continuity factors and youth suicide (Health Canada 2005: 2). The reasons behind the act of Indigenous suicide in Canada “varied according to tribal council and community” and major differences in suicide rates based on language group” (1). Self government was ranked number one while territory claims and education followed (2). However, self-government is related to territory due to its cultural identity, hence, the relationship with the land is essential. Another study done by Chandler and Lalonde searched deeper into the cultural continuity factors which included self government, land claims, education, health, cultural facilities, police and fire, women in government, and child services which concluded that if all 8 factors were evident in a community the suicide rate was zero (Chandler and Lalonde 2009: 240). Potentially, all but one, that of “police and fire” can be involved with the environment. Eleanor Alwyn listed community concerns from the Micmac people which resulted in “land claims” being at the top of the list followed by “involving the Elders into community/getting cultural information from Elders” and third integrating cultural and language traditions into school” (2004: 161). Within the literature found and studied, the above information is parallel to what this proposal seeks that the spiritual connection to the land is essential and a lack of connection devastates the Indigenous youth’s identity or Being. Indigenous interests in self government, land claims, Elder’s wisdom, and education all have profound attributes connected to the land.

The research completed by the Winnipeg Health Region gives insight on the problematic procedures labeled as “limitations” when collecting data regarding suicide. The most ambiguous of the “limitations” is the definitions used for “suicide” and “suicide attempts” (Winnipeg Health Region 2003: 3). A variety of definitions to the terms above leads to difficulty in comparing findings and outcomes across studies. A person who died in an automobile accident may be considered a suicide because of the reckless nature of driving was a momentarily lapse of reason. Some statistics have a grey area and accuracy of suicide data can lack precision. As this final project focuses on the phenomenon of suicide, it is safe to conclude that researchers on the topic of suicide reflect a general consensus that the Indigenous youth living in the northern regions of Canada suffer from extreme high rates compared to other ethnic groups. However, when exploring the potential risks and protective factors related to suicide, it is found that “currently no scientific study can explain why a particular person attempts suicide” (14). In addition, not one stressor alone will invoke a person to commit suicide (14). This conclusion is found in literature that surrounds the topic of suicide.

There are many factors that stimulates the act of suicide including socio-economic status, dysfunctional families, physical and sexual abuse, and historical grievances. Interesting to note, the factor among adolescence and young adults is the onset of a “mental illness” (14). One may wonder if Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, solvent abuse, and youth involvement with alcohol and narcotic abuse initiates mental illness and eventually contributes to suicidal rates. Congruently, the thought of “mental illness” which was recognized and well documented in research archives includes the residential school experience, Emile Durkheim’s “anomie,” and Barbara Cassidy’s “environmental racism” in which each one would cause mental stress. It is

also recognized from a number of Indigenous scholars including Susan Dion, Laurence J. Kirmayer et al, Cynthia C. Wesley-Esqimaux and Magdalena Smolewski and Cassidy that the mental illnesses of deep depression, post traumatic stress disorder, and historical continuity of grievances were/are instigated by the colonial experience. Interesting to note, Kirmayer et al believed that “suicide is a behaviour or action, not a distinct psychiatric disorder” (2007: 2). This gap between suicide being considered a potential mental illness compared to “a behaviour or an act” involves a plethora of friction, sociologically, psychologically, and religiously.

The protective factors found within the literature of Winnipeg Health Region are a list of seven. The two that would assemble a strong foundation to this proposal’s inquiry is that of “connectedness” and “cultural, religious and personal beliefs that discourage suicidal behaviours” (Winnipeg Health Region 2003: 17). The examples given for connectedness are “family, peer group, school or community” (17). The association of connectedness and cultural beliefs shines light on a unique scholarly adventure of the relationship between the Indigenous youth and the traditional views of the land and how this relationship affects suicide rates. Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention can all be meshed within any culture’s ideologies, values, and ethics. It is advised that one of the guiding principles of suicide prevention strategies rely on the activities that “must be accessible, appropriate and responsive to the social and cultural needs of groups and populations they serve” (28). Cassidy elucidated the importance of the Indigenous’ spiritual connection to the land when introducing the spectacular dual term “environmental racism” defined as “much more than toxic waste dumps, pollution of land, water and air, although these issues are not to be minimized in any way since sick land makes sick people; it is also “the loss of land or environment which has come about as

a result of being forced on to reserves so the dominate culture can continue to profit from natural resources” (2002: 16). M. B. Krawll concurs:

Aboriginal Peoples’ social identity, including their economy, social structure, political culture, and religion, is tied to the land. In this way the Aboriginal approach to living or life is a holistic process, or as it has often been described, ‘becoming one with the land.’ Aboriginal people perceive that the greatest need to improve the quality of life lies in human development. In contrast, the non-Native response to improving the quality of life is more perceived as the development of economic standards, often through the use of nature resources (Alwyn 2004: 11).

Many researchers claim that land is of paramount importance but I have yet to stumble upon a written document totally dedicated to the importance of such a medium and its affect on the Indigenous youth’s rate of suicide on the northern reserves of Canada. The formation of land-based prevention activities have been used in other cultures as well as within the dominate culture which include Girl Guides, Boy Scout programs, and summer camps. Catching the intellectual and social wave of environmental awareness, the global need to reconnect to the environment is evident due to human nature’s intrigued awe with the anthropological, religious, and scientific beliefs that are deeply rooted in human existence.

Another research project that ignited my curiosity because of its methods of research and collection of data is the project of Traditional Pathways to Health (TPTH). The collaborative rapport between the Indigenous teachers and their students from two school districts worked together with the University of Victoria’s researchers on the topic of health titled “First Nations Youth Reframing the Focus: Cultural Knowledge as a Site for Health Education;” the benefits of practicing the methods of Participatory Action Research and Collaborative Research Partnership “is holistic rather than compartmentalized in nature” (Riechen, Tanaka, Michele and Scott 2006: 1). The students are equipped with informed consent from parents and are fed valuable

information from the Elders regarding health issues. The medium chosen within the research framework is the video machines. The TPTH students “bring a focus of respect and balance to their work as videomakers” (4). “The major causes of mortality in youth” noted as injuries, suicides, and AIDS, “result from a complex array of social, economic, psychological and biological factors (4). I admire the involvement of the Elders, “rooted in Indigenous pedagogy, the emphasis is on connecting with the community and listening to Elders to learn from them” (4). Also interesting to note, the Medicine Wheel is taught to the youth leaders of the reserves in their health classes. The “knowledge transfer” from Elders to the youth “is essential to who we are as First Nation Peoples. Oral histories determined that knowledge must be transferred from generation to generation” (5). The interaction between generations builds respect and appreciation between them. I exercised a similar event with a grade 10 class. Each student visited a communally respected Elder and recited stories from Cree to English and typed the stories in text. During the conclusion of the year end ceremonies, the stories were all neatly packaged in a binder with a picture of the student and Elder. This cultural exchange went extremely well that the students will never forget. In conclusion to this piece of researching material, students become “documentarians and cultural historians” that attempt to deconstruct the “effects of colonization on the Aboriginal People in Canada” (2); but at the same time constructs cultural pride ontologically, epistemologically, and ecologically. Unfortunately, time will not be allocated towards a qualitative research yet; the relationship of the land and Elders had me think of the psychological aspect of identity from a spiritual point of view.

The challenges during the literature review were many. As mentioned earlier there were no articles found solely on the relationship between the Indigenous and the land and how this relationship affected the suicide rates. I found the information at times daunting and depressing considering my personal experiences with suicide including a family member and young students taking their lives. I have learned that psychology is of paramount importance understanding Indigenous suicide. My educational background in psychology is weak yet my religious, educational, spiritual, and cultural backgrounds assisted me to bridge intellectual gaps and contribute to Indigenous psychology. "The Muskrat and the Global Turtle" waits for your attention.

