Incorporating Cultural Knowledge and Omushkegomowin into Community School Education: Perspectives from Cultural Educators

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of three Omushkegowuk (Swampy Cree) cultural educators to honourable incorporation of cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin (the name of the language spoken) in the local context of their community school education. Scholars argued that the prescribed provincial curricula, of which where many Inninuwuk (Indigenous) communities are automatically subjected to, operates as another colonial tool that separates and eliminates meaningful participation from Inninuwuk communities and members. The goal of this study was to understand Omushkegowuk cultural educators’ perspectives to how education could become adequately inclusive of Inninuwuk worldview(s). Although this study is locally contextualized to one Omushkegowuk community, broad implications are discussed from the study. Utilizing a qualitative research design approach, purposeful and convenience sampling was carried out to recruit interviewees for the study. The findings from this study highlight the necessary equal and equitable involvement and partnerships, teachings, and mentorships from Elders, cultural educators, and the grassroots Inninuwuk (Indigenous) communities for deep, and adequate incorporation of cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin in education.

Key Words: Omushkegowuk, Omushkegomowin, Culture, Language, Indigenous Education
Acknowledgements

I wish to honour and thank the cultural educators who agreed to be a part of this study, and whom allowed me to learn from them immensely. Without you, this research would not be possible.

I would also like to thank my parents and my grandparents who were my first teachers in showing me, and telling me who I am through their love, stories and providence. My father, for telling me stories of his childhood growing up with his parents before year-round community style living, and my grandmother who is always open to share with me her stories, wisdom, and knowledge.

My husband, and our three little children, thank you for all your love, support, happiness, and strength each of you have given me.

Thank you to my professors and TAs for their superior support and constructive feedback.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

In the recent decade, the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced policy and procedural documents such as the *First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Educational Policy Framework Implementation Plan, Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students – Developing Policies for Voluntary, Confidential Aboriginal Students Self-Identification: Successful Practices for Ontario School Boards* (Ministry of Education, 2017). The overarching purpose for these policy and procedural documents, as stated under the Ministry of Education’s Indigenous Education Strategy, is to improve student achievement and well-being, close the achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students, improve opportunities, and to increase knowledge and awareness of all students about Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives (Ministry of Education, 2017).

While the aim of these documents address to close the gap between Indigenous students and mainstream schools (Butler, 2015), scholars critically argue instead that the documents largely serve to widen it (Butler, 2015; Cherubini, 2010; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008).

Scholars have been responsive to address and name the reformation required to happen for meaningful change (Battiste, 2009; Battiste, 1998; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Mendelson, 2008). These include change happening “at the top with Boards of Education that are prepared to lead, learn, commit, and sustain the necessary resources and hold schools accountable for enacting cultural change of this magnitude” (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). A significant educational challenge is rooted “in the failure of existing federal and provincial systems to recognize the needs of Aboriginal peoples, both parents and children” (Battiste, 2009, n.p.). Battiste (2009) emphasizes the required next step of “a constitutional reconciliation with
Aboriginal peoples’ constitutional rights to education supported by constitutional power from federal, territorial, and provincial education systems” (n.p). In order for this to begin, educators must come to act upon the next steps:

The next step required is a constitutional reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples’ constitutional rights to education supported by constitutional power from federal, territorial, and provincial education systems. To initiate such a step educators have to first understand how aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples in regard to education has reorientated the constitutional framework of education in Canada. Then, educators have to understand the mandatory force of constitutional reconciliation that the Court has created to converge these different constitutional sources of power, creating a complex intersection of interrelated issues that should be addressed in transforming current and future educational outcomes (Battiste, 2009, n.p.).

Battiste (2009; 1998) appeals for ensured cultural continuity of Indigenous knowledge, language, customs, and traditions in the education systems. Despite some educational policy to Indigenous communities, families, parents, and children in education, Indigenous knowledges and languages have yet to flourish in the education systems (Battiste, 1998).

1.1 Research Problem

Much research tends to focus on matters pertaining to Indigenous education in provincially-funded public schools, usually in urban settings. However, little is examined to study current realities felt by valued members from small Indigenous communities located in Ontario’s most north in regards to their perspectives on (re)claiming Indigenous knowledge, language, customs, and traditions in the education systems for future generations. The prescribed
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provincial curricula is described as “culturally biased and inadequate to meet [Indigenous] needs,” and within the context of Indigenous education, initiates a manifestation of “cognitive imperialism” (Battiste, 1998, p. 20). According to Battiste (1998), cognitive imperialism “denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference,” which “has been singularly achieved through education” (p. 20). A majority of local Indigenous community schools on reserves that are band-operated and federally-funded are no exception from a prescribed provincial curricula (Mendelson, 2008). Agreements between the federal government and Indigenous, First Nation Bands conditions “a requirement of comparability,” that is, “to adopt provincial curricula as a minimum…to assume [educational] control…” (Mendelson, 2008, p. 5; Battiste, 1998, p. 1). This criterion is problematic, because in no way does it “impose requirements on the federal government with respect to funding; rather, it imposes requirements on First Nations” (Mendelson, 2008, p. 6). The prescribed curricula is to be taught by provincially certified teachers that ensure “students to transfer without penalty to an equivalent grade in another school within the school system of the province in which the school is located”—a required standard in the terms and condition of the Band Operated and Federal Schools program (Mendelson, 2008, p. 5). The issue about provincial curricula is that they are “developed away from [Indigenous] communities, without [Indigenous] input, and written in English” serving as “another colonial instrument” (Battiste, 1998, p. 1). Battiste (1998) inputs “[w]ithout [Indigenous] languages and knowledges, [Indigenous] communities can do little to recover their losses or transform their [N]ations using their legitimate knowledge and languages” (p. 1). This study aims to centralise the perspectives and voices of Omushkegowuk cultural educators, who bring forth their insights,
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values, and wisdoms in respects to incorporating cultural knowledge and language into their local community school.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In this study, I seek to explore the perspectives from Omushkegowuk cultural educators’ on their beliefs to incorporating cultural knowledge and Omushkegoman (the name of the language that Omushkegowuk speak) into their community school curriculum. This study is voiced through a Muskego Inninuwuk methodology, which upholds respected values centered to Indigenous worldviews (Rowe, 2014). I carry this study out through a qualitative research design approach employing semi-structured interviews with three cultural educators from a chosen Omushkegowuk community located in northern Ontario. I then analysis the data gathered to examine and discuss the findings from the interviews in efforts to further bridge Inninuwuk cultural worldview for a reformed education.

1.3 Research Questions

The guiding main research question and subsequent research questions of this study are as follows:

- What are Omushkegowuk cultural educators’ perspectives on incorporating cultural knowledge and language in their community school curriculum?
  - What are Omushkegowuk cultural educators’ perspectives on how schools can transform knowledge about Omushkegowuk culture and identity?
  - What cultural knowledges and systems of knowing do Omushkegowuk cultural educators believe should be included in efforts to incorporate cultural knowledge in school curriculum?
1.4 Background of the Researcher

“’Who am I?,’ is linked to Indigenous self-determination and journeys of healing, decolonization and resurgence” (Rowe, 2014, p. 1).

Indigenous students, scholars and researchers in the academy consistently make the description of developing awareness in who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going. In part, navigating our way home again within the academy is a process raised, experienced, and mentioned by Indigenous students, scholars and researchers who find themselves feeling like something is lost. I believe that this navigation presents itself to us and tugs at our heart strings is our calling home, steering each of us to heal, (re)claim, honour, strengthen, (re)structure, (re)build, and question, our holistic selves, communities, and Land from settler-colonial trauma. I believe I have had this feeling of disappointment, loss, and inadequateness at the start of my high school career sitting in a Grade 9 class before I could really comprehend the significance of it. I had left my community to continue high school, and I boarded with families until I was on my own for post-secondary in varies cities located in southern Ontario. My then Grade 9 self sitting eagerly in class began to ponder one day, “Who are First Nations Peoples? What does it mean to be a First Nations person? Who are the First Nations Peoples in Canada?” I recall thinking to myself, “I am going to learn about these things here [in high school],” pertaining to who I was, my identity, and where I had come from and who others were, after all I was there to for education and to be educated. It was not long after in the year and subsequent years I realized that these discussions I hoped to find in high school would be extremely minimal to non-existent. When presented the learning was too often compartmentalized and fragmented in an inconsistent basis that provided no real adequateness at all.
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I felt an absence of awareness, and often respect, in classrooms and in schools to a point where I too chose to stay silent about who I was. It did not occur to me then that I was not mentioning any details about who I was in school assignments or bringing in my cultural background. I would avoid to explain what atik (caribou) meant if sharing about foods I liked to eat at home. Not until years after the fact I began to see how I was affected. This carried on with me into my early years of undergraduate where when I found more open discussions pertaining to Indigenous topics, particularly Land, residential school, and communities, I found it hard and almost impossible to speak up without becoming overwhelmed with emotion. I had struggled to graduate in high school. I was always often taking my mind back home to the summers when I got to return back home. I got to a point where I just could not care anymore. I longed to be home. There was a time I skipped high school three days in row and went to a nearby park or somewhere quiet and nice just to cope. I was coping with transition, homesickness, loss, anxiety, depression, culture change, on top of high school demands. I reflect now on the significance of Land back home had for me.

By having to leave home and my family for high school I wondered if my parents and grandparents had to do the same, and what level of education they might have had. One phone call home in Grade 9 I asked my father, “What did you have to do for school? Did you have to leave home too?!” His response was, “Yeah. I did something like that. I went to residential school.” That was my first time hearing the words and learning about residential school, a topic again that I waited to hear about in high school, but never respectfully was able to learn. That carried a lot of hurt and emotion for me. When the topic did arise, especially in early undergraduate, the topic felt only in its extreme infancy with high chances of it to fade away. Pivotal moments during undergraduate include meeting my husband and giving birth to my
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children, who all have walked with me in my educational pursuits since and thus far. My husband and children gave me strength to continue on to higher education, despite its own challenges of balancing both demands. Another moment in undergraduate that gave me my speech back was in an Indigenous women’s course I took. I broke down again attempting to engage in discussion in respects to my personal experiences with residential school through my parents and family, but rather than stopping there, I continued to talk. I had just needed to overcome that mountain. It has become easier now.

I did not know it in Grade 9, but the questions that entered my mind before would resurface themselves again and again (if not by my own thought or feeling, then by other Indigenous scholars mentioning this awareness via questions, matters, or personal stories and experiences), even to the present point of where I am now. My own educational experiences with the support and strength my own family gave me intrigued me to want to learn more about the settler-colonial education I had gone through. It is why I have pursued the Master of Teaching program. My grandparents and especially my father were my “go to” people who mentored and gave me strength. I am grateful for where I am now. While I am still growing as a human, I feel I am navigating well between two worldviews hoping to bridge, and in recovering who I am.

