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INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP:
A TALKING-CIRCLE DIALOGUE WITH CREE LEADERS

by

JULIA L. BUCHANAN

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy
University of San Diego

May, 2010

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Abstract

The study of leadership is gaining popularity as evidenced by the increasing number of leadership development programs in both corporate and academic environments. Therefore, the way that leadership is defined becomes important. Unfortunately, the majority of literature on leadership emphasizes a Eurocentric or Western perspective.

This study explored the leadership-related thinking and practices embraced by a First Nations population in Canada: nehiyawak or the Cree people. As the research evolved, the study also ended up exploring both cultural differences with respect to knowledge and knowing and the ethical issues involved with permitting non-native researchers to study native groups. The latter issue arose because of the exploitation that indigenous groups have experienced when working with mainstream-culture researchers in the past.

The proposal for the study indicated that the study would be built around qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and the largely inductive, coding-based analysis process commonly used in qualitative research. These pre-defined strategies were modified during the course of the study to ensure that the research was a collaborative effort between the Western researcher and the First Nations group that agreed to participate in the study. Procedures also were intentionally modified to reflect the recommendations of an emerging literature on indigenous methodology. Group members were familiar with this literature and viewed the methods described in it as strategies for reclaiming their group's traditional ways of knowing.

The study revealed that the Indigenous nation that participated in the study is in a process of resistance, self determination and healing from the wounds of genocide. The study also demonstrated that the Western tendency to associate leadership with hierarchy and positional power is radically different than the relational and interconnection-oriented view of leadership that is traditional in Cree culture. Even more contemporary Western literature that emphasizes collaboration and a more relational view of leadership differs, in significant ways, from Cree ways of leadership which encompass an alignment of one's mind, spirit, and body, as well as the regular engagement in ceremony.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Native people and First Nations' populations of Turtle Island. My hope is that this work will create understanding and form relationships which promote respect and caring.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge help from above and give thanks to the Lord and Creator for providing the energy and a soft heart that is open to learning.

I would like to thank the members of the Cree Nation that so generously shared of their time and energy: Pat and Leona, Sharon, Vincent, William, Lana, Brent, Marilyn, Kîskeyikaniskwew, Bernadine, Janice, James, Eugene, the Elders, the Golden Girls, and many more that reached out to share and who also welcomed me into their community.

I would also like to thank the members of the dissertation committee for lending their support to a dissertation that is unique and a design that has allowed for researching *with* members of an Indigenous nation.

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Chapter One
An Overview of the Study
Background to the Study

In recent years leadership programs have grown in corporate environments and in institutions of higher learning (Brungardt and Gould, 2001). Unfortunately, much of the literature on leadership development and the bulk of program content in both the corporate and academic worlds reflect cultural perspectives that are predominantly Eurocentric. Even the more collaborative and relational views of leadership that have emerged in the Leadership Studies field in recent years (See, for example, Rost, 1993; Lipman-Blumen, 1996; Wheatley, 2008) appear to be grounded in Western experience and seem to reflect a Western sensibility.

In short, leadership programs emphasize what is sometimes referred to as a Western view of leadership. There is, consequently, an exclusion of and insensitivity to models of leadership that have originated in and/or are currently utilized by Indigenous populations and a kind of institutionalized ethnocentrism within the academic field of Leadership Studies.

Problem Statement

Indeed, because the majority of published literature on leadership presents predominantly a Western perspective, it is difficult to even compare and contrast the views of leadership emphasized in formal leadership development programs and in the popular and academic literature on leadership, on the one hand, and the approaches to leadership employed by Indigenous groups, on the other. Except for a few notable contributions (Bryant, 1998; Makokis, 2001; McLeod, 2002; Ottman, 2005) there is little

in the academic literature that explicates the different views and approaches to leadership that are found in Indigenous cultures. Due to this lack of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous views of leadership, such views are excluded from most leadership academic programs. This exclusion undermines efforts to understand Indigenous perceptions of leadership and may contribute to a greater divide between mainstream and Indigenous populations. Consequently, there is a need to add to the limited storehouse of studies that describe non-mainstream leadership “theories” and approaches to exercising and developing leadership (Mellahi, 2000).

Purpose of the Study/Research Questions

The purpose of the study being reported here was to respond to the need articulated above. Specifically, the study explored a native or Indigenous¹ community’s understanding and practice of leadership. More specifically, the study focused on the leadership-related perspectives and practices found in the Blue Quills First Nation College in Canada.

The study initially was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do the participants from an Indigenous culture say about how leadership is defined, developed or practiced in their culture?
2. What factors do the participants believe are essential to the survival and development of their communities and/or nations and how do these concepts, ideas and strategies relate to the group’s views of leadership?
3. What do members of Indigenous cultures say about the influence of the dominant culture’s views of leadership and how leadership is conceptualized and practiced in their Indigenous cultural groups?

The above questions were modified during the study at the request of the Indigenous group that agreed to participate in the study. There will be more about the modifications and the reasons they were requested in later chapters.

The Background, Problem and Purpose One More Time...

From a More Personal Perspective

What has been written thus far represents a discourse style that is typical of dissertation writing in the West. It is nearly identical to what I wrote in my proposal before I did the study that will be reported here. Doing the study, however, has changed me in significant ways. Because of this, I want to rewrite what I have just written in a more personal way, a way that I have come to believe is no less valid or legitimate than the rather impersonal discussion in the prior three sections.

My interest in Indigenous views of leadership as a dissertation topic was encouraged as much by a pilot study I did for a qualitative methods course in my doctoral programs as it was by the sort of gap analysis I articulated at the start of this paper. As part of that study, I interviewed a Native American masters student. Among other things, he told me that he could never recognize his life experiences or the experiences of the tribal group he was a part of in his professors and classmates discussions of leadership. It was as if the leadership studies program he had enrolled in existed on a totally different planet that had virtually nothing to say about the place where he lived. What was especially disturbing to me was that he indicated he had constantly been corrected when he spoke up and told that he was wrong. His view of leadership, he was told, could not be construed as leadership. I had a visceral response to all of this and vowed, then, that I would attempt, in my dissertation research, to give voice to at least one Indigenous group.

In short, passion was just as important as my heady analysis of gaps in the literature in leading me to this topic. Of course, because I had been well-schooled, I had learned to disguise my passion and write the sort of discourse found in the first three sections of this chapter.

Other personal experiences also led me to my topic. I conducted my class-assignment interview study with a Native American masters degree student, for example, in part, because of my earlier experiences living and working on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Because I had moved from the mainland, I did not know many Native Hawaiians. As I became more familiar with the local people, and worked with them in the community, I also came to understand more about the people and the incredible hospitality of Hawaiian culture. I also learned about the history of Hawaii; especially the role of the U.S. government in the takeover of Hawaii and the contemporary push for Hawaiian sovereignty.

Through learning Hula (traditional Hawaiian dance), I was taught about Hawaiian culture and the values of Aloha (i.e., the Hawaiian world view or philosophy). This and other experiences while living and working in Hawaii have left a lasting impression on me especially because of the authenticity, generosity and humor of Hawaiian people.

Since my time in Hawaii, I have had a desire to learn more about and understand Indigenous cultures. This desire to learn more has also led to the realization that Indigenous peoples in the United States have frequently been treated unjustly.

My interest in Indigenous approaches to leadership, in particular, was piqued by talking with a colleague at the higher education institution where I work who told me that he was really “surprised” by their experiences working with tribal leadership on a project.

When I asked why, he answered, “They do things differently; they worked in ways I didn’t expect. Many of their decisions needed to be referred back to the council or group before they could agree to something. I expected them to have a person in charge that could sign things.”

These comments initially led me to the literature, but I quickly discovered that there was very little written about Indigenous views of leadership. I did not even find much literature on any aspect of Indigenous life, but, in the course of the study that will be presented here, I discovered that the problem was not so much a lack of literature but rather my not knowing where to look. In addition, two major works on Indigenous research methods were published as this dissertation was being completed. Thus, for a variety of reasons, this may be one of the few dissertation studies in which the study framed the literature review rather than vice versa.

Even though I could not satiate my intellectual curiosity about Indigenous cultures, in general, and Indigenous views of leadership, in particular, I found myself increasingly being emotionally drawn to the topic. For example, each time that I would consider this topic further, I would experience an unexpected emotional or visceral reaction. For instance, while attending a talk by a Native American professor, I began to tear up for no “logical” reason, an unusual reaction for me that indicated something that I wanted to understand.

On another occasion, I was sitting by myself on my couch at home reflecting on what I would be asking of Indigenous participants if I decided to do a study of them and their views about leadership. By then I had come to realize that, if I pursued this dissertation topic, I would be doing research with people that had really suffered and at

times still do. No sooner had I concluded that I should abandon my topic and choose another issue to investigate then I spied a flyer on my coffee table that a Native professor had given me. The flyer was for a Pow Wow to be held that very day in a nearby park. I thought maybe I should go check out this Pow Wow, even I would not be studying the group that would be participating in the Pow Wow. I left my house, drove to Balboa Park, parked and was dancing with Native people in less than ten minutes. I was so moved by the experience that I reversed the decision about my dissertation topic that I had made only a few hours earlier.

I am not suggesting that there was something mystical that led me to the dissertation topic, though I am fairly certain that the First Nation group I studied would have no trouble concluding this. What I am saying, however, is that my reason for tackling the problem I did was not as antiseptic as the rhetoric in the first three sections of this chapter would suggest. Because Indigenous people have deeply touched my heart, and therefore my thinking, I have asked to engage in research with them.

Even as I did this, I have tried to be mindful that I am an outsider. I am a Caucasian with mostly European lineage raised in a mainstream rural-suburban American community. My people are Germans who lived in Russia as farmers and also Scottish and Welsh people that eventually worked as farmers and teachers in the southern part of United States before moving West to California. I also knew something else before I began this study and know it even better as a result of doing this study: I am not only “the other” from an Indigenous perspective; I am a very privileged “other.” I have tried to be especially mindful of this “reality” and have attempted to remain in relational accountability with members of the Native nation that I research with in order to work in

a way that is ethical, respectful and reflects true integrity.

There will be much more about relational accountability throughout this dissertation. Now, however, it is probably time to be a proper doctoral student, once again, and discuss, albeit briefly, the study's methodology and its limitations and significance.

Research Methods: A Brief Overview

The research methods that were scheduled to be employed are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Here it is sufficient to note that the proposal for the study indicated that the study would be built around qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and the largely inductive, coding-based analysis process commonly used in qualitative research. These pre-defined strategies were modified during the course of the study to ensure that the research was a collaborative effort between the Western researcher and the First Nation group that agreed to participate in the study. Procedures also were intentionally modified to reflect the recommendations of an emerging literature on Indigenous methodology. Group members were familiar with this literature and viewed the methods described in it as strategies for reclaiming their group's traditional ways of knowing. A detailed discussion of the modifications that were made in the initial research design can be found at the end of Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Limitations and Significance of the Study

Because this study involves interview subjects from one geographic location, one cultural group, and, in fact, only one organization, there is no intention to generalize findings in a traditional scientific sense to other persons in similar settings. Even different Indigenous groups who, by virtue of their shared experiences, often share some common

characteristics also always exhibit idiosyncratic characteristics. In short, the term *Indigenous* is used to refer to numerous populations in many places, each with their own socially constructed understanding of leadership. Consequently, the way that leadership is depicted in this study may not be true or relevant to other cultures also referred to as Indigenous, First Nations or Native.

On the other hand, the perspectives and approaches to inquiry documented in this dissertation can have tremendous heuristic value, if only because the current literature of non-Western views of leadership is so limited. According to Donmoyer (1990), much of the learning in qualitative research “develops experientially [and] can be categorized more as meaning making than as hypothesis generation and testing” (p.189); therefore generalizability (as that term has traditionally been defined) to other populations is not the purpose. Rather, the goal is to enlarge the understanding of a social phenomenon and socially developed constructs such as the construct of *leadership*. Donmoyer (1991) characterizes this development of understanding as a form of *psychological* generalization.

This study, in fact, broadens the understanding of leadership, including how it is defined, constructed and developed in populations that may be on the margins of mainstream society and, consequently, not given much attention in the academic literature on leadership. The findings of this study may contribute to a broader definition and the use of a more informed lens when examining how leadership is understood and defined across a pluralistic society.

To summarize, because of the dearth of literature on leadership in Indigenous cultures, especially in academia, many may fall prey to allowing the dominant culture to

define leadership even when the operative definitions are inadequate or even possibly dysfunctional. In fact, it is difficult for those without extensive experiences working in Indigenous cultural settings to even recognize cultural differences. The longevity of Indigenous cultures and the economic growth evident in recent years in at least some Native and First Nations communities suggest that Indigenous cultural groups like the one reported on here may have something to offer the modern world that might benefit from experimenting with different ways to think about and enact leadership.

The Remainder of This Dissertation

The next chapter reviews the literature that served as the foundation for this study. Chapter Three describes the study's initial research design.

The fourth chapter is billed as one of the dissertation's two findings chapters. It reconstructs the long process of getting access to a group to be part of the study and the insights and understandings that were developed in the course of the access process. This chapter also reviews new literature that, in most cases, was provided by the research participants and describes how this literature led to the modification of the research design to make it more reflective of the sort of Indigenous research methods valued by the participants.

The second findings chapter recounts what happened when the Indigenous research method of the talking circle was used to explore the groups thinking about and approaches to leadership. This dissertation's final chapter provides a personal reflection on what I learned from the study and the implications of the learning for teaching about leadership.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Northouse (2007), has stated, “As soon as we try to define leadership, we immediately discover that leadership has many different meanings” (p. 2). In fact, leadership has been defined in numerous ways in the literature and the search for a definition continues due to the complexity of the phenomena being defined (Rost, 1993; Goethals and Sorenson, 2006). In order to progress toward a conception of leadership that can serve as a foundation for this study, this review will focus first, on Western views of leadership and then on what is known about Native and First Nation’s perspectives.

Before proceeding, I should note that the literature in this chapter was also discussed in the proposal for this dissertation research. I did encounter additional exceedingly relevant and very useful literature during the course of doing the study. Since this literature was given to me by members of the Indigenous group I was researching with, however, I have decided to discuss the additional literature in the findings section of this dissertation.

Western Views of Leadership

The literature on Western views of leadership is voluminous. Consequently, this review will focus on more contemporary perspectives that appear to be at least somewhat consistent with Native and First Nations perspectives. The review will not cover (a) the Great Man Theory (also sometimes referred to as the hero model of leadership) which examined how great men led in order to emulate their actions (Sorenson, 2000, p.4); (b) the traits and behaviors view which attempted to use social science research to identify factors associated with leadership effectiveness (Stogdill, 1974; Kouzes and Posner,

2002; Covey, 1991); (c) contingency and situational views of leadership that focused attention on using the context and the maturity or readiness of followers as a cue for selecting leadership behaviors (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; Fiedler, 1995); and transactional leadership models that, for the most part, equate leadership with management (Bass, 1981; Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2007).

The theories that will be discussed tend to emphasize a collective view of leadership and a decentralized perspective of authority; most that do not necessarily equate leadership with role or positional authority. Viewed in this way, leadership can be seen (a) as something that mobilizes people around a purpose or cause (b) as a phenomena that is not necessarily associated with one person and (c) as something that is organic, connected and adaptable. To summarize, the understanding of leadership is ever evolving and a shift has occurred in recent literature from models that emphasized the individual with formal, positional authority to models that examine influence, relationship and process. What follows is a review of these more contemporary leadership theories that are presumably most relevant to this study.

Burn's Transformative Perspective

According to Burns (1978), leadership is a transformative process “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p.20). Though his ideas suggest that leadership is still exercised by individuals rather than with a collective process, Burns mentions that individual power should be used to advance collective purposes. He writes,

For the study of leadership the crucial distinction is between the quest for individual recognition and self-advancement, regardless of its social and political consequences, and the quest for the kind of status and power that can be used to advance collective purposes that transcend the needs and ambitions of the

individual. (1978, p.106)

Rost and Greenleaf's Perspectives: Leadership as a Relational Process

Rost (1993) builds on the idea of an individuals' influence and focuses on the relational aspect and influence process of leadership. In fact, he defines leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p.102). This definition of leadership emphasizes the importance of the human relationship and the ability to create influence that does not necessarily depend on formal authority, but, rather is built on shared goals in a post industrial society. This emphasis on leadership as an influence process and on the importance of relationships between members of an organization is an egalitarian, power sharing model that emphasizes the importance of process (Rost, 1993).

Another approach to leadership that emphasizes relationships and morality is Greenleaf's (1970) notion of servant leadership. Like Burn's transformational and Rost's view of relational leadership, servant leadership addresses the moral and relational aspects of leadership. Servant leadership begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. The test of servant leadership is whether the people being served "while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf, 1970, p.7). In this approach to leadership, the impact to the group is considered as an evaluation of the merit or effectiveness of those in positions of authority. Like other contemporary views of leadership, Greenleaf's servant leadership downplays power or authoritarian dynamics and makes room for leadership to be exercised independent of position.

Other Leadership Theories that Differentiate Power, Position and Authority

Like other process oriented views of leadership, the servant leadership model differentiates between positional power and authority and emphasizes the importance of the latter notion. Other theories have begun to distinguish between formal, positional authority and the exercise of leadership (Heifetz and Laurie, 2001). In other words if one has a position with formal authority, that does not guarantee the exercise of leadership, but simply signals power over others. Leadership theories focused on the *process* of leadership also focus on influence, relationships, and group dynamics as key constructs associated with leadership (Goethals and Sorenson, 2006). According to research conducted on middle to upper level managers involved with the Center for Creative Leadership (2007), “when examining an organization’s approach to leadership from the past to the future, we see movement from more individual approaches (i.e., leadership as a position) to those that are more collective (i.e., leadership as a process)” (p. 3).

According to Heifetz and Laurie (2001), the process of mobilizing people to do adaptive work constitutes leadership. In this perspective adaptive work is differentiated from technical work. Adaptive work requires leadership that is able to frame tough issues and mobilize or involve others to take up the difficult work of change. Adaptive work generally requires an examination of beliefs or attitudes as opposed to technical challenges which may require authority and sound management in order to determine a solution. Many times those in positions of formal authority do not have the answers to complex problems therefore Heifetz and Laurie (2001) suggest that leadership must be able to discern adaptive challenges and mobilize organizational members accordingly. Martin (2007) in research conducted on current trends in leadership for the Center for

Creative Leadership found that increasingly managers are beginning to differentiate between technical and adaptive work:

Complex challenges are bundles of technical challenges—within our current problem-solving expertise, adaptive challenges—requiring new processes and perspectives found outside current knowledge and resources and critical challenges—resulting from an unexpected event requiring an immediate and often drastic organizational response (p.7).

Additional Contemporary Leadership Perspectives

Additional theories that are process oriented include those focused on groups or collectives and build on the ideas of working with adaptive challenges by providing ways to frame how group work gets done. These additional theories include group relations theory, which emphasizes analysis of social or psychodynamic forces within groups (Bion, 1975).

Schein's (2004) work on identifying culture in organizations also has created an approach to leadership that includes interpreting cultures and subcultures as a means to frame organizational issues and interventions. By understanding culture, leaders have another way to view how systems or forces are impacting members in a group. In addition those providing leadership can work to bring change by understanding and working with organizational culture.

Systems theory also has had an influence on contemporary leadership theory. Senge (2006) stated, "Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots'" (p.68). Systems approaches to exercising leadership provide tools for interpreting context and framing solutions or interventions as acts of leadership and to build capacity in members. It is interesting that the literature suggests

that many Native American communities have long been systems thinkers in interpreting and understanding the world:

[Americans for Indian Opportunity] has come to recognize that Native Americans and many other Indigenous peoples are systems thinkers. Before European contact, Native Americans employed traditional forms of systems science, democratic processes, protocols, social structures, and value systems that were extremely effective in consensus-oriented decision-making. (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004, p, 506)

More research to examine how systems-views impact leadership in practice could inform leadership development as well as constructs of Native American perspectives on leadership.

Networked Leadership Theory. Another theory of leadership emerging in the literature is focused on understanding the connections and networks of relationships in highly decentralized and very adaptive organizations. This approach has been referred to as connected leadership and networked leadership. According to a Center for Creative Leadership's 2007 study on future leadership trends, "Connected leadership is an emerging view of leadership as an inclusive and collective networked activity occurring throughout organizations" (p.3).

This networked approach to leadership integrates an adaptive or flexible structure and an understanding of systems approaches which allows for its highly decentralized and flexible form. An example of a networked form of leadership is *The Web of Inclusion* which resulted from the work of Sally Helgesen's study of female executives and the informal connections they created to accomplish tasks and collaboration in their organizations (Helgesen, 1995). The women in Helgesen's study did not rely on a traditional hierarchy but, instead, worked through networks of people containing multiple levels of formal authority and informal authority. This approach to leadership includes a

form or structure that may be compared to the internet, organized around a specific purpose, belief or ideology, and is decentralized, organic or constantly adaptive (Wheatley, 2008). According to Lipman-Blumen (1996), connective leadership includes a multi-dimensional understanding of relationships, connections and interdependence and “the movement in the connections among people, organizations, and ideas” (p.6). Similarly, Wheatley (1999) suggests that organizations can be understood through patterns or networks that can be detected or recognized as self-emerging and related to the ideas of chaos theory from mathematics and physics. Wheatley (1999) stated,

The organization of a living system bears no resemblance to organization charts. Life uses networks; we still rely on boxes. But even as we draw our boxes, people are ignoring them and organizing as life does, through networks of relationships. (p.505)

Understanding leadership through theories that include networks and connections emphasizes highly decentralized authority and requires that members understand the fundamental purpose of an organization in order to accomplish organizational goals.

Collective Leadership. A process that enables groups to create, understand and refine the fundamental purpose of an organization or group includes dialogue in a model of collective leadership. Isaacs (1999) suggested that dialogue is an essential practice for organizations to create capacity to function within increasingly uncertain and unpredictable environments. He suggested that organizations can harness the collective talent and problem solving or innovation potential of organizational members through collective leadership. According to Isaacs, a system exhibits collective leadership “when people are attuned to each other so well that, even when separate, they naturally act in harmony with each other and the goals of the common enterprise (Dialogos Institute).” And the capacity for dialogue contributes to effective leadership. According to Isaacs

(1999), “Leadership [is] the capacity to hold the container for gradually larger sets of ideas, pressures, and people as the different crisis points unfold. Leadership itself, understood in this light, provides a container in which tremendous change can occur” (p.255). Collective leadership is present when a group:

- Articulates its common priorities,
- Chooses the initiatives and actions that are needed to achieve results,
- Builds deeper awareness of relationship (individually and collectively) to the larger system around them,
- Embarks on an extended process of developing themselves while they develop the capabilities of the group or organization as a whole.

Collective leadership is a theory or model that evolves from the collective understanding of the organizational purpose as well as disciplines such as dialogue and practices of a learning organization. Members function well interdependently because decisions and actions are weighed against that purpose and work is not overtly dependant on authority.

Summary

The theories and approaches to leadership reviewed thus far include emerging ideas that are process oriented and anticipate the consistent need for adaptation in an unpredictable arena of globalization and economic uncertainty. These models of leadership move towards greater inclusion of members and provide ways for leadership to bring forth collective talent and intelligence for the organization. According to Martin (2007), “The results across our numerous data points to one conclusion: Leadership is changing and approaches focusing on flexibility, collaboration, crossing boundaries and collective leadership are expected to become a high priority” (p. 3). Because the theories

of leadership discussed in the previous section include predominantly process oriented, connection focused and collective approaches to exercising leadership, they may be more similar to Indigenous views of leadership more than traditional views of leadership have been. The next section includes a review of literature related to Indigenous perspectives of leadership.

Indigenous Leadership

The literature on leadership from the Native American or First Nations viewpoint is limited and found in diverse places in different disciplines (Ottman, 2005). Some of the published studies have been found in education, counseling, and political science. Few empirical studies have been done to either construct a data based understanding of what leadership is from the perspective of Indigenous communities or compare and contrast Western and Indigenous views of leadership (Calliou, 2006).

The following review explores the limited literature alluded to in the previous paragraph. It will detail how leadership has been defined, recognized and developed from the perspective of members of Native American and First Nations communities. The review will be organized around common themes that emerged from the research and that may indicate what is meaningful and what is common in Indigenous views of leadership. The themes most frequently identified are: decentralized authority, an understanding of connectedness and interrelatedness, knowledge of culture, and the use of dialogue. In addition, two studies indicate that many tribes are matriarchal.

Authority as a function of collective need

In a study by Bryant² (1998) and his graduate students, a qualitative interview approach was used to examine views of leadership from the Native American

perspective. The study attempted to answer the question, “How do select Native American individuals understand leadership?” (p. 10). The graduate students identified participants and conducted interviews both individually and in group settings. Participant observation was included as an additional data collection method. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and included six men and six women affiliated with six different tribes. During data analysis, categories and themes were identified and, then, authenticated by the participants. Bryant and his team of students identified six themes that emerged from the analysis: (1) decentralized leadership, (2) immanent value of all things, (3) non-interference, (4) self-deflecting image projection, (5) Indian time and (6) collective decision making (Bryant, 1998). Bryant also found that decentralized authority was important and linked to functions or roles needed by the community:

Every person has a role to play. Each person’s role is important to the whole. No other person can make the same contribution to the whole (p. 12). ‘Among these Native Americans, there was no necessity for a final arbiter or authority. Authority was tied to the particular situation and ended when the need for it ended.’ (Bryant, 1998, p.13)

In a comparison study of Indigenous views and leadership theory, McLeod (2002) also identified a propensity for a servant approach: “The Indian views the leader as a servant of the people, and in tribal organizations; all people are expected to act as leaders when their specialized knowledge or abilities are needed at particular times” (p.10).

Bryant also writes about the importance of decentralized authority³. This construct according to Bryant (1998) incorporates the notion of consensus and consensual decision making:

Decision making is largely consensual and involves a process of talking, including every voice as valued. Said one participant, decision-making ‘depends on the person, depends on the situation. Consensus is the best way. That’s why you have a council of seven and not a king of one.’ (p.17)

Thus, according to Bryant, consensus based decision making based on dispersed authority provides for inclusion of many community members with diverse sorts of expertise and talents that can fulfill needed roles within the community. Frequently when a role is fulfilled, the authority is relinquished until needed again.

Connectedness Amongst Members

The literature also suggests that the concepts of connectedness and relatedness are fundamental to exercising leadership in Indigenous cultures, Portman and Garrett (2005), for instance, have written that tribal leadership requires an understanding of *webs of life* or circles of life indicating the relationships that are the fiber of community and family. Leadership seen in this way is knowledgeable of community and family connections and how these relationships are potential bases of influence and access to resources. In addition, this understanding of connectedness is a collective approach that is inclusive and linked to aspects of community life. Consider the following two excerpts from the studies reviewed that note an element of collective models:

So collectively everyone becomes the leaders, so that the collective unconscious becomes the leader so that in the community individuals don't shine out as leaders because they know everything; they've studied everything, done everything there is to know and can say I am the leader. It is a society that becomes successful by all of them participating to be the questioners and answerers at once. That's how a society becomes successful. Because the leader can't do everything by himself [SIC]. He [SIC] needs the society members. (Bryant, 1998, p. 18)

All of us stand around the fishing net as equals. Sometimes one person pulls harder than another. Sometimes a person pulls for another. Leadership is like that. Leadership moves around the circle. Everyone in the circle should be treated with equal respect because everyone in the circle is a leader, past, present, or future. (McLeod, 2002, p.10)

In contrast to traditional Western views of leadership that normally employ a superior individual or hero model (Calliou, 2006), leadership from the Native view sees leadership

in terms of connection and shared models of authority. Relationships appear to be fundamental to exercising leadership and may not differentiate between community life and work life, “In contrast to Western individualism, relational theorists see genuine, communal connection in relationships as being a vital human need” (Portman and Garrett, 2005, p. 287). Those in leadership roles may be judged or evaluated through the health of their relationships in the community as a form of credibility and linked to their ability to maintain a role of authority.