Chapter 2

Introduction: The Colonial Cord

We are what we know. We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves – our history, our culture, our national identity – is deformed by absences, denials and incompleteness then our identity – both as individuals and as Americans – is fragmented. William Pinar (Dion, 2004, 1).

I have had the opportunity to dedicate a healthy portion of my teaching career in the northern regions of Canada's British Columbia and Manitoba provinces. Living on 7 different First Nation reserves with their own languages and cultures I cannot express enough how much knowledge and experience I absorbed. A few of the reserves were extremely isolated from urban centres and were only assessable by plane or winter road. Secluded in the extreme north, there was no escape of being in the public eye and the weekend hermit in me became more exposed to the community's extra-curricular activities. A deep and raw connection flourished between myself and the community. It was there in the northern lands of the First Nation people that I learned what full integrity was, intense compassion, utmost professionalism, and dynamic creativity, especially from the youth. It was there I painfully came to understand what the community feels following the crushing reality of seeing a student one day and not the next because of suicide. The agony of women wailing, especially the mothers, still echo in my memory. This paper is also dedicated for those who have lost loved ones and students to suicide.

- World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that suicide “is an identified global public health problem” a rate of 14.5 per 100 000 (Discussion Paper for the Development of a Suicide Prevention Strategy for the Winnipeg Health Region, November 2003: 5);
- The Innu in Newfoundland have the highest suicides in the world;
- “Suicide rates are now five to seven times higher for First Nation youth than non-aboriginal youth” and “among Inuit youth, suicide rates are 11 times the national average, some bands have suicide rates over 800 times national average” (Johal, 2008);
- Some of the northern communities, experience an unemployment rate that is consistently between 85 to 90 per cent;
- Many houses on the northern communities do not have running water.

These are astonishing facts considering Canada is annually nominated as one of the top 10 countries to live in by the United Nations. Yet, the original people of North America continuously suffer from negative effects of the colonial growth of modernism. One of the social ills is the explosively high rate of suicides among the First Nation People especially in the northern regions of Canada. There are a variety of theories in suicidology on what motivates Indigenous youth to commit suicide. “The Muskrat and the Global Turtle” introduces the position of the “land detachment” theory which is explicitly focused on how the spiritual disconnection of Indigenous traditional views regarding the land contributes to the high suicide rates among First Nation people in northern Canada.

My personal experience with youth suicide and the loss of my three students has provided me with insight into the possible motivating factors and/or intentions of these three Indigenous youth. Furthermore, social constructionist and critical theories have provided understanding and elaboration on traditional knowledge and its philosophy to reconnect the Indigenous youth’s identity to the environment. There are three objectives “The Muskrat and the Global Turtle” relied on:

- 1) To adhere to the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical lens of our identity or Being; while respectively, unearthing the colonial root of the problem of suicide.
- 2) To seek the elements of the psychology of (de)colonialism in its most primitive psyche form, and, in effect, to understand the relational balance between Earth, woman and Creator Spirit.
- 3) To fill academic gaps and contribute to the reservoir of suicidology regarding the importance of the land in relation to northern Indigenous youth's suicide rates.

An interesting story was told years ago by an Elder from British Columbia. As he shared his spiritual travels he mentioned that if the muskrat population bulges over sustainability, suicide is completed by swimming across a lake to purposely drown. This story has resonated within me for over a decade. Why the muskrat? There have been studies completed about the supposedly suicides of lemmings due to a scarcity of food as indicated by Thomas Joiner (2010: 205). While synthesizing the Elder's story and Indigenous suicide rates one must keep in mind that First Nation suicides differ from other ethnic groups. Each specific culture has differentiated risk and protective factors that are related to suicide. But it is found that "currently no scientific study can explain why a particular person attempts suicide" (Winnipeg Health Region 2003: 14). In addition, not one stress alone will invoke a person to commit suicide (14). These two facts suggest that suicide is individualized in nature. However, attempting to understand the lesson from the Elder the risk and actual suicides occurring among the northern Indigenous youth begin with the clash of cultural paradigms that generated sensitive historical grievances pertaining to the traditional views and relationships between the Indigenous and Mother Earth.

Many of the reserves in Canada's north have been squeezed and compartmentalized. The vast open land that once was the freedom to explore and feed from the land is slowly diminishing between generations. Taiaiake Alfred strongly advises that "...the most recent compendium of top-level medical and social science research on mental health issues in Indigenous populations confirms that it is not Indigenous dysfunction that is the root of the problem, but the dispossession of Indigenous people from the land..." (2009: 12). If suicide is considered a mental health issue, which many health officials believe, then Indigenous suicide is directly and indirectly linked to the detachment of land and its universal values once shared.

One could surmise and theorize on the possible reasons for the tremendously high suicide rates among the Indigenous youth. Contributing factors could be impoverished economics, poor diet, drug, alcohol, solvent abuse, extreme isolation and a lack of self-esteem and confidence. When considering the possibility of Native traditional views of the land as a link to the high Indigenous suicide the commonality between all contributing factors mentioned above is the mental bomb of colonialism. Colonialism continuously unleashes its ideologies of "dualism, individualism, and modernity conceptually separating mind from body, prioritizing the individual self over social relations, and typically excluding attention to spirituality" (Gone 2004: 128). The mechanical system of state governance and its practicing paradigms has deformed a vast number of relationships among the Indigenous including but not limited between genders, the Creator Spirit, and the human populace; all three relationships are breached through the alienation from the precious spiritual connection between the Indigenous people and Mother Earth. The detrimental active ingredient in the colonial's mental bomb is that of duality. Dualism is an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical wedge

between two opposites. Specifically, “hierarchal dualism” refers to “a pattern of thought and action that (1) divides reality into two separate and opposing spheres, and (2) assigns a higher value to one of them” (Johnson 1993: 10). Many reasons attest to the implementation of the superiority ideology. The monotheistic belief of God being omnipotent and totally separated from all life on Earth beyond time and space spurred the thought of hierarchy between two polar opposites. Another epic discovery, Rene Descartes’ theory of “I think there for I am” gave prestige to the mind over matter (Johnson 1993: 14). The fittest to survive in a hierarchal system operates by dissecting realities of God and life, man and woman, spirit and matter, developed and developing countries and human and Earth. On the contrary, historically found in Aboriginal folklore, dualism is in constant strain for balance but the dichotomies were both respected. The Mohawk story of twins named *Teharonhiawako* and *Sawiskera* both yearned for control. Whether male or female, non- Native or Native, or the rich or poor, the set of twins teaches us a valuable lesson. *Teharonhiawako* created things that were of beauty such as the rose and *Sawiskera* contradicted the pleasantry of his brother by placing the thorns on the stem (Rice 2005: 7). Nevertheless, both the rose and thorn complement one another for the rose radiates splendour and fragrance while the thorns protect the plant. As Brian Rice adds, the Indigenous stories of “twins” within the Mohawk, Mayan, and Navajo traditions sheds light on “The important cultural understanding to be gained from these stories is that the twins are needed to bring order and balance to the world they represent” (2005: 7). Unfortunately, the western society’s dualism has plagued the Indigenous people in a position of putrid circumstances.

