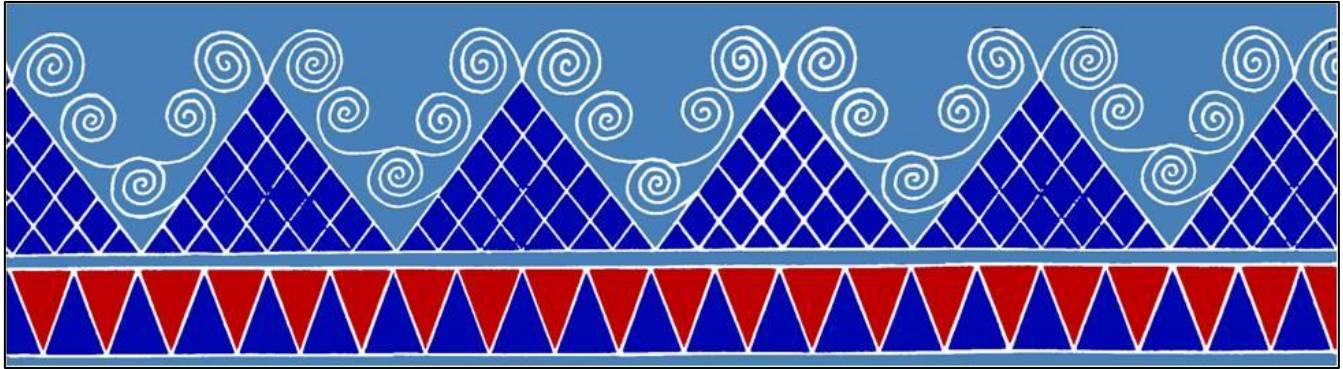


# THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY



## VOLUME 24, 2015/2016

### *In This Issue:*

- **Out of Sight, In Mind: Cell-phones and the Reconnection of the Iraqi Diaspora with a (Home)land.**
- **Bioarchaeological Sampling Strategies: Reflection on First Sampling Experience at the Templo Mayor Museum in Mexico City.**
- **Aboriginal Performance Cultures and Language Revitalization: Foundations, Discontinuities, and Possibilities.**
- **Exploring Indigenous Knowledge Systems: An Exploration of the Tensions that Exist Between Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nehiyawak Methodologies.**
- **A Feeling in their Bones: Issues of Deciphering Animal Ritual in the Archaeological Record among the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree.**

# **The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology**

## **Volume 24 – 2015/2016**

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Published annually in coordination with the Department of Anthropology, the Anthropology Society, and the Western Anthropology Graduate Society at The University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

With special thanks to Scholarship@Western Library Services

ISSN (Print): 1203-8830

ISSN (Online): 1925-8542

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London, Ontario, Canada  
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## ABOUT THE COVER



Once again we are honoured to present, as our cover art, a painting by artist David Kanatawakhon. David is a Mohawk artist from Kenhtèke (Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Territory), and also a lecturer in the University of Western Ontario's Department of Anthropology, Native Language Centre, specializing in Mohawk language and culture.

David has kindly allowed us to reproduce his piece, a design that depicts an elaborated Iroquoian water and earth design. He has written the following by way of introduction of his piece.

*The geometric pattern at the base represents the waters that flow under the earth. Above that is the earth pattern represented by mountain designs, while the curling patterns depict the winds that blow about the earth.*

*This design is typical of the traditional clothing decorations used by ancient Iroquoian Peoples.*

*This particular design would be commonly found at the base of a woman's dress or a man's kilt. It could also be used at a border design for a wearing blanket or in more contemporary times, a shawl. Prior to the European cultural invasion, designs like these would be fashioned from porcupine quill or embroidered using moose hair, coloured with natural dyes. Today, they are more apt to be presented using commercial beads and ribbons.*

# The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology

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Co-Editors: Jordon Munizzi and Paulina Reghan Johnson

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## Acknowledgments

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The editors would like to thank everyone who chose to submit to UWOJA and acknowledge the time and feedback given by our reviewers. We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to your submissions in the coming years.

Jordon Munizzi and Paulina Reghan Johnson  
Department of Anthropology  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario  
June 2016

## **Out of Sight, In Mind: Cell-phones and the Reconnection of the Iraqi Diaspora With a (Home)land**

**Abdulla Majeed**

### *Abstract*

*It was only after the invasion of 2003 and the gradual collapse of the Iraqi state that cellphones began to surface on Iraq's public market, for they have been previously banned by the regime of Saddam Hussein. This fairly recent breakage of the digital barrier rendered Iraq at the time as one of the most promising ICTs markets in the Middle East, with critical consequences on the larger Iraqi society, particularly since it also saw the introduction of the previously banned Internet. Using personal experience, as well as interviews with Iraqis from Baghdad, this paper argues that Iraqis creatively employed, and continue to employ, ICTs and Cellphones not merely as a tool of reconnection between the Iraqi diaspora and the homeland (and vice versa), continuously reconstructing their national identities, but also as tool of survival and risk assessment for Iraqis on the inside. This is of particular importance since the devastating consequences of the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq are still evident on the Iraqi social, urban, and political space until this day.*

*“Thank god I am finally able to hear your voices again. I am in Al Karada now [a popular local market in Baghdad]. The owner of Al Thuraya bast-ta [street vendor] is asking for too much money. I might lose connection in a few minutes. Let me speak to your mother quickly.”*

### *Introduction*

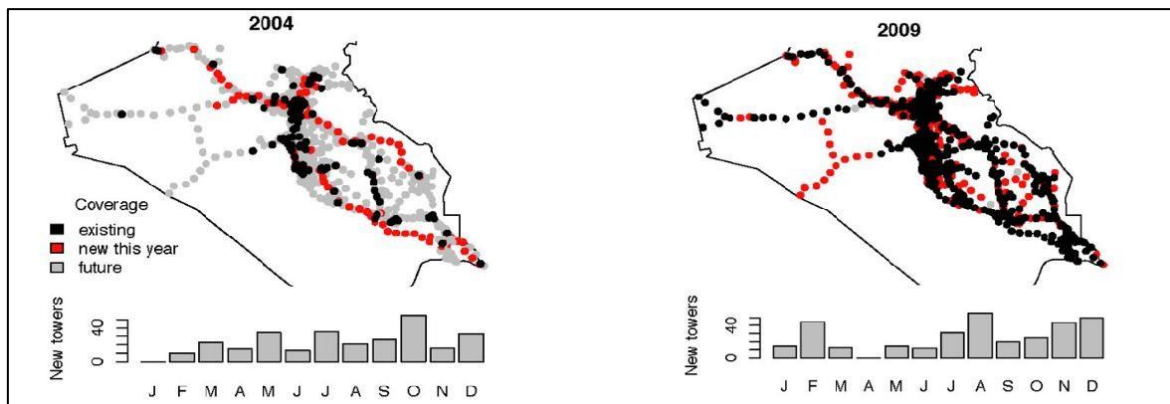
Those were the words of my grandmother the first time we heard her voice after losing touch for several weeks after the beginning of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Al Thuraya referenced in the quote were the satellite cell-phones that appeared on the Iraqi scene immediately following the overthrow of the Iraqi government, connecting a large portion of the Iraqi diaspora with their families in Iraq. Since then, multiple telecommunication corporations and operators have been established across the country. This paper will begin by providing a brief introduction on the state of digital access, particularly with regards to cellphones, in post-2003 Iraqi society and how this access contributed to the reshaping of certain cultural attitudes and practices, particularly within the urban Baghdadi society. This will then be followed by an examination of the role cellphones have had on the relationship between Iraqis in the diaspora and the homeland, and the transformations that resulted from that reconnection, particularly with regards to the renegotiation of an Iraqi national identity. Here, it is important to acknowledge that this relationship needs to be approached from two different yet interdependent trajectories: diasporic Iraqis on Iraq and Iraq on the Iraqi diaspora. Finally, I will also examine how the fragile post-2003 Iraqi political atmosphere of occupation and militant sectarianism has rendered the cellphones as a tool of survival and risk assessment for the Iraqi individual.

### *ICT in Iraq*

Any discussion on ICT (Information Communication Technologies) in Iraq must first acknowledge the fact that the introduction of ICT into Iraq is fairly recent. Cell-phones, internet, and satellite television

were all banned by the dictatorial Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein prior to 2003, while state-operated landlines were perceived as being tapped by the interior ministry (Mark et al 2009). Thus, post-invasion Iraq witnessed the concurrent introduction of multiple forms of ICT, breaking the digital barrier that had been firmly maintained under the dictatorship. The digital barrier identified here is represented by the geographical borders of Iraq, beyond which Iraqis were able to access, but not necessarily acquire, different forms of ICTs. This introduction of a new market in the Middle East for ICTs rendered Iraq as one of the best telecommunication markets in the region, with an estimated cell-phone penetration rate of 70% of the population within 6 years of the invasion, in addition to the market of Iraqi Kurdistan, which have already had access prior to 2003 (Best 2011). Zain Iraq, one of the leading telecommunication operators in the country, recorded more than 10 million subscribers by 2009 (Figure 1).

which she argues that materials need not be defined merely by human interaction with them, but one also needs to consider their 'socially consequential' existence beyond human input. Similarly, the statistics mentioned above suggest that following the invasion, Iraqi society not only developed a strong response to the new opportunities ICT provided, but also exhibited new materialistic tendencies and prestige associated with phone ownership. For example, ownership of the newest cell-phone brands symbolized an elevated status and socioeconomic achievement at a time when the hopes for freedom and social and economic development had been dashed (and remain unfulfilled). In fact, this materiality was manifested less than one year following the invasion by the establishment of more than 400 privately owned internet cafes in Baghdad alone (Alexander 2005). Such developments support Burrell's strong materiality proposition, in which the properties of ICT played a critical role in a cultural transformation, rendering the virtual space



**Figure 1. Coverage of Zain Iraq network between 2004 and 2009 (Shapiro and Weidmann 2011).**

Here, it is important to recall the research conducted by Burrell (2012) on the strong materiality exhibited in Ghana following the introduction of the internet, in

provided by ICT as a space for possible cultural and social negotiation. This is of particular importance considering that for the eleven years preceding the invasion, the U.S. and its allies, represented by the United Nations, had imposed suffocating economic sanctions on Iraq that had detrimental consequences on the larger society. During

these punishing sanctions, Iraqis were prohibited from importing much needed goods and services from beyond Iraq's borders; goods that were not only necessary for their country's development but also for their own survival, such as heart and cancer medicines, surgical gloves, and even pencils (Simons 1996).

The earliest introduction of mobile ICTs to post-invasion Iraq was Al Thuraya satellite phone, which became the main means of communication with the outside world for many Iraqis. Even though Al Thuraya provided a critical benefit for Iraqis to contact their families outside of Iraq, the satellite phones had several drawbacks, including (most importantly) the cost of ownership and operation. When they were first introduced in Iraq, Al Thuraya satellite phones could cost between 600 and 1000 USD, while the charge for international calls surpassed the 8 USD/minute mark (MENA 2003). However, such high costs did not halt the expansion of Al Thuraya phones, since by May 2003 the provider had 20,000 subscribers in Iraq alone, which was expected to rise to more than 100,000 by the end of the year (MENA 2003). Based on personal inquiries with family members who resided in Baghdad during that period, personal ownership of Al Thuraya satellite phones was relatively rare due to its high costs. Instead, Iraqi small business owners employed Al Thuraya as another tool to generate profit by renting the phones to the public for a specified number of minutes in return for a fee that was generally higher than the actual cost of operation. Here, it is important to mention that the U.S military utilized Al Thuraya signals to locate Iraqi targets in the early periods of the invasion; a tactic that put civilian life at high risk due to the inaccuracy of such data (Human Rights Watch 2003). Consider for example this excerpt from Sa'dun Hassan Salih, an Iraqi man who lost six members of his

extended family, including his two-year old nephew, after a U.S. airstrike mistakenly targeted their house in Baghdad:

I don't know why the house was hit. There was no intelligence, no army nearby, no weapons. Why did Americans tell the world they hit only places of the army? Why did they hit civilian homes? (Human Rights Watch 2003: 34)

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the intended target of this airstrike was the half-brother of Iraq's previous president Saddam Hussein, who was presumed to be at this location based on the intercepted Al Thuraya signals.

#### *Cell Phones and the Diaspora*

Extensive research has been completed with regards to the role ICTs play in the relationship between diaspora and the homeland, and a main characteristic of that relationship is the role ICTs have on easing the psychological trauma geographical distance has created and fostered. As highlighted earlier, the influence of cell phones on this relationship needs to be approached within the two aforementioned contexts. For many Iraqis in the diaspora, homeland and family were not the only form of loss they had to endure; rather I propose that there was a constant fear of the loss of memory; memory that is associated with the homeland itself and its physical elements. Thus, the digital barrier that existed prior to the invasion contributed extensively to the maximization of this real and imagined loss. Here, imagined loss refers to the loss of memories. One could argue that the transformation of memory from its 'realized' state prior to migration,



to being imagined following migration is a form of initial loss within itself. What is meant by 'imagined' here is that being detached from the material contexts associated with a specific memory jeopardizes the existence of that memory. The material base in which it was rooted is no longer realized or experienced, rendering that memory as solely imagined, and thus threatened. Within this relationship, the breakage of the digital barrier through the cellphone helped Iraqis in the diaspora form repeated and continuous connections with their families in the homeland, imaginatively collapsing the distance, even if momentarily, between the 'here' and 'there'. Cellphones thereby reconnected them to the places and people in Iraq from which they had been involuntarily separated, and eased the trauma of separation. Thus, cell phone allowed Iraqis in the diaspora to form what Hiller & Franz (2004) termed "transnational connections" that mimic their real/imagined communities prior to migration. Since the acts of memorialization and reconstruction of the past are inseparable from cultural reproduction, then by extension it can be postulated that cell phones are also contributing to the reconnection of diasporic Iraqi communities with some of their cultural roots in the homeland, motivating the perpetual reconstruction of their Iraqi culture in the diasporic time and space.

When we discuss the usage of cell phones we must realize that they not only provide us with direct contact through calls and text messages, but allow access to the internet, a platform where political movements often develop and thrive. Conversi (2012) suggests that the internet has become a space for nationalist diasporas to achieve their political agendas in the homeland, an aspect that is certainly accurate for a wide spectrum of the Iraqi

diaspora. What Conversi (2012: 1360), borrowing from Eriksen (2007), termed as "internet nationalism" has been manifested by the Iraqi diaspora extensively through political propaganda Facebook groups, email newsletters, and political websites among many other outlets. Access to the Internet through the cell phone allowed such individuals to remain in contact with each other over multiple platforms, creating collective virtual communities in order to guide or motivate political change in the homeland. Prime examples of such formations are the multiple Facebook groups that document abuses committed by the post-invasion Iraqi governments and sub-government militias against civilians, which often published video or audio materials recorded by Iraqis with cell phones. The cellphone thus became a tool for the documentation of abuses, communication with concerned Iraqi groups outside of the country, and public propagation and sharing of information with the rest of the world (for an example from Kenya, see Ushahidi 2015). Thus, the cell phone becomes one of the tools employed in mobilizing cross-geographical collective solidarities based on political and national belonging(s), reflecting the various ideological trends of Iraqis in the diaspora. This process has been facilitated by the breaking down of the digital barrier and the opening up of the virtual space for uninterrupted communication.

Similarly, cellphone usage in Iraq enabled frequent communication with those who left, easing the emotional trauma resulting from the absence of family members and loved ones. The effects of the cell phones used from within Iraq cannot be underestimated, considering the large-scale migration following the US invasion, in which the cell phone played a major mediating role by providing Iraqis on the inside with the possibility of connecting with their counterparts who have already

migrated, and who functioned as a pull factor themselves concurrent with the multiple push factors in the country. Thus, one could argue that cellphones in particular, and ICT in general, contribute to providing the means to disseminate knowledge about life in the diaspora as a possibility for a safer and more secure life compared to the situation in Iraq. This might be one of the important factors that encourages further migration for some individuals and families in Iraq. In addition, this contact with Iraqis in the diaspora allowed Iraqis on the inside to reformulate their definitions of the Iraqi nation and/or homeland, whereby it is re-territorialized to include Iraqis within Iraq and in the diaspora. This aspect has certainly been shown to be true for the Greek-Canadian diaspora also, who over the years have engaged in a de-territorialization of their Greek identity to encompass a broader definition that is not necessarily confined to the geographical nation-state (Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2012). One can argue here that the inclusion of diaspora Iraqis within the larger notion of the Iraqi nation alleviates the sense of exile and loss by way of belonging to a national entity, and counters the traumas that result from the marginalization of migrant bodies in their new host countries.

#### *Cell Phones and Survival in Iraq*

The benefits of having access to ICTs and cell phones in particular are probably best examined in post-conflict societies, where survival becomes the main concern for the population (Best et al. 2010); the Iraqi society has been in the midst of conflict since 2003. Needless to say, people use different strategies to navigate through wars and traumatic experiences. Here, I will focus on two main forms or aspects relevant to the topic on cell phones, mainly remittances and coordination of in-country

relocations.

Like many countries that have massive diasporic networks that contribute significantly to local economies through remittances, such as the Caribbean diaspora (Minto-Coy 2011), remittances from Iraqis play a critical role in contributing to the survival of families in Iraq. Following a long and exhausting period of economic sanctions, the overthrow of the Iraqi government allowed for the introduction of numerous privately owned corporations into the industries of the country, which eventually saw a rapid increase in the cost of living relative to the economically crippled pre-2003 Iraq. Thus, for many Iraqis remittances from their families abroad were an essential support and coping mechanism to meet the increasing costs of basic necessities. Cell phones not only allowed contact with those family members abroad to coordinate the technicalities of such remittances, or contact with local money transfer firms, but was also a tool for Iraqis on the inside to send and receive money through mobile banking. In addition, as was highlighted earlier, cellphones like Al Thuraya were employed by many small business owners as another source of direct income.

Post-invasion Iraq not only witnessed the introduction of ICTs to the public sphere, but also saw the introduction of countless roadblocks and checkpoints manned by the U.S military, the Iraqi Military, or by sectarian militias that were often associated with Iraqi political figures (Zangana 2010). Such checkpoints not only posed a hindrance to the movement and travel of Iraqis, but also posed a huge risk to their lives if they were assumed to be of a different religious sect for example, or if they were stopped at a roadblock that happened to be targeted by an opposing insurgent group. Iraqis were thus forced to coordinate their movements in order to carry out their everyday lives in the least

troublesome manner, while at the same time assuring their survival. From this, cell phones were the mediator that allowed those who shared a community to inform each other of the locations of such dangers in order to avoid them when traveling, or to implement alternative plans for the day if the risk was too high (Mark et al 2009).

To illustrate this aspect further, consider the following findings. Interviewing six male and four female university contacts residing in Baghdad through Facebook, six have indicated to me that they have previously employed their cellphone to inquire about the safety of the usual routes leading to their university, the possibility of using public transportation, and whether their classes were running on normal schedule or not. Such forms of communication were particularly critical during the height of the sectarian violence between 2006 and 2008, a period during which the urban space of Baghdad was transformed into a site for kidnappings (targeting students journeying to school in particular), suicide and car bombs, death squads, and militant battles. This direness of this situation is further compounded when it is realized that most of the students I communicated with had attended (or still attend) the University of Baghdad, which is located near al-Karrada neighbourhood, one of Baghdad's busiest and most dangerous neighbourhoods until this day. Not only has al-Karrada seen consistent suicide and car bombings since the invasion, but it has also been the site of targeted kidnappings and assassinations. Here again, cellphones are not merely functioning within the globally generalized structures of everyday communication, but in multiple ways, become a tool for risk assessment and aversion, assuring the survival of these students.

