

“What *indians* Are We Talking About?”:
A Discourse Analysis of Intercultural Dialogues in an Ojibway Setting

Jordan Davidson

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Abstract

“What *indians* Are We Talking About?”:

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Jordan Davidson

Based on a phenomenological approach and experiential fieldwork in an Ontario Ojibway community, this thesis records and analyses a set of intercultural dialogues following the method of “sharing and listening.” The dialogues are analysed with respect to three themes: humour; food; and, social issues (teen pregnancy, school drop-out rates, drug and alcohol use). The dialogues are interpreted both as counter-discourses that displace dominant discourses on Native peoples in Canadian society and as continuous with Ojibway storytelling and oral traditions. The thesis argues that mainstream media and scholarship reduces contemporary Native experience to a set of “social problems” and stereotypes thereby denying the meaning-making activities, agency and, ultimately, humanity of Native people.

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One author in particular, Gerald Vizenor, influenced the direction of this thesis as well as deepening (not to mention confusing) my own understanding of the very complex and humbling nature of attempting to learn about people and their life, especially for me, First Nations people.

I am also incredibly grateful to my supervisor Sally Cole for taking me on as her student, introducing me to Rainy River First Nations, giving me direction in every aspect of this research endeavour, and being patient with me as I trekked in every *other* direction to find something to write. And then, of course, for reading and commenting on the thesis with her form and accuracy, while still emphasizing the importance of cultivating my own voice. Thank you very much for your support and patience.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the processes of complex and multiple experiences. In particular, it is an intercultural and interpretive exploration of how in an Ojibway community local experiences can be seen to engage dynamically with dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian* in North America today¹. I have chosen to undertake an exploration that reveals my experiences and interactions at an Ojibway community locally referred to as Manitou, but officially called Rainy River First Nations (RRFN), in an area of Northwestern Ontario, which I also refer to as *Ojibway Country*². Thus, what I hope to address here are some of the uncanny and contradictory ways that local experiences play out, juxtaposed to and displacing the dominant discourses that maintain a kind of one-dimensional context of the *indian* experience.

Whether an unconscious or conscious nature in the individual, I want to explore the high degree of personal play executed in the local Ojibway context of experiences. A kind of play that is not simply influenced by the discourses themselves, but rather, I argue, holds a space independent of these influences. As a result, experiences can be seen to belong to unique subtleties and nuances of a local Ojibway context, on one level, as well as they can be seen to engage in an intercultural context, on another level.

In order to show this I have selected three themes: humour, food, and social issues (teen pregnancy, school drop-out rates, drug and alcohol use). I first explore how they can be seen to be upheld in dominant “western” discourses defining the *indian*. Next, I

¹ I use dominant “western” discourses for lack of a better phrase to describe how “ways” of looking at something become, not just common knowledge in the larger “western” societal discourses, but also a complete way of rationalizing how these “ways” legitimate categories of the powerful and powerless. I have borrowed Gerald Vizenor’s modification of the word *indian* to which he italicizes in lower case to emphasize how “western” discourses construct essential categories of First Nations people. See pp. 47- 48 in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

² Louise Erdrich uses this term *Ojibway Country* to refer to Northwestern Ontario, a geographical area that she explores for the writing of her book, Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country (2003).

illuminate how local experiences of these classical themes can be seen to displace “dominant” western discourses. Additionally, my experiences in this community do not end at an exploration of the complex experiences displacing dominant discourses alone, but also, are a part of the multilayered and contradictory inter-subjectivities of storytelling, listening, and sharing that have shaped the process of this thesis in its entirety.

My choice to emphasize the particular themes that this thesis explores only became obvious to me after the fieldwork, and it was mostly due to the kinds of dialogues I had with non-Natives about what it was like at Manitou. With the ensuing of questions such as: “what is the diabetes rate like there?”; “is alcoholism rampant?”; “is there a lot of unemployment?”; “do they eat a lot of junk food?” These kinds of questions got me thinking about how disconnected, for the most part, Natives and non-Natives are with each other. It also got me thinking about how insidious these kinds of questions are when it comes to non-Native people talking about Native people. Suffice it to say, these “social issues” are common amongst Canadian society in general, thus I aim to illuminate an aspect of this through an emphasis of intercultural dialoguing. Now, I am not setting up this thesis to say what the people were like at Manitou in order to deny that discourses of the *indian* do not exist as a reality in Native communities. Rather, I am interested in exploring how these discourses are not as hegemonic as they seem to appear. For indeed, these discourses can be seen to be displaced by the complex and multilayered experiences engaged in the local Ojibway context of Manitou.

Now, in coming to explore local Ojibway experiences I had to ask myself if the notion of a stereotypical *indian* was not a thing I had created in my own head. And if, in

seeking to find new terrain on experiences of being Ojibway was not rooted in my own desire to justify my “Mohawkness”. On some level, I do not doubt this, as growing up in an urban Canadian setting leaves my experiences distant from the experiences that would be accrued from growing up in a Native community. Not to mention, my “Mohawkness” excludes me from the experiences of being a visible minority. With this said, I have had to confront my own inability to abandon dominant discourses of the *indian*. Therefore, I am guilty of projecting categories of Native experience that I have socially conditioned myself to think I do, or do not belong to. So on a side note, this thesis is a kind of confessional of my own inability to escape the discourses that set boundaries on our very existence. And yet, the irony in all of this is that every argument I make throughout this thesis aims to explore how individual experiences are not simple, nor, are they suspended in a unifying and static experience.

I have organized this thesis so that the methodologies I have used are presented first in Chapter 1. Here, I explore what I have done in both the writing and during my time at Manitou. Furthermore, I draw on some of the more contemporary theories of methodology to reflect on the challenges beset in this project. In Chapter 2 I give a background history of the community of Manitou. This is followed by a brief discussion of the historical context of the larger Ojibway First Nations in order to ground a general background of the Rainy River. The historical literature on the Rainy River First Nations is scanty, and what I found after reviewing it, was that there was not a lot written on the past seventy years. Indeed, it looks as though academic research in this community eased off with the fieldwork of early twentieth century ethnographer Ruth Landes (1937; 1938;

1969). Thus, I have deduced aspects of the century from the dialogues I had with some of the older generation at Manitou, along with referring to RRFN website.

In Chapter 3 I build a conceptual framework in order to introduce the themes discussed in the main body of the thesis. The conceptual framework here helps to ground what may sometimes seem like very abstract themes that I have chosen to work with. As such, I elaborate on my application of “discourse” by drawing on Foucault’s use of this term. From this, I build an understanding towards the existing ideas of “progress” and “science” in dominant “western” discourses, and then turn to a discussion of Ojibway storytelling and oral tradition to illuminate the notion of counter discourses. In Chapter 4 I introduce three life stories: Braveheart, Blue Prairie Woman, and Joey Tall Stockings. Their stories are an integral part toward contextualizing the themes that I have chosen to discuss.

In Chapter 5 I analyze three themes to thread the life history dialogues to the social patterns that I found were reflective of social life at Manitou. The first theme, humour, I explore the multiple and complex ways in which it can be seen to be engaged in the local Ojibway context. Some of the examples that I illustrate reveal how racial discourses in an intercultural dialogue are displaced through local nuanced elements of humour. Another way I look at the local context of humour is in the irony that can be seen to be used to express local Native experiences of imperialism. Lastly, I explore how humour can simply be seen as a way for people to communicate meaning to one another.

The second theme is food. Here I explore food through the notion of social appetite, and indeed, how this social appetite is framed in dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*. Again, I illuminate how the local “taste” at Manitou is part of a multi-

layered dynamic of experiences that complicate ideas such as “healthy” and “unhealthy” food choices. As such, I explore how the contemporary era of an industrial-processed monopoly of food purchases can be seen as more than just a symbol of capitalism and “unhealthy” food choices. Thus, more importantly, in the local context of Manitou, the social mobility and the local memories that arise from eating these kinds of foods becomes significant.

Finally, the last theme is the discussion of social issues. In this section what I mean to explore is the kinds of issues that can be seen to be a residual phenomenon of “western” societies, such as the personal and familial challenges with drug and alcohol use, school drop-out and teen pregnancy, to name but a few. Here though, I explore how they become the kinds of topics that can be seen to preoccupy the dominant “western” discourses of the *indian* experience. And, in honing in on the local context of experiences at Manitou what becomes significant is how much more deeply complicated and often contradictory experiences of these kinds of social issues are, if they even exist at all in some of the dialogues I share.

In the conclusion, I reflect on the discourses of the *indian* in mainstream Canadian society, and of course, emphasize how influential these discourses are. I further reflect on the anthropological methods that I have attempted to exercise throughout this thesis. I also raise a critique to how the intercultural dialogue that I aim to achieve in the writing of this thesis exists in a trend with other mixed-blood scholars who write on Native topics. This raises the question: Are individuals who are aware of their intercultural background more sensitive to the dominant discourses of the *indian* than those who are

self-confirmed to a singular cultural experience? To synthesize this thesis, I essentially argue towards an intercultural dialogue between non-Natives and Natives.

Chapter 1: Methodology

1.1. At Manitou

I spent my time at Manitou with the awareness of exercising participant-observation as my fieldwork method. And although I consciously considered myself to be doing participant-observation as a way to begin to explore how people process their experiences through *actions*, and not just by what they *say* alone. And indeed, I thought this way people could become familiar with me, and maybe even, have them be alright with my being in their community. However, although I assert exercising participant-observation, in reviewing the literature for this thesis, I was recommended by my thesis supervisor to read Luke Eric Lassiter's book, The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography (2005). Aside from introducing and advocating a fully integrated collaborative approach right down to the writing of text, Lassiter also makes apparent the notion of "observant participation" which he refers to as a method that came out of the 1990s in anticipation of replacing the 1960s and 1970s method of participant-observation. He suggests this shift to have occurred because participant-observation "only reified the divisions of Self and Other" (Lassiter 105:2005). "Observant participation", however, aims to "narrow the distance between ethnographer and consultants in the ethnographic text itself. The two separate streams of literature began to coalesce around a new central ethnographic project, one that laced experience and its narrative at the center of the co-understanding presented in ethnography" (Lassiter 105: 2005).

Lassiter's discussion, once again, complicates the methods that I have chosen to exercise in my fieldwork, along with giving new light to the problematic that is involved in the participant-observation approach where "Self" and "Other" are concerned. Indeed,

in exercising a reciprocal approach I have aimed for an interchange that would eliminate the dichotomy of “Self” and “Other”, and thus, recognize the hierarchies that participant-observation implies. Nonetheless, though “tricky” verbatim may introduce “newer perspectives”, how it eliminates the hierarchical positions so present in fieldwork exchanges and ethnographic texts still remains the crux of this thesis.

In any event, it became clear to me, quite quickly in fact, that exercising “observant participation” was mandatory in this community, especially if I was going to have any chance at all of people conversing with me. As a result, I found that when I spent the days hanging out with various individuals, we could both get to know each other through an informal, off the record kind of dialogue. I found these dialogues often grew into rich and in-depth discussions as we developed a *shared* storehouse of each other’s life stories. I also felt that when I participated with the community people got to watch me and evaluate what kind of person I might be. I therefore found this to be a strategy towards “getting in”.

My thesis reveals how local experiences at Manitou can be seen to engage creatively with dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian*. Thus, what individuals *say* and *do* might not be consistent with one another. And even more so, what is interesting to note, is how what individuals *say* and *do* is often in paradoxical contrast to how the dominant “western” discourses tend to define the *indian* experience. In this sense, the local context of experiences at Manitou, I found, very rarely corresponded to these dominant “western” discourses. Alternatively, they reveal a rather “tricky” play of contradictions in the examples of local experiences, which only illuminate, even more so,

the complexity of experiences in this Ojibway community juxtaposed to dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*.

I was equally inspired by Michael Jackson’s ideas surrounding experiential approaches in his book, Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology (1996). Here he argues phenomenology to be a science of experience as it involves a “direct understanding and in-depth description—a way of according equal weight to all modalities of human experience” (Jackson 1996: 2). For me, exploring the complex experiences in the local Ojibway setting of Manitou, through an experiential approach is a given, especially when I consider the implication of my own presence influencing the interaction “in its lived immediacy” (Jackson 1996: 2). Furthermore, exploring the way experiences are locally perceived and imbued with meaning, lends to the importance of participating in order to even consider adapting this local meaning into my own realm of understanding. For me, the benefit of exploring phenomenology as a method of experiential fieldwork is its advocacy of the potential to explore alternative modes of knowledge through the possibility of opening up to experiencing them one’s self. And if nothing else, it is becoming aware and open to the complexity and diversity of experiences that are often wholly different from one’s own.

In Ways of Knowing: Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Dene Tha (1998), Jean-Guy Goulet discusses his “experiential” process in his fieldwork spent among the Dene Tha. He illustrates how in time, he was able to become a part of the community and do things the way they did, and have them respond to him the way they would with any Dene Tha. However, he argues that he was always aware of his Euro-Canadian self, and although he could easily turn off this nurtured Dene Tha identity, he

notes that his Euro-Canadian identity was always present (1998: 249). Goulet suggests that experiential ethnographers have accepted the fact that the problematic of representation always exists. Therefore, he argues the way of working around this without falling prey to navel gazing, is to engage a “field research experience with the representation or communication of that experience” (1998: 258).

For me, the shortcomings of this experiential method are in the fact that some categories of experience are more difficult to comprehend or access, if accessible at all. Nonetheless, it raises similar ideas to those of feminist anthropologists such as Lila Abu-Lughod who in her 1990 article; “Can There Be a Feminist Anthropology?” discusses the creative approaches of feminist anthropologists challenging the power relations between researcher and informant. Here she prefers more personal relations with individuals over the traditional relationship of “researcher” and “informant” (1990: 18). Abu-Lughod’s discussion of cultivating close and personal relationships with people suggests many of the dilemmas that I felt hindered my own fieldwork experience. As in my case, I felt that I needed more time to gain the personal relationships that would have led to a far more involved research experience, had the presumable personal relationships developed.

On another note, Goulet’s application of an experiential approach reflects the very way that the Dene Tha view knowledge to be acquired. As the “Dene regard true knowledge as personal, firsthand knowledge, and they foster everyone’s autonomy as much as possible in all domains of life” (1998: 247). I think this is a succinct description of the methods of the explorative and interpretive approach I have attempted in my own research. In this sense, some of the ways “knowledge” is unique to Manitou can be seen grounded in the local and multiple experiences that extend into the dialogical interactions

I encountered. Thus, the sharing of personal stories and thoughts give rise to the latent themes that awakened in the process of writing this thesis. In addition, Goulet's discussion acts as a reminder of the local forms of acquiring and disseminating knowledge similar to those that I encountered at Manitou, and that often, were wholly different to the ways of knowing and being in the world that I had learned in an urban Canadian setting. Thus, by way of the methods I have presented, my field site and the people I interacted with, undoubtedly shaped a unique experience for me and the process from which this thesis has evolved.

1.2. In the writing

In adding an element of dialogue in the writing of this thesis, I have meant to exemplify the type of dialogical interactions I experienced while at Manitou. As a result, I have tried to situate myself in the process of this thesis as much as possible. This also, is in effect, to reflect better on the dialogue from an understanding of experience, listening, and sharing. I found that, not just listening to life histories, but rather sharing one another's stories, made for far richer descriptions within the text, not to mention a more reciprocally engaged and involved conversation for both me and those with whom I conversed. Similarly, Luke Eric Lassiter discusses aspects of the collaborative approach rooted in the exchange of sharing and listening. He himself tells of an encounter he had with a "consultant" who remarks on Lassiter's ability to share his story without asking questions alone:

[...] None [anthropologists] had candidly elaborated why they were interested in Indians and what had brought them to southwestern Oklahoma. This consultant said she appreciated being informed. This comment convinced me that my story

is important, if only because it addresses my consultants' interests and answers questions that have surfaced in our conversations with and about each other.

The way I see it, my consultants have the right to know who I am and what I am about as I seek to learn the same from them. Such exchange lies at the heart of dialogue and collaboration. To be sure, in any truly collaborative exercise, interest, investigation, study, and learning are certainly not limited to the ethnographer. (qtd. in Lassiter 108: 2005)

For me, Lassiter's advocacy of the sharing of each other's stories remains a critical element to the experiences and interpretations made in my research thesis. As such, the sharing and listening involved in the intercultural dialogues of this thesis can be seen to illuminate the kinds of personal interactions that reveal a reciprocal curiosity.

Also, approaching this dialogue reciprocally allowed for my research experience to have an element where all those involved in the dialogue could share and reflect upon our own experiences by having this opportunity to reflect on one another's individual life experiences. Furthermore, the dialogical approach of sharing and listening can be seen to work twofold here where one reflects on one's own experiences through a kind of mirrored reflection of another. But also, as far as the outsider/insider, researcher/informant binary exists; this dialogical approach helps to level out the playing field (a bit), where the ethnographer, in sharing her own life story, becomes as vulnerable to interpretations as the dialogical "other". Lastly, it also reveals how analysis was undertaken and conclusions were reached, by way of illuminating both the objective and reflexive positions of the ethnographer. This, of course, always remained a source of

uncertainty for me, as to how much I was letting this text become more of a navel gazing pursuit than I was revealing the processes of experiential and dialogical interaction.

Sandra Harding in her article, “‘Strong Objectivity’: A Response to the New Objectivity Question” (1995), discusses her notion of “strong objectivity” which draws on feminist standpoint epistemology. She argues it to be a helpful research method toward “maximizing our ability to block ‘might makes right’ in the sciences” (1995: 131). Her concept of strong objectivity helps inform my own research as it argues “that what we *do* in our social relations both enables and limits (it does not determine) what we can know,” (1995: 341). In suggesting one starting point for this exploration in the “recognizing of social inequality” (1995: 341), Harding’s discussion illuminates how well engrained a researcher’s conditioning from the methods of the “western” academy is. Thus, to take a look from the outside, which she suggests, standpoint epistemology advocates working from the *margins*, as one starting point towards “maximizing objectivity”.

She criticizes “traditional objectivity” for advocating neutrality, free from the influences of cultural interests and values because it fails to recognize the fact that “the neutrality ideal provides no resistance to the production of systematically distorted results of research” (1995: 336), which thus, makes for “weak objectivity”. Importantly, she disagrees that the influences of cultural interests and values necessarily make for “systematically distorted” research. Indeed, her notion of “strong objectivity” makes it possible to maximize objectivity in the very act of acknowledging the historical and political positions of research endeavours. It only needs, argues Harding, “updating, rehabilitation, so that it is capable of functioning effectively in the science-based society

that the North has generated and that many now say is its major cultural export” (1995: 347).

Harding’s idea of “strong objectivity” helps inform part of my methodology in terms of how I attempt to position my own context in the process of this thesis research. Thus, in sharing my own experiences with the people I interacted with, I hope to achieve an outcome that provides the evidence of how I came to the interpretations I reach in this research. So, I feel it is critical to this research to develop a foundation that can both explore a local social world and its connection to the larger social worlds around it, while at the same time, illuminating the conclusions that I have made based on both the personal and social frameworks that I am coming from. However, on another level, I recognize that this effort towards transparency in my research can never be enough to redress history. Nonetheless, this thesis is my humble attempt to acknowledge the importance of engaging intercultural dialogue with humanistic and interpretive approaches in mind.

My intention in including a few life histories was also partly inspired by the history of the community being based on an oral storytelling tradition (Cole, forthcoming). I have recorded the conversations, but some of the scenes that I have created in the text are set in the original setting that these conversations first took place. The intention here was so to recreate the spontaneous settings and dialogues in which these stories were first shared. By presenting the life histories in this way, I have hoped to keep in line with a tradition of interacting through the Ojibway practice of oral storytelling, and thus move away from the conventional interview method. However, this dialogical exchange ends in the “field”, as in the writing, I did not experiment with a

kind of collaborative ethic that would involve these particular individuals editing these dialogues in the written process of this text (cf. Lassiter 2005).

Julie Cruikshank, in Life Lived Like a Story (1990), recorded the life stories told by three Yukon elders. She argues that the practice of writing out the shared oral stories runs the risk of lessening the oral practice of storytelling itself. Conversely, she also discusses how the process of writing spoken conversations can be brought to life in the text by learning such things as where to put punctuation or transfer lines when emphasis or pauses are needed to delineate the spoken expression (1990: 18-19). Indeed, I have tried with the dialogues in this text to be aware of the local oral nuances, and to best do this, I have tried to convey the life stories in as much of their raw form as the conversations were first shared. However, this in itself was a tricky task that, consequently, found me often editing copious amounts of details so as to get to the main discussion of each theme.

In addition, in producing dialogue in the text I attempt to keep in mind the oral tradition used to share stories. The intention of inserting my own experiential dialogue in the ethnographic examples is in the hope of drawing the reader into an awareness of the multiple layers of projected and interpreted meaning that goes on between me and those whom I interact with, as it does between storytellers and their audiences.

In Politics and Poetics of Migration: Narratives of Iranian Women from the Diaspora (2004), Parin Dossa, who collaborates with Iranian women in Vancouver, develops a kind of storytelling approach that cultivates “multi-voiced dialogue where research participants have a central space” (2004: 7). What Dossa’s main argument highlights here, is how the application of multi-layered dialogue can be seen to produce

meanings in text that have the potential to effect change (2004: 18). The idea here, argues Dossa, is a focus shifted away from the anthropologist as researcher amidst “subjects”. In eliminating this researcher/subject dichotomy, the objective of writing life stories is to invite the reader to listen in on the lives of these women with minimal concern for who is writing the text.

Although I did not produce multi-voiced dialogue, my approach of sharing my own life stories in reciprocity with those who shared their stories with me, was on one level, an attempt at displacing myself as the ethnographer in the text. As a result, I have tried to create what Dossa advocates: engaging the reader more into the stories of the individuals, rather than being concerned with who the writer, or rather, the narrator of the text is. Additionally in doing this, my goal is to engage a critical reader who further teases out the multiple layers of context that are hidden within the text itself, beyond what I, as the writer, bring forth in my own interpretive analysis.

Of course, at the stage of writing the text, what I find difficult is the interpretive variation that becomes evident in the writing and that was not necessarily what the speaker may have intended when they were sharing their story with me, live in person. Nor are the interpretations that I have projected into some of the ethnographic examples, necessarily the same experiences that another would make if they were writing about it. Thus, to trap the voice of an animated speaker into a linear trail of words seems a weak attempt at replicating an actual storytelling interaction. And, as much as I may think that I am imbuing a subjective consciousness into the text, or exercising Harding’s “strong objectivity”, issues of representation and authorization still remain the underlying stronghold within. As no matter which way I try to justify my writing, “the words [I]

conjure and the ways [I] couch [my] stories are hardly adequate for capturing the actual nature of experience” (Lassiter 111: 2005). This may be one of the reasons why Julie Cruikshank reminds her reader how the oral storytellers she worked with did not mind collaborating to produce a written life history, but still preferred to *hear* the stories orally (1990: 18).

In coming to terms with some of these representational dilemmas and grasping the storytelling process, I have reflected on Sally Cole’s article, “Anthropological Lives: The Reflexive Tradition in Social Science” (1992). Here, she explores the uses of both “life writing” and “life history.” She describes the former, as encompassing the writer sharing snippets of personal life stories, while the latter involves the personal sharing of a life recorded and written by another (1992: 114-116). What was relevant for me here was how these approaches enable the option of local experiences to be viewed in both the personal narrative of individuals, and the shared narrative between the anthropologist and these individuals (1992: 122). In coming to grips with my own unease towards the representation and authorization in this text, I have tried to apply aspects of both the life writing and life history approaches when putting together the dialogues.

In order to explore the local dynamic of experiences at Manitou, I inevitably wanted a sample of life histories. However, to have had particular individuals share their life history, I felt it was important to share snippets of my own personal life story, in an attempt to establish both a fairly reciprocal dialogue and to gain an experiential understanding towards local meanings of experiences. Furthermore, I felt it was important to include some of my own shared life story to reveal how the context in the life histories came about. This corroborates the ideas discussed in, Lives: An

Anthropological Approach to Biography (1981), where Langness & Frank suggest that writing about lives is a “transformative process” (1981:154) where constructed differences between that of the self and that of the other, begin to disintegrate as an understanding of the lives of both “our own, and the lives of others” (1981: 154) become acknowledged.

However, in How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves (1999), Paul John Eakin remains critical of this collaborative approach in the documenting of life histories, as he argues that ethical matters remain complex in first person narratives as “they are rhetorically ambiguous” (1999: 172). Furthermore, Eakin argues that collaborative texts are often not reflexive enough towards the complexities involved in the contribution. Thus, he stands weary of credited autobiographies, and rather, argues them to reflect more the work of biographies once the role of the writer/editor has had the last hand at the final drafts of a text (1999: 173). His caution reflects a constant concern in the making of ethnography where the voice of the subject remains forever at risk of being represented by the voice of the ethnographer. Thus, my emphasis on incorporating both an element of life writing and life history, is to bring this reflexive awareness to the text, which Eakin criticizes is often absent in the text.

Furthermore, Julie Cruikshank shares her experiences toward how she found that it is not only the researcher who is enthusiastic about recording life narratives, as it was the individuals at her field site who approached her to document the oral life stories they had to offer, so that “their work [could be] distributed more widely” (1990: 13). However, for her, the collaboration is not just about having the story told as the researcher records. More importantly, it is about the interactive sharing and listening

involved in the transcribing process where the storyteller can interrupt and clarify during the process of documentation (1990: 15). This, in a sense, supports Parin Dossa's discussion of how multi-voiced dialogue can be executed in text without the author being at the centre of the writing. And, it complicates Paul John Eakins' criticisms towards the final authorship in the text, especially when the "subjects" themselves are involved at the stage of writing text. Thus, the notion of authorship in text suddenly becomes a multilayered process awaiting the next anthropological conundrum (cf. Geertz 1988).

For me, the collaborative approach in my text comes out as more of a partial attempt, as my time frame, and my inexperience, did not allow for me to engage in storytelling collaboration to quite the same depth as Cruikshank and Dossa both apply and advocate. As well, it is far from having a collaborative focus at the writing level where both the individuals at Manitou and I would have worked together to produce a coauthored text. Nonetheless, the authors' discussions that I draw on have made me deeply aware of the power of representation and authorship. At the same time, they brought to my attention the contemporary practices that aim to include both multiple voices and contributions into the actual writing process of the text.

Indeed, the ethnographic accounts that I present are somewhat static, in the sense that I have taken and interpreted them from a specific place in time, and it does not give justice to the motion of an ever-changing context of local experiences. As such, the specific live interactive contexts from which my interpretations have been created have had to become transformed linearly to fit the mould of this text. In other words, what was once a kind of 3-D interactive dialogue has now been reduced to a kind of one-dimensional text. And, as much as I may express my disenchantment by *acknowledging*

the problematic of representation and authorship in writing, I have still, nonetheless, gone through with the writing of this text, and sometimes only see myself as having participated in the “western” academy’s constant preoccupation with the “other”.

With all this said, my ethnographic text is, essentially an attempt to illuminate an analysis of the dynamic experiences in the local setting of Manitou, while at the same time, exposing my own self-conscious being implicated in the process of all the interactions. The goal of this is to have my own interpretations laid out in the text, with the hope that the reader does not have to filter through so much of the personal baggage of the ethnographer, and for this reason, can spend more time exploring the central argument of the thesis. Thus, to have my writing convey the social patterns and contextual experiences that come to life through the interactive reciprocity of sharing life stories—is the point. As well, my goal is to inform a kind of interpretive development influenced by the constant processes involved in exploring the local nuances and subtleties of dialogue and social interaction.