1.5 Overview of Whole MTRP

In response to the research questions, this study conducts a qualitative research approach using purposeful and convenience sampling to interview three Omushkegowuk cultural educators about their perspectives to incorporating cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin into community school curriculum for students. In Chapter 2, I review literature drawing upon first-hand narrative accounts from Omushkegowuk Elders to develop a sense of what cultural teachings look like. Additionally, I include literature describing Indigenous worldview, tensions
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with English translations, and briefly describe historical imposed events of settler colonialism that ruptured Indigenous community relations, structures and systems. In Chapter 3, I elaborate on the research methodology employed in this study, while mentioning on interviewee recruitment and their brief biographies, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I report my findings into common themes and sub-themes and discuss their significance in light of the existing research literature. In Chapter 5, I deliberate upon the implications of the research findings for my own identity and practise, and for the educational community more broadly. I also express a series of questions raised by my findings, and suggest areas for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature to the research study topic. I begin by describing the significant role Elders hold for cultural continuation. I then explain the tensions and discomfort felt in crisscrossing worldviews via language translation, where I also emphasis pathways of Indigenous familial-communal-school engagements as a remedy. I end by explaining the spirit of settler-colonialism, including a brief description about the residential school system.

2.1 Centrality of Elders for Cultural Continuation

Iseke-Barnes (2013) emphasizes the significance of Elders “in the process of recovery and resistance to colonial realities and in reinsertion of the importance of remembering our past and remaking our futures” (p. 561). In John Paul Jacasum’s (2000) book Omushkegowuk Women’s Traditional Practices Project: Restoring the Balance, and in the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre’s (1999)’s But Life is Changing Volume One underlying emphasis is placed on learning cultural teachings through means of direct demonstration and observation communicated through knowledgeable individuals that is traditionally conveyed orally. Elder Evadney Friday believed that:

Whoever teachings the younger generation should have experience living in the bush and walking the traditional way of life. They should be old enough to teach (at least sixty years old) and if younger they should have lived the traditional life in the bush (Jacasum, 2000, p. 54).

Moreover, Elder Charlotte Koosees reiterated:
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We take those things to the school when we want to teach the children there. When we want to teach them, they should have an [E]lder, but only if the [E]lders are seventy or eighty years old, not those who are forty or fifty years old. The ones who are forty or fifty years old don’t have much to tell because they didn’t see what happened. It is only the ones who saw these things that were alive during those times (Jacasum, 2000, p. 121).

Evadene Friday shared her beliefs that younger generations should receive the experiential teachings of Indigenous knowledge when she stated “living in the bush and walking the traditional way of life”. Furthermore, the age requirement that both Friday and Koosees speak of likely refers entirely more to having been born in a time era where cultural knowledge and language in their totality were practised. This is not to infer an extinction or inferiority in the capability to thrive. Rather, it speaks to the not-so-distant generations that witnessed the transition from bush living to steady year-round settlement living. Koosees strengthens the prospect of cultural continuation by asserting, “We take those things to the school when we want to teach the children there. When we want to teach them, they should have an [E]lder…” (Jacasum, 2000, p. 121).

Building upon Friday and Koosees in how teaching and learning occurs, Elder Moses Sutherland describes the importance of demonstration, “I will not be able to teach using only words. For me to teach I need to demonstrate. It would be almost useless to use just words. It takes a long time to make snowshoes” (Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre, 1999, p. 70). In measure, Sutherland refers to the traditional methodology of cultural teaching in relation to and with Land:
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I will say a few words about what is on my mind, those things that are being considered for teaching in the school. It is believed that they can be taught by an experienced person. These things cannot be taught in a classroom, at least not by a person who has no first hand knowledge of these matters. Someone who has experienced of these matters should teach inside and outside the school. This person should know the traditional way of doing these things. He should be able to demonstrate the methods used. There should be somebody who can demonstrate the setting of a trap and the also teach the hunting methods. It is not easy for someone to learn simply by listening. It would be like listening to a story by a non-Native; it does not help us. Listening only does not help. We do not see how it is done. Take for example the airplane. We hear an expert made the airplane, but we do not know how he made it. This is the same thing with an automobile. We did not see the person make it. A man made these things with his own hands. The same applies to the things a Native made in the past. Nobody will learn just by hearing (Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre, 1999, p. 70).

Being knowledgeable of the traditional way of doing things for cultural teachings requires expertise in relation with the elements in Land. Sutherland’s views dislocate the boundary of the classroom as primary means to delivering Indigenous knowledge. In stating this, Sutherland exemplifies the significance and treasured meaning Land is to Indigenous knowledge, and therefore, should be as well for the Ministry of Education and its relevant partnering ministries within this orientation. Lastly, Indigenous knowledge has been traditionally carried on by oral transmission within the context of communal-familial relations (Jacsum, 2000; Ojibway & Cree Culture Centre). Within this particular worldview (Mushkego Inninuwuk), “knowledge and experiences are relational” (Rowe, 2014, p. 3). To learn out of context and out of worldview,
Sutherland uses the analogy that “[i]t would be like listening to a story by a non-Native; it does not help us” (Ojibway and Cree Culture Centre, 1999, p. 70).

Iseke-Barnes (2013) shares, Indigenous peoples “engage in oral traditions, historical/ancestral knowledges, and cultural resources to examine current events and Indigenous understandings in ways consistent with traditional worldviews and cosmologies” (p. 559). The practice of storytelling for Indigenous cultures “sustains communities and validates the experiences and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples” and “provides opportunities to express the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Indigenous languages and nurtures relationships and the sharing of Indigenous knowledges and cultures” (Iseke-Barnes, 2013, p. 559). Indigenous knowledges are “rooted in personal and subjected experience where the degree to which you can trust what a person is telling you is based upon the relationship between the speaker and the listener, taking into account integrity and perceptiveness of the speaker” (Rowe, 2014, p. 9). Within this understanding, personal experience is honoured as individual truth. Furthermore, Rowe (2014) distinguishes wisdom from personal knowledge where “wisdom is based upon social validation where collective analysis and consensus building occurs” and explains:

Within this understanding, the search for truth is not an establishment of one “correct” view over another but rather honours personal experience as individual truth. It is important to distinguish wisdom from personal knowledge; wisdom is based upon social validation where collective analysis and consensus building occurs. ‘Thus, an Indigenous research paradigm is structured within an [worldview] that includes a subjectively based process for knowledge development’ (Rowe, 2014, p. 9).
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An example of wisdom shared within this orientation is one provided by John Crowe in reference within Mushkegowuk Aski (the Omushkegomowin name of the Land where the Mushkegowuk live):

It is a culture tradition . . . [among] . . . the Indian people [that] the first priority for the planning is to go to the hunting area – hunting ground – and then to select . . . a certain lake . . . [for] . . . the fish that will be there. Even though other things are depended upon as food . . . the main planning is to make sure that there is fish . . . where you are going to so you will catch as much fish as you can. You can depend on fish more than any other. You can be certain that you will get a fish. And it has happened . . . ever since I can remember. And even though there were settlements around the Bay, . . . when the families were asked to leave for their hunting ground no matter how far they may be . . . their first priority is to select the area where there is plenty of fish, and, where there is a good place, they will set a fish trap. And this is the original procedure. It is tradition. It is a culture tradition. And . . . even before the European . . . it was always the same.

Because that is all the people can depend on is actually fish. They can catch [fish] more easily than any other kind of food stuff (John Crowe, personal communication) (Lister, 1993, p. 274).

Indigenous teachings operate on a basis of values that emphasize harmony and respectful relations with creation all around and with each other. Deep cultural teachings reveal rich ways our ancestors philosophically lived and were, in order to survive in relation with Land.
2.2 Tensions of Translations: Indigenous Language with English Translations

Indigenous languages must be disregarded no more. Historically, Indigenous groups faced exclusion from partaking in policymaking and planning processes pertaining to national, local and even familial affairs, as were respectable Indigenous languages and worldviews (McCarty, 2016; Coronel-Molina, 2016). Examples of silencing Indigenous presence from discussion include the “policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual French-English framework” which was “formalized with the Official Languages Act of 1969. As well as in the passing of the Canadian Multicultural Act in 1987 and the establishment of the Heritage Languages Institute “to promote cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity” (McCarty, 2016, p. 24). All of where measures intended to erase Indigenous existence, culture and languages. A well-known example of this is the residential school system were “the medium of instruction was solely English (or, depending on location, French), ‘accompanied by a derogation of, and often severe punishment for even the minimal use of [I]ndigenous languages’” to name some (McCarty, 2016, p. 23). Recent and emerging literature on topics of promising and successful efforts to Indigenous language revitalization recommend community-based actions where participation from the speech communities themselves contribute a central role (Coronel-Molina, 2016, p. 301). Iokepa-Guerrero (2016) asserts language education strengthens cultural and linguistic understanding connected with the Indigenous language:

Language is embedded in culture and can be said to unlock the “secrets” of culture. To learn a language then, is to learn the cultural values, beliefs, norms, and traditions that go hand-in-hand with that culture. Linguistic nuances, idioms, and grammatical structures give insight into the worldview and cultural perspectives of the Indigenous people associated with the language (p. 238).
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Language is inseparable from culture (in the expression of culture that “code, create, and transmit meaning”) (Kovach, 2015, p. 52). It is a central system where “cultural values remain alive and are reflective of a worldview found in their native language” (Kovach, 2015, p. 52). McKinley (2005) pinpoints that “one cannot understand a worldview in a language when one separates the culture from the language and only uses language as a technical tool” (p. 233).

Weber-Pillwax (2001) provides an eloquent example of the complexities and troublesome task of crisscrossing cultural worldviews via language and literacy translations:

I have heard the Cree word for ceremony used, but only in the context of talking to an English-speaking person who has asked something that the Cree speaker can only generalize. Then the word becomes isihcikewin(a) or, literally, “a making” or “makings,” or if the word is ceremonial, then the term is kihci isihcikewin, which carries the association of sacredness or godliness or spirituality, literally, “great making.” I looked up both these words in an English-Cree dictionary, and the English ceremony and ceremonial that are ascribed to the Cree words are probably the best choices for interpretations available in the English language. In an English-Cree dictionary, where the Cree words are written in Roman orthography and seem to have been written primarily for the benefit of English-language speakers, meaning is simplified and reflective of the literate society. However, the meaning of the Cree word isihcekewin carries an emphasis on “the making” of an event; it is a verb acting as a noun, and the emphasis is not on the person who did “the making,” although involvement of a person is implied. In standard English-language usage, the word ceremony carries an emphasis on the event itself” as a completed something, like an object. There is nothing in the word to suggest involvement of a person or action or process.
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Thematic issues identified by Weber-Pillwax (2001) in her excerpt above addresses the necessity of required local community partnerships to assist with alleviating tensions within the process of proper and adequate translations and knowledge transmissions. This is suggestive that meaningful incorporation of cultural worldviews, language, histories and stories must be considered in a respectful and honourable approach that centralises relationships with local Indigenous communities and the Land from which they belong. Weber-Pillwax (2001) explains the difficulty in accurate interpretation of Inninuwuk words that express a Inninuwuk reality where richness of meaning that are actually embedded in the Inninuwuk words are severely limited or lost. It is for this reason “why so many Cree Elders will tell us that Cree cannot or has not been translated properly, or they will caution against the interpretation of certain elements of Cree practices and teachings, often those of a spiritual nature” (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 158). As I continue to develop as a human being seeking for well-rounded and fluent acquisition in my endeavours to become knowledgeable, and fluent, particularly in Omushkegomowin, I understand the abundance and accuracy lost from Omushkegomowin with English translations.