## *Conclusion*

It is important to note that this research did not examine the negative aspects of ICT expansion in Iraq, mainly with regards to the perpetuation of violence in all its forms against civilians, and the social marginalization and exclusion resulting from the increased material tendencies. Thus, the positive aspects of ICT discussed here must not be detached from a larger context that might be discordant with the ICT4D (Information Communication Technologies for Development) approach adopted in this paper; an approach that places emphasis on the productive application of ICT. Based on this research, as well as personal and family experiences, it is safe to assume that cell phones acted as catalyst in maintaining connections and relationships between Iraqis living within Iraq and in the diaspora on the one hand, but also within and among Iraqis whether in Iraq or outside. In turn, this quickened the pace in reconfiguring the economic, social and cultural landscape resulting from years of sanctions and war. In the process, the digital revolution opened up spaces for new cultural elements characteristic of or associated with this new digital sphere. Cell phones provided Iraqis with a space for actual and imagined movement to and from Iraq as a home and a homeland, by allowing access to events and matters concerning Iraq and the diaspora shared on multiple cellphone compatible platforms. Thus, the cell phone allowed for the creation of virtual subaltern (Spivak 1988) communities; marginalized communities that did not necessarily share in a collective worldview whether in the homeland or the diaspora, and in fact came together virtually despite the differences, whether religious, cultural, or political.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Dan Jorgensen for his advice throughout the whole process of writing, editing, and submitting this paper. I would also like to thank Professor Randa Farah for her guiding tips in the process of editing this paper.

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## **Bioarchaeological Sampling Strategies: Reflection on First Sampling Experience at the Templo Mayor Museum in Mexico City**

**Diana K Moreiras Reynaga**

### *Abstract*

*Given that sampling strategies and protocols in bioarchaeology are rarely discussed in the literature, this paper is an attempt at reflecting upon the skeletal sampling process (e.g. preparation period, development of strategies and protocols, decision-making process, collaboration with those involved) as well as providing some considerations that may be useful to other junior researchers carrying out their sampling within the realm of bioarchaeology (and also may be applicable to other research fields that engage in sampling specimens from museum collections). I provide the considerations about human bone and teeth as it pertains to stable isotope analysis from the literature and then move to discuss my sampling process experience: the preparation period, the sampling process, and the sampling map I developed as an initial guide in the field. Finally, I discuss the main considerations I found helpful in the field which overall involve: 1) Familiarity with the skeletal collections; 2) Constant communication and participant collaboration with those involved in the process; 3) Establishing a feasible sampling protocol well-founded on research questions and biochemical analysis planned as a guide in the field but flexible and open to changes; 4) Handling administrative and logistical aspects of the process well in advance of the sampling visit, and 5) Continual awareness that while as researchers we value skeletal collections in a scientific manner, these also may have other kind of value to others so we must treat these collections with outmost respect at all times (i.e., when discussing, sampling, analyzing,*

*interpreting, and disseminating our research).*

### *Introduction*

My proposed PhD research project involves the use of stable carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen isotope analysis to study the diets and geographical origins of humans from the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) and adjacent archaeological sites in the Basin of Mexico dating to the Postclassic period (A.D. 1200-1519). The collections include adult and subadult sacrificial offerings from the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco's Templo R, as well as non-sacrificial burials from nearby Aztec communities. These isotopic analyses will allow us to gain insight into the life histories of these individuals and improve our understanding of how these subjects were chosen for sacrifice by the Aztec priests. This study will also help document the diversity in dietary and migratory patterns within and between sacrificial subject groups as well as in comparison with the local Aztec people living across the Basin of Mexico.

As I undertook this research project I designed a protocol for the sampling process. However, early on I noticed that bioarchaeological sampling strategies are rarely discussed in the literature. Based on this lack of discussion, and given that I have gone through my first sampling experience, the goal of this paper is to take a moment to reflect upon the strategies and decision-making involved in the sampling process and provide some considerations that may be useful for other bioarchaeologists preparing for the sampling process. I first discuss considerations regarding human bone and teeth as they pertain to stable isotope analysis. I then discuss the sampling preparation process and reflect on strategies I found useful in the field. Next, I provide a sampling map I developed, and lastly,

summarize the key considerations for bioarchaeological sampling processes.

### *Considerations for the Sampling of Bone for Stable Isotope Analysis*

Before thinking about sampling strategies, I identified a set of research questions in relation to the skeletal collections proposed for my project and followed the appropriate administrative channels to obtain official approval to carry out my proposed research in two phases. Phase I or the “pilot study phase” involved sampling a sacrificial offering from the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan (Offering 48) onto which consolidants were applied at the time of excavation<sup>1</sup>, as well as sacrificial offerings at Templo R in Tlatelolco without consolidants.

Once the administrative process and the skeletal collections for sampling were agreed upon with the Museum’s research team, I prepared my first sampling trip by reviewing the literature on bone as it relates to sampling for biochemical analyses, specifically stable isotopes (e.g., Ambrose 1993; Ambrose and Norr 1993; Cox and Sealy 1997; Hiller et al. 2004; Kohn and Cerling 2002; Lambert and Grupe 1993; Lewis Jr. and Tung 2013; Price 1989; Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). Topics I focused on, given their relevance to a stable isotopic study, included: human bone physical and chemical characteristics (e.g., bone growth, turnover rates, cortical vs. trabecular bone, collagen and bioapatite structure), common human bone pathologies, the application and removal of consolidants on bone, and the potential effects of all these aspects on bone stable isotopic values found in the literature (see for example Cerling et al. 2007; Cox and Sealy 1997; France,

Giaccai, and Cano 2011; Katzenberg and Lovell 1999; Olsen et al. 2014).

Bone is composed of 75% inorganic components consisting of a mineral base, mainly carbonate hydroxyapatite, enclosing 25% organic components (Hiller et al. 2004:1349; Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). For the analysis of stable carbon and nitrogen isotopes in ancient skeletons, bone collagen is the most common tissue analyzed. This is given by the fact that bone is quite abundant in archaeological contexts since it generally preserves well in post-burial environments. Moreover, collagen is a strong fibrous structural protein and the main organic component in bone (25% by weight in modern bone, though this percentage fluctuates in archaeological bone based on preservation and taphonomic conditions) (Ambrose 1993). Bone collagen stable carbon ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ) and nitrogen ( $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ ) isotope values provide us with a sense of an individual’s overall diet. For instance, carbon isotopes discriminate between 100%  $\text{C}_3$ , 100%  $\text{C}_4$  or marine foods, and  $\text{C}_3$  and  $\text{C}_4$ /marine (mixed) diets (Ambrose and Norr 1993; Froehle, Kellner, and Schoeninger 2010; Tieszen and Fagre 1993), while nitrogen isotopes discriminate between trophic levels along terrestrial and marine food webs (DeNiro and Epstein 1981; Schoeninger and DeNiro 1984; Schoeninger, DeNiro, Tauber 1983). This allows us to position an individual on the local food web and learn about the individual’s diet in terms of the contribution of protein from different food sources (for in depth discussions about these isotopes see: Ambrose 1991, 1993; Ambrose and Norr 1993; Froehle, Kellner, and Schoeninger 2010; Hare et al. 1991;

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<sup>1</sup> Samples with consolidants will be pretreated and processed with the consolidant-free samples. Once results are available, they will be assessed to determine if the isotopic compositions of samples with consolidants were affected or influenced by the consolidant itself. This will ensure that future isotopic analyses can be carried out on other Templo Mayor Museum collections where consolidants were applied to skeletons following their recovery from the field between the late 1970s and 1990s.

Kelly 2000; Lee-Thorp 2008; Macko, Lee, and Parker 1982; Reitsemá 2013).

The mineral component in bone and tooth enamel, known as bioapatite, is analyzed to obtain  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and oxygen ( $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ) isotopic values from the structural carbonate and/or phosphate components of bioapatite (White, Price, and Longstaffe 2007; White, Spence, and Longstaffe 2004; Wright and Schwarcz 1996). Carbon isotope values from structural carbonate provide us with further dietary information about an individual, particularly the whole composition of one's diet, including lipids, carbohydrates, and protein (Ambrose and Norr 1993; Froehle, Kellner, and Schoeninger 2010; Wright and Schwarcz 1996). These isotopic data can be evaluated in complement with bone collagen carbon isotope data to derive the proportion of  $\text{C}_3$ ,  $\text{C}_4$ , and marine protein as well as the proportion of  $\text{C}_3$ ,  $\text{C}_4$ , and marine whole diet (Ambrose and Norr 1993; DeNiro and Epstein 1978; Froehle, Kellner, and Schoeninger 2010). When carbon isotope data from both these materials are obtained, it provides the researcher with a more complete picture of an individual's diet (Froehle, Kellner, and Schoeninger 2010).

Structural carbonate and phosphate oxygen isotope values aid in determining the residence or location of origin of an individual. In brief, meteoric precipitation, along with its corresponding  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  (and  $\delta^2\text{H}$ ) value, is integrated into the landscape as surface water and it percolates into the soil to become groundwater. This local surface water ends up in water bodies (e.g., rivers, lakes) and the local groundwater is taken up by plants. As such, the plant and drinking water—along with their O and H isotopic compositions—are introduced into the local food web, and eventually, are incorporated into consumers' tissues (Bowen, Wassenaar, and Hobson 2005:338; Kirsanow and Tuross 2011:10). These water oxygen isotope values are reflected in plants, as well as the

bioapatite of consumers living in particular environmental regions. Thus, we can discriminate between local and non-local individuals in a particular region of study (for in depth discussions see: Bryant et al. 1996; Bryant and Froelich 1995; Kirsanow and Tuross 2011; Kohn and Cerling 2002; Longinelli 1984; Luz and Kolodny 1985; Luz, Kolodny, and Horowitz 1984; Podlesak et al. 2008).

Even though the chemical composition of bone has become established for isotopic studies for the most part, it is also important to understand how bone grows, develops, and changes throughout an individual's lifetime. This is mainly because the stable isotopic signal of an individual's tissues may vary due to dietary and locality changes at different points in his/her life, but also due to internal variation based on the analysis of different bone types and skeletal elements (Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). As a result, we must first consider what skeletal element and type of bone, either cortical or trabecular, will be best to sample consistently throughout the skeletal collections under study, depending on age at death and the research questions we are hoping to answer by the stable isotope method.

Cox and Sealy (1997:212) have defined bone growth as "the process through which bone increases in size by increasing the number of cells and the intercellular material between them" and this growth primarily takes place during childhood and is completed by adulthood. Besides growth, bone remodels or "turns over" (i.e. it is resorbed and replaced) throughout the course of an individual's lifetime (Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). This remodelling involves the resorption of older bone and the formation of new bone throughout life, and while exact turnover rates for healthy humans are not known, these vary depending on age and bone type (Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). According to Cox and Sealy



(1997:212) and others (Price et al. 2010; White, Spence, and Longstaffe 2004; White et al. 2000), children have high turnover rates of 100-200% at the age of one, 10% between the ages of three and seven, and 1% at the age of eight. Adolescents experience little turnover, and adults between the ages of twenty and sixty have turnover rates ranging from 0.3 to 3%. Additionally, the turnover rate of cortical bone—predominant in long bones—is much slower (~2.5% per year) than that of trabecular bone since this bone type turns over 3-10 times as fast (~10% per year) (Cox and Sealy 1997; Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995). Understanding different turn-over rates is crucial in a stable isotopic study since it determines the period of dietary and movement history that we will observe in the skeletal isotope results. Thus, planning what skeletal element and type of bone to sample for analysis from the start of the research process is essential.

Some research has been carried out exploring the influence of human pathologies, observable in bone tissue, on stable isotopic values. Katzenberg and Lovell (1999), for example, analyzed the carbon and nitrogen stable isotope compositions of bone samples from modern humans with known pathological conditions, and from control individuals with no known pathologies to assess the effect of injury and repair, periostitis, atrophy, and osteomyelitis on stable isotope ratios. This study found that, with the exception of periostitic bone, the carbon and nitrogen isotope compositions of pathological bone samples exceeded normal variation. Particularly, bone from the individual with osteomyelitis had the greatest variation in the stable nitrogen isotope values (2 permil [‰]) between segments (healthy: +11.3‰; lesion: +12.9‰; healed: +11.0‰) of the same bone (Katzenberg and Lovell 1999). This suggests that some bone pathologies, especially those caused by

common infectious diseases, produce a different isotopic signal than the healthy or “normal” bone from the same individual. In a more recent study by Olsen et al. (2014), isotopic variations in stable nitrogen isotope values were observable on bone from individuals who had suffered an osteomyelitic lesion or a fracture, while stable carbon isotope values were also different in all the pathology categories studied, except for periostitis. It is important to be aware that changes in human metabolic processes due to disease may affect stable isotopic ratios, and understand the possible implications and issues if a bone lesion is chosen for analysis (Reitsema 2013).

Some of the skeletal collections at the Templo Mayor Museum were treated with consolidants such as polyvinyl acetate (Mowilith®DM1H) and acrylic resin (Paraloid™ B72) shortly after they were recovered from the field during the 1980s. It was therefore extremely important to evaluate the potential effects that commonly used consolidants such as polyvinyl acetate (PVAc) and acrylic resin can have on stable isotope ratios. While few studies have been conducted on this subject, available publications provide some insights about consolidants as these relate to stable isotope studies. The earliest study, by Moore et al. (1989) provided an evaluation of carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios in bone collagen from consolidated (Alvar™ and PVAc) and unconsolidated bone. The consolidants were removed with a number of solvent treatments and the authors concluded that since most consolidants are soluble, a removal treatment with organic solvents (e.g. acetone, methanol) can be employed before the stable isotope analysis is carried out without major implications. France et al. (2011) assessed PVAc and its derivatives and came to the same conclusions as Moore et al. (1989), adding the recommendation that PVAc be removed using acetone followed by

drying in an oven at 80°C. Also, France et al. (2011) found that the application of the PVAc treatment prior to the isotopic analysis affected the oxygen isotope values of bone structural carbonate suggesting that the isotopic variation was due to chemical alteration during processing (see also France et al. 2015). Keeping this in mind, it is possible to sample human bone that has been previously treated with consolidants as long as a removal treatment is established and tested prior to conducting the stable isotope analysis (Metcalf and Longstaffe 2008). As a result, I am establishing a treatment procedure with the consolidated bone samples from the Templo Mayor collections (Moreiras, Millaire, and Longstaffe, forthcoming).

#### *Considerations for the Sampling of Teeth for Stable Isotope Analysis*

Tooth tissues, particularly enamel and dentin, are important sources of dietary and residential information given that they record isotopic compositions at the time of tooth formation. These isotopic compositions remain unchanged for the rest of the individual's life<sup>2</sup> in contrast with bone (Cox and Sealy 1997; White et al. 2000; Wright and Schwarcz 1998, 1999:1161). Tooth dentin isotope values can be compared with bone collagen isotope values from the same individual to infer dietary changes between infancy and adulthood. Analyzing tooth enamel alongside bone bioapatite allows for comparisons between an individual's possible place of residence during infancy and possible movement or migration to a

different location during adulthood (White et al. 2000). Since teeth provide additional isotopic information different from bones, I decided to consider sampling teeth along with bone where possible during my first sampling trip. To assess which tooth would be the most relevant for my study—based on my research questions about dietary and mobility patterns of sacrificed individuals at the two Aztec temples—I first reviewed human tooth growth and development as well as common dental pathologies that I could potentially encounter, and preferably avoid, during sampling. I concluded that it would be best to refrain from sampling teeth with any of the following pathologies: enamel hypoplasias, caries, abscesses, tooth cracks, severe dental micro-wear, and dental modifications and alterations due to cultural and/or habitual practices (these may be important to preserve for future bioarchaeological research) (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994).

I became familiar with the Templo Mayor Offering 48 and the Tlatelolco skeletal collections and noticed that the majority of the skeletons were identified as subadults<sup>3</sup> (100% and 85%, respectively). I considered it important to look at the growth and eruption timelines for deciduous teeth as well as the first and second permanent molars since these reflect distinct isotopic values at different points *in-utero* and during childhood (Price et al. 2010). For this purpose, I referred to the sequence of formation and eruption of teeth among American Indians in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994:51, Figure 24) which has been established as comparable to other

<sup>2</sup>Although there is debate surrounding this idea as it may be possible for remodeling to happen in teeth as well (Dolphin, personal communication, 2014). An example of this is the formation of secondary dentin during adulthood, thus providing different C and N isotopic composition compared to primary dentin formed during childhood. There is research being carried out currently to better understand how our skeletal tissues develop, grow, and remodel throughout life (e.g., Maggiano et al. 2016a and b).

<sup>3</sup> I considered a "subadult" to be any individual aged chronologically between birth and 12 years, based on who would have been considered children in Aztec society (Berdan and Anawalt 1997; Joyce 2000; Román Berrelleza and Chávez Balderas 2006).

indigenous populations, including Mesoamerica. As such Mexican researchers have commonly used this aging sequence in bioarchaeological studies. According to this growth sequence, deciduous tooth crowns develop *in-utero* and eruption of the first teeth (incisors) begins around 9 months ( $\pm 3$  months).

Since I needed to extract enough tooth enamel for multiple isotope analyses (C, N, and O) it was more appropriate to focus on sampling larger teeth, namely, deciduous molars and first permanent molars for subadults. The largest deciduous tooth with the most enamel, the second molar, begins development around 5 months *in-utero* and erupts between the ages of two and three, while the first permanent molar begins to grow at 6 to 9 months ( $\pm 3$  months) after birth and begins to erupt between the ages of five and six ( $\pm 24$  months). The second deciduous molar reflects the isotopic values of the mother while the child was *in-utero*, as well as the signal of the first two or so years of life (White, Spence, and Longstaffe 2004). Conversely, the isotopic values of the first permanent molar correspond to the period from birth up to the third year or so of life. Since the development, and hence the isotopic signals of these two teeth overlap somewhat, I decided that either of these teeth (mandibular or maxillary) would be appropriate for sampling. However, it would be preferable to sample the first permanent molar if it had erupted in most subadults since I do not need the mother's isotopic signal to answer my research questions. For the adults in the collection, the first permanent molar reflects the isotopic composition from early childhood as well as the second permanent molar (which grows from the age of three and erupts between the ages of eleven and twelve  $\pm 36$  months) (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994:51). Thus, I determined that either the first or second permanent molars were good sample options to obtain childhood isotope

signals to compare with adult bone isotope values from the same individual.

### *The Sampling Preparation Process and Reflections on my Experience in the Field*

In addition to reviewing the relevant literature prior to the sampling process, I had a very active sampling preparation program in the months prior to my museum visit. My first task was to compile as many details as possible about the two skeletal collections to become familiar with the individuals and the overall archaeological context. I found that having relevant information about the skeletal collections and their respective contexts was useful since I kept referring back to it during this preparation period. While it is not always possible to have very detailed information about the collections beforehand, I found this particularly convenient, especially when I discussed the sampling ideas and potential strategies with my supervisors, thesis committee advisors, and later on, with Juan A. Román Berrelleza, Physical Anthropologist in charge of the above mentioned skeletal collections at the Templo Mayor Museum.