Chapter 2: Field Site and Historical Context

2.1. Rainy River First Nations

The Ojibway community specific to my research is called the Rainy River First Nations and is located in Northwestern Ontario. In 2002 the community officially changed its name from Manitou Rapids Reserve to Rainy River First Nations (RRFN), and also at this time, adopted a logo to symbolize their traditional relationship with their land. It is still often referred to as “Manitou” by local people which stems from the community being located beside a point of the Rainy River where a set of rapids called the “Manitou rapids” flow. I have also chosen to refer to RRFN as “Manitou” throughout the ethnographic sections of this thesis, as it is mostly in keeping with how the local people themselves referred to it in my dialogues with them. The term “the rez” (slang for reserve) was also another way of referring to Manitou within this community, and which I tended to hear more among the young adults and youth.

RRFN is within the Rainy River District about sixty kilometres east of Lake of the Woods, and in between the two townships of Emo and Barwick. The major service centre is Fort Frances, forty kilometres further east which provides the basic day-to-day amenities such as shopping, schools, and employment, and is the town site for a large pulp-and-paper mill. This location reveals that the community is not isolated like some of the more northern fly-in reserves, and rather can be seen as a rural community where children travel on a bus each day to the main town for school, and much of the community drives to the nearby towns for employment which, for the most part, are concentrated off the reserve in the nearby towns.

The RRFN territory includes around 5,500 acres of land of which 4,500 acres is mixed forest of hardwoods such as birch, trembling aspen, poplar, and a sprinkling of softwoods such as jack pine, spruce, and cedar. These particular trees, specifically the birch wood, are significant to the Ojibway culture as its bark is a material that was used to make such things as the traditional wigwams (homes), canoes, and baskets up until the early part of the twentieth century. Only about 1400 acres is used for cattle grazing and hay production. The main residence of the community resides on the north shore of the Rainy River which acts as the border between Ontario/Minnesota, Canada/U.S. Most people live along the Rainy River just before the Manitou Rapids although there is residence spread out in larger lots located beside highway 71 which runs parallel to Rainy River at about three quarters of a mile north of the river (Community Profile 2004).

RRFN has a population of just over a thousand people and the mean age category is from ages 5-29, which make up fifty percent of the population. In 2004 the RRFN website estimated there were about 100 individuals enrolled in elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school. There is also a school at RRFN that is a branch of the Seven Generations Education Institute which offers post secondary education in the Rainy River District and Thunder Bay region. Part of the curriculum of this school at RRFN entails a teacher assisting all the students who work at a self-pace curriculum, and to which I found, tended to involve more young adults in their early twenties and beyond who returned to receive their high school graduation. There was also an apprenticeship training program offered for Early Childhood Educators and about five women from RRFN were enrolled in this.

A major source of employment in the community is provided by the band office, which manages the water treatment program, the medical centre, a recreation program, and the Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung historical centre. The Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung historical centre generates some of its income from tourism, although as of the 2006 summer, much of it was being heavily subsidized by RRFN. There is one gas station and convenience store privately owned and operated by a member of the community who hires a handful of the local youth. Aside from the community using this store, it is also conveniently located at the highway 71 junction thus bringing in revenue from tourists and truck drivers mostly through gas purchases. Another large employer is the Manitou Mill which is located on the RRFN territory, and is jointly owned and operated by RRFN and a private owner. It employs mostly the male population of RRFN, at least in the labour sector, as I did not meet any women working there while I was at Manitou. The only female that I met working in the male dominated labour industry was a woman who worked for a construction company contracted by RRFN for their housing development project that was launched to make more housing available to community members.

The band office also runs a summer program where they hire a handful of students to do maintenance work around the community or at the historical centre. There were also a couple of young women who received six month internships to gain office experience by working in the band office or the medical building at Manitou. These internships were developed to give the young adults at Manitou an opportunity to gain job experience so that they could be employable in the larger job market in Canada.

One of the sources of employment is the watershed program that RRFN operates in their community, and although more people from off the reserve are employed here, it

remains a program with historical significance to the Ojibway people. This is due to a “long and storied history” with their ancestors who occupied the shores of Rainy River from Lake of the Woods to the mouth of Rainy Lake long before signing Treaty 3 in 1873. The community emphasizes the importance of their ancestors’ relationship with the river. Therefore, as of the mid-1980s the community took on the responsibility as guardians of the river and from this the Watershed Project was established. This program acts to promote public awareness, monitor potential impacts, and rehabilitate areas of concern through traditional ecological knowledge and values in combination with current natural resource management techniques. There are a few interesting activities that come out of this Watershed program, one of which is the science summer camp for youth between ages 6-12. This camp aims to teach the youth a mixture of teachings from both mainstream science and indigenous based resource management traditions. Another activity is the sturgeon run which takes place in the spring time and entails monitoring the sturgeon stock, which in the nineteenth century almost saw its extinction. Thus, the community comes out to celebrate the continued existence of this ancient species that is said to go back to the dinosaur ages. The sturgeon has also been a major resource for the Ojibway for thousands of years (Community Profile 2004).

Also, managed by the RRFN is the Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung (The Place of the Long Rapids) historical site, locally referred to as “the mounds”. Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung is a historical site for its scattered burial mounds which extend about four kilometres along the shore line of Rainy River and is protected by Federal and Provincial heritage laws, being one of Canada’s National Historic Sites. These mounds are said to date back to 2100 years with the most recent mound having been constructed 400 years

ago. The mounds were constructed when a shallow pit was dug out and the deceased was placed in it and covered by the dugout earth. This process was continued with more deceased placed on top of the previously buried, and covered with earth. Along with the deceased being buried their belongings, such as medicine bags, pipes, clay pots, and tools were sometimes buried with them. The result of this layering process resulted in the development of naturally shaped mounds protruding from the earth's surface at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung today (Manitou Mounds 2004).

There are a number of other community and recreational activities that take place annually at RRFN. The community hosts their annual Powwow in June, their fish fry in May at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung, and a wild rice camp in August at Lake-of-the-Woods. Local members also organize baseball and hockey leagues that run during each season. Additionally, RRFN hosts activities for all ages such as horseshoe tournaments, fishing derbies, and baseball tournaments. There is also a gym and a library attached to the medical building that is open to the community and holds events. The band also hires a recreational director who schedules activities and drop-ins for the youth to have access to the gym most days and evenings.

The community is represented by a council of five councillors and one chief. Elders play a significant role in decision making but do not tend to hold any position within the council. Community meetings are held once a month while council meetings are held weekly. A chief's term lasts for two years and I was told that the chief receives a wage of 90,000 per year for this position. There has been no female chief at Manitou to date, but at the time of my fieldwork there was one woman sitting on council.

RRFN is a community within the Treaty 3 region made up of seven Ojibway communities that resided along the Rainy River from Lake of the Woods to Rainy Lake up until 1914 when they were consolidated into the one community at Manitou Reserve. Seven chiefs and a socio-political organization run under the guidelines of the Canadian government had existed in each of these communities. As of 1914 these seven chiefs were reduced down to one chief and council when all of the communities were relocated to Manitou Reserve. It was not until 2004 that a claim resulting from the signing of Treaty 3 of 1873 finally came to some resolution through a compensation of land claims and moneys between the Federal and Provincial governments and the communities of Treaty 3 (Community Profile 2004).

The revamped Treaty 3 land claims agreement for the RRFN entailed a lengthy process of over thirty years of pressuring the government toward a dialogue that resulted in ten years of negotiations leading up to the finalizing of a Treaty 3 agreement with the Federal and Provincial governments in 2004. The land claims agreement for the RRFN includes 55,000 square miles within northwestern Ontario and Manitoba and a trust that is set up so that no chief or council member can be a trustee. Instead, the management of the trust is based on traditional principles where the responsibilities and choices are mediated by the community now and for seven generations into the future (Land Claims 2004). Part of the reinstated land recognizes traditional territories occupied by the Ojibway, including the seven communities that had existed before the 1914 merger. However, the 1914 merger is a vivid reminder of one of many disenchanting histories experienced by the Rainy River Ojibway. And, paradoxically, the history of a well

entrenched socio-political system enforced by the Canadian government still pervades the present day organization of the community today.

2.2. The Ojibway Social and Historical Context

In The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History (1992), Alfred Irving Hallowell describes the Ojibway First Nations as comprising various socio-historical and geographical contexts due to their large population dispersed around the Great Lakes (1992: 6). To situate the Ojibway First Nations as a group in their entirety entails a broad and varied orientation. Thus, I have amassed the information given here from a select group of authors who I found to be the main scholars published on the history of the Ojibway First Nations. I will begin with a general discussion of the larger Ojibway culture and their Algonkian and sub-arctic background. For this, I refer to the more recent works of anthropologist, Alice Kehoe, and to a lesser extent, anthropologist Alfred Irving Hallowell, who worked primarily with the Berens River Ojibway and Salteaux in the early twentieth century.

I continue on to describe the specific geographical location of Ojibway Country (Rainy River region), as the Ojibway tended to vary culturally somewhat from their sub-arctic regions to that of their original homeland regions around the Great Lakes. For this, I draw on Hallowell's contemporaries especially, Ruth Landes, whose work comes from her time spent at Manitou in the 1930s (1937; 1938; 1968); and Frances Densmore who visited Manitou in 1920, but whose focus was on the Chippewa of Minnesota. In addition to using these scholars, I will further discuss the socio-historical shifts that the Ojibway underwent through the intensification of the fur trade and the ensuing of European colonization that altered the social, ecological and political patterns of life.

And to add to this discussion on the historical shifts experienced by the Rainy River Ojibway, I draw on Leo Waisberg's chapters, "Ojibway Commercial Production" and "An Ethnographic and Historical Outline of the Rainy River Ojibway;" along with David Christianson's chapter, "The Fur Trade;" and the combined work of Christianson, Noble & Waisberg (1984) in "Native Occupants of the Rainy River Region." Finally, I will conclude with a brief discussion of the contemporary setting of the socio-political climate at RRFN, in order to link these local historical contexts with the conceptual framework discussed in the following Chapter 3. In addition, I refer to both the RRFNs' and Grand Council of Treaty 3 websites where they have posted historical and cultural synopses.

In North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account (1992), Alice Kehoe discusses how the ancestral homelands of the Ojibway First Nations occupied the perimeters of the Great Lakes crossing over what is now referred to as the US and Canadian borders, and scaling the north region around Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Huron, and Lake Superior; and the southern region around Niagara River to North and South Dakota; and also many miles inland from the north and south shores of the three Great Lakes (1992: 545). However, Ruth Landes in her book, Ojibwa Sociology (1937), describes how migration movements changed in the seventeenth century, as the socio-economic climate shifted with the intensification of the fur trade which pushed a portion of the Ojibway population into the sub-arctic regions, and on a smaller scale, to the western plains. Furthermore, Landes discusses the large territory that they are believed to have inhabited, and how they have had a history of socio-political relations with groups such as the Cree, Algonkian, and their long time nemesis, the Sioux, to name but a few (1937: 1).

Christianson, Noble & Waisberg (1984) add to this discussion by exploring the controversy over the first evidence of the Ojibway First Nations inhabiting the Rainy River area. They surmise that “an analysis of the historical records on the question of Ojibway migration into the Rainy River during the historic period [post-contact] [has] displayed some interpretive and evidential problems” (1984: 91). Some of the evidence they have gathered suggests that the “heartland” of Ojibway territory was in the Sault Ste. Marie area since the late seventeenth century, and that they spread up into the Rainy River area in the mid-eighteenth century with the intensification of the fur trade:

Between 1740 and 1780, the Ojibway, in accompaniment with the Cree, had forced the Sioux out of most of the forested area west of Lake Superior, gaining exclusive access to Rainy Lake, and the Kaministikwia and Pigeon transportation routes, and therefore, to the western fur trade. (qtd. in Christianson, Noble & Waisberg 1984: 88)

They also provide a discussion that suggests how it was not so much a physical movement of the Ojibway that made their presence dominant in the Rainy River area in the eighteenth century, but rather, it was that people in the Rainy River area increasingly *began to be referred* to as Ojibway (1984: 89; emphasis added). Christianson, Noble and Waisberg argue their findings to be speculative at best; they nonetheless, affirm that the Ojibway were in the Rainy River area at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans to the region (1984: 91).

This geographical description of the Ojibway First Nations, Hallowell and Kehoe discuss, associates them as part of the larger Eastern Algonkian language group which are further sub-grouped into the Algonkian speakers that occupy the Canadian Shield from

the interior of Quebec to where the prairie lands begin at the Eastern end of Manitoba. These Algonkian speakers include the Algonkian, Ottawa, and an offshoot of the Ojibway in the western prairies, called the Saukteaux (Hallowell 1992: 6; Kehoe 1992: 233). Hallowell explains that the origin of the name Saukteaux was used by the French fur traders to refer to the Ojibway First Nations they traded with around Sault Ste. Marie. And that eventually, this smaller Saukteaux population migrated west to the prairies when the fur trade became overwhelmed by stronger groups (Hallowell 1992: 21).

Kehoe suggests that this linguistic association helps explain why the Ojibway's cultural patterns lean toward similarities with that of other Algonkian speakers (1992: 536). In terms of their material culture, the Algonkian speakers are further identified with the Late Woodland period (AD 900 – AD 1680) which is marked by a continual development of technology such as the use of stone tools, clay pots, canoes, wigwams, and the processing of wild rice (Kehoe 1992: 236). This description of the Algonkian grouping as identified by the material culture of the Woodland period supports a discussion more specific to the RRFN location in the northwestern region of the Great Lakes, and who also “belong to the most western woodlands” (Landes 1937: 1).

In her book, Chippewa Customs (1929), Frances Denmore presented the first detailed description of the material culture of the Chippewa. Wigwams were the living quarters common to most of the Algonkian groups. Denmore illustrates how they were typically a small conical structure ten feet in diameter. Landes discusses how this was specific to the Woodland Ojibway who occupied the wigwams in small family units that lived amongst each other in groups of three to fifteen families (Denmore 1929: 23; Landes 1937: 1). Kehoe explains that their construction depended on the materials that

were available, and typically included birch bark, elm, conifers, or hides that were draped over bent saplings that were tied together (1992: 236). Additionally, she mentions that the simplicity and size of these wigwams reflected the seasonal dispersal patterns and the small size of the family that tended to travel together (1992: 237).

Landes identified the Ojibway as seasonal hunters and food gatherers who often, but not necessarily, returned to their villages in the spring and summer after spending the winter in small hunting groups (1937: 1). Kehoe adds to this by suggesting that they moved according to the natural harvest of particular foods and their seasonal availability: the wild berries, rice, maple sugar and fish that were yielded in the spring and summer around the local villages; and the meat that was trapped and hunted in the fall and winter around the various established hunting grounds. She also claims that cultivating land was not as common to the Algonkian groups as it was to their southern Iroquois neighbours, and this was primarily due to the temperature drops in the Canadian Shield, which created a short growing season and left agriculture to be an unreliable food source (Kehoe 1992: 234).

Alternatively, Waisberg discusses the importance that cultivating corn and other garden products held in the Rainy River area from the start of the nineteenth century onward. His evidence suggests that corn was cultivated for both consumption and commercial use especially when the competition of the fur trade increased in the 1820s, as they “[supplied] produce to the canoe brigades and also export[ed] garden products to Albany River H.B.C. posts” (1984: 113). Corn also became an important subsistence food to rely on when the wild rice failed. Waisberg mentions how this horticulture practice was not always in effect during the early nineteenth century, as the documents he

refers to claim that the Ojibway at this point still would go off to their hunting territories. Thus, leaving them unable to maintain and keep watch over their produce that was “liable to be taken by strangers on travel” (1984: 116), or eaten by animals.

Hallowell discusses how the seasonal mobility that was typical of the Algonkian language group was altered drastically in the intensification of the seventeenth century fur trade as groups like the Ojibway became more dependent on their traditional trapping, hunting and fishing for commercial purposes. This, in turn, Hallowell argues, influenced their subsistence patterns to become more based around the trading posts (1992: 19-20, 44). Furthermore, both Hallowell and Landes describe how the turn of the nineteenth century came with increased control of the Canadian government who allocated First Nations people to specific territories under the 1876 Indian Act and various Treaty agreements. Consequently, these shifts in Ojibway subsistence patterns had vast affects on their socio-cultural systems, not to mention their health and nutrition as they shifted from a diet of foods gathered and hunted to the introduction of more processed foods with the ensuing of the industrial era (Hallowell 1992; Landes 1937: 4).

Landes describes how in the past the elder “medicine man” has been the main figure in the community “because he [was] on favoured terms with the supernatural” but he “held no official position” (1937: 2). A council of all mature males or elders made decisions based around a kind of consensus process and individuals could assume the role of leader for specific undertakings, to which their role “[disappeared] when the enterprise [was] over” (1937: 2). The notion of “chief” and “councillors,” Hallowell concurs, was a phenomenon of the Canadian government’s policies that did not recognize the Ojibway social organization, and enforced the protocol of a “one male” representative

(1992: 35). Similarly, Landes explains that the Canadian government appointed “hereditary chieftains” in order “to strengthen what was considered a hazy aboriginal government” (1937: 2). Landes further explains how the “Indians have never understood this kind of ‘chief’” (1937: 2). Thus, a son recognized by the Canadian government as chief because his father was an important figure in the community, would not necessarily “qualify as an Ojibwa ‘wise man’ or ‘conductor’” (1937: 3). Nonetheless, the 1876 Indian Acts regulation of a “chief” and “council” still functions as the political organization in many Native communities today, including RRFN (Community Profile 2004).

Respect towards the “medicine man” illustrates the importance of the Midewiwin in Ojibway tradition. Kehoe and Hallowell describe the Midewiwin as one of the major ceremonies concerned with curing that outlasted the colonial ban on many of the Ojibway practices, and that also had a revival in the nineteenth century (Kehoe 1992: 545; Hallowell 1992: 11; Landes 1968). Mide, are the medicine men and women, who are responsible for the spiritual and physical health of the people, as they hold the knowledge of herbal medicines that maintain and prolong life (Densmore 1929: 86; Landes 1937; 1968). The Midewiwin, Densmore suggests, also reflected the world view of the Ojibway, as the Mide pass on knowledge that emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balanced life through systems of conduct, vision questing, and the sacred teachings and songs (1929: 87). Waisberg discusses the sacred teachings and songs to have been produced on birch bark using pictographs and symbolic figures. He adds that they “were used in the instruction of Mide candidates for the various degrees of the Midewiwin, as instructions for the performance of rites, and as guides to chants and songs sung during

ceremonies” (1984: 242). This Midewiwin cultural practice is also embedded in the clan system practiced among the Ojibway.

Landes describes how many Ojibway were traditionally organized through a clan system represented by animal emblems or totems, or *dodems*. She refers to this clan organization as “gens”, and describes how it is passed down patrilineally (1937: 31). However, the Grand Council of Treaty 3³ suggests that females took on their mother’s clan and males took on their father’s clan; as well, exceptions were made for medicine people, healers or orphaned persons (Clan System 2006). In my interactions with people at RRFN, I found that most people took on their father’s clan. To this extent today’s functioning of the clan system is similar to how Landes described it at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The clans were also exogamous and the Grand Council of Treaty 3 suggests this to be so, in order to encourage marriage outside one’s own village, thus promoting a “widening of the genetic pool” (Clan System 2006). According to Landes there was no ranking of the “gens” and each clan held a high level of respect toward one another (1937: 39). Furthermore, Landes describes how she saw that the clans had no specialized function except for acting as an institution of marriage, but she suggests that prior to the onset of colonization, the clans once played a more political and religious role (1937: 52). The Grand Council of Treaty 3 additionally suggests that the clans mandated obligations and responsibilities that profoundly impacted all areas of the individual’s life, as well as meeting the needs of the Nation in its entirety (Clan System 2006). The importance that the clan system may have had toward “[reinforcing] the teachings and principles of a

³ The Grand Council of Treaty 3 represents the Anishinaabe people in the region of Northwestern Ontario and into the Southeastern corner of Manitoba. See www.treaty3.ca.

sacred way of life” (Clan System 2006) in the past, the Grand Council of Treaty 3 states, does not hold the same importance today. This, Hallowell argues, is due in part to the increased conversion to Christianity that has proven to be a slow and incomplete process at times; however, the clan system was still heavily influential in Native communities throughout the nineteenth century (1992: 29). In the summer of 2006, I found that within minutes of my first introductions with most people, they would voluntarily mention their clan, but there was never any greater depth to this besides being able to identify with their extended family members.

Kehoe discusses how increased conversion to Christianity was encouraged by the Anglican, and to a smaller extent, Roman Catholic missionaries who built churches at the trading posts. However, she adds, full conversion proved difficult as Ojibway seasonal patterns made it so they were not at trading posts all year round. As a result, traditional drumming practices apparently were carried out in the bush camps and church-going became associated with life at the trading posts. Kehoe also mentions how resistance to conversion most likely lessened as families began living at the trading posts all year round. Nonetheless, she remarks, because the principles of Christianity were not dissimilar to Native spiritual practices, many aspects of Ojibway tradition and spirituality were able to co-exist and thus maintain a certain degree of resiliency despite missionary proselytizing efforts (1992: 547).

According to Hallowell, historically it was common for men to have multiple wives until the Canadian government banned this practice in 1895 (1992: 30). However, Landes suggests that although polygyny may have occurred, in practice it was a part of a more complex dynamic of male and female unions where cultural norms of remarriages

and separations between both men and women were not only common, but also were, to a certain degree, socially accepted (1937: 54-54; 1938).

Landes also describes how social patterns of residence are not so easily determined, but women appear to have taken up residence with their husband and his parents. As well, the delineation of the tasks associated with hunting and gathering was generally defined by gender (1938). In addition, the active players in the political and ceremonial aspects of social life, as already suggested, tended to be headed by the “wise old men” of the group. However, Landes writes that a totalizing understanding of gender roles is not so easily discernable, as social patterns constantly shifted to involve multiple duties, or simply, that the crossing over of the supposed delineated gender roles was just done (1937: 53; 1938). With all this said, Kehoe argues that the patrilineal system among the Algonkian speakers is one of debate, and that defining this is based on documentation well after European influence (1992: 238). Conversely, much of the Ojibway social patterns, Hallowell figures, appear to have remained in place up until the early twentieth century despite increased European contact and governmental control. However, even Hallowell himself suggests that the advent of the European fur trade is evidence of the beginning of a series of imposed changes on the Ojibway socio-cultural life, including, and here both Kehoe and Landes would argue, the perception and status of gender roles (Kehoe 1992: 38; Landes 1937; 1938; see also Cole 1995, 1997, 2003).

Hallowell discusses how the expansion of the European fur trade greatly influenced the Ojibway in the eighteenth century, as they were a key Native American group involved, and also were a group that migrated further north to join the Cree as direct traders with the Hudson’s Bay Company (1992: 22). Kehoe suggests this

migration was a result of the direct trade relations the Cree had established with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) which cut the Ojibway out of their middleman position with the French traders who had previously developed posts on the Ojibway's summer fishing grounds around the Great Lakes. Thus, in dealing more directly with the HBC, many Ojibway migrated north. Additionally, this close proximity with the Cree resulted in a new dialect rooted in the Algonkian language which I often heard in Ojibway Country referred to as Oji-Cree, as well a cultural shift characterized by a northern Ojibway people who had more similarities with the Cree than their southern Ojibway. However, some of these influences, Kehoe explains, extended down to the south where by the 1770's the Ojibway inhabited most of southwestern Ontario right up to Lake Winnipeg (1992: 545). Essentially, the cultural influences discussed here reveal how these Algonkian groups were influenced by the different environments of the North to the South. And also reveals the socio-economic shifts that were underway from about the seventeenth century onward.

Additionally, Kehoe discusses how the economic growth of the fur trade altered the seasonal dispersal of the Ojibway, so that their winter trapping and hunting expeditions became preoccupied with the more Euro-Canadian commercial trading, and as a result, concentrated them around the trading posts in the late spring and summer seasons. The traditional fishing grounds were still visited; however, more so if they happened to be on or close to a trading post (1992: 546).

Kehoe further discusses how the drastic cultural shifts experienced by the northern Ojibway since the increase of the fur trade are revealed in many social processes, such as a population decline due to a smallpox epidemic in between 1780 and

1782. This was only compounded with the decline in the caribou, moose, and beaver population that Kehoe suggests may have been related to the epidemic, and/or was due to an over extraction of these animals. However, as these animals provided the main staple for both the Ojibway and Cree diet, Kehoe argues, a result of poor nutrition and a weakened resistance to diseases became common, as their diet became limited to fish and snared small game for awhile. Additionally, they suffered from the cold temperatures more without their caribou skins, moose hide coats, and beaver mittens (1992: 546).

In the same era, Waisberg describes on this decline of animals more specific to the Rainy River area where reindeer and moose were still available, but not in enough supply to provide for all the meat and fur that was needed to feed and clothe the local population. However, the scarcity resulting from the moose/caribou depletion was much more felt among the northern Ojibway. As Waisberg suggests, the Ojibway in the Rainy River area were able to shift their resource focus to the available wild rice and sturgeon, as well as hunting bear and beaver instead (1984: 167).

For the Rainy River Ojibway, Waisberg emphasizes how wild rice was a “critical element of the subsistence and commercial economy,” (1984: 140) as it supplied the Ojibway when they went on their winter hunts for fur. In addition, they could harvest it as a commercial product for sale to the fur traders and other settlers around the posts. Nonetheless, the harvesting of the wild rice, in many years through the nineteenth and twentieth century, is recorded to have been an unreliable resource, as the variation in the water levels dictated the production of the rice from one year to the next. One example was in a two year time span between 1824 and 1825 when the water levels rose so much that there was no production of rice during this time (1984: 146). Additionally, Waisberg

describes how with the signing of Treaty 3 in 1873, construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway line also began in the area. Up until this point the Ojibway had been supplying rice to the fur trade companies. However, with the railway development came also the “rapid shipment of grain and other non-Indian foods into the region” (1984: 151). Thus the Ojibway experienced a decline in the commercial sales of their wild rice which paralleled the further challenge of legislation of the 1881 Indian Act that prohibited sales of surplus garden produce off reserve (Waisberg & Holzkamm 1993).

By the early nineteenth century, Kehoe writes, a resurgence of these animals brought the fur trade back as a viable economy for the Ojibway, as many gained their major income from trapping (1992: 548). However, their poor socio-economic conditions and health issues were already a century well-embedded and the growing convenience of purchasable products at the trading posts, such as flour, sugar, lard, canvas, and cloth continued to challenge the Ojibway health, way of life, and not to mention, their position in the shifting economy taking place in Canada (1992: 552). As well, the immigration of Euro-Canadian miners and trappers increasingly interfered with Native hunting and trapping practices, which Kehoe suggests encouraged the decision for Native communities to sign treaties in hopes that it would protect their territories (1992: 548).

The Euro-Canadian political policies that have been implemented since the onset of colonization reveal their contributions to the deterioration of important local social patterns in the Ojibway culture. Hallowell discusses how the British always recognized the rights First Nations peoples had to the land they occupied. This is evident in the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* that was created to ensure that any land appropriated from

First Nations people would first require the consent of the Crown. This evolved into the creation of treaties that were a part of the policy of coming to an agreement on the ownership of land. Hallowell discusses how these agreements typically included reserves set aside for First Nations communities and “benefits, such as cash payments, annuities, supplies, educational facilities, and other considerations. In return the Indians were to pledge peace and acceptance of the white man’s rule, as well as relinquish any legal claims to the lands they had formerly occupied” (1992: 32).