2.2.1 Bridging tensions together through local Indigenous community partnerships

For Indigenous families and communities, familial-communal-school involvement looks differently than the traditional parent-teacher interviews and occasional volunteering in the classroom (McDonald, 2009). Familial-communal-school involvement exceeds beyond mere partnerships that call for schools to become interconnected with the local communities they serve (McDonald, 2009). The significance of familial-communal-school involvement strengthens and draws upon Omushkegowuk forms of education, where the parents, grandparents, Elders, and extended families of children held direct roles in the development of their children. Familial-communal involvement in education is not a concept that is distinct to Indigenous people in
North America nor is it a struggle that only Indigenous people embark on (Chabot, 2005). The situation for Indigenous peoples, however, is distinguished from others because their “culture, languages, and world view they bring to the equation – none of which exist anywhere else in the world” (Chabot, 2015, n.p.). If Indigenous languages, culture and worldview completely erode, there will be no other place in the world where they can found. This makes it extremely important and a requirement for “the number of stakeholders – Departments, Ministries, School Boards” – who must be persuaded and realize the goals and efforts Indigenous people are aiming to do. In respects to the number of stakeholders involved, Chabot (2005) points out:

These groups have posed and will continue to pose the biggest challenge to accomplishing a meaningful degree of parental and community involvement in [Indigenous] education. At the same time, however, given the difficult realities these same groups are now encountering in a realm of education, they may also prove to be our greatest allies (n.p.).

Reflective familial-communal-school involvement forms a central feature underlying Indigenous control (McDonald, 2009). Citing the Royal Commission on Learning, McDonald (2009) highlights specifically to familial-communal engagement in education in where parents “want to have more input into the schools their children attend” [italics in original] (p. 21). Pathways that this might be achieved felt by parents is “by having more trustees on provincial school boards, or by being able to vote in school board elections, and ... looking for more direct involvement with their local schools” [italics in original] (McDonald, 2009, p. 21). Other concerns felt by parents include “achieving full self-government and controlling their own education system from early childhood to post-secondary and adult education and training” [italics in original] (p. 21).

Several barriers mentioned that hinder familial-communal involvement include: “negative
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educational experiences of Indigenous parents (based on the residential school experience)”; “barriers to communication (the traditional school is fragmented whereas [Indigenous structures are] more holistic in nature; body language and the use of language is a cultural barrier as well)”; “limited understanding by the schools of [Indigenous] issues and values (by staff, administration, teachers, within the curriculum, etc[.]”; “cultural awareness”; “poverty and illness in [Indigenous] families”; “lack of engagement strategies by the schools”; “intimidation, racism and bullying”; “negative parent-teacher contact (frequently teachers and parents communicate only in negative circumstances or when there is a problem)”; and, “‘segregation’ of [Indigenous] students” (McDonald, 2009, p. 4-5). On another note, meeting “for no reason, short-term initiatives, tokenism, inadequate promotion of activities and the offloading of parents and students to resource personnel are ineffective strategies” in Indigenous familial-communal-school engagement practices (McDonald, 2009, p. 7).

Inclusivity of Indigenous familial-communal relations in the development of education programs and policies is pivotal to designing successful practices, and contributes to overall higher student success and development of Indigenous children (McDonald, 2009). It is the position of this paper that a remedy to bridge existing barriers and tensions is to establish an interconnected relationship with schools, boards, institutions, structures, systems to Indigenous families, communities, students, scholars, educators, Elders, and cultural educators.

2.3 Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is an “on-going process” defined by Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) as the “specific formation of colonialism in which the colonizer comes to stay, making himself the sovereign, and the arbiter of citizenship, civility, and knowing” operating “with a logic of elimination”, which entails the “removal of Indigenous [Peoples] of a territory” (p. 75,
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Thus, the primary motive for the settler and settler-state within settler colonialism is “access to territory” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013, p. 73). A remedy for settler-colonialism is restoration of Land-based resurgence.

2.3.1 Fragmentation

Fragmentation appears to be an evident and on-going theme highlighted in academic discourse and in most literatures when it comes to respecting and honouring Indigenous teachings and language in the totality that it is for settler-colonial education. For example, in her article McKinley (2005) asserts that there exists an assumption that the only place for Indigenous knowledge “is that which equates to, or at least does not disrupt the boundaries of, [western modern science] and people’s view of culture” (p. 228). McKinley then asserts, “[b]y accepting only that knowledge that ‘fits’ science the status quo never changes, power and/or authority is not contested, and extra resources are not required” (p. 229). Although McKinley (2005) attunes to science education, the existence of this assumption can be applied to all layers of the colonial education and schooling sphere. Shahjahan (2005) calls that, “Indigenous knowledges have a rightful place in the academy. Not to incorporate them is to spiritually amputate ourselves. This amputation is to the detriment of the academy” (p. 234).

2.3.2 The residential school system

The establishment of the Canadian confederation through the British North American Act of 1867 enabled the “new federal government with authority over Indigenous ‘affairs’” (McCarty, 2016, p. 23). Established by the settler-state came the Indian Act of 1976, which:

began a deliberate course of genocide, linguicide, and territorial seizure through the removal of [Indigenous Peoples] to reserves, the restriction of their personal movement,
denial of legal representation, and the creation of a segregated residential school system.
Underwritten by deep-seated attitudes of racial superiority and evangelic fervor, the residential schools combined “basic learning” with training in agriculture and “large doses of religion” (McCarty, 2016, p. 23).

Historically, education has been defined by the federal government “as the chief means by which [Indigenous] children were to be socialized into becoming ‘Christian’, English-speaking workers, farmers, and homemakers” [single quotations added] (Satzewich & Mahood, 1995, p. 48). This was done through a system that became known as residential school in 1923, though residential schools “had their origins in a report on industrial schooling for [Indigenous] children in the United States written by Nicholas Flood Davin in 1879, a report and its recommendations which were embraced by others, including Sir John A. Macdonald” (Satzewich & Mahood, 1995, p. 48). Hutchings (2016) argues the residential school system could be traced back as far back as the 1820s “‘when Upper Canada’s lieutenant governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland…submitted a plan to the Colonial Office ‘‘for ameliorating the condition of the Indians in the neighbourhood of [the Colonial] settlements’’” (p. 303). A focus John S. Milloy described as targeted “‘very much on the children’” (Hutchings, 2016, p. 303). These schools were:

created for the purpose of separating [Indigenous] children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the cultural of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. The schools were in existence for well over 100 years, and many successive generations of children from the same communities and families endured the experience of them (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. v).
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Painfully, plentiful of Indigenous children inflicted into the residential school system across Canada endured horrendous experiences of isolation, and violence from emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, sexual abuse, and even death in these schools operated by the Churches and endorsed by the federal government. Assimilationist projects, such as these “involved widespread violence and abuse and ultimately served as models for the Nazi genocide” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013, p. 76).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I drew upon narrative accounts expressed by Omushkegowuk Elders who shared their insights to teaching bush life and the traditional way of life. Secondly, I explained the inseparability of language, culture and worldview to honourably and respectfully understanding Indigenous knowledge. Thirdly, I address the significance of Indigenous familial-communal-school engagements as a remedy to bridging discomforts and tensions felt in the much needed implementation of Indigenous knowledges in schools, institutions, structures, and systems. Fourthly, I describe the present reality of settler-colonialism felt within practices of settler-colonial state, and conclude by providing a brief summary about the residential school system in Canada. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the research methodology design utilized in this study.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology. First, I begin by reviewing the research approach, procedures, and data collection instruments. Secondly, I expand more specifically on participant sampling and sampling procedures. Subsequently, I clarify data analysis procedures and review the ethical considerations relevant to my study. Lastly, I end the chapter with a brief summary of central methodological decisions and my reasoning for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing a semi-structured interview procedure where I interviewed three Omushkegowuk cultural educators from a selected northern community. This community was chosen due to my affiliation and accessibility to the community. I carried out my engagement with this study following four pillars identified by Kovach (2015) of Indigenous methodology:

- Holistic Indigenous knowledge systems are a legitimate way of knowing.
- Receptivity and relationship between researcher and participants is (or ought to be) a natural part of the research methodology.
- Collectivity, as a way of knowing, assumes reciprocity to the community.
- Indigenous methods, including story, are a legitimate way of sharing knowledge (p. 53).

I also adopted Rowe’s (2014) Muskego Inninuwuk methodology that draws “from Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, relational accountability, and mino-pimatisiwin”
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(p. 2). Mino-pimatisiwin, in Omushkegomowin, can be expressed as the “‘overall goal of healing, learning and life in general’” (Rowe, 2014, p. 2). Moreover, the Muskego Inninuwuk methodology supports insight into experiences of identity through “exercises of inwardness”, which “allows one to ‘subjectively experience a sense of wholeness’” (Rowe, 2014, p. 9). Importantly, I privilege Elders in this research in the following ways that realize the significant role they hold to our communities: they are “wisdom and knowledge keepers” who are “situated in communities as leaders in sustaining Indigenous cultures and pedagogies”; they are “researches of the natural world and our relationships to it” whereby their stories express “these interrelationships and teach them to the next generation” and are educators to “children, youth, and adults about the living systems of which we are part of”; they hold deep understanding “of storytelling” where “within their stories were understandings of the living systems in which we share our lives”; importantly, “Elders mentor and provide support and have systematically gathered wisdom, histories, skills, and expertise in cultural knowledge”; their role is “based on their knowledge and the way they use their knowledge for the collective good”; and, finally, they share their “stories and expertise through collaborative dialogues” (Iseke-Barnes, 2013, p. 56).

The design of inquiry selected for this research was narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as “a way of understanding experience …. the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives—” (p. 20). Creswell (2014) highlights in narrative research the researcher “studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives”, which is then “retold or restoried by the researcher” (p. 13). Narrative inquiry aligns with indigenous methodologies described by Kovach (2009) by placing emphasis on storytelling. I adopt a holistic research approach to this study that involves the
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interrelationships between health and well-being (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) situated in Inninuwuk worldview, meaning based upon Aski (Land) having centrality.