In developing my sampling protocol, I engaged in frequent meetings with my supervisors and thesis committee advisors. Each advisor has a particular expertise and experience so they all provided a variety of suggestions and guidance about how to go about the sampling based on my research questions and the skeletal collections under consideration. I kept a journal with notes of these meetings, most of which I later turned into a field notebook (see below). I think that having this kind of support, and to receive feedback prepared me mentally and physically for this process as I began thinking ahead of time about a number of aspects including: options about how and what to sample (e.g., cutting bone, taking fragments, loose teeth); the materials needed and logistics involved, and how to strategize

based on different possible scenarios I could encounter (which I later turned into a sampling map).

A few weeks before my visit to the museum, I compiled the relevant information from the literature and the suggestions from my thesis committee into a single guide as a field notebook that broadly included the following: 1) logistical details (permits, contact information, materials and a supplies checklist); 2) information on the skeletal collections, dental formation and growth diagrams for aging, description of common pathologies, and 3) a sampling protocol that included sampling methods for bone as well as tooth samples and a sampling map with different scenarios that I could potentially find in the field.

One of my supervisors (Dr. Fred J. Longstaffe) and I travelled to Mexico City and met with Phys. Anth. Juan Román to carry out the sampling process in the museum's Physical Anthropology Laboratory (Appendix, Figure 1). He introduced us to the curators, restorers, and other researchers who were present at the time. I found that it was important to explain the purpose of our visit and our intentions with the skeletal collections. Given that I was about to cut fragments of bone and extract teeth from two skeletal collections, I had to put myself in the curator's shoes and be clear about how removing fragments of the nearly-complete and irreplaceable collections would be beneficial and allow us to tap into certain aspects—which would be otherwise unknown—of the lives of those individuals who were once sacrificed and offered to the Aztec gods. Hence, it was important to engage in constant communication during the sampling process since multiple stakeholders were involved and the benefit of this process had to be obvious to all parties.

Before even beginning the sampling process, Dr. Longstaffe, Phys. Anth. J. Román, and I looked at the collections from Templo Mayor and Tlatelolco for an initial assessment of the available skeletal elements, preservation status, and other characteristics specific to these collections. It was through this initial process that I was able to determine which skeletal elements I could potentially sample and which ones would be inaccessible due to unique morphological features, specific pathologies, and other traits held by particular individuals. For instance, included in the collection is a 'famous', very complete, and thoroughly studied child offering which was better to keep intact. There was another individual at Tlatelolco with a unique green stain on the bones of the arm (ulna and radius) from wearing a copper bracelet when offered to the Aztec god of wind, so these skeletal elements were better left intact (Appendix, Figure 2). Based on this assessment and with the help of the sampling map I developed, I began to discuss sampling possibilities with J. Román, explaining the reasoning behind why a specific bone fragment or tooth would provide certain type of data that could be beneficial for my study (Appendix, Figure 3).

Throughout these discussions there was compromise on both ends. We both explained different aspects about skeletal elements and shared information with one another to come up with a jointly acceptable set of individuals and skeletal elements for sampling. This sample set would: 1) not alter the collections in a significant way, and 2) maintain relative sample consistency (i.e., using the same skeletal element for most samples) or from the skeletal elements and teeth I had identified as "good" candidates for isotopic analysis in my sampling map<sup>4</sup>. I consider that this type of communication and open

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<sup>4</sup> As a result of this collaborative process, I sampled fragments of left femoral shafts ( $n = 24$ ) (posterior side by the *linea aspera*) and first permanent molars ( $n = 15$ ) from the Templo Mayor (Offering 48) collection (Appendix, Figures

discussion is essential to develop strong and long-lasting collaborative relationships with the institutions and researchers in charge of the skeletal collections we are interested in studying scientifically.

Looking back at this sampling experience, I found some valuable insights throughout the process that benefitted me greatly when it came time to sample the collections at the Templo Mayor Museum. I practiced sampling bone and teeth from modern faunal mammal specimens<sup>5</sup> at the Laboratory for Stable Isotope Science (LSIS) at The University of Western Ontario prior to my sample field trip. Becoming familiar with the tools and ways to sample different skeletal elements as well as having a sense of how much material I needed for multiple isotope analyses (and corresponding method duplicates) was very helpful. Thinking about the logistics and supplies I could potentially need during the sampling process was also very useful and it was very satisfying having all the tools and materials I could potentially need. Even when I did not end up using all of them just knowing I had them available made me feel more prepared.

Being familiar with the collections was instrumental prior to and during the sampling process. I must admit that even though I had compiled information on these collections, I was still unaware of many details such as the excavation process in each case and about each individual's particular mortuary context. The researcher discussed some aspects about each collection so I learned a lot more about these individuals during the sampling process itself. Additionally, he recommended specific books about the collections so now that I am analyzing the samples in the laboratory I am becoming

more knowledgeable about these individuals and their archaeological context.

I found it valuable and quite practical to have a field note book ready for the sampling process. The information about tooth formation and growth was particularly useful as we examined the tooth samples selected, and subsequently, estimated the individuals' ages. I also included a sample table with relevant columns such as: Sample ID, Collection, Sample Type, Provenience, Unique Features, Preservation, Age, Sex, and Weight (g). This facilitated the sampling process greatly making the process organized, practical, and timely.

As mentioned previously, I prepared myself by ranking preferred skeletal elements to sample based on my research questions and type of biochemical analysis to be carried out in the laboratory. This became my sampling map which I also included in the field notebook (see below). It was a great idea to set-up possible burial context scenarios I could encounter and pre-select certain skeletal element that would be potential candidates for isotope analysis. This was definitely productive during my sampling trip as an initial guide. However, at the same time I was aware and open to the possibility that my top sampling choices might not be available to sample in reality. Thus, while it is good practice to think about preferred skeletal elements for analysis, we cannot assume that our planned sampling strategies will be the "best" until we are able to actually look at the collections, observe their preservation status, and assess the skeletal elements in collaboration with the researchers and curators in charge of the collections in order to agree upon those deemed best to sample.

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4-5) as well as ribs ( $n = 24$ ), two first permanent molars, a second permanent molar, and two second deciduous molars from the Tlatelolco Templo R collection (Appendix, Figures 6-7).

<sup>5</sup> I am thankful for the support and guidance from my colleagues Dr. Z. Morris, Dr. R. Schwartz-Narbonne, and T. Plint during this preparation period.

Below I include my sampling map, as a list of situations of preferred bone and tooth samples depending on the possible burial context in which the individuals from the Templo Mayor and Tlatelolco collections were recovered from. I separated sampling preferences for subadults and adults and incorporated the reasoning behind each sampling choice:

#### *Subadult Samples*

##### Situation 1: Single burial with complete skeleton:

- ❖ **Bone:** Occipital planum (back of skull) *AND/OR* right/left femoral fragment to a side of the *linea aspera* feature (posterior mid-point area).
  - Reasoning: Both bones have thick cortical bone which is less prone to post-mortem alterations than trabecular bone. Femoral diaphyses and other long bones are less likely to be contaminated by dirt or plant roots (DeNiro and Schoeninger 1983). Important features are avoidable in those areas. Two skeletal elements are ideal (but not crucial) to assess the isotopic signal of both cranial and post-cranial bones per individual due to different bone turnover rates.
- ❖ **Tooth:** Maxillary left or right deciduous second molar *OR* first permanent molar if erupted.
  - Reasoning: The second deciduous molar is the largest tooth during childhood with the most enamel for isotopic analysis and captures the isotopic composition from *in-utero* to 2.5 years of age. The first permanent molar captures the isotopic composition from around 4.5 months to approximately 7 yrs. of age. Can be

associated with the skull bone sampled per individual.

##### Situation 2: Cranium (no cranial and post-cranial association):

- ❖ **Bone:** Mandibular body fragment (between the gonial angle and the mental foramen).
  - Reasoning: Thick cortical bone and no important features in that area, although must be careful as subadults will have permanent teeth inside the mandibular area (prior to eruption). Bone can be associated with a mandibular tooth per individual.
- ❖ **Tooth:** Mandibular left or right deciduous second molar *OR* first permanent molar if erupted.
  - Reasoning: The second deciduous molar is the biggest tooth during childhood with the most enamel for isotopic analysis and captures the isotopic composition from *in-utero* to 2.5 years of age. The first molar contains the isotopic composition from around 4.5 months to 7.5 years. of age. Can be associated with the mandibular bone per individual.

#### ***OR***

- ❖ **Bone:** Occipital planum (back of skull).
  - Reasoning: Has thick cortical bone and important features are avoidable.
- ❖ **Tooth:** Maxillary left or right deciduous second molar *OR* first permanent molar if erupted (Appendix, Figure 6).

- **Reasoning:** The second deciduous molar is the biggest tooth during childhood with the most enamel for isotopic analysis and contains the isotopic composition from *in-utero* to 2.5 years of age. The 1<sup>st</sup> molar contains the isotopic composition from around 4.5 months to 7.5 yrs. of age, and thus, the longer distance between adult and childhood isotopic compositions. Can be associated with the skull bone per individual.

Situation 3: no cranial remains present:

- ❖ **Bone:** Right/left femur fragment to a side of the *linea aspera* feature (posterior mid-point area) *OR* right/left rib fragments. Last choice would be to sample a phalanx (whole or fragment) (Appendix, Figure 4).
- **Reasoning:** These bones have thick cortical bone and are commonly sampled for isotopic analysis. Important features are avoidable and it involves minor loss of morphological information (Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995).

*Adult Samples*

Situation 1: Single burial with complete skeleton:

- ❖ **Bone:** Mandibular body fragment (between the gonial angle and the mental foramen) *OR* right or left femoral fragment to a side of the *linea aspera* feature (posterior mid-point area) *OR* right/left rib fragments (Appendix, Figure 6).
- **Reasoning:** These bones have thick cortical bone and important features avoidable in those areas. Ideal to

assess the isotopic signature of both cranial and post-cranial bones per individual due to different bone turnover rates. This bone can be associated with a mandibular tooth per individual.

- ❖ **Tooth:** Mandibular left/right permanent first *AND/OR* third molars.

- **Reasoning:** The first molar captures the isotopic composition from around 4.5 months to 7.5 yrs. of age, and thus, the longer distance between adult and childhood isotopic composition. The third molar contains the isotopic composition from the age of 8 to 16 or so. The ideal scenario would be to sample both molars for analysis as these include a childhood and adolescent isotopic composition to compare with the adult bone composition.

Situation 2: Cranium (no cranial and post-cranial association):

- ❖ **Bone:** Mandibular body fragment (between the gonial angle and the mental foramen) *OR* occipital planum (back of skull)/interior skull fragments (e.g., sphenoid bone).
- **Reasoning:** The mandibular fragment and occipital planum have thick cortical bone and important features avoidable in those areas. The interior skull fragments will not affect the outer integrity of the skull (no visual disruption). These bones can be associated with a mandibular or maxillary tooth per individual.
- ❖ **Tooth:** Mandibular *OR* maxillary permanent left/right first *OR* second molar (Appendix, Figure 7).

- Reasoning: The first molar contains the isotopic composition from around 4.5 months to 7.5 yrs. of age, and thus, the longer distance between adult and childhood isotopic compositions. The second molar contains the isotopic composition between ages 3 and 12 so there is still enough distance between the adulthood and childhood isotopic compositions.

Situation 3: No cranial skeleton present:

- ❖ **Bone**: Right/left femoral fragment to a side of the *linea aspera* feature (posterior mid-point area) *OR* right/left rib fragments. Last choice would be to sample a phalanx (whole or fragment).
- Reasoning: These bones have thick cortical bone and are commonly sampled for isotopic analysis. Important features are avoidable and it involves minor loss of morphological information (Sealy, Armstrong, and Schrire 1995).

*Final Considerations on Sampling in Bioarchaeology*

It is obviously one thing to establish a sampling strategy and another to carry out the sampling while navigating the practical, administrative, and ethical realities one inevitably encounters in the field. Bioarchaeologists are no exception and must always be aware that even when we are extremely prepared for our sampling process and plan to obtain the best sample set possible, it may not result how we originally planned. This is one of the main reasons why keeping an open mind and being flexible is crucial since the sampling process is based on constant compromise and collaborative efforts among the multiple parties involved. My sampling visit to the Templo Mayor

Museum was no exception. Below I provide a summary of key considerations that I have found useful and which may be relevant to other junior researchers preparing for their own sampling experiences:

- ❖ Familiarity with the collections proposed for sampling ahead of time as well as right before beginning the sampling process;
- ❖ Constant communication with the researchers involved prior and during the sampling process (e.g., researchers, curators, thesis supervisors and thesis committee advisors, relevant colleagues, etc.);
- ❖ Establishing a sampling protocol with corresponding methods and strategies to use as an initial guide in the field;
- ❖ Sampling skeletal fragments that will not damage the integrity of the skeleton, avoiding unique traits as well as important morphological, pathological, and cultural features in collaboration with the researcher(s) in charge of the collection(s);
- ❖ No sample is ever perfect in bioarchaeological research so while it is important to keep sample element consistency in mind one must be flexible and open to different sample possibilities;
- ❖ Addressing the logistical, administrative, and practical aspects ahead of the sampling process;
- ❖ It is quite exciting what we do as bioarchaeologists; we are able to reach into the past and tap into the lives of people in a very direct way. Nonetheless, the most important point is being aware and constantly conscious that we are



dealing with human remains. We must treat the skeletal collections with dignity and respect *at all times* (Larsen and Walker 2005; Walker 2000) recognizing the value of human remains not only as they provide bioarchaeologists with invaluable scientific information but as individuals who may possess other kinds of value to other people (e.g., descendent communities, general public, stakeholders, etc.); and finally,

- ❖ Each sampling experience will be unique based on the collections considered, preservation status, and research questions so while I have provided a sampling process (and its resulting protocol) that was beneficial to me, it is meant as an example of the preparation and decision-making process itself rather than as a 'one sampling guide fits all'.

We cannot assume that our sampling strategy is best until we are able to physically observe the preservation and burial contexts of the skeletal collections to be sampled. As such, it is essential to know the reasoning behind why the bone fragment or tooth we would like to sample is relevant or even necessary for a research project. I think this is the fundamental question that we all have to constantly ask ourselves and assess in collaboration with the researchers involved to evaluate if it is worth removing 'this' or 'that' bone fragment or tooth from a close-to-complete skeletal collection. It may be fruitful to consider the entire sampling process in the framework of participatory collaboration in which all parties are able to communicate, share ideas, provide suggestions and feedback, propose and weigh sampling options openly, compromise in certain aspects and agree to others, and learn from one another in a constructive and collaborative fashion. This will enable trust and open communication among the different

parties and strengthen the collaborative bond between those involved in the entire research and sampling process. Even though this is not discussed much in the literature (aside from ethical considerations), I think this is something we have to engage in constantly, given the nature of our work, and we will continue to do so throughout our careers. I propose we consider this collaborative engagement as one more set of skills we must develop and strengthen as part of our professional bioarchaeological repertoire.

#### *Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank the researchers of the Templo Mayor Project, particularly J. A. Román Berrelleza, E. Matos Moctezuma, X. Chávez Balderas, and L. López Luján for all their guidance and support and for allowing me to contribute to this project by studying these (and other) collections via stable isotope analysis. Thanks to my supervisors J. F. Millaire and F. J. Longstaffe and my thesis committee: A. Nelson, M. Spence, and A. Dolphin for their so valuable and endless support, feedback, and guidance on my PhD research (including my sampling strategies). Thanks to A. Dolphin and J. F. Millaire for their valuable feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript as well the comments and suggestions of two anonymous reviewers and the editors. This PhD project is primarily funded with the support of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC) and the Research at Western Award (UWO).

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*Appendix*



**Figure 1. Physical Anthropology Laboratory at the Templo Mayor Museum, Mexico City. Photograph courtesy of Juan A. Román Berrelleza.**



**Figure 2. Radius and ulna from an individual in the Tlatelolco collection with a unique trait: green stains from wearing a copper bracelet. Photograph by Diana Moreiras.**



**Figure 3. Diana Moreiras and Juan A. Roman in conversation about the sampling process. Photograph courtesy of Fred Longstaffe.**



**Figure 4. Close-up of femoral sample extraction by Diana Moreiras from the Offering 48 collection of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. Photograph courtesy of Juan A. Román Berrelleza.**





**Figure 5. Offering 48 collection of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan: Cranium before extracting the right maxillary 1<sup>st</sup> permanent molar for isotope analysis. Photograph by Diana Moreiras.**



**Figure 6. Rib fragments taken for isotope analysis from an individual in the Tlatelolco collection. Photograph by Diana Moreiras.**



**Figure 7. Loose second permanent molar taken for isotope analysis from the Tlatelolco collection.  
Photograph by Diana Moreiras.**

## Aboriginal Performance Cultures and Language Revitalization: Foundations, Discontinuities, and Possibilities

Remi Alie

### Abstract

*This paper address the question of how indigenous art and performance culture(s) can contribute to institutionalized language revitalization efforts in Canada, through their use of threatened indigenous languages. Drawing from a wide range of sources published between 1988 and 2014 by scholars, the Assembly of First Nations, departments and agencies of the Canadian government, and artistic practitioners, I illustrate the absence of performance from the available literature on language revitalization. By analyzing these documents thematically, I argue that a substantial shift occurred in the public discourse surrounding language revitalization between the 1980s and 1990s, and the mid- to late-2000s. Whereas scholarship and policy proposals published during the 1980s and 1990s were strongly influenced by Joshua Fishman's research on language revitalization, public discourse a decade later framed language revitalization in the language of land claims. Following Glen Coulthard, I suggest that this shift should be understood as part of the broader emergence of a "politics of recognition" in Canadian discourse. At the level of Canadian and Aboriginal government policy, this discursive shift has left even less room for performance and theatre within the wider project of language revitalization. Insofar as the arts are a rich source of pedagogical material, my aim is to undermine the discursive impediments to their use by language educators and policy makers in*

*the field of language revitalization.*

"Time and time again, respondents spoke about how language and art practices are interconnected and interrelated, and that the concepts within the language are interwoven or linked to art practices. [...] We heard that the most popular use of Aboriginal language is, by far, in the disciplines of dance, music, song, and performance. The level of interaction between the arts practice and the languages reveal the interconnectedness of the cultural aspect of the territory and the Aboriginal nation(s)" (Sinclair and Pelletier 2012:15, 17).