Knowledge of Culture

The role of culture is significant to Indigenous views of leadership and also how leadership is developed in a Native or First Nations community. Bryant (1998) found that culture was directly linked to the informal authority a leader creates: “One does not appoint themselves a leader but grows into that position and is gradually accepted based in large in their ability to translate the mother culture” (Bryant, 1998, p.13). In short, one must understand—and be seen as understanding—the values and traditions of the tribe in order to operate in leadership and be trusted with decisions.

The knowledge of and expertise about culture is also indicated in a study of leadership that examined how to work with Indigenous populations. In a microethnography study, Hart (2006) conducted interviews with the twenty one Native Americans from the Winnebago Indian Reservation in Northeast Nebraska. They also collected data from documents and participant observation. An analysis was conducted of key words and descriptors leading to three themes: traditional tribal leadership: tribal leader/leadership characteristics; tribal acculturation and interventions. The study findings suggested concepts that should be considered by individuals and groups working

with tribal communities; “Tribal leadership is shared leadership, organized by the clan system, guided and sustained by elders through the teaching of language and telling of stories” (Hart, 2006, p.7). This indicates that culture and knowledge of Indigenous ways is important to understand in Indigenous populations: “The dominant society leadership has done much to force acculturation on tribal people, but the old traditional ways are not forgotten and live strong in the spirit of the Winnebago people.” Hart (2006) goes on to explain that the culture that is maintained through stories, mentoring and ceremony may be linked to perceptions of leadership and cultural resilience in the face of a dominant Western influence (p.7). McLeod (2002) also mentions the importance of culture:

Tribal leadership is not simply an act or series of acts; it is not merely directing a process; it is not playing a role. Tribal leadership is the embodiment of a lifestyle, an expression of learned patterns, of thought and behaviors, values, and beliefs. Culture is the basis; it formulates the purpose, process, and, ultimately, the product. (p.13)

Ottman’s (2005) study of the perceptions of leadership of Saskatchewan leaders included both the views of leadership and leadership development. One leader in the study shared his philosophy that culture may need to evolve or adapt:

You reconcile the old with the new because no culture has ever stayed static; they have always changed, sometimes due to environment and sometimes due to other situations. We always grow, we didn’t just sit back and die and freeze in time. (Ottman, 2005, p.186)

This viewpoint or philosophy may also indicate that, though culture and tradition are important, there is an acknowledgement that adaptation and change is necessary in order to grow successfully into the future. In other words, though the traditions of culture are central to know and understand leadership, the ability to adapt is also important.

Dialogue is a Significant Process

The use of dialogue, especially as a means to include all voices, was explicitly

discussed in a number of studies. One paper in particular focused on the insights and learning from an experience of conference attendees at the Indigenous Wisdom of the People Forum in 2003. The conference included the Indigenous Leaders Interactive System including a structured dialogue process used to conduct the conference interaction. The conference included Native American and Maori (Indigenous people of New Zealand) members and attempted to engage *Indigeneity*; an emerging term considered to represent a cluster of ideas that become conceptual contributions and add to the growing understanding of globalization in contemporary discourse (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004, p. 505). Dialogue is seen as a key concept to collective activity ensuring multiple perspectives are considered and different voices are heard:

A group will not endorse proactive solutions or act upon practical action plans unless community stakeholders participate in a process of disciplined dialogue, enabling them to collectively define complex issues and identify proactive solutions...because the issues and problems Native Americans face today are so complex and are mostly symptoms that reflect deeper underlying causes, uncovering the collective wisdom of a tribal group or Native organization is difficult. (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004, p. 506)

The process of dialogue includes an egalitarian approach ensuring that all people have an opportunity to voice their view and work towards inclusion of members or stakeholders.

Dialogue is used to bring collectiveness and find agreement around issues or

opportunities. Dr. Alex Pattakos defined dialogue as:

A concept that takes on a new and deeper meaning when it is perceived as a group's accessing a 'larger pool of common spirit' through the distinctively spiritual connection between its members. This suggests more than 'collective thinking'...Spirit flowing through the participants in dialogue leads to a collective thinking which, in turn, facilitates a common understanding thereby resulting in 'common education.'
(Harris and Wasilewski, 2004, p.507)

Another example of the importance of dialogue in decision making and the need

for input from tribal members is evident in a study by Makokis (2001). Interviews with Elders of the Cree Nation were conducted on their views of leadership. Through her analysis she noted:

Voice must be given to our stories. Healing must take place. Dialogue by talking and listening to reach decisions by consensus must be revived. It is vital for the survival of our culture that we first know our history. In understanding our history, it liberates us in that we begin to understand what has become of our people. We know that it is not some defect in our nature or culture, but rather as a result of actions on the part of the colonizers. (p.218)

Dialogue serves a number of purposes by soliciting input from many voices in decision making and by providing a way for networking or relationship building. Dialogue may also provide a means for learning and understanding the history and culture of the tribe and nation which is significant to exercising leadership in Indigenous nations and communities.

Matriarchy

Portman and Garrett (2005) explore the Native American view of leadership as matriarchal and use this framework for comparison to a more masculinized view of leadership that is common in mainstream culture. The authors compare the Native American view of developing leadership utilizing relational-cultural theory and nurturing leadership to mentor leadership development. According to Portman and Garrett (2005), leadership is best exhibited through mentoring, self-mastery, demonstration of abilities that benefit the tribe and involves: collectivism, collaboration, compassion, and courage and is frequently matriarchal:

American Indian governance is filled not with the romantic notion of male "chiefs" as wise, supreme, all knowing grandfathers but with tribal councils or committees consisting of multiple leaders (male and female) holding positions of leadership, most often with a group of (elder) women holding the ultimate power for decisions that affect the entire tribe. (p.284)

This study questions a commonly held belief that leadership resides with a top hierarchical tribal chief and instead illustrates a more complex idea of leadership with shared authority and a unique role for female elders with checks and balances on decision making and power.

Other Elements Worth Mentioning

Some aspects of culture and community life that may be linked to Indigenous views of leadership need mentioning. Though these were not consistently noted across the studies reviewed, they are components that may surface as significant to the ways that leadership is exercised and developed in the contexts of those that share views of leadership from Indigenous communities.

Not Speaking for Others. Constructing meaning in this study process provided some challenges to the researchers in the Bryant study coming from a Western view of epistemology. For example, “One does not speak for others. Thus, as we interviewed different members of different tribes, we typically heard a person state that they would not speak for others. One in particular frequently began his observations with the phrase, ‘I know my traditions, I cannot speak for others.’ (p.9) ‘Native leaders with whom we interacted provided a route around this tortuous dilemma. One goes ahead and speaks, but first one asks forgiveness for the mistakes and misinterpretations that one will inevitably make’ (Bryant, 1998, p. 12).

Sense of Time. Bryant (1998) noted that time is viewed differently in Native American culture than in the Western culture: “For the Native American leader there was a deep connection to the present. Often this connection was linked with an ability to see and comprehend the meaning of natural events.” (1998, p. 16). Others have noted that

time has meaning which includes “when everyone is ready” rather than a need to follow a chronological appointed time.

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, the research on Indigenous view of leadership is sparse, however, it does provide some key distinctions between Indigenous views and western views that are common across the studies; these include decentralized power, knowledge of culture, and use of dialogue. Much of the research on Indigenous leadership emerged before the recent leadership theories mentioned in this review and therefore no comparison exists. The themes identified in this review may help to inform the understanding of Indigenous perspectives; however, more research is needed. As Indigenous populations work to reclaim their self determination and resulting resiliency following the effects of colonization, conflict and even genocide; this reclaiming may result in more autonomy and economic resources for First Nations and Native American communities through the Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world and developing home grown leadership.

Many Native American communities across the United States and Canada are realizing tremendous growth and economic development (Cornell and Kalt, 1998). Leadership in these communities has enabled tribes to mobilize towards opportunities that enable growth and economic development in important ways. By understanding more about Indigenous views, leadership definitions can become comprehensive adding cultural sophistication, diversity and inclusion to the understanding of leadership.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The proposal for this dissertation indicated that, in order to begin to develop an understanding of Indigenous perspectives of leadership, it was appropriate to use qualitative research methods. More specifically, the proposal outlined an approach utilizing interviews and participant observation to develop a case study of a particular Indigenous cultural group's view and practice of leadership. A case study design seemed to be a good choice because for this study because it is both context sensitive and holistic (Patton, 2002). The plan was to initially use interviews with key informants and then to triangulate the information gathered from key informant interviews with information from additional members of the cultural group. The proposal also specified that participant observation also would be used, if at all possible, and that Polkinghorne's (1995) *analysis of narrative* approach would be employed to analyze the data generated through interviewing and participant observation.

Interview Procedures Specified in the Original Proposal

The proposal specified the type of interview strategy that would be employed in the study: informal conversational interview strategy (Fontana and Frey, 2000). As its name implies, this strategy includes informal, natural questioning that emerges from observation of "the particular setting or from talking with one or more people in that setting" (Patton, 2002, p. 342). This approach to interviewing is similar to interviewing strategies used in much ethnography.

Due to its open-ended approach and unstructured design, the strategy seemed to be the best way to promote open dialogue with representatives of a population that has

experienced Eurocentricism in research in the past (Blaut, 1993; Smith, 1999). The informal conversational interview strategy, in short, seemed the best way to honor forms of communication that may not fit into a pre-determined, formally structured interview design. The conversational interview in fact, is commonly used in cross cultural inquiry.

In addition, I planned to use the conversational interview approach because I did not know what may happen or who would be present during interviews (Patton, 2002, p. 342). Finally, the open conversation strategy presumably allowed for follow-up questions including member checking for clarity during the interview process. If those being interviewed agree, the plan was to audio tape the interviews and transcribe the tapes after each interview was completed.

Participant Observation Strategies Discussed in the Original Proposal

The proposal also specified that I would engage in participant observation. More specifically, the plan was for me to play the role of *observer as participant* (Glesne, 2006) which allows for some participation in cultural activities as well as interaction (i.e., informal interviewing) with study participants while observing events. The proposal indicated that notes might be taken during events but, more than likely, note taking would occur immediately after events so as not to overemphasize the fact that the participant observer's status as an outsider and a researcher.

The participant observation component seemed to be an important aspect of the data collection process. According to Patton (2002), "Through direct observations the inquirer is better able to understand and capture the context within which people interact. Understanding context is essential to a holistic perspective" (p.262).

The proposal did acknowledge that barriers may arise to engaging in extensive

participation due to cultural, spiritual or political factors that may prevent full participation (Patton, 2002, p.266). There were also potential logistical problems associated with fully implementing the participant observation part of the study, given that the researcher worked full time and the study might end up being conducted in a site that was not close to where I live. The original research design, therefore, did not overemphasize the use of participant observation as a data collection strategy. It did, however, specify that at least some participant observation data would be gathered, if only to further triangulate interview data.

The Analysis of Narrative Strategy

The original proposal detailed a data analysis process inspired by Polkinghorne's (1995) notion of the analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). As used by Polkinghorne, the term *analysis of narrative* refers to "paradigmatic analysis [that] results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters or settings" (p.12). During the analysis of narrative process, key phrases and terms that appear to describe practices and ideas that the participants indicate are significant become the study's key categories and translated into codes.

The proposal emphasized that, to the extent possible, the analysis will employ what anthropologists call an emic approach to identifying themes and patterns in the narrative data (Patton, 2002, p. 454, 455). An emic approach attempts to see the world from the perspective and category schemes used by the cultural group being studied. One method of insuring an emic perspective is to use the researcher's "native language" (Spradley, 1979). The proposal indicated that an emic orientation would be used throughout the research process in order to be true to the perspective of the respondents

and ensure that the insider's view is sought throughout the study.

Conclusion

As it turned out, operating from an emic perspective was not as simple as attending to and employing a cultures' "native language" (Spradley, 1979). And, indeed all of the other relatively neat and tidy methodological procedures detailed in the proposal turned out not be so neat and tidy as they first appeared once I made my way into the field and found an Indigenous group to collaborate with.

Indeed, the process of finding a culture to study, itself, turned out to be a complicated and elongated one. Once again, the proposal had laid out a relatively precise game plan. The proposal specified that the study would be conducted in one or more Indigenous communities in the United States and/or Canada. Individuals from a Native or First Nations population that have self identified as members of an Indigenous community were to be contacted through network sampling (Glesne, 2006). According to Ermine, Sinclair, and Brown (2005):

Western academia tries to apply its concepts to Indigenous peoples because it tries to own all the processes of education and knowledge. However, the Elders said that an exchange of knowledge between these worldviews requires, at the least, open-mindedness about what exists in the other culture. The Elders said that academics 'don't know what they don't know.' (p.20)

More specifically, the plan was for me to indicate to colleagues the general idea of the research project and ask if they know someone from a Native American or First Nations community—especially those in a leadership role—that may be interested in participating in the study as a key informant and helping to get access to the larger group. Once potential key informants were identified, the plan was for me to contact potential participants, explain the purpose of the study and inquire if there was interest in

participating. If the participant indicates interest, I would then ask for referrals to additional members of the community and repeat the same process.

As it turned out, gaining access was considerably more difficult than I had assumed in the rather glib procedures laid out in the proposal. According to Smith (2002):

‘We are the most researched people in the world’ is a comment I have heard frequently from several different Indigenous communities. The truth of such a comment is unimportant, what does need to be taken seriously is the sense of weight and unspoken cynicism about research that the message conveys. This cynicism ought to have been strong enough to deter any self respecting Indigenous person from being associated with research. (p.2)

It is also the case, however, that the very difficult and quite elongated access process was a tremendous learning experience, an experience, in fact, that led to the modification of a number of aspects of the research design to make the design more consistent with Indigenous ways of operating and knowing. It was also the source of some of this study’s most important findings. Therefore, in the next chapter—the first of two findings chapters—I have reconstructed from journal entries and saved emails the access experience as a story.

In short, I have engaged in a process Polkinghorne (1995) calls *narrative analysis* (as opposed to the *analysis of narrative* process that the proposal indicated I would use to make sense of the data). Simply stated, *narrative analysis* entails reconfiguring data in story form complete with a plot and literary type themes. In the course of telling the story, I will describe how the study was actually done and, by implication, how the methods described somewhat glibly in the original proposal got modified to make them more consistent with the Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) of research and learning.

Chapter Four

Findings, Part 1: The Access Story

Gaining access can be a problem in doing research. The problem can be especially acute when qualitative methods are being employed because qualitative inquiry normally is highly personal and labor intensive. It is not accidental, after all, that qualitative methods textbooks (see, for example, Patton 2002; Glesne 2006) have sections focused on access issues.

Normally, however, access issues can be dealt with relatively expeditiously. Such issues normally are dealt with in dissertation proposals, for example, in a limited number of paragraphs that describe a relatively technical process that the researcher plans to engage in to get access to research sites and those who work within them. My own proposal detailed such procedures.

Early Awareness of Potential Problems

Even as I described the relatively straightforward procedures I planned to use to get access to a research site, however, I was hardly naïve. I had, after all, read the literature about the exploitation of Indigenous culture. For example, I had read Smith's (2002) comments about the imperial stance of most Western researchers when they study non-Western people:

Research through 'imperial eyes' describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings. (p.56)

Given this imperial perspective, it is hardly surprising that Smith (2002) has noted that "the word... 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (p.1).

Furthermore, even if the literature had not alerted me to potential access problems, prior experience would have. I knew long before I drafted my dissertation proposal that I wanted study an Indigenous group's view of leadership. I wanted to do this primarily to help overcome, in an admittedly modest way, the ethnocentrism found in the leadership literature, a literature that has focused almost exclusively on Western conceptions of leadership.

I had, in fact, observed this ethnocentrism rear its ugly head in one of the doctoral classes. One of the members of a class, a Native American, shared feelings of complete marginalization around her views of leadership. According to this student, the instructor "corrected" her Native views of leadership because the instructor perceived them as invalid. This experience led the student to feel isolated. When she spoke with me she was reconsidering her participation in the program.

There was another reason I wanted to study Indigenous views of leadership. I had been attracted to Wilber's (2000) idea of an integral theory, a theory that can integrate highly diverse and, even, seemingly contradictory perspectives. Presumably, knowledge derived from a variety of cultural contexts would be useful in constructing a truly integral theory of leadership.

Thus, I knew mid-way into my doctoral program what I wanted my dissertation research to be about. I even sought feedback about my dissertation ideas from researchers who studied Native American issues and Native Americans and who were themselves, Native Americans. After listening to one of these scholars conduct a dialogue, I introduced myself and my very preliminary ideas about exploring Native views of leadership. This scholar was encouraging and provided his email address. I later sent him

a concept paper for my dissertation, and he responded with a thoughtful and detailed critique. Much of the critique centered on issues related to my being an outsider (i.e., a White outsider) studying an Indigenous group. I later invited him to serve on my dissertation committee knowing from the literature (but also intuitively) that it is important for Native scholars to be on dissertation committees involved with Native nations (Smith, 2002). I did not receive a response to this request. A second request also went unanswered.

I also consulted with a second Native American scholar who also was encouraging but also raised cautions about a non-Indigenous researcher studying an Indigenous group. Among a great deal of helpful advice, this scholar recommended that I needed to provide a practical benefit to the tribe. Vague Western notions of contributing to general knowledge just would not be convincing in the Indigenous world, according to this mentor. This viewpoint is also mentioned in the decolonizing literature. Smith (2002), for example, stated:

The belief, for example, that research will ‘benefit mankind’ conveys a strong sense of social responsibility. The problem with that particular term ... is that Indigenous peoples are deeply cynical about the capacity, motives or methodologies of Western research to deliver any benefits to Indigenous peoples whom science has long regarded, indeed has classified, as being ‘not human.’ (pp.117-118)

The benefits of research to an Indigenous community must be identified in partnership through relational accountability, and at times must be more practical than some mainstream researchers might expect in addressing the real needs of the tribe. Smith (2002) goes on to clarify her recommendations on questions that should be asked as part of the research process:

In contemporary Indigenous contexts there are some major research issues which

continue to be debated quite vigorously. These can be summarized best by the critical questions that communities and Indigenous activist often ask, in a variety of ways: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? While there are many researchers who can handle such questions with integrity there are many more who cannot, or who approach these questions with some cynicism, as if they are a test merely of political correctness. These questions are simply part of a larger set of judgments on criteria that a researcher cannot prepare for, such as: Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix our generator? Can they actually do anything? (p.10)

In short, both the second Native scholar's advice and some of the literature I reviewed suggested the importance of the anthropologist's notion of reciprocity.

When I asked this second scholar if she would consider being on my dissertation committee, she declined. Her reason was that it was not clear what Native nation I would be working with, and she did not want to be in the position of overseeing a study with a nation that was not her own. Such action could be highly inappropriate.

This sort of thinking I encountered both in the literature and in conversations with two Native scholars might have discouraged more cautious souls than yours truly, but I moved forward undaunted. If anything, the cautions and roadblocks served as incentives for me to want to make sense of what, obviously, were somewhat different ways of thinking and acting than my socialization by the Academy and mainstream culture had provided.

Initial Access Attempts

My first direct experience with access difficulties occurred a few months after my contact with the two Native American scholars discussed above. I was enrolled in a course on qualitative research that required me to do a mini-study. It made sense for me to attempt to do a miniature version—a kind of qualitative pilot—of the study I would

eventually do for my dissertation.

Contacting Two Apparently Ideal Research “Subjects”⁴

I decided to contact two people whose group—two years after my initial contact and long after the course I was taking was completed—finally agreed to work with me on the dissertation study. I was attracted to the two individuals and the group they led for two reasons. First, the individuals I initially contacted were First Nation leaders who had graduated from the doctoral program in leadership in which I was enrolled. I assumed, therefore, that they would be in a position to compare and contrast the Western views of leadership they had encountered in their doctoral study with the more Indigenous leadership thinking in their native culture.

Second I was impressed by their leadership accomplishments in their own culture. They both worked in—and one serves as the president of—the Blue Quills First Nation College in Canada. Their ancestors had founded the College thirty years earlier on the site of a former residential school, a dreaded institution of domination, abuse and control, according to the Cree people in the region who had attended the school as children.

All of this sounded impressive to me. Just how impressive became even more apparent as relationships deepened during my nearly two year attempt to gain access and as I learned more about the history of Blue Quills First Nation College and the contributions made by the two people I had initially contacted.

Blue Quills First Nations College

In order to understand the significance of visiting Blue Quills First Nation College, it may be helpful to explain at least briefly some of the history and context of the college. According to the *Commemorative Edition of the 30th Anniversary of Blue Quills*

First Nation College (BQFNC, 2002), the residential school originated in 1898 and was moved in 1931 to what is now the site of Blue Quills College First Nations College as a result of a policy of the Canadian Government. The policy required children to be forcefully removed from their homes and families in order to be assimilated into the emerging dominant culture through residential schooling. Residential schools were treacherous for students due to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Ross, 2009; Cardinal, 1998). The atmosphere was mechanical and orderly. Children were not allowed to speak their language and would be physically disciplined if they were caught. Their hair was cut; they were sprayed with insecticide and given European/Western clothes instead of their traditional clothing. The Canadian government utilized predominantly the Catholic Church, and, at times, also Protestant churches to run the residential schools through contract agreements with four churches established in 1892 (BQFNC, 2002). The residential school system became a tool of cultural genocide for generations (Cardinal, 1998).

The agreement between the government and churches ended in 1969. Therefore all residential schools were to be dissolved. Indian Affairs discussed turning Blue Quills Residential School into a hostel for remotely located students. Without consulting the Native people, the agency made this decision which brought to the surface long term underlying frustrations of decision making without Native input (BQFNC, 2002).

A meeting was held in October, 1969. Native people from Saddle Lake/Athabasca District (location near Blue Quills Residential School) unanimously decided to make a bid to take over and operate the school. They formed a committee called the Blue Quills Native Education Council. They went to work to form a constitution, obtain non-profit

status and to meet with department officials. Meetings ensued with Indian Affairs officials at all levels without an affirmative response, therefore the people held an organized occupation (sit-in) and demonstration until the Federal government agreed to the “wishes of the people” (BQFNC, 2002, p.1).

Following the twenty-one day sit-in, with over 300 demonstrators involved, the people selected twenty individuals representing the twelve reserves involved to meet with the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on Parliament Hill. The group won the approval to operate the school and residential facilities under the governance of Blue Quills Native Education Council to be transferred by July, 1971. The official signing of the agreement to finalize the transfer took place on December 31, 1970 (BQFNC, 2002).

Due to this history, BQFNC is a living symbol of resistance and self determination for the First Nations in this area, governed by Seven Nations: Beaver Lake First Nation, Cold Lake First Nations, Frog Lake First Nations, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, Saddle Lake First Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, and connected to the Cree nation ancestral lands. Because BQFNC is an Indigenous college with Indigenous governance, the people and the scholars connected to the college are first and foremost respected members of their community. Many, however, also possess advanced degrees from Western institutions. The two people I contacted as I prepared to do my mini-study for my qualitative research class fit into this latter category. They, like other faculty members and administrators at the College, however, had not been completely socialized by their Western education. Indeed, like other faculty members and administrators at Blue Quills First Nation College are in a constant process of what they at times characterize as decolonization in order to reclaim Indigenous knowledge,

ceremony, leadership and spirituality. This decolonization process is challenging because it requires a constant reclaiming of Cree epistemology, ceremony, language and culture while pushing forward to reclaim and sustain nationhood.

In short, my decision to contact the two individuals for the purpose of doing my class project made even more sense the more I learned about them and their organization. Unfortunately, the logic of having me “study” them and their organization was not as apparent to them as it was to me.

The Absence of a Negative Answer is not Necessarily a Positive Response

My initial request for access was through email. I asked the two individuals if they would consider being interviewed for my class-project/mini-study and, if that was a positive experience, whether they would consider letting me study them and their organization for my dissertation research. The response seemed unusual to me: Pat—the person who turned out to be my main point of contact throughout the process of gaining access—asked me to write about, among other things, my family. Following is the email communication:

Hi Julia,

Nice to hear from you...Before we consider a possible chat by phone, could you share with us a little more about yourself? Who are you, what is your family background, how did you decide to do a doctorate at USD, your work/education etc. This will allow us to understand a little more about your worldview in leadership too. Are you okay with sharing a little more about yourself?

In collegueship,

Pat,

My initial internal response was, “Why do they want to know about my family?” and I could immediately feel my discomfort with the request. However, I realized that I

needed to be sensitive to cultural differences and decided to respond in the best and most transparent way that I could. As I shared some basic information about my family, I began to become emotional. I am not sure why other than it is unusual for me to say who I am without the context of my title or position. And I am certain that my mother—who had taught me not to discuss family matters or get too personal with people that I did not know well—would have thought my behavior inappropriate. In fact, because of this socialization, writing the response felt a bit like taking off my clothes in public.

Never-the-less, I sent the response email in good faith hoping that the sharing would begin to develop a relationship and the sort of rapport that would lead to access and cooperation once access was granted. Pat and Leona responded with appreciation. Correspondence continued, and I asked, on two occasions, if I could contact one or both of them by telephone. There was not response to either request. Therefore, I decided to be patient and hope for continued contact via email.

Later on in the process of getting to know Pat, I shared with her my discomfort over her request to share about my family when she read the draft of this dissertation. She reacted with surprise. She went on to explain that, in her culture, family histories are typically shared because, after all, that is who you are. You are your relationships, and because of the importance of relationships, it is helpful to introduce yourself by describing the social context (e.g., your clan and family as well as your geographic history) that has made you.

All of this seemed as strange to me—a product of the more individualistic Western tradition as my reaction to Pat's request had seemed strange to Pat. Later, while on my first visit to Blue Quill First Nations College, I learned much from watching a

white person who lives and works in the community of Saddle Lake, introduce himself by sharing information about his lineage. Interestingly, we shared similar ancestry and, in part because of this, I was able to learn from his example how to introduce myself appropriately.

The incident described above was only the first cultural difference to arise during the course of my two-year attempt to get permission to do my study. More email correspondence followed and Pat generously invited me to visit Blue Quills First Nations College. Dates were tossed back and forth, and then, inexplicably, the opportunity seemed to evaporate. Pat's knowing smile when she read an earlier version of this part of the access story suggested that the lack of follow-up was not accidental.

The literature on White privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Lucal, 1996) was a reminder to me not to be a pushy white girl, so I waited and continued to follow up with other contacts who might agree to be studied for the class project mini-study. The due date for that project was fast approaching, and I eventually was forced to do my mini-study with another participant, a Native American who was enrolled a Leadership Studies masters degree program.

In Search of Access for the Dissertation Study

Several months after the qualitative research course was over and the study I did for the course was completed, I began working on my dissertation proposal. I still wanted to study an Indigenous group's views of leadership, and my proposal reflected that goal. I did, however, include in my proposal a Plan B that looked very much like the Plan B I ended up using for my class project. The only difference was that I would have interviewed a number of Native American and/or First Nation leaders rather than a single

research participant.