In respects to literature review, narrative accounts by Omushkegowuk Elders from Mushkegowuk Aski on cultural teachings served a dual purpose of both literature review and preliminary form of data collection and analysis. The literature review expanded and drew from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars on topics pertaining to: critical policy analysis, Indigenous education, worldviews, culture, language, and Land as pedagogy. Effort was made to privilege literature that included stories and voices by Omushkegowuk Elders, but no restrictions were placed on authorship in the literature reviewing process.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Given my research questions, the data collection method employed was semi-structured interviews with three Omushkegowuk cultural educators about their perspectives on how and what cultural knowledges and Omushkegomowin could be incorporated into their community school system. The purpose of semi-structured interviews engages in face-to-face conversation with the aid of an interview question guide where the researcher asks open-ended questions in a conversational tone with the interviewee (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). The interviewee is allowed to respond freely “in whatever way he or she chooses” sharing his or her experiences and perspectives while the interviewer listens carefully and facilitates responses from the interviewee (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, p. 50). In semi-structured interview, participants are encouraged to share “comments, stories, and associations, as well as to initiate new topics,” and the interviewer is free to adapt if need be (Creswell, 2015, p. 25). Semi-structured interviews aligns true to the purposes of qualitative research design, that is, to interpret meaning making that participants ascribe to a phenomenon. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) address, “the best
way to put to learn about people’s meaning and meaning-making is to listen to people talk about their experiences in their own way and in their words. People’s own words afford the best access a researcher can have to how they understand their experiences” (p. 2).

In part, this study was conducted utilizing purposeful and convenience sampling (Creswell, 2015), where the intent was to purposefully select interviewees that would best help inform the researcher understand the research problem and to recruit interviewees who were accessible and available for the study. Each interview was recorded with a digital audio recording device that was later transcribed to written transcriptions for data analysis. Copies of the written interview transcriptions were kept secured in a password protected computer, and in a USB only accessible to myself and to my professors. See appendixes A and B for a signed letter of consent and interview protocol/questions.

3.3 Participants

In this section, I outline three sampling principles developed for the nature of this study in seeking participants. Secondly, I provide description of the sampling procedures in connecting with cultural educators. Lastly, I end by providing three brief biographies of the cultural educators in this study.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

The sampling criteria created for the purpose of this study are as follows:

- Cultural educators must be Omushkegowuk, and speak fluent Omushkegomoowin.
- Cultural educators must be of the generations that were born prior to the transition to the concept of year round settlement living.
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- Cultural educators must have received kiskinohamakewinnah (teachings) transmitted through familial and communal relations that were learned by lived experiences.

The rationale behind the sampling criteria formed is to ensure relevancy to the topic of this study. Speaking fluent Omushkegomowin is an important piece to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview in education. By selecting generations who were born prior the permanent transition of year-round settlement living or community living, cultural educators would not be of subsequent generations, like myself, who were community schooled within English-speaking institutions governed by provincial curricula. Rather, cultural educators would have had closer and relevant lived experiences being distinctly taught and raised on the Land alongside their familial circles. They would have borne witness to distinct cultural teachings, practices, knowledges, and spoke primarily Omushkegomowin as their first language. However, it is important to acknowledge that these same generations are generations who experienced the abuses of the residential school system.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures

In qualitative research design approach, the aim is to explore a topic in depth (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Thus, it is essential that sampling be purposive to recruit interviewees with personal experience and knowledge that will best help understand the research under study (Cleary et al., 2014; Creswell, 2015). Creswell (2015) highlights that for qualitative research studies; 1-3 interviewees are typically recruited where the number is sufficient. Furthermore, the nature of the research question explored in this study helps the researcher determine the number of interviewees needed (Cleary et al., 2014). Purposeful sampling is the non-random way of ensuring that interviewees for a study are selected within a particular sampling universe or
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population that will be represented in the study from which data is collected from (Robinson, 2014). Furthermore, purposeful sampling enhances this study by ensuring certain interviewees with “unique, different or important perspective[s] on the phenomenon in question” are represented (Robinson, 2014, p. 32). In contrast, convenience sampling is described as locating “a nearby source of potential [interviewees] who are convenient in their proximity and willingness to participate … and are in all likelihood not a random cross-section of the sampling universe” (Robinson, 2014, p. 32). These two sampling strategies were the best option for this study, which aimed to explore cultural educators’ perspectives at the highly localized context of one Omushkegowuk community. Consequently, purposeful sampling was utilized in combination with convenience sampling to recruit interviewees with very specific life experiences and knowledge to best help the topic explored. Thus, generalisations are restricted to this specific local level (Robinson, 2014). However, broad implications raised from this study will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Interviewees were purposefully selected during a visit to an Omushkegowuk community located in Mushkegowuk Aski (the name of the traditional territory in Omushkegomowin), located in northern Ontario. The reason this particular community was chosen was based on convenience, accessibility, and due to my personal affiliation with the community. I contacted potential cultural educators all of whom I was readily aware about, and whom I was aware of their backgrounds. Cultural educators were contacted in advanced either through telephone calls or internet messaging where I then provided them with a brief explanation and overview of the study, to which each interviewee agreed to participate. From there, interviewees decided upon time and location to be interviewed that they were comfortable with. Upon meeting with
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Interviewees, copies of the consent letter and interview protocol were handed over for their own reference prior to the interview beginning. Each interview lasted between 48 to 94 minutes.

3.3.3 Participant biographies

All participant biographies utilize pseudonyms to protect the interviewees’ identities.

Ben Twig was taught at a very early age how to live off the land. A few examples of early teachings he remembers learning consisted of snaring fish, grouse, and rabbits. Omushkegomowin was always spoken by everybody around. When Ben Twig, along with others, was sent to residential school for the duration following the settler colonial school calendar (September to June), the cultural teachings he was familiar with were cut off. In residential school, Ben Twig shared that they did not learn much there. In the summertime when Ben Twig returned home for the short summer holiday was where he saw people fishing and hunting, but due to leaving to residential school winter activities became absent. Ben Twig eventually left residential school and returned back to school located in his community in Grade 7 or 8 where he describes that they were taught well. Learning to write in syllabics was one of the teachings his community school provided (the community school was separate from residential school). Syllabic learning was mainly taught by the priest, but there were times the priest invited Elders from the community to support deliver teachings. Ben Twig explained back then considerable amount of time was allocated for syllabic teachings, not 40 minute periods that typically exist today, and that it was very easy for them to learn it because everybody then were already fluent speakers in Omushkegomowin. Omushkegomowin was not experienced as a second language.
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Flint Rock’s teachings as a child and growing up involved being on the Land where the way of life was so different than when in the community. The way of life that Flint Rock speaks of indicated that parents were the primary teachers. Examples of teachings that Flint Rock received then included what he referred to as the language of the Land. Language of the Land consisted of knowledge to places of the Land honoured and respected, and reiterated by and in the Omushkegomowin language, which was the primary language. Due to having received these teachings Flint Rock was able to identity places on the Land by their respected names in Omushkegomowin, a knowledge Flint Rock felt that a lot of young people today do not know. Flint Rock described his learning environment as being very different than the traditional classroom setting. Rather, learning was taught by action and by example. A few examples of the kinds of teachings he received included how to skin a rabbit, beaver, and caribou.

John’s early teachings consisted of observation and watching the actions of his parents and the Elders as they delivered lessons. By watching the actions of his parents whom afterwards would recite the lesson being taught prompted John to try and imitate the teachings. This process became the habit of doing in John’s early teachings that helped him learn. Examples of teachings given to John included everyday activities like how to get up early and to understand the reason behind this: the morning is the best time to catch what you want. Furthermore, half hour past sunset being careful not to scare away any small animals was important because they were relied on for food.

3.4 Data Analysis

Once interviews were transcribed, pseudonyms were employed in place of the interviewee’s names and any other potential identifying information to protect their identities and ensure anonymity. This included computer file names, document, and audio recording labels.
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Hereafter, multiple read-throughs of each original data were carefully conducted to sort emerging codes individually, and then later were cross-analyzed in relation to each other. Initial codes were conducted utilizing vivo, descriptive and values coding techniques, where data was identified accordingly to my research questions, relevant literature, and areas not found in the literature review. Seers (2012) identifies the coding process as when “themes are developed to describe the data in a form which summarises it, yet retains the richness, depth and context of the original data” (p.2). Thus, it was in my best integrity and ability that I aimed for accurate interpretation and judgement during this process.

In addition to coding, highlighting, and margin note taking during the initial readings, I created two sub-question files where I placed selected excerpts from each interview that pertained to a research sub-question in. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) instruct “[w]hen you decide to select a piece of talk for a particular sub-question file, you make a judgement about whether or not the meaning of what was said pertains in some way to the sub-question” [italic in original] (p. 88). To the best of my ability and integrity I aimed for accurate interpretation and judgement during this process. Once I completed the two sub-question files, reread the excerpts and added brief notes underneath each excerpt to record succinct information from what the participants were conveying. This was to discover any repeating, divergent, and convergent themes, and to compose integrative summaries and labels to assist with theme findings. Once I felt I had a good grasp of developing themes, I carefully began to write consistently drawing back on the interview transcriptions to ensure truthfulness.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Throughout all stages of the study, I aimed to stay true with the concept of minawasin (a Omushkegomowin word meaning it is good, perfect, or beautiful). Kvocho (2009) highlights
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*mino* as a broad interpretation of ethical responsibility in relation to Indigenous methodologies in research. Kovach (2009) writes:

> Trust needs to be earned internally. Trusting relationships are engendered in a variety of ways: following protocol, showing guardianship over sacred knowledges, standing by cultural validity of knowledge, and giving back (p. 147).

It was my intent to bring cultural educators’ experiences to this study, and by doing so, honouring Indigenous worldviews, which are “holistic and encompass knowledge sources,” as powerful, legitimate, and important (Kovach, 2009, p. 147). A risk of bringing such knowledge into the academy is them being appropriated or diminished (Kovach, 2009). To address this concern, I aimed to heavily focus and approach this study through a speech that honours Land, Inninuwuk worldviews, and the importance for cultural teachings, practices, knowledges, and Omushkegomowin in education, our communities, and for the layers upon layers of societal structures, systems, and spaces. I hoped to have respectfully introduced and spoken about the cherished cultural educators of this study. I carefully chose not to utilize any colonial or demeaning narratives, or deficit ideologies of Indigenous education and Peoples.

All interviewees were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities. Interviewees were notified of their right to refrain from answering any question that they do not feel comfortable or necessary to answer. Interviewees were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research study without penalty or consequence. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) inform “participants’ anonymity and confidentiality must always be safeguarded in research” (p. 75). Any potential identifying makers that risked jeopardizing the interviewees’ anonymity and confidentiality were removed from data entirely and replaced with pseudonyms consistently
INCORPORATING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND OMUSHKEGOMOWIN throughout all phases in the research process. This included using pseudonyms for labels of the audio-recordings, computer file names, and for any potential identifying markers that may have been mention in the written interview transcriptions. There were no known risks to participation in this study. Participants were emailed copies of their written interview transcriptions for appraisal. All data, including audio recording devices that contained the interviews, hardcopy written interview transcriptions, consent letters, and anything else that may have been given were safeguard in secured place only accessible to myself. The electronic written interview transcriptions were protected in a password protected computer, again which was only accessible to myself and my professor.