### Introduction

This literature review surveys a broad selection of documents published by scholars, agencies and departments of the government of Canada, and artistic practitioners between 1988 and 2014, which are relevant to the intersection between language revitalization, public policy, and Canadian Aboriginal theatre and performance<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, this review addresses the question of how Aboriginal art and performance culture(s) can contribute to institutionalized language revitalization efforts in Canada, through their use of threatened Aboriginal languages. My research has only identified one scholarly publication that directly addresses the role of performance in language revitalization (Carr and Meek 2013). A traditional literature review is therefore out of the question. Rather, I have drawn from a wide range of scholarly and governmental sources which indirectly

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this review, I will refer to 'Aboriginal' peoples, languages, performance cultures, etc. While 'First Nations' has emerged as a preferred term in public discourse, and the current Canadian federal government has signaled its intent to transition from the term 'Aboriginal' to 'Indigenous,' the term 'Aboriginal' continues to legally encompass the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities within the geographical jurisdiction of the Canadian government.

address performance and language revitalization, in order to a) illustrate the absence of performance from the available literature on language revitalization, b) identify broad trends in scholarship and policy, and c) provide a foundation for further research. Broadly speaking, the texts and documents surveyed fall into three categories, although these inevitably overlap with and inform one another.

1. Research projects, written reports, and policy recommendations produced by various government departments and agencies. As Sinclair and Pelletier observe, there are no federal laws that govern language revitalization in Canada (2012); hence, institutional perspectives must be sought out from less formal sources.
2. Academic perspectives on language revitalization in Canada. As mentioned above, there is virtually no scholarly literature that directly addresses the question of performance in language revitalization. Surveying the relevant scholarship remains worthwhile, however, in that it defines the spaces where new work can intervene.
3. Perspectives on Aboriginal theatre, arts, and performance cultures in Canada. Here, the distinction between academic and government sources blurs considerably, as the relevant sources include essays written by theatre professionals, as well as reports released by Canadian arts agencies, including the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Arts Centre.

Methodologically, this review is structured around two key government documents: the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (R.R.C.A.P.), a 4,000 page document which drew on four years of research and consultation with Aboriginal communities,

and the 2005 Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (T.F.A.L.C.). It is impossible to neatly periodize any field of literature without making serious intellectual impositions; at the same time, one of the most useful features of a literature review is the identification of trends or patterns. My decision to structure this survey around two *clusters* of documents is an attempt to balance these two methodological imperatives. Rather than a chronology, I have chosen two key government documents, and traced a network of texts related to language revitalization which radiate outwards from each. While it is impossible to identify a single moment of change, there is a substantial shift between these two documents in the discourse surrounding language revitalization. Whereas the 1996 R.R.C.A.P. consciously drew upon Joshua Fishman's groundbreaking scholarship on 'language shift' (which inaugurated language revitalization as a field of study within linguistic anthropology), the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. appealed for language revitalization on the basis of what Glen Coulthard terms a "politics of recognition" (2014:3). Clustering scholarly and governmental documents around these two crucial reports illustrates changing dynamics of language revitalization, and the possibilities for intervention offered by new work on art and performance cultures.

*Language, Performance, and The 1996 R.R.C.A.P.*

Joshua Fishman's 1991 *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* is considered the foundational text for scholarship in the area of language revitalization (Hinton 2003:49), or in Fishman's terminology, "reversing language shift" or *R.L.S.* (1991:2). *Language shift*, defined as a threat to the "intergenerational continuity" of "speakers, readers, writers and even understanders" undermines a language's existential

viability, and its ability to serve as the foundation for indigenous identity and community (Fishman 1991:1,4). Fishman describes the destruction of a language as “an abstraction which is concretely mirrored in the concomitant involvements and intrusions, the destruction of local life by mass-market hype and fad, of the weak by the strong, of the unique and traditional by the uniformizing, purportedly ‘stylish’ and purposely ephemeral” (1991:4).

While this passage betrays the author’s anxieties with the globalizing world of the early 1990s, it also points to his underlying justification for efforts to reverse language shift. For Fishman, language and culture are fundamentally interwoven: language extinction entails the loss of traditional lifestyles, patterns of thought, and ways of being in the world. In his articulation, R.L.S. – commonly described as *language revitalization* in more contemporary literature – is profoundly political. “R.L.S. is an indication of dissatisfaction with ethnocultural (and, often, with ethnopolitical and ethnoeconomic) life as it currently is, and of a resolve to undertake planned ethnocultural reconstruction” (Fishman 1991:17).

By contrast, the *Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education*, published in 1988 by the Assembly of First Nations (A.F.N.), does not make an explicit connection between language and cultural vitality. Under the heading “Aboriginal Languages” the document advocates for a series of changes in federal policy, including “official status [for Aboriginal languages] within Canada, constitutional recognition, and accompanying legislative protection” (Charleston 1988:16). This contrasts sharply with Fishman’s focus on “the intimate family and local community levels” rather than “‘higher level’ [...] processes and institutions” (1991:4). Consequently, the *Declaration* distinguishes between *language* and *culture*. While it is necessary to “teach cultural heritage and traditional First Nations skills with the same emphasis as

academic learning” (Charleston 1988:15), Aboriginal languages themselves are not described as either key components or *vessels* of culture.

While a number of scholars had begun to pay attention to dying and endangered languages during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Fishman succeeded in consolidating the field of study and communicating the importance of R.L.S. to other academics and policy makers. One of the key documents in the contemporary history of Aboriginal peoples and the federal government is the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which provides the nucleus for the first cluster of texts surveyed in this review. David Newhouse describes the R.R.C.A.P. as a benchmark for subsequent negotiation: “We used to ask, when presented with proposals from governments: ‘is this just the [highly controversial, and ultimately abandoned 1969] White Paper in disguise?’ [...] Now we will say: ‘How does this accord with the R.C.A.P.?’” (2007:298).

Tellingly, the R.R.C.A.P. adopts Fishman’s model of R.L.S. in its recommendations regarding Aboriginal language death. Volume 3, titled *Gathering Strength*, addresses the “fragile state of most Aboriginal languages and the prospects for and means of conserving them” (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:564) under the broader rubric of Arts and Heritage. From the beginning, language is understood as crucial to culture, both as the means by which culture is transmitted and as a component of culture in its own right. “Language is the principal instrument by which culture is transmitted from one generation to another, by which members of a culture communicate meaning and make sense of their shared experience.” (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:563) Indeed, this perspective is reflected in the organization of the volume itself: Section 6.2, which addresses language, is situated between sections which address cultural heritage and the relationship of Aboriginal people to communications media (Sections 6.1 and

6.3, respectively). At the same time, this perspective raises important questions about the report's ideological commitments regarding language. By privileging the role of language in culture, does the report address the historical abuses of the residential school system and of federal language policy, or does it unconsciously reiterate a European language ideology that conflates national and linguistic identity?

Like Fishman, the R.R.C.A.P. recommends that countering language loss must begin at an interpersonal and community level, in order to restore intergenerational transmission. Indeed, Fishman's eight stage model for reversing language shift is directly quoted in the R.R.C.A.P., and provides the template for their subsequent recommendations (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:573-4, 577-8). One of the most substantial recommendations calls for the Canadian government to fund the National Language Foundation which was proposed by the A.F.N. in their 1988 *Declaration* (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:578). This foundation would fund academic research and the development of classroom-based language learning materials, alongside "traditional approaches to language learning such as language/cultural camps" (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:578). Interestingly, this set of proposals does not see support for literary or performance cultures as a possible component of language revitalization, and the later recommendations for arts and cultural funding do not address the possible use of Aboriginal languages (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:602). It is also interesting that the authors of the R.R.C.A.P. chose to integrate the A.F.N. proposal for a national language foundation into the broader academic framework of language revitalization.

According to the R.R.C.A.P., the Canadian government is directly responsible for the contemporary decline of Aboriginal languages, and consequently for their revitalization as well. "In our view, Canadian governments have an obligation to support Aboriginal initiatives to

conserve and revitalize Aboriginal languages and as much as possible to undo the harm done to Aboriginal cultures by harshly assimilative policies" (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:564). Language revitalization is therefore seen as necessary to prevent the further decline and loss of Aboriginal languages, but also to address historical wrongs.

Those historical wrongs figured prominently in the vibrant Canadian Aboriginal theatre scene that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. While Aboriginal playwrights and performers had been active since the 1940s (Schäfer 2013:20-1), "the real breakthrough of Native theatre in Canada came with Cree playwright Tomson Highway" (Schäfer 2013:24). His widely celebrated play *The Rez Sisters*, first produced at Native Earth Performing Arts in 1986, inaugurated what theatre scholar Henning Schäfer has described as a decade-long "golden age" (2013:24) of Aboriginal theatre in Canada.

Aboriginal languages occupy an ambiguous position in the writings of playwrights who were active during this vibrant moment for Aboriginal performance culture: if federal support for language revitalization stopped short of funding language use in performance, contemporary performers were equally ambivalent towards the use of Aboriginal languages. The pattern that emerges in these two very different literatures is a careful segregation between language revitalization and cultural revitalization.

Tomson Highway directly addressed his decision to write in English in a 1987 essay titled *On Native Mythology* Highway attributes the success of Aboriginal playwrights to theatre's unique ability to adapt themes and performance styles inherited from a rich oral tradition (2005:1). "The only thing is, this mythology has to be reworked somewhat if it is to be relevant to us Indians living in today's world" (Highway 2005:2). For Highway, reworking traditional mythology entails the use of contemporary technology, a balance

between urban and rural settings, and, crucially, minimizing the use of Aboriginal languages in performance:

“The difficulty Native writers encounter as writers, however, is that we must use English if our voice is to be heard by a large enough audience: English and not Cree. The Cree language is so completely different and the world view that language engenders and expresses is so completely different – at odds, some would say – that inevitably, the characters we write into our plays must, of necessity, lose some of their original lustre in the translation” (2005:2).

This passage raises an interesting tension between two possible approaches to incorporating Aboriginal languages in theatre: is it more worthwhile to strengthen an Aboriginal language by incorporating it into theatre and performance, or to Anglicize Aboriginal theatre in the pursuit of a broader audience? While Highway recognizes that language communicates a culturally unique worldview, the political objective of his work lies in confronting and educating a broader Canadian public, and affirming the mythological “dreamworld” (2005:3) of Aboriginal peoples in a widely accessible language.

Drew Hayden Taylor more overtly confronts the cultural legacy of residential schools in a 1996 essay titled *Alive and Well: Native Theatre in Canada* Taylor, who succeeded Tomson Highway as the creative director for Native Earth Performing Arts, echoes Highway’s suggestion that Aboriginal theatre represents the “next logical step” (2005:61) for a storytelling culture grounded in orality, spoken words, and bodily gestures. However, he also claims that theatre offers a unique venue for cultural revitalization: while “Christianity, [...] the government, the residential system etc.” sought to

assimilate Aboriginal culture, “it is incredibly hard to eradicate the simple act of telling stories” (Taylor 2005:62). While essentially restating a point Highway had made nine years earlier, Taylor is much more explicitly politicizing Aboriginal theatre in the context of colonial oppression; I would argue that his more pointed references to historical and political realities are inseparable from the contemporary R.R.C.A.P. consultation. By framing performance as a uniquely resilient art form, the contemporary vibrancy of the Aboriginal theatre scene becomes inherently political. For Taylor, theatre is inspired by, and confronts, historical and ongoing oppression, while at the same time being performative of the resilience and revitalization of Aboriginal culture by virtue of its very existence.

Language plays an intriguing role in Taylor’s essay. While he describes cultural revitalization as “getting our voice back” (Taylor 2005:62), that project does not overtly include getting his *language* back. In fact, he partially attributes his own gravitation to theatre to his imperfect education in the English language:

“The spotty education that has been granted Native people by the government and various social institutions has not been great. This is one of the reasons I became a playwright: I write as people talk, and the way people talk is not always grammatically correct – therefore I can get away with less than ‘perfect’ English” (Taylor 2005:61).

Once again, this passage speaks to a fairly durable separation between language and culture. Ultimately, Taylor is concerned with specifically cultural degradation and revitalization: if language revitalization is conceived as a separate project altogether, then language death does not necessarily threaten culture. Projects aimed at cultural revitalization can bracket



language, and language revitalization will not appreciably impact cultural renewal.

*Language, Performance, and the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report*

As I suggested in the introduction to this review, my decision to distinguish between two *clusters* which emerge from the literature, rather than between two *periods*, is an effort to address the conceptual pitfalls of periodization. With that qualification, the literature which I have clustered around the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report is characterized by three broad departures from the cluster surrounding the 1996 R.R.C.A.P.:

1. The appearance of discourses consistent with what Glen Coulthard describes as a 'politics of recognition'.
2. A discursive nexus between Aboriginal languages, cultures, and land.
3. A gradually emerging interest in the relationship between Aboriginal performance culture and Aboriginal languages.

The most important document to follow the 1996 R.R.C.A.P. is the 2005 Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (hereafter the T.F.A.L.C. Report), whose full title is *Towards a New Beginning: A Foundational Report for a Strategy to Revitalize First Nation, Inuit and Métis Languages and Cultures*. Created in 2003, the T.F.A.L.C. was tasked by the Minister of Canadian Heritage to develop a new national strategy for language revitalization, in consultation with Aboriginal communities and elders. To a large extent, the community-driven focus of the T.F.A.L.C. was intended as a response to Aboriginal critiques of earlier heritage language legislation, which was considered unacceptably centralized, and insufficiently consultative (Patrick 2013:298-9). Although the T.F.A.L.C. Report itself is sharply critical of "what it considers to be a serious underestimate of

the time needed to carry out its mandate in a respectful, complete and dignified way" (2005:15) the process was nevertheless quite extensive. The T.F.A.L.C. Task Force itself consisted of ten experts in language revitalization, was advised by a Circle of Experts who provided working papers and presentations, and consulted fifty-one First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Elders (T.F.A.L.C. 1005:119-23).

The report makes a series of twenty-five recommendations, which in many ways reiterate the substance of earlier policy proposals. For instance, Recommendations 17 and 18 call for a permanent Aboriginal Languages and Culture Council, which would assume the central role in language policy and funding occupied by the federal Ministry of Canadian Heritage (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:x). This proposal is virtually identical to recommendations made by the R.R.C.A.P. in 1996, and in 1988 by the Assembly of First Nations. There is also clear evidence of Joshua Fishman's ongoing influence on Canadian language revitalization policy. While the Task Force saw its report "as the first step of a 100-year journey" (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:viii), it also recognized the need for immediate action in support of critically endangered languages. Fishman's scholarship in language shift is cited as a "template for revitalizing declining and endangered languages" (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:85); in fact, like the R.R.C.A.P., the T.F.A.L.C. Report recommendations for language revitalization initiatives are modeled on the eight-stage approach he elaborated in 1991.

While the T.F.A.L.C. inherited many of its substantive proposals from documents published during the 1980s and 1990s, its discursive and political framing clearly departs from the precedent of that earlier cluster. The 1996 R.R.C.A.P. framed Aboriginal language revitalization as a necessary step towards reconciliation by foregrounding the history of assimilation and abuse; by contrast, the T.F.A.L.C. Report closely links language to national identity and territorial rights.



As Donna Patrick observes, the Supreme Court of Canada has narrowly defined Aboriginal culture in terms of traditional hunting and fishing practices, thereby excluded language use from the definition of cultural practice (Patrick 2013:299). The 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report strategically essentializes Aboriginal culture in order to rhetorically link Aboriginal languages with national identity, spiritual practice, and the land itself. Part III of the T.F.A.L.C. Report, *Our Languages and Our Cultures: Cornerstones for Our Philosophies* includes the most explicit articulation of this new, ‘territorialized’ rhetorical strategy:

“We came from the land – this land, our land. We belong to it, are part of it and find our identities in it. Our languages return us again and again to this truth. This must be grasped to understand why the retention, strengthening and expansion of our First Nation, Inuit and Métis languages and cultures is of such importance to us, and indeed, to all Canadians. For our languages, which are carried by the very breath that gives us life, connects us daily to who we are” (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:10).

This rhetorical strategy departs significantly from the approaches taken during the 1980s and 1990s. Although both the T.F.A.L.C. and the R.R.C.A.P. frame language as the central component of Aboriginal worldviews and identities, the T.F.A.L.C. links language revitalization to land, and thus to a wider conversation surrounding ongoing territorial disputes, in a way that was simply not part of the earlier discourse. This maneuver allows the authors to deploy Canada’s national and international commitments regarding the environment, cultural diversity, and biodiversity in support of language revitalization. If, as

the T.F.A.L.C. argues, Aboriginal languages are uniquely grounded in particular physical spaces and environments, then language death threatens our collective ability to understand and protect “Canada’s biodiversity” (2005:72).

In one sense, this seems highly creative use of discourse and framing to strengthen the argument in favour of Aboriginal language revitalization. Certainly, this maneuver has become increasingly common in contemporary language revitalization discourse (Patrick 2013:300), and is one of the characteristics that defines what I have called the *second cluster* of literature. However, the process of embedding language revitalization discourse in the politics of territorial claims simultaneously embeds Aboriginal languages in what Glen Coulthard terms a *politics of recognition*. In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, he “takes ‘politics of recognition’ to refer to the now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to ‘reconcile’ Indigenous assertions of nation-hood with settler-state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relationship with the Canadian state” (2014:3). According to Coulthard, this model of negotiation between Canadian governments and Aboriginal peoples simply rearticulates the logic of colonialism and territorial dispossession (2014:22). Tellingly, this politics of recognition is inseparable from the T.F.A.L.C.’s discursive nexus between land, language, and identity. The T.F.A.L.C. Report is prefaced by a series of guiding principles, which includes the following statement:

“We believe that Canada must make itself whole by recognizing and acknowledging out First Nation, Inuit and Métis

languages as the original languages of Canada. This recognition must be through legislation and must also provide for enduring institutional supports for First Languages in the same way that it has done for the French and English languages” (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:3).

Two observations are necessary. First, the discourse of the T.F.A.L.C. differs substantially from the literature clustered around the publication of the R.R.C.A.P. a decade earlier. In that time, the nexus between land and language, and the discourse of recognition, replaced the R.R.C.A.P.’s historical argument as the dominant rationale for language revitalization. While the T.F.A.L.C. echoes the R.R.C.A.P. in blaming Canadian governments for the decline of Aboriginal languages, this argument has been superseded. Indeed, the T.F.A.L.C. Report’s first three recommendations call for “the link between languages and the land,” for the “protection of Traditional Knowledge,” and for “legislative recognition, protection and promotion” (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:ix).

The second observation is crucial for the purposes of this review: cultural production, and particularly performance art and theatre, remain a low priority for the authors of the T.F.A.L.C.. In fact, the arts have an even lower rhetorical profile than they received in the 1996 R.R.C.A.P.. The only specific references to the arts are found in Appendix H, where the authors reproduce the objectives of the U.N.E.S.C.O. *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Objective 13 calls for the “preservation and enhancement” of “oral and intangible cultural heritage,” fifteen for the “mobility of creators, artists, researchers, scientists and intellectual,” and sixteen for fair copyright laws (T.F.A.L.C. 2005:135-6). Nine years earlier, the R.R.C.A.P. critiqued the “expectation that

Aboriginal artists should produce traditional or recognizably ‘Aboriginal’ art forms” (R.R.C.A.P. 1996:600). While it is impossible to assign causality, Aboriginal performance cultures received even less attention alongside the emergence of a discourse of recognition.