Soon after the arrival of Columbus onto the new-found-land, the Jesuit Order introduced the religion of Christianity to Turtle Island's inhabitants. At a time of harsh punishments for heresy involving conflicts between science and religion, the faithful Order were on a mission to convert the Indigenous people because of their supposedly heathen and uncivilized mannerisms; mannerisms and attitudes that paid respect to all life including a "Great Spirit." Later, as the European population grew, so too did capitalism. As a result, the state government forcefully permitted in herding the Indigenous people like cattle on small pockets of land known as reserves and the "rez life" began. Life on the reserves especially those planted in the northern regions of our country are severed from society and a vast majority are economically pathetic. The description of third world situations is not comparable. Witnessing first hand, at times there are four generations living under one roof, housing was poorly built due to government finances that mould grows like a forest, the smells range from this ever growing micro forest to the combat of Javax, not to mention that many houses heat their homes with hot stoves and many do not have running water. The surveillance of the Canadian government including the Indian Affairs officer and Christianity were introduced and separated generations of family members via residential education. The Canadian state granted Band operating governance on reserves which all have contributed to the decay of the Indigenous life style. Even within the community,

Political and social institutions, such as band councils and government-funded service agencies that govern and influence life in First Nations today, have been for the most part shaped and organized to serve the interests of the Canadian state. Their structures, responsibilities, and authorities conform to the interests of Canadian governments, just as their sources of legitimacy are found in Canadian laws, not in First Nation interest and laws" (Alfred 2009: 5).

Self determination and resiliency has been smothered by the colonial blanket and currently, the dependency on social assistance stagnates economic opportunities. Recently, the Progressive Conservative government has attempted to shave or abolish entirely post secondary assistance to First Nation students. Individually and collectively, education is vital for healthy change. The number of First Nation students at the tertiary level is increasing and promoting change. The Canadian government on a number of occasions has tried to renege from historical promises. As the late Elder Arthur Solomon repeatedly voiced “Treaties are better known as “documents of deceit” issued and forced by the “government of KKKanada” (1994: 9-11). Situations presented briefly here result in the younger generations feeling overwhelmed with alienation from mainstream society and are torn physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually from their inherited Being which then, this internal frustration leads to the expression of anger – like a caged muskrat. The “inner hatred” as Lee Maracle calls “systematic rage” developments into a series of violent acts (Alfred 2009: 3).

Freire’s duality of subject and object and oppressor and oppressed respectively is internalized by the oppressed. The “oppressor exists within their oppressed comrades” and Franz Fanon elaborates further that the aggression laid upon the oppressed is returned to other natives (Freire 2007: 62). Psychologist Eduardo Duran explains:

Once a group of people have been assaulted in a genocidal fashion, there are psychological ramifications. With the victim’s complete loss of power comes despair, and the psyche reacts by internalizing what appears to be genuine power – the power of the oppressor. The internalizing process begins when Native American people internalize the oppressor, which in merely a caricature of the power actually taken from Native American people. At this point, the self-worth of the individual and/or group has sunk to a level of despair tantamount to self hatred. This self hatred can be either internalized or externalized (Alfred 2009, 59).

The internalized and externalized self hatred becomes the catapult of self destruction and ultimately the destruction of the nation and its state, municipally, federally, and globally. In small scale, Indigenous gang activities on reserves are on the rise and include harsh beatings, death, burning of houses and drug and solvent trafficking. Slowly, the “Indian Posse” movement is leaking into the metropolitan centres including Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Regina causing havoc. Canada’s federal financial aid to First Nation communities is a small band aid on a large lesion of cultural dislocation severed by the Federal government itself. Globally, as the Earth transforms due to global warming, whether naturally or induced by capitalism’s wants, sheer ignorance and dominance of Indigenous culture and knowledge regarding Mother Earth’s qualities has played its role against the Indigenous well being and perhaps the well being of humanity. Fortunately, the Indigenous people are magnificently resilient and for good cause, to survive and rekindle the Original Instructions from the Creator. It is proclaimed that animals will be able to survive without humanity but humanity will cease to exist without the animal and plant kingdoms. The colonial cord has either force fed the First Nation people that have spiritually and emotionally paralyzed them and like a dialysis machine the cord is still plugged in attempting to defuse and refuse their way of life...or the cord more often than not has been used to commit suicide. The Mohawk Creation Story begins with a woman falling from the sky and is bobbing for dear life on a planet filled with water. A few of the animals sacrificed their lives to save her but only the turtle and the muskrat were successful. The appreciation and the understanding of the Indigenous relationship with the land are essential for the colonial global giant to transform but for many First Nation youth who are confronted with the thought of suicide. Mainstream society and the Global Turtle in fact cannot live without the Indigenous

people and their wisdom of this sacred land. Even for the incorporated populations of the northern First Nation communities can the dominate society dismiss the importance of the Indigenous youth. "The Muskrat and the Global Turtle" welcomes you.

Chapter 3

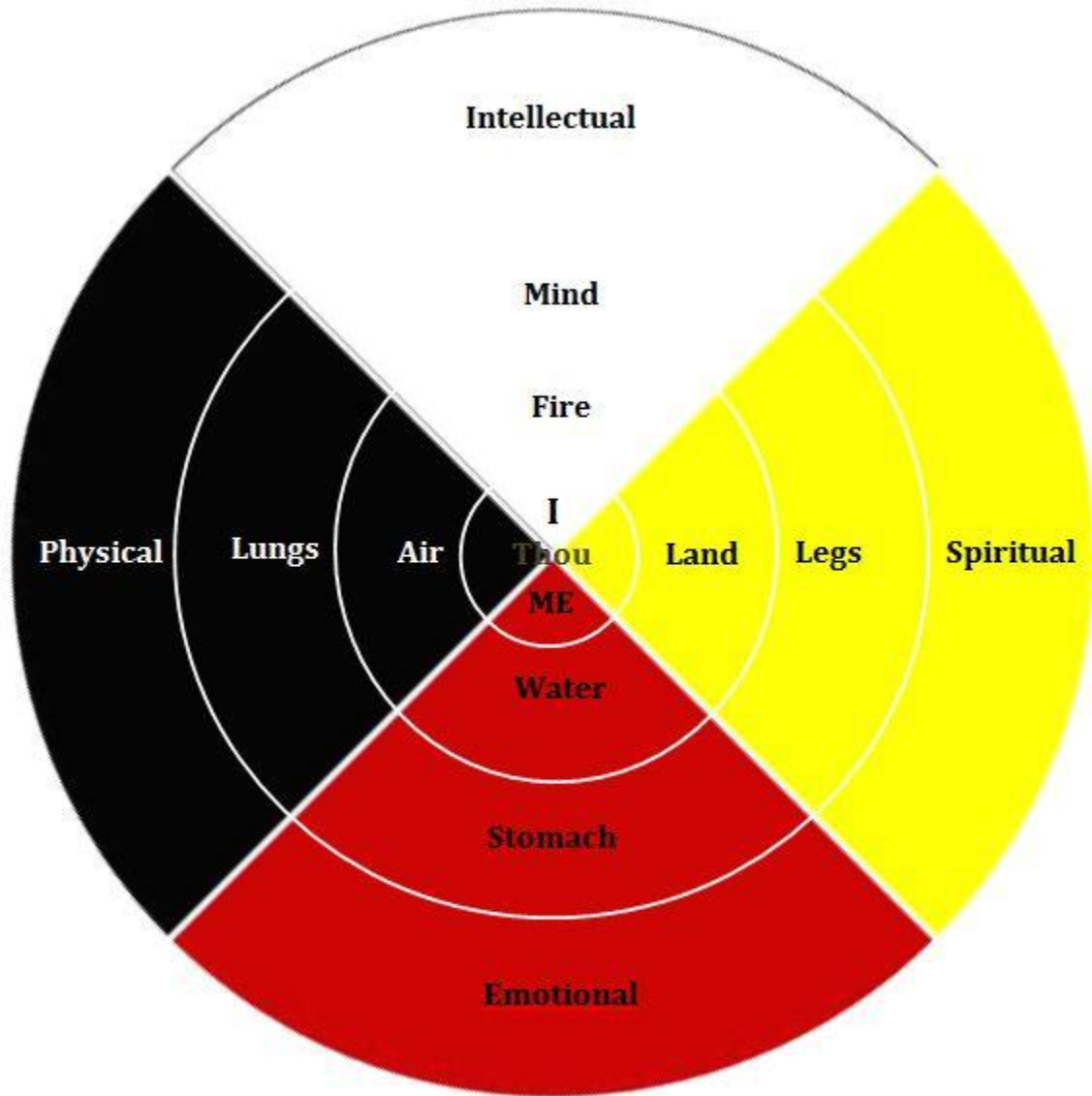
The Search for Thou in Reuniting “I” and “Me”

At the level of the unconscious, therefore, colonialism was not seeking to be perceived by the indigenous population as a sweet, kindhearted mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather a mother who constantly prevents her basically perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to its malevolent instincts. The colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune (Frantz Fanon 2004: 149).