3.6 Methodologies Limitations and Strengths

The themes explored in this study are immense and complex, and cannot be fully addressed in this research or in mere words alone. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is simply to bring to discussion the noteworthy themes raised from the perspectives shared by Omushkegowuk cultural educators on pathways to go about incorporating cultural knowledge and language into educational structures and systems. The intent of this study is to de-structure and de-center exercising settler colonial powers within education, policy and related government systems and frameworks to incorporate equitable power-sharing with Indigenous relations. Most importantly, this study is to hear from the voices of cultural educators in their perspective to how incorporating Inninuwuk worldview can be bridged. While this study situates from a regionally specific Territory and community carrying with it its own contextualization that may vary from different local communities, the focus here is to deeply understand how Indigenous cultural worldviews and language might be bridged honourably into school systems and structures. I believe in my best efforts and integrity I centered the voices from the Omushkegowuk cultural
educators of this study and facilitated their perspectives and insights into broader academia and policy discourse via this study, attested that this research would not be without them.

It is necessary to acknowledge the limited incorporation and use of Omushkegomoowin to explain, describe, and honour words, phrases, worldviews and understandings within the language, as well as the limited inclusion of culturally specific practice and teaching paradigms. Due to time constrictions of the MTRP in accordance to the MT program time frame and other school demands, comprehensive deepness and expansion is not completed by this study. Consequently, this study is only a beginning to the discussion, establishing next steps, and allowing expansion for others to include their experiences to elaborate combined understanding.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology chosen for this study. First, a qualitative research design approach was selected for its suitability in inquiring into the research questions of the study. Semi-structured interviews was selected as the main instrument for data collection. I implemented Kovach’s (2015) four pillars of Indigenous methodology as over arches in the research approach, as well as Rowe’s (2014) Muskego Inninuwuk methodology as they were best suited for the nature of this study. Narrative inquiry was selected as it aligned closely with Indigenous methodology where storying and storytelling are emphasised. Secondly, recruitment criteria were selected that included interviewees of the study must: 1) be Omushkegowuk, and speak fluent Omushkegomoowin; 2) must be of generations that were born prior to the transition of the concept year round settlement living; 3) and, must have received kiskinohamakewinnah (teachings) transmitted through familial and communal relations that were learned by lived experience. The recruitment criteria were designed to ensure relevancy, experience and knowledgeableness of interviewees were appropriate to the topic of
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the study. In this way, the study is deepened as a result of the interviewees recruited. Then, data analysis procedures which consisted of coding, highlighting and margin note taking, the creation of two sub-question files, and subsequent reviewing of excerpts and interview transcriptions were explained. The coding process helped categorise theme development from each interview, which were later cross-analyzed to determine any relations with the data, to the research questions, relevant literature, and as well as new emerging themes not found in literature. Next, ethical review considerations were discussed that ensued the concept of the Omushkegomowin word *minawisin* (it is good, perfect, or beautiful), where trusting relationships with interviewees were built and the knowledges that came from the interviews were respectfully interpreted through *vivo*, descriptive, and values coding techniques after multiple read-throughs. This also included assigning interviewees and any identifying information with pseudonyms to protect their identities, and informing interviewees of their right to refrain from answering any questions they feel need not to as well as their right to withdraw at any time with no penalty. Lastly, methodological limitations were identified followed by strengths of the study. The next chapter presents the findings from the interviews for the study, followed by discussion of their significance in relation to existing literature.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The research question that this study sought to answer is:

What are Omushkegowuk cultural educators’ perspectives on incorporating cultural knowledge and language in their community school curriculum? The data from these findings has been analyzed and grouped into the following themes:

The first theme found that incorporating Inninuwuk worldview into education policy and curricula design requiring adaptability to a Land- and family-centred cultural identity. The second theme discusses the transmission of cultural teachings and Omushkegomowin identified with responsibilities that begin with parenthood and self-sufficiency. The third theme expands on the role of settler educators in the work to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview(s), which includes partnerships and cross-cultural learning.

Each theme will be broken down to subthemes; each subtheme will present interviewees’ perspectives and voices and also connect to relevant research on the topic.

4.1 Incorporating Inninuwuk Worldview into Education Policy and Curricula Design

Involves Adaptability to a Land- and Family-Centred Cultural Identity

In respects to the incorporation of Inninuwuk (Indigenous) worldview into education policy and curricula design, cultural educators called for a (re)structuring of current approaches to becoming more honourable, reflective and inclusive to cultural practises existing within the Inninuwuk worldview, which includes teachings and language. Omushkegomowin is important, because encompassed with it are vast understandings and cultural worldview insights embedded and expressed by, and through the language. Cultural educators pointed to strong connections...
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between families and schools, as well as an appreciation for the changing nature of the Omushkegomowin identity, as integral to successful incorporation.

4.1.1 Transmission of cultural teachings and Omushkegomowin is a family and community responsibility where partnerships with schools is necessary for adequate incorporation

A finding that consistently emerged in the interviews was the crucial element of authentic, meaningful and equitable partnerships with Inninuwuk (Indigenous) families and communities, who are the bridge to incorporating Inninuwuk cultural knowledge and language(s) into schools and for education. In this way, the intergenerational transmission of teachings via interrelationships is effectively done so respectively to Inninuwuk worldview(s). For example, Flint Rock mentioned a time when the school provided cultural breaks giving a time for parents to take their children out during the spring. Interestingly, Flint Rock explained that the infusion of cultural practises into school historically promoted high parental involvement:

I think a lot of parents, if you were, if education were to be promoted like that. Mix it with that cultural stuff. I think there would be a lot of support from the community, because it happen before. When teachers organized stuff like that the parents came out and supported it.

However, at the time of this study cultural educators revealed that there were no current efforts to incorporate cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin into their community school. In fact, extending students’ cultural knowledge was seen as a detriment to their formal education. An example shared by Flint Rock entailed students who were penalized for missing three weeks of school to join their father in an annual spring hunt out on the Land. Rather than incorporating cultural breaks into the school structure, or counting the missed days from class as instructional
days, the students were given school assignments by their teacher to take with them and complete during their time away. Yet Flint Rock believed:

That should be our time. It’s 100 percent cultural teaching that happen, and basically the parents are providing that teaching. I’d rather see a school giving that opportunity to practise your culture. Like given that cultural breaks, stuff like that.

In describing the kind of shift that must occur to realize and devise a culturally aligned school calendar incorporative of Inninuwuk worldview, cultural educators called for change to ensue at the core and foundation of education policy and curricula exceeding beyond inadequate classroom integration and educator convenience. The nature of incorporating cultural teachings and language emphasised by cultural educators requires an equitable amount of community control and involvement in education and in decision-making that involves mutual partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. Areas identified by cultural educators for revamping school curricula to become more inclusive of culture included the need for “field trips”, “cultural breaks”, and learning that occurs in the “wilderness.” These were suggested to being taught by parents, cultural educators, Elders, Omushkegowuk educators, and knowledgeable community individuals rather than restricted to mere in-classroom learning where cultural and linguistic teachings are limited and become incomplete. Ben Twig called for a school calendar that is culturally reflective of “our way of life”:

…I think cultural stuff should be taught, because it’s our way of life. I’ve read in history book that school calendar came from farming, so the kids could be out helping out with the farm long time ago. So we should be able to do the same thing with our culture.
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Cultural educators provided a brief explanation into the system of Omushkegowuk culture by discussing the importance of season, animal migrations (both on land and on water), and the conditions of the outdoor environment during certain seasons (e.g., the best time when to make snowshoes). Moreover, John reiterated the role of Elders in working with schools and teachers in the community: “They should be sort of supervise the teachers to do it right, and also help them stick to the closest to the true thing, no just imagination thing.” Likewise, Ben Twig also strongly felt that the community should make an effort to ensure that everybody is included. He explained, “If that is not the case it will not work, because you need everybody involved.”

A culturally reflective school calendar, that honours and invites community involvement for student learning were highlighted as essential by cultural educators. Among the barriers that limit parent-community involvement in schools for Indigenous families, a “limited understandings by the schools of First Nation issues and values (by staff, administration, teachers, within the curriculum, etc.)” and “cultural awareness” were highlighted as two reasons by McDonald (2009). Furthermore, McDonald (2009) points out the importance of Indigenous parent-community involvement to ensure student success and “an effective education process” (p. 24). This aligns with these cultural educators’ call for authentic school and community partnerships.

4.1.2 Omushkegомowin is not a bounded, static or homogenous entity, but changes depending on background, location, and context, encompassing multiple opportunities for cultural insight

The place of Omushkegомowin for cultural teachings, and in education was embedded throughout each of the interviews. Flint Rock shared, “The language that you speak represents your ultimate expression of who we are, your culture.” Cultural educators highlighted the
important role of Omushkegomowin to delivering cultural teachings, and for cultural identity. Cultural educators connected Omushkegomowin to cultural teachings by means of Land centered learning that involves physical participation, where learning Omushkegomowin is enhanced, fuller, and enlightened.

Ben Twig: I think when you’re out there doing something sometimes there are words you don’t hear in a classroom setting. As an example somebody is talking about how to set up a net. There are so many words that are left out if you’re not physically there putting up a net. As an example, after you set up the net you start currying the fish. There are so many ways to cook fish, and there are words that do not describe the insides of the fish and the names of… the insides. There are just words that you don’t hear in a classroom setting, because you’re not there physically and it goes for everything else too.

When I asked Ben Twig if he could provide an example of an Omushkegomowin term not used every day in the classroom, he raised the issue of sole in-classroom learning prohibiting full the understanding of Inninuwuk teachings, and reemphasised the call for field trip learnings outside of the school:

If a program in a school instructed kids how to do, how to learn to do this every year. I’m pretty sure the kids would grasp it over a number of years. You just can’t learn it in a 40 minute segment like what they do now. Because you just don’t learn anything. As an example, when you smoke a fish there’s a name for it. And when you turn it into powder fish there’s another name for it. When you fry it, or when you smoke it in the sun, you know? You just forget some words, and how they relate to in any activity.
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The consequence of segregating Land centered learning for language learning in schools risks the weakening and loss of old and unique terminology that are commonly not used in everyday language. In respects to the full teachings and orality of the Cree culture, Weber-Pillow (2001) describes, “By full understanding is meant a capacity, an ability, and a willingness to immerse oneself totally in the event as it is enacted or unfolds. The vitality of primary orality in a culture rests on this full understanding in each member of the society” (p. 156). Similarly, Flint Rock highlighted, “In the language there are other cultural teachings.” Furthermore, John stressed the importance of understanding deeply the hidden meanings of words that are not necessarily used every day as well, particularly for listening to legends:

To be able to communicate properly, to be able to understand the meaning of the words, and also listening to the lectures, one of the most important things is to hear it and to understand the hidden meaning behind, eventually. You hear, you enjoy, and the words are there, in the lesson, the words that you use, that you don’t necessarily use every day. There are words there that are applicable in the future or in the real life, and they are there in that story, the teach us to get used to that word, these different words, and also things that you may find something that you kind of have to understand with just the word. There in the legends and only when you encounter and you understand what they mean. So to understand the hidden meaning of the legend is one thing, okay, that’s why legends are important. You learn the language deeply that way.