Looking for Access in all the Wrong Places

Although my proposal contained a fallback option, I really wanted to do the study with an active and thriving Indigenous community. It seemed a bit inappropriate to rely on a single individual's perspective of thinking within the Indigenous group they were a part of without having the opportunity to triangulate what they would say with what other community members would share. In addition, it seemed highly inappropriate to use individuals to study cultural groups that value and operate communally. In fact, in many Native nations, there are ethical problems associated with an individual consenting to participate in a study about their group without the consensus of the group and the input and consent of the Elders. This, in fact, is a major sticking point when Western scholars want to study Indigenous groups, according to Wilson (2008):

Basic to the dominant system research paradigms is the concept of the individual as the source and owner of knowledge. These paradigms are built upon a Eurocentric view of the world, in which the individual or object is the essential feature. (p.127)

Clearly, this individualistic paradigm is fundamentally different from the paradigm employed by many, and, possibly, most Indigenous groups.

Thus I made a valiant effort to get access to a whole range of Indigenous cultural groups. Through my network of friends and professional colleagues, I contacted many different individuals associated with approximately fifteen different Native communities. I also attended a conference on Native American Organizational Leadership in Santa Fe, New Mexico in order to get acquainted with members of Native communities and find out if any community representative was interested in the study.

During my search for a research site and community to study, I met some

wonderful people, but for various reasons, participants were not found and access was not granted. One complicating factor was that Native nations now have their own sets of procedures to ensure the protection of human subjects. At least one participant, for example, was enthusiastic about my study, but indicated he did not feel it was appropriate for him to speak with me about the study until I had completed his tribe's process for research approval and informed consent.

So, for bureaucratic reasons and, possibly other reasons, as well, my efforts to gain access to a group produced no group for me to study. I now understand why. There is such a thing as relational accountability, i.e. the sort of accountability that occurs naturally and almost unconsciously because deep relationships have been formed. It is these deep relationships that virtually prohibit a researcher from acting inappropriately or in a way that would harm the group he or she is studying. All of this, I would later learn, is incorporated into the ethics policy adopted by the Blue Quills First Nations College, the group I had originally wanted to study.

That policy states:

To fully comprehend the ethics environment, researchers must commit to relationships, ceremony, and protocol within the institution and community which will provide the interpretation. The academy has come to our lands, and now it is time to teach the academy how to be in our lands. (p.1)

If at First You Don't Succeed...

Of course, I was not aware of the College's ethics policy. In fact, as I searched for a site in which to do my dissertation, I had more-or-less lost touch with the folks at Blue Quills College. Approximately a year and a half after I had decided to move ahead with a Plan B for completing my class project and the mini-study had been finished, however, one of my fellow students at the university I was attending called to tell me that

Pat and Leona would be coming to town to be honored at an event at the university. The student had acquired their cell phone numbers for me from university administrators in charge of the event. Because I had successfully defended the proposal for the study that would focus on views of leadership in an Indigenous community—and, quite honestly, because my attempts to gain access to other groups had not been successful—I decided to call Pat and see if she and Leona would have the time to meet when they were in town.

By this time we had email corresponded intermittently for a year and a half but had not spoken to each other. I dialed the number (which was, in a very real sense, a violation of an earlier unexplained directive not to call) and could feel my pulse speeding up. Pat answered the phone and said she could take a few minutes to meet. This was good news, as I had hoped for a chance to connect in a more relational way than email. Clearly, the two women and the organization they were instrumental in leading remained very much potential “research subjects of interest.” I now realize that I needed to own my own view of research and come to terms with what I was asking of Pat when I would meet her. I had to reflect on items contained in the literature on decolonizing research methodology and figure out what it might mean for the study I wanted to do. Among other things, this meant that I had to take seriously the responsibility to do research with an Indigenous community or people, while respecting traditional protocols, ethics, and relationships. I also knew the research had to contribute directly to the lives of people, supporting empowerment in individuals and the community.

I knew all of the above, but I had a very limited picture of what all of the above should actually look like in my research project. Fortunately, that was a topic for much later conversations. My first face-to-face meeting with Pat was primarily social—an

opportunity to begin to build a relationship.

I met Pat in a coffee shop and had a rich but very general (as opposed to operational) conversation about research, decolonization and the university. I wanted to show respect by letting Pat know that I was preparing myself through reading about decolonizing. For example, I dropped—not quite accidentally—that my advisor had told me to read Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodology*. Pat commented on this and seemed pleased.

My dropping the name of what turned out to be a highly respected and influential book within Indian country, however, did not lead to instant access to conduct a study. Still, the meeting was a positive event. I had tried for over a year to have meaningful contact and begin to develop a relationship. Within thirty minutes, I had gone from little progress and only email correspondence to what, for me, at least, was a very warm and very human encounter.

Pat seemed to view our encounter in a similar way. At one point, for instance, I characterized our meeting as a chance encounter, a product of coincidences. The meeting, I noted, never would have happened had the university not decided to honor Pat and Leona that year and bring them to campus to receive their honor. It would not have happened had my fellow student not heard that they were coming to campus or known of my interest in making contact. It also would not have happened had Pat not answered the phone when I called. (Given my nervousness, I doubt that I would have tried to call a second time if I had I not received an answer on my first try.) Pat responded that things happen for a reason and that she believes there are no coincidences.

At the end of our face-to-face meeting, Pat invited me once again to come and

visit Blue Quills First Nations College. This time the email correspondence about the dates of the visit continued until the visit was scheduled. I was scheduled to visit during a gathering of Indigenous physicians and traditional healers within various First Nation cultures. Pat suggested it would be a good time to visit because I could see Indigenous leadership in action.

Before the visit to BQFNC actually occurred, however, Pat asked that a number of things occur, which, it seemed to me, might either set the stage for my visit or result in my visit being cancelled or, at least, postponed, possibly for another year or more. First, Pat asked me to review the ethics policy posted on the college web site. There was nothing surprising here; it was consistent with and may have even been informed by some of the literature on decolonizing methodology that I had reviewed and had worked hard to internalize.

The second issue, however, could have been a potential deal-breaker, from what I could tell. Pat asked me to meet with the Dean at the university where I am a student to ascertain if there was interest in establishing a long term relationship and ongoing collaboration with her institution. These requests made perfect sense to me by this point. I had read the literature and heard a Native American scholar talk about the concept of reciprocity. Also, by now I knew that, due to past injustices in research and the normal power differentials between Western researchers and the Indigenous groups they often study, ethical research requires a commitment to establishing deep relationships and long term collaboration (Smith, 2002). Pat, in fact, had indicated that members of her group were not interested in a one-shot experience with my institution, i.e., in participating in my research if my research did not lead to something more.

During my meeting with the Dean, she expressed an interest in developing a continuing relationship with BQFNC. I shared this information with Pat. In addition I told her that the committee chair for this dissertation expressed interest in forming relationships that would lead to more sharing and even exchange experiences between my university and Blue Quills First Nations College.

This news apparently satisfied Pat. At any rate, I was soon bound for Canada to attend the meeting of Indigenous physicians and Native healers. Later on in this process, as I grew to know Pat more, she shared with me that the meeting with the Dean was important because of relational accountability: because Pat and Leona knew the Dean, and knew that I had shared my intention and interest with her, I was invited based on that pre-existing relationship.

The First Visit

I headed to Canada optimistic about getting access to do my study. In one email message, Pat had mentioned that she thought that perhaps a dialogue could be arranged to discuss Cree views of leadership with an interested subgroup of participants in the meeting of Indigenous physicians and traditional healers I would be attending. Did this mean I was finally going to be granted access and given permission to do the study I had described in great detail in my recently approved dissertation proposal, I wondered. On the chance that this was the case, I dutifully packed my tape recorder and IRB-approved consent forms.

As it turned out, although there was talk of getting a group of people together to talk about leadership, this gathering within a gathering never occurred. Unlike so many other things that happened—or did not happen—in this access story, this time I received

an explanation for why the meeting-within-a-meeting did not happen. Pat told me that there was no time for the additional meeting. Later this explanation made even more sense when I realized that the group does not force anything to happen in this type of gathering, if it does not seem that there is an obvious consensus. The view is that if something is supposed to be it will be; my dissertation agenda, in short, did not fit naturally in the flow of things that were occurring during the meeting and I needed to accept that fact. After all, forming relationships was far more important than following the dictates of a research proposal that had been written and approved months before in a very different environment than the Indigenous environment I was now in.

The Gathering. My visit certainly provided multiple relationship building opportunities. Both the form and the content of the gathering, itself, were fascinating.

The purpose of the gathering, as I have already noted, was to explore how Indigenous physicians and traditional Indigenous healers could work collaboratively. As is customary, the traditional talking circle—which convened in different teepees set up around the college grounds at different times during the three-day gathering—provided the structure for the gathering. A wood fire burned at the center of the teepee during each session. The talking circles went from early in the morning to late into the evening during the three-day gathering.

The initial talking circle involved the thirty or so participants introducing themselves. People did this by describing their lineages. Suddenly, Pat's initial request of me to tell her about my family made much more sense.

Later, the focus was on Cree wisdom and knowledge. One of the Elders who had been invited to attend the gathering had been one of the research participants in Leona's

doctoral dissertation, *Teachings of Cree Elders: A Grounded Theory Study of Indigenous Leadership* (Makokis, 2001).

Although traditional teachers participated in the circle, their voices were not the only—or even the primary—voices that were heard. Everyone who sat in the circle—Elders and community members, men and women, adults and children—all spoke on a variety of topics—not all of which seemed, to me, at least, to be directly related to the gathering's formally articulated topic and purpose—for as long or as short a period of time as they wanted. One twelve year old girl, for example, spoke for more than an hour about how she was being groomed to be a leader of her nation through ceremony and rites of passage. No one interrupted her or any of the other speakers.

Even visitors such as myself were invited—and, indeed, expected to speak. During the initial sharing session of the gathering, for example, each person introduced himself or herself, in part by speaking about their family or lineage. Initially, because I knew I was a guest and did not want to take up too much time during the introductions, I explained who I was, how I was affiliated through the university that Pat and Leona had attended several years before, and that I was there to learn more about the group's views of and approaches to leadership. I did not understand at that point that it was appropriate to go much deeper and explain in much more detail the reasons that I had come for the visit and what led to my interest in this topic. Pat counseled me that evening that I needed to tell people *why* I was there in much more detail.

The next morning during a time of sharing I explained on a deeper level the journey that brought me to the circle and the teepee that day. I indicated that over ten years ago I had read a book called *Healing America's Wounds* by John Dawson. The

book included several historical events, including massacres and injustices in the United States with Native people. I was horrified at the reality of things that had happened, the literal and cultural genocide that has taken place in the United States. The book also included information about healing ceremonies with both descendants of victims and descendants of perpetrators.

After explaining all of this, I indicated that I experienced guilt and shame during and after the time I read the book and began to reflect on the implications for me as a teacher of leadership. I also noted that, as a result of reading the book, I had examined my own lineage to determine if my ancestors had been responsible for any of these events. I was relieved to discover that there was no evidence that they were not involved and, in fact, I learned that my great grandmother was Native. I never knew her but my father did, and, with some prompting, was able to share with me what he knew about her.

These experiences, coupled with my study of and teaching about leadership, I explained, led to my interest in wanting to explore Native and Indigenous views of leadership. I was able to share this background in the circle and felt good about the opportunity because I was becoming more aligned with the mind, spirit and heart of the group. In this group, talking at length about one's interests and concerns is a cultural virtue because it is important to be transparent in sharing intentions and my experiences.

This and subsequent opportunities to share my story throughout the three day meeting, help to personalize the literature I had been reading and cognitively processing for the past several years. In the process, I learned that by integrating the intellectual understanding with the emotional and spiritual experience, I would become more appropriate in my interactions with others in the community. This way of operating, of

course, is a stark contrast to my socialization in academia and Western culture, in general, which promotes the separation of emotion from intellect and experience from feeling in the interest of being objective.

My experience as a member of the talking circle, in short, was very much like what Regan experienced when she reflected on Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions. Regan (2005) described the process she engaged in as follows:

I began to look for theoretical and practical approach to non-Indigenous decolonization – a process of struggle that I call ‘unsettling the settler within’ that would move us from unconsciousness, racism, denial, and guilt about our history to critical inquiry, reflection and social action, using history as a catalyst for change. (p.7)

Building relationships. So much happened during the three day gathering, and I was completely fascinated by what I was experiencing. I recall one especially memorable moment when an Indigenous medical student at a Western university became exceedingly emotional as he spoke about how horrible it was to have to work on cadavers without first engaging in a ceremony or some sort of protocol. I also recall a Lakota Elder who shared his stories of healing and recovery. He had been told by doctors that he would never be able to have children due to an injury, but through participating in ceremony he was able to heal, recover and become a father.

Mostly, however, I recall the relationships that began to be established during my four day visit. The four day visit, in fact, provided many relationship building opportunities. Some opportunities were relatively formal and group oriented. My contributions to the talking circle are examples. But there were also many informal opportunities to reach out to people and feel them reach back.

I was quite moved by the hospitality and generosity of my hostess and the

community of Saddle Lake. Pat invited me to stay at her home which was helpful because I could get to know Pat better and meet her family. Pat was also hosting three other women—Elders from another reservation. I was able to spend time talking and sharing with the Elders and listen to them tell stories and speak in their native language. Eventually, as they got to know me, they frequently translated the stories into English so that I would not be left out of the conversation.

As my visit neared an end, I had an opportunity to speak with Leona who I had initially contacted what now seemed so long ago but who seldom responded to me during my nearly two years of attempting to get access. During our conversation, Leona told me that it is important to visit the community because such a visit can touch the soul. Pat also believed this, and, after my visit, I, too, was a convert to this line of thinking.

But, What About Access?

Although I returned from my visit truly exhilarated, I still did not have permission to do the study with the group that had been my hosts. I had, however, experienced tremendous learning, and the entire experience absolutely touched my soul because people shared with me and also allowed me to share with them. Because of this visit I also began to feel differently about the research I wanted to do. I knew, now, that if I ever did the study I wanted to do, it would not be a study of the group; rather it would be done *with* the group. The reading I had done, especially about decolonizing methodology, in other words, began to make visceral sense. Looking back I believe the information I had gleaned from reading the literature started to move from mere cognitive understanding to understanding that was more embedded in my heart and spirit in a way that would, most certainly, humanize the entire research process.

Upon my return, I sent an email message to Pat thanking her for the visit and also how I was beginning to experience my emerging understanding differently, especially the importance of relationships. Pat responded with encouragement:

Yes, who knows where the visit will take us. San Diego (and all of our Profs there) believed and went on that leadership journey with us. Who knows, maybe we are to continue that collective journey. It will be up to all of my colleagues, their thoughts, desires, etc. Thanks for flying out Julia. It was our pleasure to host you, along with the Elders.

What followed was silence. For weeks I waited for a follow-up message from Pat that, hopefully, would have signaled that, indeed, she and her colleagues were interested. No message came.

I had a conversation with my dissertation chair who strongly urged me to move to the Plan B I had outlined in my proposal in case access turned out to be an insurmountable problem. He was concerned because he knew that I almost certainly would not be re-appointed to my university position if I did not complete my dissertation within the next several months.

After the meeting, I sent yet another email to Pat asking:

Just thought I would check in and see if you had any thoughts about exploring research on leadership. The visit to Blue Quills was a great experience and I appreciate the sharing especially. I hope I can answer any questions or perhaps dialogue further. Pat you had mentioned that perhaps a talking circle or dialogue on leadership might be a good way to go—I'm very interested in that as a methodology as well.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Although my chair had urged me to share my work situation with Pat, I chose not to do so in this message because I did not want her to feel any pressure or obligation to go forward with the research. If the study was to occur, I really wanted it to happen because the people were interested in collaborating and genuinely wanted to explore the

topic indicated in the study and also because the spirit of collaboration is essential to an ethical framework for the research.

My reaction reflected a bit of a transformation process in me. I had spent almost two years learning about decolonizing methodology, past injustices in research and the resulting harm that researchers had done to Indigenous groups. Because I was learning about the importance of relationships when doing this kind of research, I wanted to protect the relationships that had begun to be established and the possibility of deepening the relationships over the long-term. I felt it would be inappropriate to share the urgency of my personal timeline. I had also been learning that if the research was meant to be—it would happen. I had to learn to trust even in the face of uncertainty due to a lack of response.

Before concluding this section, however, I must provide one additional piece of information in an effort to be totally transparent and honest: I did not totally rule out the possibility of sharing my situation at some point in the not-too-distant future in a follow-up phone call. I was still very much a doctoral student in a Western university and an employee of another Western academic institution who very much wanted to retain her job.

It's a Go!

As it turned out, there was no need for me to play the I-am-about-to-lose-my-job card because something fortuitous happened. (Pat, of course, would say *not* coincidentally.) One of the Blue Quills group had taken a trip to Ghana in Africa. She was perceived as Western by some of the people there. She spent time sharing about how she is not Western and how her nation has experienced hardship at the hands of

Westerners. (See Chapter five for an account of this experience in her own words.) This experience led to her feeling that their group's stories need to be told. The conclusion was that I might be of help in getting the story of the Cree nation and what members of the nation have endured. Pat made it clear, however, that the study would be done using Indigenous research methodology. Pat and Leona both graduated from the same doctorate program as myself but mentioned that if they were to do it again—they would use Indigenous methodology.

Additional Caveats and Qualifications

I had at least some sense of what Pat meant by Indigenous methodology because of the literature I had been reviewing for the past several years and also because of my first exceedingly educational visit. I knew, for example, that I would not be studying the group's views of leadership but that, rather, was a collective would be exploring this issue together, and I was very excited about the learning. As it turned out, there was more for me to learn as I translated the general ideas about Indigenous research methodology articulated in the literature into an actual research design and specific research procedures, but, fortunately, Pat was more than willing to serve as my teacher and mentor. There will be more on this in the final section of this chapter.

Here, I want to briefly focus on some additional issues that arose after I was given the go-ahead to do my research. In the process of giving me the go-ahead for my study, Pat was exceedingly encouraging. She indicated that, normally, it would be my job to visit people, offer them tobacco as what I assumed, at the time, was a kind of token of respect and appreciation, and invite them to participate in a dialogue about the topic I was interested in. Later I understood that this was much more sacred and spiritual than I

originally had thought. In Chapter five, there are a number of times when participants explain the significance and sacredness of tobacco and offering tobacco to ask for help. Because I was absent, Pat offered to connect with people and invite them to participate in the research dialogue. I was appreciative of Pat's efforts and excited about moving ahead with my study, which now would really be best characterized as *our* study.

I soon learned that I probably should not get too excited: the permission I had received to conduct the study was informal and conditional. I still had to go through an ethics dialogue with members of the group before I would be permitted to move forward with the study. This review was scheduled at the start of my next visit, prior to doing anything even resembling dialogue. I in no way thought this review was pro forma procedural display, however. Given what had happened in the past, I prepared myself for having the informal permission I had been given to do the study revoked or at least delayed.

The ceremony prior to the ethics dialogue. As a beginning to the research process, and before the ethics dialogue could commence, there was a ceremony. Leona who is a pipe holder and one who can lead ceremony, agreed to conduct the ceremony that involved traditional Cree practices. Before the ceremony commenced, however, I found a private moment with Leona to offer her tobacco and ask her for help. (Pat had also offered the ceremony leader tobacco in my absence, before I arrived to honor the protocol). I then followed the traditional protocols, as I was beginning to learn, of offering tobacco, cedar and/or sage to ask for help with the research, to each individual that arrived for the circle. The next step was the smudge ceremony involving sage and a cleansing of eyes, ears, mouth, and heart as one of the male participants helped each

person with the smudge process. Next the group stood in a circle and prayer was offered in Cree language to the Creator by Leona considered an Elder acknowledged for her wisdom, age, knowledge, ceremonial experience and integrity (walk your talk).

Participants sat in a circle in a room called the Four Directions room. I had never participated in a ceremony before and felt honored to be included. Though much of the ceremony included the Cree language and, therefore, I did not fully understand everything that was said, I did sense how sacred the ceremony was and how important ceremony and the relationships of those who participated in a ceremony were for learning and knowledge generation and transmission. I also recalled an article written by Pat's daughter that I read just before my second visit. In the article, she wrote, "For many nehiyawak [Cree] within my community, ceremony acts as a repository of our knowledge systems, the place where our knowledge is stored, learned, understood and transferred to those who wish to seek out traditional ways of being [nehiyawak knowledge]" (Makokis, 2008, p.10).

The ethics dialogue. Following the ceremony, and as part of the process of ethics review, a dialogue circle was convened. Those in the circle proceeded to ask me about my intentions and processes articulated in my research proposal. (The research proposal had been sent in advance and distributed to those that Pat thought might be interested.) I mentioned that, because I had been engaged in an ongoing learning process. I would not write the proposal the same way I had originally written it. Following my comment I was asked to share what I had learned thus far and how I might change the proposal.

I responded by describing what I was beginning to understand about Indigenous

approaches to research. I mentioned the importance of relationship building and the ethics-based rationale for engaging in a collaborative inquiry process. I noted that I understood that relatively deep relationships are needed to help ensure equality and provide accountability to the participants in the study, neither of which was normally provided by Western researchers of Indigenous people in the past. As I said this, Smith's words echoed in my head:

It is surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *Indigenous peoples* together, in the same breath, without having analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply imbedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices. (Smith, 2002, p.2)

The potential benefits to the community and the process that was planned for sharing findings also were discussed. In the dialogue process, I was able to share my journey: how I had become interested in the topic, how the study had developed, my intentions and the process of relationship building that is ongoing. I reminded myself of the words of Ermine, Sinclair, and Brown (2005):

The elders remind us to have 'conversations' as equals. The act of dialogue is the act of resolving the confrontation and is itself an ethical act. This will entail the examination of structures and systems in attempts to remove all vestiges of colonial and imperial forms of knowledge production and to instill respect and understanding of different and multiple readings, and different jurisdictions of the world. It will be in the ethical space where all assumptions, biases, and misrepresentations about the 'other' are brought to bear in the interest of identifying ethical/moral principles in cross cultural interaction. (2005, p.7)

The ethics dialogue continued for over an hour. At the end of the dialogue, I also was handed a copy of the group's ethics policy (See Appendix A) and asked to respond to a number of specified items in writing via email. A copy of my responses can be found in Appendix B.

Participation in Strategic Planning

I was invited to participate in the strategic planning process of BQFNC which was scheduled to occur immediately following the ethics dialogue. To be more accurate, I was not so much invited to participate. Rather, it was assumed that I would want to participate and that it was appropriate for me to participate. The lines demarcating who should be in and who should be excluded from particular conversations seemed, at the very least, much more porous here than back home.

Not surprisingly, the strategic planning process involved meeting in a circle, initially as a full group and, eventually in break-out groups. At times, this dialogue sounded very familiar. The topics certainly were similar to the topics that are discussed at my own university: problems with coordinating the master calendar, agreeing on priorities, and managing a somewhat daunting workload.

The planning process also included activities that Western folks might characterize as *ice breakers*. One involved holding a balloon but not with hands or arms, and touching the four directions (north, south, east and west) and the Cree colors in the room for the different directions. It is difficult to take oneself seriously after engaging in a task such as this. I realized that by participating I was given the opportunity to get to know additional members of the community and be silly with them which provides for potential bonding and relationship building. This participation may have served to provide an opportunity for others to observe me and based upon their feeling then determine whether or not they would participate in the talking circle about Cree perspectives of leadership the following day in the Four Directions room.

Redesigning the Study the Indigenous Way

Now it was finally time to do the study of leadership. To be sure, I never formally heard that the study had been officially approved in the way that I expected, but on day two of my second visit, everything was in place to move ahead with the study.

The study's design, however, would differ in some significant ways from what I described in my proposal more than a year before. Pat's declaration that research procedures would have to conform with Indigenous research methodology did not leave me totally confused. After all, the literature I had read while writing my proposal and that is reviewed here in Chapter Two included work about "decolonizing methodology" and making research procedures consistent with the Indigenous world view. And by the time the study of Indigenous views of leadership was to commence I had also read a number of other works, most of which were recommended by Pat. Many of these additional works provided insight into how to do the study I wanted to do in a way that was consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing.

One of the books Pat had suggested I read was Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*. This book turned out to be important to the study for at least two reasons. First, there was Wilson's emphasis on the significance of ceremony. Initially I thought the title of Wilson's book was *Research as Ceremony*, but I eventually realized that I was wrong. I also realized the significance of my error: Research, from an Indigenous perspective, is itself, a sacred process grounded in both the traditions of the group and group relationships and is should be understood as ceremony.

Second, the Wilson book, more than any other source I read, provided a detailed description of the talking circle that Pat clearly equated with Indigenous research

methods and thought would be a good match to the questions and therefore believed I should use in lieu of traditional Western data gathering techniques such as interviewing.

According to Makokis (2008), in the community of Saddle Lake Cree Nation talking circles are often used in ceremony, for research, therapeutic healing practices and other situations related to community and family social functioning. (p.48) According to Wilson (2008),

A talking circle involves people sitting in a circle, where each person has the opportunity to take an uninterrupted turn in discussing the topic. Talking circles, while not a new idea for Indigenous people, are newly accepted as a research technique, (Hanohano, 2001; Martin 2001). They are based upon the ideal of respect for participants in the circle (Archibald and Haig-Brown, 1996), where everyone has an equal chance to speak and be heard. (as cited in Wilson, 2008, p.41)

Just as Wilson's book provided an alternative approach to data collection, it also suggested the importance of using an alternative, largely unfiltered approach to data analysis and display. Rather than engaging in the analysis of narrative process (Polkinghorne, 1995) process discussed in the proposal, therefore, I simply transcribed—with only a minimal amount of editing described at the start of the next chapter—the talking circle speech so that the participants speak for themselves. In other words, I refrained from extensively analyzing the data and layering my logic—which invariably is a Western logic—on the words of the Indigenous folks who agreed to function as my co-inquirers.

The bottom line here is that I ceded control of the process to the group. Many times throughout the process of this study I have needed to trust and back away from my tendency to want to manage the process. I realized that I would need to loosen my control of the research process if I truly wanted to collaborate. Though I did have some anxiety

due to the fear of the unknown, I trusted that the approach would be a good match to the research. I found comfort in the words of another writer that Pat had suggested I read as part of her informal tutorial on Indigenous methodology. These words were written, not by an Indigenous scholar, but by a White scholar who, like me, desperately wanted to learn from Indigenous groups, but in a way that was respectful rather than exploitive. The scholar wrote:

It seems to me that there is this place of 'not knowing' that may hold a key to decolonization for non-Indigenous people. As members of the dominant culture, we have to be willing to be uncomfortable, to be disquieted at a deep and disturbing level – and to understand our own history, if we are to transform our colonial relationship to Indigenous peoples. For it is in this space of 'not knowing' and working through our own discomfort that we are most open to deep, transformative learning. The kind of experiential learning that engages our whole being – head, heart and spirit. (Regan, 2005, p.7)

Conclusion

The stage has now been set for a presentation of what occurred during the talking circle about Indigenous approaches to leadership. That is the topic for the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Findings, Part Two: A Talking Circle About Leadership

Background Information

As was noted in the previous chapter, it was decided that a traditional talking circle would be used to structure dialogue about the research questions that would collaboratively answer them. Because Pat was at Blue Quills First Nation College she offered to approach individuals that would be good participants for the talking circle. Pat had communicated with about ten people and nine of them were able to make the scheduled time. They were: (a) Pat, the person who had been my main contact throughout the access process described in the previous chapter; Pat served as the Director of Curriculum Development for Blue Quills First Nation College. (b) Leona, the President of Blue Quills First Nation College; Leona also is Pat's sister-in-law. (c) Kîskeyikaniskwew (d) Vincent (e) Brent (f) Bernadine (g) Lana, Art actionist and instructor (h) Marilyn (i) William.