Stephen Bonnycastle stretches the above thought from Frantz Fanon’s epic “The Wretched of the Earth,” “a nation emerging from colonialism must first of all develop its own identity and culture...” (Bonnycastle 2002: 219). Fanon’s proclamation of an identity and culture’s emergence from the colonial’s chaos uses the peculiar verb “develop” which teaches its readers a two-fold mission that identity is similar to tabula rasa, the yearning to fill an empty abyss; however, in order to develop an identity a nation must seek for the remnants of character, that resembles the identity sought under the colonial’s chaotic rubble. Secondly, to “develop” insinuates that identity refrains from fixity and is in constant fluctuation. The definition of identity is, like many other terms, extremely difficult to find an absolute description because of the multitude of disciplines it intimately involves itself with. For the purpose of “The Muskrat and the Global Turtle,” Fyre Jean Graveline’s definition of “Self-In-Relation” presented earlier describes identity as who we are culturally; the reciprocal relationship consists of members of social structures and its philosophical paradigms which include the individual, family, community, and the global family. Mainstream society’s ideologies revolve around the prism of nature – a three dimensional view such as Sigmund Freud’s “id, ego, superego,” man, woman, child, rich, middle class, poor or the Christian dogma

of “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Indigenous reality of identity values a 4 dimensional philosophy that involves the symbol of the Medicine Wheel. There are variations of this philosophy. The Medicine Wheel depicted on page 23 displays, beginning with the northern hemisphere, the four elements of being, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. These elements of our physical being, spiritually flow, through the four elements of Earth; respectively, mind - fire, legs - land, stomach - water, and lungs - air. Within the centre of a Medicine Wheel, the Indigenous image of philosophy, the individual self is found – the “me” and “I.” However, the “me” and “I” are not dichotomies like good and evil but a realism of being holistic. “Me” refers to the aspect of a personal identity of who we are psychologically which reacts to the expectations of others through social interactions. During social interactions, individuals are aware of the expectations of others but they do not necessarily conform to these expectations in their conduct. This spontaneous, never entirely predictable, element of individual personality makes each individual a unique social actor. “I” refers to the aspect of a collective identity which is aware of and has internalized the expectations of others; guided and spurred by Carl Jung’s archetype of the Mother which will be discussed later. When including the four elements of human Being, the physical Being and the four elements of Earth, humans are entwined with the web of life beginning with our planet Earth. The “I” is encompassed and driven by energy, the most primitive part of whom we are. There is no escaping this part of who we are.

The Medicine Wheel: a framework for
the land detachment theory



This energy follows us like a shadow; as Goethe announced “All that is outside, also is inside” (Jung 1959: 439). Laurence J. Kirmayer et al explicates the value of the “ecocentric self” and its relationship with the environment:

In many traditional Aboriginal world views, the land, the animals, and the elements are all in transaction with self, and indeed in some case, constitute aspects of the person (or rather, the human person participates in these larger more encompassing realities). Damage to the land, appropriation of land, and spatial restrictions may all constitute assaults on the individual and collective sense of the self of those who adhere to this ecocentric world view (2007: 60).

Traditionally, the First Nation’s youth of northern Canada were connected and intellectual about the environment. Today, many youth’s social relationships are severed, the traditional teachings about the land are becoming an historical bygone, and a majority of the young people yearns to leave their isolated home lands to the metropolitan cities. R. Bachman’s hypothesized that the more traditional communities are the lower the suicide rates but research finding were inconclusive (58). However, the global need to be aware of humanity’s action against the grain of Earth and all living creatures has slowly taken precedence due to the likes of the G-Summits and recently 2007 noble prize winners Albert Arnold and Al Gore Jr. for their efforts of dismantling human greed that causes climate change. Traditional knowledge is invaluable not only to the Indigenous but to humanity.

Continuing with the “me” side of the self, the “me” is guided and shaped by the culture of an individual's society or group, which is internalized and acts to direct and control behaviour. Excavating deeper into what the self is composed of, again following the Indigenous belief, four components can be evident consisting of the “I,” “me,” and both their relationships with “Thou.” The identity of the self needs the connection of the “me” (consciousness) and “I” (unconsciousness) to bridge relationships with the “Thou.” A fracture in any of the connections

disposes frailty and uncertainty of self worth and belonging. The deeply pulling journey of Indigenous youth contemplating suicide begins here.

Within the self, spiritually and qualitatively, lies the hidden “I” which reflects objectivity, the unconsciousness; a reservoir of potentialities in becoming actualized. While, scientifically and quantitatively, hosts the “me,” at the consciousness level, a reality that is tangible and actualized from possible potentialities. Both are constantly feuding with each other for equilibrium. George Hubert Mead summarizes briefly:

The simplest way of handling the problem would be in terms of memory. I talk to myself, and I remember what I said and perhaps the emotional content that went with it. The “I” of this moment is present in the “me” of the next moment. There again I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself (1964: 229).

If an individual is contemplating on taking his or her life, it is the intense conflict between the objective and subjective realities, the “I” and “me” respectively that become unbearable, each taking turns saturating one another like an overbearing bully. Mead adds, “The “I” is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the “me,” is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself [herself] assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized “me,” and then one reacts toward that as an “I”” (230). The individual’s subjective reality is the colonial roots that are filtered into mainstreams society then forced onto the minorities. Therefore, the objective reality spurs self conflict for a staggering number of Indigenous youth whose escape from a stressful reality is to die. The colonial cord has and still is in the process of fusing thoughts of what the Indigenous people should be by way of thinking, speaking and acting homogeneously with mainstream society.

Historically, the incidences of multiple episodes of genocide and assimilation strategies clash with the present situation of Indigenous identity being splintered and suffering from high

suicide rates. The word “clash” describes a conflict because the historical “I” which is confused with the present “me.” Suicides presented by many researchers have concluded that depression is the main cause of suicide. Heavy grief has been noted to continue with succeeding generations. When considering that shortly upon European arrival the loss of land including traditional hunting and fishing regions and sacred burial grounds were relocated historical grievances stained the “I” which eventually poisoned generations of “me.” Natan Kellermann supplies evidence to historical grief,

Thus, in the same way as heat, light, sound, and electricity can be invisibly carried from a transmitter to a receiver; it is possible that...experiences can also be transmitted from parents to their children through some complex process of extra-sensory communication. In fact, such quasi-naturalistic terminology is frequently applied when describing how the “vibrations” within a Holocaust family “atmosphere” may affect the offspring in a variety of indirect and subtle ways (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski 2004: 75).

Understanding the past “I” is equivalent to knowing where the future “me” should be. Sweet grass is a perfect way to begin the process by thinking good thoughts daily. Mary Isabelle Young’s researched story from “Aanung” described the word “Pimatisiwin” being “the good life” (142) and Niin added “being a good person” (166). Concluding these thoughts, being a good person is to continually learn. The Saulteaux world view of learning “involves thinking hard who you are;” it is a “process that resolves, involves, and revolves. Learning is good thinking (22). Pimatisiwin is needed to take what the Native people learned and need from the past and apply it to the present for a better future.