In 2007, the Assembly of First Nations released a National First Nations Languages Strategy which offers an interesting contrast to the T.F.A.L.C.. While it too is framed via a) a language of spiritual and national identity, and b) a discourse of political ‘recognition’, its substantive recommendations differ significantly from the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report. The 2007 A.F.N. Strategy advances two central policy objectives: first, that “First Nations have jurisdiction over First Nations languages which are recognized and affirmed consistent with Section 35 of the Constitution Act” and second, that “First Nations seek legislated protection via a First Nations Languages Act” (A.F.N. 2007:9). Subsequently, the report lists five major components of a language revitalization strategy, which include fostering more positive attitudes towards First Nations culture and language, and increasing the role for First Nations languages in education (A.F.N. 2007:9).

This policy-first approach contrasts strongly with the recommendations made by the T.F.A.L.C.. While both the A.F.N. and the Task Force call for increased Aboriginal jurisdiction over Aboriginal languages and funding, the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. was far more concerned with developing community-level initiatives. While its twenty-five recommendations certainly called for substantial engagement between Aboriginal and Canadian governments, and for substantial changes in the structure, funding, and jurisdiction of language policy, the T.F.A.L.C. also stressed the “need for a community-driven revitalization strategy” (2005:63). Genealogically, the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. traces its roots to the 1996 R.R.C.A.P., which proposed a language revitalization strategy

largely inspired by Joshua Fishman's research in language shift. By contrast, the 2007 A.F.N. Strategy shares many of the policy concerns articulated in the 1988 Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction over Education, which, as discussed above, took a very different approach to the crisis in Aboriginal languages. In other words, the tensions within the literature produced during the 1980s and 1990s are replicated in more contemporary policy proposals. While it is natural for institutions to draw on their existing literature, the fact that current A.F.N. policy on language revitalization is rooted in a report that predated the emergence of language revitalization as a field of study at least partially accounts for its policy-driven approach.

Despite substantial differences in policy, the 2007 A.F.N. Strategy also deploys a discourse of political recognition, albeit inconsistently. "The core elements of our strategy are to ensure the revitalization, recognition and protection of our languages through sustainable investment, capacity building, promotion and preservation" (A.F.N. 2007:7). Yet, on whom is the burden of recognition placed? This wording seems meaningless in a way that suggests that 'recognition' has become a reflexive part of the contemporary language revitalization discourse. Out of seven concrete strategic recommendations, however, none explicitly echo the language of recognition (A.F.N. 2007:9). This inconsistency might suggest ambivalence towards the politics of recognition, but considering the very liberal, rights-oriented approach taken in the first policy objective, it seems more likely that 'recognition' has become an obligatory part of the contemporary discourse.

As with the T.F.A.L.C. Report, the 2007 A.F.N. Strategy refers to artistic production and performance culture only in passing. The A.F.N. Strategy simultaneously affirms the A.F.N.'s right to jurisdiction over language policy, and calls for an expanded role for government

support and funding. "Government support of language by support of culture, heritage, the performing arts, media and other mechanisms that support language, culture and traditions" is listed as one of the "functions required of the Government of Canada" (A.F.N. 2007:20). Once again, this formula reiterates a static view of Aboriginal languages – they are useful to the *preservation* of "culture and tradition", but not to a dynamic performance culture.

Despite the dynamism of Aboriginal theatre during the 1980s and 1990s, and into the twenty-first century, neither the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report, nor the 2007 A.F.N. Strategy, envision a significant role for theatre or performance cultures within the wider project of Aboriginal language revitalization. The literature which I located within the first *cluster*, whether produced by institutions, scholars, or performers, consistently demarcated between language revitalization and cultural renewal. By contrast, the 2005 T.F.A.L.C. Report energetically links language revitalization to land rights; however, doing so in the context of 'heritage' and 'tradition' excludes the possibilities offered by a dynamic theatre culture. The 2007 A.F.N. Strategy's rights-based approach effectively prioritizes political negotiation; rather than demarcating between language and culture, it deprioritizes both.

If theatre and performance culture has continued to be absent from the institutional literature on language revitalization, what role has it played in the relevant academic literature? My survey of language revitalization scholarship between 2002 and 2013 suggests a growing, if uneven, interest in the performative aspects of language transmission. In 2003, Leanne Hinton published a literature review titled *Language Revitalization* in the *Cambridge Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. Her review consolidates and summarizes the research which had followed Joshua Fishman's groundbreaking publications in the early 1990s, surveying legal documents, language learning curricula, applied

research in language learning and revitalization, and theoretical and empirical research (Hinton 2003:48). The literature she cites does not address the arts or cultural production, much less performance or performance cultures. However, as Carr and Meek observe, a 2002 article in the journal *Anthropological Linguistics* was among the first academic papers to theorize “the significance of incorporating performance into language revitalization efforts” (2013:193).

In that article, titled *Dynamic Embodiment in Assiniboine (Nakota) Storytelling*, author Brenda Farnell posits that oral performances convey meaning through the interplay of speech and bodily gestures; in other words, that “processes of entextualization and traditionalization [...] can occur through visual-kinesthetic gestures as well as speech. [...] The emphasis here on the moving body as a crucial feature of human agency defines this approach as a dynamically embodied theory of discursive practices” (2002:38). To examine the connections between speech, gesture, and space, Farnell filmed a series of stories performed by an Assiniboine elder, who communicated via a combination of English, Nakota, and a signed language called *Plains Sign Talk* (2002:40). Farnell proceeded to transcribe Plains Sign Talk using the Laban script, “a set of graphic symbols for writing body movement” (2002:38); by juxtaposing her gestural transcription with the spoken component of each performance, she argued that body speech and gesture were crucial to communication.

Farnell’s article has proven influential in the field of language revitalization. Her case study, in which performance proved essential to one elder’s use of her language, has provided other scholars with the theoretical basis from which to argue that successful language revitalization should recognize the importance of embodiment and performance to Aboriginal languages (Carr and Meek 2013). Her work is not beyond criticism, however. First, Farnell

consistently describes her interlocutor, an eighty-four year old elder named Rose Weasel, in unnecessarily endearing language, referring to her “girlish laugh” (2002:41), for instance. While Farnell clearly meant to convey Weasel’s genuine pleasure at sharing her stories (Farnell 2002:41), overstating the point becomes problematic, if not patronizing. Second, while Farnell’s fieldwork and theoretical observations are very useful, her methodological decision to transcribe Weasel’s gestures using the Laban script buries her contributions in unnecessary technicality. Subsequent references to her work (Carr and Meek 2013) sidestep this approach altogether.

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard advocates for a “resurgent politics of recognition” (2014:18) that includes the need for “Indigenous people [to] begin to reconnect with their lands and land-based practices” (2014:171). His land-oriented politics resonates strongly with the discourse of language revitalization articulated by the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, which, as discussed above, drew a direct line between Aboriginal territory and languages. In her 2013 article, *‘We Can’t Feel Our Language’: Making Places in the City for Aboriginal Language Revitalization*, Natalie Baloy raises an important question in the face of this territorial rhetoric: if Aboriginal languages and language revitalization are tied to territory, what are the implications for the increasing proportion of Aboriginal persons who live in urban environments? How can Aboriginal language revitalization be adapted for the specific needs of urban dwellers?

Drawing upon work with the Squamish community in Vancouver, British Columbia, Baloy offers three central challenges and solutions for language workers and learners. “First, language workers and learners must work against the sometimes subtle but pervasive idea that a strong aboriginal identity and an urban

lifestyle are mutually exclusive” (Baloy 2011:516). Second, she advocates for “placing language” in urban centers, by recognizing the diversity of Aboriginal languages and peoples in an urban setting, while at the same time acknowledging the importance of “local peoples, their land, and their languages” (2011:516). Finally, she suggests a number of concrete strategies for “making spaces” (2011:516) for Aboriginal languages in the city.

Crucially, these concrete recommendations include incorporating cultural expression into language learning. A wide range of academic and community interlocutors suggested that cultural activities involving song and dance were significantly less intimidating for new language learners (Baloy 2011:534-5). According to Baloy, a variety of ongoing Aboriginal language song classes and dance groups have sprung up in urban Vancouver, while cultural events like powwows have increasingly worked to incorporate a strong language component. Encouragingly, cultural groups and events combine “motivation to learn an aboriginal language” (Baloy 2011:535) with an accessible peer group of language learners. Finally, song and dance offer a powerful pedagogical tool for adult language learners. “Teaching in that formal setup we use for learning languages....doesn’t give those students an opportunity to practice and carry it on. But with songs, some of the words can stick with them for the rest of their lives” (Baloy 2011:535).

While Baloy is optimistic about the language learning opportunities offered by cultural activities, her article does suggest some limitations. First, her focus on song and dance groups and community events like powwows means that theatre and performance cultures do not feature in her research. More serious is the “concern that singing and dancing provide only surface exposure to language learning” (Baloy 2011:535). In their 2013 article *The Poetics of Language Revitalization: Text, Performance, and Change*, Gerald Carr and

Barbra Meek offer possible responses to both of these limitations, through their significantly more nuanced approach to language revitalization and performance. Whereas Baloy focused on the celebration of cultural heritage through song and dance, and the resulting opportunity to create an accessible language learning environment, Carr and Meek examine both language learning and revitalization in the context of performance theory, and specific instances of language learning enabled by theatrical performance.

Carr and Meek’s most important theoretical contribution is their application of the idea of *breakthrough* in performance to describe language revitalization. They follow anthropologist and performance theorist Dell Hymes in distinguishing between reporting and performing culture. To take an Aboriginal storyteller as an example, if reporting culture means providing an account of a traditional narrative – essentially relaying the events – then “the notion of breaking through to performance refers to a storyteller’s shift to [...] truly performing it as verbal art, a shift that is evidenced by verbal cues” (Carr and Meek 2013:195). This bears significant resemblance to Brenda Farnell’s idea of dynamic embodiment, in that a storyteller is understood as ‘performing’ when her speech and bodily gestures become equally important and meaningful. They go further, however, by emphasizing the need for a performer to inhabit and embody the cultural practices, traditions, and epistemology within which the story was/is told, in order to successfully communicate the narrative in its spoken and gestural entirety.

This idea of ‘breakthrough’ into performance “offers a remarkably apt frame for understanding what is at stake and what is desired” (Carr and Meek 2013:196) for language revitalization. If the use of a language constitutes the ongoing performance of an identity, then the gold standard of language revitalization would be a speaker’s ability to fully inhabit the

cultural context of that language – that is, her experience of a breakthrough into performance. According to Carr and Meek, the “goal of language revitalization efforts is to transform individual articulations from reporting, or model reproduction, to performing, production with all the inherent variation and creative capacity that performance entails” (2013:196).

One of the serious weaknesses of Farnell’s earlier theory of dynamic embodiment was the absence of practical, pedagogical application. The strength of Meek and Carr’s article is their dual focus on theory and application. Theoretically, their insights into language revitalization are shaped and informed by performance: practically, they evaluate the role of performance, storytelling, and theatre in language learning programs developed by the Kaska community of the Yukon Territory. The reciprocity between theory and application suggests that the field has continued to mature.

### *Conclusion*

Over the last three decades, the discursive terrain of Aboriginal language revitalization in Canada has been highly contested by scholars, performers, policy makers, and Aboriginal governments. Consistently, Aboriginal theatre and performance culture has occupied an ambiguous position within this literature. During the 1980s and 1990s, a strict conceptual division between language and culture meant that language revitalization and performance were mutually exclusive in the literature produced by Aboriginal performers on the one hand, and policy makers on language revitalization on the other. In many ways, the policy recommendations made during the 2000s reiterate work accomplished a decade earlier. Joshua Fishman’s research has proved rhizomatic, for instance, heavily influencing the authors of the R.R.C.A.P., and reappearing in the 2005 T.F.A.L.C.’s extensive reliance upon its precursor. However, substantial shifts appear between

the first and second *clusters*, notably in the transition away from an approach that distinguishes between language and culture, to one that binds them both the logic of land claims. At the level of Canadian and Aboriginal government policy, this discursive shift has left even less room for performance and theatre within the wider project of language revitalization. As the academic study of language revitalization matures, however, scholars have become increasingly interested in the potential offered by performance theory, and the use of performance in pedagogy. Carr and Meek’s excellent research in the Yukon Territory, for instance, strongly suggests that integrating performance, especially theatrical productions and storytelling, into language pedagogy can contribute immensely to the success of language revitalization programs. Considering the ongoing tragedy of Aboriginal language loss, further research into the potential symbiosis between Aboriginal theatre and language revitalization is both promising, and necessary.

### *Acknowledgements*

My thanks to Dr. Cheryl Dudgeon, for encouraging this research over the course of a stimulating seminar in Fall 2014 on Global Cultures of Gendering (CGS 3515). Two external reviewers provided valuable and encouraging feedback. Andrew Rampton very generously assisted in formatting the manuscript. Finally, my sincere thanks to Hannah McGregor, for many conversations about language policy and indigenous rights in Canada, and for her invaluable critiques of earlier versions of this paper.

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## **Indigenous Knowledge Within Academia: Exploring the Tensions That Exist Between Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nêhiyawak Methodologies**

**Paulina R. Johnson**

### *Abstract*

*Over the last few decades the rewriting of Indigenous knowledge and history has been discussed, debated, and rewritten through the fields of Anthropology, History, and First Nation Studies, to name a few. One of the main tensions that exists in this reclamation process is the differences between Indigenous and Western methodological approaches. However, it has yet to be put forward as to what are the tensions that exist within Indigenous methodologies and their practice. This paper will bring forward three methodological approaches utilized within research for and by Indigenous peoples, as we examine how Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nêhiyawak methodologies challenge and support one another, and how in order to conduct research, specific views must be taken into account to give a better understanding of the philosophical and spiritual foundations in which the research is situated. Specifically, the article will assess what are Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nêhiyawak methodologies and why there is a need to incorporate specific methodological approaches dependent on the research in question. Yet, in order to understand the importance and relevance of these differing approaches to find knowledge, we must first discuss how early research and ethics impacted what we know about Indigenous peoples and their way of life. I focus on Nêhiyawak methodologies in particular as a member of the Nêhiyaw Nation in the territory of Maskwacîs.*

### *Introduction: The Representation and Study of Indigenous North America*

Since “contact” with mônîyâw, meaning “not of us” or “strangers”, the beliefs and knowledge perpetuated about Indigenous peoples have been cross-cultural miscommunications and misunderstandings that extend into appropriations through interpretations and representations dominated by non-Indigenous peoples. Through scientific analysis Indigenous peoples found their selves compared, measured, and judged inferior to European standards of civility, language, and culture. This belief permitted atrocities and forced removal throughout Indigenous territories due to the idea that the land was *terra nullius*, a Latin term meaning, *land that belongs to no one*. As Indigenous peoples were ravaged by disease, warfare, slavery, and so many other detrimental experiences to their identities, a belief arose in the minds of European settlers that because the ‘Indian’ could not live or be exposed to civilizations such as theirs they would soon be extinct. This belief was exemplified further through the decay of Indigenous societies linked to “drunkenness, beggary, and savagery” since they were the fallen savages and were unworthy of their heritage and culture (Dippie 1982:25-28 in Biolsi & Zimmerman 1997:67). The fear of extinction drove various individuals to capture, collect, and record all that they possibly could about Indigenous peoples from their language to kinship traditions. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, research on Indigenous peoples had developed extensively. However, the very knowledge that was obtained followed the standard for Western positivist research, where this research was aimed at examining the ‘other’ and found its dominance within ‘institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial

bureaucracies, and colonial styles' (Said 1978:2 in Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 2).

To clarify, 'Western' as Stuart Hall explains functions in four ways: (1) It allows 'us' to characterize and classify societies into categories, (2) condenses complex images of other societies through a system of representation, (3) provides a standard model of comparison, and (4) provides criteria of evaluation against which other societies can be ranked (Smith 1999:43). 'Positivism' is how the natural world is examined and understood through Western scientific method and leads to a 'universal truth' (Smith 1999:42). These approaches led the way for qualitative studies, and soon Indigenous histories and culture were being extracted by research approaches that left those who were studied disenfranchised (Kovach 2009:27). However, one-thing remained throughout academia's salvage of Indigenous knowledge: the Indigenous Nations who were supposed to vanish were actually growing.

The assumption that Indigenous peoples would eventually cease to exist has created various problematic narratives and Western standards of discourse have continued this legacy throughout academic studies of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous history has largely been conducted by the non-Indigenous, who stand outside Indigenous worldviews and comment in a language that is unsuitable for the topic and often does not translate effectively (Miller & Riding 2011:1). Western academic institutions and scientific disciplines have continued this trend by marginalizing Indigenous worldviews and discourse from Indigenous histories and present-day national narratives. Indigenous scholars trained in Western institutions still find their voice marginalized, as Historian Mary Jane McCallum (2009) indicates that often Indigenous writers are relegated to the sidelines of commentary or

left solely to review books and articles on Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous scholars have worked continuously to challenge the hierarchy of domination and suppression that they have been placed into by colonial forces, in addition to marginalization through biased legislation and educational initiatives and policies that promote Western knowledge systems at the expense of our own (Bishop 1997). Dominant is often used as an adjective to describe the culture of European-descended and "Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated" society, and does not include those who fall "outside" (Wilson 2008:35). Indigenous peoples and their allies have taken a stand and begun an indigenizing and decolonizing process that includes the retelling of cultural pasts and practices, and have advocated for their own value systems, traditional governance, and way of life in relation to the cosmos, nature, and landscape. Neal McLeod in *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (19-20) forwards that part of the Christianization process in Canada involved the erasing of previous Nêhiyaw memory which had been marked in the landscape by *mistasiny*, sacred stone also known as grandfather stones. These stones were markers within the landscape that held intuitive power and were a place for Indigenous peoples to gather and have ceremonies and pray for the spirit within the stone is a listener and as old as Mother Earth (McLeod 2007: 20). Put simply, the *mistasiny* were physical reminders of the relationship including the kinship ties of the Nêhiyaw people and the rest of Creation (see McLeod 2007:23). Understanding these concepts that challenge the very essence of our Western education systems, Indigenous peoples have taken on the politics of our society in North America and abroad, and revealed for the first time, who Indigenous

peoples are through their own way of life rooted in cultural tradition.

From the increase of Indigenous scholars to the revitalization of Indigenous languages, the narratives that surround Indigenous peoples and their histories have begun to be reclaimed, reinforcing and reinstating who they are through their own narratives. In turn, this knowledge is challenging and reinterpreting stories that often were mistaken, taken out of context, or simply made to fit the assumptions of the writer. Granted this paper could be entirely devoted to the injustices of the past or focus on the “tensions” between Western and Indigenous science including the problems with reconciling different knowledge systems and worldviews. But as an initiative to push Indigenous studies forward, I will focus on tensions that exist between Indigenous, Decolonizing, and Nation-specific methodologies. I advocate for the use of Nation in relation to specific Indigenous cultures and groups, because “community” and “tribe” does not adequately indicate the complex dynamics of Indigenous peoples. Specifically, “tribal” is Eurocentric in nature and the term overlooks important networks of relationships that exist between ethnic groups (Innes 2012 using Binnema 2004). “Community” as told to me by Nêhiyaw knowledge holder Joseph Deschamps is the lowest form of government, and for First Nations who have long held and practiced a way of life through laws gifted by Manitou, Creator, this term does not accurately indicate the interconnected relationships between us as people and the universe. However, in order to fully grasp the nature of methodological approaches and those related to spiritual worldview, understanding what exactly is a methodology is vital and this must also include the differences between epistemology and ontology.