However, Ojibway people dispute that these treaties have rarely, if ever, been honoured; and furthermore, that treaties have been a part of a long series of land seizures and negotiations since the manifestation of the 1763 Proclamation. In Social and Economic Change among the Northern Ojibwa (1959), Dunning discusses how, in 1873, Ojibway communities in northwestern Ontario, and a small part of eastern Manitoba, signed the third treaty of a series of eleven. He explains how the communities within this treaty experienced drastic social, economic and geographical shifts that can be attributed to the way that the agreement of Treaty 3 was managed (1959: 10). Waisberg has used an excerpt from the Manitoba Inspector of Indian Agencies that displays an example of the ways the Euro-Canadian administration viewed the Ojibway in the few years that they did receive their treaty annuities:

It is the habit of these Indians to meet annually, where they remain for five or six weeks, partly to receive their annuities and partly to celebrate their various pagan ceremonies and traditional war dances. Gambling is also largely indulged in at these gatherings where mostly all the money received from the Government is squandered, and much valuable time is

lost when the cultivation of their gardens should be tended to. (qtd. in

Waisberg 1984: 197)

This description reveals the kind of paternalism that is embedded in these treaties.

Consequently, some of the justification in dishonouring the treaties can be seen in the disapproval of how the Ojibway were viewed as “squandering” their treaty annuities. As a result, Waisberg adds, that by 1915 the Canadian government had in fact sold most of the “Rainy River Indians” reserve land (1984: 120).

Waisberg also outlines the introduction of schools to the Rainy River Ojibway, which was outlined in the Treaty 3 as being an option that would be provided when the communities asked for it. However, it was not until 1881 that two schools were finally in operation on the Rainy River at Long Sault and Little Forks, and in 1889 when one was finally built at Manitou Rapids. Furthermore, they were mission schools which were “a cost-cutting measure” for the government, and stipulated that if the Ojibway were not willing to accept the mission schools they would have to build their own schools before the government would provide official teachers (1984: 259). Waisberg cites records that state how, in the end, the Ojibway agreed to put their children in the mission schools if the government was not going to offer anything else. By the 1890s, Indian Affairs began to support the idea of a “central industrial school” after being convinced of “inadequate federal funding and poor attendance” (1984: 262). However, Waisberg points out there were much protest from the Ojibway who demanded their schools be open and taught without religious instruction. Consequently, the schools on the reserves did operate on and off up until 1916, after which, with the amalgamation of the Rainy River

communities, a permanent day school opened. Waisberg writes on the kind of government control here:

Promoting inadequately funded mission schools under poorly-paid and incompetent teachers the government broke not only the letter but the spirit of the treaty with the Rainy River Bands. The Department of Indian Affairs, not Ojibway religion or lifestyle, was the chief obstacle to modern training and education during the last quarter of the 19th century. (Waisberg 1984: 263)

Waisberg elaborates on the post treaty life where after 1900, access to the diverse resources became threatened with the “increasing Canadian settlement in the region, the destruction of the sturgeon resources by the commercial fisheries, the increasingly common inundation of the rice, by water control structures and finally, a series of disastrous land surrenders, severely reduced the resources and lands available to the Rainy River Ojibway. By the time Ruth Landes began her studies at Manitou Rapids in the mid-1930s, the economy of the people was severely circumscribed and characterized by low productive diversification” (1984: 126). This is a well defined example of the severe social, economic and environmental shifts that the Rainy River Ojibway experienced and all within only a century. Many aspects of social life at Manitou have carried its residue right up into today.

Some other Ojibway groups, however, such as the Berens River community who agreed to the terms of Treaty 5 in 1875, were less fazed. As Hallowell suggests, their northern territory was so isolated from main trade routes that their traditional patterns, at the time, went on as usual. Only they were now provided with annual treaty payments

and were appointed an Indian agent (1992: 33). Essentially, the struggles that First Nations communities have undergone throughout the twentieth century in order to regain their sovereignty and lands has been met by tension with government bureaucracies over policies such as the Indian Act and unsettled treaties. Consequently however, Kehoe argues that much of this struggle has resulted in indigenous mobilization that has been taking place since 1969 (1992: 555).

One clear example Kehoe gives of this local community revitalization is among the Northern Ojibway and their participation in the Grand Council Treaty Number Nine from 1905-1906. They designed a policy where aboriginal rights to historically occupied lands were to be inalienable, and have outlined these rights in a list (Kehoe 1992: 553). Essentially, the goal of the Grand Council Treaty is to create local projects that protect Ojibway activities and maintain Ojibway values, while at the same time, making available technologies and Euro-Canadian education. Thus, Ojibway education seeks to integrate Algonkian languages, history, and instruction in bush skills with Euro-Canadian academic subjects. The wisdom, Kehoe suggests, is the symbiotic integrating of both First Nations and Euro-Canadian traditions simultaneously “gained through decades of frustration and disappointment under policies imposed by strangers” (1992: 554).

The recent political shift at RRFN with the signing of the renegotiated 1873 Treaty 3 settlement in 2004 is, in the one hand, another example of the increasing Native resurgence that has especially been on the rise since 1969 with the onset of local and international initiatives such as the push of local communities organizing the reimbursement of dishonoured treaties and the formation of groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM), which influenced movements to organize in Canada. On the

other hand, this suggests the impetus, or even, the urgency for the mobilization of Native communities. The effects of the dishonoured treaties, along with a well enforced Indian Act, epitomize the existing historical processes that have been in power throughout the twentieth century. These social and historical examples of local mobilization reflect the overarching goal of self-determination that is felt in most Native communities throughout North America today, and which I found evident during my time at Manitou.

In this section, I have tried to illuminate the multilayered aspects of the structural forces that the onset of European contact can be seen to have imposed on First Nations people. Thus the lives of First Nations people have since been constantly altering and adapting to an industrial-technological-progress oriented “western” world. Above all though, as Hallowell has argued, this socio-historical shift was not without the “continuities of the native sociocultural systems because influences from the past by no means suddenly disappear” (1992: 38). With that said, this historical framework moves my research into a conceptual exploration of the dichotomizing notions of “tradition” and “progress” that dominant “western” discourses continue to rely on today to undermine and isolate experiences of the *indian*. Furthermore, it gives a back drop toward the endless gaps of both possibility and disbelief that can be found when trying to ground an historical exploration of the “causes and effects” of the structural forces implicated in the local socio-cultural context of experiences in an Ojibway community like Manitou.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

In building a conceptual framework to explore how local experiences in the Ojibway setting at Manitou can be seen to contradict and displace dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian*, I think it is important to come to some general understanding of the way that I have come to employ some words used in this thesis such as the notions of *indian* and of discourses. I begin by looking at Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “manifest manners” which draws on the construction and maintenance of the *indian*. I then turn to Stuart Hall’s elaboration of Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse and his ideas of “power from knowledge” to reveal how certain systems of knowledge become normalized, dominant forms, such as the present position of “western” discourses on the *indian*. From this theoretical base, I draw on some Enlightenment theory as a departure point for understanding possible kinds of dominant discourses that influence such notions as “western” science and progress today. Finally, I turn to Foucault’s idea of “counter discourse” to illuminate how it can be seen to displace dominant discourses when local contexts of experience are considered. And for this, I draw on a discussion of Ojibway oral tradition and storytelling as a method to express local and highly nuanced experiences. In addition, I draw on the theoretical discussions concerning the dominance of “western” discourses to consider the historical positions that the experiences have, in part, been influenced by. I also draw on the theoretical discussions emphasizing Native experiences with local ways of knowing to ground the major exploration of this thesis: the multilayered and complex contexts in which local Ojibway experiences are embedded.

3.1. *indian* versus Ojibway

In the Ojibway language the actual name the Ojibway refer to themselves as is *Anishinaabe* which is defined in the A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe (1995), as a “person, human (in contrast to nonhuman beings), Indian (in contrast to non-Indians), Ojibwe” (1995: 10). The Ojibway have also commonly been known as “Chippewa” which Alfred Irving Hallowell in his book, The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History (1992), discusses is the anglicized version of Ojibway adopted by the American government (1992: 6). The American spelling of Chippewa is still the same pronunciation as the word Ojibway, but with the vowel “O” taken off resulting in the “Chippewa” spelling to make the similar sound (Densmore 1929: 5).

In the context of my paper, I have chosen to use the “Ojibway” spelling that RRFN use on their website rather than the “Ojibwe” that is used in the dictionary. Similarly, I use the word Ojibway to refer to the RRFN throughout this paper as this is how I most often heard people referring to themselves, at the local level. However, there is some interchange between the usage of Ojibway and Anishinaabe where context permits. And actually, if I were to work toward developing this thesis with a more “decolonizing” emphasis, it would have been a more appropriate choice to employ the word Anishinaabe.

In Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance (1999), Anishinaabe scholar, Gerald Vizenor argues towards the specificity of referring to Native peoples by their designated groups in order to move away from the homogenizing that grouping all Native peoples as *indian* implies. He further, advocates using the original names, such as Anishinaabe whenever possible, as the current names used are inventions of the colonizer

(1999: 11). I have considered what Vizenor argues but have equally found it difficult to apply all the time, for as I have mentioned many people at RRFN and in Ojibway Country, for that matter, refer to themselves as Ojibway. I found this to be especially significant when building an historical analysis; I was compelled to change the constant usage of the word Ojibway to Anishinaabe, as I felt the pressure of perpetuating Vizenor's argument of a "manifest manners in the literature of dominance" (1999:3). However, in the end I opted for what I heard in the community. Indeed, Vizenor's argument raises awareness towards using these simulated words, in and of themselves, reinforces the "manifest manners in the literature of dominance" (1999:3). The other side of this, however, is that these simulated names can be argued as becoming a part of a complex context that imports localized meaning and importance to these words employed by the colonizer.

I have borrowed Vizenor's ironic use of the word *indian* which he italicizes in lower case intentionally "to draw attention to the simulation of hundreds of cultures in one name" (2000: xxiii). He argues this to "[insinuate] the obvious simulation and ruse of colonial dominance. Manifestly, the *indian* is an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities" (1999: vii). Vizenor's symbolism of this word *indian* helps to inform my own thesis in terms of how dominant "western" discourses can be seen to define First Nations people into categories that, more or less, construct a kind of essential *indian*. However, and again, on the flip side of this, I found people at Manitou employ this word so that in certain contexts it was locally acceptable to define oneself as an Indian. Alternatively, and I will give an example in just a moment, to *play* with this word in reference to its use in dominant

“western” discourses, reveals how dominant social constructions of the *indian* can wind up being displaced in the local Ojibway context at Manitou.

I witnessed an interaction during my fieldwork at Manitou where a group of young teenage boys were horsing around with each other and began trying to take each other’s caps off their heads. From this, two of the young men agreed that if one of them got the other’s cap that person could keep it. Naturally, one of the young men championed the other and ran off with his hat. The group of boys all laughed and went back to hanging out. However, after a few minutes passed, the young man who had lost his cap, snuck up behind the fellow who now had his new found cap perched on top of his own. The young fellow managed to snatch his cap and run off laughing. The young men laughed, saying to the young fellow who was careless enough to let the cap back so easily: “he just pulled an *indian* on you!”

Vizenor talks about the idea of a “post-indian” who he defines as “the new storiers of conversions and survivance...*indians* are the immovable simulations, the tragic archives of dominance and victimry. Manifest manners favor the simulations of the *indian* traditionalist, an ironic primitive with no cultural antecedence. Postindians absolve the simulations with stories of cultural conversions and native modernity” (1999: viii-x; see also Warren 2001). When these young men at Manitou describe the one young fellow’s action of taking his hat back as, “pulling an *indian*,” it suggests this kind of “postindian” playing with the constructed *indian* in the “literature of dominance”. Here these young *Ojibway* men can be seen to “absolve the simulations” of the classic notion of the “*indian* giver,” by acknowledging the difference between an “*indian*” and an *Ojibway*. Thus, the “cultural conversions” here can be seen in the local context that

distinguishes between the *indian experience* and the *Ojibway experiences*. I use this as the onset of examples to show how at the local social level of Manitou, exists cultural nuances and subtleties that seem to almost *play* with these dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*. Or, as Vizenor would say, “tease...the literature of dominance...with stories of cultural conversions and native modernity” (1999: x).

I will quickly touch on Vizenor’s notion of “manifest manners” in order to illuminate what I mean in referring to dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian*. And again, my purpose is ultimately to argue toward the importance of context taken down to its finest points, in order to derive meaning from the experiences at the local levels, rather than taking from these abstract dominant “western” discourses alone. Thus, “manifest manners”, as according to Vizenor, “are the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as ‘authentic’ representations of *indian* cultures. Manifest manners court the destinies of monotheism, cultural determinism, objectivism, and the structural conceits of savagism and civilization” (1999: vii). Furthermore, he argues this to permeate the “literature of dominance”, which he describes through the notion of Wallace Stagner’s “western landscape”. Here Vizenor writes how “the land and new nation were discovered with nouns and deverbatives, consumed with transitive actions, and embraced with a causal sensation of manifest manners. The land was unnamed and became a place with names ‘worn smooth with use,’ [Stagner] wrote in an essay. ‘No place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments’” (1999:9). For me, I attempt to show how this “literature of dominance” reinforces

Vizenor's "manifest manners" with the themes I use to exemplify how dominant "western" discourses define the *indian*.

Vizenor uses an example of a particular high school where he describes the teachers, who teach Native students, as good hearted and well-meaning, but nonetheless, "[endorse] the idea of "cultural deprivation," [thinking] that natives [are] not as capable of abstract reasoning as other students. [Vizenor names] their "educated" views, manifest manners" (1999: xi). His ideas are clever, and have often had me wondering how many ways I might be somehow contributing to this "manifest manners" in the writing of this text. For that reason, I think this next example sets the tone for how easy it is to fall into discoursing about the *indian*. And why dismantling these very discourses through exploring local experiences gives rise to an increasing awareness of complicated meanings and local assertions of power:

Native educators likewise contributed to manifest manners, and did so with a curious crease of authenticity. I had invited an outstanding native educator to meet with the reservation students; she told them that *indians* "do not touch each other." That notice, naturally, prompted a humorous response, but the students truly wanted to know what *indians* she was talking about. She had written as much about cultural values in her dissertation, and at many education conferences, advanced the idea that *indians* were not touchers. Many teachers *embraced* the "no touch" notion to answer apparent *indian* reticence in public school, and the rest is manifest manners. (Vizenor 1999: xi)

In a similar vein to Vizenor's ideas surrounding the impetus of "manifest manners", Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes in her book, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999), on the different conceptualization of the term "authentic" in the "western" context and in the world views of the "colonized". Here she elaborates on the ways in which the colonized conceptualize this notion:

[It] was used as a form of articulating what it meant to be dehumanized by colonization; and, second, for reorganizing 'national consciousness' in the struggles for decolonization. The belief in an authentic self is framed within humanism but has been politicized by the colonized world in ways which invoke simultaneous meanings; it does appeal to an idealized past when there was no colonizer... [and] although this may seem overly idealized, these symbolic appeals remain strategically important in political struggles. (1999: 73)

This, she juxtaposes to the "western" notion of "authentic" that when directed towards the colonized is used to define "who really is indigenous, who is worth saving, who is still innocent and free from western contamination (1999: 74). Her discussion inspires my exploration towards the ways that local Ojibway experiences can be seen to contradict the dominant "western" discourses of the *indian*. In this thesis, the ethnographic dialogues most definitely suggest recognition of "a long and storied tradition" grounded in the Ojibway culture. Furthermore, in writing a historical synopsis of Manitou, and for that matter, the entire Treaty 3 area, the way that "they" construct their Ojibway culture as historically valid and culturally unique reveals, on the one hand, the depth and intricacies of Ojibway culture. On the other hand, the requirement to "prove" their historical existence to justify why they are entitled to their treaty rights

reveals how they systematically become framed by the “west” in this “authentic” image of the *indian*. Consequently, not being framed as “authentic” immediately assimilates the “colonized” to the “west”, and further indicates how discourses of the *indian* experience are maintained.

Smith’s commentary is significant in that she asserts that the “colonized” are “contradictory”, and rightly so. Smith writes: “[At] the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the west has that privilege.” (1999: 74) In this thesis, to illuminate the complex contexts of the local Ojibway experiences at Manitou, a reconceptualising of “authentic” and a dismantling of the *indian* is critical.

I explore three themes—humour, food, and social issues—to look at how “western” discourses have constructed and defined the experience of the *indian*. Additionally, I aim for a focus that explores how these “western” discourses about the *indian* become transformed into highly localized and sophisticated contexts of experiences. Thus, it makes for a “tricky” project, as to even think of entertaining these social themes in the context of Native peoples, is like refuelling an already blazing fire. However, if I can even begin to show in this text how I have interpreted the ways individuals at Manitou shared their experiences with me, then it might mean that I am getting across the ways that local experiences can be seen to transform these kinds of dominant discourses into complex local meanings of their own.

3.2. Discourses

Stuart Hall, in his article, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” defines discourses as “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (1996: 201). For me, Hall’s discussion is important for conceptualizing some of the dominant “western” discourses that define ways of the *indian* experience, and which I illuminate in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Hall refers particularly to Michel Foucault whose ideas surround notions such as “power from knowledge,” which is valuable in helping to inform my own argument towards the existence of a surrounding body of “western” discourses on the *indian*. I am interested in how Foucault defined discourse as based on the “production of knowledge through language” (Hall 1996: 201), and what is of particular importance here is how Foucault argued that this knowledge “creates peoples very sense of who they are” (Mascia-Lees 2000: 81).

Hall draws on Foucault’s preference for referring to discourse rather than ideology. Here Foucault argues that ideologies distinguish true or scientific statements from false or ideological statements making reality to be based on this either/or binary of statements. For Foucault, these true and false statements are not so easily defined, as they are implicated in an array of complex meanings and forms of discourses. Furthermore, whatever may be perceived as true or false, is not of utmost importance. Rather, Foucault argues that these beliefs have real consequences based on the knowledge source that has made these beliefs “true,” thus it is more of an issue of *power* than of *facts* (Hall 1996: 203). Foucault’s designation of the difference between discourse and ideology has helped influence my own application of it in this thesis.

In understanding how Foucault theorized discourses to function, I again draw on Hall who has outlined some important points. For example, he discusses how discourses can be produced by individuals coming from a variety of institutions, and that individuals communicate these discourses from the position of the subject. Here Hall uses the main discussion of his article as an example of how an individual from “the west” may not believe in the notion of “the west and the rest;” however, speaking with the awareness that “the west” is the superior civilization accords meaning to this particular discourse. Consequently, discourses construct new meaning by drawing on other discourses, as well as the meanings from old ones that also transcend into the new ones. For Foucault, discourses “don’t stop abruptly” (Hall 1996: 221) and are always in forward motion making sense of the emerging circumstances, bringing along with them “many of the same unconscious premises and unexamined assumptions in their blood-stream” (Hall 1996: 221).

Foucault employs the concept “discursive formation” to describe how discourses are not singular or closed statements, but rather made up of many statements that do not need to be the same. However, they “must be regular and systematic” (Hall 1996: 202) in order to produce meaning. These aspects of the functioning of discourses are helpful for understanding his ideas of how power is gained from ways of knowing. Certain kinds of knowledge, Foucault argued, become normalized discourses while others become marginalized. An example that he discusses is of the normalized discourses of medicine and psychology on sexuality where he argues act “as regimes of truth’ ... in modern societies like our own... ‘truth’ is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions that produce it...it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion

and consumption...it is produced and transmitted under the control...of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)” (Mascia-Lees & Black 2000: 82). For Foucault, this control through discourses of knowledge keeps people limited to their own potential of power through these “regimes of truth.” In this sense, people can make choices for themselves but they are limited to the confines of what constitutes “truth” according to the normalized forms of knowledge at a given time. As well, the “truths” that are produced out of discourses are what influence and shape individuals (Mascia-Lees & Black 2000).

In I am Dynamite: An Alternative Anthropology of Power (2003), Nigel Rapport criticizes Foucault’s ideas for having a limited idea of individual potential as Foucault sees the “individual is a variable complex function of discourse [...] totally imprinted by history” (2003: 62). I draw on Rapport’s argument here because it raises a critical link to how Foucault’s notion of discourses does not “tell all” through history alone. Indeed, the residue from history always seems evident, and I support this by presenting a historical synopsis of the Ojibway, and by further illuminating in Chapter 5, particular ways that discourses can be seen to define Native peoples in contemporary North America. It does seem, however, that at the local and particular level of context this idea that humans are wholly shaped by the power of discourses becomes less clear the more local one goes. For on the surface level, the structure of discourses may appear at the forefront of everything. However, to have had the opportunity to both visit Manitou and get to know some of the people there; the way that dominant “western” discourses of the *indian* uphold in the particular contexts of this community, began to appear for me, as a

fragmented and complicated array of experiences imbued with local and flexible meanings rather than a “regular and systematic” production of meaning.

Consequently in this thesis, Foucault’s “power from knowledge,” on the one hand, provides the foundation for articulating how particular ways of knowing becomes dominant over another. This framework helps to inform understanding of how the historical relationship between First Nations people and Europeans continues to this day, and is reflected in the disparity between the marginalized and the powerful, respectively. However, and this is where the other hand comes in, in my own exploration of this disparity, I give momentum to this power relationship as I explore the historical discourses that continue to embed dominant ways of knowing. Additionally, I most definitely see how Foucault’s notion of “power from knowledge” exists within the local discourses at Manitou. However and just as equally, I see this “power from knowledge” implicated into a realm of complicated and contradictory experiences when taken into the local Ojibway context at Manitou. And this, in the end, makes it difficult to avoid noticing the prevalence of unique and local nuances influencing individual experiences which, I argue, transfer the power from “western” knowledge discourses into local Ojibway contexts of meaning. But before I get ahead of myself, I want to draw on some ideas that precede the development of Foucault’s notion of discourses by exploring the possibilities towards how the discourses of the “West” have dominance over the “rest”.

3.3. Enlightenment Thought

I will draw on some earlier ideas that distinguish between the “West” and the “rest”. In generating an understanding of where some of the basic contemporary western mainstream ideas are rooted, I turn to the Enlightenment period which is often referred to

as an intellectual movement in the 1800s. For my purpose here, I want to look at how it represents a historical shifting point for an emergence of new ideas that can be seen to remain rooted in the world-views and dominant discourses western societies still hold today. For this, I draw on Peter Hamilton's article, "The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Sciences," for his in depth discussion of the formations of modernity due, in part, to the emergence of an intellectual awareness that was critical of society in Western Europe.

Hamilton argues that many elements of thinking from the Enlightenment period have transcended into a distinct "modern sociology" and are suggested to be preoccupied with a particular mode of thought that he calls "critical rationalism," which encompasses ideas surrounding "reason to social, political, and economic issues with a concern with progress, emancipation, and improvement, and is consequently critical of the status quo" (1996: 22). For Hamilton's purpose, he suggests that these ideas provide a framework for intellectuals, then and now, to both visualize their natural world and a way for thinking about it. These ideas on many levels suggest how they have become normalized into popular modes of thinking, or rather, discourses in mainstream western society today. Consequently, the modes of thought in intellectual circles such as the Enlightenment illustrate a kind of reflection of the processes of the social world implicated in the producing and reproducing of mainstream ways of thinking and knowing held in western societies today.

So what are some of these ideas that emerged in the Enlightenment and can be seen embedded in the normalized and mainstream discourses of our contemporary western societies? Hamilton outlines a summarized list of the main ideas that the

Enlightenment intellectuals, also known as the “philosophes” were thinking at the time. And although they may be minimally articulated in daily discourses I tend to believe that these ideas pervade a general consciousness in society today however contradictory and inconsistent they may be played out. The concept, “reason”, which Eric Wolf, in Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis (1999), suggests is a central preoccupation of the “philosophes,” was seen as the key to freeing the mind from a long time religious orthodoxy; thus, “knowledge [could] go forward unhampered by figments of the mind” (Wolf 1999: 32). Operationalizing reason, the “philosophes” believed, would cultivate a rational thought that organized knowledge “based upon clear, innate ideas independent of experience” (Hamilton 1996: 23), and was accessible to any thinking person. This notion of reason assists understanding of Foucault’s “power from knowledge” where discourses can be seen to gain collective meaning through how rational thinking is normalized from a set of beliefs. Therefore, the mentioned set of beliefs that constructs ideas of “reason” illustrates how power is produced from knowledge.

The “philosophes” linked rationalism with empiricism which was used to suggest how human beings produced thoughts and knowledge about the natural and social world through their sense organs’ experience; therefore, suggesting how knowledge is based on empirical facts. Additionally, scientific knowledge from experiment would also be “the key to expanding all human knowledge” (Hamilton 1996: 23), and through the idea of “universalism” both reason and science outlined here could be the guiding principles for all of humanity. The idea of “progress” that looked to science and reason to be the key to improving the conditions of human beings and increasing their well-being reflects the

dominant discourses today that suggest western society having a high standard of life due to the notion of “progress” (Hamilton 1996: 23). Although the benefits of “progress” have clearly not been made accessible to all human beings, the notion nonetheless, based on the potential of science, can be argued to hold true as a dominant belief that is the key to improving the human condition.

Hamilton continues with Enlightenment ideas such as: “individualism” which suggests knowledge and action start from the individual; “toleration” which asserts that all human beings are equal; “freedom” to do such things as think, interact, communicate, etc.; and finally, “uniformity of human nature” which essentially entails the belief that human nature has and always will be the same everywhere (1996: 23). For my purpose, these ideas help in trying to conceptualize Foucault’s notion of discourses in terms of how they contribute to some understanding of the contemporary “western” modes of thinking. The idea that the “philosophes” believed reason provided a knowledge base for ideas of progress to ensue, namely science, suggests how dominant discourses today came to rationalize “progress” through science. Furthermore, it suggests, how power can be seen to be implicated in a realm of discourses that privilege certain kinds of knowledge, such as, particular “western” forms of science.

The “philosophes” applied ideas of science to describe the new ways of knowing the natural and social world, and to distinguish from the long time reign of knowledge about the world that was monopolized by Christianity. Therefore, reason as Hamilton suggests it, provided the “philosophes” with a whole new framework of ideas about man, society, and nature, which challenged the existing conceptions, rooted in the traditional world-view of Christianity (Hamilton 1996: 24). Here, the “philosophes” can be seen to

have distinguished between traditional forms of knowledge authorized by the church in place of modern forms of knowledge that utilized “experience, experiment, and reason – quintessentially, science” (Hamilton 1996: 30). They argued that up until the eighteenth century a specific kind of knowledge was disseminated through religious institutions. It was not until the emergence of empirical science and common accounts of distinct and exotic societies that the traditional cosmologies founded by Christianity were challenged (Hamilton 1996: 30).

The “enlightenment anti-traditionalists” set out to debunk “outmoded, scripturally-based concepts of the universe, the earth, and human society” (Hamilton 1996: 30), in the hope to displace the veil Christianity held as socially important knowledge, and to redefine it according to the new and relevant meanings. Here Hamilton suggests that the “philosophes” dismantling of traditional society and knowledge were motivated by their advocacy toward how science provided clear and tangible answers to the social and natural world, along with, “the notions of progress and reason for which it seemed to provide a guarantee” (Hamilton 1996: 31).