When pondering on the fact of how valuable tradition is consider that most reserves who are connected to their traditional land based cultures do not radically suffer from suicide. Durkheim’s studies display a revelation between the Catholic and Protestant religions. After

testing, it is believed that the more traditional and integrated a religion is the lower the suicide rates (Durkheim 1951: 158). If this is true, then traditionally, the First Nation people were culturally and religiously woven into the environment. Religion and spirituality are the foundation of many Indigenous societies. The dilemma that presents itself between the youth's "I" and "me" is whether to fully commit to one religion, either Indigenous or mainstream. This unsureness is diagnosed as "cognitive imperialism" by Mary Battiste, which is the "last stage of imperialism wherein the imperialist seeks to whitewash the tribal mind and soul to create doubt (Barman et al. 1989: 37). The residential education system could not fully break the Indigenous faith on their perspective of sacredness. "In spite of years of training in residential schools, Aboriginal children could not fully integrate in mainstream culture" (Rice 2005: 3-4). Rice continues, "Often these children felt they belonged in neither culture and were confused about their place and role in society (4). This confusion leaves the muskrat in a watery delusion.

Transformation of the subjective reality begins with the understanding the "I" by dialogically transforming the "me." The "me" alone is selfish and sees the world as an illusion at times through the eyes of the oppressor where all animate and inanimate parts of life are objects to be dominated. Dominance by the conquering other has been tagged with and fueled by the Darwinian theory "Survival of the Fittest" which gives homage to the individual over community, one voice over another, and humanity domineering nature. Cynthia C. Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski support this theory of damage that "Researchers today agree that Western colonialism brought to the New World a dualist view that separates nature from culture and places culture in a dominate position over nature" (2004: 34). Therefore, the

communal values of kinship, social democracy, and respect for nature are blasphemous according to the egotistical wants of the colonial enterprise. Disturbingly, it is the unconscious “I” that signals the conscious “me” to possibly think of the act of suicide. The “me” is filled with the hidden internal hatred supplied by the flaws of the dominant society and the “I” holds the experience of the “me.” Since, colonialism wrought the unconsciousness of the oppressed to the point of experiencing complexities that not only attempts to shape the Indigenous identity but discourage it from attaining the rightful identity of the Indigenous; complexities consisting of a wrath of dilemmas that include psychological, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual wounds to the Indigenous identity. Identity is either re-fabricated to the dominant society’s liking towards a continual assimilation or if not; the identity of the Indigenous is shunned and treated like a leper. The pressure of assimilation aggravates the “I” in so far that horrific stimuli are experienced through the history of bigotry and alienation, politically, socially, intellectually, and economically and the feelings of worthlessness subjects the objective experience into a sleeping-seclusion deeply buried within the unconsciousness. Ivan Pavlov’s theory of “Classical Conditioning” would present itself as the aggravated stimulus that is continuously provoking a response of unconsciousness which continuously suppresses the “I.” Such aggravated stimuli was crisply explicated as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as part of historical trauma stated by S. M. Weine et al, “the massiveness of suffering experienced by people who felt genocide (even if only vicariously, as repeated in memories of their ancestors)...” and the Lakota Takini Network Inc. defined the PTSD phenomenon as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations resulting from massive group strategies” (52). To continue with Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski’s found knowledge on

PTSD, “Research also shows that descendants can have a tremendous loyalty to their ancestors and relatives who suffered and died, and often find they perpetuate suffering in their own lives as a whole” (55). Painfully, the cause and effect cycle repeats itself until the individual is hard pressed to escape using means of alcohol, drugs, solvent abuse, and having thoughts of suicide. A sense of numbness overwhelms the self and the relationship between the “I” and “me” becomes blurred to the point of transforming the internal hatred to the external realm by method of violence towards loved ones or to themselves. The act of violence becomes a last resort of options. On the contrary, the conflict between the consciousness and unconsciousness can be healthy because both strengthen the resilience of the individual. Conflict within the individual gives way to a healthy medium before the tipping point of becoming violent. “There has to be something to fight against because the self is most easily able to express itself in joining a definite group” (Mead 1974: 221). Both the “I” and “me” need to complement one another within individuals contemplating suicide. Both aspects of the “I” and “me” are essential to the self in its full expression. Mead explains,

One must take the attitude of the others in a group in order to belong to a community; he has to employ that outer social world taken within himself [herself] in order to carry on thought. It is through his relationship to others in that community, because of the rational social processes that obtain in that community, that he has being as a citizen (199).

A healthy choice emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually is to connect the “me” and “I” to Thou for support of an authentic relationship for a sense of purpose, worth, and well being within oneself and among others. Bear in mind, Thou is not necessarily God (Creator) but the spiritual essence of a whole entity whether it be the self, an individual, Mother Earth and, or beyond.

Thou could be the scientific and, or the religious view of life in its entire. Martin Buber explains that Thou “is no thing. Thou has no bounds” (1958: 4). In relating Thou with the “me” and the “I” the inner self experiences two relationships. Buber’s ideology deciphers the dualistic approach to the relations of our inner self with Thou. The “I-It” and “I-Thou” relationships opens up a Pandora’s Box of connections. I-It is characterized as experience and “can never be spoken with the whole being” where as the I-Thou “can only be spoken with the whole being...establishes the world in relation” (6-3). Therefore, the “I” is related to experience which would be the I-It and the “me” has the opportunity to connect with the Thou and assist the “I” to follow. From a colonial perspective, dominance is the dominant vibe and the relationship with nature and humans would be considered an “it.” The dominant society has placed a wedge between the traditional thinking of the Indigenous and their relations with nature and humanity. Both nature and humanity were once considered as one among the Indigenous philosophies. This wedge between the I-Thou and me-Thou is caused by the I-It; I referring to the experience of not feeling holistic. On the contrary, Buber illuminates the thought of learning towards a Thou relation, “But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It” (16). Yes, an “It” first but once realized how a thing is among things then the It transforms into a Thou. The Indigenous belief of an individual is never separated but tangled in a web of relations beginning with the family, community, and nature. A possible answer to uniting the “I” and “me” and fulfilling the requirements of enjoying a Thou relationship as opposed to an “It” is hidden deep within the “I.” The unconsciousness not only stores the experience of the oppressor but holds the secret of our relationship with Thou through what is understood with the Earth and the relations with

others. As Buber and many other scholars have reiterated, relationships must be mutual (8). Mainstream society has detached itself from the spiritual and scientific connection since the dawning of science and capitalism. An oxymoron presents itself because it is through people like Dr. David Suzuki who with their scientific knowledge are revealing the importance of not being so stubborn and domineering towards nature. The Indigenous people and their traditional philosophy of life can assist with this revelation, only if mainstream society wishes to listen or read. Elizabeth Johnson's triple inclusion of Earth, Women, and Creator Spirit equips humanity with academic tools to rectify our thinking towards a respectful, holistic approach in understanding our relationship with Earth. Indigenous youth who are suicidal can benefit from their traditional roots. This paradigm shift is needed to find equilibrium between the "I" and "me."

Chapter 4

The Equilibrium of Existence

Every disturbance of equilibrium, even though it achieves greater comfort and a heightening of general vitality, is an impulse to voluntary death. Whenever serious readjustments take place in the social order, whether or not due to a sudden growth or to an unexpected catastrophe, men [humanity] are more inclined to self destruction (Durkheim 1951: 246).