Once it was decided to use a traditional talking circle to facilitate sharing about the thinking and approaches to leadership, it seemed helpful to use the studies' research questions to focus the discussion, though the questions that appeared in my proposal seemed to have a Western bias. The night before when I was reviewing the research questions, I realized that they sounded much more like the *subject—object* model of research than I had realized. I believe this was because I had first written the questions over a year ago; I had now come to know these participants in a relational way. I now understand why relationship building is such an important process in collaborating in research because it humanizes the process which creates respect.

Wilson (2008) comments on the importance of sharing in an ethical approach, “The relationship building that this sharing and participating entailed is an important aspect of ethical Indigenous research” (p.41). I consulted Pat on the questions and together we came up with wording that was more direct and less academic. After all, this research is evolving, I was not studying them, and they were not objects of study. Rather, we were jointly exploring the meanings that the group attached to the notion of *leadership* using the talking circle strategy that was as contemporary as the emerging literature on Indigenous methodology and as traditional as any cultural practice of the group. Thus, on the night before the talking circle, Pat and I sat at her kitchen table and redrafted the research questions as follows:

1. What is leadership?
2. How is leadership developed?
3. How is leadership practiced or exercised?
4. What is important for community development related to leadership
5. How has the dominant culture’s view of leadership had an impact on how leadership is practiced or developed?
6. What is important to know about leadership as related to resiliency?
7. Where do you want to see this research go?

Once Pat and I had revised the questions, I went to bed completely exhausted from the experiences of the day. I lay in bed thinking about the questions and how they might be improved when I fell asleep. That night I had a dream. The dream was long and quite vivid. The following morning as I was driving with Pat to the college, I shared my dream with her. Pat asked me what I thought it meant and she agreed with my interpretation. I thought that perhaps it would be best to share the dream as a way to begin in the dialogue at the beginning of the talking circle that morning:

I had a dream last night I was in some kind of a building like a high rise apartment building but yet I knew everybody there. There was a man that came to my door and he was a very white looking man, very blue eyes and very blond hair and

looked young. Somehow I knew him but his face wasn't familiar to me at all. He said he was accused of raping a woman.

He asked me if he could hide in my place because the authorities were looking for him. For some reason he didn't frighten me—My first reaction would be repulsion because he violated a woman but for some reason I knew him, and I had these thoughts of—well he is 'accused' of raping and he seems to have admitted he raped, but is he innocent? That kind of tension was going on in my mind is he guilty or not?

This dream was really long and really vivid with me going to different places and having to hide the rapist, and then eventually realizing that I had to tell this rapist 'You have to turn yourself in—you have to give yourself up to the authorities. I'm not interested in hiding you anymore' and so that was my dream.

Before I went to sleep I was reading the questions again from the dissertation proposal. What I remember feeling was how those questions did not feel good to me anymore at all. I think that maybe that's a good thing because I am learning more about decolonizing and about Indigenous views of the world. Because I'm in a Western university it's hard to know how to process that tension [between Western assumptions about knowledge and Indigenous research methodology]. I think that's what the dream was about—the rapist was like unethical research and yet how I have to have a relationship with that rapist in order to complete the research.

Because dreams are significant in Indigenous epistemology and Pat said they are viewed as teachers, it was important to share the dream with the participants in the talking circle. The dream became a means to share the internal struggle I was experiencing; I was exercising a commitment to transparency and offering a small amount of vulnerability. Perhaps I was beginning to internalize what Smith (2002) says about the role of Western research with Indigenous people,

Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state). (p.8)

I began to think more critically about the data and the approach to analysis. I realized that almost any form of analysis that I do is a Western approach and therefore I look to

participants in collaboration and Indigenous scholars for insight.

The wording of the questions was not the only issue to attend to once a decision was made to use the talking circle strategy to generate the study's data. There was also the very important question of how the data would be analyzed and represented. The participants clearly stated that they would not tolerate yet another Western researcher slicing up their words and imposing the researcher's own meanings on what they had said. The literature also provided cautions on this point. According to Wilson (2008), in Indigenous research, "analysis of a research topic can develop of its own accord...Analysis is cumulative and ...an Indigenous system of logic is not necessarily linear" (p.98). Much like a vase in a great work of art, words and phrases will lose their meaning when they are removed from the whole picture or from their relational context. Wilson (2008) elaborates on his view of analysis for talking circle data:

My role is not to draw conclusions for another or to make an argument. My role, based upon the guidelines of relationality and relational accountability, is to share information or to make connections with ideas. The ethic in place is that it is not right to interfere with another's actions or thought process—that would not allow them to be accountable to their own relationships...Carrying this one step further, it becomes unethical to reiterate or restate previous messages. To do so would require me to judge certain ideas as more important than others.

Because this narrative is transcribed from a talking circle with Indigenous people in a traditional way of sharing knowledge, the narrative has been kept intact for the reader. As a non-Native researcher, I cannot make judgments about what statements mean or the lessons inherent in stories because that would create a Western derived interpretation.

So, it seemed clear to me that my job was to let the transcripts of the talking circle remain largely unedited and un-coded. The participant's words must stand pretty much as

uttered. Even this decision represents a compromise of sorts because, as Wilson (2008) has written, even transcribing speech that is so much a part of culture rooted in oral traditions may transform the meaning of the spoken word:

Writing ideas down fixes them as objects that can be taken out of context of time and relationship. As fixed objects, ideas lose the ability to grow and change, as those who hold relations with the ideas grow and change themselves. (Wilson, 2008, p. 123)

In the end, of course, some compromises need to be made, and my research participants did not seem bothered by the fact that their words would be written down. They did, however, expect their words to be presented pretty much as spoken.

I was forced to do one modest bit of rearranging. Because two of the participants had to leave early, they responded to all of the research questions at the start of the meeting while the others responded to each of the questions as the group, as a whole, confronted it. To enhance readability, I altered the talking circle transcript by redistributing those comments about each of the questions to the sections of the transcript in which the group, as a whole, was discussing the relevant question.

The questions Pat and I had were further modified. The morning of the talking circle as I was in the room and writing the questions on the white board, participants made comments on how to modify the questions. Because this research is collaborative the questions were modified. I felt satisfied because the participants were taking ownership of the questions and understood the intent to explore leadership from their viewpoint.

Question # 1:

How has the Western Culture's View of Leadership Impacted

How Leadership is Practiced or Developed?

Marilyn: I guess in part for me in relation to you [she is referring to me] is—I think that leadership is also about relationship, it's about healing. People when they become effective leaders, they have done a lot of self reflection and a lot of looking at themselves. They are no longer acting from a place of their own distress or needs, but are learning how to be a better human being and how to act to others in that way and to encourage others to act that way. When I look at leaders in the community and people that I aspire to, that is what I see. I see people who don't necessarily say this is what you ought to do—this is what you have to do and this is the right way to do things. There are people who say this is how I'm doing it, or have you thought about this? Or tell you stories to broaden your own perspective.

So in relation like to that dream and some of that emotion and non native people particularly white people, when they come and they're exploring this and they are opening themselves up and looking at what the relationship to Indigenous people has been—I think that they have that struggle. They want to divorce themselves from all things western and for me not all things western are negative.

I think that colonization is one of those strange things that happen to all human beings. All human beings, all races have the capacity to colonize and in some ways it's human nature. Not human nature but in nature all things colonize—all things when its out of balance have a tendency to over extend themselves and to create havoc...we were talking about the rats and human beings are like rats. And not that rats are a bad thing—

don't get me wrong, it could be bees it could be anything, it could be ants, it could be the dandelion. Rats if they have—like on an island and they have an abundance they will eat everything until they eat each other because there is nothing else to eat until they bring themselves back to a balance. I think that human beings are like that as well, we have that capacity to overextend ourselves and create havoc.

Part of the whole thing of leadership is coming back and saying—when we are looking at ourselves in terms of the collective, if we are looking at ourselves in terms of our place, not just in this moment but in the past and in the future by taking a look at that—when a person starts thinking in that way, then having that Indigenous leadership. Thinking beyond themselves. Thinking beyond the today and having then the strength and the courage to say...we need to maybe not cut down that last tree like the Easter island guys cut down the last tree and now they don't have nothing on their island but their heads [Moai]. Coming to balance within our own selves and we are very blessed when we have George here (Elder) but a lot of times it's the only native male presence since I have been here in August not to have anything against yourselves ...it would be nice to have more of a that male voice in this circle because I think squares are really important.

William: Thanks for inviting me to be part of this circle. I don't like being constrained by questions so I'll try to respond to it whatever direction I go in. In terms of the journey you're engaged in—in terms of offering us tobacco—I'll try and explain the context of that. In my experience the best way to explain it is to quote an Elder, sorry I don't know his name, but the protocol is: for what you give you get and for what you get you give, so

in terms of implications of what you engaged in—we think of it as a small ritual but it underlies just about everything that we do, not just in the contexts of relationships but in the context of our relationship to the universe and it also plays out in family relationships.

Because we talk about land, I teach a course on family relationships, there has to be a balance of give and take—if there's too much giving or too much taking relationships fall apart. This explains the high divorce rate. In the context of leaders in the west, This concept of give and take has been distorted, that concept when you look at Obama's election and really one of the reasons he got elected—you got sociopaths as CEO's at Goldman Sachs who contributed considerable to his campaign. So what are they expecting in return? Are they expecting to have their interests protected? This is how they screwed up the current economy; they elected him.

In the context of Native culture the Judeo Christian perspective is central to influencing the Western perspective. Judaism has the Torah as a moral guideline, Christians have the Bible, and even Islam has been influenced by the Judeo Christian ethic in terms of the Koran came after the Torah and the Bible. In the Cree culture we consider language as a moral compass in terms of guiding relationships, and so what's happening at Blue Quills College is a reclaiming of teachings associated with language as part of a process of creating a new consciousness.

The consciousness that existed centuries ago—that's the exciting part about working here is a commitment to reclaim those moral teachings embedded in the language. The other day when we were sharing information about syllabics, I really wanted to follow up on the dialogue. Every symbol represents spirit, that's the first time I realized that syllabics represents spirit.

I'd like to explore that a bit more with the Elder, its unfortunate that he's not here. That just goes to show the moral underpinnings of language and in terms of how leadership is developed, just from my experience of what we do here. It starts when you say to a student 'you're going to get out of this course what you put into it' in terms of about giving and taking and the more you open up your heart for what's in this program, the more you will change from within. And that's the exciting part about working here. The courses blend healing and professional development that's what's so unique about Blue Quills First Nations College.

Reclaiming your culture is definitely part of that healing journey; also healing the soul because of the trauma that has been transmitted over so many generations. It's exciting to see the students working on themselves—coming to school excited, questioning and wanting some more of this information. There's a profound change taking place in the lives of our students; the change impacts the families and eventually the communities, and hopefully teaching the next generation now. That's all I have to say.

Pat: I guess for me when I think about that and what I see in our communities today, I see some of our leaders and our people emulating a hierarchical power and control type of leadership. And as a result of that we have disempowered our own people. As Sherri would say there is a crisis of disbelief and that this belief is there because our people literally put power in the hands of those political leaders that have those positions and in so doing they—we in our communities are disempowered.

Our people I guess are....maybe they're sleeping for lack of a better word right

now— that's what I think of, they're sleeping and as they're sleeping they come to Blue Quills and they learn the information that's been shared by Marilyn and William. They learn about colonization, they learn about how we have all been impacted by that western world view and in that process they remove that shackle that binds them. I always tell students we carry this invisible ball and chain around our leg. As they understand history—understand trauma, those historical impacts, it's like they slowly remove that ball and chain.

I remember one time when I went to do a presentation and I was asked to go to the wellness center in Saddle Lake. I did a presentation there to talk about the historical impacts. And there were a lot of men in that group, there were men and women but there were more men. As we talked about this different world view— this western world view and how it's impacted our community. I remember this man saying if only everybody knew this because it was like a light bulb went off in his head. Because then he could start to understand our families and our communities in a different way, the trauma that exists, the addiction that exists, the violence, those deep pains, deep wounds—from the Western world they refer to that as dysfunction. In our world its woundedness, it's a woundedness that many of our people carry, that I carry. I have to look at how I deal with that—looking back at family looking back at community, it's every day trying to help myself and other people understand that because that different view of the world has significantly impacted our community.

Everyday we see the walking wounded in our communities. Some of those walking wounded, it has become so normalized, the drinking, the violence and it is normalized. The other day I gave this young girl a ride and she was drinking. I could

smell it as soon as she got in the car and we were talking. I forget the exact words that she said: 'I drink to get a high'—while at the same time ironically she was carrying this little photo album of her children. She asked me if I wanted to see her children. I said I'm driving so I can't look; so here she was with the alcohol and she was drinking and she had this little photo album with her family. So on the one hand that woundedness and on the other hand that love of her own family so much so that she's hitch hiking and carrying this little photo album of her children. There's something to be said of collectively, all of us everybody understanding that history and that collective trauma, because we are all impacted by it; how we live and our views of the world. Our people carry those scars, those invisible scars like lashes on their backs.

Ay ay

Kîskeyikaniskwew: I'll start off by saying that last night I also had a dream and the dream was also vivid and interesting. Prior to going to sleep I was reading *The Whale Rider* where at the beginning there's a description of a whale that loses its mother to sharks. He's mourning and he's listening to the fluting sounds of the other whales as he's mourning. Close on the beach there is a man who I don't know if he knows what's going on but he's playing a flute. At first it has a calming effect on the whale that has lost its mother and so that whale attaches to that man with the flute. He sees that man as his master and instead of going south where the other whales go, he stays and is in relationship with this man and that's how I went to bed.

In my dream I dreamt a very vivid and long dream about someone dropping off a buffalo for me. A buffalo is very significant because buffalo are almost extinct and how

could a buffalo be in my back yard? That's unheard of but it was very very ...I think docile in the sense that it didn't go anywhere it, didn't need fences and it was not afraid of human beings. It was very in-relation to me so it responded to me. I was wishing it would go and be free because it didn't belong in my backyard. I never expressed in my thoughts or actions that that's the way that I felt. I really wanted it to be free and at some point in my dream the only way it can be free is if it changes. The only way it can change, because I don't want it to not be a buffalo, is if it becomes very very small. And it goes and lives with those that are its size. Then it can be free and that's what it did and that's how it happened and it became free. It was happy and in my dream I could transform as well.

And that's how I could feel better about that buffalo in my care in relationship to me that it could be free. I think that speaks a lot about our relationship to western society and the history of colonizing and leadership. All of it's tied together because the buffalo is the leader and has a very significant role in the men's pipe. I think its one of those animals that has that hump so it's got a very sacred spiritual significance in relation to people as well. I think about western leadership and how it has impacted our lives and it comes from a tradition and an ideology that is liberal.

The liberal tenants and how it manifests itself are every where. People don't realize that there is anything different. We as First Nations people, we don't understand liberalism; the average person doesn't understand liberalism. We come from a different world view and our world view may be shredded but its still there. The more people don't understand liberalism the more they will practice liberalism and take on its manifestations without understanding it or knowing it. I think it's very important for the people to know

it.

And when I talk about liberalism in this way I am talking about the male dominance, the prevalence of male in terms of decision making and the hierarchy; where the origins of that comes from; the males thinking as the rational human being and the fear of difference and the need for assimilation. The need for assimilating anything that's different so all the "isms" that come out of there, the racism, sexism, genderism, ageism, and anything else I can think of that informs how to behave in relationship to anybody that's different and so we are different and that is why we were ravaged in our past.

I asked my grandfather who was very very wise—he's passed on now. I asked him "what did we do in the past that caused us to have to endure this—this colonization. I didn't tell him like that but he was upset with my question. I found it really interesting because he's always telling me 'make sure you ask the right question—don't come here and waste my time—ask good questions' He used to tell me that...and I thought this was a really good question but he got upset with me and I still don't understand what caused him to express to me his dislike for my question. He never explained so I'm still to this day wondering and I still think it's a good question. We must have done something to have to endure all of what we've endured as a people. Or is it a test to see if what it is that we are is true?

These are all the things that come into my mind because we have been heavily impacted by Western culture and to the extent where we have been silenced. Our story is not known anywhere outside of our country almost. Because I just came from Ghana, Africa in the last month and they didn't know I was a First Nations person. To them I was a white person because I wasn't black. I was really thinking I need to educate

them so I got myself invited to their university class and had a discussion. They still didn't think I was different than a white person and I think we have so much to do in terms of telling our story.

That is why I think that research is important because we need to tell our story and we need to let people know that we exist. We need to let people know that this is who we are and this is what informs who we are. It's a very deep and rich and vibrant way of looking at the world. I'll stop there.

Vincent: Well it has a deep impact here in Canada because of the Indian Act and the oppressive nature of the Canadian State. I think around the 1920's they went into Mohawk country and dismantled the longhouses and the leadership of the long houses and they took away the chieftainships; the leadership roles of the hereditary system and their matrilineal system but not in the western sense. They dismantled that and put into effect the Indian Act Chiefs coercively. They had the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) go in and do all that for them and that's the role of the RCMP to this day. They are the oppressive state apparatus for the state. The ideology is supposed to be law and order but whose law and whose order? So that's the leadership we're stuck with today.

The INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) chiefs, the INAC chiefs are more into protecting their jobs, their careers than doing what's right for people. I would say what's right for the people is humble leadership. We don't have that humble leadership anymore. People that are so humble that they'll lead that way. I think probably if you look at Gandhi he was one of those humble leaders. Although they had numbers on their side and we don't have numbers on our side anymore. They have been practicing

genocide on us for so long that it's basically silenced us and the few people that dare to step outside the box of that colonial box that they put us in.

You have to first fight that psychological fight within your own mind because every time you step out of that box you are challenging yourself; am I doing the right thing? Am I a naughty boy? Because that's what they are calling us and what they want us to think. Once you overcome that—you have to overcome that whole mind set of all your relations because they are all thinking what a naughty boy. He's not falling into line and that's the power and force of ideology. So our leadership bought into that ideology. We're going to have selections again next spring. I say selections because they are not really elections. They're like selecting who's most popular—who can do something for me and not who can do something for our nation. And they even buy into that rhetoric of community. I don't know where this—maybe communion comes into place. Communism isn't very good so I don't know why we buy community. We've divested ourselves of nation and nation hood. People don't think of nation anymore but when I think of community I always think that that if I'm in the community there's a nation out there taking care of me.

If I talk in the words of nation and nationhood than we have to take care of ourselves because community is less than nation so has western leadership because it's the cult of the individual. Kiskeyikaniskwew was talking about liberalism, and that's what the cult of the individual is—it's the ideological bullshit that the individual comes before the group when really you can't be socialized without the group—it's the group that socializes the individual.

The individual citizen is prized over the group and the only legitimate groups in a

liberal state are political parties. And we have a political party that's supposed to be a national party here in Canada but they're peculiar to one [province] and that's the Quebec party. I don't know what the name of it is really—they're not national but Canada is built on such lies that you just close your eyes to it and let it happen which isn't right. The western influence and the western model of hierarchy and the individual and the crème rising to the top, the lie of uplift has all of the Indigenous people buying into that fairy tale notion when really individualism is prized among our people because it's the individual that brings the knowledge forward and actually that knowledge is carried by the whole group. And it's not even knowledge until you share it. You could be given the best gift by the Creator but until you share that, what good is it?

Because of this liberal perfecting knowledge notion of the academics you have to protect that knowledge, you could put it out there, but you better cite me, you better reference me, because you know what you don't know anything—I know it all. There's a hangover from the academy from too long where individual's that go into that space that have that knowledge are looked at as empty gas tanks and only the knowledgeable can fill that gas tank up. That's the spill over of all western society when really in our societies when we come together in groups and we share our knowledge and we all come together in ceremony then—there's that connection and we call that *khagisimo*. When we pray, *khagisimo* and there's that connection and that's the important thing that is to connect not only on a human level but on a level of this energy, this energy that's all around us—and when you can do that—I believe that's what that leadership is, when you can lead people to that space to connect, when you have that knowledge and you can open up those doors to that knowledge, and get people to feel, and get people to see, there

is some empiricism there but there's more intuitiveness which is spirit—that opens up.

The academy is just learning about intuition now. They used to say well that's a women's space—you women can go and have your intuition—us men will be the bastions of reason (more like the bastards of reason), [laughter] but reason is again, reason its over-privileged. There is a space for reason but there has to be expanded. It has to be expanded on. It has deeply impacted us and we have to unlearn that and once we unlearn it then we have to help the masters to unlearn it too. And I believe that there are some of those masters that are slowly unlearning it but they scare everybody when they do that. Everyone gets scared of them—run em off—assassinate them—what ever they do with them. So that's my quick answer of have we been tainted, of course the whole world has been tainted.

Leona: I agree with all that was said. Just to add to that in terms of the history; since the arrival how slowly, how gradually, how insidiously this whole western belief system has impacted us and it was really well thought out in how they were going to eliminate us. Because we are of this land and this land is full of resources and when it comes right down to it—it's because of the resources that they can take from the land. They consciously made a decision to get rid of us and you can see that through their legislation and you can see that through the way in which they destroyed the [Beotuk: Indigenous people of Newfoundland, considered extinct]. Killed them off, shot them off and there was nothing to them. Because in their minds they saw us as savages with no soul, no spirit, so it gave them reason to come to this land and say its an empty land and they continue to do that.

Through their structures, and developing their legislation, their structures, their systems, they continue to dictate where they want to direct us and really its all about again, genocide and assimilation. I look at their Webber's bureaucracy and hierarchy and that's the system that was oppressive growing up, by removing us, by legislation, removing our ceremonies, our language, isolating us on reserves, not allowing us to get off the reserves, not allowing us to vote, to be seen as wards of the government. I think they try to get that body of knowledge of who we are *nehiyawak* out of there so there is only one system we could fall back to, and again year after year after year as we were sent here—generation after generation into schools like this [residential schools] gradually they were trying to change us into something we could never be.

They did remove a lot of our spirit and a sense of pride in who we are and instead it was replaced by things like pagans, savages, devil worshipers, your grandparents are gonna go straight to hell. As a child this informs you on how you relate to your family after ten months here [residential school] and you go back home and it's so gradual. Going back home I used to be afraid of the Elders because they were pagans. Especially those ones that I know that were going in ceremony—these are my grandparents and not just my maternal grandparents my grandparents, community of Elders and just in terms of relationships even with my parents. My dad was Protestant—well classified as protestant. He never really did go to church back then. Even back then he was spiritualist and my mom was Catholic and every time we would go back we would start hounding him on how he was gonna go to hell and we were gonna go to heaven because we were Roman Catholic and how would he like it if we were all going to heaven and he was going to hell?

We just pressured him and finally he said ok ok ! He got baptized on Easter. I remember my dad was walking down in a long flowing white gown and now—its funny—and all these mothers and parents are carrying these little babies to be baptized and here's my dad over forty getting baptized. We just thought wow—he's saved and that's the continuous thought you know—and you grow up with that. You come to the realization. That's as far as you know, but then it takes a long time to get out of that space and to get to really be a part of ceremony, celebrations, dialogues because it's so easy to fall back into that.

In terms of systems and we see that in our communities, it's not easy to break down the system of bureaucracy. The outside world expects to come in and see who the "leader" is because the leader has got this body of knowledge—that they are the spokesman for all people and they know what's good for our people—this one person. There's always pressure and the other thing in my experience here is that—and it really aggravates me and it really irritates me when people know who the president is, it's like all eyes are on you, like that you know it's like what you say is the truth for everybody.

There's that expectation that this person is going to make the decision—you go see that one—so there's always that pressure on those positions—and its constant and I think after awhile if you fall into that. I think people could easily fall into that because it hits the ego—so much for the spirit—it hits the ego and again in terms of the difference, and maybe sometimes its easier to work in a bureaucracy because its—if you follow that philosophy—that you go to work and you're in a position to become the expert of that little position—you don't have to develop relationships because there is this mandate or policies or structure or bylaws that you have to follow.

It doesn't matter how—you don't have a decision making power, the decision is to implement that—and where as in the organizational structure that we have here we have to multi-task—we multi-task and its—we try to work on people's gifts and when you work on your gift its a lot easier to do the work that you need to do and in terms of relationships, the whole bureaucracy, the Indian Act—all of that, there is no relationship, the relationship you have when you're in it is to follow those policies and to implement them and it doesn't matter how many brown skin people are up there trying to do what they think is best for their people and be spokesperson—it's a machine. They have just been put in the driver's side—that machine is set to go and we know where it's going [status quo].

You know this whole thing of cultural colonization—one of the ladies talks about how it's in your head—it gets in your head. You need to recognize it—we need to know—we need to know who we are, we need to know our history we can [naya] distinguish, we can recognize that there's two sides or two or different ways of doing things and remain true to who we are, its easier if we know that information so un-learning about it comes from each individual in terms of their own healing or in terms of their experience.

I know with Kîskeyikaniskwew and Vincent they have been raised in ceremony as children and those of us that have been raised in institutions like this, how much of an institutionalized mind I have, its there—and you just keep falling back into it all the time so you need to be aware always—so its really insidious. I really appreciate the strategic planning process that we went through because it put forth some of the dilemma we have here due to government dictates. It's not just Canada Manpower, Alberta Employment

and Immigration who funds the program and other funding agencies where they have policies to follow and it does not meet the needs of our students. And I see the conflict that we have and when there's conflict its like it's so underlying because they are dictating that they should have so many hours of instruction—academic instruction and we also know that our students have to go through this healing journey.

It's not going to take eight weeks, its been generations of generations of generations that have put them in that position, but there's that expectation that our success is going to be measured by the number of students that are gonna go work or whatever and really standing firm recognizing that and standing firm. Because when policy dictates it's like now with our leadership and our communities following the Indian affairs and following the policies by them, they are now implementing that machine. So we direct our frustrations at them but really it's that big galoz [giant] out there and our leadership doesn't recognize that.

Leadership doesn't recognize that they are operating from a borrowed, imposed structure and with its own purpose and the way that it dismantles relationships by departmentalization which goes against the very grain. Bureaucracies are about professionalism in one area, knowledge in one area and power because you can't win in a bureaucracy—we've recognized this with the Bureau of Indian Affairs recently—that one little person down here impacts the growth of our trades building because for whatever reason we didn't dot an I or cross a T and so now we wait. This whole organization waits for that one person and because we had a chat with somebody who was her supervisor she's now stuck her hand firmly into the ground and is putting us in our place. It's like stepping on toes," You stepped on my toes" well I'm in the position to dictate your life

and I'm going to—I'm getting angry [laughter] I'm gonna stop here.

I'm raging and I don't want to go there any more—cause its happening now is what I'm saying. The way we elect our leadership it's about all transactions. Lana if you give me a vote—I'll give you a house, but all your family everyone of them has to vote for me. Its not transformation, its not transforming—as the way it was. We stay stuck
Ay ay

Lana: Since a few of us started with a dream, I'll start with the dream I had last night; must have been a good night for dreams [laughter]. I dreamt I had to go somewhere's and I took a vehicle that wasn't mine—it was someone else's vehicle who loved this old truck and I drove and I was in a rush I felt like I was being chased. I had to hurry somewhere's and I couldn't—I kept stepping on the gas to the floor, metal to the pedal or pedal to the metal. I was going really really slow and I drove it as far as I could until it ran out onto E. I realized the truck had the emergency brake on the whole time by that time. I realized that I probably would have gotten to where I needed to go if I just got out and ran with my own two legs so when I woke up this morning I felt really bad that I wrecked this truck. I couldn't afford to fix it and it's interesting because it does relate to how western culture has impacted how leadership is practiced or developed.