Shawn Wilson (2008) in his work *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research*

*Methods* argues that *epistemologies* are the nature of thinking and knowing and where we have come to know something (i.e. how do I know what is real?) (Wilson 2008:34). *Methodologies* refers to how knowledge is gained (i.e. how do I find out more about this reality?) (Wilson 2008:34). Methodology includes the techniques used to obtain knowledge, and can include archival research, interviews, and so on, while epistemology relates to worldview or philosophy. Though epistemology is linked within methodology we will witness that epistemology dominates the methodological framework of Indigenous study because it includes entire systems of thinking that are built on ontologies. *Ontologies* look at the theory of nature of existence, or the nature of reality (i.e. what is real?) (Wilson 2008:33). These are part of an axiology that is the ethics that guide the search for knowledge and judge what is worth searching for (i.e. what part about this reality is worth finding out and what is ethical to gain such knowledge?) (Wilson 2008: 33). The term *tension* is used quite often in Indigenous studies as it explores distinct differences between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. In that vein, I will bring forward the distinct differences between the three methodologies but also point out where these methodologies converge and diverge from one another. This insight is critical for scholars who intend to work with Indigenous communities and for the settler-nation state of Canada to begin the process of reconciliation and understanding as both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples move forward.

Therefore, this paper will examine how Indigenous peoples have utilized Indigenous, decolonizing, and Nation-specific methodologies to rewrite what is known and can be known. The Nation that I will focus on in this paper is of my own: the Nêhiyawak Nation who govern the region of Western Canada and live within the territory of

Maskwacîs. Yet, I must state, the methodologies that will be presented by no means are to dismiss the work of previous scholars. To begin, we will take a look at the early beginning of Western scientific knowledge systems, specifically those within the discipline of Anthropology, and explore how they have impacted perceptions of what it means to be Indigenous and why it is important to look beyond qualitative methodologies used by present day researchers as we push the boundaries of what we already know. These methodological approaches challenge the very core of knowledge production since they do not follow Western terms of research (Kovach 2009:29). In order to understand why this is critical to Indigenous and non-Indigenous studies, we need to evaluate past research ethics and relationships that will allow us to conceptualize the need for collaboration, inclusion, and respect for Indigenous peoples and their way of life.

#### *Examining Early Academic Thought in Anthropology*

In order for Indigenous peoples to break from misrepresentations of their historical narratives, including the confrontation of categories they have been placed into, we need to address the problems that exist in academia today. Anthropology is a young discipline rooted in global expansion and colonialism that has endured significant changes to its research paradigms, ethics, and relationships with Indigenous peoples since its beginnings. Nevertheless, it is within its early inception that anthropological interpretations and understandings began to drive general knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Anthropology emerged simultaneously as explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and colonial regimes spread around the world. Through these early journeys of enlightenment, Indigenous

peoples were documented, observed, and their cultural objects and material possessions were collected and analyzed. In *Indians and Anthropologist: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology*, Biolsi and Zimmerman (1997:3) attest that anthropologists tend to reproduce “self-conforming, self-referential, and self-producing closed systems with little, if any, empirical relationship to or practical value for real Indigenous peoples”. Anthropologists descended every summer onto Indigenous communities because they intended to “climb the university totem pole” (Deloria 1970:98-99 in Biolsi & Zimmerman 1997:3). This academic hierarchy and progression saw anthropologists come in and out of communities and the research conducted rarely, if ever focused on the needs of the Nation, but rather the anthropologists’ self-interests and desires that would later result in the presumed assumption that they knew more about the Indigenous Nation than the citizens themselves. This in-and-out relationship was an abuse of trust on Indigenous peoples and many refuse to share their knowledge since they witnessed their history manipulated firsthand. This approach was the ideal for field research and often persists in present-day studies.

The scholarly knowledges that were created about Indigenous cultures, language, and objects and remains have been subjected to appropriation and (re)presentation (Biolsi & Zimmerman 1997:7). Anthropologists often act as stewards of the past and this results in the cutting of ties with present day Indigenous peoples, and creates a myth that Indigenous peoples no longer exist today or that in order to find an “Indian” you must search for the feathers and traditional regalia. The use of the term “Indian” in respect to every Nation contradicts and groups Indigenous people together, and voids any differences that make them unique including regalia, art forms, and language. During the

early period of anthropological research, there were rarely any initiatives for collaboration and consultation with Indigenous peoples. Any agreements with Indigenous participants or informants were rarely, if ever regulated by an ethics board. Today, the request for written permission or a signature from a participant is still problematic, since many Indigenous peoples come from oral cultures, and the relevance of a signature is not as binding as ones given word. For various Elders and Nation members, there is a chance that they do not understand the formal context of forms asking for their signatures or do not have the ability to read or write. In many instances, many students are not required to complete an ethics approval, since they are working with artifacts of a prehistoric era, which causes concern in relation to worldviews and conceptions of time and whether these items are alive and animate. All of these factors play into present-day fears about, and relations between Indigenous peoples and scholars. Even if a scholar is Indigenous themselves, this creates tensions between the home Nation and the scholar by revealing knowledge and concepts that are only shareable in certain ceremonies or times of the year.

With that said, the dominant approach in taking back Indigenous narrative is best expressed in the policy statement of the journal *Indian Historian*: “Indians have good reason to distrust and even scorn the professional researcher. Too often have they misinterpreted the Indian history, misrepresented their way of life. It becomes necessary now to correct the record, to write the history as it should be written, to interpret correctly the aboriginal past” (Miller 2011:20). This statement does not limit the study and research of Indigenous peoples solely to Indigenous peoples. Non-Indigenous scholars may join Indigenous peoples in producing and creating great

pieces of work, but cannot lead the movement since they may take part but not take over (Miller 2011:21). Understanding the importance of Indigenous peoples within this reclamation process is important to the study and emergence of Indigenous studies. The Indigenous Renaissance, as Mi’kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) has called it, allows Indigenous peoples to share and document their research by bringing back of theory and culture, and therefore, creating a new realm of Indigenous study.

### *Indigenous Methodologies: Challenging the Constraints of “Research”*

As Indigenous peoples have grasped for the ability to represent their selves through their own narratives and intellectual traditions, we have witnessed a shift in the academic landscape as studies move away from the binaries of Indigenous-settler relations to construct new, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory, and action (Kovach 2009:12). Indigenous methodologies have been first and foremost the reaction against research and its effects on Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and history. It is out of this relationship with research that Indigenous peoples developed “alterNative” methodologies that ‘construct, rediscover, and/or reaffirm their knowledges and cultures...represent the aspirations of Indigenous [peoples] and carry within them the potential to strengthen the struggle for emancipation and liberation from oppression’ (Rigney 1999:114 in Ladner 2001:37). A battle cry of “Indigenize!” relays in the minds of activists, lobbyists, and even one’s own self as Indigenous peoples bring forward their knowledge to shift how our world thinks and learns how to reason (Battiste 2013:71; Ladner 2001:35). This shift is caused by the *Indigenous Renaissance* since it is an agenda for the present and future and is a movement that works collaboratively

toward Indigenous peoples' goals for sovereignty, self-determination, and treaty and Aboriginal rights (Battiste 2013:73-74).

All of those that experience this movement attempt to bring light to how Indigenous peoples reason with the world, since our society has been instructed to reason in only one fashion, and that is through scientific analysis that dictates a specified way of thinking (Ladner 2001:35). Incommensurability impacts the discussion of Indigenous methodologies. Through this way of thinking, tensions arise amongst Western scholars and Indigenous peoples struggle to share their knowledge due to how they have been educated in Western institutions that limit the ability to see outside fact and evidence. As James Youngblood Henderson affirms in *The Mi'kmaw Concordat*, it is the 'transformation of consciousness' that is required in order to escape colonial legacies and Western-Eurocentric thought (1997:24). By incorporating Indigenous alterNative ways of thinking we react to intellectual colonialism and reaffirm Indigenous knowledge by respecting Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies (Ladner 2001:37).

By incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks that are distinctive of cultural epistemologies we are able to challenge and transform the institutional hegemony of the academy (Kovach 2009:12). This institutional transformation is how Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks open up new ways of interpretation and understanding since these offer broad overviews and frameworks for research; but since they are based on beliefs and assumptions about reality, they are intrinsically tied to value (Wilson 2008:33). Therefore, these methodologies are based on Indigenous knowledge that is derived from the spirit, heart, mind and body; where intuitive

knowledge, and metaphysical and unconscious realms are possible channels to knowing (Abolson 2011:31 using Colorado 1988; Deloria 2002; Little Bear 2000). Channels can come from meditation, dreams, and visions, and all of these are gifts from the spiritual realms that allow a researcher to learn through nature and maintain the relationship between creation and the Creator. As Leroy Little Bear states: "the function of Aboriginal values is to maintain the relationships that hold Creation together. If Creation manifests itself in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions, the maintenance and renewal of those patterns is all-important' (2000:81 in Abolson 2011:49). Cyclical patterns that reflect a continuous connection that is never broken are important since Indigenous worldviews are 'cyclically governed by natural and spiritual laws' and bound by *wholism* (Abolson 2011:59). Wholism as Jo-Ann Archibald (1997) stated in her dissertation:

"...refers to the interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and physical (body and behavior/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of wholism extends to and is mutually influenced by one's family, community, Band and Nation. The image of a circle is to show the synergistic influence and responsibility to the generations of ancestors, the generations today, and the generations yet to come. That animal/human kingdoms, the elements of Nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles" (Abolson 2011:59).

This wholistic view is embraced by multiple Indigenous Nations around the world and incorporates a mindset that looks beyond scientific research as it attempts to bring in-depth qualitative research of knowing how and why. To exemplify this further, the terms used by scholars for “research” should not reflect a Western view of collecting and finding, but instead should reflect the views of obtaining through past traditional practice and include terms such as searching, harvesting, picking, gathering, hunting and trapping (Abolson 2011:21). By incorporating Indigenous intellectual traditions of how knowledge is gained, researchers allow themselves to view the world through different lenses and open their selves to a new way of thinking, learning, and understanding. Researchers who do not share these mindsets can begin with understanding cultural protocol since this is not only a method to obtain knowledge but the creation of a mutual relationship with Indigenous Elders.

As Margaret Kovach states in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context*: “we need only to look to the importance of protocol within Indigenous communities to recognize that how activities (i.e. methods) are carried out matter. Protocols are a means to ensure that activities are carried out in a manner that reflects community teachings and are done in a good way. The same principle ought to apply to research” (2009:40). Walter Lighting defines “protocol” as:

“... to any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person from whom the individual makes a request. The protocols differ according to the nature of the request and the nature of the

individuals involved. The actions and statements may be outwardly simple and straightforward, or they may be complex, involving preparation lasting a year or more. The protocols may often involve the presentation of something. It would be a mistake to say that what is presented is symbolic of whatever may be requested, or the relationship that it is hoped will be established, because it is much more than symbolic” (1992:210 in Kovach 2009:37-38).

Indigenous teachings and cultural protocol encompass the importance of Indigenous methodologies. Since they both relate to the act of sharing, and since each personal narrative, story, and song is a method that allows each generation to transmit knowledge, these approaches are vital to cultural persistence and continuity. Cultural longevity depends on the ability to sustain cultural knowledge, and many Indigenous scholars emphasize methodological approaches that respect cultural knowings (Kovach 2009). These cultural knowings drive Indigenous research through three distinct characteristics including: the cultural knowledges that guide one’s research choices, the methods used in searching, and a way to interpret knowledge that gives back in a purposeful, helpful, and relevant manner (to the Nation and the wider audience) (Kovach 2009:43-44).

Susan Abolson presents an example of an Indigenous methodological approach that incorporates all of the previously mentioned. Abolson’s “Petal Flower” is a wholistic framework in search of knowledge and is comprised of six parts:

1. *The Roots*: That is the foundational elements, where all methodologies are rooted and



- informed in varying degrees by Indigenous paradigms and worldviews.
2. *The Center of the Flower:* The center represents self and self in relation to the research. Indigenous re-search is as much as who is doing the research as to the how of the research.
  3. *The Leaves:* The leaves enable photosynthesis of knowledge: the transformative journeys of self through research. Indigenous researchers are on a journey of learning who they are and what they know. The leaves are connected to the stem and to the ways Indigenous searchers navigate academic channels.
  4. *The Stem:* This is the methodological backbone and supports all parts of the whole. The backbone of Indigenous research comprises a critique of colonialism, imperialism, and euro Western research on Indigenous peoples. The stem is the connecting pathway between the paradigms, researcher, process, academia, and methodologies. Critical Indigenous research agendas are actualized because of the strengths, supports, skills, and roles of Indigenous scholars.
  5. *The Petals:* The petals represent the diversity of indigenous research and methodology. The diverse ways of research for knowledge.
  6. *The Environment:* This is the academic context of the framework that influences the life of Indigenous methodologies in the academy and affects Indigenous researchers who are

trying to advance their theories and methods. Predominantly, Indigenous research and the inclusion of an Indigenous methodological approach brings uncertainty and unfamiliarity since it is unfamiliar in the academy, and therefore within the environment a researcher can share their experiences and strategies for employing Indigenous research in the academy (2011:50-52).

This methodology is significant in a number of ways: all of its components are interrelated and interdependent; it is earth centered and harmoniously exists in relationship with Creation; it's cyclical and changes from season to season; the environment it lives in impacts its life; and it has spirit and a life (Abolson 2011:49). Predominantly, this Indigenous methodology brings the core of creation to the center of its importance while acknowledging and validating Indigenous leadership and scholarship displayed within a climate that is often foreign, alienating, and marginalizing (Abolson 2011:49). This methodological framework is one of many that may be utilized by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars because it intertwines Anishinaabe protocol and intellectual traditions. As promising and important as frameworks such as these are, there are limitations and tensions within Indigenous methodology.

Tensions that arise from attempting to conform to an outsider's view of the 'Indigenous Standard' (i.e. 'all Natives are this, all Natives are that') have failed since each Indigenous Nation is different and unique and has a multi-layered tradition of customs borrowed from other Nations and employ strategies to understand their own places (Kovach 2009:5; Oliveira 2006:6 in Louis 2007:133). Quite simply, there cannot



be a single Indigenous methodology that is universal since, as Kovach states, a common language puts Indigenous peoples at risk (2009:24). As Little Bear states, “there is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply concepts generally” (2000:79). Therefore, each Indigenous Nation is bound by their cultural philosophies, worldviews, beliefs, customs, and protocols, and though a general methodological approach assists through research, it cannot however be a universal truth for all Indigenous peoples. To exemplify, Indigenous languages often have multiple meanings associated to one word and when you give a translation that becomes the sole definition it compromises the word entirely, since it denies other possible meanings to be associated with the term.

Indigenous methodologies have allowed Indigenous ways of knowing to emphasize the cultural, spiritual, and intangible importance of Indigenous ways of life. These methodologies allow Indigenous histories and pasts to be told through Indigenous knowledge systems that put the heart of the people at the forefront rather than on the margins looking in. These are valuable and critical research frameworks and epistemologies that can assist in enhancing, rewriting, and challenging what we know and have yet to learn about Indigenous peoples. The overall principles of Indigenous methodologies include the incorporation of Indigenous worldviews and cultural knowledge systems, but these are simply not enough. The foundations of academic hierarchy are rooted in colonial thought and this requires us to decolonize academic and larger societal systems.

### *Decolonizing Methodologies*

In order to assess what decolonization is and how it relates to methodologies, I believe we must examine what colonization/colonialism is by assessing

imperialism. Imperialism frames the ‘Indigenous experience’ and still hurts, still destroys, while reforming itself constantly (Smith 1999:19). Extending backwards all the way to the arrival of Christopher Columbus, imperialism allowed for a vast array of military personnel, imperial administrators, priests, explorers, missionaries, colonial officials, artists, entrepreneurs, and settlers to leave permanent “wounds” on the Indigenous Nations, and allowed them to name and claim traditional lands (Smith 1999:21). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that imperialism tends to be used in at least four different ways beginning from the fifteenth century:

1. Imperialism as economic expansion: The system of control that secured the markets and capital investments,
2. Imperialism as a form of subjugation of ‘others’: Exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous peoples that has created a struggle to recover histories, lands, languages, and basic human dignity,
3. Imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization: Particularly, this way incorporates the promotion of science, economic expansion and political practice, all of which have impacted the study and research of Indigenous peoples, and
4. Imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge: This way has been generated by writers whose understandings of imperialism and colonialism have been based either on their membership of and experience with colonized societies, or on their interests in understanding imperialism from

the perspective of local contexts (1999:21-23).

Imperialism was the beginning of what would become colonialism and the driving force for settlement of colonies. As Susan Miller asserts in her article "Native Historians Write Back," colonialism refers the planting of colonies outside of a Nation's land base that suppressed and manipulated Indigenous peoples through military assault, concentration on reduced land bases, the taking of children, re-education, criminalization of Indigenous culture and incarceration of its carriers, and so on (2011:33). Though Miller's statement traces the impact of colonization through time, the colonial policies reflect an agenda that attempts to remove Indigenous sovereignty and rights from the outset.

Colonialism therefore is 'the historical process whereby the 'West' attempts systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the 'non-West' (Gandhi 1998:16 in Hart 2009:26). Colonization however, connects directly to Indigenous knowledge through three means: *exclusion*, or the absence of Indigenous knowledge, methodologies and practices, and with Eurocentric scholars identifying their knowledge as superior; *marginalization*, where peoples, individuals, and ideas are put to the sidelines; and *appropriation* that connects colonialism to Indigenous knowledge through the misrepresentation of partial representation of an idea or artifact without recognition of the sources or inspiration, while at the same time gaining prosperity, success, and/or the benefit from others' ideas (Hart 2009; Graveline 1998 in Hart 2009:27). The question for Indigenous historians is not what colonial peoples have done but how Indigenous peoples have experienced them (Miller 2011:33).

To challenge the constraints of colonialism, academics and new learners

who are allies to Indigenous peoples in the protection of our knowledge must step outside their privileged positions and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines of the colonial power structure (Hart 2009:32 using Simpson 2004:381). Specific topics concerned with decolonization include Indigenous ways of thinking such as: "ideas about citizenship, governance and organizational structures, education, oral traditions, language, repatriation, images and stereotypes, and diet, as well as the role of truth telling..." (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird 2005:4). In order to understand why we must decolonize Indigenous thought, we can focus our attention to the context of African colonization and where we first witness decolonization emerge through diffusion and anti-colonialism.