The “philosophes” pursuit of modernity can be seen to be rooted in the belief of the “pre-eminence of empirical, materialist knowledge, essentially science; and an enthusiasm for technological and medical progress: scientists, inventors and doctors were seen as the curers of society’s ills; and a desire for legal and constitutional reform, specifically an admiration of the liberties in the British constitution” (Hamilton 1996: 36). The paradox of this mode of thought is that although the “philosophes” had brought forth a kind of framework for improving the human condition, this is not how it has been played out for *all* of humanity.

Therefore, what I suggest can be argued here is in how these ideas have been implicated into a web of discourses that only perpetuates the power associated with any mode of knowledge. For example, for all that the Enlightenment brought to the surface by unveiling “truths” that had previously kept the church and monarchy in power. New dominant discourses were produced that maintained the “idea that the application of science and enlightened thought to the improvement of man’s lot could make the European societies in which the philosophes lived the most advanced in the world” (Hamilton 1996: 43). Consequently, Enlightenment thought has transcended into the present day beliefs where western societies hold the notion that “progress” is wholly discernible between the existing dichotomies of “developed” and “developing” worlds.

3.4. Counter Discourses

Foucault argued that as a result of the ever so pervasive “regimes of power,” counter discourses would emerge (Mascia-Lees & Black 2000: 83). This is similarly exemplified in Eric Wolf’s discussion of the counter-enlightenment thoughts that emerged as a critique toward the Enlightenment’s complete preoccupation with the notion of “progress” based on a universal science benefiting all human beings (1999: 26). Thus, in Wolf’s argument, counter discourses emerge in order to contest the very “regimes of power” constructed in a “progress” oriented knowledge central to the era of Enlightenment.

This idea of counter discourses is a critical juncture to the main argument I am trying to make in this thesis. My fieldwork process left me with the impression that local experiences have their own highly creative and sophisticated ways of displacing the dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian*. For me, this not only complicated

the understanding of the ways that discourses are experienced, perceived and actualized. But also revealed how, in the local Ojibway context of Manitou, the dominance of these discourses can be seen to become immediately displaced and/or completely irrelevant to the given experiences at hand.

I once again call upon Gerald Vizenor for the counter product of his notion “literature of dominance”. Here “an invitation to a ‘reflexive nature’ that [...] [undermines] the trust of presence in translation, representation, and simulations” opens up to the “virtues of the literature of survivance” (1999: 69). Vizenor describes this in more detail in his discussion on the issue of naming which recalls a kind of counter discoursing as, “[the] Indian [becomes] the other of manifest manners, the absence of the real tribes, the inventions in the literature of dominance, the postindian simulations of survivance, on the other hand, [arise] with a resistance literature” (1999: 55) in the “literature of survivance”.

These names may not hold the same meaning in the context of the “postindian”, as they may have in the oral storytelling of the past. Nonetheless, argues Vizenor, “personal names and tribal nicknames are stories” (1999: 55) that can be seen as a part of the “resistance literature”. The inventions of names in the “literature of dominance” can be seen in the experience of Luther Standing Bear, “one of the first tribal students at the new government school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania” (Vizenor 1999: 54). He writes in *My People the Sioux* upon receiving his “white man” name:

One day when we came to school there was a lot of writing on one of the blackboards. [...] We did not know what it meant, but our interpreter came into the room and said, ‘Do you see all these marks on the blackboard?’

Well, each word is a white man. They are going to give each one of you one of these names by which you will hereafter be known,' None of the names were read or explained to us, so of course we did not know the sound or meaning of any of them....I was one of the 'bright fellows' to learn my name quickly. How proud I was to answer when the teacher called the roll! I would put my blanket down and half raise myself in my seat, all ready to answer to my new name. I had selected the name 'Luther'—not 'Lutheran' as many people call me. (qtd. in Vizenor 1999: 54)

Standing Bear's description suggests the ways in which Foucault's notion of the "production of knowledge through language...creates peoples very sense of who they are" (Hall 1996: 201). As here, the *indian* becomes the project of assimilation with the abandoning of tribal names in place of the "white man's" names. Thus, "knowledge through language" suggests how meaning through the symbolic power of naming shapes "peoples very sense of who they are". And this, Luther Standing Bear exemplifies when he shares how proud he was to be one of the first to answer back to the teacher when he heard his new name called out. Today, however, as Vizenor argues, this loss of personal identity in Native history is regained by the counteraction in the practice of naming as "tribal nicknames are the shadows heard in stories; the pleasures of nicknames, even in translation, are an unmistakable celebration of personal identities. Nicknames are personal stories that would, to be sure, trace the individual to tribal communities rather than cause separations by pronouns of singular recognition" (1999: 57).

In the ethnographic dialogues in Chapter 4 I have created pseudonyms (Braveheart; Blue Prairie Woman; Joey Tall Stockings) to provide a certain level of

anonymity for the individuals that I interacted with. I have also chosen to incorporate this kind of tribal naming that Vizenor writes about, to illuminate the embedded ironies in the paternalism the Government maintains, as is exemplified of Luther Standing Bear when he describes receiving a white man's name at school. In addition, this emphasis on tribal naming provides a symbolic exploration into how "Postindian identities are inscrutable recreations, the innermost brush with natural reason, and, at the same time, unbounded narcissism and a rush of new simulations of survivance" (Vizenor 1999: 52)

Now, in looking at counter discourses I will explore how Native discourses provide a way of knowing the world that is remarkably different from the dominant world-views of "western" discourses today. This, of course, is assuming "western" discourses are a simulation of the dominant ideas carried over from the Enlightenment mode of thought. Additionally, the context of local experiences are inevitably bound up in their own set of sophisticated discourses, as they present "a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic" (Hall 1996: 201). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the absolutes that seem to arise with any form of discourse, and that equally run the risk of abandoning the complex experiences that exist in the more particular of contexts.

In presenting Native ways of knowing in relation to Euro-Canadian discourses, which in my view appears to privilege scientific modes of thinking, I argue that Native knowledge is embedded in a web of counter discourses. I argue two implications for this. One is that Native ways of knowing, with its own intricate history set apart from European influences reveals how pre-colonial civilizations had produced an approach to knowledge that was wholly different. Thus, in both the subtleties and grandiosities these

pre-colonial knowledge systems transcend into the present day, despite the powerful influences of “western” discourses. The other factor I suggest stems from the history of contact, where in the dramatic socio-cultural shift for Native peoples, emerged a resistance that continues to both reveal and reproduce itself within a kind of Native counter discoursing. I am not advocating here for either Native ways of knowing as being produced as a direct reaction to colonization, nor am I suggesting that Native knowledge systems are wholly implicated in a historical setting of their own based on notions of “tradition”. Rather, to be aware that in the many complex layers that the process of local experiences takes place, they consequently can be seen not only to contradict dominant “western” discourses alone, but also, to have their moments where they *play* with the local and counter discourses as well.

Wolf quotes Richard Fox who argues that “there is no weight of tradition, only a current of action. Culture is not a given to be reenacted but is ‘always in the making’” (Wolf 1999: 61). This illuminates how different world-views are constantly in flux, relatable and influenced by one another, and yet at the same time, completely unique and independent in their own nuanced ways. Nonetheless, in what seems to be an inherent characteristic of power, these counter and dominant “western” discourses are not only totally distinguishable from one another, but are also caught up in dichotomizing discourses that privilege mainstream forms of knowledge, and as a consequence, marginalize counter forms.

In Ethnocriticism (1992), Arnold Krupat discusses an interesting angle of this dichotomized discourse between Native and Euro-Canadian relations with his concept, “frontier.” He argues here that one culture did not encounter another but rather in “that

shifting space [...] two cultures encounter one another” (1992: 5). He suggests that western scholarship always distinguishes the two cultures by their unequal material relations. He further argues that with this discourse as the backdrop for academic theorists, indicates how “western” imperialism transcends into its critical discourses. Nonetheless, Krupat himself stands at a crossroads where the concepts he employs are “western” categories, and yet he argues that with a relativistic approach multiple frontiers can still be crossed. Essentially, for Krupat, ethnocriticism may be a contradictory project because it positions itself in the “betweenness” (1992: 28) of all the critical discourses. However, his emphasis “to traverse rather than occupy a great variety of ‘middle grounds,’ both at home and abroad” (1992: 25) lends to the advocacy of both acknowledging and employing marginalized modes of knowledge.

Furthermore, Krupat discusses how discourse at the “middle grounds,” or “frontiers”, involves varying levels of relations going on where Native and Euro-American perspectives confront one another (1992: 29). And these two “frontiers” have very different ways of transmitting knowledge, for example, the difference attributed to many Native American societies of being associated to an oral tradition, while the “west” is typically associated to a literary tradition. Krupat argues that they are still able to come to a kind of “middle ground” that communicates these different discourses through processes of “some new ‘invention’ or synthesis” (1992: 30).

For me, what is critical in Krupat’s argument is how “ethnocriticism,” for him, must avoid “[speaking] for the ‘Indian,’ ‘interpreting’ for him or her” (1992: 30). For in doing so, one is continuing to silence Native peoples through the dominant “western” discourses that assume Native peoples fail to have experiences. Or rather, to think that

meaning for Native peoples is the same for all, or as Krupat quotes T.S. Elliot, “to have had the experience but missed the meaning” (1992: 30). Basically, his argument suggests that there are many levels to take into account when trying to understand these cultural boundaries. However, the focus of my thesis is inspired by how this notion of “frontier” appears blocked by the evident difficulty that the cultural boundaries between Canadian society and Native communities have towards meeting at this kind of equal plain, somewhere at the “frontier”. Ironically, Krupat himself cannot come to solve the problematic of the relations of power and representation here and even criticizes himself for still writing despite his use of “western” constructions of theory.

Now I will draw on some Native ways of knowing in order to situate the counter side of this “frontier”. It is not that I hope to find the antithesis to the kinds of privileged knowledge systems dominated by “western” discourses. Rather, it is more to illuminate ways of knowing that are not just preoccupied with notions of science and “progress”. Consequently, in discussing this, it helps orient my thesis towards an exploration of how the local level of Ojibway experiences can be seen to engage with the dominant “western” discourses of being *indian* in complex and contradictory ways.

An important point that has come up in my research about Native ways of knowing is how it is largely argued to be produced and disseminated through oral tradition. Kimberley Blaeser in, Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition (1996), discusses Gerald Vizenor as a mixed-blood Anishinaabe coming from a storytelling people. For Vizenor, Blaeser explains, storytelling is “so precious and so gentle and so powerful...the simplest act of personal liberation is imagination, talk, the play of imagination—in other words, talking so that an idea actually is part of it yet sets you out

of it” (1996: 4: see also Cole forthcoming). There are many critics, Blaeser argues, that do not think oral tradition can be accurately translated into a literary text. However, Vizenor does not limit himself to this perspective, as he argues that there are possibilities in at least attempting it, and thus has sought after his “traditional Ojibway tales, ceremonies, and dream songs, and in the pantribal milieu of oral and mythic tradition” (1996: 16) for inspiration in his own writing.

What I think is important to draw from Vizenor’s advocacy of writing oral tradition is how he suggests it to be the key to Native survival, as he sees identity largely constructed through language and literature. Therefore, without Native languages, or discourses of oral traditions, the Native will “vanish through popular, scientific, literary, and political rhetoric” (Blaeser 1996: 39). Vizenor’s approach suggests how cultural boundaries are crossed in order to reproduce new modes of expression while still using “traditional” ways of knowing. This reflects the resiliency of cultural marginalization and also suggests an aspect of Krupat’s “ethnocriticism” where Native societies are argued to be in “forward” motion no less than the “west”. Consequently, the importance of storytelling and oral tradition is that they are not only key to the survival of unique socio-cultural contexts, but are also important reference points to the ways of knowing oneself and the world.

In Keeping Slug Woman Alive (1993), Greg Sarris discusses the rich detail and meaning that the process of storytelling gives to both the storytellers and to those that are listening, as stories “can work to oppress or to liberate, to confuse or to enlighten” (1993: 4). He further suggests that storytelling with its standard beginning, middle and end conventions is part of a process of “intercultural and interpersonal communication and

understanding” that can also be seen in the simple exchange of conversation. Essentially, the meaning that is transmitted through communication, either nonverbal or verbal, reveals the different cultural and personal world views.

Sarris explores this through the conversations he has with his Pomo grandmother, Mabel. He has recorded her stories in order to explore how different cultural and personal perspectives can be seen to meet at a crossroads of exchanges and understandings, or to at least meet at a kind of empathetic realization. Sarris realizes this process when he is sitting in a kitchen one day peeling potatoes with his grandmother and aunt. The way that his Pomo grandmother and aunt cut potatoes was evidently different from how Sarris, a mixed-blood Pomo/Miwok native also identifying as an American, peeled potatoes. This difference was raised by his aunt who perceived it as based on a cultural difference when she said, “Just like a white man...so wasteful!” (1993: 2). This example of an intercultural exchange of communication leads to some of his central questions about how people communicate “so that [they] see more than just what things seem to be” (1993: 3).

I find his discussion relevant because it reveals how paying attention to the subtleties and nuances in local cultural contexts allows for a developing awareness of the complex and inter-layered meanings going on. Again, this is reminiscent of Krupat’s “frontiers” in the sense that meaning is exchanged from both sides, not just one. In terms of how my exploration looks at how local Ojibway experiences can be seen to displace dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*, my experiential research also exemplifies how these discourses can apply in intercultural dialogue, while at the same time, maintaining specific nuances in their own local contexts.

In Life Lived like a Story (1990), Julie Cruikshank has chronicled the songs, mythologies, biographies, and life experiences of three elder Yukon Native women through the process of the life history approach. Cruikshank suggests that the life history approach involves a broad expanse of stories that may or may not indicate the workings of society; however, the women speak of their lives through “an oral tradition grounded in local idiom and a shared body of knowledge” (1990: 2).

One of the relevant points of Cruikshank’s analysis of oral stories is how she reveals that ways of knowing are situated in places. Here, named places and land marks are ways of understanding how “the past is culturally constituted and discussed in different contexts” (1990: 347). Therefore, through the way stories are told, places can be suggested to be embedded in meaning, as well as being used to orient events in chronological order. Furthermore, Cruikshank suggests that the narratives identifying places reflect a telling of the past where landmarks indicate events in time, and “symbols from nature [...] talk about culture” (1990: 354).

Similarly, in Wisdom Sits in Places (1996), Keith Basso discusses how Native discourses construct knowledge about the natural and social world through places among the western Apache. He suggests the notion of “place-making” as being a way of building an understanding of the world and “involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways” (1996: 5). Basso also suggests that place-making does not just provide an understanding of the surroundings, but also provides a conceptual framework in constructing history. Therefore, providing a means of “reviving” past events and “revising” them, as their significance can be interpreted at any point in time. Ultimately, Basso illustrates how place-making provides a framework for

“cultural spheres, including conceptions of wisdom, notions of morality, politeness and tact in forms of spoken discourse, and certain conventional ways of imagining and interpreting Apache tribal past” (1996: xv).

I would like also to draw on some of the aspects of the storytelling narratives that reveal the complexity of meanings involved in the local experiences of interaction. For this, I turn to Cruikshank again who has suggested that orally narrated life stories of women tend to be about their connection to other people and nature. As well, they provide an understanding to how men and women hold notions of “individuality, culture, and gender differently” (1990: 3). Also, Cruikshank argues that most of the literature tends to be about men’s lives. Here, she has illuminated the different ways that life stories are told of men and women, as men tend to reflect a “heroic literary tradition” with a self-confident image capable of overcoming difficulties, while woman are typically constructed as having inconsistent and discontinuous life stories. Furthermore, the life stories of minority women exhibit marginalization from both male-centered conventions and their position as an ethnic minority (1990: 3). Essentially, for Cruikshank, understanding oral tradition is important for how it is “used” more than what facts can be derived from it (1990: 4). For my purpose, her discussion provides a complex and contextual framework of Native oral tradition that is not just a way of expressing homogenous ways of knowing, but rather entails processes of the complex layers involved in intra-cultural relations as well. Thus, having drawn on these authors helps orient my exploration toward the complex layers of experiences in Native socio-cultural contexts, and further provides awareness towards the richness in alternative and more marginalized ways of knowing.

Furthermore, Cruikshank's discussion of how storytelling in the Native oral tradition reveals alternative ways of knowing suggests the complex elements of intersubjective experience whether it is cultural or personal. In Gender and Anthropology (2000), Frances Mascia-Lees & Nancy Black's discussion helps illuminate these complex elements that I have found important to consider when exploring local contexts of experience. First, they draw on Lila Abu-Lughod's argument that the concept of "culture" should be replaced by "discourse" as it is a more accurate description of how individual experiences are constructed within many discourses. The specific example they use illuminates how a black man's identity may be partly defined by a discourse of race and ethnicity, while at the same time, defined by a discourse of masculinity. Mascia-Lees & Black suggest that two power relations are going on here where in the former the man can be suggested as marginalized by the "system of a racial hierarchy, and in the later, he can be seen as privileged in a "system of gender hierarchy" (2000: 100).

I would like also to draw from Chandra Talpade Mohanty's article, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," to bring another element of analysis that specifically illuminates layers involved in various discourses of gender. Her article explores ideas about discourses of western world-views imposing their ideas and criticizing non-western experiences. For the purpose of Mohanty's article, she looks at how feminist discourses can be just as overbearing as mainstream discourses when they turn their gaze on the non-western world. She argues that recognizing that there is a difference between "third world feminisms" and "western feminist discourse" is the first step to moving away from western constructions of third world women. Mohanty does

not propose that even western feminism is homogenous, yet in the context of defining women, Mohanty argues that third world women are often assumed to be similar “regardless of class, ethnic or racial location” (1991: 55).

She suggests that for the purpose of critiquing the way western writers’ present western and non-western categories; there is a continuum in theme to be found. This theme, Mohanty argues, is the structural domination that suppresses “the heterogeneity of the subject(s),” and it is with this in mind that she seeks to develop “strategic coalitions across class, race, and national boundaries” (1991: 53). However, in the context of a homogenized construction of women, Mohanty argues, has also evolved an image of third world women. Thus, they are further dichotomized by the association of being women who are “sexually marginalized”, and for being from the “third world” which compounds discourses of poverty and “tradition-bound” associations of the third world (1991: 56).

Essentially, Mohanty’s argument is set up to challenge the western discourses that define non-western women into a “monolithic” category that consequently subverts and essentializes “third world women.” She suggests that this category is constructed from the basis of comparison where “western” scholars understand third world women’s lives based on “us” and “them” dichotomies. This diverts from the complexity of experiences and relative meanings that exist within local social contexts. Mohanty offers a good example of the contradictions and inconsistencies that complex and situational circumstances of oppression can yield. Thus, she compares the 1979 revolution in Iran where middle-class women wore their veils in solidarity with their working-class female counterparts. Mohanty’s use of this example is to suggest that looking at the veil as a

form of oppression based on sexual segregation is a western construction that limits the analysis and is not based on understanding historical and local contexts. The veil in this example symbolizes “an oppositional and a revolutionary gesture on the part of Iranian middle-class women; in the second case, it is coercive, institutional mandate” (1991: 67).

Mohanty’s discussion leaves me thinking about the many complexities that encompass social experiences, not to mention, a most astute perceptiveness required when interpreting meaning from these experiences. Cruikshank reveals this in her discussion of how women told the stories: although they could produce courageous stories of the men’s adventures, they left their own as seemingly average. She was also able to illuminate how these women’s very act of storytelling influenced and shaped the social life around them (see also Cole forthcoming). In this sense, women’s stories did not need to be glamorized, as it was in the “act” of telling the story itself that acknowledged women’s independence and creativity. Consequently, had Cruikshank only built her analysis on the “words” that were spoken from the stories, her analysis would have lacked the similar awareness toward complex contexts that Mohanty argues, exists in how “third world women” are critiqued from “western feminist” discourses surrounding gender equality. Rather, in highlighting the influences that her female storytellers have, Cruikshank’s example suggests how it is important to recognize the subtle nuances going on at the local level of socio-cultural settings, as they often tell a lot about the processes of social experiences. Furthermore, it reveals an awareness of the complexity in local contexts of experience juxtaposed to dominant discourses.

Now with all this said, I would like to present the life history dialogues so to begin a discourse analysis towards how kinds of local and social patterns of experiences

can be seen to creatively displace dominant “western” discourses of the *indian* in the Ojibway setting of Manitou.

Chapter 4: Life History Dialogues

4.1. Braveheart

As we slowly etched our way out of the narrow dirt road, I had come to the conclusion that witnessing a shaking tent ceremony was not meant to be. Maybe an outsider would have jinxed the whole thing, or maybe a woman menstruating would counteract the power? As it was now, Braveheart was focusing intensely on his driving at the same time as he was apologizing for having driven out to the meeting point only to find that everybody had already jumped on the boats and headed out for the island.

“Geez Jordan, I didn’t really think that everyone would have their cell phones turned off. I guess I should’ve driven a little faster. Sorry ‘bout that.”

“Oh don’t worry about it Braveheart, the fact that I could even come along was joy enough for me,” I responded in all sincerity, as I was pleased to be able to hang out with Braveheart.

“You know that some of the elders decided to organize this shaking tent because of all the things that have been going on in the community?” Braveheart stated.

“Really!” I exclaimed only half surprised.

“Yeah. Some think that the bad medicine is due to the treaty settlement. Some communities are not happy that we have come into so much money.”

“Huh.” I said between closed lips trying to piece together all the things I had learned since I had been here.

“But it is not easy to find a sincere medicine man these days, so many of them charge for their services. It’s hard to be a part of a ceremony and then after have the medicine man hand you an invoice for his services. In the past people would repay [the

medicine man] in gifts or money if they could, but it was never asked for, nor was it expected. For this shaking tent, the elders found someone who doesn't charge for their services."

"Oh, there are still some out there today?" I replied unknowingly.

"Oh yeah," Braveheart assured me with a quick glance, and then resumed his focus on the road.

"Hey Braveheart," I cut in excitedly, "How does someone just all of a sudden have bad medicine on them?" It was a question that was starting to eat at me because so many of the conversations I was having with people always brought up this discussion, and I really did not quite understand it.

Braveheart started to describe this with his own circumstance of being born with a left hand and no right hand. "You see how my stump looks like a turtle's paw a bit" and he raised his right arm towards me so that I could see it better. It was a little stump off the wrist without any fingers or knuckles and it was smaller than his other palm probably because it was not used, so the bones never developed equally.

As I stared at it and started to see the turtles paw that he was talking about, I quickly interrupted him. "You know I have a friend that has the same thing as you, but it is his left hand instead."

"Really?" He replied in an interested tone and then went on to tell his story.

"While I was in my mother's womb she ate turtle's eggs, and because the turtle is an animal held in high regard for being associated with North America. You know—Turtle Island? It was a sign of disrespect to the turtle and its natural life course. So you see I was born with a turtle's paw."

“Huh. That’s interesting,” I responded thinking about how the turtle and the human affected each other, and how my friend never spoke of his situation like this, to which I replied to Braveheart: “You know my friend always just says there is no rhyme or reason, he was just born with it.” I paused for a few moments thinking about how the same circumstance could be rationalized in completely different ways. My friend saw it as something he had no control over, where Braveheart saw it as the product of a cause and effect reaction. However, to me they both similarly lived out lives that reflected their coming to terms with it.

During all of this talking we were coming close to the town of Fort Frances where I had left my car parked at the Wal-Mart. Just as I got thinking about how this evening was coming to a quicker ending than I had hoped it would, Braveheart piped up: “are you hungry?”

“I can always eat!” I replied realizing that I was actually quite hungry.

“Good! ‘Cause I can too,” Braveheart said happily.

I smiled and decided to start up a conversation about food, “Which do you find yourself doing more of...eating out or cooking at home?”

“Ah well, I cook sometimes, but me and the kids will pick up food before baseball in the evenings. Usually KFC.”

“You drive all the way into town for that?” I interrupted surprised.

“Yeah!” Braveheart said excitedly, “There isn’t a week that doesn’t pass where me and the kids don’t go to KFC. Sometimes we even go two or three times a week. I *love* Kentucky Fried Chicken!”

I smiled when he said this, as I could relate to his enthusiasm over food.

“Besides,” Braveheart continued bringing me back from my thoughts, “now that John is starting to drive I can get him to run into town for things.” Braveheart said this with a tone of humour that suggested to me how his son had finally come of age, at eighteen years old, to start taking on some of the family errands.

I had met his kids many times by this point. So I knew that his oldest boy was from a previous marriage, and was ten years older than the oldest of his three teenagers, from a later marriage. His three youngest were a few years apart from each other. He was now separated from their mother. All of his boys lived at his house, while his youngest—a girl—lived at her mother’s on Big Island reserve. Nonetheless, she was with her father often, and I actually got to know her quite well because I saw her at most of Manitou’s community gatherings.

Braveheart continued to talk about what he eats. “I always have *bo-log-na*⁴ around the house. Nothing beats two slices of white bread with a piece or two of *bo-log-na* smacked in between.”

It was no surprise for me to hear this, as I was becoming fully aware of Braveheart’s love of bologna. One of the stories that I was told once while sitting in the medical building with a few of his coworkers, was how at Christmas one of them had wrapped up a pack of bologna and a loaf of white wonder bread for his secret Santa gift. While this story was being told to me, the storyteller started to laugh as she emphasized how Braveheart had opened the gift and delightedly began to make a sandwich, completely unfazed by the humour that everyone else saw in the simplicity of his bologna obsession.

⁴ Braveheart tended to pronounce this word, in good humor, as it is spelled rather than as it is said.

“Even the ‘better-half’ always keeps *bo-log-na* on hand at her place, and she never did this before me, nor did she really much eat it,” Braveheart said in a joking manner.

“Really!” I replied astonished with a tone of subtle sarcasm, “You got her on to bologna too?”

Braveheart had told me once how he had met his girlfriend a few years back at a Powwow, as they both followed the Powwow trail all summer long. He told me about how she was interested in Ojibway culture and started taking Ojibway language courses at the local University in Minneapolis, where she lives. From there she began going to Powwows and eventually they met each other. When they are not going to Powwows they alternate visiting one another from Minneapolis to Manitou every other weekend.

As we were entering town I reflected on all that Braveheart had been talking about, especially with respect to his tradition and beliefs. I began thinking about my own Mohawk grandmother, and the life that she led which had many similarities with what Braveheart spoke about, but at the same time many more experiences that differed.

“You know Braveheart, my grandmother is a Mohawk.” I decided to share my thoughts with Braveheart.

“Really,” Braveheart said slowly, “where is she from?”

“Her community is in Southern Ontario close to Muskoka Lake.” I answered him and continued on. “You know when she married a white man, my grandfather, she lost her right to identify as a Native, but she always says that she didn’t mind because she got to live a better life off the reserve.”

“Yep, that happened a lot,” replied Braveheart, unsurprised.

“When they amended the Indian Act in the eighties my grandmother was recognized as an Indian again, so were her children. I am not sure if it was because my father was born out of wedlock, but however, my brother, sister and I are also recognized as Indians.”

“Do you have a status?” Braveheart asked curiously as we were pulling into the parking lot of Subway.

“Yep,” I replied and brought it out of my wallet to show him.

“Wow,” Braveheart took my card, glanced at it, handed it back to me, and then said nonchalantly, “You should have told me this sooner.”