Since moving home I've finally come to terms as part of my healing I need to accept that I am assimilated but I have assimilated with a very Cree heart or Cree consciousness. I assimilated because I've been around assimilated people, I work with assimilated people—I'm always in this place of assimilation. But inside me there's always that yearning or chasing or being chased and like relating to my dream. There's

something Cree—Cree consciousness—a collective, almost like an alertness or alarm going off inside. I feel as if that Cree consciousness is connected to this earth and connected to the animals and connected to people and I feel we are in an age of total identity crisis. I hear—my trying to learn my language—I hear Cree speakers tell me well it's in you and it will come out and I'm working towards that.

This cultural view of leadership still keeps me stuck in speaking English and not being able—Kîskeyikaniskwew and Vince mentioned of being silenced, I've been assimilated and I've done really well. I can live in western society and I can learn and function but there still an enraging-ness inside me. I feel that there's still an emptiness or a searching or a yearning—some chaotic thing that I can't even explain in English.

I don't think it's explainable but I feel it's in the Cree language and that's part of that Western leadership and how it's impacted our leadership. We're still stuck in this liberalism or individualism it's like those penguins in the south pole and were all huddled together in order to keep warm. In order to stay human we are stuck with other humans that are following the—whether it's the ebb and flow of Cree or whether it's the ebb and flow of Western society. It's hard to find that Cree Nation to get huddled with and because were still struggling with that identity and our language and our loss of culture and that woundedness. I think a lot of us explained already about how I was thinking about how western –western culture—its hard not to get pissed off—joining Leona with her anger.

Its an angry topic—there's so many of us that know—who have that consciousness and the knowledge that were living in a delusional state of being and state of mind. Its delusional and its destructive and its keeping us assimilated and I'm sick of

being—of driving a truck that's on emergency break and wants to run with the buffalo—I want to run with the buffalo tutanka [laughter] Ay ay

Bernadine: Good morning everybody my name is Bernadine—I'm part of the management team here. Even just introducing myself that way when were meeting with other agencies. Leona had made this comment before I thought that was true. Some of these academics that we meet with—they look around the table, [we] begin with prayer, [we] begin with smudge and explain that to them and were going around the table. We introduce our selves as a team—and you look at their faces. They say their titles and they want to know who they should be speaking to. And when they're here—that's the thing to—we invite them to come here because they need to know who we are and what it is we do—first of all we don't have the money to go and meet with them at their corporate offices in the city or whatever.

You want to meet with us; you come meet on our dime basically and see what we have to work with. It's really interesting to see some of the dynamics that are going on in some of their meetings. They look at our board room and look at things we have on the walls and I think it's quite a different experience for them. Everything is organic. I guess we don't have necessarily our coffee that's in nice cups or what ever. You're lucky if you get a cup of coffee in a styrofoam cup [laughter] to me I think they are somewhat taken aback —we treat them with hospitality as well.

In their discussions with us they do want to meet who the president is—they want to talk to “the boss” and when we sit and talk in circle format—that's huge for them as well. Some of them they want to—I find they are uncomfortable with silence; they want

to spout off what it is they came here for. They are looking at their clock needing to spend that minimum amount of time that's required and get going cause even when you offer them a meal —“no I'm sorry we gotta get back on the road” kind of thing.

Ok well let's work towards future relationships and after the meeting its follow up through email, its follow up through phone calls. I don't find its real relationship building. If they are really into relationship building then they take the time and come to visit us—and so the impact of how they interact with us is felt. The biggest frustrations I have are the external reporting that needs to be done— the proposals that need to be done—and you are trying to juggle all of these things to get it done on their time limit.

It's a real conflict for me—it really is because in being directed to their time we don't have time for ourselves as an organization to grow, to develop, to mentor even other staff members, even other students. There's not the time to visit, there's not the time to talk about things that emerge for me. I feel like I'm just a hamster in a cage running running running and not getting anywhere—Leona: it must be the same truck, Bernadine: the passenger's side [laughter].

Even when you're handing out business cards, they're looking for as many alphabets behind your name. It's just frustrating to deal with stuff like that. It's the time concept that's the real clash for me—trying to reconcile myself with that—it is insidious like everyone was saying—if you haven't grown up with ceremony, with language and culture then it is so easy to fall into this management by objective form.

You know in your heart it's not wrong for me, I have to go back at the end of the day and just reflect on what did I get done today? Or what's missing or what connect have I not been able to establish or with my other colleagues. Lately it's gotten to the

point where it's hurtful, you have to close the door to get the work done, but at the same time you have to be you. You have to be there for the needs of people who need to connect with you, who need to establish relationship with you, who need answers on particular subjects. I think if there's a better way to do that—I'm still searching for it so I think that's my struggle now.

And being part of the planning process that we've done for the past few weeks or so—it has put things more in perspective for me. Why should you be jumping those hoops—we need to be really true to who we are. If we did that—I think I'd be more at peace with myself, with what I need to do here to get things done. Ay ay

Brent: I work at Blue Quills in capacity of a helper with student housing project. Off the start I would like to say that I was really impacted in a profound way by the metaphor of your dream Julia. The rapist and the rapist being hidden in academia so that he could continue and how that can be used as a metaphor for knowledge, leadership and western culture and its linear orientation: the focus of power and control through one individual. It's about an individualistic society as apposed to the collective. It's about objectivity—purely, and who has and you measure what they have and the measure of what you have and are directly proportionate to your worth and value as a human being.

Those that have the most tend to maneuver into leadership positions and what that does is just discount those with skills in other areas and how it turns into competition, pure and simple rather than cooperation. I feel that what I bring to this circle with respect if Indigenous leadership is what we're looking at—I don't know very much—I can't go very deep. I bring with me some knowledge that I've acquired in the past few years. That

knowledge is not the same at all as wisdom around leadership.

The knowledge that I've acquired adopted a position that—not that I'm suspicious of it but that I really need to be able to process it and in some ways adopt or pick up those pieces of knowledge that are true for me and my understanding of reality and that is limited to only what is in this body—I don't know if that's making sense—from courses that I took at University of Lethbridge in the Native American studies program from a man who I feel has an unbelievable wealth of knowledge. He would stand and lecture and lecture fluently and the only time he looked at his power point presentation is to make sure that he is staying on track. The information, the data, the chronology its amazing what he was capable of communicating but again that was just knowledge right? Not wisdom what he taught me was that a fundamental difference between the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples whom the Europeans encountered when they arrived here was that the Europeans had leaders and were very hierarchical. The individuals they were encountering had a system that was described as being savage and being unorganized and just one step above animals where in reality the leadership in those nations was not a chief. A chief was a white concept. In the collective if the business that was at hand for the day was hunting, then hunters came forward and he was the leader.

If it was about negotiation for trade and barter then it was the best negotiator. If it was war then it was the best warrior, if it was about gathering and preparing food it was many people and those that had the skills necessary for what was to be accomplished would move into that leadership role.

When that task was completed they would step back. Europeans, well that just didn't fit in the logic and the rapist again coming and imposing, imposing will with no

regard for the others' spirit, well being as far as that goes and just how powerful I said that the dream was. How that's changed through the sustained attempts at what I truly believe to be genocide—you can be as diplomatic as you want but understanding what has happened it would be inaccurate to describe it as anything else. The leadership of western civilization has attempted generation after generation—well if they couldn't actually eliminate the people, (the Beothuks) you assimilate—you have the people disappear in servitude to western culture. It's a huge difference, I believe when Kîskeyikaniskwew was speaking earlier about why did this happen maybe in a way it's about truth and if it is indeed truth then it's resilient. You might try to change the way that it looks through leadership and you might try and manipulate it and control it but truth remains truth and it can't be—it will continue to surface in its way in its truth and...from my shallow perspective for what's its worth, that's the difference that I understand with respect to Western culture and its style of leadership being imposed in the style of a rapist on a collective people.

Question #2

What is Indigenous leadership?

Marilyn: I had some thoughts when we are going along and I feel like a child in some respects sometimes. I look inside and I'm thinking like a child and I look in the mirror and think oh no I'm not—I'm really old [laughter] sometimes that's how I think in relations to what I'm learning and how I live my life in regards to how I think about things.

Part of this whole thing of Indigenous leadership and how is leadership

developed? And I don't know if I'm going along in the right track here. I think the whole process of leadership for ourselves having our own ability to determine our own thinking as individuals. Never mind somebody who's now put in that position of being the one who is standing forward for whatever path that's ahead, even when we were talking I was thinking I never really liked that title: Dean. I like saying to my friends outside: "I'm the dean you know"—oh what is that? But its kind of embarrassing—what the hell is that? [laughter] My friends in the other world and in New Zealand —they say "wow". [laughter]

I was thinking about that and I was thinking something that you were saying; what would I like to be and what is my role in that? Maybe I'm the basket, maybe like the container. When you think of counseling, coming into that relationship, part of the role of the counselor is to be the container for that that work; to be the container for that energy and accessing spirit and being in that place and being that container. Maybe at this point it won't stay that way but that's the image I'd like to hold for this moment and this time—part of the work is to be the container for that program and so that feels good.

The other thought that came to my mind was maybe in part from reading that book the *Wayfinder* and back to those testicles. I'm stuck with that image.

Want to clarify that for those who weren't here?

I'm reading this book called *Wayfinder*. It started out with a number of things but where it ended up was with the reclamation for all the Polynesians for their technology and knowledge around navigation and ocean going. One of the guys that they got that knowledge from the Hawaiians was Micronesian or Melanesian and part of his training was as a baby he was put in the tidal pools so he could see how that water flowed. When he was fourteen he tied his testicles to the mast of the ship of his boat, so that he could

get a really good sense of the wind currents and how things were moving through that part of his awareness, I guess his being. [laughter]

Vince: I do the same thing [laughter]

Marilyn: Knowing where we're going also is in part knowing where we are and in that sense work around healing the wounds of the colonization process is necessary. There's so much that has occurred and its recent history but at the same time that it's recent history its history that's not necessarily known in the communities. That's kind of an interesting thing if you think about it—that are children don't know that we had an apartheid system much like South Africa where we had to have passes to leave and passes to sell. How the welfare system became so entrenched in our communities—was not something of our doing, our construction or our desire, its not what we were planning but it is where we are—those kinds of things are important for us for ourselves to know; so as Kîskeyikaniskwew was saying for the rest of the world—particularly this world and this community to know.

I remember when I took my daughter to school for that one year in St. Paul and I thought what kind of history do you have here? That teacher when I went to school with her and that principal was quite happy with herself, quite progressive bla bla bla but really they didn't know anything. Those kinds of things in terms of I guess Wayfinding and in a sense that is what we are doing and what Blue Quill's is doing. Other Native organizations like Red Crow College and Neichi Institute in their own ways are trying to help people find their way. And I think its finding our way back to that Indigenous

knowledge and our own leadership of our own self and our own life so that we can then be that nation that's self determining.

Making good choices about who we want —who stands forward in certain situations when we need somebody to stand forward. I think about that *onîkânot* the person who's gonna stand forward. We develop people that are doing that not from that place of ego or woundedness but more and more we do that from a place of solidness and understanding of where we are. That whole process of decolonization I see it as kind of like a healing process as well. I think that there are stages to it and that individual people are at different stages in that healing process maybe we move back and forth in that process.

We come to a place of real anger and we come to a place of—the word is not acceptance—but we are in a different place in terms of our own healing and so we're able to see things from a broader perspective and act less from that woundedness and more from a place of empowerment. It's a process that we need to go through and bring our own people through and I think in the community, it's a process of coming and taking a look. Hey look at the wound, look at what happened and encouraging the anger and whatever else that needs to come out—if people are coming from a place of empowerment and not of fear or difficulty.

I always think those Europeans they're so many years displaced from their tribalness that's what a lot of them are looking for and missing—their own Indigenous origins. Maybe it's from before the Romans, that occurrence that disruption started to happen but certainly they spread it along. The whole Roman conquest and how they conquered all those different cultures and Indigenous peoples. The (I was gonna say the Americans) the

British then took on that mantle and carried on that whole colonizing thing. Certainly I think now the Americans; everybody in the whole world needs to go back to that Indigenous leadership and that Indigenous kind of thinking.

I was thinking of Kîskeyikaniskwew's recent trip to Africa and thinking about the role of men and women. It would be interesting to know how those particular Ghanaians, how their whole traditional process occurred. That chief that she went to go visit was in that process of being chosen and given a mother—not his physical biological mother but—so that's a very interesting of how that would work out.

That's as far as I can go. Ay ay

Lana: First of all I would like to thank everyone that was in the circle I think that this is probably one of my most appreciative and beneficial professional development ever done since I've been here. I think a lot of it has to do with working in an Indigenous organization. I've got to hear first hand by everyone in here what this organization really is about. I know I read about it in our proposals. We've talked about it a bit in some of the meetings and in our strategic planning but this has been a really—a very evoking and important dialogue. I feel very akin to and I really appreciate all the knowledge and wisdom that was shared and emotions. I guess it made me feel very comfortable to finally allow my voice from the wilderness to come out because I'm always silencing it. I appreciate Stewert Steinhauer for being that kind of role model of allowing his voice from the wilderness to always speak but I agree with what everyone said it's definitely about a relationship.

About protocol about our connections to the land, to tobacco and to each other

and especially to ourselves and acknowledging that because whenever I look at questions like this I always look at how that relates to me. The best way that I can answer is of course from my spirit. That's what I am learning to speak and since I'm not very good just speaking from my brain and my head—I'm better at writing with this [laughter] but to speak—it's not my skill. I ask myself if I'm a leader; who's been a leader and how it was developed?

And I'm thinking of Vincent's words of the tobacco and honoring and bringing that. I haven't done that too much to tell you the truth and a lot of the reasons why is because of not being taught the protocol; because it wasn't taught to be of value or worthy. I think by not being taught that; I don't feel of value and worthy and to have that relationship with tobacco and to bring it to an Elder. I have kind of reiterated when you are first born into this earth, this world you're acknowledged by your mother holding you or looking at you. A lot of children don't feel that; a lot of children are born as crack addicts and or their parents are not there to completely connect with them and so that very first touch, that very first connection is lost—and I do believe—as part of being assimilated is being asleep.

Those of those that are born with Cree ancestry that still lives within us and at the same time its very much asleep, silenced. When we reconnect to the language, the land all our relations, our traditions, once that's been developed then we'll really see some powerful leadership amongst ourselves. What Vince is saying about the crabs and the pulling up—I really appreciate that—that's part of giving that knowledge by just teaching the protocol. I'm always working unfortunately I don't get to go to a lot of these things. I should know these things but I don't get to go to different workshops because I'm always

in the background helping out with things. It's good to acknowledge that by sharing that knowledge to be in a circle of people. That is acknowledgement and it makes you feel worthy enough and it makes you feel comfortable and at ease once you hear other people sharing that stuff.

Kiskeyikaniskwew: I would like to share a story as well about Indigenous leadership it comes from our neighbors to the south the Blackfoot people who did some research on what is the research that came out of Blackfoot territory. So they started digging and they found, they came across Maslow's research and it happened in 1935. At that time the government had just made the reserve smaller and the sociologists wanted to know what impact that would have on the people, in terms of their organizing, in terms of their social fabric. So they sent out three researchers to Sisika which is east of Calgary in 1935. Abraham Maslow was one of those researchers and one of the things he had going for him, he was very meticulous about his observation and recording what he observed. So I think this story really captures Indigenous knowledge in terms of the relationship to leadership in that Teddy Yellowfly was the youngest Chief.

Amongst their Chiefs, they had many Chiefs and he was their youngest Chief and he's the only one on the reserve who had a car and he bought and maintained the car and made sure it had enough gas in it all the time. Anybody and everybody on the reserve who needed it came to pick up the keys and away they went in the car and they would bring it back. This was something that Maslow observed and recorded that he was amazed that anybody could just come and drive this car to their appointments. They could get things in a nearby town and do whatever and Teddy Yellowfly was happy to

share his car. Teddy Yellowfly was a rancher as well, so he had many cattle and when it came time to branding the new cows and doing whatever they do to new calves, all he had to do was go to the area where they were gathering and say 'on Tuesday of next week I'm going to be branding my cows' and make that announcement. Low and behold on Tuesday the following week all these people would come and the work would get done in no time. That's that synergy; I guess is what they call it—that's what it became known as synergy. He's lending out his car. It's become sort of like the collective car and he's not asking for any rent on the car or payment on the car but what he's getting in return is gratitude from the people in that they're coming to help him with what need to get done and offering their service.

To me that's a really wonderful explanation of what we're talking about today and it illustrates that in 1935 this is still happening, and there are aspects of that still happening today. Abraham Maslow and his experience of the Blackfoot people developed from their knowledge base what has become known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs and he got it from the Blackfoot knowledge base.

Leona: What is Indigenous leadership? I'm all over the place I'm not thinking in a linear fashion. In terms of how we lived and where we are today there's a lot of stuff that we're not involved in so that knowledge that was carried through our language and through our relationships. A lot of that is missing in terms of the trapping, hunting, trading, navigating, the knowledge that we learned about animals, we learned about their habits and we learned about the environment.

We learned about the weather. Through the stars we learned about travel, the

weather systems. The language was involved. I always remember when I first moved, my mother in law only spoke Cree. When she used to get visitors, first of all they would talk about who they were and how they were related. Then the next thing would be she would ask in Cree 'how is the moon hanging?' Why would she need to know whether it's up or down, waxing or waning? I never saw the importance of that because really it was also about the weather, and also about where people were at. So there's lots of stuff and are connections and our responsibilities to that is missing and how do we bring that forth?

In terms of leadership, for me leadership is about *nîkân nîkotisitimâsewo*, *okimahkân* is a chief *onîmakahkew* is a boss. We put *kân* at the end of it. It makes it that the person is artificial chief. I think the language keepers basically knew what they were saying. In other words, how do we develop that word because they saw that our chiefs today are artificial leaders. They are in there because of the Indian Act. *nîkânnew* is somebody in front for the purposes of others. That whole collective and that whole purpose is not in there because of your own vision or because of what's going to drive you to stay in the lead. It doesn't necessarily mean that your going to be the lead for these other purposes or these other people all the time, it basically implies that for that purpose your in the role but its always for others.

I guess for me its being a part of change. We can't remain static—if we remained static where we were in 1970, our kids would still be taken away from us and be sent where ever. To be critical in terms of the whole colonial process, when we don't understand what's happening then we blame it on people and they don't understand what's happening so we put the blame on people. What's happening now is I know that we are administering our own poverty in our communities. We are administrating here

but to move beyond that—how do we do that?

I think that Indigenous leadership is about reclaiming who we are, our identity, our ceremonies our songs, our knowledge of the land, and the cosmos. Unlike the western world—we've got a whole area of healing that needs to happen. I think that leadership; one who is out in front of us to do things for us in different ways and different capacities, we need to recognize our history. We need to tell our stories and we need to be able to also have space and the ability to practice who we are through our ceremonies, through our songs, everything else and our language so its about the collective. It's about bringing forth the best in people—giving them that opportunity.

Leadership is also about relationships. Our brother Wizakitsza, he was out teacher and he came here to teach us and he also had the knowledge of everything on earth and as well as in ceremony. His human failings as well and those are the teachings that we need to learn from so we need to be able to tell those Wazikitsza stories. For the masters program one of the assignments that we gave our students was to take a Wizakitsza story and analyze it from a researcher's perspective; the learning and sort of reflecting on how that story relates to you. It's not just about this academic learning and information but how does it touch your spirit? How would that touch your spirit? And that was such an interesting exercise. I was thinking the other day you know of all these stories that I was reading, and I remember how the language brings beauty in that. The lessons of Wizakitsa, I'll tell you a story...

He came upon—he's always looking for his brother right? The wolf *ayeethena*, they had had a falling out when they were kids. Wizakitsa was walking along he sees these chickadees. They were taking their eyes out and they were throwing them up then

they would catch'em and put them back in. All these chickadees were doing the same thing and he's curious to find out why. They were having so much fun and he wants to have fun too so he thought, hmm I wonder if they would teach me? So he's got this relationship with these chickadees and they trust him and they said but there's walls around us. You can only throw your eyes out four times and that's all we're allowed to do, you're allowed to do that. You can only throw your eyes out four times and that's all we're allowed to do, you're allowed to do that. So *miskîsik* is the eye right? *Mis* is a body part usually *misakan*, *miskaskot*. *kîsik* is the heavens or the skies. So he's throwing his eyes out there and the birds are gone so he thought, hmm. He throws his eyes up the 5th time and of course they didn't land. He was told not to. He didn't listen so he goes around looking for his eyes, looking to the plants, to the different animals. No, no you didn't listen. That's what you get. You crossed the boundary, you've caused this imbalance. He finally comes to this tree and the tree has pity on him. He said take this spruce, roll it up and put it in your eyes and so he did that.

Those kinds of stories, the reflection that I received; there was about forty stories that they could choose from. There was really a lot of learning about morals. As little kids we used to learn this way. We have adults come in and they look at this and they talk about the relationship building that's in the story and the need to follow those values and what happens when you don't. All of the stuff that happens in those stories and we don't tell enough of those stories and we need to start to be able to say them in Cree.

Part of what I am saying in terms of our responsibility and in terms of leadership, to enhance that, to provide that opportunity as well as the collective ensuring that we do things as a collective. There's times that jobs require us to stay focused to do that. The

big picture is working for the collective, being in the collective. You see all of that in ceremony. What we need to know about organizational development, leadership development, responsibilities is all in our ceremonies.

oskapewis are helpers in ceremony; if they don't get the things done, the ceremony doesn't go. The pipeholder might be there, the singers might be there, *oskapewis*, if the helpers are not there it doesn't happen. If the food's not there, it doesn't happen. All of those things—everybody has a responsibility and also a gift to bring into that and it's for everybody—it's for the children, its for the Elders, its for the people.

I see also the whole life long learning that it continues that we continue to be a learning community, we learn from each other. I really enjoy when we sit down and talk and people have gone out to other places and have come back with a story of things; the connections and the relationships that they build. Because I think each one of us, everyone on staff and everyone in the community needs to be able to develop those relationships because through those relationships work gets done. You see that again in ceremony and the gift of the mentorship. I know we don't have the resources, the time or any of those things. That's one thing that causes us to continue to develop, to continue to mentor staff and students. I think its basically working to everybody's gifts, giving them space to grow, giving them voice, the ability to voice. I think those for me are really important. In terms of our Indigenous leadership, through ceremony, were provided the vision or the purpose of why we are here and our responsibilities and our connections.

In the pipe ceremony, Kîskeyikaniskwew was talking about this; bringing the teachings of the women's pipe and the men's pipe together so we can learn what the men's roles are or vice versa. Through the collective we would begin to have more

balance in terms of our knowledge and in terms of finding out. We all have sons and daughters that I think we would all benefit; we can find different ways in which we can all bring this body of knowledge forward.

Ay ay

Lana nya: I was thinking about Indigenous leadership and I think my first memory of Indigenous leadership is the heart beat which is connected to the earth, to the mother, to the grandmothers, to language and song, to being cradled and loved and all of those teachings. My first real Indigenous leader would be my grandmother who gave that love and sharing and these teachings. We see the kindness the caring—those grandmother, grandfather teachings and she was also connected to the land. She was connected to so many other people and it was definitely about her relationship building. This affected me and because she was always with me, she took me everywhere with her when I lived with her. She always spoke her language she always sang, she was always walking in the bush and always around other people.

I've learnt from that because that was my closest relationship to what I believe as a very Indigenous a very *nehiya segoa* person. Those four elements of being, where as I almost see myself as almost a *keegats* [laughter]. I'm working towards it. Indigenous leadership is definitely about the person's relationship to themselves, by and who they create their relationships with, and the knowledge and skills that they are sharing. As I grew up and started reading about Indigenous peoples and nations, historically they knew who had skills and they shared that knowledge. If you were an artist, people would know who the artist was, the arrow maker or who had the best hunting skills. There was that

acknowledgement from your relations. I'm trying to not use 'community' [laughter] and then passing acknowledging and sharing that knowledge; realizing that everyone is a leader in their own way because in the western world view it is an authoritative voice for leadership.

Of course what we learn through Catholic school was that as a woman, I had to attain to be that angel in house; the virgin but I still had to have kids [laughter]. There's all these conflicting views and those were supposed to be our leaders, that delusion of trying to attain the impossible. Then we don't embrace the human being-ness of being able to make mistakes and even seeing in our mistakes that's a learning opportunity; this in itself a leadership strategy. Working in this Indigenous organization, Indigenous leadership is about having many roles and we're learning to balance that and helping one another and sharing with one another, that's being Cree. Ay ay

Bernadine: Indigenous leadership to me is being truly yourself, having respect for yourself as well as others, growing with children, growing with others, growing with Elders being—role modeling your behaviors to others—being self reflective, giving yourself the opportunity to learn from mistakes or if not mistakes then learn from your experiences to be able to have the confidence in yourself which your lived experience has meaning—has validation being true to yourself I think.

William: I'll talk about some other stuff in a round about way and come back to this question. Last night I was watching the news and they had Obama hosting a state dinner for the Indian Prime minister. I visualized Mahatma Ghandi in place of the Indian prime

minister in his loin cloth half naked. That's why Churchill called him a savage. Churchill wouldn't meet with him because he knew that Ghandi would come dressed up like that [laughter]. Being true to yourself, being comfortable in your skin which is really what is slowly happening in aboriginal communities. The reclaiming of culture and identity because of what has happened in terms of the impact of colonization, it's very scary because it has occurred world wide. Having grown up in East Africa and being told about the value of being part of the British Empire by a teacher whose East Asian dressed in a sari [laughter].

Your welfare as a student is dependant on how much knowledge you've taken in from that textbook about the British Empire, and feeling proud about being a member of the British Empire, and feeling proud about being Catholic. Just sort of a devaluing of whatever identity my tribal ancestors had 500 years ago prior to colonization and having to struggle with that all of my life. Some of the participants here talked about and seeing how it has been played out today in Asia in terms of the consumer culture. For the first time China will be producing more cars than the United States and all of those cars will be bought within the country. India's Tata motors will be producing something that looks like the smart cars and you can buy them for 2,000 dollars. The sense of boasting that goes with that, with the consumer culture that the rest of the world has bought into the western model of democracy of development. India's middle class population is the equivalent of the US population 50 million maybe 350 million little smart cars and the imbalance it will create in terms of emissions etc. So when the concept of Indigenous leadership and the teachings that balancing with nature and taking from nature only what we need, back to nature to me that is such an invaluable lesson. As Kîskeyikaniskwew

said it needs to be heard. The teachings that go with Indigenous culture—it needs to be heard in Ghana and everywhere else. Because this model (consumerism) that is being embraced is a scary model. It's going to destroy the planet and from what I learnt when I have worked here all this time, if I want to cut a tree I have to offer tobacco to the tree before I cut down the tree. The rocks, the trees, everything—there is spirit in everything and somehow that connection has been lost.

The Europeans have lost that sense of tribal connection and the teaching that went with that in terms of reconnecting with mother earth; the values and going back to those teachings so that we can restore that sense of values, that sense of give and take in our relationship with the universe.

Pat: I'm going to answer what is Indigenous leadership and how is it developed? That's a hard question, a very hard question for me but the place that I want to start is by my personal connection to the land. For me the land and my connection to it is very spiritual. I grew up on the land, I grew up in the bush, I grew up with the mountains in the back. I grew up with the bears, I grew up really connected to that land and I think it just hit me when I listened to Lana, how profound. When I'm on the land for me it's really spiritual. I don't think people really understand that because I've been laughed at so many times. When I walk, it's such a spiritual connectedness to that land.