Omushkegomowin is essential for education, because it is an “identity marker” and “a mode of resistance to assimilation and marginalization” that demands proper place and procedure in education to the delivery of its teachings that is powerfully reflective of the cultural transmission
process valued by the Inninuwuk (Westman & Schreyer, 2014, p. 131). Teachings belonging to Inninuwuk worldview are not whole and become severely weakened and limited without the incorporation of proper practise that truly reflects the nature of the oral culture. Weber-Pillar (2001) introduces the concept of orality consciousness among Northern Cree that is “one of healing, a reconnecting to self and to collectivity, not in a cerebral logical way, but at the deepest level of acting and engagement with life” (p. 162). Similarly to Weber-Pillwax (2001), cultural educators described the potentiality of fuller understandings to language and culture teachings when they are enacted upon and unfolding among the cultural educator and learner accordingly to Inninuwuk worldview.

4.2 Transmission Of Cultural Teachings And Omushkegomowin: The Responsibilities Of Teaching Begins With Parenthood And Self-Sufficiency

It was interesting to discover the perspective that the cultural educators held in what it meant for them to be an educator. Familial relations and roles played a central indicator in the automatic responsibility of being a teacher. For example, Flint Rock described his role as an educator that “comes with responsibilities. Just like being a parent.” He shared the word tapamanitisso (you’re self-sufficient) when people get married, have children, pursue education and have a career. In the traditional perspective they would be like a hunter, and a parent. Likewise, John shared the same viewpoint:

To be a teacher, automatically, a teacher as you are when you get married. That’s when you begin to teach your own children. And also before you get married you can teach your own brothers and sisters, you take over that responsibility if your father is dead, and then you are responsible for your brothers to support, you’re the old one, eh, that’s when
you begin to teach, that’s when you begin to be a teacher. And then when you have children you become a teacher. Teaching begins there.

Familial relations were further signified by cultural educators who explained that their parents, grandparents, extended family and Elders were their first teachers being raised on the Land, and that they considered their children, grandchildren and friends to be their students. For cultural educators, being an educator entailed a responsibility “passed down to them” as described by John, and taking on the role as a “link” between Elders and Elders who have passed on and younger generations explained by Flint Rock. This forced me to rethink my role as an Omushkego (singular of Swampy Cree) parent to my own children, and the responsibility I have to learning as much as I can in order to pass on stories, histories, language, and teachings existing within my culture for my children’s futures (educator in the traditional sense).

4.2.1 Cultural educators’ preferred pathways to incorporating Inninuwuk teachings emphasise the role of Omushkegomowin to delivering learning through legends, by example, and with certain perspectives

Cultural educators each shared personal ways they favored to delivering teachings. John preferred using legends conveyed in Omushkegomowin for oral language teachings, but also for incorporating moral teachings that are found within the legends. He described the level of language development that occurs when telling stories of legend:

That way you will hear the words, the baby language, the child language, the youth language, and the Elder’s language, and the very old terminology, the old terminology just like when you finish your university degree and then you use the word that are very condense that’s what you speak when you get older, not like the teenagers. That’s why
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they do it, it’s really very fit in this culture, only this culture can express the way your language, English I cannot describe something like that, but I told you, it’s hard to find the word in English, because I didn’t go to school eh? So that’s how it is, language. And easy to listen to legends that way, you enjoy it, even if you don’t understand like me, even all of us when we were young used to laugh, and enjoy, they don’t tell us all of the legends, one part in one evening, not the same week, maybe the next week after, the other one between, alternating legends, that’s how they are teaching. That’s how they use oral teaching, that’s a language teaching when you listen to that. And also later on we were able to write, when they introduced syllabics, before that there were no syllabics.

Ben Twig encouraged teaching by demonstration, combining real life experiences, and via field trips where learning is strictly conversed in Omushkegомowin. Based on his teaching experiences, he found his students to pick up the language faster through these ways. He explained, “It is all conversed in Cree, what I’m doing. And they pick up the words faster too” and provided his rationale for his doing so:

It’s just more, because the way people used to learn long time ago they learn by looking, watching. Everybody I knew that’s how they learned. As an example, when my dad or my grandfather went setting up traps or snares. They never told you want to do. They just take you out there, and they would do their own thing. They don’t even talk. They’re always quiet, because you have to be quiet in the bush. And watching over time, that’s how you learn.
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Interestingly, while cultural educators called for pathways that are generally unprecedented for mainstream education, they also found use for cultural learning to occur in the classroom reflective of traditional practises:

Ben Twig: And in a classroom setting it’s different, but I think there’s an advantage to classroom setting too. You can talk to your pupils, because that’s where they are and take them out after so they can see it. And they will learn a lot faster. In the old days, the classroom used to be around the campfire before people went to bed. I remember once in a while somebody would talk about how this is done. They had no blackboard or anything. They just explained it and tell a story about what happened here or there, just like in their hunt, whatever.

Flint Rock described perspectives through which he prefers to teach by that included: the language of the Land; values of the Land; and, teaching by example “as opposed to just talking.” In regards to the language of the Land, Flint Rock asserted, “Our whole territory it comes by name …. All those names were, have been named by our ancestors basically eh.” Secondly, within values of the Land, Flint Rock highlighted kakaytamantamoon (wisdom) explaining that “those values were a collection of your knowledge from generation to generation from behind all the way to the present,” or in other words can also be called accumulated knowledge (“wisdom is ancient”). Furthermore, sharing (of responsibilities, or in other words signifying that everybody had food to eat), bravery, respect (considered the ultimate), natural laws of the land (in reference to the seasons and natural world of things that cannot be changed), and spirit of the Land (spirituality) were other perspectives through which Flint Rock taught.
4.2.2 Cultural educators highlight health, well-being, and positive sense of cultural identity as important reasons for incorporating Inninuwuk worldview

For cultural educators, the incorporation of Inninuwuk worldview not only meant teaching hunting and survival skills or knowing the uses, purposes and knowledges behind plants and animals, but is also about the identity of a person:

Flint Rock: …I mean it takes steps to devise a curriculum when it comes to a cultural stuff, eh. Because you need that too eh… the cultural education is not only how to teach hunting skills or stuff like that. Cultural education is also about the identity of a person. That’s basically what your family’s about. That’s who you are. You know yourself. You got to have a strong identity to have confidence eh.

Interestingly, Flint Rock importantly identifies familial relations as integral to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview into education. Behaving as a “link” between Elders and Elders who have gone, and to young generations that include the children, and grandchildren of the cultural educators in this study, Flint Rock felt pride in his role, how he identified himself to be and the meaning he held with it. Moreover, Flint described what he felt the teachings he had to offer meant:

Well… I think for me what I have is a… I look at the… the current a, status of our people. For example there’s a lot of… like suicides. Omushkegowuk Crees. And what else? ….They’re kind of epidemic in some communities. For me… you know… we have to revive our, I guess basically our culture. In other words, you got to have a sense of identity. A positive identity. You got you see your culture as a positive thing.
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Furthermore, identifying deep examples of prospective cultural teachings to embed for school curriculum Flint Rock linked the potentiality of traditional diet teachings, and traditional harvesting taking place during animal migrations that attune to the overall holistic health and wellbeing of an individual:

If you teach how to prepare that fish what you’re doing is actually teaching the traditional diet and the importance of traditional diet, because you know native people also have, we’re leading in that category when it comes to diabetes. ….That’s one of our traditional harvesting that, I’m talking about the white fish. They only come seasonally eh. Just like when the geese come in the spring time. ….Fish, fish is a good diet. It’s more healthy than what they have, or the pepperoni they get. It’s a healthy snack. I think that’s what they should incorporate. Like do something like that, and it’s something that doesn’t take a lot of risk.

Flint Rock revealed a brief insight and description of Omushkegowuk culture tied accordingly to the seasons and migration of animals and fish. According to Flint Rock, there are “a lot of teachings” in traditional diets that are healthy. There are rooted multiple and rich examples of potential cultural and linguistic teachings surrounding fish from traditional diet, learning to prepare fish using the multiple ways of traditional methods that exist, and language teachings that identify the type of fish, methods and processes used during certain preparation methods and the outcome of the fish, including naming the “insides” of the fish (explained by Flint Rock and Ben Twig). Similarly, Ben Twig linked Omushkegomonin and cultural teachings pertaining to knowledge held in Land with overall health and well-being, and cultural identity. In doing so, Ben Twig expressed the potentiality of incorporating plant teachings (“what to eat”, “the
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medicines”) and “how to prepare our own food [traditional harvesting]” into school curricula in efforts to strengthen cultural and linguistic continuity. Furthermore, he believed that traditional teachings and language were crucial for the culture continuity and promotion of health. The significance of culture and language as social determinants related to First Nation, Inuit and Metis health for is also highlighted by the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (2016).

4.3 Working As Allies: The Role Of Settler Educators To Incorporating Inninuwuk Worldview(s) Involves Partnerships and Cross-Cultural Learning

In each of my interviews, cultural educators repeatedly emphasised a partnership that must occur with settler educators and cultural educators in the community of the school concerned. Specialized skills and talents that settler educators may bring with them should be utilized alongside cultural educators to developing and translating school materials, such as translated books, and teaching the skills of how to use Photoshop and Illustrator for example. However, ultimately cultural educators desired for educators from the community to teach culture and language. The belief behind this is that cultural educators felt the responsibility for delivering culture and language was theirs. The main concern addressed by cultural educators about settler educators delivering culture and language teachings was that they do not fully know and understand all that is embedded and carried within those teachings (e.g. the Inninuwuk system that covers language, culture), and risked misappropriation. Cultural educators explained that settler educators do not always initially arrive readily knowledgeable of the community’s culture. They further explained that it is something that takes time to learn and advised that settler educators partake in cross-cultural training with the community to fill in gaps that their teacher education programs did not cover.
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4.3.1 Cultural educators advise for Inninuwuk cross-cultural learning with Elders to occur in a local context on Land

In addition to teacher education, cultural educators believed there should be cross-cultural training with Elders that occur on Land for settler educators prior to assisting in incorporating cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin into school curriculum. Cultural educators advised that it is important for settler educators first to understand and learn themselves the culture existing in the Inninuwuk worldview of a community before teaching. Flint Rock emphasised:

I think the best way to do that would be cross-cultural training. I think once in a while teachers should have a retreat. ….A retreat with local communities, go somewhere learn something. For example, like go to Trout River [pseudonym] once in a while, in the wintertime. ….Retreat a local and do ice fishing, stuff like that. You could learn a lot just for a couple days when you’re on the Land.

An important piece to this process was the necessary role, and inclusion of Elders directing, mentoring, providing, and storying meaningful and effective pathways. Ben Twig described “respecting the Elders of our culture” as a central value in what it means to be an educator. John advised the task of general educators in the commitment to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview(s) into school should involve being taught “by the Elders, visiting the Elders, people like me, that I’m interested to teach them.” Moreover, John pointed out that Elders “know more than anything,” and recommended that educators “should seek the Elders who are waiting to show them, teachers. At least the basics…” Similarly, Flint Rock strongly emphasised the role of Elders for educators in this work in the following way:
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...well basically you consult with your Elders for their wisdom. That’s what I usually do. ....I take them on the land and that’s where they’re open when you consult them eh. Opinion, ask for their opinion. When it comes to cultural stuff there … I think there should be a, almost like a committee, but the role of giving that direction what goes on when it comes to cultural teaching I think that’s the job of those Elders.