Mary Louis Pratt presents "diffusion" as the process of substitution and replication, and this, put simply, is where Western education replaces Native education, and where the modern replaces the traditional and local (Hart 2009:30). The 'superior' or importantly, the Western approach, substitutes for the 'inferior' philosophical belief systems. However, anti-colonial accounts recall a completely different substitution; instead these were structured interventions that combined physical and epistemological violence inflicted onto Indigenous peoples (Hart 2009 using Pratt 2004:452). The anti-colonial approach brings forward anti-oppressive discourses and at the same time, remains aware of the historical and institutional structures and contexts that sustain intellectual projects (Hart 2009 using Dei 2000). Within anti-colonialism lies *Indigenism* that opposes imperialism and colonialism but incorporates the *fourth-world position*. Identified by Manuel and Posluns, the 'fourth-world' calls for empowerment and seeks the ultimate goal of peace (Hart 2009:32). Indigenism can literally mean 'to

be born of a place' and specifically as Hart (using Jamies Guerrero (2003:66)) states: an Indigenous person has the "responsibility to practice kinship roles with his or her bioregional habitat, manifested through cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies that cherish biodiversity; this is the contact of Native land ethic and spirituality" (Hart 2009:33). The emphasis of anti-colonial and Indigenism is the recognition of the injustices inflicted by imperialism and colonialism and what we as Indigenous writers and advocates must bring forth as we reflect on the transformation of our worldviews and customs. This is decolonization that looks to resist and challenge colonial institutions and ideologies (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird 2005:2). Decolonization is an important aspect of writing and learning Indigenous pasts, and is critical to the advancement of Indigenous worldviews into mainstream educational systems that are Eurocentric by nature. This is where Indigenous scholars and supporters must break down the layers of colonialism from our education, politics, medicine, and so on, and confront the very foundation Western society is built upon.

Confronting ideologies of oppression is essential in order to decolonize our minds and our disciplines because we are not in post-colonial times (Louis 2007:131 using Smith 2000:215; Moody 1993:xxix). Decolonizing Indigenous research is not the total rejection of Western theory, research, knowledge, and existing literature, but it is about shifting directions into Indigenous concerns and worldviews and how we come to know and understand our theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Louis 2007:132 using Smith 1999:39). Primarily, decolonization is by no means an effort to live as Indigenous peoples once did before contact and colonization, but a movement to rid the colonized relations with nation-states and the destructive nature of those relationships

(Miller 2011:34). Simply, it is a movement to 'bring back' that includes the revitalization of language, recovering ceremonies, institutions, technologies, philosophies, games, and various other forms of ancient knowledge, including traditional governance and responsibility (Miller 2011:35).

At the same time decolonizing methodologies do not allow Indigenous peoples to fall into victimization of past injustices but rather demonstrate how we are able to work toward our freedom, transform the world around us, and liberate our lives while at the same time enhancing our cultures, traditions, and state of mind (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird 2005:2). Graham Smith (2000) (in Battiste 2013:70) furthers this notion through showing how Indigenous peoples' struggles cannot be reduced to singular solutions in singular locations but need to be carried out in multiple sites using multiple strategies. Decolonizing methodologies demand a critical reflexive lens that acknowledges the politics of representation within Indigenous research (Kovach 2009:33). So far, I have discussed the importance and needs that have driven a decolonial discourse by Indigenous peoples, but to see what methods are implemented in practice we will turn to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999).

Various Indigenous scholars have utilized Smith's work as it details a global experience felt by Indigenous peoples who share a common history. In her book, Smith presents twenty-five decolonizing projects that are not efforts to resume living as our Indigenous ancestors did before colonization but a movement to rid colonial relationships with nation-states and the destructive efforts of those relations. Of these twenty-five projects I will focus on nine that are important for my particular research: storytelling, celebrating survival,

remembering, connecting, writing, representing, returning, protecting, and sharing. Though the other projects will all tie into my research, these nine will bring forth the importance of decolonizing methodologies and reveal the motivating factors of my study.

Storytelling, oral narratives, or oral histories are an integral part of the Indigenous research since these stories “contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place” (Smith 1999:144). Oral narratives and oral traditions allow for Nation stories linked to identity and wellbeing to be brought to the forefront of academic research and analysis. Indigenous cultures have a firm tradition of telling stories, and this is because they are used as teaching narratives, to tell of spiritual beginnings, and to offer words of self-healing and self-reflection for the audience. The majority of Indigenous cultures are oral cultures, and oral tradition and narratives bind Indigenous peoples together. Oral traditions and narratives present the collective of the Nation and as Simon Oritz states:

“The oral tradition of Native American people is based upon spoken language, but it is more than that too. Oral tradition is inclusive; it is the actions, behavior, relationships, practices throughout the whole social, economic, and spiritual life process of people. I think at times “oral tradition” is defined too strictly in terms of verbal-vocal manifestations in stories, songs, meditations, ceremonies, ritual, philosophies, and clan and tribal histories passed from older generations to the next...Oral tradition evokes and expresses a belief system” (1992:7 in Archibald 2008:25-26).

Oral traditions and narratives present a look into cultural traditions and custom while at the same time dictating protocol, and this is because of *oratory*. Oratory as a Lee Maracle affirms is a place of prayer, to persuade:

“This is a word we can work with. We regard words as coming from original being – a sacred spiritual being. The orator is coming from a place of prayer and as such attempts to be persuasive. Words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, story is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of people” (1992:87 in Archibald 2008:26).

Oral narratives are linked within ancestral traditions, and they are maintained through a systematic process that includes oral footnotes of where the story began, who spoke it, and from where it came. Not only do stories tell of the culture and people, but also they allow for Elders to reach beyond their generation and impact the lives of the youth and therefore impact cultural longevity. Stories such as these offer ‘diversities of truth’ where the storyteller and not the researcher remain in control (Bishop in Smith 1999:145). Linked within storytelling is the celebration of survival that focuses on the positives of Indigenous being and celebrates our resistance and affirms our cultural identity (Smith 1999:145).

Both Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies offer extensive frameworks

and approaches to carrying out the reclamation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. While similar in their ultimate goal, the differences are distinct in their overall approaches, causing tensions to exist. Indigenous methodologies attack the research processes and aim to incorporate “alterNative” ways of thinking including Indigenous knowledge systems, whereas decolonizing methodologies attempt to remove colonial relationships and the systematic injustices that Indigenous peoples are placed into. While both bring forward the experiences of colonialism, one aims to produce a resurgence of traditional knowledges through worldview and intellectual traditions, and one aims deconstruct and decolonize our minds from suppression and assumed inferiority in which we are situated in the idea of the “endgame of empire” (Waziyatawin 2011:76 in Desai et al. 2012:ix). However, neither is capable of successfully reaching their goal without the other since decolonization can only be “achieved through the resurgence of an Indigenous consciousness channeled into contention with colonialism” (Alfred 2009:48 in Desai et al. 2012:iii). Indigenous methodologies that incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems are the starting point for resurgence and decolonization. However, to narrow in our focus, I will present a Nêhiyawak Methodological approach to discuss how certain research frameworks require a specific and detailed approach.

### *Nêhiyawak Methodology*

Indigenous and decolonizing epistemologies both examine the collective experience of Indigenous peoples, yet there are limitations and generalizations that extend out of their initiative. Margaret Kovach explains that applying Indigenous and decolonial methods may actually reveal too much and make available through texts what should have never been written down,

such as sacred knowledge (2009:46). Therefore, there is a need to create and express how Nation specific methodological approaches differ from Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies since Indigenous cultures offer a breadth of distinct, unique, and even multicultural worldviews that are not expressed within a generalized approach. With that said, the Nation specific methodology that I will focus comes from the *Nêhiyawak*, the ‘Four-Body People’. The Nêhiyawak are often referred to as the Plains Cree, though we prefer to term Nêhiyaw over colonial terminology.

*Nêhiyaw Kiskeyihtamowin*, Plains Cree Knowledges, is an epistemological approach presented by Kovach that has several characteristics including: Nation epistemology, decolonizing and ethical aim, researcher preparations involving cultural protocols, research preparation involving standard research design, making meaning of knowledges gathered, and giving back (Kovach 2009:46). The basis of this framework is in relation to *miyo*, meaning good, and is important for sharing and generosity, and for respect for the earth and all its life forms (Kovach 2009:63). *Miyo-wichetowin* is good relations and is the center of Nêhiyaw culture and the basis of ethical responsibility. Kovach presents a Nêhiyaw research framework through the Buffalo Hunt. The *paskwao-mostow*, buffalo, were the main stay of the Plains Nêhiyaw economy and an essential part of Nêhiyaw life. Peyasiw-awasis, Chief Thunderchild, shares a story that underlines Nêhiyaw methodology in relation to the buffalo:

“In the days when the buffalo were many, there were Old Men who had the gift of ‘making pounds.’ Poundmaker’s [one of the Chiefs of the Plains Cree] father was such a one, and he gave the name to his son. Another was Eyi-pa-chi-nas, and

when it was known that he was 'sitting at pound' – that he was seeking the supernatural power to bring the buffalo – hunters would gather.

One winter there were ten teepees, just for these hunters. Working all together, they cut trees to make a circular pound about seventy yards across... The gate was fourteen feet wide, and out from it they laid two long lines of tufted willows that spread farther and farther apart, to channel the buffalo into the pound. In the centre they set a great lobbed tree.

When everything was ready, other Old Men joined Eyi-pa-chinas and sang the buffalo song. Far on the plain, a herd of buffalo was sighted, and two young men rode out to watch. They were to blow whistles as soon as the buffalo started to move in the early morning... The buffalo came on between the lines of the wall and through the gate... Then the hunters closed in, and stopped the gateway with poles and buffalo robes.

We would cut up the meat till late at night, and haul it with dogs to the encampment... Other bands came to join us and to feast" (Ahenakew 1995:36 in Kovach 2009:64-65).

In this story we witness an underlying methodology that is "the preparation for research, preparation of the researcher, recognition of protocol (cultural and ethical), respectfulness, and sharing the knowledge (reciprocity)" (Kovach 2009:65). This is a context of how the Nêhiyaw people did

things, and an epistemological teaching. In order to get at the heart of Nation epistemology, we can relate to storytelling and the teachings within each narrative, and we can also find the cultural protocols within language.

Within *Nêhiyawêwin*, Plains Cree language, we witness how the Nêhiyawak related to their world. We can look at the animacy of animals, tobacco, rocks, trees, and rivers and understand why they are given respect and how wholism ties within Nêhiyaw concepts. English translations often do not convey the full context of the meaning, and as researchers we must be aware that "we are going to lose some of the meanings, and we are also going to change some of the meanings" (Hart in Kovach 2009:68). What we must remember is that a researcher does not need to be fluent in *Nêhiyawewin* but have an understanding of how language influences knowledge. This is an important and critical aspect of Nation epistemology since it speaks to other realms of knowing and the sacred. Sacred knowledge is difficult for Western researchers to accept and is quite often uncomfortable to them, since as Shawn Wilson demonstrates Nêhiyaw research is a ceremony, and the West has struggled to understand the metaphysical (2008:69).

Nêhiyaw ways of knowing are tied to the pipe, the songs, and prayer, and these are integral parts of ceremony. Treaty negotiations were conducted in a pipe ceremony, which is one of the most important ceremonies conducted since it involves spiritual beings and ancestors. How Nêhiyaw people come to know is linked to spiritual knowings and processes such as ceremonies, dreams, visions, and synchronicities (Kovach 2009). The emphasis of a Nêhiyaw epistemology is the importance of "respect, reciprocity, relation, protocol, holistic knowing, relevancy, story, interpretive meaning, and the experiential nested in place and kinship systems" (Kovach 2009:67).

With that said, there is no designated Nêhiyaw philosophy for how we come to know is a process in understanding our own being (Kovach 2009), and the research that is conducted within the Nêhiyaw culture is a learning journey that reflects the writer's experiences. Understanding Nêhiyaw custom and tradition is only the beginning of the whole experience a researcher will undergo, and often we fail to realize that though we may write a dissertation, a novel, or an article, we may not be leading that project and the universe has decided what we should or should not know. That is an important aspect of Indigenous and Nation research that is never accounted for in traditional western modes of knowledge-making.

Nêhiyawak methodologies offer new insights and cultural experiences for researchers, and are valuable to growth of Indigenous literature and study. This specific research framework puts the needs of the Nêhiyawak in the forefront of the research and allows for them to express how they understand and interact with the world around them. A Nation-specific methodology extends out of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies but at the same time has distinct goals it aims to achieve. The tensions that exist are those that the Nêhiyaw people must forward since it is their way of life being researched, their experiences within the constructs of colonialism, and know what ideologies and traditions are important for their own resurgence and well-being. Nation methodologies are based on the foundations of creation and incorporate the ontological knowledge linked to philosophies that make each Indigenous Nation distinct.

### *Conclusion: Moving Forward*

Indigenous peoples live within two worlds: one is rooted in culture and tradition, and the other is within the colonial indoctrination of the settler-nation state. Finding who we are is an important journey

of self-discovery, reclamation, and liberation, as we are often conflicted between who we feel we are inside and the society we find ourselves in. Nêhiyaw writers Shawn Wilson, Margaret Kovach, Neal McLeod, Michael Hart, and various others have written about their experiences in understanding who they are through their research. Together these scholars have reflected that the research we intend to do does not always follow what we plan because in there is an unaccounted-for element. Kovach points out "our culture, family, kin, kith, clan, and Nation wait for us. We have the right to know who we are, and that this right involves responsibilities – but there are people to help us out, that we are not alone" (2009:10). Often accounted for as skepticism or simply, the idea that "I do not see them so they cannot exist", is the spirits and ancestors that are within Indigenous research including the stories of our Elders who channel the same voice heard millennia ago. The ancestors that watch over our shoulder as we write down traditions and customs, and the other than human entities that witness our everyday actions and live around us and those who watch from the sky. There is a spiritual dimension that is incorporated in Indigenous studies, and for a scholar to experience this embodiment requires them to change the very essence of how they view and perceive the world.

This realization is an important aspect of epistemology, as I begin to understand my self-in-relation to the world, but importantly my role within my Nation. Crazy Bull states that "the most welcomed researcher is already a part of the community, ... understand[s] the history, needs, and sensibilities of the community ... focuses on solutions, and understands that research is a life-long process" (1997:19 in Louis 2007:131). Reflexivity is utilized within qualitative research approaches to reference the researcher's own self-reflection in the meaning-making process (Kovach 2009:32).

With the needs of my Nation in mind, I have thought extensively about my role as a Nation member and what I can contribute to academia as an anthropologist. We cannot change what happened in the past, but we cannot forget it either, it is important to acknowledge this in every aspect of Indigenous research and study, but it's also important to remember that these past injustices do not define who we are, who will become, and how we can redefine the society we are a part of and add to the discussion of *where do we go now?* How do we better these relationships, and how can we change our outlook and perspective about Indigenous peoples and their histories?

By incorporating Indigenous knowledge and relation to the universe, we allow for Indigenous peoples to be authors of their pasts, and we decolonize the systems that we are indoctrinated into. As Sylvia McAdam points out: "to begin decolonizing systems of the colonizer we will inevitably lead to a path of Indigenous self-determination, liberation, and freedom" (2015:36). Freedom from the constraints that impact our Nations and wellbeing is the ultimate goal within Indigenous research, something I like those before me have sought. Though there is still much work to be done; examining the differences and similarities between Indigenous, decolonizing, and Nation-specific methodologies allows researchers to be exposed to new ways of thinking and perceiving the world around us. What is fundamental to any Indigenous research is that Indigenous peoples must be the first priority of researchers since this is their history. Without them, there is no research. As Linda Tuhaiwi Smith (1999) points out, 'research' for Indigenous peoples is a dirty word because of past injustices by self-serving academics, and we need to change what research means for Indigenous peoples by incorporating how they continue intellectual traditions and cultural continuity.

Western academia often enacts 'methodological discrimination' that limits the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies, but in order to counter this view we need to increase the awareness of Indigenous inquiry and research (Ryen 2000:220 in Kovach 2009:13). As each methodology grows within Indigenous research and breaks down the borders of academic discourse, there is the hope that the voices of our ancestors will lead the discussion and change the very course of our world. I may not see it in my lifetime, but like those who have come before me, the prayers and tobacco have been said and laid down for the generations to come, and each step forward is for them.

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## **A Feeling in Their Bones: Issues of Deciphering Animal Ritual in the Archaeological Record among the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree**

**Arwen M. Johns**

### *Abstract*

*Whether religion and ritual are elements of past cultures that can be studied effectively by archaeologists has divided experts for some time within the discipline. This paper examines specific animal rituals from two mobile hunter gatherer groups from Canada's North, the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, in relation to Colin Renfrew's 1985 book *The Archaeology of Cult*. In this paper I seek to demonstrate that the archaeological concepts and methods put forth in Renfrew's (1985) work, related to analyzing religious and ritual contexts in large scale sedentary societies, cannot be neatly applied to Northern mobile hunter gatherer groups because of the nature of their movements across the landscape and their unique ritual relationships with animals. By going into detail describing, and subsequently analyzing the practical implications of the animal rituals and beliefs held by the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, it is my goal to call more attention to the archaeological study of small scale mobile societies and their ritual practices that defy conventional methodologies for discerning and analyzing ritual in the archaeological record.*

### *Introduction*

It has been a long held view by some that archaeology is inherently unsuited to address religion and ritual due to its focus on material culture (Rowan 2011). However this is changing, and with the responsible usage of ethnographic and historical documents more archaeologists are beginning to see the

potential to understand ritual through their work (Insoll 2004; Kyriakidis 2007). Fogelin (2007:56) notes that this is, and should be, a multidisciplinary undertaking, with viewpoints from cultural anthropology, religious studies, and sociology being incorporated into the interpretations put forth by archaeologists in an effort to theorize the material outcomes of intangible aspects of culture.

With this information in hand, archaeologists such as Barrowclough and Malone (2007) and Whitley and Hays-Gilpin (2008), now believe it is possible to do the archaeology of religion and ritual, and there has been movement away from referring to all material viewed as religious in nature as only being strange and/or non-functional. This new shift in focus has brought to the fore studies on domestic, or small-scale ritual, that suggest religious and secular rituals are not mutually exclusive, leading us to question how ordinary objects and actions become ritualized in the first place (Fogelin 2007). As I will demonstrate though, using both Renfrew's (1985) *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, and case studies from the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree of Canada's Northeastern Subarctic, theories of ritual cannot be readily applied to different spatial and temporal contexts without encountering both theoretical and interpretive problems. While addressing these issues is the main focus of this paper, I will also revisit Durkheim's (1995) notion of the sacred and the profane, focusing on the grey area between these two representations.

### *Background*

It should be noted that Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree cultural groups are still in existence today, and that their lifeways have changed since the writings of the ethnographies utilized for this paper. There are still continuities though, each group still possessing an intimate relationship with the

variable environments they now occupy and the animals they share them with. I would like to make it explicit that the information regarding the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree describes lifeways that existed before these groups were forcibly settled in communities by missionaries and government programs (which in some cases was only a few decades ago). Finally, as with the use of any historical documents and ethnographic data, interpretations must be made with caution. It has been shown repeatedly that these documents can be unreliable accounts, often shedding more light on colonial bias than the true nature of the cultural traditions recorded.

For the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree groups, the relationship between themselves and animals had become intensely ritualized at the time of Henriksen's (2010) and Tanner's (1979) ethnographies, but the past composition and lifeways of these groups makes doing "their archaeology" much more difficult. They were highly mobile, with many of their animal rituals fixated on lack of waste, and their ideology permeating all aspects of their societies. This makes the ritual context all the more important in these cases, because it is often the only way to distinguish between secular and religiously used artifacts and animal remains. Caribou were very important for these groups (especially the Naskapi Innu), and will be of primary focus here. I will examine elements of animal rituals from both the Naskapi Innu and the Eastern Cree, and discuss how these may appear in the archaeological record, if in fact they do at all, in the context of Renfrew's work *The Archaeology of Cult* (1985), which deals with locating religion and ritual during excavation at a Bronze Age town called Phylakopi on the island of Melos.