As a kid I grew up in the bush in northern BC [British Columbia] and the mountains were in the back, I lived with the bears, the wolves were there. As kids we would pick gallons of berries, we would take five gallon pales and it was nothing to go pick blueberries, raspberries, cranberries, huckleberries—we just did it. And it's only now

in sitting here listening to Lana how fortunate I was. I didn't grow up with any churches; there were no churches where I lived. And I listen to all of these stories and I think holy shit was I ever lucky. I didn't have the language. My parents are fluent Cree and they didn't teach us the language, that's a sadness for me.

But the land, that connectedness, my kids they would when they were younger, they would laugh at me because I would hug trees. I would hug the trees and they would say 'oh mom you're so burnt' and I would just laugh. It's so interesting now because when I look at my kids I see that they get it, they get it now, they get the connection to the land. And I'm so saddened when I see this colonizer raping the land, because that's what I call it. They are raping the land and we are sitting by allowing that. He's polluting it. Because for me Indigenous leadership is about that land, my spiritual connectedness to that land and it's about values, and it's about those natural laws of kindness, honesty, strength and determination, and love.

As I was listening to you guys talk, I was thinking about the late Joe P. Cardinal. I remember I sat in the trailer there and he was talking, he was laughing. I can still hear him, he said they were talking about residential school and these impacts we're talking about. He said, yes he said 'places like this,' he said they try to remove the savage from us here. Then he started to laugh and he said 'I'm here to tell you today that we're here, I'm here, we are here, (there were other Elders too), 'we're here to put the savage back into you.'

When I think about this question of all the people in this circle Vincent, Kîskeyikaniskwew, Leona; these are the people I look to as being my mentors. I feel like a baby in kindergarten in terms of this knowledge. One thing that I know is how

connected, that spiritual connection to the land is for me. That connection is so profound. When I am on the land, I see the interconnectedness to the trees, to the birds, to the winds, to the water. My heart aches when I see the water depleted.

It literally aches because I know how disconnected we are. There are so many people in this world who are so disconnected. I saw that most profoundly when I went to New York, when I went to New York City. I saw so many people and something as simple as using your own mug, a recycled mug when you go for coffee, and how many thousands and thousands of people could do that every day, and they have no connection to how we're destroying things. For me—those examples I think are aspects of Indigenous leadership. I think another thing that's really important in terms of leadership is working from our heart, with those values of kindness, honesty, strength, determination and sharing. Those are really critical aspects of leadership. When I teach leadership to our students, I always go back to those natural laws because I'm responsible for teaching contemporary leadership to our students. I go back to those values, I ask them and I remind them.

If we live these in our community, that living this way and embracing these values, these teachings that have gotten our ancestors to where, they brought us here. Those are good teachings and in decolonizing ourselves, then how we work with our colonizing leadership and our communities that are dealing with our woundedness and anger. Then the leaders that come through Blue Quills's FNC, helping them to understand these Cree values and Cree ways of being in the world. They can make their own connection to that, then there's significant hope about how leadership will change; how our people will lead because it will be very different leadership.

The egos that some people have in their positional power and their places of that style of leadership will fall to the wayside because a title is nothing—its nothing. It's how we live and engage and try to do the work that needs to be done. One of the things that I want to throw out and we had this conversation Julia, in this decolonization process and this study of leadership, I would challenge or I would invite your committee members to come here, come to Blue Quills First Nations College. I would invite them to come here and sit in the circle with us for a pipe ceremony and for us—for all of us that sit around this circle now to help you with this leadership, to understand Indigenous leadership. For them to come into this circle here, on this land to think about how they decolonize themselves, because we need allies, we need people who can come to that place in their own heart of knowing that there are many injustices that continue to be happening all over with lots of different people. All the “isms” that have been mentioned. So I got emotional about this because I just, I realized how lucky I have been [laughter] when I think about it, how lucky so thank you, you've helped me today.

Kîskeyikaniskwew: [Cree] And that's where it starts. First I acknowledge the Creator and give thanks for this day. To me, (I'm Kîskeyikaniskwew), that is where it begins and that is what informs our consciousness. That is what has given us our consciousness is the acknowledgement of the spiritual and that starts with the Creator who created all that we know. In creating all that we know which includes the four elements, the wind, the sun, the water, the rain and the land and everything that lives on the land. Everything that lives in the skies and everything that is not seen by our limited ability to see; it was created for a purpose.

As such they are teachers to us because they took on that responsibility of what it is they do. As people we were created last for the reason that we are the most fragile of all of creation in terms of our inability to remember, for our inability to remain in balance the way that everything else in creation can and naturally does. Because they follow the natural laws of the natural order and when we were created we were created with that will, that ability to think and to speak and to act. We say we came from the spirit world in order to come and touch the ground with two legs, two feet to walk this land because we come with love in our being, to help others. We come with a gift and we're born into that natural order of things. We were born with that love, honesty, sharing and determination. We are born with that and we are nurtured as we move through the seven stages of our lives until we take and expel our last breath. We return to spirit because we have finished what we have come to do. That is the natural order of Indigenous ways of being so when we talk about leadership, we talk about the most important fundamental beings as being those children that we are nurturing. They are going to replace the roles that we have, when we leave them; we have to teach them those roles and responsibilities.

As men and women we were each given ways of interacting, ways of being in balance and ways of being interdependent on one another. Using our gift that we came here with that purpose that we came here for and with those laws and rules that we are given. They are represented in our pipe; the woman's pipe ceremony the men's pipe ceremony. I like to refer to them as the universal pipe of the woman and perhaps it's the universal pipe of the men. There is our oral constitution, we have governance and our governance comes from there and it's informed from the spirit world. So we acknowledge the primacy of that spirit, we acknowledge the primacy of the spirit in

relation to our physical beings, our emotional being and our being.

Those are what we have to remain in balance to walk this road we call the sweet grass trail. We live to our responsibilities and to me that's what leadership is; to live to our responsibility and to live to our purpose. We don't do it for self interest. We do it for the well being of the ones that we love, the ones who we are a part of, our relations, all our relations not just our mom and dad or sisters and brothers but all of our relations because we are all related. So we have our natural ways of being in balance. So for women it becomes—it's a cycle that helps us to remain in balance. For men they have a different role because they have to go out and be protectors and providers.

Sometimes men have to be in situations where they have to assert that capacity to be providers and that capacity to be protectors. When they assert themselves, they get out of balance. In order to get back into balance, we have within our governance systems ceremonies and all of these ceremonies have a natural order. Everybody has a role to play in them so our men have to come into ceremony to get back into that balance.

We have an abundance of ceremonies throughout the year to help our men to be in balance. We have a role to play and as Leona said not one single group or role is the primary role. Every one has a distinguished role that makes that ceremony work. To me that's how we also need to be able to assume that organizational capacity in our contemporary ways of organizing. What I said yesterday, our people, we come together at least once a year to talk about those things. To ensure we maintain the integrity of those ceremonies, maintain the integrity of our roles, and our functions and our abilities to make things work. To me that's Indigenous leadership. To me that's what it's for, it's all of us it's not just us in relation to one another *wagotoin* but it's about our relationship to

the land, our relationship to other nations and people.

I think about the land and I think about the sky and I think about how those beings that know those places much better than we do and have taken on roles. I look at them as leaders. For the land say here in Canada, the leader of the animals is there, and holds those four—in their paws I guess, four laws. They hold love, they hold honesty, they hold sharing and strength and they walk the land. They are seen as kind and healers and we look to them for those purposes when we need help. For the sky, it's the eagle. The eagle has an incredible story of transformation. I don't know if you have heard about it yet because it's been going around in emails.

The eagle has a very long life but in order to maintain that long life they have to go through a transformation at about thirty five to forty years. They have a choice at that time. They can die or they can transform themselves and live another forty years. That transformation process is brutal because they have to go to the mountain and they have to sequester themselves. In that process and in that time they rejuvenate themselves. They'll hit their beaks against the rock until it falls off. They need a new beak in order to live forty more years. They need that strength in their beak in to be able to hunt.

They will rip out their talons one at a time because in order to hunt they need strong talons and after forty years those talons have worn, they need to rejuvenate them. They rip out all of their feathers because their feathers have become mottled and they need the strength of flight. To rip out all of their feathers and they'll sit there and wait and wait until they rejuvenate themselves. Until their feathers grow strong again and so they're going through a fasting period and their talons are growing and their beak regrows and then they can take flight again. Be the masters that they are and live another

forty years.

So for me that tells me how we need to sometimes go through a critical period in our lives in order to maintain the strength and integrity of the four directions, and that balance. The bear goes through the same thing year after year. It goes into a state of fasting during the winter months.

I look at those beings; we have a lot to learn from them. We do not have that belief that we should be masters over the animals and all these other beings. In fact it's the opposite, they are our teachers and we are part of them and that tell us about how we came to be birthed and gifted to this land. We didn't come from Asia or Bering Strait or where ever they claim that we came from. We were born here and we have that story that tells us how that came to be. To me that's all Indigenous leadership.

How it manifests in me, I have a gift and I have a purpose here and I need to lead a life of responsibility in order to be a woman and to raise the children that I have been gifted with. To carry on that bloodline for the next seven generations because they assumed it from seven generations past, and not to be that weak link that messes it up. But to carry it forward because it is beautiful, it is powerful and it is in balance and has the truth all wrapped into it. Ay ay

Brent: Thanks Kîskeyikaniskwew—its Brent again. What is Indigenous leadership? My own story, the journey that I have been on the last few years has been a journey of empowerment and it was a gift that I was given through relationship that was extended to me through an Indigenous teaching institution. That truly is what has brought me to this chair here today. Much of what Kîskeyikaniskwew was talking, about the relationship

building and not exclusive to, but includes all spirit that there is no individual. That there's connections at all levels. Pat talked about the connection that she felt with the land where it began. I understand at this point in my life that for so long so much of the problem and so much of the struggle that I had was in resistance to that. It was about the idea of leadership being about power and control. I see this form of leadership, it's about of empowerment and change and not fearing change. It's about the story that Kiskeyikaniskwew just shared about the eagle, it's about renewal, and it's about knowing the truth in spirit and connection.

To create all of these illusions and or false realities that that are so human; I think about at the time of first contact. What would the earth look like today if the leadership of the people in the Americas was the same sort of mindset as the Europeans? As soon they see them (Natives), they see that they are different and want to kill them. But what if they (Native leaders) encourage them to come on the land and as soon as they come on the land destroy those boats so they could never go back. They build relationship and kinship between peoples, and I don't subscribe to the idea that these pristine sailors walked off these ships with all this shining armor and nice clean clothes and everything and saw these savages.

I think they would be stinkin—lice ridden, smelly individuals that just spent three months floating on this little piece of wood on the ocean. If anything they were the savages, yet they were embraced by the people that they found; by the leadership that they found. It's a story that I thought about as far as those of us who are experiencing it and its reality today. How different it would have been if those Europeans weren't allowed to harvest trees to build the boats to bring the settlers in a vicious cycle.

Because at that point in mankind's history on this globe, the Europeans were running out of resources and it was only through finding Americas [rather] Turtle Island, pardon me, that they were empowered to have things unfold the way that it's unfolded. I think that in some of the conversation, I was thinking about the changing roles in leadership and Indigenous ways of living and how about recently we had an experience where we would be meeting with specialists in economic development. One of the things that was said clearly over and over and over again, when you look at all of those leaders that have been successful, the economy; Henry Ford, Bill Gates, whomever, not one of those successful individuals did everything. In every one of those organizations they had skills that were specific areas that would step up and utilize those and in so doing the collective, in this case the corporation becomes successful.

Where that gets skewed though is where the corporation is about profit and bottom line yet the same logic around leadership is what makes it successful; it's a collective effort. The thing that I appreciate most about it is the leadership in that school. I first went six years ago, welcomed me, even though you can't see my ancestors—you can't see my connection—its invisible, but its there.

Vince: Very good

Indigenous leadership to me is *cistemawiyiniw* [tobacco] brings that leadership forward unto itself cause every time that people are asked to do something, what gets them in motion is that *cistemawiyiniw*. Like what you came and gave me here *cistemawiyiniw*. That's it [laughter] very simple.

It's like what everybody said—it's contextual.

Everybody has their gifts. It's like that thing behind you (mural of Cree teachings) and building the nation. Everyone has their gifts and so the role of those people that stand in the front is to recognize those gifts for the nation and ask those people to lead. Take a step back and let it happen; not this egotistical bullshit where they think that well I'm the king, I have to do something it's not like that. To go ask somebody to do something you have to be pretty grounded in who you are so you do have to know who you are and know your limitations so then you can ask other people.

Even if they don't want to do it you see the gift in them and you bring that over and you make them feel better so they move forward. When those situations come about, it enriches everybody. They say we have crab syndrome where we drag each other down. I see it the other way where we have to drag each other up. If where strong enough to stand up we have to lift each other up and that's what builds nations, that's the leadership. I believe it is very contextual because you can't be everything. You can't run a ceremony by yourself. You have to ask those people with those gifts to come forward and help you, and you treat them right and they're happy.

You foster good relations, they're happy to be there and you build family, you build good relations, to me it's quite simple. Indigenous leadership starts with that—well of course with the Creator and that plant that the Creator put here *cistemawiyiniw*. That's the one that's always in the lead, always, it brings forward the leadership.

That's all I have to say.

Question #3

How is leadership developed?

Leona: How is leadership developed? I agree with Vincent in terms of mentorship.

Because the term we use for education in Cree is *kiskinwahamakewin* when you break the word apart it means to show it by modeling. That's how I think we taught our kids and I think for me leadership is developed in children at a very young age and I would think it would come from ceremony.

That's how children observe as you sit there and are doing things and they take in what you do by just observing and listening and with years and years of that, it gets to be a part of who they are and so role modeling is one thing just being true to who we are with our children is most important. We have a leadership and management program and I think we recognize the importance of leadership more and more so we grow each year with our programs here.

I think we need to reflect back on how has that [observation and mentoring] been a part of our program? And I know Pat changes the curriculum every year, so what I'm feeling is that we should be teaching almost with a conscious awareness of having students in ceremony weekly so it touches their spirit—it touches their need for healing. One of the things that prevents our students from moving forward from leadership action and change or falling back into the patterns of the governance system, it takes a while to do the healing work. Which I guess goes back to resiliency. We have it because it hasn't—because ceremony and language was almost lost for a lot of people so what we are doing is bringing in the philosophy and imbedding it into our leadership courses. Still

a lot of it is academic and there's nothing wrong with that but I think we need to balance it with the spiritual as well.

We have our smudge ceremony every time we have class but it's also our readiness level and their readiness level in our own growth things. They began to change what we did ten years ago and now it is changing again because we learned—we're more grounded I think, so that's where I'm at.

Pat: First of all I want to add a little bit but I want to thank you Lana—I really do want to thank you for being in this circle because you've—You really taught me some things today. It's really nice to have you here. It would be nice if you could be in here in this circle more. You have gifts that I don't get to see—like you really do like your art. You do beautiful creative things. And that creative side is one of the things that I see in you and for you to be able to come and share your voice and the creative thinking is really good so I really want to thank you,

Thank you.

And there's a few things that I want to add that I think are really important about how leadership is developed. One of the first things I want to say is leadership really can't be learned from a book. When you do your research and you share it, that's a good thing and yes it is but you can't learn leadership from a book. You have to live it; you have to do your own healing work. You have to look at who you are, like each one of us has to do that work and I know it's like looking at our own skeletons that are in our closet. We look at those then as George would say (George he's our Elder) he would say the hardest journey is to make that six to eight inch journey from our head to our heart.

Emotionally we connect. When I think about this leadership and how it is developed and from a western perspective, in the contemporary literature, one would say that you read a book and you find out all of these skills and all of these attributes—all of these role models and that would be kind of looking at positional leadership. In looking at how those things, if I emulate those, if I take a look and I try to model what this book is telling me then I might be a good leader in being this positional leader. I think the level of what we're talking about here is a more spiritual level. It's a spiritual level of leadership that if we go that journey, we get to know ourselves better and as we get to know ourselves better from a mental, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of wellness. We do the emotional work that we need to do and its hard work, its really hard work because you experience all kinds of emotions.

Anger and rage, you have to relive trauma; you have to relive the pain. You have to walk through the pain and it's a really hard journey to do, to go on. Sometimes it's easier to just read the book and be that kind of a leader. I can do this but really we will still continue to have those hierarchies. We'll still continue to have people practicing positional power because that skeleton still lives in the closet. As the skeleton still lives in the closet things will happen in the work place that will trigger potentially that leader. They can learn all of those things and they can read all of those things in the book. But when that trigger happens, that's when that skeleton is sitting on their shoulder and they may then practice power and control—that they don't want to practice but they will practice it.

Leadership, it has been mentioned here that we role model and we mentor and I really do believe that. I believe that each of us has a walk. We each have a journey to go

on and anybody wanting to be a more effective is to take that journey, is to go on that walk. It's a walk you go on yourself in connection to community, in connection to nation, in connection to family because it starts with us and it ripples out to others. In terms of what's important for nation development; well it's decolonizing, removing that shackle—that healing work, its recognizing oppression and marginalization—and its all about the things we have been saying about reclaiming.

Reclaiming Indigenous identity, reclaiming being a human person, being a human, feeling your heart and yet all of the literature out there has been pushing staying in your head to feel. And it continues actually today in men especially because men aren't supposed to cry and men aren't supposed to show emotion, and men aren't supposed to express emotion. One of the greatest teachers for me has been our Elder who would sit in a pipe ceremony, and he would sit there as the tears would ripple down his cheeks. He was a role model for me because as he sat there crying, it allowed me to cry, it allowed me to open my heart to say its ok, there's no shame in crying. George (our Elder) has been a wonderful teacher in his own kind, humble, loving gentle way—to see his tears stream down his cheeks. It was like such a lifting moment, a lifting moment to see that here's this man... We're all brain washed into thinking we have to be strong emotionally. We need to share; we need to share, share, share. We need to build relationships. We need to invite others on the journey with us. We have to hold hands with others and work together and as we do that we will collectively be at a better place.

Kîskeyikaniskwew: How is leadership developed? This is Kîskeyikaniskwew, and I like what Vince said about *cistemawiyiniw* its true fact. It put everything into motion by

offering that tobacco. I think somebody said that, William said it, before I cut a tree down I have to offer tobacco and tobacco is the doorway. The way it was described to me, it was described to me in many ways—but one way I really like was the Blackfoot people. They have a really profound knowledge of tobacco as well. They say that's the place or that's the being, the one who provides relationship opportunity and that is the treaty. So every time you are offering tobacco you are offering a treaty relationship with somebody else. To me the treaty relationship coming from our perspective is that honesty, strength, sharing and love and that's what you're doing. What you're asking for is going to be symbiotic in relation, not a power imbalance way of looking at it.

So how do we develop leadership? It's by being, maintaining that integrity to who we are Nehiyawak First Nations people; people of the four bodies and passing that knowledge on to our young ones. They have to carry it. If we don't pass it along they don't have it, so that's our responsibility. How do we develop it? Thinking about when you're born—the ones who are gifted like the old ones. They see you coming because they are connected to the spirit, very strongly. They knew what you're coming here for and with that they could name you when you arrive based on why you are here. They could offer that support to your parents, and your aunties and uncles so you could, so you are mentored eventually to the right ones to the right people holding that gift. So that you could take your place in that circle and lead with that purpose that you came here for. It's having that insight to see, to hear, to know then to pass that knowledge on to the ones that need it so that our children can be nurtured in a way where they assume that responsibility. So how do we do it today?

Because we're separated from that knowledge, we need to put it in our schools.

We need to take the time to give that knowledge in ceremonies with the people that are there to give that knowledge. Any opportunity we have I'd like to say we should put it on the radio and it's in our language, so we need to pass on our language. We need to find ways to pass it on that is true to who we are, true to that spirit and that language.

Language is really a vital part of leadership development. It's a part of child rearing, its part of resuming a healthy nation once again. Its about knowing that which we came here for, not so we could flaunt it but so we can be responsible about it; responsible to the next seven generations. That's all I'm gonna add.

Brent: I can answer how is leadership developed?

I see it as knowing when to follow, having the courage to trust and know myself well enough that those things that I can do well—I should do them well and when I can't, don't be ashamed to step back and turn it over to those who can. I believe that's where the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island got into trouble because they had people that would exploit them and take advantage of them. So if you're coming from truth, honesty and true spirit, the way to know how to lead is to know how to follow.

Vince: Through mentorship. All your answers are right behind you there [Four directions room mural of Cree teachings] You just gotta know how to read that. When children are born they come with a gift and that gift is to enrich their lives and also to help their nations—to help develop their nations. People watch them and see what their gifts are and put them with who they're supposed to be with. The clan mentors that person and that person becomes fully developed then they become that leader of that

clan. The clan also has the right of recall if they fall off track. Then they just put a new leader in and it's not written in stone. I like some of these guys that say we have a hereditary chief. But that hereditary chief isn't doing right then somebody else comes up then. You have to be really careful about the creep of, the colonial creep [laughter] you can take that two ways [laughter]. How that comes in and messes with people's minds because that hereditary chief sounds like a king, and the king's son—oh the son—its privilege in how it all plays out. I tend to question all that and I can't answer your question because we have this thing called belief. I can steer you in the right direction but if you believe then you're going to go out and ask lots of people.

Your going to open your eyes and your going to open your mind, your ears—everything. Some of those answers are not going to come from another human being. It might come from an animal, it might come from nature, it might come from the cosmos, and it might come from a dream. It's up to you to sort that all out cause that's how our knowledge works, our Indigenous knowledge, I can point you in the right direction—give you that there's a piece missing and that's—we always have to pull that piece out and that's how we don't have to protect Indigenous knowledge. A young man in Rocky Boy, one of my uncle's sons, I went to there for medicine and my uncle had passed on already. They said go see this young guy but I wanted to see one of my relations an older guy. We went looking and looking for this plant. We couldn't find this thing but when I ran into this young man he said oh these are easy to spot. That guy you were traveling around with he doesn't know what the heck he's talking about. But anyway we went back to the old man's house and he pointed out these plants, see they're all over the place but I won't show you one thing he said. I never know what he was talking about. I went back again

and another young man said, there's two parts to this plant. The upper part where everybody picks but you have to dig deep, you always have to dig deep. There's another bulb down there and you don't pull out lots, you pull out just what you need and that deeper bulb has more stuff in it.

When I first started building sun lodges, the old man that taught me how to build sun lodges, he said: you go out and you choose a willow, but you don't choose that first willow, you just walk right by it, get your second one. Because that first one will deceive you, you walk right by that first one and you keep on going deeper and deeper and you'll find better. That's how it is, that first one is just there to hook you. On my first fast my father said that first night be careful what comes, don't follow that one. That's the easy one, that's the easy road, that's only there just to hook you. When you go you keep on going, then you'll learn more, but you have to have that belief. So that's why my answers are quiet and they're simple, there are simple answers to these. How is leadership developed? Through mentorship, we mentor, we see those gifts in people and we work with them and we follow those seven laws, these four principles cause people are people, they get their own—they have their own mind. That's all—that's all for me.

Question #4

What's important for nation development related to leadership?

Leona: I think we want to develop leaders and want to form our way before we get nation development. Because our nations are so entrenched in government policy, government dictates. When we introduce change in our communities we need to be able to know each other and be related to each other. That change process can cause all sorts

of emotional issues: fear of change, the whole sense of those emotions gathered around that forming, norming? What is that? Forming—storming phenomena; sometimes we get stuck in the storming. [Tuckman, (1965) theory of group development] You're in the community and people are angry with you forever. That knowledge of change and the way that systems are out there—people have just bought into it and they don't have other alternatives they're stuck.

Elections and how governments run, how it's set up to keep us divided. Because every three years and in some places every two years, and so one year they are starting to know the job and the second year they are already politicking and in the politicking there's all sorts of back biting, and accusations. Then you go into vote and there's these sixty people that ran and only 7 positions, so we have fifty three "losers" because that's how it's set up—you've lost but it represents family groups and subsequent dynamics. So how can you move forward when you are stuck in that? How can you develop a nation when you are stuck in that sort of thing?

So I think to have the ability, I think we need numbers, this is what Blue Quills is about in educating and mentoring and developing numbers [of students] whereby they start feeling comfortable to critique a system in a good way without having people feel like they're being attacked because relationships are key to leadership and continuity.

The Indian Act needs to be dismantled but we need to have something in place, we have to develop that, we can't expect anybody else to develop it for us. There's a sense of competence in knowing that we can do it and believe in ourselves. Using every institution that's in our communities; the health centers funded by the department, the schools funded by the department and all of these departments, that's what we call them

now, there getting funding from the department—using that and really beginning to do professional development in the communities with ceremony—the whole reclaiming process.

When we get people to begin to understand that, I think it's easier to make that next step and I guess lastly here at Blue Quills, how do we continue to model that in a good way? We do have our challenges. New people come in and don't understand—we can see that, there's such a level of frustration; nobody seems to be moving, nobody seems to be heard, students aren't coming to class—all of that. That whole idea of reciprocity; I think that we need to continue working on that. What you do comes back to you in a good way.

We have to do the process in a good way when we start making changes so that it's not imposed on other people. I always believe in dialogue and in putting little seeds here and there; the people will figure it out when it's been fertile enough for them to grow that idea. It begins to be their ideas and then they take with that a sense of ownership for the end result. That's what [process] needs to be in there. Dialogue needs to be in there in terms of what leadership should look like. Certainly it has to be servant leadership, were not *oskapiyos* they serve us. At the end of the ceremony or during the ceremony protocol is they have to serve themselves first with the food or when we have a feast offering, after that ceremony we serve them the food because we honor the work that they're doing.

Brent: It's a hierarchy and if you are higher than you are expendable, but if you are lower and you're removed, then it takes out all of the chain above it. I believe that

Indigenous leadership is connected to the foundation of that chain of existence and coexistence and survival and it has to be about that balance, between the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual; the I, the We the It and the Its. [Wilber (2001) AQAL Model of Human Development and Consciousness] Ay ay

Leona: I would like to add to number [questions number] two.

I keep hearing Uncle Mike say humility: he used to tell us humility and humbleness and I see leadership in that, being humble. I'm thinking being humble we are connected to spirit, we are of spirit because that's what directs us and the Creator and spirit. Also in humility, then we provide space for other people. You recognize other people's gifts and you also recognize your own shortcomings and are accepting of them. You can't be everything to everybody every time, so when you can get to accept that, it's to be able to acknowledge other people's gifts. That's honoring those people. It's a continuous honoring of their gifts and what they bring to the circle. In that way it's honoring each individual's gift for the collective so you don't have any room for individualism or competition or vying for positioning.

And the other things that I think that is important as leaders in everything that we do—we need to know where we're going we need to know our mission, our purpose in life; our mission in organization and as well as the vision. I guess I really enjoy when we go through that exercise [strategic planning] because it reminds us again and as well our philosophy how are we going to get there, the process by which were going to get there incorporating the values that are taught to us as part of the process and being aware of that. For me I see Blue Quills as First Nation. When I think about my grandchild who

will one day be 25 years old and is not even born yet; what would I like to see my grandchildren and other grandchildren experience that I didn't? And I think that's that challenge of making changes—collective changes.

I see a safe place where grandchildren, great grandchildren will be in the language and will be able to run to any of the grandmothers and aunties or uncles and refer to them by how they're related; children that can still hear the songs and the stories season to season to be exposed to that, for it to be normal. As part of the community living to see Elders and to see grandmas living up to the *netigoohok* that their houses are so full that they have to sit on the outside. The men being through this education process as well as Blue Quills will again provide a space or this collective will provide that space for them to become the providers and the protectors and will take on that role.