Elders are highly regarded for their deep level of wisdom and knowledge, and are respected as leaders in sustaining Inninuwuk cultures and pedagogies (Iseke-Barnes, 2013). Therefore, Elders must be positioned and given place, particularly in this case, for the cross-cultural learning that educators may take.

4.3.2 Challenges identified by cultural educators to incorporating Inninuwuk worldviews into the current structure of education includes struggles to develop trust and self-efficacy

Challenges identified by cultural educators to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview into education included the non-existent inclusion, place and equity of cultural knowledge and language infused into education and schools. Flint Rock emphasised that “anything to do with culture” is a “community thing” and a “shared responsibility between the teachers and community.” However, he described some concern that the community did, but at the same time did not know, how to go about this work concerning community control over education of their community school:

And I think that’s part of the challenge is sometimes we’re so…I guess, what do you call that? Kind of hesitant to make assertions about your rights eh. That’s what I think. Like colonized people, if you study those people. They’re always waiting for someone to come and tell them what to do, but the person they’re waiting for has to be white eh. That’s that
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colonized mentality. But if you study, like you’re doing, your university you know your rights after because it’s all there and the government really opens up to our rights now eh. We’re no longer, we’re no longer being pushed away. They’re open to us to develop our own eh. Our own education curriculum for example eh. That school could come, go a long ways. Because over the years we have limited funding, limited resources when it comes to education. But our students continue to do good. That tells you a lot eh.

Similarly, Ben Twig reiterated the importance of community coming together to discuss what matters and is important regarding their children, the community, and the future. Community involvement and effort to come together to expand knowledge concerning the education in their school, and to create vision in how to educate their children were important for Ben Twig:

parents needs to come together and grandparents that want the best for the children and talk about issues and how to make life better for the community. And once you have that vision, you can program your school so kids can learn about the future.

For John, building the confidence in Elders that what they have to offer is useful, to believe in the cultural teaching, and careful not to impose settler ideas onto the Elders’ beliefs were deemed as challenges in this work. John described a delicate process to recruiting interested Elders that entailed approaching them separately at a time to create a safe space for Elders to feel comfortable in sharing their input without feeling dominated or silenced. In this way, learning from the Elder happens in a more clear, respectful and meaningful way for the learner. The challenges identified by the cultural educators reflected ones formed by the violent legacies and impacts of colonialism inflicted upon the very existence of Inninuwuk worldview(s) and identities. For example, the purpose of the infamous residential school system cruelly separated
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children from their families breaking family ties and cultural linkages (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

4.4 Conclusion

Combined with the incorporation of Inninuwuk worldview (the cultural teachings, knowledges, practises, and Omushkegomowin) follows a process existing within that worldview, which details and guides how cultural knowledge, and a culturally reflective education is to, or should be transmitted on for younger generations in the education system. Interviewees call for educators, researchers, principles, school boards, school administrators, education policy decision-makers, curricula designers, ministries of governments, and the municipal, provincial and federal governments work laboriously together and in partnerships directly with Inninuwuk Elders, parents, cultural educators, and communities to no longer excuse and exclude Inninuwuk worldview(s) and practises to incorporating and in delivering cultural knowledge, teachings and language(s) to be implemented in education policy and curricula design. Interviewees also ask us to realize, within Inninuwuk worldview, the significance and centrality of Land for education (e.g. the infusion of field trips, cultural breaks, and learning that occurs on Land). Furthermore, a number of scholars tend to emphasis Land, calling for Land-based education in the work of decolonizing education (Wildcat et al., 2014). While Land for Inninuwuk teachings is an integral part and very important, the commitment to incorporating Inninuwuk worldviews becomes immobile without the equal and equitable involvement and partnerships, teachings, and mentorship from Elders, cultural educators, and the grassroots Inninuwuk communities.

In the next chapter, I discuss and elaborate on the implications of my key findings. First, I provide a summary review of the key findings as listed in this chapter, and briefly highlight their
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significance. Next, I address the research implications, recommendations and areas for further research. Lastly, I conclude by sharing my final thoughts.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief overview of key findings as listed from the previous chapter. Next, I describe the broad and narrow implications of my findings for my own professional practice and identity, and for school boards, principles, superintendents, education and curricula policy-makers, ministries of government, municipal, provincial and federal governments, researchers and educators, and the educational community at large. Then, I discuss recommendations that have emerged because of this study. Lastly, I conclude with a summary of final thoughts of this study.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

This study presented three overarching themes followed by various important subthemes. In the first main theme, I elaborated upon my findings regarding the incorporation of Inniniwuk worldview that include cultural knowledges and language into education curricula as determined by the cultural educators. These findings are specifically localized and contextualized to one selected Omushkegowuk community located in Mushkegowuk Aski (the name that describes the traditional territory), but have broader implications.

In the first main theme, cultural educators expressed a call for a (re)structured approach and education curricula that is inclusive, culturally, and linguistically aligned and reflective with the Inniniwuk worldview, practices, traditions, values, protocols, systems, and beliefs. Possibilities to this include creating opportunity in the school for field trips, cultural breaks, and learning that occurs in the wilderness taught and directed by parents, cultural educators, Elders, Inniniwuk educators, and knowledgeable community residents. Cultural educators advised for these teaching that occur outside the classroom directed and controlled by the community to be
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counted as instructional days where students are not penalized for missing in-school class days or falling behind in school assignments.

In the second subtheme, cultural educators emphasised that the transmission of cultural teachings and Omushkegomowin is the responsibility of the family and community to deliver, which then characterised the nature and type of familial-communal-school partnership required. For cultural educators, the crucial element of authentic, meaningful, and equitable education partnerships with Inninuwuk families and communities acts as the (re)bridging of worldviews delivered into education for students. In this way, the intergenerational transmission of worldview cultural teachings, and Omushkegomowin is effectively delivered respectively to Inninuwuk values.

In the second subtheme, cultural educators described Omushkegomowin as a not bounded, static, or homogenous entity, but where meanings and its uses change and expand depending on background, location and context. Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding encompassed in Omushkegomowin reveals vast pathways to our ancestral worldviews, knowledge of the Land, cultural teachings, philosophies, and many other insights into cultural knowledges regarding elements of creation in our world. Inninuwuk worldview is not whole and severely limited without the incorporation of Omushkegomowin.

In the second main theme, cultural educators presented potential ways that transmission of cultural teachings and Omushkegomowin might occur. In the first subtheme, cultural educators discussed preferred modes that they advised to incorporating Inninuwuk worldview teachings that included: learning the language of the Land (meaning, identifying, naming and knowing traditional territory accordingly with its ancestral language, that is Omushkegomowin); (re)incorporating the utilization of legends conveyed in Omushkegomowin for moral and
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linguistic teachings; and thirdly, promoting the daily use of Omushkegomowin, teaching through conversations and in delivering cultural teachings in order to greatly enhance and benefit deep cultural learning.

In the following subtheme, cultural educators raised concern through holistic lens by highlighting health, well-being, and strengthening a positive sense of cultural identity as important reasons for incorporating Inninuwuk worldview(s) in education. Prevalent epidemics existing in Inninuwuk populations such as high suicide rates and diabetes were concerns identified from the cultural educators who believed the incorporation of Inninuwuk teachings, worldview and culture could remedy.

The third main theme discussed the role of settler educators in the commitment to incorporating Inninuwuk worldviews in education. In the first subtheme, cultural educators recommended for cross-cultural training with Elders and knowledgeable community members to occur in a local context on Land. This would be in efforts for settler educators coming into the community to learn the culture for that community. The inclusion of Elders directing, mentoring, and providing meaningful and effective pathways was highlighted as necessary by cultural educators to adequately and deeply learn. Cultural educators discussed a co-partnership settler educators in the community must have and be inclusive with alongside Omushkegowuk and cultural educators to this work in the school.

In the last subtheme, cultural educators identified challenges to this work that highlighted complex issues. The first major challenge reiterated by the cultural educators was the non-existent inclusion, place and equity allotted for Inninuwuk practices, culture, language, and worldview in their community school curricula and education. The second challenge emphasised was the need for the community to get together and discuss how to make the community better.
Cultural educators acknowledged the challenges created by legacies from settler colonialism that have made steps forward in respects to education and identity complex. Lastly, another challenge highlighted by cultural educators was building confidence in Elders that what they must offer is useful, younger generations will grasp their teachings, and that settler educators will not impose their own beliefs.

5.2 Implications

This section discusses the broad implications raised from this study for school boards, principles, superintendents, education and curricula policy-makers, ministries of government, municipal, provincial and federal governments, researchers and educators to realize that incorporating Indigenous education is a mutual, dialectic, on-going and active process that is not bound or confined to one worldview and construction. Secondly, I elaborate the narrow implications on my professional identity and practice that chooses to value Mushkegowuk Aski (name of the Land where the Omushkegowuk reside) as a rich exploration of educational and cultural worldview and insight that is not complete without the aid of cultural educators, Elders, fluent speakers, knowledgeable members, residential school survivors, and local residents who are capable of transmitting these teachings and Omushkegomowin.

5.2.1 Broad implications for the wider educational community

It is important for Inninuwuk and settler Canadian relations in respects to education to (re)dialogue to incorporating equitable place for two worldviews, and their values in how Inninuwuk cultural teachings and language can be placed into education curricula and policy. This is a process tackling the task that involves and heavily relies upon (re)bridging and (re)building Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and powers, respecting and realizing the
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procedures of how Inninuwuk (Indigenous) education should be taken forth accordingly by Inninuwuk values.