“Well, what was I supposed to say,” I replied not knowing how to respond to this comment and wondering if my presence in the community appeared more sincere now. However, I was puzzled because Braveheart had always included me in the community activities regardless. I could not see how the way people perceived me already would make any drastic shifts just because I possessed a status card?

After ordering our food, and Braveheart insisting on buying, we seated ourselves in the restaurant. Me eating a six inch salami and cheese sandwich, while Braveheart ate what looked to be a very thick looking potato leek soup out of a Styrofoam bowl accompanied by a foot-long meat sandwich.

Braveheart continued our conversation. “You know Jordan, when I taught at the school I used to tell the children that ‘if I can do what I do with only one hand, the sky is the limit for you kids’. When I was young I used to be really self-conscious about my stump. I still am from time to time, but not as bad as I was when I was a teenager.”

“Really!” I was surprised because Braveheart came across as quite a confident and self-assured man.

“Oh yeah,” Braveheart laughed “it was when I started to drink that I learned to be okay with it. As soon as I was drunk I could go up and talk to any woman, but when I was sober—oh boy—was I ever shy!”

“You!” I exclaimed jokingly

“You know I didn’t finish my degree.”

“What were you studying?” I interrupted abruptly surprised to learn that Braveheart had been to University.

“I was going to school to become an art teacher.”

“Art!” I repeated him unsure if what I heard was correct.

“Yep. I was always good at art and because of my hand my mom always encouraged me to go on in school, so that I would be skilled in less of a physically demanding job.”

“Huh! An art teacher, eh?” I replied with listening wonder, amazed at the idea that Braveheart, as a fifty year old man, born and raised on the reserve, was encouraged to carry on in school back in his day.

“I got married too back then, and had a daughter, but after a few years the woman got sick of all my drinking and partying, so left.”

“Really!” I said surprised to hear this because I only knew about his four kids that lived at home with him. “So this is in your other life?” I replied jokingly.

“Oh boy was it ever!” Braveheart laughed and continued. “I have another girl, but I’ve never met her.”

“What Braveheart!” I exclaimed sarcastically. “You have a daughter that you have never met? How the hell did that happen?”

Braveheart smiled and said teasingly, “Oh boy, Oh boy! The memories,” he paused in preparation to tell the story. “I was drinking one weekend and I hate to say it, but I don’t even remember what the woman looked like. Anyway, whatever happened that weekend, I had the cops come to my door a few years later telling me that I had to take a blood test because this woman said that I was the father of her daughter. I first went to a lawyer to see if I even had to do this, and he said that I pretty much had no choice. So, I took the test and it was positive. But you know the funny thing is? I never did meet the girl, nor to this day do I remember that night with that woman.” Braveheart finished.

“You have no recollection of that woman at all?” I asked naively and wondered why the woman went through the process of getting him to take a blood test, but never ended up introducing him to the girl.

Braveheart responded bluntly, “Nope!” and carried on to say “my drinking got bad in my early twenties and it wasn’t until I was pushing close to thirty that I decided to sober up. All I did was drink and party, and sometimes get into trouble. Sure I had some good times, but I wasn’t going anywhere with it. In my late twenties I had a girlfriend, we had a son together, we drank a lot together, and after a few years of this we broke up and I started going to AA meetings. It was at these meetings where they talked about God and this got me thinking about my own tradition that I knew nothing about, aside from the language. I went to the elders and asked them to teach me things and ever since then I haven’t looked back.”

“You knew your language because your parents spoke it to you growing up?” I asked curious.

“Yep. They always spoke to us or with my grandparents, uncles and aunts; I heard it so much that it just stuck,” Braveheart answered me quickly here and continued his train of thought. “The elders would put on a sweat lodge and I would sometimes sit inside for hours at a time after having fasted, it was hard sittin’ in with an empty stomach, but that’s the way it’s done.” Braveheart stopped as another thought came to his mind, “You know Jordan, next week there is going to be a medicine wheel workshop focused on healing. You might like it.”

“It’s open to anyone?” I asked eagerly.

“Yep. Everyone is welcome. It’s during the day on Friday in the Nanicost gym. They put these things on every once and awhile, and with the recent suicides in the past month, I guess the community is feeling a need for it.”

“Wow! That’s great to know. Thanks, Braveheart.” I replied with great enthusiasm at the idea of yet another thing that I could take in while I was in Ojibway Country.

Again, I decided to share a piece of my life that reflected a similar experience, but from the angle of the child: “My dad was a raging alcoholic, but I never really grew up with him because my mother took us kids to the city when I was only five. We did see him often though, and I have vivid memories of him and his girlfriend, and some other friends sitting around the table in the evening, drinking while us kids just watched TV. I remember that my little sister would always try to sit in with the adults around the table and serve drinks for them if she could.”

“Yeah!” Braveheart continued, “I remember sitting at the couch in the front room of our house watching my parents leave on a Friday night not knowing when they would return. I was left taking care of my younger brothers.”

“You’re the oldest?” I interrupted.

“Yep,” Braveheart responded and continued on. “I would just sit staring out the front window waiting to hear the sound of my parent’s vehicle driving back up the road. They often would not return until Sunday after a weekend at the bars in town. Us kids would just be at home waiting around for them many o’ weekends.”

“Crazy life, hey?” I responded.

Braveheart smiled, took a bite of the last half of his sandwich, and continued to talk. “There is only Feather Wings and I now, but there used to be six of us boys in total. My mom came from Big Island before her and my dad married.”

“Really!” I replied interested in hearing about his family.

“Feather Wings is the youngest, and him and I are ten years apart. One of us six boys didn’t live much past his early childhood as he got sick and died young. Another one of us was a teenager...actually he was with Jack when this happened,” Braveheart quickly added. “Some of the local farm boys stopped their truck along the side of the highway when they saw my brother and Jack walking home late one night. Anyways, Jack managed to run off, but my brother didn’t get away. A few days had passed, and my mother began to worry about him, and then the police came to her door. She knew right away,” Braveheart paused.

“Jesus,” I said taken aback. “Why would something like happen?”

“Oh some of the town boys got themselves roughed up in the bar by some of the young guys from Manitou. So they were just looking for revenge.”

I had questions buzzing in my head about Jack, about the community’s response to this event, but I didn’t feel it was my time to ask questions. Braveheart carried on talking about his family. “You know Vivian, right?” Braveheart asked.

“Yeah!” I replied enthusiastically, “she’s a fun lady!”

“She was married to another brother of mine who ended up committing suicide,” Braveheart said nonchalantly. “Who knows, but she was cheating on him and he found out about it.”

“Huh?” I said unsure of how to respond.

“Anyways,” Braveheart continued, “she was the one that found him in their bedroom. He was hanging from a rope suspended from the ceiling.”

“Wow!” I replied slowly thinking about Vivian. And how closely knit this community is, and how I was able to put faces to some the names that Braveheart spoke about.

“This summer my brother who had been living in Winnipeg was beaten to death by some guys while walking home in his neighbourhood one evening,” Braveheart carried on.

I didn’t say anything, nor did I want to say anything, for fear of saying something stupid in response to what Braveheart was telling me. Though I knew my facial expressions probably revealed my amazement and sympathy. I just let Braveheart speak without any interruption.

“My mother was called up to go to Winnipeg to identify his body. We all went together.”

Braveheart was finished with his food at this point, so we gave a nod to each other indicating that we were ready to leave. I was thinking over everything that he had said tonight. How in hearing his life story, all in one sitting, made the experiences of one’s life appear clearly like an intricate and complex web of events. Now, if only to understand how these kinds of experiences shape the way we perceive the world and the choices we make to *be* in the world. As it seems, from Braveheart’s story that the lifestyle choices he has made have been influenced by these contextual experiences. However, another individual could describe completely different lifestyle choices they have made, based on the influences from the same contextual experiences.

As we were getting into his van I wondered if I would ever meet Braveheart’s girlfriend, so I asked quizzically, “you and your ‘better-half’ aren’t seeing each other this week?”

“No, next weekend we will meet each other at the Powwow down in Red Lake. It will be the last outside one for this year. The kids and I will all go and she will bring her son with her too. The boys all get along together.”

“Hey that’s good. They hang out together?” I said, basically repeating what Braveheart just said. “When do your four day weekends come to an end anyways?” I asked teasingly.

“Oh yes the four day weekends,” Braveheart repeated, “they will be coming to an end soon. I think in another two weeks I am back to the office.”

“Oh Geez, are you actually going to have to work sometime this year?” I said sarcastically.

Braveheart laughed, “Oh yeah, it sometimes happens!”

Braveheart works at the medical building at Manitou as the drug and alcohol councillor. He told me that the prerequisite for this job was that you had to be sober for over three years. That was ten years ago, and at that point he had been sober for over ten years, so he was well over qualified.

As he rolled up to my car I gathered my daypack and my jacket and said with a smile on my face, “Thanks for the scenic tour tonight.”

“Hey anytime,” Braveheart smiled and then said, “Oh yeah don’t forget tomorrow. The tournament starts at ten in the morning.”

“I’ll be there ready to use all my new tricks I learned from the Pro the other day!” I laughed, as I alluded to Braveheart as the Pro.

We said our goodnights and I got into my car ready to be home after being out all day.

4.2. Blue Prairie Woman

I met Blue Prairie Woman when I started volunteering at the Native Youth Centre in Fort Frances. I would often sit and talk to her in her office until someone came in, but even then, we would carry on chatting for hours at a time. On this particular night no one came in, so we talked the entire evening. I was in her office telling her about a particular run in that I had with an elder at Manitou earlier that day, and how I was really frustrated from the whole experience.

“Jordan, you can’t take things like that too seriously, people around here like to tease. And especially if you aren’t from around here, this is how some people gauge your character,” Blue Prairie Woman explained.

“Yeah, that’s great,” I replied sarcastically, growing more embarrassed at the fact that I had revealed a weak character. “I feel like a real ass now that I have just proven myself to be the ‘outsider’ without a sense of humour.”

“Yep,” Blue Prairie Woman laughed, “I wouldn’t worry yourself too much about it. People don’t hold grudges around here, and besides most people expect this of your type”

“Great,” I interrupted. “Just how I want to be seen—as a ‘type!’”

“I don’t mean it to sound like that,” Blue Prairie Woman said with a smile. “My family has been back for five years now, and it still feels like we are outsiders to the community sometimes. My dad even grew up at Manitou, but because us kids didn’t, people have had to get to know us. Mind you, my younger sister and brother made good friends immediately, but they were young,” Blue Prairie Woman explained.

“Why did your parents decide to go out west?” I asked recalling previous conversations when Blue Prairie Woman had mentioned that she grew up in Abbotsford.

“Um, they had both grown up in Ojibway Country and I guess were just bored of the place and decided to leave. So they packed up with me and my older brother and headed west. They found work easily enough and we stayed out there for almost sixteen years. I was just a baby when my family went out there,” Blue Prairie Woman explained.

“Why did you guys end up coming back?” I asked thinking how sixteen years was an awfully long time to stay in one place and then just to up and move.

“We had to come back for my grandmother’s funeral one summer,” Blue Prairie Woman responded, “and while we were back here my parents just felt like being closer to both their families, and so we stayed.”

“Were you happy about the move back or would you have gladly stayed in BC?” I asked curious to know if she missed the west coast.

“Well I could’ve easily stayed I guess, but I was also going through a lot at that time,” Blue Prairie Woman said.

“Really?” I said quizzically.

“Well I had been dating this guy for a few years,” Blue Prairie Woman started to explain, “and it just so happened that, before we left to come out here, I got pregnant.”

“Really!” I interrupted.

“Yep! I was that .01 percent chance of getting pregnant while on the pill,” Blue Prairie Woman said.

“And you decided that you wanted to have the baby? Well I guess so hey!” I said catching myself stating the obvious.

“You know when it all happened, it never occurred to me to not go through with it. It just wasn’t an option,” Blue Prairie Woman replied. “Of course, I did hold off telling my parents for as long as I could,” she said laughing. “I knew that my mother would be able to handle the news. It was my father that I was afraid of. So, I got them before one weekend that they were going away. I was being strategic you see,” she said humorously. “I knew that my dad wouldn’t speak to me for a few days after. So I figured if he had those few days away from me, he would be a lot calmer by the time they returned to the house.”

“Well was he?” I asked curious.

“Mostly,” Blue Prairie Woman replied smiling. “He didn’t speak to me for a few days longer than I thought. But he did come around eventually.”

“Wow!” I replied not having ever thought about how a parent might react to their sixteen year old daughter coming home to tell them that she was pregnant.

“Alexander’s father decided to come out after I told him about being pregnant,” Blue Prairie Woman continued. “So we rented an apartment in Fort Frances. It really didn’t last a long time,” Blue Prairie Woman laughed. “He couldn’t seem to find a job and when he did find something, it wasn’t that great and it didn’t pay much. Plus we were just kids really, and in living together I could see that we were not meant to be. Anyway, one day he just up and went back to BC.”

“Is he in contact with your son at all?” I asked curious to know if having the father in the picture was important to Blue Prairie Woman at all.

“Not at all,” Blue Prairie Woman said nonchalantly. “Alexander and I have made our family here at home with my family. Actually, it’s amazing how in having

Alexander, my family has become incredibly close. And my dad,” Blue Prairie Woman laughed. “Well basically I don’t know what he would do without his grandson. Those two are inseparable.”

“Great!” I said, as I sat listening.

“Yeah,” Blue Prairie Woman carried on, “after Alexander’s father left back to BC, I ended up renting an apartment by myself in Fort Frances, and staying at home to raise Alexander for the first year. I left school as soon as I started to show, which worked out to be at the end of the first semester.”

“Really! Did you not feel comfortable being at school while you were pregnant?” I asked.

“I was due to deliver soon and it just wasn’t practical to be nursing a baby and going to school,” Blue Prairie Woman responded. “I went back to school when Alexander was about a year and half.”

“Did you go back to high school?” I asked curious to know what it would be like to return after almost two years away.

“Yep, I went back to the high school,” Blue Prairie Woman said.

“How was that?” I asked. “Being the older one in school?”

“It was fine,” Blue Prairie Woman replied. “There were other older women there as well, so I just hung out with them for the few years it took to graduate.”

“Did you work while you were at school?” I asked knowing that now she was still a student and working.

“For the first year that I raised Alexander I was on welfare and then I got my first job at Mr. Sub, but I only worked there for three months before I got hired here. Been here for three years now,” Blue Prairie Woman replied.

“Crazy,” I replied, for lack of a better word, while I sat listening to a life completely different than my own, and yet not typical of anything that I might have assumed to be the norm for a teenage mother.

“Alexander and I recently moved in with my parents,” Blue Prairie Woman continued, “they just moved into a big house in Emo last month. It’s a huge place. We all have our own bedrooms.”

“How come you decided to do that,” I asked curious to why she decided to move to Emo when everything she does is in Fort Frances.

“I just figured that school and work might be a little more intense this year considering that I’m trying to transfer to a university next year. Anyways, if I move away, to whichever university I end up choosing, Alexander won’t be seeing his family as much, so this way it gives him extra time.” Blue Prairie Woman continued. “Not to mention that just having a little extra money is also nice. My Plymouth is starting to get old. I’m thinking of getting a new car. I’ve been looking at a KIA, but I don’t know if it’s the greatest car. But they are cheap, that’s for sure.” Blue Prairie Woman finished speaking, and got up from behind her desk to go and retrieve her bag that was sitting on a chair in the far corner of the room.

“Yeah that’s true hey,” I replied, remembering a friend of mine debating on whether or not to buy a KIA. “So you’re planning on moving out of here by next year

hey?" I asked intrigued that she was going on to university. "Where are you thinking of moving to?"

"Well," Blue Prairie Woman replied, as she pulled a snack out of her bag. "Right now I'm thinking Halifax. I want to go into law specializing in Aboriginal rights, and Dalhousie would be a good university for that. Plus I would really like to go somewhere far. As important as it is that my family is here, I don't want to stick around here my entire life. Plus, if I want to pursue my education further I have to leave Ojibway Country."

"What are you studying right now?" I asked.

"Kind of a mix of stuff," Blue Prairie Woman laughed as she walked back around to her desk, "I'm headed for a psych degree."

"That's cool!" I replied impressed at hearing a woman capable of raising a kid at the same time pursuing her education. "What got you interested in law anyways?"

"Oh, I've always been interested in Aboriginal rights," Blue Prairie Woman replied. "But I think since I've been a part of the Aboriginal Youth Association, I have become more certain of it. I've been exposed to some pretty impressive people like the lady who directs the Association. She knows what she is talking about and always articulates important issues in a way that gets everyone around her involved. Anyways, I've also met some good friends through this association that live in Halifax, so that's why I've been considering Dalhousie. Plus, they work at the friendship centre there, so I could probably have a good chance of getting hired," Blue Prairie Woman said smiling.

"So you're moving out of Ojibway Country," I said being redundant, at the same time, the phone rang.

“How many siblings do you have?” I asked after she got off the phone and wrote a few things down.

“I’ve got a sister and two brothers, so there’s four of us in total,” Blue Prairie Woman replied.

“Huh! Where are you in the order?” I asked.

“I’m the second,” Blue Prairie Woman replied, “I have an older brother, a younger brother, and then I have a little sister who is the youngest.”

“Hey that’s crazy!” I replied excitedly, “that’s exactly the same as me, I’m the second one too.” Funny I thought.

“Yeah?” Blue Prairie Woman replied. “We all live at my parent’s home. Even my older brother is still at home. He doesn’t really do anything but sponge off of my parents,” she laughed.

“Oh, so everyone is around?” I repeated.

“Yep!” Blue Prairie Woman replied. “My little sister is in high school right now, but the chances of her graduating on time are slim.

“Oh no?” I said quizzically.

“Yeah, she never goes to class and she really doesn’t care,” Blue Prairie Woman laughed. “Oh, she’s actually really smart; she is just not interested in applying herself. She got a job at Wal-Mart and when she is not doing that she prefers just to hang out with her friends. She is kind of known as the crazy girl in town.” Blue Prairie Woman laughed. “She’s just really eccentric. Whenever I go to the annual general meetings which are often held in major cities, I get to go shopping. Anyways, I’m a pretty thrifty

shopper and really don't like to spend too much money on clothing. But my sister is the easiest person to shop for."

"Really!" I replied enthusiastically.

"You know how at Winners all the clothing that goes for really cheap is usually the weird stuff that nobody wants," Blue Prairie Woman explained.

"Yeah," I laughed.

"Well that's the stuff my sister likes," Blue Prairie Woman said. "So she's not only easy to shop for, but she's also cheap to buy for too." I laughed at this knowing full well some of the stuff she probably found off the racks at Winners.

"My younger brother will probably get his grade twelve before my sister. And he left school for awhile," Blue Prairie Woman said smiling. "It's funny at this school they tend to put the Aboriginal kids in the slower paced classes."

"Really," I replied curious.

"Yeah," Blue Prairie Woman continued, "my sister doesn't care that they do this because she's not interested in being at school anyways. But, it also doesn't encourage her wanting to be there either. I remember when I first registered at that school the counsellor was enrolling me into the slow paced classes without even considering my transcripts from my previous school. If he had of looked, he would've seen that I was a straight A student. And if he did look it obviously didn't dawn on him."

"Really!" I replied. "Just because you looked Native he just assumed you weren't smart?"

"Pretty much," Blue Prairie Woman replied, "but I demanded to be in the regular classes, where my sister sees it as an opportunity to slack off."

“That’s crazy,” I replied amazed, yet not entirely surprised.

“That’s something I find to be different out west,” Blue Prairie Woman said. “I don’t know if it’s because it is more multi-cultural out there, or what. But I never felt discouraged from school, or thought I was less capable because I was Aboriginal. But here I find the teachers really unsupportive towards the Aboriginal kids.

“I would’ve thought with the larger Native population in this area that there would be less of that?” I said not realizing that racism was still an issue in the school system.

“Oh yeah,” Blue Prairie Woman responded, “if you stick around long enough you get to see how it’s really divided between the white community and the Aboriginal community. But then again, you also get to see how it’s divided between the non-rez kids and the rez kids.”

“Oh really,” I said intrigued.

“Yeah! The kids on the rez are socialized a lot differently than the kids off of the rez,” Blue Prairie Woman replied.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yeah, I guess it’s just a difference in social behaviour. Like, if you are an Aboriginal living off the rez, you are more likely to hang out with non-Aboriginals. Where rez kids tend to stick together,” Blue Prairie Woman explained. “The rez kids also act different than the non-rez kids at school, like they just tend not to cooperate as much. At least this is what I find.”

“Huh,” I replied as my mind wandered off thinking about how minute the ways humanity can break down differences between one another. “Would you ever want to live on the rez?” I asked wondering how she felt about this.

“Actually, my dad has put our name on the housing list,” Blue Prairie Woman responded, “but we all have mixed feelings about living on the rez. There are a lot of politics that come with living at Manitou, and I really see this when I go to community meetings with my dad.”

“Really,” I replied.

“Yeah, it’s just that there’s no structure to their meetings.” Blue Prairie Woman paused. “I guess there are politics for an Aboriginal whether you’re on or off the rez.”

“Yeah! So I’ve learned in my own experiences,” I said having spoken to her in earlier conversations about my own Mohawk heritage.

We paused here as the phone rang again, and I thought it would be a good time to escape and go use the washroom.

Blue Prairie Woman laughed as we continued our conversation. “You know Alexander isn’t able to get a status.”

“Really?” I said surprised.

“Yep,” Blue Prairie said. “I’m only recognized as half aboriginal. My mother’s not Ojibway she’s Ukrainian.”

“Really!” I interrupted.

“And Alexander’s father only had a bit of Aboriginal blood in him, not enough to qualify for a status anyways,” Blue Prairie Woman explained. “The government sees Alexander as third generation which means that he doesn’t qualify as Aboriginal because

he is below the quarter percentile. My brothers and sister and I are considered the last in our line to be federally recognized as “Indian”. Of course, if one of us had kids with a full-blood than it would qualify the kid.”

“That’s the same as me and my family! We’re the last in line, and even at that, I have cousins who are not considered eligible for status, and yet we are.” I replied always amazed at what defines a Native person in this country. “I didn’t realize that your mother isn’t Ojibway?”

“Yeah, neither do I sometimes,” Blue Prairie Woman laughed. “I think even my mother has come to think of herself as an Ojibway more than a Ukrainian. I know that I identify more with my Anishinaabe side than my Ukraine side. In my house we’ve been raised Anishinaabe. And that’s the same for Alexander, whether he has a status or not.”

“Crazy.” I said while thinking how it was interesting that up until this point I had no clue that Blue Prairie Woman was not a full-blooded Anishinaabe. She had only let it be known that she was Anishinaabe. And yet, even after sharing about her Ukrainian side she still voiced her Anishinaabe side as her sole identity.

“My younger brother takes a pretty leftwing stance about this. He thinks that aboriginal privileges like the status should be done away with. He figures that if it was abolished, prejudices such as not being considered Aboriginal if you don’t have a status, would stop.”

“Do you agree with him?” I asked.

“Oh, in one way I can see what he means,” Blue Prairie Woman replied. “There definitely are a lot of issues that are directly a result of this system. Actually, it was funny last week on my MSN there was a question sent to me that said: ‘what does your

Native identity mean to you?' This question stumped me at first so I asked [my co-worker] what she thought about it, and her response was: 'that I will forever be known as a statistic and that my identity is my status card number.' So you see she sees her Native identity in the status card.

"Huh, interesting," I said.

"I think for me," Blue Prairie Woman continued, "it means to be identified as a group of significantly different people: culturally holding different values than other cultures in the world. I also think that the values of culture held by a person are more important than the visual and registered categories of a person."

"Yeah, it's interesting the different outlooks on Native identity," I said out loud.

By this point it was almost time to close the centre, and after we both commented on having talked for so long, Blue Prairie Woman went to shut down the computers getting ready to close the centre for the evening.

4.3. Joey Tall Stockings

An Introduction

Today was my first day at Manitou and I was invited to play baseball at the staff lunch. As I sat on the bleachers waiting for the game to begin, a young man, wearing a baggy navy blue t-shirt with large white letters on the front spelling **SNAG**, confidently strutted over to introduce himself to me. “Hi, I’m Joey Tall Stockings, but you can just call me Joey Tall.” He said in a friendly voice as he lent out his hand to initiate a handshake.

“Nice to meet you,” I replied enthusiastically. “My name’s Jordan.”

“Where are you from?” He asked curiously.

“Well I guess I’m from Vancouver, but I’m living and going to school in Montreal,” I responded feebly.

“Hey! I’ll be in Ottawa in the next few weeks,” Joey Tall said excitedly. “I’m working on a project for Manitou right now where some of the information I need about our community is sitting in archives in Ottawa. I’ll be going there three times throughout the next couple of months to work on this project. I’ll also be making a trip to Vancouver to get some information there, and one trip to Toronto.” Joey Tall said smiling. “Toronto will be some work, but I used to live there, so it will mostly be party time with some old friends. So what brings you to Manitou of all places?” He asked without a moment’s pause.

I smiled. “Well, I guess I’m here for school, the program that I’m taking requires me to do fieldwork. I thought that I’d maybe try to volunteer around here for a couple of

months. Try to get to know the community.” I said thinking about how horrible it must sound to listen to someone “doing” fieldwork in your community.

“So, what d’you study?” He asked nonchalantly.

Of course he had to ask this! “Um...Anthropology,” I said meekly, anticipating his next question.

“Huh!” he replied disinterested, “how do you know about Manitou?”

“My supervisor is a big fan of an anthropologist named Ruth Landes. She actually spent some time in your community way back in the 1930’s.” I said unsure if he would even know who I was talking about. “Anyways, there are these stories written by Maggie Wilson. Do you know her?” I asked curious.

“Yep,” Joey Tall replied, waiting for me to carry on.

“Anyways, my supervisor is working on a project surrounding this lady’s stories. And as a result, she suggested your community to me.” I said timidly.

“Huh,” Joey Tall responded and was then called over somewhere else. “Well it was nice to meet you Jordan,” he said politely and as he was about to walk away he asked: “Are you going to be playing baseball?”

“Yep, I haven’t played it in a long time, but I brought a glove to stand way out on the field with,” I replied quickly.

Joey Tall smiled. “Okay well I’ll see you out there.”

“Sure thing,” I replied and as he turned around to walk away I noticed the words: **Sexy Native American Guy** written on the back of his t-shirt. I smiled to myself and made my way to the baseball diamond where teams were being organized.

Later On That Same Day

As it turned out, after the baseball game Joey Tall asked me if I would like a tour of the mounds. Of course, I was surely not going to decline this offer, but as I sat on the golf cart driving through a gravel path of a lush deciduous forest listening to Joey Tall talk, I wondered if maybe I was not starting my new repertoire of friends on the wrong footing?

“Last year I actually had a really tough year.” Joey Tall said nonchalantly, as he continued to drive the golf cart down the path.

“Oh yeah,” I responded, “how come?”

“Well, I had to quit hockey after playing it since I was four,” Joey Tall began.

“Oh you’re a hockey kid hey?” I interrupted humorously.

“Yeah, I played until I was twenty-two,” Joey Tall said. “I left home to play hockey when I was nine. Back then I was billeted in a white family’s home in Thunder Bay. It wasn’t always easy being the Native kid on the hockey team. There was racism. And when I came back home I had a hard time with the Native kids too. They’d call me the apple.”

“What’s that?” I interrupted.

“You don’t know what that is,” Joey Tall asked as if surprised and answered, “Native on the outside, and white on the inside,” he laughed.

“Really,” I said intrigued at this new racial category for me.