It has been theorized (Hawkes 1954:161) that claims about the religious and spiritual life of past peoples are the hardest inferences to make of all, implying that the belief systems are almost inaccessible via the

archaeological record. Others like Renfrew (1985) believe that there is nothing problematic about this matter because ancient peoples created many monuments which we can easily identify as religious. As I will demonstrate however, this does not apply so readily to most mobile hunter gatherer groups, who leave comparatively few traces on the landscape. Renfrew (1985:1) would have us believe that the real issue is not the lack of material, or difficulty in recognizing it, but that few have even attempted to develop a methodological approach to the subject. I believe Renfrew's work, while valuable when dealing with large-scale sedentary societies, has comparatively less merit when examining small-scale hunting and gathering groups like the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree. I will discuss the reasons for this in relation to some of the types of animal rituals being performed.

Humans feel the need to materialize the intangible, leading religion to often be expressed through performance which leaves its mark in the archaeological record in the form of ritual paraphernalia, iconography, and sacred spaces (Rowan 2011:1). This makes archaeology an appropriate avenue for studying religious beliefs. According to Durkheim (1995) the sacred is idealized and part of a transcendent and often dangerous realm, including things like religious beliefs and rituals. Objects that have been deemed sacred are often separated from the "everyday" profane realm, which Durkheim (1995) viewed as capable of contaminating the sacred. When the line between the sacred and profane becomes blurred however, things become more difficult to disentangle because ritual and mundane activities become interconnected. This is one of the primary problems when trying to decipher the remains of animal rituals conducted by these subarctic hunter-gatherer groups because butchery, consumption, and disposal of the remains, could be at once a ritual and an everyday

activity. Animal rituals are more susceptible to interpretive issues because the majority of zooarchaeological assemblages are fragmented and heavily impacted by taphonomy, which previously led to a focus on only certain types of deposits (namely articulated animal remains that appear to have been buried as part of ritual, where human intervention in deposition is obvious) (Davis 1987). This narrow focus on animal remains from particular contexts has led to the further conceptual division between sacred and domestic spaces, which is problematic when trying to take a holistic view of animal use in ritual (Angelo 2014).

I will begin now by outlining the similarities between Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree ideology before delving into the mechanics of a few of their rituals and how they are translated in the archaeological record. As well, I will critically examine how useful Renfrew's (1985) work is in this interpretive context with this specific culture type.

#### *Naskapi Innu and Cree Belief Systems – A General Overview:*

Irimoto and Yamada's suggest in *Circumpolar Religion and Ecology: An Anthropology of the North* (1994:50) that generally there are two elements that go hand-in-hand in Northern hunter gatherer cultures, the first being personal (private) rituals for the daily killing of animals and secondly, subsistence oriented around animals. The authors go on to postulate that there may be a functional correlation between the two, because for these groups survival depends on animal foods and many aspects of life are focused on their procurement. Hill (2011) argues that this heavy reliance on animals had led many Northern groups to view animals as "other-than-human persons", imbuing them with a sense of agency, and other human characteristics. As a result, for the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree,

interactions with animals take on a dynamic and depth that transcend Western understanding. Western cultures, broadly speaking, often see animals as objects, so it is important to be able to see past these conceptions in order to take the artifacts (in this case animal remains) and to look at their deeper symbolic and ritual meaning accorded to them by the relevant cultural group. Significance and meaning are socially constructed, so it is the job of the archaeologists to find its contextualized material expression.

Caribou and other prey animals were viewed as especially powerful, with many similarities to humans, and as a result they were afforded a special position within the worldviews of many Northern populations, ranging from the eastern to western Arctic and Subarctic regions (Hill 2011). Interactions with animals were based on a foundation of mutual respect and ideals of reciprocity, with animals and humans fulfilling obligations to one another for fear of punishment. Irimoto and Yamada (1994:51) report that there is enough data to demonstrate that ritual taboos were used as non-physical tools essential for the successful exploitation of animals, which were viewed as supernatural beings. Prey animals were seen as being obliged to "give" themselves to hunters that acted properly by treating their remains with respect and who lived in accordance with all taboos, so it should not be surprising that animal ritual taboos were a salient aspect of both Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree culture. Each group believed that if taboos surrounding the treatment of the flesh and bones of the animal were broken they would secure no more of that particular species. The animal spirits would know they had been disrespected, and would no longer cooperate in reciprocal relationships with the hunters (Henriksen 2010). There were many sanctions, some of which included rules about how animal products were to be shared

equally among families to further reinforce the relatively egalitarian nature of these societies (Feit 1995). Potter (1997:353) notes that in groups without strong leadership (like the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree as a result of their egalitarian values), communal rituals and sharing were key integrating forces, providing a sense of social cohesion between small-scale groups and family units.

Animal rituals characteristic of Northern hunter gatherer groups commonly contain three elements: bringing home of game animals, rituals to honor the animals, and lastly ritual disposal of the remains (Irimoto and Yamada 1994:54). For the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, the ritual disposal of bones involved placing them on platforms, in trees, or hanging the bones from the limbs of trees, which preservation allowing, is something archaeologists can recover. The preservation of bones in northern areas can be exceptional, but in cases where they are hung or left above ground, bones would be vulnerable to a number of taphonomic factors related to weather and scavengers who may displace the bones from their original ritualized context.

Potter (1997:354) writes that determining to what degree different aspects of communal ritual were emphasised in certain cultures is a question that may be answered in part by determining how accessible such rituals really were to *all* members of the communities. Particularly suited to this type of question is zooarchaeological data, which when used in conjunction with other lines of evidence (material remains including ritual paraphernalia), can help establish where ritual occurred most frequently within a community. That being said, locational consistency is a problem with the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree because of their high levels of mobility. Even if the context of the ritual was the same in each camp (say a specific hunter's tent), the location may only be used once at a given campsite, making it

much harder to recognize the repetitive nature that is often attributed to ritual. The next section of this paper will deal with how bones are treated in specific, albeit highly similar, rituals among the Naskapi Innu and Cree.

#### *Bone Treatment in Rituals – Scapulimancy and Ritual Feasting:*

The remains of animals are often excavated from numerous contexts on an archaeological site, such as middens, burials, house-floors, and as isolated bones, in the cases of the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree however, ritually significant bones can be found on platforms or hanging from trees (Hill 2013). Most animals, generally, are found in a state of disarticulation and in a non-burial context, which can hinder analysis of whether they were ritually significant or not. However, the unique ritual deposition recorded historically and in modern ethnographic accounts for these groups helps mitigate this problem. Bones found on platforms or hung in trees were usually displayed near the kill site or at camp, and because of their “special” context, are far less likely to have their ritual importance overlooked, or to be taken as everyday refuse (Speck 1935). A problem may arise because the Naskapi Innu and Cree believed *all* animal remains needed to be treated in accordance with taboos, so we are forced to ask where best to draw the line between secular and religiously associated remains, if a line can be drawn at all. We cannot effectively exclude any remains from being involved in ritual, so the best we can hope for is to find bones in specific, unmistakable ritual contexts, so as to be sure of the ritual nature of the remains at least in these special circumstances. This too can be problematic because it forces us to categorize and create dichotomy between ritual and domestic space that may not truly have existed in the minds of the individuals we study (Angelo 2014).

### *Scapulimancy – A Form of Divination*

To facilitate the reception of messages from the spirit world is the goal of all divination in general terms, and the materials these messages are transmitted through must be treated with the proper respect (Tanner 1979). For the divination method of scapulimancy, practiced by both the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, the transmitter of such messages was a scapula (shoulder blade) of a specific animal. This type of divination was part of a linked set of rituals related to humans' relationships with animals, because in each case it was animal bones being manipulated to facilitate action on the part of the hunters, and bones that were displayed for the spirits in thanks (Tanner 1979: 12). The use of symbolically potent caribou bones in distinctive divination rituals may make this practice easier to distinguish in the archaeological record. Scapulimancy divination was practiced in different contexts among the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, but the treatment of the bones was the same, as well as their intentions of facilitating a connection between themselves and spirits.

For the Naskapi Innu, the scapula was viewed as the most "truthful" of animal bones and before it could be used for purposes of divination it had to be properly prepared (Moore 1957: 72). This involved stripping all meat from the bone, which was then boiled, cleaned, and hung to dry, before a small piece of wood was split and attached to form a handle at the neck of the scapula (Moore 1957: 70). Speck (1935) noted that the type of bone used was also highly significant, and hunters were better served by using bones from the animals they were seeking. The Naskapi Innu almost exclusively used caribou scapula in their divination because this was the animal they most often desired to hunt. The scapula had to be held in a certain position during the ritual, usually in reference to the local environment so it could be

regarded as a blank chart of the group's hunting territory at a given time. The ritual involved holding the scapula by the handle over hot coals until the heat caused dark burn marks (usually spots) and cracks, which could then be interpreted (Moore 1957). No one had control over the results of the burning, so the ritual effectively removed the responsibility from one individual if the group was unsuccessful in hunting, making it an unbiased randomizing device (Moore 1957:71). It was reported to Henriksen (2010) during his field work, that this type of divination was only undertaken during times of extreme uncertainty over where to best look for caribou. Essentially the ritual mobilized them to hunt during times of food shortage and crisis that could otherwise increase indecision and caused even greater danger of starvation.

During his fieldwork Tanner (1979) noted four different kinds of scapulimancy (*mitunsaawaakan*) practiced by the Mistassini Cree. All of these methods used porcupine scapula and each was conducted to reveal a particular future event, making it somewhat different from what was practiced among the Naskapi Innu. In the past, caribou scapulae were preferred, but at the time of Tanner's fieldwork the people did not regard anyone as possessing sufficient power to use them after their last shaman died, demonstrating how powerful caribou were. In line with this preference, large scapulae have been viewed as especially powerful and valuable, and in most cases were hung separately in a tree and not laid on the bone platforms with the rest of the remains (Tanner 1979:123). These large elements were commonly reserved for use in only the most dire of situations, and in some cases could be used in multiple rituals within a single day.

The burning of the scapula largely followed the method of the Naskapi Innu, with one minor difference being that the bone was at times hung from the frame of a

snowshoe and then burned to represent a nearing journey. After each burning, the bone was taken around by a child to each tent so all members of the group could view the results and draw their own conclusions, though interpretations followed a general pattern (Tanner 1979). The inedible parts of animals were still thought to possess the animal's spirit, and often hunters were viewed talking to the scapula during the ritual, asking the spirit to fly around the land, reporting back what they saw (Tanner 1979:130).

### *Ritual Feasting*

The way ritual feasts were conducted by both groups is similar. Usually there was a single leader for each gathering who ensured everything went as planned and was in accordance with taboos; cleanliness and lack of waste were of paramount concern. In both cases the animals were processed and cooked on mats to ensure any scraps could be disposed of in the proper manner, and none of the remains were fed to the dogs (Tanner 1979; Henriksen 2010). Even the inedible parts of the animals had to be accounted for, and collected to be burnt in the stove on which the meal was prepared. This extreme caution was exercised because it was believed that starvation may have resulted if an individual misstepped and disrespected the animals during the course of the feasting rituals. For the Mistassini Cree, it was reported that the most sacred parts of the animals such as the cranium, scapula, and antlers, were given to specific hunters to be displayed in trees, while others were made into tools.

The feast was called *Mokoshan* for the Naskapi Innu, and it was held only to please the caribou spirit (*katipinimitaoch*) to ensure luck in future hunts (Henriksen 2010:35). It can be viewed as the expression of their willingness to complete obligations to the caribou, with everyone in camp taking part either directly or indirectly. The male hunters

occupied central roles, and boys who had killed their first caribou were permitted attendance to the processing, whereas women and younger children were allowed in only later to eat with their husbands and fathers (Henriksen 2010). All bones were scraped clean of even the tiniest morsel of meat, and long bones were smashed to extract the marrow, and then pounded into paste to be boiled. The fat clumps and the broth were saved for consumption and the remaining bone fragments were burned in the stove (Henriksen 2010). It was not uncommon during *Mokoshan* for as many as thirty caribou to be processed for one feasting event.

### *Implications for the Archaeological Record – Why Renfrew's Work Cannot Be Applied to Mobile Hunter Gatherers*

Before moving into a critique of Renfrew's *The Archaeology of Cult* (1985), I will clarify and comment on some aspects of ritual mentioned above in relation to their incorporation into the archaeological record. For both the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, the bones of animals had to be treated in a certain way during butchery. Bones were generally not allowed to be broken during the initial process, and members of these groups were very skilled in butchering animals, learning to strike between the joints to limit the amount of damage inflicted on the bones in order to show the greatest amount of respect for the carcass (Speck 1935:123). Due to the fact that all animals were ritually treated in this way, it is of no use to archaeologists to examine the bones for significant evidence of differential treatment during butchery that could be expected when animals are being used for either purely secular or ritual purposes. The patterns of butchery left on bones may vary depending on the "style", skill, and experience of the individual doing the butchering. The ritual treatment of all animals in relation to the



taboos against dogs having access to the remains also precludes looking for evidence of digestion on the bones as an indicator of the use of the animal. The Naskapi Innu according to Speck (1935), believed that animals find it terribly debasing to be gnawed on by dogs, and that the use of dogs to hunt effectively betrayed them by granting humans an unfair advantage.

The sheer scale of ritual feasts like *Mokoshan* give hope that we may be able to determine the ritual nature of a hearth deposit based on the exceptional number of bones alone, but I caution against such optimism. I find it reasonable to suspect that if hunters went to such trouble to collect every scrap, they would be equally as careful ensuring that fragments burned in the stoves were mostly, if not completely, destroyed. Breakage, burning, and other processing methods also would weaken bones, causing them to be more vulnerable to taphonomic processes, leading to further preservation issues.

Renfrew (1985) states that identification, excavation, and interpretation of ceremonial centres is one of the most challenging undertakings in archaeology, and that nothing can safely be assumed by the excavator because there is no larger body of theory governing the archaeology of religion. While there have been advances in the study of ritual archaeology since his writing, I would still tend to agree that there is not, and perhaps cannot be, such an overarching theory of ritual archaeology without ignoring specific cultural context and abandoning relativism. Renfrew (1985) disagrees with archaeologists who rely mainly on ethnographic documents to draw conclusions about ritual components of sites, rather than being confident in what the archaeological record tells them. This is not to say that he devalues or does not advocate for using ethnographic and historical data, he simply suggests that these resources should not be used as crutches by archaeologists. I would

counter this by stating that realistically, due to the nature of the animal rituals of the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree, we would not be able to infer much about their religious practices if we were solely, or even mostly, to rely on data from the archaeological record. This is because so much of their rituals related directly to subsistence and may not be recognized as ritual as a result, and *Mokoshan* is a relevant example here. Rarely would an archaeologist's first thought upon finding bones in a hearth, be that they were used in a ritual, because of their stereotypically mundane nature. Without the special context afforded by bone platforms or hanging in trees, there is no way of deciphering which remains were used for what purposes without referring to the ethnographic literature to give us a starting point (luckily there is extensive ethnographic and historical documentation of these groups). As mentioned earlier in the paper however, these accounts must be used with a certain amount of caution for reasons related to colonial and modern ethnographic bias, unintentional or otherwise. Renfrew (1985:11) defines religion as follows:

“[...]Action or conduct indicating a belief in, or reverence for, and desire to please, a divine ruling power...Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship”.

Renfrew views this definition as especially useful because it distinguishes between belief and cult, faith and practice. Such distinctions are not so easily made among northern hunter gatherer groups, for whom all actions are related in some way to their belief system, making their landscape and interactions therein especially sacred.

Domestic or “everyday” ritual is never easy to recognize archaeologically according to Renfrew (1985:15), but he feels secure in stating that it will usually depend on the interpretation of “special” places where ritual conventionally occurs, or of equipment (paraphernalia), designated for use during the course of ritual. This is the part of *The Archaeology of Cult* (1985) that I find to be the most inapplicable when dealing with most mobile hunter gatherers, especially Northern groups like the Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree. For these groups, the places where rituals occur are transient in the landscape, and rituals mostly take place within what would be considered the domestic sphere, with no way to distinguish between sacred and secular space (with the exceptions of bones hung in tree stands which are seen as protective and significant places on the landscape). Without the ethnographic and historical record, we would be hard pressed to recognize many Naskapi Innu and Eastern Cree ritual elements, for example the burnt scapula used in divination, commonly given to children as a toy as was recorded with the Mistassini Cree. Renfrew (1985) also believes that for the best interpretive results, we should limit the discussion to evidence from a single site, with no reference to other examples, and to a period of just a few years. This is not possible in the cases of mobile Northern hunting and gathering groups, who move multiple times in a season, reducing occupation length in one location to nothing close to the years that Renfrew views as ideal for interpretation.

Renfrew does recognize in *The Archaeology of Cult* (1985) that it is not impossible for ritual to be conducted within a domestic unit, and that the location of ritual itself does not define it as domestic or communal; this is defined by the degree of community participation. As was demonstrated above, this is most often the case for the Naskapi and Cree, where ritual

feasts take place in a hunter’s tent, and Renfrew admits that these situations are considerably more problematic, although he only mentions them in passing. He makes the suggestion that to better recognize these domestic ritual spaces, we should focus on house units because they are easily compared to others across a site or region. Once again however, this is not applicable to Northern hunter gatherer groups, who lived in temporary shelters that leave little behind in the archaeological record. As well, their taboos against wasting animal products makes it even less likely that there will be much refuse to be found marking the location of a tent.

I do agree with Renfrew (1985) when he states that context is everything, because single indications of ritual action are rarely enough evidence to make confident judgements, and this is especially true for the material being dealt with here: natural objects with symbolic significance. As well, he notes that sacred places for ritual do not have to be man-made, and can include a number of natural features on the landscape, with emphasis only on the permanent nature of these spaces. I believe this is important for all archaeologists to keep in mind, and it may be especially relevant to the Naskapi Innu who commonly made their camps in the barrens near stands of trees, which were also used in ritual during bone hanging. I stress though, that whether these were even permanent locations for this group is questionable, because surely these areas were used more than once by different families over the years, but they were not a location that was usable on a regular basis because of their mobility in search of caribou.

### Conclusion

With all of the above issues taken into account I believe that it is a reasonable conclusion that, while Renfrew’s *The Archaeology of Cult* (1985) is a suitable

resource for consultation regarding methods for recognizing ritual in large-scale sedentary societies, it is a poor reference for those looking to examine the ritual remains left by mobile hunting and gathering groups. All of the elements listed by Renfrew as making sites good candidates for this type of analysis are not present in any meaningful way for mobile, small-scale societies. With more work in specific spatial-temporal-cultural areas that ensures all aspects of the archaeological record of hunter gatherer groups and beyond can be properly investigated, new doors will be opened by archaeologists with regional ritual theoretical orientations.

#### Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Chris Ellis, who encouraged me to write this paper even when I was unsure of my ability to synthesize a remarkably small, but hugely fascinating body of knowledge. Also a big thank you to my family and friends for their tireless editing and support.

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## **The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology Volume 24 – 2015/2016**

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**CO-EDITORS: Jordon Munizzi and Paulina Reghan Johnson**

ISSN (Print): 1203-8830

ISSN (Online): 1925-8542

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