Our lives are constructed through nature (I) and nurture (me). The natural essence of our Being evolves from the energy of the unconsciousness, a cosmic soup of actuality and possible potentiality. Nurture is stimulated through social relationships and individual reflexiveness. The swaddling effort of family love empowers each of us, to a certain degree to become independent, confident thinkers. Individualism must not be confused with the ideology of western civilization. Individualism should be practiced through prayer, meditation, and, or contemplation; all are relevant to the enjoyment of personal presence. However, there must be balance between the social relations and an individual's personal presence of being unique. Suicidal tendencies can be weakened by a healthy supportive linkage between the self in equilibrium by fusing "I" and "me," and this fusion connected to Earth, woman, and Creator Spirit; each relationship underlining the sacred connection of our body and mind to the environment; each having a positive view that has the potential power to deter the Indigenous youth of pondering on suicide.

When searching for a healthy balance we are fusing the "I" and "me" with the union of Thou (God, Creator) which unveils the components of an ancient, sacred relationship. This sacred relationship has, mentioned earlier, been frayed because of ideologies brought into existence by western civilization; ideologies of individualism, modernism and capitalism which

suppresses the holistic value of our nature, our Being. Filtering through the idea of domination, a capitalistic competitive nature has emerged and with our entire scientific and technological advances Earth, woman and Creator Spirit have suffered the consequences and as a result many Indigenous youth suffer from a weak authentic relationship with all three. The balance of the self (I and me) needs to fixate its proper relationship beginning with our mother.

The word “mother” opens a reservoir of emotions. The word mother is involved with the power of giving life, an attachment of self sacrificing the daily needs and wants in exchange for the survival of her species - humanity. The emotional connection between mother and child is extremely raw. Considering Arnold Madison’s “wounding” theory of suicide, J. B. Minore et al believes a plethora of emotional wounds are possible suicidal risk factors including child abuse and wife battering (Wesley-Esquimaux 2004: 173). Native women are a minority of a minority (a woman of different colour) and have been the subjects of brutal aggression not only from the oppressor but from their very own community members, the oppressed. Freire witnessed this hostility in Latin America,

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the [Africans] beat each other up, and the police and magisters do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime in North Africa...While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressiveness glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother (1970: 62).

Violence shuns the chance of healing when proper connecting is not discovered through the Original teachings. Our personality begins with the nature of human genetics and nurtured in our unique cultural surroundings. Indigenous culture places great emphasis on women being of paramount importance for nurturing future generations. Many Indigenous Creation Stories

including the Iroquois, Ojibway, and Cree explicitly teach that women and Earth are life givers through their respected Creation Stories. Interestingly, the Cree Creation Story O ma ma ma Earth Mother gave birth to all the spirits in the world. Such archetypes eventually became reality meaning made flesh. The relationship between mother and child and Indigenous youth and the environment is reciprocal. Being dissected from the land of our Being is to separate the self from our mother. Not only does Indigenous Philosophy proclaim the importance of women but so did Christianity when declaring “God’s Mother,” Mary, a Holy part of Heaven;

the relationship to the earth and matter is one of the unconditional qualities of the mother archetype. So that when a figure that is conditioned by this archetype is represented as having been taken up into the heaven, the realm of the spirit, this indicates a union of earth and heaven or of matter and spirit” (Jung 1993: 448).

Women and Earth cannot be separated as two separate entities but as one of similar qualities giving and nurturing life.

Elizabeth Johnson’s *Earth, Women, and Creator Spirit* is a marvel of work in a diminutive package that softly demands humanity to question our relationship between humans and Earth, humans with others, and humanity and God. One or more of the three relationships among the Indigenous youth contemplating suicide are unbalanced. Mentioned earlier, one of the wedges between a healthy relationship and unstableness is Darwin’s theory of “survival of the fittest” which feeds the engine of capitalism and grants permission for hierarchal dualism to be practiced. Many reasons attest to the implementation of the superiority ideology. The monotheistic belief of God being omnipotent and totally separated from all life on Earth beyond time and space spurred the thought of hierarchy. The fittest to survive in a hierarchal system operates by dissecting realities of God and life, man and woman, spirit and matter, developed and developing and human and Earth. Rosemary Ruether unveils “...that the

Achilles heel of human civilization, which today has reached global genocide and ecocidal proportions, resides in this false development of maleness through repression of the female” (Johnson 1993: 17). The intense individualism of separating of “you” and “me” and “us” and “them” has provoked considerable damage between genders, mainstream and minorities, rich and poor and western religions all the while hindering our planet. Reductionism with the purpose of separating has become the norm between mainstream and minorities. While science and Western religions have had opposite perspectives, oddly, Christian paradigms have imitated its antithesis, the Scientific method, by separating. First, the scientific method making one of the most crucial errors against women was Francis Bacon’s gross analogy using the modern scientific method with woman’s subordination outlined as:

...wrestling new knowledge from nature’s womb; seizing her by the hair of her head and molding her into something new by technology; penetrating her mysteries; of having the power to conquer and subdue her (1993: 15).

Bacon’s insight destroys equality between man and woman and humanity with nature. Shockingly, the thought of exploiting the Earth is congruent with exploiting women and visa versa. Christianity and their residential school system squeezed the land use of the Indigenous to a mere size community known as the reserve. The free will to roam to hunt and look for natural medicines on traditional lands was discouraged from the Crown’s authority.

The Land Detachment Theory is similar to Barbara Cassidy’s “Environmental Racism,” defined as “the loss of resources and land” (Cassidy 2002: 107). There is congruency because she offers advice on the phenomenon of Indigenous suicide by using a holistic approach that concerns the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms of each individual and community (106). As mentioned earlier, that the four realms of our personhood are bound to the four

elements of Earth including the four body parts of legs, stomach, lungs, and brain. Traditionally, the Indigenous youth were taught about their whole existence within the web of life. To the Indigenous, the land was sacred; Ultimate Reality exposed in a sacred web of life that took several millennia to learn and jive with. Sun Bear, a Chippewa-Ojibwa, adds that “The Earth to us is an intelligent living being. It has a natural intelligence to itself, and is able to talk to us, to communicate with us, to guide us in what we do...” (McFadden 1991: 140). A living body that has inherited the genetics of the cosmos and we as humans and all other life forms have the building blocks of life that is worth 15 billion years; “In a very real sense the world is our body” (Johnson 1993: 35). In essence, the Earth is living, full of life that gave birth to life’s physical being; fittingly the Earth is our cosmological Mother. The Gaia theory from Dr. James Lovelock fits eloquently well with the Indigenous belief systems when he wrote that the Earth “is a self-organizing system which works in such a way as to keep its systems in some kind of equilibrium that is conducive to life” (Crystalinks 2010: 1). The Indigenous philosophy believes that Earth to be our Mother commonly named Mother Earth or Earth Mother. A strand of the Original teachings Sun Bear shared concerns our physical nature to that of Earth; the two human elements which are the legs that represent the land anchored in the ingredients that assisted life to exist. The second element is the stomach which replicates the boundaries of water. Water (by means of steam or ice) is vital for any life form to try and exist. This sacred connection of the land cannot be dismissed particularly for those Indigenous youth suffering from low self esteem, a sense of self worth and awareness of who they really are – Indigenous people who either consciously or unconsciously hold the traditional knowledge of the sacred relationship within themselves and the Earth. Consciously, taught by our Elders, parents and

teachers. Unconsciously, the archetypes were already there waiting to be presented by way of the material world of matter.