Pat: There's a few things that I would like to add I think are important to me, to clarify the difference between for me spirituality because somebody reading this research might think, well I look after my spirit or I go to church on Sunday. I go there that one hour and given that I go there for one hour I'm doing what there talking about in terms of nurturing the spirit or connecting to spirit. But that's not really what I'm talking about, and I'm not talking about going to church one hour a week. I'm talking about ethical leadership in terms of practicing being connected to spirit to the Creator. What I have come to believe and understand as the Ancestors and Helpers who are there with me. Who I call upon and I ask for help with my children in the work that they do; call upon our ancestors that they sit with you, that they're there with you, that they help you, that they give you that strength that you need to do the work, that you have to do. Because for me that's very

different than if somebody interprets that as going to church for one hour a week, because it implies a different connection; a connection that's much greater and a responsibility, a very big responsibility, an ethical responsibility to bring about change. For me raising my children—since they were little they were groomed they were groomed in a certain way with a responsibility.

They would have to create something better and make the way easier and move our people forward. When I speak about that—that's very different and because somebody could read that literature and say 'I'm doing really good here you know I go to church every Sunday so I'm doing what these people are talking about' but I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about that collective consciousness that collective responsibility—that's what I mean.

Because that weighs heavy on my kid's shoulders because they have been groomed since they were little. They have big responsibilities. I think that they've taken it to heart in a very big way that things sit on their shoulders to make life better. That's very different. They don't take it as, I have this job to do, but they take it as part of their spiritual connectedness and responsibility. I have to thank Kískeyikaniskwew, Vincent and Leona because they are our mentors and as a result of that.

These two kids will graduate with those degrees soon but it's not ever ever been about them personally and what they're going to gain from this (education); nothing. It's about the collective responsibilities that they have as young leaders coming in the next generation behind us to imprint this change in a very conscious way. One of the things that I did for my son and I wanted him to feel it, I wanted him to experience it in his heart; when we had a ceremony, I said to him "James when you become a doctor I want

you to remember to treat women well, give them respect, the love, the kindness and the honoring that they need, as their helper, you need to give them” And I said that’s very important to me that you do that that you practice that type of leadership.

Those are little stories that matter because people are going to read this literature and they’re gonna interpret it from the lens from which they come and what its inviting—where do I want this leadership to go as a participant in it

I do dream Julia—to see these people come here; they have an obligation if they want to be part of a critical mass to bring about change then they need to come. They need to come sit in this room they need to learn, be at the heart of learning from a different master in a humble way because it will be humbling for them to sit here. They’re used to having a position—positional leadership. Here they’re gonna come at the foot of a young person—much younger than them and they’re gonna have to learn and in that [process]. Hopefully they’re gonna connect to their heart because that’s where significant changes can happen when they move from their head to their heart and move out of that white privilege place to try as best as they can. And I don’t know that they can—to experience a different lens, a different knowledge base that needs to be privileged. I think and I hope and I pray that in that process they will come to a different place of how they interpret leadership.

I remain personally optimistic and hopeful. I think of my own kids. They talk and they talk amongst their peers in the little circles that they travel and it’s very interesting to listen to them because they’re young. They talk about social justice, social consciousness. They talk about this and these are some pretty elitist kids that go to these schools some of them. The changes that they are able to make as a result of their relationships with these

other people; these elites are going to be young people who are gonna go on to leadership—probably take key leadership places if they continue to keep those relationships with these young ones.

I am optimistic. Recently James was talking about these two little [Algonquin] children that opened up this international Conference on the Rights of Children, they started this children's gathering, they said the prayer in [Algonquin] and James said "Mom you would have been so excited. These little kids, all nations, little Black kids, little Asian kids, these little Indian—East Indian kids, and they are talking about the injustices in Canada to Canada's Indigenous peoples; saying they don't have proper housing, they don't have proper water, they don't have. These are the little tiny ones, little children I guess talking, and if they have that kind of (understanding) they're learning about Canada's unjust society in which we're living—Then imagine what could happen.

As you do this research, one of the biggest things that I would like to invite people who read your research is to get out of the cement jungle and come to the land—come and learn on the land because it is a very spiritual experience.

Thank you

Vincent: So what's important for nation development as related to leadership?

It's like asking the question—what comes first, the chicken or the egg? [laughter]

Because as leaders develop, they develop nation it just doesn't happen. It just doesn't happen, it's developed by the people that develop within and culture isn't stagnant, it's forever evolving and then it looks back on itself, critiques itself and moves forward

otherwise we wouldn't have these renewal stories.

Because we lose our place and then people come back. Our children come with stories, ceremonies are introduced or re-introduced we move ahead like that's the answer to that one for me is a rock *asiny*. We keep going as a rock, we keep going, that's a rock, that's resilient. Some people, some of our leaders are, they just stay focused and just keep on going. It doesn't matter what anybody says, they just keep on going until they get there and then they'll rest. So that rock is strong, we pray to that rock for strength, we choose that rock that comes out of the ground *asiny*. We choose that rock and we heat that rock and we bring that rock into the sweat and we ask that rock for its strength and we sit there with nothing on and we receive that strength from the rock. It's pretty hot [laughter] pretty intense but that's what that rock does for us it reminds us it's a rock from the ground. *Donsayogawhasiinee*.

That rock that we see up in the sky, that sun, that rock does something else for us it watches over us. It heats us; we're warm because of that rock that's in the sky. That one that's in the earth that speaks for us, it sets us straight; it shows us how to walk a good path. That's why we choose that rock, when we heat that rock up specifically chosen. When you go into a field of rocks you don't just choose anything, you walk, you pick the right ones you want, you put them in that pile and then you pick the ones you want again, its not just choose anything. It's like choosing a leader. That rock is strong after sitting in many many many sweats you'll get that spiritual answer and that last one.

I know Sherri talked about when the people finally open their eyes and realize that we still carry knowledge they're going need to be going somewhere to learn it and I'm hoping it will be here still. Seven generations and... Ay ay

Pat: In terms of what's important for nation development, well it's decolonizing, removing that shackle, that healing work. It's recognizing oppression and marginalization and it's all about the things we have been saying about reclaiming, reclaiming Indigenous identity—reclaiming being a human person—being a human, using and feeling your heart. And all of the literature out there has been (suggested to) staying in your head, to feel—and it continues actually today in men especially cause men aren't supposed to cry and men aren't supposed to show emotion—men aren't supposed to express emotion and one of the greatest teachers for me has been our Elder who would sit in a pipe ceremony and he would sit there as the tears would ripple down his cheeks. He was a role model for me because as he sat there crying it allowed me to cry, it allowed me to open my heart to say it's ok there's no shame in crying. George has been a wonderful teacher in his own kind, humble, loving gentle way—to see his tears stream down his cheeks. It was like such a lifting moment—a lifting moment to see that here's this man—cause we're all brain washed into thinking we have to be strong emotionally, (to be) the role models what I think good leadership is, we need to share, we need to share share share, we need to build relationships—we need to invite others on the journey with us we have to hold hands with others and work together and as we do that we will collectively be at a better place.

Brent: I keep talking about my ability to only do a shallow response. I believe that the situation that exists today, the monumental task that exists with respect to rebuilding and nations. In light of all that's happened the demands that it will place on those that assume those leadership roles—it's overwhelming and definitely those that undertake it have that

passion and commitment that can come only from the kind of depth of where it's being spoken of earlier here.

It's in your genetics like Lana was saying—its asleep but its there. The demands placed on leadership today and all of the obstacles that exist due to the idea of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and what is done with that knowledge, its interpretation, its application in a laboratory that is in every way different than where it was born you know going all the way back as far back.

Because I also don't believe in the BS theory [laughter]—you know the Bering Strait Theory. I learned of an archeologist or an anthropologist and I wish I could remember his name that was absolutely bounced out of academia as a heretic. He talked about the atoll that's off the California coast that has fossilized records of society that existed on this continent not 5,000 years ago but 50,000 years ago, which does indeed suggest that just as there was a cradle of evolution on the other side of the globe. So too the evolution process started here. So going way back and the way that that knowledge had been brought forward and how at the time of first contact probably it could be assumed, because at that time because of the way that life was existing and co-existing on the continent. At that time and in those levels it was all in perfect balance between the two leggeds, the four leggeds and birds and fish. It was in a balance, a sustained balance that was all about harmony and connection and as soon as people humans started to increase population, the balance began to shift, shifted to the point now where—what exists for those leaders to do, I don't know—it is a form of romanticism to think that you can ever reclaim it. It can't ever be exactly as it was—I believe though that it was founded in truth and that truth is that essence of the source of the resiliency. The people,

the cultures are still existing but what will return will be a renewal but completely different, a completely different environment. How that challenge will be met I don't know. I kind of lose my train of thought there, it's so overwhelming.

Kískeyikaniskwew: What's important to nation development as related to leadership?

I think what's really important is the people that have that knowledge—live that knowledge and are nurtured to live that knowledge and not expected to privilege western ways of doing things. We have to privilege our own—and so places like Blue Quills has to have, to take that responsibility of being, of privileging who we are, privileging Indigenous knowledge and breaking out of that skin of Western society and just coming out of that box just coming out of that box like Vince was talking about—that analogy of being in a colonizer's box and just take those risks.

I was thinking about my dream of the buffalo and I was thinking how the buffalo also is education to our people. To me education has a really vital role to play in reconnecting our people to that knowledge and addressing the resistance through belief.

Privileging our knowledge is vital, colleges like this are vital, we need to get into our schools. Our First Nations schools while we still have them so that we get this information in them. We need to start retraining our teachers to think this way. We need the language as part of that movement, its important because that language informs who we are. Without that language I don't believe we can maintain nationhood and seven generations from now we might be able to do it for five generations. After that it's gone because you still have that connection because it's in your cellular make up. Your DNA that you inherited from your parents and your grand parents its still in you until your

fourth generation and then its gone –its not as strong –there’s not enough language around to revitalize it at that time its going to be more hopeless, now is the time to change and to move that language forward.

Question #5

What is important to know about resiliency?

Lana: Leadership as it relates to resiliency?

Again It’s sharing that knowledge being a friend, an aunt, a sister bringing back those kinship terms and knowing those roles that go with who you are as a woman as a man.

As an aunt, as a mother, as a grandmother and like the story I shared earlier about teaching my daughter, she was asking about suppression and resistance last night. It was funny—it was funny and not funny at the same time—just showing her. Suppression is and I smushed her head into the pillow [laughter] I’m like ‘I’m suppressing you’ ‘I’m keeping you down—I’m supposing myself on you to make you do what I want you to do.’ Well that’s not nice—she says, ‘well that’s what suppression is’ And we put our hands together and said now push back and so now I said ‘now you’re resisting’; that’s resistance and we talked about that and about the residential school. And so she never knew anything to much about that.

Putting faces and putting people into those stories and remembering those who didn’t survive these schools and honoring them by telling their story and by honoring the wounded ones including how we’re wounded by not knowing our language and that’s how we can resist is through education.

Leona: What is important to know about leadership as it relates to resiliency?

My own story—I think I’d like to share my own story in terms of resiliency. My grand mom, my mom’s mom was in residential school for along time. She came home speaking French and playing piano and violin. My mom was here in this school [BQFNC] for eight years. My dad went for two years. He was orphaned so he was sent out to Edmonton and he ran away each time. I’ve had that influence (residential school) and I was here for 9 years – 6 of them I came back in high school. And most of my family had been through residential school. So that groomed me to be, and we were taught here, that we would never be more than a secretary, or a nurse’s aid or a teacher’s assistant or housekeepers so that’s what we were groomed to be.

We were told that university was out of our league. In terms of confidence, in terms of knowing who I was, I knew I was *yehinosko* a Cree woman because my parents were Cree. I had quit speaking the language when I was 5 because I was hospitalized and I didn’t know how to speak it when I came out. I didn’t understand it for a couple of years but eventually I began to understand it again. I was never in ceremony because of course only “pagans” did that and only devil worshipers did that, so I never had ceremony through my growing up years. I didn’t have a relationship with anybody other than my mom and dad and my grandma, my mom’s mom.

Because my mom’s mom went to church and she really tried to mentor us into being assimilated or acculturated. I remember how she used to make us pronounce our words when we would go on the way to treaty grounds. She would sit us down—she was very lady like—she would sit us down “now Leona I want you to pronounce properly say ‘treaty’ [laughter] that was my grandma, she was really that kind of influence.

I think I left when I was 18-19, I went on to get my secretarial degree—and so the way I was raised here was very authoritative, a lot of discipline, a lot of structure, systems, consistency, predictability, control. Voiceless, we became voiceless; of course we were just little beings that walked around and were told what to do and marched to the tune of the nuns. When I got home it was no different because my mom was raised here, and I was the eldest girl so it was important for her to ensure that discipline was in order. We the older ones had to be parents to the younger ones so she had to really engrain structure.

It was another very controlled authority environment. I love my mom dearly but the reality is when I was growing up—later on her world changed as she got involved here in the school takeover and involved in ceremony, involved with Elders in those leadership roles.

But when I was growing up that's the way we were raised. At age 23 I moved out and my golly I found a sister superior to get married to [laughter]. It was just an extension of my life here, oppression, control, and I served—I served this man for twenty years and so it was not healthy, I know that—but it was all that I knew. I was in that relationship with the abuse and everything else I still stayed in it—because of your comfort with the discomfort I guess? I don't what it is but he was an alcoholic and so again I was in the place of being oppressed so whatever it was during that relationship it was whatever I was told was good for him. At the end of that relationship and going through my divorce and going to see counselors, I didn't even know who *I* was because it was all about him.

It's like knowing the colonizer to the T but not knowing yourself—I think that's where we're at right now. A lot of people know a lot about the colonizers and what they

want, what they're about but we don't even know ourselves so we are left with a big vacuum. It was only through ceremony, I saw counselors, but it was also through ceremony that I begin to realize that as a healing process I was responsible for me. What did I want, what did I need. I had two kids so through that process I know my biggest challenge was feeling like a victim—to overcome that feeling of being a victim—because when you are feeling like a victim it's like you can't move.

I saw that—do I want to be in this place for the rest of my life? No! Is this what I want to model for my children? That you're oppressed and you have to stay there? No! But what do I need? So I came back to family, I moved back here, I connected to extended family my uncle Mike, my brother-my sister. Vincent and my cousins, I started a journey, really taking a role in ceremony but deep down I know all of those experiences have led me to here.

I know that maybe that was the choice I made when I came to this earth, was to go through those experiences. I had to go through those experiences to appreciate where I am at now, I know I was guided my last fast in the mountains I prayed for—that was a year before my separation and divorce. I prayed for truth and I got the truth, oh right in my face. And that was the year that my mom passed away as well. Eight months later the truth came and I had to face up to that. So it took me a long time to continue to pray to get the strength. When I did a part of it as I proceeded, I guess jumping from that part—resilience, something in you makes you go on. Something in me with my children and my family and my parents, my dad was still alive then.

Going to school here I tried at least for myself, I always tried to blend in so I would never attract attention to myself. If people saw something in me and whatever it is

I was expected to fulfill I would just back off “no no” don’t ask me to do that. I was going into formal education, mainstream education and at the same time there’s an expectations that you have to do that stuff, difficult as it was, I would step up to the plate to do that—then I began to recognize—I do have a voice. I think everyone of us has been given a purpose, meaning and a gift so searching for those, I began to come to terms and I just trusted that I will be where I am supposed to be.

I was hired. I came here in 1975 as a secretarial instructor and went back to university 79-82 for an admin degree. Then I worked here in 1982, started off as an accountant and coordinated as an executive director in ‘88. Then I went back to university, went through the divorce and took a year off. I was invited to put in a an application/CV as an education director and I said, ‘really’? Jane Houle said put your application in and I said ‘wow’. I knew there were two other people with masters that applied and wouldn’t ya know I got the job.

And so I decided ok there must be a reason and moved here and moved my kids here and a year later I was moved to this position here by the chiefs and I’ve been here since.

So yes resiliency is possible, it’s difficult to step off the beaten path, the colonial impact of relationships and the power and history of what happened to us in residential schools. The classmates that I had when we were going into high school, I think there was about twenty something girls good grief, 10-12 here—there’s two marriages that survived. I think that more than half of my class mates died in violent deaths, early deaths. And really this is what the impact of the policies of residential schools did and so the impact of that societal rape and of course now we impact the next generation. Our

kids—I feel sorry for my oldest because he's the one that's been impacted by that whole lifestyle that I lived.

He was sixteen by the time I went through the divorce and my daughter was 7. She didn't have that same level of impact that the relationship caused and so it carries on. It carries on. So I think there needs to be a lot more work around resiliency. There needs to be an honoring of resiliency for those people for even going through this place (residential school) and even being alive is resilient.

What is important to know about leadership as it relates to resiliency? I'm really cut off from the information on resiliency so I really can't make that comfortably—I can't speak to resiliency and so I think about we have to honor and acknowledge the fact that what we know and what we have come to understand Western knowledge that revalidates our own knowledge is that when we nurture our children in the best way possible then we give that child the capacity to self regulate. I'm gonna use Bruce Perry's language and they're on the road to being self regulating adults who continue to live to who they are while they're here. Then whenever we live and do something and act on our values and beliefs, what's going on within our bodies is psychological and physiological bodies is that release of 'I've done it.' I've contributed to the people and it's a self regulating occurrence and I'm talking about that release of dopamine that our brain secretes into our bodies because we have followed and we have done what we believe in. We don't need external accolades because we know we've done a good job, its already internalized. We need to keep relying on that to feed ourselves especially when you feel like we are a small group of people trying to make a really big change.

That process is what is going to nurture that. It's what's going to feed it and

connect it back to our ancestors and the spirit world for help and for guidance; I guess give us that direction and to help one another in that process. To that interdependent life that we need one another because everybody has different roles to play. So if that's resiliency, then that's to me how we need to go about leadership and nurturing it.

Brent: My own resiliency is in spite of all kinds of dysfunction physical and sexual abuse, drug addiction all of these things that were imposed on me as a child; in the beginning and then growing and rippling and mushrooming out of control, bringing me to a place of not believing in myself. Through a connection with spirit as it was offered to me in an Indigenous institution of learning in a holistic approach to healing. I found a way to renew myself in spite of all of that. It takes people like George, Leona and Vince and Pat and Kîskeyikaniskwew –those with the wisdom; insight and understanding that go beyond the knowledge.

You can have the knowledge but a little bit of knowledge can be dangerous. At one point in my life I got a class 1 drivers license and was driving tractor trailer trucks on the highway for a living. I'll never forget my instructor telling me, ok you passed your exam –you showed me that you do have the knowledge but be warned, what you got is enough knowledge to kill yourself if you're not careful.

It is enough combination of that knowledge and the wisdom in the driving scenario. The driving wisdom to be able to read the variables, the subjective nature of dynamics in combination; road conditions, traffic conditions, my own personal conditions; how all of that in harmony comes together to create a situation that can be managed or a situation that's threatening, for the leaders to be able to work with the

youth.

As Leroy Little Bear says, a man that I met in the south country at Lethbridge, that youth are like blank slates they haven't been privileged with their own identity or grounding culture and yet in Western Civilization, that would be a case where the mindset is a dominant mindset it pushes the people out, because you're different. Its incumbent on the leadership to be able to take down that kind of thinking and bring back the knowledge that's founded in truth and empower the youth.

Question #6

Where do you want to see this research go?

Leona: And Vincent mentioned that's for you to answer.

I guess for me it's to get the message out. Out there and like they can read your dissertation and it will be head stuff but really the recommendation is that they experience it. Truly experience it. I think that's key. And some people will experience it and never know what it is—it's a readiness level so... Ay ay

Lana: Where do you want to see this research go?

The first one is just having this dialogue and what I'm getting from it is very—I leave with a lot from the circle—this talk and I'd like it to be propaganda [laughter] as part of that Cree manifesto. I spoke with my dear friend Roberta when she first came to school here and talked about these ladies important writings, their research and how that was a Cree manifesto.

It's privileging our voice and our history and acknowledging that, and I would

like it to bring people here.

Brent: Where would I like to see this research go?

I would really hope that the outcome of this circle and the ripple that it may cause—that it would ultimately lead to the removal of barriers; to increased acceptance, understanding, tolerance, connection. So many of the characteristics and attributes that if we don't—if we don't get a handle on them right away its not about this nation or that nation they in and of themselves perish, its about our grandmother earth—and we've gotten so smart that the earth has become so small and we think that that knowledge insulates us from the reality of our spiritual connection with all. You could take human beings, every human being on the planet out of the formula; out of the combination that exists in sustaining the planet as it is take every two legged out of the picture and the planet will continue if you take the environment out and the two legged's disappear.

Vince: Where do you want this research to go? That's *your* question.

What I'd like to see is that people get it, people finally get it and getting it is realizing that there's connection, there's a big connection from the stars up above to this land that we're on. We're just a part of it and just think of how much knowledge is out there when I say this, open your eyes or close your eyes and you'll have your eyes opened, like this its barely [empirical] this is all the knowledge you can gain right here. There's a little bit of spillage, that's what you can share—that's finite but when you close your eyes *kepaa kaneeks*. I started every chapter like that. When you close your eyes that finite becomes infinite, that knowledge is infinite. And it's up to you where you want that knowledge to

go *Paneegan* I could be telling you the truth [laughter] or I could just be telling you a good story [laughter].

Kiskeyikaniskwew: Where do I want to see this leadership research go?

I really think that we need to make that movement from how can we use ceremony and our knowledge to inform how we organize ourselves and our organization effectively. I think we are on the right track but I think we need to continue to go it and I think we need to continue to nurture it. To begin to write about it and we need to begin to explain about it, because people who come from a western mindset of what leadership is expect a hierarchy. Even our own people expect that and when they see something that is not a hierarchy, it becomes something to belittle. So long as we can get our knowledge out into the literature on how we're using Indigenous knowledge to organize ourselves; that's a step in the right direction. Informing others and educating others, not only those who are close to us but the world.

Going back to my experience in Ghana we need to begin to write about what it is that we know in a way that isn't going to put us in a box again so that it can be replicated. You know how science, objective research is supposed to be, all the variables are supposed to be contained in order to replicate it somewhere else. We need to be very mindful of those traps in saying this is how it works here, because of who we are as Indigenous people. What we believe, to be mindful of the traps and writing true to who we are as well. Its not about the writing, it's about living it; living it is the most important thing. The writing is a piece to me that we need to make sure is out there, whether its on our website and whether we have it available for people who disbelieve and can't see out

of the liberal world view.

And that's all. Ay ay

Invited Comment

Spirituality as different from religion

Kîskeyikaniskwew: I was wondering about that spirit-religion [written on the whiteboard] what is that?

Pat: I just clarified for myself. I just wanted that difference to be kind of understood and so Leona suggested putting that—do you want to comment?

Leona: I thought that was your intent for putting that up there to invite comments.

Pat: Sure, as I sat here I was thinking; ok somebody reading this literature might say, I go to church once a week. When these guys are talking about spirituality, I'm doing what they're saying. That was why I offered that comment. You're suggesting that others offer their voice on that?

Leona: If they want to.

Kîskeyikaniskwew:

I would probably first off say that I don't know much about organized religion—just observing, not really interested in going there to find out more. I have a really deep faith already in what comes from our ancestral knowledge and our knowledge and understanding of and practice of our belief which is spiritual and comes from the Great Mystery, the Creator so that nurtures me, it fills me and carries me.

I really believe because I have a long term memory of being before I was a human being and I know that that's unique and it's a gift. I honor that and I cherish it. Because from there I can remember vividly every part of my being, my cellular being even,

remembers that love that incredible purity of love that comes from that spirit being—that Creator. So I have a memory of that, it has kept me solid throughout my whole life. I think because I asked for it. I asked to have that memory, to remember, that I have been conscious from birth about something bigger than what life is, physical life.

So I don't have any doubt. Nobody's going push me to believe anything else than what I believe is the truth. So that carries me and I'm happy with it. I know its spirit because it's still with me. When it communicates with me it gets my attention through sound, so I'll hear a song or I'll hear the rattles, or I'll hear a voice and I know that comes from spirit. I know that it's giving me protection, that's it helping me to sort through anything that I'm experiencing if there's anything happening in my life. I don't know if that answers that question.

I want to close my remarks with an appreciation for this circle for everybody who had a voice in this circle, I appreciated listening to you. I came back because I thought it was interesting [laughter] and I came back because the schedule got changed so I didn't have to do anything after all-yea.

One of the things that I really believe in is that, when you ask for something and it comes from a good place of where you're asking from, then the people that you need will be put in your path. Maybe they're not people, maybe they're from our relatives; the animals, the birds, or the land or something that will come to you and will help you. I think you asked the question and you put some heart into it, some focus and energy so you are getting what you are asking for. You will probably be getting more and more and it's just for you to be open and be mindful and be able to receive and then once you do you have to go through that process of sorting it all out for yourself.

So thank you for this opportunity and thank everybody here. Ay ay

Brent: Religion and spirit right, I don't know anything in my life that did as much harm and gave as much challenge for me as religion. I understand religion as a theism, it's a belief system that's built around this reality that exists out there because everything outside of myself which is good because what's in here is bad. And that I was supposed to spend my whole life trying to atone for Gods' forgiveness for something that I never did and one day I woke up and realized I don't have to ask God's forgiveness because God never accused me of anything.

It was religious people that accused me of things and I believe that religion although it may be founded on the philosophy that I do not argue with, if we're talking about the Christian religion, which is the one that I was exposed to from a very young age on. I believe that the things that the man Jesus said were indeed the way the truth and the life. To be able to achieve a connection of spirit in all that is good and nurturing and empowering and allows us to live life to the fullest and the courage for us to be all we can be I believe the Creator wants for us. But religion is about power and control, adopting a pattern of behavior that means you pay homage to the church and its hierarchy and it's—all that stuff that goes with it.

When things changed for me was when I understood that I am of the spirit there's that part of me inside that happens that are my thoughts—but I'm not my thoughts. I am that awareness that perceives those thoughts. I'm not my feelings, I'm the awareness, its like there's this place that I can get to sometimes really quickly that is spirit and its like a pipeline, a connection to all that's come before and all who will come after. The answers

I struggled for so long to try and find will never be in the human experience. They're not mine to be understood and I don't care who you are—unless you've gone after, experienced it and come back. I just don't believe that because I said earlier that the Bible was written by a bunch of men and that Jesus was a man, a child of the Creator just as we are children of the Creator and if you read what he said—he said that in the book —‘these things I do and so shall you and greater things.’

I don't have to go outside myself to find spirit. I was spirit before I came here and I'll be spirit after the body is done. I don't need religion to help me minister to that, that's of human creation. I think the best way, the simplest way I learned early on in my recovery between a religious man and spiritual man is the cliché that goes: the religious man goes to church on Sunday morning and sits in a pew in church thinking about fishing, and a spiritual man goes in his boat on Sunday morning sits in his boat and he's fishing and thinks about the Creator and creation. Simple – I don't have to go get it from theism and the church and I really appreciate the circle.

I have so many questions but sometimes I fear to ask questions ya know thinking are they stupid questions? Or are the questions really highlighting my ignorance, my lack of knowing? But that's the thing I like about the circle, the acceptance and this was wonderful to be offered tobacco and invited to share in this. The leadership that I have experienced in my journey has empowered me to make changes like I never dreamed possible for myself and so thank you—all of you.

Vincent: I would just like to say leadership is easy, when you surround yourself with other leaders [laughter] cause then you just have to worry about your own, your own

piece of the puzzle eh? But if you don't do your piece of the puzzle then it can become unraveled, so that's it. Good to work here because we go about doing our stuff, we each have a piece of that and we each know that were integral to the piece of the puzzle just like this today and on time. Things happen on time. They happen on time for a reason and it's not revealed until a later date why it happened like that. That usually becomes revealed. So I have no comments on church—they say if you got nothing good to say—you don't say it so.