“You never heard that before?” Joey asked in disbelief.

“Nope,” I replied.

“I even had a big black guy from the football team as my bodyguard at one point. He was a friend of a friend and just hung out with me at lunch time and outside of school. And this was to protect me from the Native kids too!” Joey Tall laughed as he said this.

“Really!” I said surprised to hear that a teenage boy would need a bodyguard at high school.

“It probably didn’t help that I was a pretty cocky teenager,” Joey Tall said pausing for a minute and then said: “Actually I was pretty mouthy. I knew how to stir up trouble.”

“No way!” I replied not feeling entirely surprised by this. “So why did your hockey career come to an end?” I asked curious now to hear what the story was behind this.

“Pretty much my knees got so bad that I just couldn’t play anymore.” Joey Tall explained as we drove through a forested path beginning to descend downhill slightly. “But when I stopped playing I didn’t know what to do with myself.” He paused as he said hello to some people on the path. “I was drinking a lot and using drugs.”

“Huh! What kinds of drugs were you taking?” I asked curious.

“Mostly just over the counter prescription drugs,” Joey Tall said.

“Really!” I said naïve to the fact that this constituted as a drug issue.

“Oh yeah! Believe it or not, I got hooked on these things through hockey,” Joey Tall said seriously. “My coach would hand out painkillers like they were candy and it doesn’t take long before you find yourself hooked.”

“Wow!” I said listening attentively.

“When I look at it now, I see how it was so easy to fall into depression,” Joey Tall continued. “I was done with hockey and really didn’t know what to do with my life.”

“Huh?” I said listening.

“Now though I’m working towards being chief in this community one day,” Joey Tall exclaimed.

“Really?” I said surprised.

“Oh yeah baby!” Joey Tall said with confidence as he took his eyes off the road to smile at me. “That’s not where I’ll stop either. I’m going to take it all the way to Grand Chief.” Joey Tall laughed as he said this.

“Wow! An ambitious young man you are.” I said somewhat sarcastically. “What makes you want to be a chief so bad?” I asked intrigued. I couldn’t help but think if what I was hearing was not the remnants of power in its conception, and that even within Native communities there were the powerful and the not-so-powerful.

“The men in my family have always been chiefs, my grandfather, a few of my uncles and my dad as well.” Joey Tall said. “I’m only twenty-four, so I still got time.”

“Do you speak Ojibway?” I asked curious, as we passed some more visitors walking along the path.

“Boozhoo,” Joey Tall said as he smiled to the visitors. “Not fluently, but it’s on the to-do-list.”

“Oh really!” I replied.

“So what makes you interested in us Ojibway anyways?” Joey Tall asked repeating what he had already asked me.

“Well, I kind of told you already,” I replied. “But it also stems from an interest in my own Mohawk background.”

“How much Mohawk are you?” Joey Tall replied quickly.

“Well, I guess enough to have a status card,” I answered back.

“You have a status card,” Joey Tall asked rhetorically. “You know you can get a gas card. They have the form at the gas station. You just gotta fill it out and send it away. You don’t have one, do you?”

“Nope,” I replied.

“You know the chief called me up when you first arrived and suggested that I might be a good person for you to talk to.” Joey Tall said, changing the course of our conversation.

“Really?” I responded surprised that the chief had even taken any notice of my being here.

“I think it’s cool that you could just show up at our community. A lot of people don’t really like the idea of it,” Joey Tall said nonchalantly.

“Really?” I said feeling self-conscious about the idea of not being welcome here, already.

“When the chief told me about you, I asked him why he let you stick around without having consensus from the rest of the community first,” Joey Tall continued.

“Oh really?” I said starting to feel a little unimpressed that I might have to listen to what this guy thought of me. I tried to stay neutral realizing that maybe it was just the way Joey Tall talked. After all, I was talking to the future chief.

Indian Taco Lunch

It was a couple of months into my fieldwork and I had been spending a few days a week hanging out at the mounds. I had also gotten to know people a little better by this point, as well as them getting to know me. On this particular day, Joey Tall was helping his dad gather some files that were stored at the historical centre, so I ended up having

lunch with him. It was a day in mid-September, what you might consider an “Indian summer’s” day. Aside from the wind it was pretty damn hot, so we decided to eat outside in the picnic area.

“I’m trying to put together a book on the history of our community, but the guy who had the job before me won’t give me any of the information that he gathered up. So I have to go everywhere to find it myself.” Joey Tall was explaining to me his work as we waited for our food.

“Well you got connections, so it shouldn’t be a problem,” I said jokingly.

“That’s what I’m doing, my father is helping me out with it right now,” Joey Tall replied unfazed by my comment. As Joey Tall was talking about his work one of his aunts’ who works in the Hungry Hall kitchen at the historical centre came out with our food. She and Joey Tall exchanged a few friendly jokes, and then we began to eat.

“Yummy!” I said famished and delighted to be eating something. “I’m starving and I’ve wanted to try this Indian Taco salad forever!”

“You’ve never had that before?” Joey Tall asked.

“Nope,” I answered. “I guess you grew up on these things eh?”

“Pretty much,” Joey Tall said. “I miss being in T.O. for all the good eating out. Italian food is what I like most, some nice fresh pasta and a good Alfredo sauce. God it’s good!”

“Italian food is your favourite?” I asked.

“Oh yeah!” Joey Tall replied. “I know a good place that I used to always eat at when I lived in T.O. You can’t find anything like that around here.”

“There’s nothing like that? Not even in Fort Frances?” I asked surprised.

“No way,” Joey Tall replied, “nothing around here except McDonald’s.”

As we were eating, we started talking about how the mounds were not generating as much money as the community had hoped it would. “That’s why when I’m chief I’m going to put a casino on this reserve. That way we can really make some money.” Joey Tall said excitedly. “I will have boat rides going from the casino to the mounds that way the historical centre will be getting promoted and making some money. I’m telling you Jordan, I’ve got ideas,” Joey Tall said confidently.

“Sure sounds like you do.” I replied wondering if the idea of building a casino is what the rest of the community wanted. “Maybe you could use the profits from the casino to give more equal job opportunity to everyone in the community?” I said, putting my two cents in for the hell of it.

“That would be the point of the casino, Jordan.” Joey Tall replied in a tone that indicated he was clearly used to my off hand comments by now: “To bring some wealth into the community.”

“It seems to me that some people always profit more than others in these kinds of projects,” I argued. “Josephine told me that when she was down at a Powwow in the states she could tell who was making money from the casino and who wasn’t, just by looking at the size of their houses. She even said that the community was pretty much divided like that—big houses on one side of the reserve, and not-so big houses on the other side.”

“Yeah. I have seen that too,” Joey Tall said, “it’s kind of shitty that happens.”

“No kidding!” I retorted back wondering if a female chief would make any difference here and decided to ask about this. “Has there ever been a female chief around here?”

“Yeah, in the last little while there have been a few in other communities, but not ever at Manitou. There just aren’t any female leaders in our community, and besides it’s not that they aren’t involved, they are at the root of every decision making process, they guide the men in our community,” Joey Tall explained. “Women are the backbone of Anishinaabe society. They keep the hope and faith for the men to heal, and because of this I see how the men are becoming better fathers and leaders. I say this because I saw my own mother bring my father up from alcoholism,” Joey Tall continued. “You know, this summer I was fighting with my mother because she thought I was beginning to turn into my father. She thought I was starting to play the dirty tactics he played when he was a politician. She said to me: ‘That’s why I divorced your father because he was being dirty with his power, and started to use it against my family,’” Joey Tall finished.

“Huh,” I replied thinking how his response reflects the image of the “traditional” past in Native communities. However, it also contradicts the contemporary roles between the females and males that I have observed at Manitou. “I’ve been thinking lately on how it is weird here at Manitou how there are a lot of older men, like Braveheart and Pearly White, who are raising their children on their own. Then there are a lot of young single mothers who are raising their children sometimes with the help of their parents,” I said wondering what Joey Tall would think of this. “Where are the young men who have helped get these young women pregnant?”

“For all I know, I could be one of them.” Joey Tall laughed. “I know what you mean though. There are a lot of young teenagers with kids still living at their parents’ house. When I was fourteen, my parents split up and I came back home for that year. There was a tight group of us guys in the community, and we remained this way every summer that I came back to Manitou, even after I left to go play hockey again. Anyways, we pretty much ended up dating all the same girls at one time or another. It was pretty incestuous come to think of it,” Joey Tall laughed. “But I never knew when one of those girls got pregnant. It wasn’t till recently that some of them told me that they were having abortions back then.”

“Really!” I said shocked but not surprised, “doesn’t anyone use birth control?”

“Some do and some don’t, I guess,” Joey Tall said indifferently.

“Crazy,” I said and asked “what if those were your sisters?”

“My two younger sisters,” Joey Tall laughed. “They know better and won’t have anything to do with a guy like me. They’re smart.”

“Well, I guess it pays to have a brother like you, for those reasons hey?” I said teasing him.

“Well they learn from having me and my older brother in their life. That’s for sure! They always say they like me because I’m their brother, but they feel sorry for the woman who has to live with me.” Joey Tall laughed. “They really don’t put up with much bullshit from anybody!”

“Huh! I think I have met a lot of those kinds of women around here. I just get that ‘Fuck off’ look from them.” I said humorously. “I can understand it, but it does make it

hard to get to know them.” Joey Tall laughed here, in a way that indicated to me that he got what I was saying.

“So are you and your brother close?” I asked.

“We go in and out,” Joey Tall replied. “Right now he seems really disconnected from the family and the community. He just doesn’t get involved. All he does is work at the mill and drink. I feel like he’s letting himself just fall into this pattern.”

“Well, you’ve never worked a labouring job very long have you?” I asked wondering if he just couldn’t understand his brother because he is too interested in his own goals of becoming chief.

“No, I used to work at the mill,” he answered. “I’ve worked everywhere, but I can honestly tell you that I don’t like repetitive work. I didn’t like the mill and didn’t stick around there for long. That’s why when I came back last year I went to a few people, and asked them for a job in the band office.”

“Huh!” I replied.

“So how come you went back into hockey after spending that year at home when you were fourteen?” I asked.

“Well I think I told you this, but I was just hanging out drinking with my cousins, and my dad just had enough of it. He had some connections as a member of the Treaty 3, and knew a coach that was willing to put me back on a team. I never even had to make up that year I missed at school. I just went on like nothing ever stopped. That’s hockey for you! I never even really cracked open a textbook, and yet I managed to receive a high school education.”

“Are you serious?” I said, yet not surprised at hearing about this kind of loop hole.

“Oh yeah!” Joey Tall replied smiling and continued on. “My father really pushed me through my hockey career. Even when I was a young kid he would come and watch my games. If I played shitty I usually got it from him on the drive home. He would smack me hard against the head and tell me what I didn’t do right.” Joey Tall said.

“Oh!” I replied uneasily.

“He wanted to see me succeed and supported me all through my hockey years. He supports me still with me getting into politics. He’s someone I watch. He can debate with the best of them,” Joey Tall smiled.

“Both him and my mom were really conscious of raising us kids with good ‘white Canadian’ values, so that we could go places in our lifetime. I’ve told you how when I was nine I billeted in Thunder Bay with a white family. Well my parents were really on me for making sure I had good manners.”

“Really! You think the pressure of having to be a polite kid is intensified when you are a Native going into a non-Native setting?” I asked interested in what Joey Tall thought about this.

“Oh yeah!” Joey Tall assured me. “They were a nice family, I must admit, but man was it two different worlds. Going from their home to the rez in the summer times, I had to be careful when I would return after a summer at Manitou,” Joey Tall laughed. “You are socialized differently when you grow up on the rez, that’s for sure!”

“How so?” I asked curious.

“Kids are shy and not proud because they are scared of being wrong and laughed at. And they learn this at a young age from things like the racism they experience in the schools,” Joey Tall replied.

“You experienced racism in the schools? If you ever went to school,” I added teasingly.

Joey Tall smiled and replied: “Even at the elementary level. There is always the cowboy versus the Indian, or that redneck versus the Indian, in hockey, in school, or just around town. I have to say that from experiencing this I have become kind of racist towards whites. I also get it from my dad, which he got from the hatred he experienced in the residential schools. It’s contagious,” Joey Tall argued.

“I can understand that,” I said, “but at the same time you can still sit down and have a conversation with me.” Joey Tall laughed. I continued: “Besides you’ve experienced exclusion from both sides. Where you haven’t been “Indian” enough, where you haven’t been “white” enough, and even when you are too much Ojibway!” I said reflecting on a previous conversation of ours where he said that the Cree he played hockey against would fight him because he was Ojibway.

“Yeah, I know its nuts. My experience is really a lot different from many of the kids on the rez,” Joey Tall explained. “I got off the rez at an early age. Also, my parents were always very aware of how to act in the white community. I don’t know if this comes from them being educated, or if they just picked it up.”

“Both your parents went on in school?” I asked trying to put together what he was saying.

“Yep,” Joey Tall answered. “My dad got a degree in business and economics. And my mom went back to school when I was young and got her degree in law and security. She’s a teacher’s assistant right now, but plans to go back and get her MA in education.”

“Do you think that you’ll ever go back to school,” I asked.

“Oh yeah, eventually,” Joey Tall said. “It’s kind of the way it works with the chiefs. You go and get a degree and then come back to the community to become chief.”

“Really,” I said surprised.

“Yep! The chief now, he has the same degree in business and economics as my father. They both went down to Bemidji State University at different times and returned after to become chief. My uncle Long Stride did a similar thing, but he went to Duluth and got a teaching degree and then came back to do a term as chief,” Joey Tall explained.

“Huh! I didn’t realize that all of these guys had degrees,” I said. “So you plan to go back to school before you become chief. Eh?”

“Yep, I don’t plan to stay at Manitou forever,” Joey Tall replied. “Of course I will come back eventually, but soon I want to move off the rez and broaden my horizons a little bit,” he laughed.

“Oh really,” I replied. “So you do see yourself somewhere else as well?”

“Oh yeah,” Joey Tall replied.

“So how long have you been back at Manitou since you finished hockey?” I asked curious about the chronology of his life so far.

“I’ve been back now for over a year,” Joey Tall explained. “At first I had money and so was living in Winnipeg with my cousin, just livin’ the life of a party guy in the

rough “hood” of the city. It was crazy,” Joey Tall reminisced. “I was once picked up by these two chicks after a night in the bar. I went home with them and the minute I stepped through their door I got the shit kicked out of me. There were some guys waiting there and they cleaned me out of the money I had in my wallet. Somehow I managed to find my way home after that!” Joey Tall paused and laughed. “Anyways, it wasn’t long after that I left Winnipeg. I actually have a really vivid memory of me and my cousin sitting in our apartment one evening. We heard these two Indians outside on the street yelling at each other over what direction the soup kitchen was. It made both my cousin and I see a dose of where we were headed. After this I pretty much signed myself into a traditional treatment centre. It was really good. Except when I came back to Manitou, I was high on life while everyone here was still the same. People’s attitude brought me down a bit, but I also got used to it and did my own thing. Anyways, if I want to be chief, it is in my best interest to stay sober.”

Chapter 5: Discourse Analysis

5.1. Local Contexts of Humour

You'll like the Natives around here. They are laidback and always have a sense of humour.

—Local Emo Resident

My discussion, in part, explores how local experiences at Manitou can be seen to displace dominant “western” discourse of the *indian* through elements of humour. It may have more to do with the laidback lifestyle that living in rural regions, like Manitou, tends to offer, rather than being unique to Native communities. Nonetheless, it was common for me to hear people say that “my people know how to laugh”; “we know how to tell a joke”; “we might not have it easy, but we know how to laugh about it”. Equally, the opening remark above comes from a fellow I met in the Emo hardware store. When I told him what I was doing in Ojibway Country he immediately told me that “[I] will like the Natives around here [because] they are laid back and always have a sense of humour”. Indeed, humour was integral to the interactions I experienced during my time at Manitou.

In Vine Deloria’s book, Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifest (1969), he expresses how non-Native people portray Native people as the “drunken Indian”, the “lazy Indian”, the “Indian giver”, but he argues there is never any mention of the “funny Indian” (1969: 146). Don Kelly has a similar take with his article, “And Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Get Ready for some (Ab)Original Stand-up Comedy,” where he suggests that Native humour provides a kind of escape from the constant experiences of marginalization in being a Native person in Canadian society (2005: 51-66). I sat talking

over beers one evening with a lady who shared this similar take on humour: “We [Ojibway] can laugh at ourselves. We live because we can laugh,” she relayed to me with a deep bellied chuckle. Her commentary suggests how the local context of humour is a self-realized aspect in Ojibway experiences. Indeed, elements of humour were central to the everyday social interactions that I encountered. As well, many dialogues involving humour revealed to me how it can be seen to displace dominant discourses of the *indian*.

In “How to Be as Funny as an Indian,” Ian Ferguson defines the categories of telling different kinds of jokes. One category he has is “in-jokes” which he defines as usually consisting of a Native person telling a joke that everyone, both Native and non-Native, can laugh at, and can usually be marked with a self-deprecating element. The second category is “not-jokes” which are just plain unacceptable, such as the “drunken Indian” theme that only excludes and reinforces negative stereotypes, which Ferguson also adds, are simply not funny. “Our-jokes”, on the other hand, are more of an “insider” joke that all Native people grow up knowing and sharing amongst one another. An example Ferguson gives is, “you might be Aboriginal if you know thirty seven ways to prepare Spam” (2005: 128). These categories of jokes Ferguson outlines, suggest the varying ways that humour can be seen to be used, to include and exclude, both non-Natives and Natives alike. In addition, it provides a framework for exploring how humour in the Ojibway context displaces the dominant discourses of the *indian* experience by way of engaging ironic dialogue. As in my own interactions at Manitou, many jokes were highly embedded in racial undertones, where at times, the “self-deprecating” approach could ease the interactions, while at other times; ironic dialogue was used to express the more deeply rooted local experiences of imperialism.

One evening I was sitting drinking beers with some women at one of their homes. One of the women's cousins came by after spending the day making deer stands in preparation for the hunting season. As we were being introduced, the cousin asked me: "Do you work at the watershed?" To which I replied, "No," and then responded using an element of the humour I had become familiar with at Manitou. "Why? Is it because I'm white?" Everyone that was around immediately laughed at this asinine comment of mine, including the fellow who had asked me the question. Indeed, there is a context in which my comment is coming from.

The watershed, I have briefly outlined in Chapter 2, is a project started and subsidized by Manitou with the objective to protect and monitor the Rainy River. I have heard people at Manitou complain that they subsidize this project, when the main mill in Fort Frances, who are the ones that "dump all the crap into the river", should be the ones protecting the river. More to the point, the watershed program at Manitou is the only department where the staff is mostly, visibly white, off-reserve employees. Parts of the argument I have heard for this, has to do with the education requirement, as most of the people hired to work at the watershed have a background in resource management and sciences. However, this does raise a bone of contention within parts of the community as there are people within the community without work.

Now, I have strayed from my point slightly, which is to say that my comment that was received comically, suggests how there is a racial awareness that distinguishes between who are the Natives and non-Natives at Manitou. As such, in one way of looking at it, I managed to come off pulling Ferguson's "in-jokes" by using the "self-deprecating" elements of owning up to my "whiteness" in an Ojibway setting. However,

the meanings one could read into it, hinge on a precarious balance that is contingent on the particular social setting. Having white people on the payroll at Manitou, is a contentious issue with some, and therefore, my comment could well have been a catalyst for the social setting to turn into a discourse on this unsatisfactory employment situation. Due to my own naiveté, I was fortunate enough to be with people who were willing to laugh at my comment rather than raise it as an issue. I suggest this, because I was not implying my “whiteness” to be a privilege at Manitou, but rather as a response to this fellow’s generalizing about what a “white” person could possibly be doing at Manitou. Thus, in this context, the humour implied can be seen to relieve the racial tensions that stand between the non-Native and Native, in the very interaction of these “unchartered” intercultural dialogues.

Ultimately, racial discourses expressed through humour tread on a fragile path when it comes to including one group and excluding another. In Don Kelly’s “And Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Get Ready for some (Ab)Original Stand-up Comedy,” he writes about how it is important to educate non-Natives about Natives through comedy. He discusses how there is a particular approach that one has to take in order to keep the audience from walking out. Furthermore, he still believes that controversial topics can be brought to the stage and still get the message across without excluding and having half of the audience uncomfortable. The controversial material he suggests deals with racial stereotypes, and his approach involves two ways of getting laughs out of these stereotypes: “by refuting them or by reinforcing them” (2005: 60). He further suggests that this approach is based on the assumption that people already know the stereotype, or

that this new idea brings out the subtle and mundane in the topics that the audience was not aware of before (2005: 60).

I draw on Kelly's discussion, as it illuminates some of the ways that I encountered racial discourses at Manitou to be displaced with elements of humour when traversing intercultural dialogue. Thus, making jokes that "reinforce the stereotype," can prove to relieve intercultural tensions, such as is in the interaction that I had with this fellow who asked me if I worked at the watershed. Here the joke was in the fact that predominantly only "white" people are hired at the watershed, and my pointing it out by joking about my "whiteness", reinforced this awareness that "white" people hired on at the watershed does in fact exist. Thus, the ensuing laughter following my comment supports Ferguson's point about how self-deprecating jokes can welcome intercultural dialogue, as the reflexive nature in this approach can be argued to invite listeners without putting anyone on the spot. Nevertheless, jokes with racial content remain dubious at best, as it is more often than not, an invitation for miscommunication and misinterpretation across the cultural "frontiers" of the "insider" and "outsider".

On the flip side of Kelly's discussion, Ian Ferguson again explores how Native humour is not always received well by non-Native people, if it is even understood at all. He argues: "they take it the wrong way. That is, they take it way too serious" (2005: 131). The example he gives is that of the anthropologist coming to a Native community, and being immediately recognizable because of their "complete lack of irony (not to mention their long hair and knapsacks)" (2005: 131). This example, Ferguson suggests, resonates with an interaction that I had when I thought it was a good idea one day to show up at Manitou, with my notebook in hand. And although I saw no humour in this scenario at

the time, I later realized the irony that was being impressed upon me in the dialogue. This example also illustrates Ferguson's discussion on the exclusivity of "our" jokes, and how often, an "outsider" is incapable of seeing the ironic humour used to displace imperial discourses.

I was probably close to two months in the field, and really up until this point, all I had been doing was volunteering at the mounds and going on every outing that the kids go on with Manitou's recreation program. There had been no "anthropological" advancements to speak of. I had met people, hung around with some more than others, but no one that I would refer to as the "main" informant. What I had learned about as a thing to happen to anthropologists while out in the field. Nor, to mention, was I comfortable enough to carry around a notebook. Rather, I felt that I was taking the more "experiential" approach remembering the conversations and interactions I was having during the day and then running back to my cabin in the evening, to fill in the ethnographic pages as quickly as possible.

Well two months passed like this, and I thought that I would step it up a notch. Feeling that I was not really being the "anthropologist" that I had always envisioned, walking about the community with their notebooks and pencils in hand. So, in taking to tradition, one fine September day I decided to visit the medical building (with my notebook) to ask some specific people in mind about the treaty, which had recently been settled in 2004. This was a horrible idea, to say the least, and as much as it started out awkward it only ended all too awkward as well.

I could feel myself getting frustrated because I felt like my questions were not getting answered when I had asked one fellow “what do you think the implications of the treaty signing has on the youth?” This fellow (no wonder!) did not answer my question, but he did say: “our community was seven communities to start with and then the treaty, which was never honoured, merged seven communities and seven chiefs into this one community, with only one chief to represent us all.”

I managed to smile, but inside I was beginning to feel pretty frustrated, and then just when I thought it could *not* get any worse, an older fellow walked into the room. The other fellow introduced me: “this is one of our respected elders in the community. He is someone that you want to be talking to.” This older fellow turned to me smiling “what is it that you are wondering about?” he asked.

I shyly told him, “I am wondering about the treaty.”

“What would you want to know about the treaty?” he replied.

“I am curious as to how in having a recent treaty settlement this might influence the youth in the community today?” I responded.

At this point he turned to me, and in what *I* ascertained to being a fairly serious tone while maintaining a smile, he said, “what does the treaty and youth have anything do with each other?”

“Well,” I said self-consciously. “Does having a treaty signed inspire people toward their goals for self-determination?” At this point I was

beyond frustrated, and I also just stopped speaking unless asked to for the few remaining minutes that this conversation lasted.

This old fellow replied “the treaty is about a history that was not honoured. It is about the Government taking away everything that we had.” After saying this he asked amiably, “what are you doing here?”

“Well, I study anthropology,” I said self-consciously, and stupidly continued, “and I came here to do a project related to youth culture.”

With a big grin he replied: “We had an archaeologist around here for awhile once, and boy,” this old fellow laughed aloud, “was he ever something else.” He continued: “Anthropologists make things up. I could tell you something that I have made up and you could go and write this down like it means something.”

It was at about this point that I felt like a complete ass and needed to make my escape pronto. I smiled as tears rolled down my cheeks. The old fellow looked at me: “is there something a matter?”

“No,” I said shyly, “I had better get going though. Thank you for your time.”

He asked: “What is your name?”

“Jordan,” I replied.

“They call me Big Bert around here, like the character from Sesame Street,” he said smiling.

(Field notes, September 6, 2006)

What I came to learn here, was that in asking the questions I did, I was not approaching it in a way that people around Manitou worked. Unfortunately, I had not intuitively figured this out, thus, I had to experience this little bit of humility. Furthermore, in the duration of all my frustration, I was never able to see, neither the humour, nor the cliché in my actions; hence, Ferguson's description of the anthropologist with the "complete lack of irony" (minus the knapsack in my case). I guess, for me in the end, what I took out of all this was that the "outsider" had missed the point, again perhaps. Nonetheless, this experience clearly suggests how humour is used with ironic undertones in order to respond to the patronizing "outsider". As on my side, it may have been a lesson of both humility and reflexivity toward my inappropriate "authenticating". However, for the individuals on this "other" side, my position as the anthropologist suggests how it is simply a symbol of the larger ongoing history of imperialism and domination.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes about a Maori conference held in New Zealand where a reporter showed up with a photographer "suggesting that it would be a very colourful feature for the newspaper to highlight." (2004: 72). Smith describes how when these two showed up, they were so "visibly" disappointed at the nature of this conference being a normal everyday kind of venue with people dressed in suits and ties "that they chose not to take a photograph" (2004: 72). Smith writes about some of the responses from the individuals attending the conference, as they joked around about how they should have looked more *indian*: "Oh, I forgot to come as a native," joked one of the delegates. "My feathers got confiscated at the airport when I arrived," teased another. "I

suppose my eyes are too blue,” was another of the responses to the reporter’s decision to choose not to take photographs (2004: 72).

Smith’s discussion illustrates how these kinds of intercultural experiences trigger a kind of ironic humour that suggests a form of coping and creatively engaging with these kinds of dominant “western” discourses that define the *indian*. Her example also suggests the continuum in the argument that observes the lack of irony from the side of the “expert,” or “outsider”. Thus, experiences in the local context reveal a way of interacting that can be embedded with elements of humour, and that, on the one hand, looks to be in counter response to the dominant discourses that attempt to define the *indian*. As in Smith’s example where the joke looks to be on the “expert” who chooses not to take photographs. On the other hand, however, local forms of humour suggest a much more human universal that surely transcends the idea that humour used in the local Native context is solely a counter response to colonialism, or even a sensibility unique to Native people alone.