What is within and outside humanity's reality is hidden in the darkest corners of our unconsciousness. Unconsciously, the seed of our Being was planted during the ignition of life's evolution. Scientifically, it is believed that a rodent was the first mammal to follow the footsteps of the dinosaurs. Mice unearthed themselves from the dark tunnels of life's collective unconsciousness. Indigenous lore, particularly in the Iroquois and Anishnawbe Creation Stories, teach us that it was the older sibling of the mouse, the muskrat who first ventured into the darkness of the ocean to collect the first ingredients to create life; the rich loam is congruently used in scientific and Western Monotheistic Creation Stories. Life on Earth cannot be detached or thought of as below humanity. Forcefully implementing western paradigms that runs against the grain of human unconsciousness and consciousness delivers unhealthy proportions of grief. If theorists hypothesize the Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder and Historical Trauma Transition (HTT) to be true then the Indigenous People including the youth are suffering similarly like the Jewish People due to the Holocaust. This heavy burden of grief is transferred to multi generations. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski describes HTT:

This stems from the impacts of epidemics immediately after contact during the 1400's, followed by the transmission of overwhelming and unresolved emotions to contemporary generations. Aboriginal people are not only suffering from the impacts of generational grief, they are acting it out at a personal and cultural levels and recreating drama (2004: 3).

Acute suffering like HTT becomes a "normal" element of the culture and contributes to the community dysfunction. Both PTSD and HTT adds to the depressed mood of northern living due to the economic bleakness, political nepotism, and social racism (light and dark skinned

innuendoes). A general feeling of “who cares” trickles down from the Federal government to the Provincial government and leaves the Chief and Council hand strapped to do anything at all about the high rates of suicide because of a lack of funds. This opens up Durkheim’s famous “anomie” which is defined as society lacking structure and laws in one’s life; suicide that “results from man’s activity’s lacking regulation; society’s influence is lacking in the basically individual passions...(Durkheim 1951: 258). Cassidy rebuttals by stating that anomie could be more of a

...manifestation of the total institutionalization which government-dependent Aboriginal peoples must endure; that is, the forced assimilation, decimation and destruction of our culture, language, gender roles, ceremonies, religious/spiritual systems, economic systems, social systems and numerous other factors vital to the survival of Aboriginal culture (2004: 57).

Not to mention the sacredness of the land. In the same dissertation, Cassidy gives examples of environmental racism including but not limited to The Kerr-McGee Story, the Church Rock Mill incident, Akwasasne contaminants, and the Oka crisis. Anomie does in fact exist with regards to our sacred environment. But there is hope. To heal the wound of the superior ideology, Johnson’s term of “ecofeminism” has voiced its social, cultural, and spiritual concerns. Rosemary Ruether elaborates, “ecology is concerned with the natural environment systems and feminism being a multiple layered movement deals with the ramifications of social, economic, and political policies upon women being subordinate” (Ruether 1997: 2). Eco-feminism perhaps was the building blocks to initiate policies to halt poisoning the land. For instance, the use of lawn weed control and pesticides must be of natural ingredients for home owners in Ontario. Vehicles are becoming increasingly “greener.” Also, Federal government monetary assistance is being allocated for renewable energies on reserves. The number of times the Indigenous

have been scorched leaves one to believe if there is something hiding underneath the sleeve of the government. Now, one can wonder when the developed countries will follow suit by decreasing industrial pollutants.

When attempting to define the relationship between the Indigenous people and the Earth, Elizabeth Johnson's kinship model appropriately reflects "the relational embrace of diversity...it sees humans beings and the earth with all its creatures intrinsically related as companions in a community of life (1993: 30). Practicing the Original Law and living life as being sacred gravitates us towards securing a better relationship with not only Earth but with women and the rest of humanity as well. Lorraine Canoe and Tom Porter teach us that humanity is not on the top of the pyramid because "man [human] is the least powerful, is the least strong in the ways of life on Earth. It is he that is the weakest and the most undisciplined of all creations" (McFadden 1991: 28). The bare truth tells us life will continue without humanity on Earth but humans as a small and phylum part of the Animal Kingdom will cease to exist without other life forms.

Interesting to note, it seems the aftermath of women's liberation has placed a degree of stress about our sexuality. Within Indigenous culture, a woman was considered equal and both gender duties were essential for the survival of the tribe and at times gender duties were reversed. From an Indigenous point of view, a misconception for the time being considering both sexes are experiencing the unfamiliar opposites of cosmological powers and gender roles; men experiencing femaleness partaking in-house activities and women declaring maleness through venturing outside-the-house as part of their being. Gender reversal generally develops later in life with physical changes. The acute understanding of our own body is evolving in

relation with Mother Earth. The dualism of male and female needs refining to solidify a comfort zone of oneness; a collaborative approach between genders that would benefit Mother Earth and humanity.

Therefore, men should continually seek, nurture, and celebrate their feminine side while the women during their pursuit of equality should continually cherish their masculinity. In doing so, the female attributes will be more appreciated and respected in both sexes. When considering Gaia and the outer life that surrounds the earthly life force, both Christians and the Indigenous label the internal forces as “mother” and the external forces of the sky as “Father.” Symbolically, during a traditional Creek wedding the focus was not on the union but the relation of the married couple (Martin 2000: 102). One of the meals symbolizing the relation consisted of two ingredients, that of an onion, which represented the wild external realm of the man’s world which was inserted into an egg that represented the “female power and its ability to domesticate the external” (2000: 102). The gender relationship is equalivent to the “complementary” relationship of Mother Earth and Father Sky (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 134). Navajo philosophy strives for complete wholeness depicting Mother Earth and Father Sky creating, nurturing and sustaining life. Similar to androgyny, both Mother Earth and Father Sky “provides what is lacking in the other” like the left and right sides of our brain (134). The left-handed twin is always concerned with controlling the earth while the right-handed twin is always striving to be in the spirit world (Rice 2005: 64). Both parts of the brain are attached by a bridge called the corpus callosum. It has the duty of complimenting the left and the right parts of the brain to work as one. The Creator Spirit is the corpus callosum exposing the invisible to be visible. The mystery that is being harvested as one living entity of Gaia, both

genders as one, all life as one, Earth and the universe as one submersed and guided by the Creator Spirit. The third element of air, represented by our lungs, defines the breath of the Creator Spirit whom breathed into all life until our last breath continually flows into the future.

Darwin's survival of the fittest theory has implemented a profound effect on life. During the introduction of Darwin's proposal another scientist was conducting a theory contrary to Darwin. Prince Peter Kropotkin believed mutual aid was "responsible for the flourishing of all surviving species of animals – particularly humans" (Banks and Mangan 1999: 67). Human survival depends on our need for one another and all other life on Earth and beyond. Darwin's theory was not inaccurate just incomplete. Both scientists together create a thorough synopsis of evolution. The principle of God being separated from life on Earth is also incomplete. A practice of mutuality harvests the social aspect of panentheism. Panentheism is God within and without time and space. "Panentheism resembles pantheism in that the universe is part of God, but in which it is not all of God. One metaphor is that of the universe as God's body" (Davies 1992: 43). Panentheism would suggest that the presence of the Creator within the universe is also within life itself like cells in the human body. Not one cell is more important but all cells work together uniformly. Therefore, all life forms have equal value. Monotheistic religions believed God to be disconnected, outside of the universe. Conversely, the belief that God is actively involved with human affairs by an eternal will of omniscience allows us to ponder on the fact that perhaps God is not outside our universe.