School boards, principles, superintendents, education and curricula policy-makers, ministries of government, municipal, provincial and federal governments, researchers and educators, and the educational community at large should be aware of the metaphorical invisible spider’s net that connects and passes on cultural teachings, knowledge and language from our ancestors, to our cultural educators and parents, and then finally, to our young generations today and to come. The transmission of a spider’s net cannot be grasped, halted, or broken into parts otherwise the valuable and esteemed cultural teachings, knowledge and language do not make it to future generations. This transmission of a spider’s net must be dealt and handle with gently, delicately and undisrupted meaning we cannot exclude any knowledge, wisdom and language learned from our ancestors, or have the separation of members from local communities, and lastly that in many instances educator researchers will only act as facilitators of Indigenous knowledges and language. Behaving as a facilitator means respecting and honouring the voices from these local communities where projects should not act as a stand-alone apart from centralising the community’s participation. We should hear from the communities as best as we can in any wide-project and program efforts, incorporating and welcoming the transmission of the spider’s net to pass forward honourably. It is impossible to take a snippet piece from a spider’s net without having it break, especially if out of context. Being a facilitator of cultural knowledge and Omushkegomowin in this sense means knowledge cannot be owned or property, but is given (to pass forward in good heart, undisrupted, in partnership and relationship with Inninuwuk involvement).
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Education decision-makers and policy researchers must create open pathways and relationships by releasing equitable power to hand over for the partnerships and the inclusion of Inninuwuk worldview(s). A (re)transformation to this scale seemingly requests for a vast quantity of dominant power to shift and give up much, however, this is only the start that is requesting for meaningful, ethical, and equitable dialectic dialogue to occur in the provincial curricula documents and in the education systems. It matters, because provincial education and curricula documents direct the knowledge of what is taught and learned for most students in Ontario, including impacting families and students in communities, on-reserve. Equitably incorporating Inninuwuk worldview(s) into education is not a practice of convenience, but is a deep, on-going, equitable presence, involvement, relationship, and process. It is a relationship and process that is necessary and has a place at the educational policy, curricula, and research level giving voice and control to Inninuwuk communities. If it is anything less, then it is weakened and ill-effective, and changes little for Inninuwuk in respects to their worldview(s) being expressed in education. This process spoken of is not restricted to and solely rooted from the expertise of the non-Indigenous and academically qualified community, but also creates meaningful relationships to include dialectic dialogue and involvement with knowledgeable cultural educators and Inninuwuk communities who must have equitable voice. By (re)building these meaningful and ethical relationships at the education policy and curricula level with communities and knowledgeable members, values the system(s) and protocols existing in Inninuwuk worldview(s), and the processes for intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, histories, stories, practices, and language(s).
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5.2.2 Narrow implications on my professional identity and practice

As a beginning educator-researcher who is passionate about this study, I became fundamentally aware of how education at a cognitive, systematic and structural level operates through one worldview to addressing Indigenous education. I realized that just as there are cognitive, systematic and structural levels to how this one worldview proceeds in respects to education, particularly Indigenous education, there also exists the same for Inninuwuk worldview(s) that are essential to realize in the commitment to Indigenous education. It makes me wonder if this education gap spoken of by the Ministry of Education is really a manifestation and consequence to the absent bridging of Inninuwuk worldview(s) in education that do not centralise the involvement and qualifications (life experiences) of Elders, parents, cultural educators, residential school survivors, fluent speakers, and so forth. When I think of the word bridge or bridging, I now realize the key to this bridging are the traditional educators in our communities, the fluent language, and their stories. As an Inninuwuk who has been a student, I realized that the colonial system did not just affect me, but also was bothersome for Elders, and parents who felt that there is no adequate place in the current education to pass forward culture and language.

Throughout the course of conducting this study, I developed a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature and vast quality that Omushkegомовин provides in terms of developing identity, teachings, worldview insights, histories, stories, and becoming closer (building a relationship) with Aski (Land). I became aware that by honouring cultural practises and Inninuwuk traditional protocols, and values via intergenerational transmission come numerous rich and deep opportunities for cultural and linguistic insight respective of Land that are healthy and minawsin (it is good, perfect, well) for both the learner and educator involved. Familial
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relations and the responsibility to education were central in this study, which forced me to think about my professional identity as qualified educator, to not undermine my role as a parent and my responsibility for cultural and language transmission. Furthermore, I have considered Land via Inninuwuk worldview(s) as containing rich exploration of educational and cultural worldview, and insight that is expressed through Omushkegomowin. However, this is not complete without the aid and guidance of cultural educators, Elders, fluent speakers, knowledgeable members, residential school survivors, and local residents who are capable of transmitting these teachings and Omushkegomowin. This study forced me to reflect beyond my professional identity to my role as a mother to my three children, and the responsibility I hold as an Inninuwuk in the intergenerational transmission of teachings and Omushkegomowin to my children.

5.3 Recommendations

A recommendation for educators, school administrators, principles, education policy-makers, curricula designers, researchers, ministries of governments, and municipal, provincial and federal governments is to consult with local Inninuwuk communities and to not undermine the local Elders, knowledgeable community members, residential school survivors, and parents who must have place and voice in educational decision-making regarding their communities, traditional territories, and respective Land, and language(s). I advise for these parties to proceed accordingly, Indigenous education respecting the metaphoric invisible spider’s web. That is, the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge, values, teachings, practices, and language(s) that is successfully passed down via familial and communal relations calling for the minimal requirement for the presence of Elders, parents, knowledgeable community residents, and so forth to have equitable power, voice and control regarding the education in their communities. I do not believe this has been acted upon to the scale it requires yet, and when it is,
I believe then that education will bridge worldviews, and strengthen the future, community, and young generations in our Land.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Areas for further research, could explore pathways in which researchers, schools, educators, policy design makers, and curricula designers work in direct partnerships, supporting Elders, cultural educators, fluent speakers, residential school survivors, and knowledgeable community residents, to see what insights are discovered and what educational shifts are made. It would be interesting to see the outcomes of these partnerships, similar to this study but expanded on a larger scale. It is from my experience that the Elders, cultural educators, fluent speakers, residential school survivors, and knowledge community residents tend to be “quiet” in nature, but have much to offer, and say. It is important not to miss these opportunities to learn from them. It is a laborious, practical (human, face-to-face), and ethical process, partnerships and relationships to be made at the grassroots level with the diverse Inninuwuk communities, but it is highly essential. It would be also interesting to explore at a deeper level the relationship and perspectives that the Ministry of Education has to Land, and how it differs or is similar in respects to Inninuwuk worldview(s) on Land and education.

5.5 Concluding Comments

What I have learned from this study is that incorporating Indigenous education is a laborious, practical, and ethical process that is not complete and whole without the equitable Indigenous partnerships and involvement existing, beginning at the grassroots level. The grassroots level typically includes those in communities who are closer and fluently experienced in Inninuwuk worldview, like our Elders, residential school survivors, and so forth, but whose voices, experiences and teachings are silenced out in mainstream education policy and curricula.
INCORPORATING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND OMUSHKEGOMOWIN

How could we expect non-Indigenous education and curricula policy-makers to well-roundly understand the needs and concerns of its multi-Indigenous relations (families, communities, children, and everyone in-between respective to their cultural and linguistic identities) for education policy and curricula development without respecting or developing equitable and ethical relationships? The issues are complex. However, in terms of inclusivity and the presence of shared vibrant voices within broad education policy and curricula, important pillars of Indigenous values need to be realized and uncovered via dialectic discourse between Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in education development. Incorporating Indigenous education respective of cultural and linguistic identities, values, truths, stories, histories, communities, experiences, worldviews, Land(scape), knowledges, teachings, and so forth is a laborious, practical and ethical process that must occur both ways, which is only equitably complete when relationships and involvement with Indigenous relations are actively honoured, respected, and justly involved. It extends beyond a non-Indigenous mainstream worldview and construct of what Indigenous education entails. Incorporating is a mutual dialectic on-going process that is not mere words or ideologies confined within one worldview and construction, but two.
References


INCORPORATING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND OMUSHKEGOMOWIN


Incorporating Cultural Knowledge and Omushkegomowin


Ojibway & Cree Cultural Centre. (1999). *But life is changing (Volume One)*. Timmins, ON: Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre.


APPENDIX A:

A Letter of Signed Consent

Date: ________________________________

Dear ________________________________,

My name is Joette Lefebvre and I am a teacher candidate in the Master of Teaching (Primary/Junior) degree in the Ontario College of Teachers Certificate of Qualification program, under the direction of the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research study I am conducting is focused on better understanding perspectives of Cree elders and knowledgeable community residents on Cree cultural knowledge and language with regard to what can be learned for transforming current approaches to incorporating Indigenous perspectives in education. I am interested in interviewing elders and knowledgeable community residents who demonstrate lived experience in cultural knowledge and fluency in Cree language. I believe that your knowledge and experience is valuable and will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview will be arranged at a time and place convenient for you. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final research paper and informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings through conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity. I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only other person besides me who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time even after you have consented to participate, and the right to refrain from answering questions you do not want to answer. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation. I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview is completed to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. A second copy will be given to you for your own records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time even after I have consented to participate without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Joette Lefebvre, and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Name (printed): ____________________________________________________________
Signature: _______________________________________________________________
Date: ________________________
APPENDIX B:

Interview Protocol/Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed. Before we begin, I will ask you choose a pseudonym that you wish to be identified as. In this research study I am conducting is focused on perspectives of Cree elders and knowledgeable community residents on cultural knowledge and language with regard to what can be learned for transforming current approaches to incorporating Indigenous perspectives in education. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

The interview questions I will ask are broken down into 3 categories focused on your experiences and beliefs on cultural knowledge and language, how it can be practiced and actively incorporated in the school in your community, and your beliefs in the next steps for teachers and the education system to receive in the commitment to incorporating Indigenous perspectives.

I want to remind you that your name and any identifying information that would comprise the anonymity of your participation will not be included in this study. Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation in the study at any time without penalty. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded through the use of a digital recorder. If, for any reason, do you not wish to be recorded at any time during the interview, please feel free to let me know. Do you have any questions before I begin?

Background Information:

1) To start, what are some of the important Cree teachings and cultural traditions that you remember learning as a child?
   a. Can you provide an example of how you were taught to learn some of these teachings?
   b. What was the role of Cree language in your teachings?
2) Who were your teachers in regard to learning these teachings?

Perspectives and Beliefs:

3) As an elder/knowledgeable community resident, what does it mean to you to be a teacher?
4) How do you understand your role as a teacher?
   a. How would you describe what it is that you teach?
   b. In your view, who are your students?
5) In your role as an elder/knowledgeable community resident, how do you teach?
   a. How do you convey cultural knowledge and traditions?
   b. Can you give me an example of how you have taught cultural knowledge and traditions?
   c. What did you teach and how?
6) What do you believe is the role of Cree cultural knowledge and language in the formal school system in your community?
   a. Do you believe that Cree cultural knowledge and language currently have a place in the school in your community?
      i. In your view, what place should they have?
   b. Are there any teachings that you received as a child that you feel should be taught in schools today that are not being taught?
   c. Do you believe that children should be tested for their level of knowledge in Cree knowledge and language? If so, how? Which children?
7) How do you think teachers should teach students Cree cultural knowledge and language?
   a. Cree teachers?
   b. Settler teachers?
8) What are some Cree cultural practices that you would like to see teachers teach today?
   a. In your view, can settler teachers teach these practices? Why/why not?
      i. If so, what (if anything) do you think is important for these teachers to consider and communicate to students when teaching Cree cultural practices?
9) What, if anything, do you believe teachers should know/bring into the class when teaching Cree cultural knowledge and traditions?
10) How do you believe teachers should be trained to learn what you know?
11) How do you believe teachers should be trained to teach what you know?
12) What do you believe should be the role of elders/knowledgeable community residents, if any, in working with schools and teachers in your community?
   a. How can teachers and elders/knowledgeable community residents work together to teach Cree cultural knowledge, traditions, and languages?
   b. What challenges, if any, do you think elders/knowledgeable community residents might encounter in this work?
      i. How do you think such challenges could be resolved?

Next Steps:

13) If you were to give advice to teachers on the topic of incorporating Indigenous perspectives in education, what would you say?
14) As the education system moves forward in its commitment to incorporating Indigenous perspectives, what do you believe is most important for the system to consider and to do in order to realize this commitment?

I sincerely appreciate your participation in this study – Thank you!