I have tended to focus on the “typical” ways that humour can be seen to be embedded in racial discourses that dichotomize between non-Native and Native. And indeed, Vine Deloria argues that Native humour is a way of coping with a history of colonialism suggesting it a common feature in Native discourses to have this element of humour whether it is expressed ironically or literally (1969: 146). However, I do want to acknowledge how humour can be seen to creatively engage in intercultural dialogue separate from a context of using it to displace racial and imperial discourses solely. Thus, in taking a look at Native discourses of humour from this angle, Don Kelly argues how humour is not solely a product of coping with “being dispossessed, disenfranchised,

discounted, and dismissed” (2005: 63). Rather, he argues that Native peoples had this sensibility long before contact. Here he writes of the trickster character called Nanaboozhoo, and though today trickster humour can be seen to be custom tailored to fit the historical context of European contact, this character has been a part of Ojibway mythology for time out of mind, often portraying a powerful character, and yet still “always creative” or just kind of “a foolish spirit” (2005: 62). As I have said, in my own experiences at Manitou humour had a sustaining presence throughout my interactions. As such, the evidence of acknowledging this “foolish spirit” can be seen in the kind of “ice-breaker” interaction I encountered on my first introduction at Manitou:

It was one of those hot summer’s days in July, one of the hottest days of the year in fact. The baseball game was coming to its end and as I sat at the bleachers feeling the sun cooking on me, I was called up to the batting area. I grabbed the bat that was handed to me and took a couple of swings to warm up, and then I stood bending over the base watching for the ball. I swung a couple of times missing the ball completely and earning myself a background noise of laughter from the bleachers. The back catcher jokingly commented, “Your swings are strong, but in order to get to first base it’s important for you to make the connection between the ball and the bat”. I comically smirked at his sarcasm and then managed to hit the incoming ball so that it at least made it out far enough into the field for me to make it to first base.

As I stood there at first base, preparing for my run to second base, the batter-up quickly nailed the ball. However, it only made it as far as the

catchers in inner field, and there seemed, to me, to be great doubt that I would make it to second base before the ball did. I ran like the dickens anyways. And as I ran, I could see that the ball was about to be thrown to a young fellow standing on second base. He was standing in between me and the base, and within these few moments, I caught myself wondering how I would deek past him to touch the base. Also, he was standing in a position that brought me in between him and the ball, so I could not help but think that I might get hit by the ball if I was to run for the base. As all this was happening, in the matter of seconds it took to run from first base to second, I quickly decided to close my eyes and just go for the base regardless of getting smoked by the ball.

This was definitely not strategic thinking on my part, as the ball ended up landing in the young fellow's glove and within the next half second I came running straight into him. I had apparently not calculated the physical proximity, or the breadth of my wide shoulders that inadvertently smoked this young fellow instantly to the ground. When I finally became aware of what I had done, the young fellow was gathering himself up from the ground. I had not hurt myself, but was quick to ask him if he was alright. I apologized endlessly as he wiped off the dust on his arms. He smiled and said, "I'm fine". Within these few moments that I was getting my bearings straight, the game had come to an end, as I was the third strike out.

As I turned to walk back to the bleachers, right there in plain view, everyone was roaring with laughter at what the *new kid on the block* had just

done. I felt, at first, sort of like I came across as some kind of oversized bully, yet at the same time, for me, it was typical of my clumsy character. However, as I watched everyone laughing at what had just happened, I got the impression that they saw this same clumsy character too.

As the game ended and I was walking to my car a fellow said with a smile on his face, “you should come out for the wrestling team”. I smiled back, and as I hopped into my car, Braveheart, whom I had only just met within the hour, was getting in his van with his kids, one being the young fellow that I had just knocked down. He said jokingly, “a girl that likes to push the boys around, we had better watch out!” Braveheart said this with a great big teasing grin on his face, a grin that I would come to recognize as a part of his social character. And this kind of teasing interaction would prove to be a part of many of the dialogues that I would have at Manitou.

(Field notes, July 26, 2006)

The “foolish spirit” of the trickster character here comes to life in the action that takes place out on the baseball field suggesting how humour is used to interact and share social experiences. Moreover, it illustrates how this sharing of experiences can cross cultural boundaries without implicating racial discourse.

Drew Hayden Taylor in, Me Funny (2005), discusses Native humour as unique from other ethnic senses of humour. He admits it is not always obvious, but there are “nuances, subtleties. It’s as if chicken is the joke, but the sauce or the unique flavours of the joke’s humour come from various cultures. You’ve got tandoori chicken vs. chicken cacciatore vs. a McChicken” (2005: 1). In his book, his emphasis is on exploring the

Native perspectives of humour more than it is to understand cultural differences in humour (2005: 3). And indeed, in my experiences at Manitou, these nuances of local humour were evident in such examples as I have discussed above, along with the life history dialogues I have presented. For example, in Braveheart's dialogue his love of bologna and Spam appears genuine, but how he emphasizes this love suggests how there is also a sense of deliberate irony and play to his commentary as well. Essentially, local Ojibway nuances of humour can be seen to engage racial discourses with a kind of teasing exchange across cultural boundaries, while it equally can be seen to ironically displace the discourses that define the *indian* experience. In this sense, Taylor's notion of Native humour can be seen to be relevant in the unique experiences at Manitou.

However, from another angle, local experiences, ultimately, reveal how complex and contradictory dialogue involving humour are. Such is the example of my dialogue with Joey Tall which reveals his seemingly arrogant confidence when he is remarking on my coming to Manitou unbeknown to him. Indeed, his conversation suggests how he can be argued to exemplify the similar "lack of irony" that I am found doing when I meet Big Bert. However, Joey Tall's example illustrates how notions of humour attributed as a Native sensibility solely; mask the potential of complex individual experiences. And inadvertently reinforces discourses of the *indian* by making essential claims such as the idea of a comprehensive "Native humour". Additionally, discourses of the *indian* experience not only can be seen influenced from mainstream society alone, but also how they are maintained at the local level of Native communities. Thus, further suggesting how humanity, in the grand scheme of things, can be seen to be easily drawn to

generalized and essentialized definitions. And yet, it is in illuminating individual experiences where an abandoning of these dominant discourses seems most possible.

With this said, I have intended to explore how the local dialogical exchanges at Manitou are embedded with elements of humour. And how there can be seen an ongoing process of complex and dynamic experiences displacing dominant discourses of the *indian* through various uses of humour.

5.2. Local Contexts of “Taste”

There isn't a week that doesn't pass where me and the kids don't go to KFC. Sometimes we even go two or three times a week. I *love* Kentucky Fried Chicken!

—Braveheart

John Germov and Lauren Williams, in their edited book, A Sociology of Food and Nutrition: The Social Appetite (1999), define social appetite as “the social context in which food is produced and consumed, and thus influences our food choices” (1999:9). With this in mind, I will *indulge* in a discussion towards how an exploration of the “social appetite” can capture the complex and inter-layered local contexts of Ojibway experiences, at the same time, that they contrast the contemporary dominant “western” discourses that can be seen to infer a kind of social appetite into the *indian* experience. In order to illustrate the dominant “western” discourses of social appetite, I will look at three of Germov and William's concepts: “McDonaldisation”, “social differentiation”, and “self-rationalization” from their article, “Introduction: Food as the Nexus of Culture and Nature”.

The examples that I discuss from my experiences at Manitou reveal that there are local nuances and social patterns that set the context of Ojibway experiences apart from mainstream Canadian contexts. An example of this is in the fact that locally harvested and hunted foods, like wild rice and wild meats, can still be seen to have a presence in the local social appetite. In addition, exploring intergenerational differences in food preferences suggests a socio-economic mobility in the last half century at Manitou. At the same time, this intergenerational analysis also reveals how industrial-processed foods have evolved in the local context of Manitou, as they have in the larger Canadian context.

Indeed, I do not intend for this discussion to deny the influences that the fast food industry has in this community, as this is no less present than it is in the Canadian context. Rather, the emphasis of my discussion on industrial-processed foods here is more to illustrate socio-economic mobility, nostalgia, and the variety and choice available at Manitou, than it is to reinforce the dominant “western” discourses that allude to the “poor eating habits” typically tagged onto Native communities.

“McDonaldisation”, Germov and Williams write, is “a modern metaphor for the extension of bureaucratic rationality throughout social life” (1999: 6). Essentially, this concept reflects the increasing standardization of food and how its consumption and production are controlled by multinational enterprises. In addition, it suggests how the nutritional intake and eating patterns of the North American diet today have been altered.

This notion of “McDonaldisation” is very evident when driving through the small towns of Canada. In fact, one might easily miss these small towns if it were not for the well marked “Golden Arches” that often act as the centre piece of many a small town. And this does not exclude the local nearby town of Fort Francis that the people of Manitou patron. Fort Frances is dotted with establishments such as KFC, Pizza Hut, Subway, Dairy Queen, A&W, and McDonald’s. Not to mention, it hosts the only box office store in town—Wal-Mart—which also boasts yet another McDonald’s. All of these franchises are built side-by-side one another on the one main road of Fort Frances, which easily takes you in and out of the town within five minutes. Therefore, when Braveheart talks about going with his kids to KFC at least once a week because it is his favourite restaurant, this not only suggests how many families have developed a tradition

of picking up something quick to eat after a long day of work, but it also indicates how eating out in this rural area of Northwestern Ontario means eating fast food.

On the one hand, Braveheart's example illustrates the way that the standardization of food production makes an impression on the local choices of food consumption by creating limited options in the kinds of restaurants that monopolize rural towns like Fort Frances. In contrast, Joey Tall Stockings talks about how when he used to live in Toronto he would eat out at Italian restaurants, which he also mentions, is something he is not able to get around Fort Frances. His preferred restaurant choice of Italian food, as opposed to Braveheart's preferred restaurant of KFC, reflects how constructions of "taste" can be seen to be influenced by a geographical context. The social appetite in the rural town of Fort Frances is limited in choice, compared to the setting of a big city like Toronto.

On the other hand, to credit the notion of "McDonaldisation" as the sole influence on Braveheart's food preferences denies his own ability to make choices, or for that matter, also denies the fact that there are other choices around besides these dominant institutions. I was invited, on a couple of occasions, to what I will refer to as an *Ojibway Feast*. One of these occasions was a Thanksgiving dinner, and here there was a spread of food that provided both the foods that would be consumed at a "typical" Canadian Thanksgiving dinner and local "traditional" foods that are harvested and hunted in Ojibway Country:

After a few minutes people started settling wherever they could find a place to eat. At this point I got up and went over to the island to grab myself a plate of food. The variety of foods spread across the counters

revealed what I would mostly imagine a tremendous Ojibway feast to be like with the addition of mainstream Canadian dishes served on an occasion like this. There were a few traditional dishes of wild rice prepared in casserole like dishes with mushrooms and other vegetables mixed in. Along with this were bowls of salads, potato dishes and some trays of battered and fried fish which would probably be one of the local species of bass, pike, or walleye. I decided to ask Long Stride's girlfriend, Louise, who was over by the stove cutting meat, "what kind of fish is this Louise?"

"Its walleye," she replied as she placed some meat on one person's plate.

Once I filled my plate with a sample from every dish on the island counter, I went over to the stove where Louise named out my choices, "we got partridge, moose and deer. Long Stride just got the deer last week with Jess." Louise was speaking about her grandson, "he took Jess out hunting for his first time and came back with this."

"Really!" I replied impressed, "Well I will definitely take a piece of that then."

Louise cut a piece of the meat and placed it on my already heaping plate of food.

"Do you want some partridge or moose?" Louise asked again.

"Sure I'll take a sample of each," I replied reaching for the cup of gravy that was sitting beside the meats.

(Field notes, October 8, 2006)

The foods that were consumed here, illustrate how the notion of social appetite expands into a multilayered exploration of “taste” at the local level. Thus, the undeniable fact of “McDonaldisation” in this rural area of Northwestern Ontario is counter acted by the kinds of local experiences engaging in the variety of locally cultivated food choices in Ojibway Country. In this kind of conceptualizing, the diverse contexts in which “taste” can be seen to exist at Manitou demands awareness towards how individual experiences make choices that contradict and displace the dominant “western” discourses defining the social appetite of the *indian*.

In Pat Crotty’s article, “Food and Class”, she discusses how popular notions of social appetite are hierarchically maintained. She uses Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of how those with “cultural capital” influence social appetite in “[creating] notions of ‘good taste’—legitimate the forms of consumption to which they have more access. They are able to define their bodies, their lifestyles, and, in this case, their preferred food choices as superior, worthy of respect, and ‘classier’. Thus, Indian take-away is better than take-away hamburgers and, what is more, is chosen by better educated and better paid people” (1999: 144).

Crotty’s discussion illustrates how notions of social appetite fall into categories based on social class, and thus also, falls under the assumption of “better” educated. She argues that lower class households tend to be labelled as having “unhealthy” eating choices (1999: 136). To counter these notions, she suggests that studies should factor in such variables as the presence of children and the age of people in the household. These variables, argues Crotty, are equally useful toward explaining the range and type of

consumption, as much as income, occupation and education help to understand household diets. Essentially, she argues nutritional studies assessing food behaviour and diet need to contextualize lower socio-economic groups and distinguish sub-groups within this category. Studies that suggest variations in diets between lower and higher socio-economic groups are due to class factors alone, Crotty argues, misinterprets all the intervening variables that also impact food choices (1999: 135). Nevertheless, Crotty concedes that food insufficiencies are still regarded to be closely linked to homelessness, unemployment, young students, and single parents (1999: 136).

In referring to Crotty's argument here, I will share an experience that reflects my own limitations in developing an opinion based on these kinds of guidelines that distinguish between "unhealthy" and "healthy" food choices. I attended a dance that was put on by an external group that had been hired by Manitou to do a "community member survey". They decided that in order to get the input of the youth they would put on a dance for them. For me, what was of notable interest here was the kinds of foods that were provided for the kids that evening. I ended up sitting with the recreation coordinator as she worked in the kitchen doling out bags of candy, chocolate bars, and pouring glasses of pop to the kids all evening. In addition, there was a store bought cake put out on the table next to a selection of potato chips for the kids to serve themselves. This gamut of apparent junk food shocked me, as to see kids consuming this much junk food in one evening was something that I had been conditioned to think was *not* making "healthy" food choices.

The kids took their new found goodies and ran off outside. Before long another wave of kids came through to get their candy bar and bag of candy.

When it was quiet again I asked Denise, "Do the kids always get this much junk food?"

"So far it seems this way," Denise replied. "For every activity I have a budget for refreshments and sometimes snacks, but anytime there are no snacks on an outing the kids are told to bring their own money and we stop at the convenient store."

"Oh really," I said curiously, "Do the kids bring money for the store?"

"Oh yeah, all the time," Denise replied quickly, "and when one doesn't have money usually other kids are good about sharing their snacks." Denise poured herself some orange soda, "Do you want anything?"

"No thanks," I replied.

"Even I have started to eat more junk since I've been working here." Denise laughed. "It's always around."

"The parents aren't afraid of their kids bouncing off the walls once they get home," I asked comically.

"Not really," Denise laughed. "I've heard a parent tell their kid that they only get one soft drink on an outing once, but generally they eat what they want."

(Field notes, August 1, 2006)

In showing my own ability to be quick to pass judgment here, I mean to acknowledge how my understanding of social appetite is very well shaped by the dominant discourses that Crotty argues, define “unhealthy” and “healthy” food choices. My immediate attachment to this type of discourse, and thus, inability to simply remain neutral and nonjudgmental about the foods provided at this event, exemplifies how dominant forms of knowledge uphold influence. In hopes of countering my own immediate judgments, I had to become aware, to whatever extent this really matters, to how a local context of “taste” can be seen more complex than simply being a case of “lower socio-economic” and “uneducated” choices. And indeed, what becomes notable is the socio-economic mobility that can be seen going on in the intergenerational local experiences of food choices. For this, I draw on Manitou’s annual rice camp that I attended.

Manitou’s annual rice camp is held for a week at the end of every August. In the past, and as recent as three decades ago, families canoed out to their traditional territories on Lake of the Woods to harvest rice for the better part of August and September. The rice was then sold in order to provide families with a bit of income for the rest of the year. Today, the annual rice camp is, more or less, a community event for the youth to experience camping, and optionally, to experience harvesting wild rice. However, most of the youth spend their time canoeing, swimming, and hanging around the campfire socializing and eating. The foods supplied for this included an abundance of the “typical” foods eaten on a camping trip, such as hamburgers, hotdogs, marshmallows, and oatmeal:

When we first pulled up on the boats to the island where the rice camp was held, I joined some of the young men as they were browsing through the packed food they had just carried up from the boats in a big cooler. One of the young men was listing out some of these foods as he sifted through the gamut of perishable foods that were completely insulated by blue Styrofoam, and kept cool by a couple dozen bags of ice. I peered into this box to view the massive amount of food. There were numerous packs of hotdogs, boxes of hamburger patties, and a few four litre jugs of milk, ten or so packs of Hershey's chocolate bars, bacon and sausages. Beside this cooler-box of food, there was a metal rack filled with about a dozen cartons of eggs, and as I glanced through some of the dry-food boxes there were buns for the hamburgers and hotdogs, and pasta accompanied with cans of tomato sauce. There were also a dozen or so cans of Spam. At this point, one of the young men noticed marshmallows and graham crackers in one of the boxes and yelled out, "they brought the stuff to make S'mores!"

(Field notes, August 22, 2006)

Essentially, this ethnographic clip illustrates a kind of socio-economic mobility through the generations within the community. As the choices the youth at Manitou have today far exceed the choices that the generations living through the post-treaty era experienced, when life on the reserve, correlated with the shift away from "traditional" harvesting and hunting patterns, suggesting evidence of "harder" times.

For this, I draw on the "dozen or so cans of Spam" that were packed for the rice camp and were the topic of many conversations during the week. Here, I learned that

Braveheart's love of Bologna also transferred over to Spam. Additionally, what was significant was how Braveheart and many of his contemporaries shared their nostalgia of having eaten Spam as children, and throughout their younger adulthood:

As the young men were investigating through all the food packed for the rice camp they caught the attention of Braveheart who came up to the boxes to check around.

"Hey look at all the Spam! Someone was thinking when they were packing the food," Braveheart said with a big smile across his face.

I laughed at this, for I had come to learn at how obsessed Braveheart was with Bologna that this did not surprise me to hear his excitement over the Spam.

"So you like Spam too, hey?" I asked teasing.

"Oh yeah!" he replied humouring me and carried on to say, "I use to eat this stuff all the time when I was a kid."

As Braveheart was saying this, an elderly lady joined in: "When I cook Spam I always poke some cloves into it and then bake it like that, so to add some extra flavour."

Braveheart smiled: "I love it fried and then slapped between two pieces of white bread. Yum!"

Both the elderly lady and I laughed at how Braveheart humorously said this. I started thinking about how Spam was kind of like Bologna's close food-relative, in terms of how food categories might be described as affordable, processed and quick.

“Pearly White, good call on the Spam,” Braveheart said comically to Pearly White as he walked up smiling his nice big grin.

One of the younger men standing around the boxes of food asked, “What is all the Spam for anyways?”

Pearly White replied teasingly: “it is what all you kids will be eating this week—Spam sandwiches!”

The young group of men made gestures of disgust and commented amongst themselves on how they were not having anything to do with it.

Pearly White, directing his comment more to the young men and me, said: “this is the kind of food that we would eat as kids all the time, even in my twenties I ate this stuff at College.” Pearly White paused. “And I still eat it.”

(Field notes, August 22, 2006)

Spam, in popular culture, is easily slotted into a lower socio-economic echelon. This resonates with Crotty’s discussion of how higher socio-economic groups tend to be associated with eating “more vegetables, cheese, and fruit juices”, where oppositely, lower socio-economic groups are associated with eating “more foods such as butter, potatoes, and bread” (1999: 136). This, she writes, also implies how the “former may be seen as ‘modern’ foods and the latter as ‘traditional’ foods” which she further suggests reveals how “the diet of lower socio-economic groups is commonly viewed as uniformly ‘unhealthy’” (1999: 136).

Spam is a “meat” product packaged in a can and made from “ham, pork, sugar, salt, water, a little potato starch, and a mere hint of sodium nitrate to help [it] keep its

color”⁵. Spam made its debut in 1937, a decade that was met with an increase in the manufacturing of processed products, and intended to supply industrial societies with a kind of “bang for your buck” practical food product. Additionally, Spam was one of the only “meat” products that were not rationed in Britain during World War II, due in part to its durability, affordability, and non-perishable qualities. Taking into account this background, at a similar time line, the socio-economic hardships that were experienced at Manitou in the pre-treaty era was also a time when Spam was introduced to this community. Thus, the discussion of Spam among some of the older generation at Manitou not only alludes to the practicality of this food in a time of limited resources on the reserve, but it also dates the era when industrial commodities were first being introduced into Ojibway Country.

The difference between the introduction of Spam in the early thirties to the industrial-processed foods of today, can also be seen in the unlimited choice that is a part of the “western” consumer culture today. Thus, industrial-processed foods can be seen as a part of the mainstream social appetite, in both Manitou and the larger Canadian society today. Even though, as Crotty outlines, these foods have become suspended in a discourse between what is “unhealthy” and “healthy” and what is of an “uneducated taste” and “educated taste” respectively. Essentially, in the context of Manitou, the notion of “choice” seems to me, to be a far more important point of analysis toward the complexity of the local social appetite than is the exploration of discourses that distinguish between “unhealthy” and “healthy” food choices across social class.

In this sense, having observed how the youth at the rice camp had no interest in eating the Spam, and for that matter, nor did any of the older generation, as the dozen

⁵ This information I retrieved off the Spam website: www.spam.com

cans of Spam remained untouched the entire week, suggests to me, how the abundance of choices today has evolved since the days of Spam. Nonetheless, what is important to take from the ethnographic captions is how Spam still holds a special place in the memories of the older generation at Manitou today. As such, the example of the one elder lady who explained how she added extra flavour to her Spam by adding cloves to it, corresponds with Native comedian Ian Ferguson. In his article, “How to Be as Funny as an Indian”, one of the “our jokes”⁶ that he shares is how “you might be Aboriginal if you know thirty seven ways to prepare Spam” (2005:128). Essentially, Ferguson’s comment is very fitting to the above conversations, where not surprisingly, even Braveheart shared how he “[loves] it fried and then slapped between two pieces of white bread.”

Thus, the personal memories of Spam can be seen as symbolic of the highly nuanced experiences of childhood at Manitou. Whether poor or not, childhood memories here ring with positive nostalgia. Failure to acknowledge these kinds of shared memories and historical contexts, supports Crotty’s argument of how social appetite becomes explored through the dichotomies of the lower and higher socio-economic groups alone. Importantly, aside from this local socio-economic mobility, these shared memories of eating Spam illustrate how local experiences are cherished no less than the “high cultured” experiences of fine dining.

Germov and Williams’ second concept influencing social appetite is “social differentiation”. Here, they suggest how an increasing level of consumer choice is on the rise and further diversifies the already unquestionable range of lifestyles choices, specifically in developed nations. With this said, “social differentiation” also reveals how in the vast range of choice, social appetite can influence the pull of social identity to

⁶ See pp.117 in section 5.1. Local Contexts of Humour for Ferguson’s discussion on jokes.

strongly associate to certain kinds of social membership such as “vegetarianism, eating out, culture and ethnicity, class, [education], and ageing” (1999: 7). In exploring how social appetite influences people’s social identity, Crotty’s discussion on how foods can be seen to be defined through “unhealthy” and “healthy” choices and are identified with lower and higher socio-economic groups respectively, becomes a critical looking point. As the processed foods consumed at both the rice camp and youth dance can easily be argued to fall under the category of “unhealthy” food choices, thus constructing a social identity based on how these food choices are perceived in the dominant Canadian culture. Indeed, these kinds of limited perspectives projected on the ethnographic examples only prove to illustrate the ways that dominant “western” discourses define and reinforce the *indian* experience.

In the context of an increasing level of consumer choice, processed foods like Spam is symbolic of a time, back in the thirties, where consumer choice of processed foods did not exist to the same extent that it does today. As it was, at many of the community events that I experienced at Manitou there was always plenty of food to go around. Thus, the increasing level of consumer choice that “social differentiation” infers can be seen as having an influence at Manitou, as the cans of Spam that lay ignored the entire week of the rice camp suggests how *necessities* nowadays tend to remain on the shelves. As such, today’s over-abundant food choices suggest a context where people’s food choices become more a matter of *preferences* rather than *necessities*.

On yet another level of this discussion, the abundance of choices today can be argued as limited to the obvious exposure of fast food chains and food products sold out of mega-stores such as Wal-Mart. And although “traditional” food still hold a place in

the local social appetite at Manitou, the influence of Germov and Williams' "McDonaldisation" does suggest the odds against choosing to consume more of a "traditional" diet in this seemingly contemporary fast food era, especially among the youth. Thus, in one sense, "traditional" food can be seen as a secondary food option, especially, in a context where the corporate food industry has managed to play a pervasive role in the food choices of the consumer, quite obviously seen in small towns of Canada, such as Fort Frances.

Finally, Germov and Williams' third concept, "self-rationalization", draws on Foucault's "ideas of surveillance as a form of social control and particularly refers to discourses that attempt rationally to manage and regulate the human body" (1999: 7). The example that Germov and Williams give is of the "social fat conscience" that exists in developed nations, and which is seen to be produced and reinforced through scientific discourses that uphold ways of thinking about food choices (1999: 8). This idea goes two ways in the context of this paper. The first illustrates the systemization of "science" discourses that associate Native communities with poor diet and "unhealthy" lifestyle choices. I have illustrated this in my description of the "junk food" that was consumed at the youth dance, as well as the kinds of foods that were eaten at the rice camp which, mind you, can also be argued as the foods eaten on a typical "all Canadian" camping trip. I do want to set it clear that I am not here to argue that junk food is *not* an "unhealthy" food choice but, what I want to suggest, is how the very "health, nutrition, and beauty discourses [reflecting] attempts to manage the human body rationally" (1999: 304), are embedded in the discourses that infer about the food choices in Native communities. As such, I think that I reveal this quite blandly in my own reaction towards the consumption

of “junk food” I observe at the youth dance. Indeed, I have no doubt that my astonishment toward the junk food consumption has a lot to do with a bias of being “educated” about nutrition from the dominant “western” perspective. As Crotty suggests it is not only in the powerful and influential defining social appetite, as it is also, in their legitimating this through being “better educated” (1999: 144).

Another important aspect of analysis is the context of the fast-food industry that monopolizes rural regions of Canada. Germov and Williams’ notion of “self-rationalization” illustrates the greater complexity of the health and diet discourses towards Native communities, as well as it also highlights the ever present paradoxes of how corporate enterprises can also be seen generating a local economy. Noting this raises the awareness towards how the government does not seem to oppose this type of economic development. Yet, one of the paradoxes that exist here illustrates how federal advocacy towards improved diet and healthcare in Native communities seems only counterproductive to generating and stimulating local economies based largely on the development of these corporate food industries.

To wrap up this already complex and contradictory discussion, the snippets of dialogues that I have provided are meant to illustrate how the social patterns of experiences essentially displaces the notion of what are “healthy” and “unhealthy” food choices. As in the local context of Manitou, having both the choice and access to fast food can be seen as symbolic of a socio-economic mobility, at the same time, as there are existing multiple contexts in which different types of food, besides processed and fast food, are eaten. I have tried to touch on this by mentioning how, on the one hand, fast food consumption can be seen to be provided at the particular community activities and

in the casual evening dinners that Braveheart talks about; where alternatively, the local and “traditional” food holds its importance in social gatherings such as at Thanksgiving. Thus, the local experiences of “taste” take on a complex and dynamic orientation that displaces dominant “western” discourses of the social appetite of the *indian*.