If Christianity and the panentheism were reciprocal, the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (a three dimensional world) is within each human. Pope Benedict XVI advised the congregation in Sydney in 2008 that the Holy Spirit is "the most forgotten of the three persons

of the divine Trinity, and yet supremely influential over the life of man and of the cosmos” (Magister 2008: 1). The Holy Spirit is the Creator Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Creator Spirit is referred to by the Hebrews as a life force or the energy of God like the description given by Johnson as *ruah* which means “air” or “wind” (Johnson 1993: 45). Johnson elaborates further, “[T]he Spirit is the creative origin of all life. In the words of the Nicene Creed, the spirit is *vivificantem*, vivifier or life-giver” (42). The identity of life is breathed into us by the Creator Spirit. The identity stems from the Scientific, Christian, and Indigenous explanations of how life, through their respected Creation stories, supports the evolution of who we are. Whether from the “Big Bang” Theory, life made reality in a 7 day span found in Genesis, or the common themes of anthropomorphism and animism presented in the Indigenous Creation stories; the Creator Spirit is the force behind all life and continues to shape life here on Earth and in the cosmos. The creative Spirit can be referred to as having female attributes. Johnson found in the Wisdom texts, Proverbs 4:13, that “she is the giver of life, she is a tree of life, she is your life (1993: 53). In the Mohawk Creation Story, life began with the aid of the animals collecting mud from the ocean floor. The mud was then rubbed on the back of the Turtle and the land came into existence. The ignition of life could not be actualized without the Creator Spirit. Reiterating what was mentioned earlier, life came into form from the darkness. Dr. Norman King, a retired Professor at University of Windsor, shares his thoughts that life has evolved first in darkness, from the deep depths of the darkest oceans, the rich loam of soils, and the womb of women. The Ojibwa believe the Creator Spirit is the energy of everything to be as *Manitou*. The Mohawks have a similar definition under the term *Orenta* which “is the energy and power that exists within everything on both the earthly and spiritual planes. The opposing force is

Otkon, energy for selfish and malevolent purposes” (Rice 2005: 23). The opposing forces of *Orenta* and *Otkon* are in constant friction to find a comfortable balance. But, it is *Orenta* which develops like an expanding universe, engulfing all life with the energy of love. This love springs forth with the assistance of the Creator Spirit.

Sallie McFague describes God as “Mother, Lover, and Friend” (Barbour 1990: 50). The same 3 models can be used for the Creator Spirit, that “each represents not the power of domination but the power of love in a particular form...the three models express in turn God’s activity as Creator, Saviour, and Sustainer...” (50). The Creator Spirit becomes a parental guide that moves life towards spiritual perfection. A practice of becoming complete is revealed in the power of panentheism;

Coming together in a Circle, caring for one another, sharing with each other, helping each other gain a better understanding of our cultural locatedness, our Self-In-Relation is considered by Traditionalists [Elders who follow the Original Instructions] to be necessary for the transformation of today’s society. We must work continuously to re-establish the individual in connection to the community and In-Relation to Mother Earth (Graveline 1998: 164).

The Creator Spirit assists with the Self-In-Relation due to our primal roots embedded in the circle of all life. “We have all evolved from common ancestors and are kin in this shared, unbroken genetic history” (Johnson 1993: 35). Self-In-Relation is our identity of who we are in relation to one another and life itself including the Earth and beyond. Firstly, the land not only shapes the Indigenous identity but the identity of humanity. As Gerald McMaster agrees, “[T]he land is the spiritual, historical, and physical connection that gives Native [humans] people their identity” (Meli 2000: 213). The individual associates with the land due to the traditional Creation stories, the herbal medicines collected, and the food whether plant or animal both are highly respected. A transformation takes place when reconnecting with the

land, the common root of humanity. One identity is an Island but collective identity secures survival expressed earlier by Kropotkin's mutuality theory. Thomas Berry states that "This means of self-transformation is through cultivation of oneself in relation to others and to the natural world" (Tucker 2009: 1). Berry continues that the transforming individual is the microcosm in a macrocosm universe (2). Human morphing unfolds through what Susan Weil and Ian McGill define "experiential education" as the "process whereby people, individually and in association with others, engage in direct encounter and then purposely reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their different ways of knowing" (Graveline 1998: 183). Hence, the final element of fire, the intellectual aspect of being human is expressed. This sharing of wisdom builds unity through the "Transformative pedagogies" (1998: 191). Transformation pedagogy is the active involvement of both minority and majority to transform present day reality beginning with the oppressed teaching the oppressor. Transformation occurs with the acknowledgement of the Creator Spirit at work in both the inner world of Earth and the outer world of the universe.

The growth of the living experiences three worlds. In many Indigenous traditions a tree is symbolized as a sacred connection between the worlds such as the Tree of Peace in the Mohawk tradition (Rice 2005: 12). The symbol of the tree in many cultures signifies knowledge. As Rice noted, the "World Tree of Life is a part of cosmology" and connects the three worlds "that the roots leads to the underworld, the trunk is a part of the Earth world, while branches of the tree reach into the sky world" (12). What then is the common link of the three worlds? Spiritually the Creator Spirit resides in the three dimensions. The self, I and me, balanced, in relation to the land adds another dimension of four. The buzz word in Canada's provincial

education systems is “inclusiveness.” As educators, we all wish for the best for all students. Both Freire and Graveline believed in consciousness-raising. May “The Muskrat and the Global Turtle” ignite the fire within us to continue our search for equilibrium of existence for all life including the land and the Indigenous youth.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Sken: nen ko: wa ken (Peace of mind, peace in body, peace in spirit)

*...The Spirit has helped me grow
To stand tall with the Pine and Birch Trees
The shadows are not shadows after all
I see the light, it filters through the grey –
There is hope*

*I know now if I follow the light
I can make it (The late David Rice, written on July 26, 2008).*

Researching and collecting information to explain a theory on what instigates the thought of young Indigenous suicide has been a daunting experience and task. All theories learned from various scholars have some truth to the matter. “The Muskrat and the Global Turtle” introduces the land detachment theory in an academic thistle. Understanding the Indigenous youth’s minds a researcher must be one among the community; to be Indigenous, to have experienced the emotional turmoil like the Indigenous youth. The environment is our niche, our element of survival, and our identity. This academic journey has introduced a theory that has devastating implications on the Indigenous youth but also to humanity. On April 22, 1971, a selected number of businesses under the name Keeping America Beautiful launched a campaign ad “The Crying Indian.” The commercial was to raise awareness on human’s involvement with polluting the Earth. The wounds of humanity’s ignorance towards Earth began with the colonial push of psychological, epistemological, and ontological way of living. These conceptual frameworks found in colonial ideologies and paradigms have hammered a wedge between who we are and where we come from – the Earth, our cosmological mother. To fuse consciousness and the unconsciousness, the present day paradigms need to shift to

engulf what was believed in before monotheistic beliefs; to understand our Primal Indigenosity, the rich history of our sacred union with our total identity of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical elements. More intellectual work is needed to find similarities and weld the paradigms of science, monotheistic beliefs and the Indigenous philosophy. In doing so, the colonial cord becomes the umbilical cord of life, the “me” and “I” converge to fully acknowledge humanity’s root of placement with Earth, and all life on Earth are a sacred part of the Creator Spirit, Thou, God, the Creator.

With regards to the title, the muskrat is the older sibling of mainstream society calling for change in our behavior towards and thoughts and beliefs about Earth. Perhaps this would have a profound effect on the rates of Indigenous suicide in the northern regions of Canada; perhaps other Indigenous People on the global Turtle we call Earth. As humanity continues its search deeper into the mystery of life the intention of the Ojibwa’s word *Pimatisiwin* must be close at hand, a search for “a good life and being well (Young 2005: 142), being a good person (166), to walk in a good way” (179). That is, to remember the four parts of our body and to reconnect them to the four elements of the Global Turtle. Durkheim’s term *anomie* sounds more like “I” and “me,” “and of me” or the “end of me,” a call from the Indigenous youth for help. Elder Manitonquat (Medicine Story) from the Wampanoag Nation believes that there is “sense of the spiritual connection, the sense of sacredness” that is becoming contagious in popular culture (1991: 128). The Indigenous youth need to believe, practice and share this knowledge to mainstream society, scientifically and religiously. The Original Instructions are within you. You hold the secret to save and preserve life. You are the muskrat and the future of the Global Turtle.

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