5.3. Discourses on “Social Issues”

You white people can just have a glass of wine and keep it at that hey?

—Joey Tall Stockings

I want to explore how the local Ojibway social patterns of experiences can be seen to creatively displace and complicate the dominant “western” discourses of social issues in Native communities. Gerald Vizenor writes how “Native American Indians bear the burdens of a nation cursed with the manifest manners of alcoholism [...] Indians are the wild alcoholics in the literature of dominance” (1999: 29). He brings forth the stereotype of the “drunken Indian,” which he quotes from Joseph Westermeyer in “‘The Drunken Indian’: Myths and Realities,” who describes how this notion can be seen to be officially recognized when the federal government “prohibited the sale of beverage alcohol to Indian people for over a century (1999: 30).

For me, what became increasingly apparent over the course of my research was how contemporary discourses about Native people can so easily surrender to this discourse of the “drunken Indian”. The idea of *not* essentializing an entire Native population seems all together obsolete in the realm of dominant “western” discourses. Yet, on the other hand, a “drunk” in a non-Native context, would be hard pressed to see their ethnicity and biology as the root cause for their drinking. Vizenor explores the history of the stigmatization of Native people and alcohol: “[...] ‘some tribes learned to drink from the wrong whites: fur traders, explorers, or fishing crews, all of whom drank hard and, frequently, in a fashion not condoned’ by missionaries and other colonists” (1999: 30). As best I can, I want to explore kinds of social issues through an analysis of dialogues I had with people while I was at Manitou, as they challenged my own

conceptualizing when actually interacting with *real* people. As the local context of drinking revealed to me a more complicated set of experiences than the given discourses of the “drunken Indian” give justice to.

Vizenor’s notion of the “manifest manners in the literature of dominance” becomes very evident, when I turn to a number of articles that easily fall prey to this kind of gaze on the *indian*. Indeed, this is an uneasy topic to even be treading on, as this kind of discourse can be seen in both the dominant Canadian context, as well as holding a place in the Native context. In this sense, it is *not* to deny that these kinds of social issues exist, or for that matter, are not in need of historical and structural analysis. However, to explore how the *indian* is viewed under notions such as the “drunken Indian,” seems critical towards acknowledging how insidious and impressionable, and, quite plainly, misleading dominant discourses are on the experiences of individuals targeted by them. Not to mention, how they perpetuate a fairly nonexistent dialogue between Native and non-Native interactions.

What is equally evident, is how within the dialogues I experienced at Manitou, individuals can be seen internalizing these dominant discourses of the *indian*, while at the same time, contradicting them. Joey Tall Stockings dropped in on me one day and, as I was pouring myself a glass of wine, I offered him one. He declined, and as he watched me pour my own glass he said: “you white people can just have a glass of wine and keep it at that hey?” His comment, though obviously rooted in his own personal journey with addictions, nonetheless suggests to me how even Native individuals can be seen to internalize dominant discourses of the “drunken Indian”. As Joey Tall’s refusal of the

glass of wine can be seen to be rooted in a “scientific” logic that Native people cannot just have one glass of wine.

Vizenor quotes the authors of *Drinking in America*, as they write, “the colonial view of Indian drinking, that red men could not hold their liquor, was in fact the beginning of a long-standing stereotype of the impact of alcohol on the tribes” (1999: 30). This statement helps interpret Joey Tall’s comment, suggesting how insidious discourses of the “drunken Indian” are, in that they can even become internalized by the very people made victim to them. It also suggests how much weight “western” science holds, as biology in Joey Tall’s example, becomes the reason for, not just him alone, but for the entire Native population, being unable to “hold their liquor”. With such a conceptualizing, reveals how this kind of discourse seriously underrates the possibility of structural components and other phenomenological influences contributing as factors to these kinds of social issues. Not to mention that it denies the intricate context of individual experiences.

Now with this said, I would like to explore a few examples of the literature that, on the one hand, can be seen to have the best of intentions to advocate an awareness of the way that Native experiences are embedded in a historical web of events. Though, on the other hand, by continuing to make apparent only the “social issues” in Native communities, have the effect of reproducing and maintaining dominant discourses of the *indian*. Thus, I intend to discuss these selected pieces of literature to reflect on how *normalizing* discourses of the *indian* read, and inadvertently, are maintained. Ultimately, from this, I hope to establish a discussion of how local Ojibway experiences can be seen to contradict and displace these kinds of discourses defining the *indian*.

In “Separate and Unequal”, Larry Krotz discusses statistics that reveal Canada’s youth school dropout rate at thirty-one percent, which stands at almost half of the dropout rate of fifty-nine percent of Native youth living on reserves. By the time these youth enter their early twenties, Krotz explains, this number only decreases to forty-three percent compared to sixteen percent for the rest of Canadian young adults (2007: 64). Krotz also compares this to Native people who have integrated into urban society and thus have a higher success rate to those who stay on the reserve. Essentially, Krotz’ article suggests that it is the reserve system, still in place today, that continues to marginalize Native people, and thus, helps explain the high rates of school dropout. He also looks at the faction of social class that occurs within Native communities. He argues how the “political Native” can be seen to find their closer allies amongst the larger Canadian political class than they do within their own communities:

The problem is that Canadian public policy regarding aboriginal peoples, instituted with the general agreement of the native leadership, has created and continues to support a parallel system that suffers the curse of most all separate systems: it is by no means equal. Those who cling to it fear assimilation; what they have forfeited is participation. While we might aspire to celebrate unique cultures and reconcile the injustices of history, in reality we have created a system wherein people are paid to be Indian; where they are legislated to be different; where they are not deliberately condemned to be poor, but where that is the result; and where the aboriginal political class goes to work each day with a vested interest in keeping things as they are. (2007: 65)

Krotz remains critical towards how it comes down to a question of money, as the Government and Native political class consistently negotiate past wrong-doings through a process of cash settlements. In illuminating the unequal distribution of power in the reserve system, at both the Government and Native political level, Krotz points out how this correlates with the high rates of youth dropout. His argument here presents the components of a double edged sword where the very system that attempts to create policies that work to improve the socio-economic life on reserves, is also, the same system that continually manages to marginalize those same people.

I went to a healing workshop one day while I was in Ojibway Country. The speaker here shared the philosophy of the medicine wheel, and in order to show its importance he drew on some of his own life experiences. Here he shared his story of being sent to residential schools which, he argued, was the beginning of the end of a bad cycle of being out of balance with all the elements in the medicine wheel:

Tom Wind Dancer continued to talk about the importance of the medicine wheel and how the fundamental principles of life can be understood from an awareness of this medicine wheel, which he also referred to as “the wheel of life”. He shared his personal battle with alcoholism and abuse, and how he has been sober for thirty years now. He briefly explained how before he was sober he was following patterns of abuse that he saw from his parents and continued for his own children to learn, “it was the lessons from this medicine wheel that made me aware of my patterns.”

“Within each quarter of the wheel,” Wind Dancer explained, “there constitutes a balance.” He wrote out the words of each of the elements of balance as he said them. “There is the mental which entails self-concept, the physical which entails self-awareness, the spiritual which entails self-determination and the emotional which entails self-esteem.” Here Wind Dancer described: “when all these elements are in equilibrium they naturally manifest respect, kindness, honesty, and sharing, and this is how the wheel of life works at its maximum potential.”

Wind Dancer used this wheel to describe his own experiences in residential schools and to how the demoralization he experienced made his own wheel of life off balance. He argued: “the residential schools emphasized on the mental making sure that they drilled into us their language and arithmetic and science. They left out the physical by completely ignoring that children need to be unconditionally loved. And for many of us, the physical that we did experience was sexual abuse which only repressed this physical element even further.”

(Field notes, September 22, 2006)

Tom Wind Dancer’s discussion of his life history experiences, where he alludes to his teaching of the medicine wheel as a process of recovery from his experiences at residential schools, suggests how bureaucratic policies enforced onto Native people have created the statistics that Krotz brings forth. At the same time, however, emphasizing Krotz’ statistics too much detracts from the processes involved in the local individual context of experiences.

Therefore, all the dialogues of Braveheart, Blue Prairie Woman, and Joey Tall Stockings illustrate a different kind of exploration. Rather, in light of their shared experiences, the message from Native statistics can be seen to be misleading, as it lacks awareness of the processes involved in contextualized experiences. My immediate surprise at learning that Braveheart had gone to university is, for me, an indication of how well embedded Krotz' Native youth dropout statistics are, and that they reproduce the ways that the *indian* is represented in dominant "western" discourses. Reflecting on my own reaction had me thinking about how I thought it was odd that Braveheart would have been encouraged to go onto university, coming from both his time era and a Native reserve. Of course, he being born with a "turtles paw" can be seen as having an influence on the way that his mother encouraged his choices. In addition, an awareness that Braveheart makes choices himself displaces my own assumptions towards how I have come to perceive what reserve life entails. Essentially, in this context, the dominant discourses on youth dropout rates does not appear to have the same cut and dry legitimacy in the presence of knowledge of Braveheart's youth experiences, even for his time era on the rez.

Blue Prairie Woman's dialogue illustrates yet another highly complex and inter-layered web of experiences that taken at face value, supports the statistics of both youth dropout rates and teen pregnancy occurrences. However, only highlighting her dropping out due to her teen pregnancy, ignores the choices that she has made for herself in her life. As well, it undervalues and marginalizes the processes of her personal experiences.

On another note, Joey Tall Stocking's dialogue illustrates the contradictory nature that local experiences can be revealed to exemplify. In his experiences with school, Joey

Tall did not have to concern himself about being a statistic of Native youth dropout; as he shares, being on the hockey team automatically granted him high school graduation.

Whether he needed to concern himself with academics becomes inconsequential in the processes of his experiences, as academic performance in high school was a secondary priority next to his hockey.

I read an article in the *Globe and Mail* back in February 2007 titled, “A Slap in the Face of every Canadian,” written by Margaret Philp. Here she argued how Canada has too long ignored the atrocious socio-economic conditions in many of the reserves across Canada. Now, though, “one of the international humanitarian agencies that fight malaria in dusty refugee camps is training its eye on some of the isolated, alcohol-drenched reserves here at home” (2007: F.1). Philp, along with two aid workers, travel to two remote Oji-Cree communities in Northwestern Ontario to meet a range of individuals from young pregnant teenage girls, youth suffering from depression or mourning over peers who have committed suicide, to kids as young as ten abusing anything from alcohol and hairspray to painkillers (2007: F.4).

Essentially, Philp spends the better part of the article discussing the poverty and social issues existing in two particular communities with descriptions like “mattresses tossed on the floors to sleep everyone” (2007: F.7); “not a morsel of food remains in the fridge, save for bottles of barbecue sauce, maple syrup and two cans of baby formula” (2007: F.6); “[teenage girls] sniffing gasoline and drinking hairspray when they can’t find liquor” (2007: F.4). In this context, Philps’ article addresses the need for external aid, as the limited resources in this community reveal the “aboriginal misery in Canada that dates from the time British traders first came to these shores” (2007: F.8). Furthermore,

her article addresses how “we shouldn’t make excuses for the government. They’re the duty-bearers here and it shouldn’t be taken away from them. But there are things that can be done that can make people’s lives better on a day to day basis” (2007: F.8).

These comments can be seen to be similar to Tom Wind Dancer’s medicine wheel workshop where he directly relates the patterns of alcohol abuse to the history of Governmental policies imposed upon Native communities. Even when Braveheart speaks about his memory of being a child sitting waiting at the window for his parents to return home from a long weekend of drinking in town, echoes the nature of this vicious cycle, where these social issues keep cropping up generation after generation. Braveheart himself, winds up describing his own patterns when he hits University and begins drinking. Nonetheless, Philps article, written for the “all-Canadian” reader, is saturated in dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*. As the two communities, honed in on, are written in a way that winds up giving the impression to Canadians that *all* First Nations communities are “problem” communities, and thus, all First Nations individuals are plagued to a life ridden with “social issues”.

In Johnson & Tomren’s article “Helplessness, Hopelessness, and Despair”, they discuss the national statistics for American Indian youth suicide. They suggest that Native youth stand dangerously vulnerable to suicide with rates 2.4 times more than other Americans in between the ages of 15 through 24. In addition to the high rates of suicide they also suggest “alcoholism, arrest careers, and interpersonal distress such as anomie, helplessness, hopelessness, and despair” (2001: 234) to be directly related to the loss of Native tradition and culture experienced during the introduction of European contact. Their discussion is significant for at least two contradictory and important observations.

The first is how it acknowledges the similar issues that both Krotz and Philp address, which is also seen in the dialogues of Braveheart, Blue prairie Woman and Joey Tall Stockings. Not to mention, Wind Dancer's discussion of the systematic pattern of life on Native reserves, which in his context, suggests a history ridden with residential schools and early separation from families. All of these examples suggest some of the major factors contributing to the social issues of alcohol abuse and suicide occurring in Ojibway Country. As such, the discussion from this angle impresses upon the reader the history of political policies imposed on Native peoples, and that continue to carry their residue today in the kinds of social issues discussed here. Indeed, the statistics and discussions that the above articles present shake the facade of a developed, humanitarian Canada.

However, for the relevancy of this thesis, what Johnson & Tomren bring forth that is not present in the other articles is a kind of critical analysis towards this kind of discourse. In their argument, they discuss how overemphasizing American Indian suicide can prove counterproductive, as "it can lead to low self-esteem and low self-image, which may actually perpetuate American Indian suicides" (2001: 235). When Joey Tall comments on how white people can keep it at just one drink, exemplifies how these kinds of dominant discourses of the *indian* are capable of being reproduced and instilled within the local context of Native experiences. As such, in looking at the contemporary discourses of the *indian*, and how they correspond with the above articles, Johnson and Tomren's argument raises an interesting observation as to how discourses may be capable of influencing people's perceptions of what is real, and therefore, suggests how personal choices are influenced from these very discourses.

Johnson and Tomren's discussion brings forth how critical a local exploration of experiences is to an understanding of the complex layers and contradictory components involved in local social contexts. Without such a conceptualizing, Johnson and Tomren's discussion brings forth how by virtue of being Native American one is framed by the discourses of being highly susceptible to suicide, and similarly, issues like alcohol, youth pregnancy and dropping out of school. And indeed, these dominant discourses can be seen suspended in a vicious cycle that works to define the *indian*, as much as it works to influence the choices that Native individuals frame their experiences within.

Alternatively, as much as these discourses can be argued to be influential, there is still largely the phenomenon of individual experiences at play here. When I interacted with individuals at Manitou, I could not help but realize how those learned dominant discourses of mine became abandoned and replaced by local contextual experiences. Braveheart's story of his drinking days finds him seeking a recovery that is rooted in his Ojibway roots. His experiences illuminate both the phenomenological nature of how an individual influenced by the obvious learned behaviours of his environment takes a ninety degree turn toward the life of a full time single father in his third decade of sobriety. More importantly, his experiences share the richness of a life history that cannot be summed up by discourses of the "drunken Indian"; as his story exemplifies the minute processes that add up to all the unique experiences of a living human being enmeshed in a wide net of meaningful social relations.

In Blue Prairie Woman's account of her teenage pregnancy, her choice to leave school and support herself on welfare could have the potential to tell the tale of "Helplessness, Hopelessness, and Despair". However, in her sharing of her complex life

story, her pregnancy displaces the assumptions upheld in stereotypes of “Native youth pregnancy”; nor was her leaving high school a result of “youth drop out”, nor her welfare checks an indication of poverty and despair. Her example illuminates the diversity of contexts that clearly are not the ruin of a life, juxtaposed to the making of a life for oneself according to the “western” equivalent of “success”. Thus her life story shares refreshing alternatives to the dominant discourses on Native youth pregnancy, as equally, as it reveals the agency that Blue Prairie Woman can be seen to assert in the experiences of her life, as they can be seen to show her not succumbing to the influences of the discourses of the *indian*. Returning to school while raising a child, especially after being away from school, was more than doable for Blue Prairie Woman, as even a job at the Native centre was feasible too. My interpretation here of her life experiences, is not to come out as a romanticized illusion of single teenage motherhood; rather it is simply to illustrate how individuals experiencing youth pregnancy in the Native context are still highly capable social actors, with rich experiences.

In Joey Tall’s story of his experience with addictions, he shares the challenges that are met when he finally resolves to go to a treatment center, and even is challenged by his focus towards sobriety when he returns back to live on the rez. His story suggests how his interactions have had a relative influence on his life including his hockey coach aiding his abuse of over-the-counter drugs. As well, his alcohol and drug abuse, when he returns to the rez, can be seen to be shaped by the social circles that he chooses to move in. Nonetheless, his addictions reveal a contradictory experience where his context does not stem solely from the “Helplessness, Hopelessness, and Despair” of the rez. As he equally spends time in the larger Canadian society having lived with “white” families

when he was billeted out for hockey, and having lived in various cities throughout Ontario, including Toronto while he played hockey up into his early twenties. In this sense, his experience rings familiar of the similar experiences of youth experimenting with drugs in the North American context and that sometimes evolve into long term battles. Equally, challenges with drug and alcohol abuse can be seen to provide an outlet to the pressures of keeping up in competitive sports such as hockey. Importantly, Joey Tall's dialogue illuminates the complexities of drug and alcohol abuse that are not simply isolated as the challenge of the *indian*, but are a phenomenon constituted in the larger experiences of "western" societies today. Thus, the presented statistics, and discourses that ensue with them, oversimplify Native experiences by systematically isolating these kinds of social issues to a Native context. And furthermore, by constructing these social issues as the *indian* experience suggests how it inadvertently contributes to manifesting these occurrences.

I have to consider that on one level here, in the very act of presenting this discussion, I no doubt, implicate myself in reproducing these discourses of the *indian*. So, in an attempt to redirect this discussion, I reveal a kind of counter-discoursing, or really, just the local discourses that alternatively can be seen processing these same social issues. In the three dialogues, the actors' experiences share a kind of process that is highly nuanced in the Ojibway context, and yet simultaneously, individualistic and interculturally relatable. Furthermore, in the local Ojibway setting, social issues can be seen to be expressed with a level of humour, as well as a local discourse that reflects the influences of Ojibway philosophies and knowledge systems.

Braveheart tells of the time when he made the decision to quit drinking, and on attending an Alcoholics Anonymous circle, he explains how it occurred to him that his tradition had a spiritual force that was different than the “god” he was learning about at the AA circle. He describes how in considering the white man’s “god,” he was compelled to go to his elders and learn about his own tradition as a process of recovery. Similarly, Wind Dancer found himself turning back to the teachings of the medicine wheel when he was in his process of recovery. Re-valuing the knowledge of the medicine wheel suggests an important aspect of the healing recovery being grounded locally. Both Wind Dancer and Braveheart’s stories suggest the process of recovery through choosing the Ojibway teachings. Their processes illustrate the importance of the local knowledge that provides a whole realm of Ojibway philosophies embedded in the aspects of healing, health, and life. Braveheart and Wind Dancer’s stories reveal the importance of this local knowledge when they *return* back to their tradition. Even in Joey Tall’s story where he signs himself into a treatment centre suggests how he seeks knowledge from the First Nations teachings. To illuminate how this local knowledge is circulated I draw on the lecture of Wind Dancer who emphasizes that in the end it can only be up to the *individual* to choose to break from the cycle of abuse:

Once we reconvened after lunch, Wind Dancer continued his talk; this time around he was focusing on the imbalance of the elements being embedded in the local family context. He started to talk about how the parents are the role models: “If we want to see change then we have to start from the individual”. Wind Dancer started to draw a spiral: “It starts from

the individual in the centre of this circle and makes its way outwards, to the family, and then next is the community, and finally the Nation.”

As Wind Dancer spoke about this spiral beginning from the self he asserted: “the one thing a man can do for his child is to love his mother.”

And from this he began to tell his story where “for every time that my father began to drink. Every time without fail, he would beat up my mother by the end of the evening.” He continued to describe with incredible conviction how this is a common scenario that he has seen his entire life happening throughout his community. “The women stand up for themselves by screaming back: ‘come on you bastard just hit me!’ So common are the black eyes on women that it seems like it’s some kind of badge of honour!” Wind Dancer paused: “It’s got to stop! And where does it stop?” He asked as he pointed directly to the word **individual**, boldly printed out in the center of the white board.

(Field notes, September 22, 2006)

Wind Dancer’s story, no doubt, refers to the same social issues that Krotz, Philp and Johnson & Tomren write about being a common theme in Native communities. However, in the multi-layered web of these experiences exists the local capacity to go beyond the limitations that dominant “western” discourses of the *indian* influences on Native communities. Wind Dancer’s story shares this complex process of experiences, at the same time, it tells of how local knowledge guides him through the experiences that impress to him that he is the *individual* with the key, so to speak, to the choices in his life.

Braveheart's story speaks of similar processes where in choosing to stop drinking indicates how he "started from the individual" to choose experiences that displaced the historical patterns that he learned as a child. Blue Prairie Woman's story shares an equal light on the philosophy of the *individual*. As her own teen pregnancy reveals that dominant "western" discourses of the *indian* do not define her individual process; and, furthermore, reveals how highly nuanced and complex the individual context of experiences are.

Essentially, what I have tried to illuminate in this discussion are some of the multi-layered and social patterns of experiences that the local setting of Manitou reveals. And, how these contextualized social patterns of experiences can be seen to displace the dominant "western" discourses that define the *indian* through particular kinds of social issues.

Conclusion

Now to sum this up, I have found myself exploring in the end, more the experiences that *I* took from my time at Manitou. Indeed, on entering this community I had the kinds of high ambitions where I would have a project that the community would find useful and valuable. This, as you have probably already amassed from reading here, is not the case. And in fact, the principal focus in this thesis has become more attuned to the dialogues I encountered with my fellow Canadians, before, and well after the fact of my time spent at Manitou. As I cannot help but see how completely unparalleled my experiences and interactions were at Manitou, to the kinds of ways discourses construct Native people to be. With questions such as, “did you find them lazy?”; “was diabetes a big problem there?”; “Were kids sniffing gas?” I even had a friend who teaches Native kids at high school say how she found the Native kids to be the slower kids in her classes, which she argued was because “they simply don’t do their homework!” These examples illustrate how fitting Vine Deloria’s comment is when he writes: “[one] of the finest things about being an Indian is that people are always interested in you and your ‘plight’” (1969:1). Indeed, I have written a text that explores the way contextualized social patterns of experiences at Manitou can be seen to displace, contradict, creatively play with the dominant “western” discourses that attempt to define the *indian*. And as discussed, I do this through discourse analysis of such themes as humour, food, and social issues.

In grounding a discourse analysis, I presented the three life history stories of Braveheart, Blue Prairie Woman, and Joey Tall Stockings first in order to weave both

their stories and my own dialogical experiences at Manitou into the explored themes. Second, to illustrate the unique web of social patterns that exists in the cultural milieu at Manitou. In this sense, humour can be seen to be used to communicate meaningful local knowledge and experiences that are illustrated in the light and easy going manner of the dialogues exemplified in this thesis. At the same time, humour can be seen to counter imperial discourses through the use of deliberate irony. As such, humour used in the local context of Manitou reveals a way to communicate historical and cultural meaning, and at the same time, engage in an intercultural dialogue of sharing and listening of life stories that displaces dominant “western” discourses of the *indian*.

Now, in reflecting on the life stories and my own experiences from social gatherings at Manitou, my exploration of food, on the one hand, reveals how dominant “western” discourses of social appetite reflect the processed-food consumption at Manitou today. However, on the other hand, as easily as this is to identify in the local context of Manitou, it is just as easy to illuminate the significance of the social nostalgia and upward mobility derived from the experiences of consuming processed and fast food paralleled with the socio-economic shifts occurring in the last century at Manitou. Not to mention, the local experiences of taste reveals a diversity of foods that extends into such locally harvested foods as wild meats and wild rice, and equally have their place in the local social appetite of Manitou. The ethnographic discussion of the diversity of foods eaten at Manitou illustrates how dominant “western” diet and health discourses essentialize the “social appetite” in Native communities, and is, ultimately, displaced by the social context of complex and diverse experiences of taste at Manitou.

Finally, the discourse analysis of social issues illustrates the juxtaposition between local social experiences with that of mainstream media and scholarship. Here what becomes notable is how social issues such as teen pregnancy, school dropout rates, drug and alcohol use are consistently delineated under descriptions of “helplessness, hopelessness, and despair” in the *indian* experience. In this section, I analyze the stories of Braveheart, Blue Prairie Woman, and Joey Tall Stockings in order to humanize the very social experiences of these individual agents.

At this stage in my writing, I have used the tools that I have learned from anthropology to illuminate the complex nature of a particular culture, and, on a deeper level, humankind. To critically examine how the differences and distances I experienced, by crossing cultural boundaries, can be seen to be constructed and suspended in ideas, discourses, ways of seeing and believing the world we live in. To have tried to engage in an experiential journey to better understand the experiences of those around me. And thus, to reflect on the local context to ascertain the relativity of experiences, along with the ironies and contradictions that also arise along the way. To what importance any of this serves the people that I “gazed” upon, seems to me completely useless and inconsequential to them in their immediate lives. So with this, I may have tried to use the tools I learned in anthropology, but I feel that I have not moved on beyond what has already been unravelled, deconstructed, understood.

I also want to mention, again, that this entire project is impacted by my own search to justify my own Mohawk identity that easily goes unnoticed in the shadows of my all Canadian upbringing. The reason I mention this is because I could not help but notice that the literature that helps support my argument that dominant “western”

discourses of the *indian* do in fact exist, seems to be dominated by other “mixed bloods” like myself. These authors include Gerald Vizenor, Vine Deloria, Drew Hayden Taylor, Kim Blaesar, Greg Sarris and Louise Erdrich, to name but a few. This is not to make claims on the way “race” influences notions of belonging. Nor is it to illuminate how authors make “statements about having ‘Indian blood’ to send a message about ‘being in’ [in order] to authorize their general ethnographic descriptions” (Lassiter 2005: 106). Rather, it is more to suggest how, on some level, there is a need to assert that there is *no* all-encompassing script that determines the way a Native person acts, lives, talks, is. And the need to assert this, has just seemed to me, to exist more in the ones that, in their own way, cross the boundaries of multiple cultures than it is of those confirmed in their minds to belonging to a singular culture. So again, context would make this discussion more relevant in one setting than in another.

Despite all of this introspection, the point of the matter is, these often negative and over generalized ways of discoursing about First Nations people still exist today. And although it may be completely irrelevant to local First Nations themselves, this discussion is still important for cultivating an awareness towards the implications that dominant “western” discourses of the *indian* have in the Canadian context. As it both continues to reinforce the way non-Natives perceive First Nations people, at the same time, it can be argued to imprint a kind of manifestation into the consciousness of those framed by these discourses. In addition, these discourses continue to help maintain the predominantly nonexistent intercultural relations between Native and non-Native peoples alike.

Thus, to pick out the minute and particular, which mind you is difficult to avoid when experiencing interactions on the local and personal social levels, becomes a critical component towards breaking down cultural boundaries and essential categories. But maybe, perhaps in the grand scheme of things, this discussion is just a smaller indication of the way humankind naturally engages in essentialist understandings, at the same time as individuals are naturally inclined to assert their uniqueness through the influences of the local social patterns of their community.

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