Leona: gosh and I was gonna really rant [laughter]

Vincent to Leona: You can rant

Vincent: I was told if you don't believe in that ceremony you leave that ceremony. So I've been taking that to heart with church and when asked to go to church—I say I can't go—because if I go I'll weaken that ceremony. Any other ceremony I go to if I don't believe in it, I have to leave because I weaken it by not believing in it. So when I'm there and I stay right there through the ceremony I'm there because I believe in it. I believe in what it does for the people. I went to a funeral, one of my cousin's funeral and they had a church service. I had to leave once the priest started taking over because I didn't believe in it. I had to leave—I believe my cousin is in a good place but I couldn't stay there for the service.

Leona: I concur. I really enjoyed the afternoon I felt again as our strategic planning last week and I was a part of that, I felt very hopeful. In September when I came back, in September I was exhausted—I was tired, I was sickly, I didn't feel like I had a place in this place anymore that I better move on—move home. But I'm starting to feel better, be

re-energized and that strategic plan really invigorated me.

Vincent: you broke off your beak? [laughter]

Pat: She's good for another 40 years [laughter]

Leona: I feel very energized and this circle this grounds me in what is our collective purpose here.

I also feel like I still have a role-maybe a different role because my beak will be sharper [laughter]

Vince: better hunting

Leona: Watch it Indian Affairs [laughter]

Thou shall not kill [laughter]

Vince: It's ok, you can go to church on Sunday [laughter]

Leona: I guess we didn't talk about that, because we have been doing it—is the humor.

That's the resiliency and then the laughter and yea I wouldn't go and kill a pig [laughter]
but if I was an eagle...

Thank you thank you so much for providing us that opportunity; It's that reciprocity we talk about, you've invited us for this information that we have and wisdom, knowledge and experience and at the same time when we talk about it, it reminds us, you're giving back to us, as a collective voice we're hearing each other and getting re-grounded and Lana, I so appreciate you being here. Ay ay

Lana: [Cree] I'm thankful for all of you and for being here I mentioned earlier that I haven't used enough tobacco. What I meant was I haven't used tobacco to give to people—I haven't done that. I use a lot of tobacco when I go for my walks and when I go

out in the bush which I like to do religiously [laughter]. That's where I get a lot of my leadership and I think I got that because I traveled a lot, I moved around a lot. I was told by my grandmother to leave the reserve and to leave and go get educated and I did that. Of course she gave me the four colors and sweet grass and said 'but don't forget where you come from.' Those are very powerful words that our Elders and grandmothers, and grandfathers tell us.

When I moved out, I would always go look for Elders in urban communities. I moved to (communities) not nations [laughter] and I've learnt what good leadership is by offering tobacco to Elders. I say that in quotes because I've had experiences where these so called leaders have turned around and hurt me emotionally. One pinched me really hard in a ceremony because I came with my new boyfriend, things like that I learnt. I became really really untrusting of who I defined as my leader and who I gave my trust and belief and I guess power to. I turned to go for walks, that's where I couldn't find anybody, I would always go the bush and go for my walks and hikes and there's a few times I got accidentally lost.

And there's a few times I went to go get lost. I think when it comes to spirit I tell my kids this; this is where I really found the most spirit, if there is a way to define spirit or to find it, it is to be alone in the bush if you are by yourself with the elements, especially if you are alone and its cold out and you have nothing. I think this is part of vision quest, part of that fasting is being so connected that you're almost near death or scared to death and so that is the closest I could define as spirit or my spirituality. Again I thank this group for getting me out of this truck with the emergency break on and helping me get on my own two feet. Ay ay [Cree]

Pat: I just want to say thank you-thank you to everybody. I'm honored to be in the circle with everybody. I just wish I had a really good memory [laughter] to remember what you guys talk about, there are so many things. I blame it on age but truly I can't. Thank you, it's been an honor for me to sit in this circle today.

Chapter Six

Reflection and Discussion

Introduction

The final chapter of a dissertation normally summarizes key findings, interprets the findings and discusses implications for practice and/or policymaking, along with implications for future research. I will do all of the above, but in a somewhat different way. My strategy will be to share personal reflections on the study and the insights it has provided in a manner that is at least somewhat consistent with Cree traditions.

My inspiration and general approach came from the work of Janice Makokis (2008), Pat's daughter. In her master's thesis, Janice Makokis wrote: "The analysis of the findings will be viewed through the lens of 'personal reflection' which coincides with the teachings that Cree Elders pass on to us" (Makokis, 2008, p. 58). She went on to quote from Leona Makokis' doctoral dissertation, *Teachings from Cree Elders: A Grounded Theory Study of Indigenous Leadership*:

According to the Cree world view, it is in each individual to seek out and understand the truth of his/her existence. The answers to the questions of Who are we? What is the purpose of why we are here? are found embedded deep within ourselves, and the journey of introspection, then each individual can become responsible and serve his/her fellow human beings and the land. Thus, the Cree world view claims as its base and its future direction, the spirituality of the Creator, inclusive of all beings both in the seen and the unseen world (p.88). (L. Makokis (2001) as cited in J. Makokis (2008, p. 58))

This shift in rhetorical stance is not mere window-dressing or gratuitous symbolism; this shift allows me to speak in a less authoritative voice than is normally heard in the final chapter of a dissertation. I can, in short, take off, at least to some extent, the mantle of the expert that doctoral programs tend to impose.

Rather than adopting the sort of secular *ex cathedra* stance one often finds in

dissertation writing, therefore, my focus is on what I, personally, learned in the course of living and reflecting on the access story recounted in Chapter Four and while participating in and thinking about the talking circle experience that was recounted in Chapter Five. My hope is that others will find some of my reflections and the implications I personally have drawn from the experience useful and applicable to their own professional and, maybe, even, their personal lives. My goal in following Janice Makokis' lead, however, is to avoid suggesting that the conclusions I have derived from doing this research are definitive or in any way the only sense that could be made of what has been presented here.

My game plan is to organize the bulk my reflections about, first, my responses to the access story recounted in Chapter Four and, then, my responses to the talking circle experience which is re-presented in Chapter Five. I should quickly add, however, that the discussion of one chapter will include references to data presented in the other findings chapter. The distinction between the two first parts of this discussion involves what is in the foreground and what is in the background in each section.

Chapter four, for example, revealed that gaining access to do the study was an elongated, complex, and arduous process. The talking circle experience helped me understand why this was so—and, therefore, some data from the talking circle chapter (i.e., Chapter five) will be referenced in the access story discussion—but the access story (and the things I learned from it and as result of the access process) will be in the foreground of the first part of the discussion. The access process, in fact, produced great insight and understanding and, also, touched my heart. I will share some of what I learned, both intellectually and viscerally, in the first part of this chapter.

My learning was further deepened by participation in the talking circle. There I had an opportunity to hear the study's participants share their Indigenous views and approaches to leadership. In the second part of this chapter, I will reflect on what the talking circle—and additional reading prompted in part by the talking circle experience—revealed about the talking circle process, itself, and the Cree view of leadership. I also will comment on what the talking circle experience revealed about related aspects of Cree culture including the Cree worldview, the influence of the West on the Cree world view, in general, and the Cree view of leadership, in particular, and the importance of decolonization.

In the final parts of the discussion, I will reflect on (a) how I expect this study to influence my future research agenda (and, possibly, the research agendas of others who are interested in studying Indigenous groups) and (b) what this dissertation research means for my (and possibly others') teaching in and leadership of a university leadership program.

Personal Reflections on the Access Story

As noted, I will first reflect on what I, personally, learned from the experience of getting access and from additional reading I engaged in that was prompted by the access experience. I will first reflect on the importance of understanding colonial history and the role that history played in my attempts to gain access. Second, I will focus on the importance of *relational accountability* and why, from an Indigenous perspective, relationships are linked to accountability in research. The discussion of relational accountability will lead naturally into a third, related discussion about the role that introspection played in this study and the role I suspect it should play in any future

studies that I—or others—will do with Indigenous groups.

The Importance of History and Understanding History

Understanding the group's past as a way to make sense of contemporary actions During the course of this study—both during the access phase and especially during the talking circle experience—it was imperative that, as a participant in this partnership, I understood the importance of the group's history. Though my focus ostensibly was on *contemporary* Cree approaches to leadership, the talking circle discussion often invoked the past. In particular, comments often focused on colonial oppression of the past which set up the major challenge for contemporary leaders: how to overcome the still rather dramatic residue of past oppression.

I came to understand that, for the group, understanding colonial history is important for operating thoughtfully in a contemporary Cree context. I also quickly understood that I, too, needed to recognize the importance of Cree history, both prior to and after contact with Europeans, in order to understand at a deeper level the current historic trauma that continues to linger and negatively impact Cree culture. I especially needed to understand the impact that the dreaded residential schools had, and continue to have, on the Cree soul.

An understanding of the group's history also helped me make sense of the Cree commitment to engaging in ceremony and the role of ceremony in research. It became clear over time that Cree leaders believed that solving their problems and freeing themselves of the horrible impact of colonization required reclaiming their historical traditions. The answer inevitably also involved history since the assumption was that the way the group could overcome colonial oppression was to reclaim the historical traditions

that had been largely obliterated by colonial institutions such as the residential schools. Those traditions included not only the Cree language and Cree social structure, but also the rituals and ceremonies that were an integral part of Cree life in the past, and for some, including the participants in this study, the present.

References to the importance of understanding the group's past for leading in the present can be found throughout the talking circle discussion reported in Chapter five. At one point, for example, Vince stated, "They have been practicing genocide on us for so long that it's basically silenced us." Leona commented, "They [the colonizers] consciously made a decision to get rid of us and you can see that through their legislation and you can see that through the way in which they destroyed the Beothuk⁵. Killed them off, shot them off, and there was nothing to them." Kîskeyikaniskwew talked about the question she had asked her grandfather: "What did we do in the past that caused us to have to endure this—this colonization"? She also noted that he never answered her.

After the talking circle had ended, Kîskeyikaniskwew's question prompted me to seek my own answers by further studying the history of Native populations, especially in Canada where the study was conducted, but also closer to home (i.e., my home), i.e., in the area of the world where I live. I did not find an answer to Kîskeyikaniskwew's question—the literature, in fact, was as silent on this point as Kîskeyikaniskwew's grandfather had been—but what I discovered was, never-the-less, shocking.

I read, for example, about the dreaded residential school experience in work done by Cardinal (1999). Cardinal provides the following account of life in a Canadian residential school from a First Nation woman:

Throughout both Father Mackey's and Father Collins's regimes the biggest crime was running away. They were brought back in a cop car by the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police. The boy's heads were shaved and they were kept in the dark closet, sometimes for several days and nights. They were strapped and fed only dry bread and water. In one case, the boys were tied and left there for two days. (Knockwood, 1992, cited in Spring, 1997, p.86)

Cardinal (1999) goes on to comment on the impact of genocide in First Nations groups:

Children were severed from family ties and their cultural roots; the First Nation language was prohibited; gross injustice of exploiting the land and resources became government policy... The reign of terror resulted in the maiming of First Nations cultural framework, including psychological, physical, social, and spiritual casualties. (p. 23-24)

In the talking circle, Pat put the history of the psychological genocide that was practiced in residential schools and the literal genocide that was alluded to by others in the talking circle in perspective:

I remember this man saying if only everybody knew this [the group's history], because it was like a light bulb went off in his head. Because then he could start to understand our families and our communities in a different way—the trauma that exists, the addiction that exists, the violence, those deep pains, deep wounds. From the Western world they refer to that as dysfunction. In our world its woundedness, it's a woundedness that many of our people carry, that I carry.

The importance of studying *my* history. There was another reason that the study of history I engaged in as a response to my experience in the talking circle was shocking. As I reflected on what I had *just* learned, I realized that I had been in higher education for almost seven years, including a number of years working on advanced degrees. Shouldn't I know at least the fundamental historical background of Northern America? As I reflected and read more, I became aware that the truth about Native nations is not told to mainstream populations in either Canada or the United States (Tuminia, n.d.).

What is taught is the narrative of the disappearing Native which works to justify the colonization of land by early settlers. For example as a child in grammar school, I was taught that Native people or Indians used to live in California, but no one knew why they

disappeared. It was assumed Native populations were assimilated into the melting pot of the U.S. like so many immigrants had been. I never realized that there was, in fact, a very conscious campaign of genocide waged to eradicate Indigenous groups (Heizer, 1993; Trafzer, 1999; Tuminnia, n.d.; Cardinal, 1999; Harte, 1860).

The historical material I now began to read told a very different story than the story I had internalized as a student. I read, for example, the following account by a newspaper reporter in the mid 1800s in Northern California:

A report was brought from Eureka on Sunday morning, that during the night nearly all the Indians camping on Indian Island, including women and children, were killed by parties unknown. A few loaded canoes bringing the dead bodies to Union on their way to Mad river, where some of the victims belonged, confirmed the report. But when the facts were generally known, it appeared that out of some sixty or seventy killed on the Island, at least fifty or sixty were women and children. Neither age or sex had been spared. Little children and old women were mercilessly stabbed and their skulls crushed with axes. When the bodies were landed at Union, a more shocking and revolting spectacle never was exhibited to the eyes of a Christian and civilized people. Old women, wrinkled and decrepit, lay weltering in blood, their brains dashed out and dabbled with their long gray hair. Infants scarce a span long, with their faces cloven with hatchets and their bodies ghastly with wounds... They were all killed with the exception of some few who hid themselves during the massacre. No resistance was made, it is said, to the butchers who did the work, but as they ran or huddled together for protection like sheep, they were struck down with hatchets. Very little shooting was done, most of the bodies having wounds about the head. (Harte, 1860)

In my reading, I also learned that the reporter who wrote the above account was chased out of town when it was published. Evidently, even in the past, there was an effort to keep some historical facts secret.

Among the more troubling realizations that resulted from my talking-circle-promoted reading was the realization that some of the worst incidents took place in the state in which I was born and now live, California. In Northern California, for example, it was not uncommon for young Native women and children to be kidnapped and sold into

slavery. Native people also were literally executed; even children and women were indiscriminately slaughtered.⁶ So, it is not in any way an exaggeration to say that the history of Native people includes a history of government sanctioned genocide⁷.

The study's data in historical perspective. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the talking circle discussion of leadership practices frequently circled back to the group's past, a past that very much included the sort of genocide I had heard about in the talking circle and, later, read about in a number of historical texts. History also puts the difficulties I had in gaining access into perspective.

Indeed, knowing history makes me question whether it was ever appropriate for me to even ask for access. It is now clear that the things that I heard about in Canada were not simply things that had occurred in another time and in a distant place which had no true connection to my life or the legacy I have inherited from my ancestors. Clearly, just as an oppressed group often feels close connections and an affinity with other oppressed Indigenous groups throughout the world, it is time that I, too, must begin to take note of my historical connections to the oppressors of the past.

No wonder the First Nation folks in Canada were so reluctant to grant me access to their group. No wonder they insisted on leveling the playing field and making this a study we did together rather than a study I did of them and their thinking. No wonder they insisted that deep relationships be established before a study—even a collaborative study—could commence. After all, despite the very substantial distances of space and time, we have, in one sense, at least, been in a relationship for a good long time and, in the past, at least, that relationship was not a positive one.

The Importance of Relational Accountability

During the time I was attempting to get permission to do my study, I often heard the term *relational accountability*. Later, I also encountered the term in the book Pat suggested I read titled *Research is Ceremony*. That book's Cree author, Sean Wilson, writes about the ethical imperative of relational accountability in Indigenous research:

Some methods and strategies have inherent in them more relationship building and *relational accountability* than others and, therefore, may be more attractive in an Indigenous paradigm. Talking circles...and action research (Carson and Sumara, 1997) are good examples, but again they are only tools. Without following the Indigenous axiology of *relational accountability*, they can still be used in hurtful ways. (Wilson, 2008, p. 39, emphasis added)

The point I take from Wilson and from the other references to relational accountability I heard throughout my attempt to gain access is that, in doing research with Indigenous cultures, it is not sufficient to simply use the “right” or culturally appropriate research methods. Even an Indigenous method like the talking circle could conceivably be used—to reference my dream that those in the talking circle found so significant—as a vehicle for methodological rape by someone who did not feel responsibility to the people being studied.

Given this understandable concern with developing relational accountability, what is surprising is not how long it took to gain access but, rather, the fact that the granting of access was so speedy. The speed is undoubtedly attributable to Pat's skills as a teacher capable of signaling to me what was needed for a trusting relationship to be established with her and, eventually, with other members of the group. She and the others taught me to bracket many of my Western researcher assumptions and approach inquiry in a less haughty and more collaborative way. Pat and the others helped me engage in the sort of shift in consciousness that Ermine, Sinclair and Brown (2005) suggest is required for

Western and Indigenous Scholars to work together in a cooperative spirit:

The current order of research, established from western hegemonic modes of thought requires the urgent advancement of a new research order for the expression of ethical principles in studies that cross cultural borders and specifically involve Indigenous Peoples. This shift in consciousness will not and cannot be manifested through the lenses of Western thought alone. It requires models of new knowledge and pedagogy from different worldviews, *in a cooperative spirit* between Western institutions and Indigenous Peoples in manner that brings honor to all. (p.11, emphasis added)

I am truly grateful that Pat and, eventually, other members of the community reached out to me. And I do, indeed, feel a tremendous responsibility not to do harm, and, even, if possible, to do some good.

The Role of Introspection

I suspect that one reason that a sense of trust and relational accountability could be established in what might be record time was that I was neither afraid to engage in introspection or to share what I learned from introspection with members of the group. The willingness to share was not my initial instinct. As I noted in the access story recounted in Chapter Four, my comments during the first talking circle I attended when I was only a visitor were brief and quite general. I was behaving in a way that would have been appropriate in a Western group. There the norm is for visitors to not take up too much air time. Visitors certainly should not hijack the group's agenda and interfere with the group accomplishing its task. I was quickly signaled, however, that the norms were different at Blue Quills First Nations College. Here, there was as much time a needed to share whatever seemed important to an individual than to complete some pre-defined task. This sort of sharing was not just encouraged; it was expected.

So, in subsequent Talking Circles, including the Talking Circle recounted here in Chapter Five, I shared my deepest and most innermost thoughts, and even my dream of

harboring a rapist. The sharing of the dream was greeted with enthusiasm by the members of the group who seemed not to rigidly distinguish between the dream world and the so-called “real” world. Indeed, my dream about being friends with a rapist was viewed as insightful about what I was trying to do as a Westerner intent on studying Indigenous views of leadership. The dream seemed to be viewed as something more than a metaphor by most members of the group. The group’s reaction, in fact, suggested that it was a gift.

Introspection, of course, is hardly a novel idea in the literature on Western qualitative research methods. Most research methods textbooks, for example, encourage researchers to keep reflective journals or at least reflective notes to guard against bias and subjectivity. In this study, however, subjectivity was less something to guard against than something to learn from. And the extensive sharing of the insights my introspection produced certainly went well beyond what most methods textbook writers would suggest be done.

Deviating from what is recommended in qualitative research textbooks seemed important for engaging in what Regan (2005) characterizes as “unsettling the settler within.” Engaging in deep introspection was absolutely essential for engaging in an internal process of decolonization and for shedding the mantle of the Western expert. Introspection was the vehicle for confronting and, hopefully, rejecting Western assumptions about authority, superiority, and privilege that rarely, if ever, are examined by researchers, even qualitative ones. Even critical and feminist scholars who tend to rail against injustice normally are not normally inclined to reflect on their own privileged status. Introspection and sharing the results of introspection with research participants

(who, ideally, are actually co-researchers), however, seem to be a pre-requisite for establishing honest and transparent relationship.

I should conclude this part of the discussion by acknowledging that introspection during this study was not merely an intellectual activity; it often also was a deeply emotional experience. On a number of occasions when I either thought about my reasons for wanting to study Indigenous leadership or shared my reasons with others, I would tear up. Because I am not a particularly emotional person, I thought this reaction intriguing. Thanks to Kîskeyikaniskwew, a participant in this research, I have now come to see my reaction as evidence of what Kîskeyikaniskwew and others called *spirit*. Where does Western research methodology say about the role of spirit in inquiry? I suspect if it says anything, the subtext, at least, is that what Kîskeyikaniskwew calls spirit is something to be avoided, or at least very carefully managed. I wonder if Indigenous research methodology might be a way to make research methodology truly holistic or, to use Wilber's (2001) terminology, more integral.

Summary of Access Story Reflections

Here I have shared some of my reflections on the access story that was told in the first of two findings chapters, i.e., Chapter 4. I discussed the importance of understanding not only an Indigenous group's history but also the history of mainstream culture. A reasonably deep understanding of history can help a researcher from the dominant culture like myself aware of the lingering effects of colonialism. This awareness, in turn, helps a mainstream culture researcher make sense of the reluctance of Indigenous groups to participate in research and puts into context the expectations of an Indigenous group if permission is finally granted.

Among the expectations alluded to above is the expectation that close personal relationships be established between the researcher and the Indigenous group with which she or he will be working. Here I have detailed how relationships are associated with the concept of accountability and, also, how deep introspection and the willingness to share the results of introspection with the Indigenous group help in the building of relationships and a sense that relational accountability will occur.

Personal Reflections on the Talking Circle Experience

The discussion, up to this point, was generated primarily by the access story recounted in Chapter Four. To be sure, there were references to ideas that were generated in and by the Talking Circle, but access issues and what they signified was the front-and-center topic in the reflections discussed up to this point. Now I want to shift the focus to the ideas discussed during the Talking Circle which were articulated in the second findings chapter, i.e., Chapter Five.

I will begin by reflecting on the use of the talking circle as a research method. Next, I will attempt to distill my understanding of what the talking circle revealed about what was the original focus of this dissertation, the Cree view of leadership (or, to be more precise, this particular Cree group's view of leadership).

Three related topics will be discussed in the remainder of this section: the Cree world view; the impact of Western culture; and the importance of decolonization.

Reflections on the Talking Circle as a Research Method

The talking circle methodology included a gathering together a wide range of people who would be interested in a topic to be discussed—in this case Cree views of leadership—and arranging them in a circle formation. The circle formation encouraged

discourse and learning from and sharing with others since everyone in the circle could see and hear everyone else in the circle. The circle configuration also had symbolic importance: It signaled the equal status of the participants since no participant was in front of or elevated above other participants. No matter what their positions outside of the circle might be, no matter what titles they might hold, no matter what their ages might be, everyone was an equal participant in the circle and everyone was listened to, no matter who they were or what they had to say. The circle symbolized this equality.

In fact, Bernadine, in the course of the talking circle reconstructed in Chapter five of this dissertation, told of a group of important visitors who came to Blue Quills First Nations College. The members of the group were invited to be part of a Talking Circle. They kept trying to figure out who the important people were, but could not do this. Talking circles are the antithesis of hierarchy.

One final point about talking circle etiquette: Those that are not speaking have the responsibility to be present mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Listeners do not interrupt. They are, in short, expected to embrace the elements of a traditional medicine wheel, the holistic representation of the human being used by the Cree. (See Makokis (2009), *Leadership Teachings from Cree Elders* for a detailed teaching on the Medicine Wheel, and Natural Laws.)

I should add that my experiences in the circle were different than other sharing experiences I have participated in. I felt that I could speak in a way that was both from my mind and intellect and also from my heart and spirit. I sensed that listeners would not cast judgment or overly analyze my comments. They certainly would not criticize them.

As a research method, the talking circle encouraged largely unmediated and

unfiltered commentary and reflection from a very wide range of people, in fact, everyone who was part of the circle. This lack of filtering can have a downside, of course, as those who have worked their way through the many twists and turns in the talking circle transcript printed in Chapter Five undoubtedly have already learned. In the talking circle, a plethora of diverse and, often, disconnected perspectives and responses may be purchased at the price of cohesion and coherence. The reader must absorb the information in a way that is not necessarily a linear, intellectual process but one that allows for listening to the speakers with the intellect, but also with the heart and spirit in order to discover what can be learned.

But the talking circle strategy, when used as a data collection tool, also yields incredibly rich data largely unmediated by interview questions or the nonverbal behavior of a researcher. In this study, it certainly yielded rich data about the way members of an Indigenous community view and approach leadership.

What the Talking Circle Revealed About Indigenous Leadership

In the talking circle, participants shared their views of leadership and how it is developed. At times answers were provided in a direct fashion; at other times, the speaker addressed the designated question (a reworked list of the study's research questions) more indirectly, for example, by sharing a story or perhaps a dream. Here I will share my personal distillation of what was said. I also have shared this information with Pat, now a member of the dissertation committee, for her review to ensure both relational accountability and that information discussed has not been misunderstood.

Leadership is largely non-positional. I learned that leadership is seen as something that is done in service to others, and that leadership is experienced as a

collective or communal process rather than something that is enacted by individuals. Integrity is important, but titles and hierarchy do not seem to matter very much. Interestingly, Leona currently is urging the college she heads to get rid of the title of *college president*—despite the complications not having a designated president might cause with funders and government officials—in an effort to further reclaim the Cree people’s traditional collaborative forms of governance. Similarly, when I asked Pat to serve on my dissertation committee, she commented that titles and positions are not what are important. What matters are relationships: relationships to the Creator and spiritual practice, relationship to the land, relationships with others, and relationships with oneself. Relationships, of course, also are the basis of accountability, both among members of the group and between the group and outsiders who are welcomed into the group.

One of Leona’s comments during the talking circle suggested that some of the rejection of titles and hierarchy is rooted in the colonial oppression alluded in the first section of this chapter. She also indicated that this rejection of a hierarchical view of leadership is embedded in the Cree language. She said:

In terms of leadership, for me leadership is about *neegotstimaseo*. *Onemagkan* is a chief *onemaghoa*, is a boss. We put *khan* at the end of it. It makes it that the person is artificial chief. I think the language keepers basically knew what they were saying. In other words, how do we develop that word because they saw that our chiefs today are artificial leaders. They are in there because of the Indian Act [a Western governmental law]. *Neegon* is somebody in front for the purposes of others...It doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re going to be the lead for these other purposes or these other people all the time. It basically implies that, for that purpose, you are in the role, but it’s [being a leader is] always for others.

Leadership is oriented toward decolonization and the reclamation of traditions Participants also repeatedly returned to the importance of healing and the need to reclaim language and ceremony during the talking circle about Cree leadership.

Clearly, one of their concerns was: leadership for what? Some of the answers to this question were just as clear: Leadership should be exercised for decolonization, resistance, and the reclaiming of traditions. These goals were accomplished through education, through ceremony, through a rich sense of humor, through education and through relationships.

Leadership involves connecting to the land. There were other ideas that surfaced at various points in the talking circle discussion of Cree leadership. One of these ideas involved associating leadership with having a connection to the land. At one point during the talking circle, Pat said the following:

As you do this research, one of the most important things is [this]: I would like to invite people who read your research to get out of the cement jungle and come to the land—come and learn on the land because it is a very spiritual experience.

The idea that a connection to the land was important for leadership also surfaced at another point:

For me the land and my connection to it is very spiritual. I grew up on the land, I grew up in the bush, I grew up with the mountains in the back. I grew up with the bears, I grew up really connected to that land and I think it just hit me when I listened to Lana, how profound. When I'm on the land for me it's really spiritual. I don't think people really understand that because I've been laughed at so many times. When I walk, it's such a spiritual connectedness to that land.

One thing that I know is how connected, that spiritual connection to the land is for me. That connection is so profound. When I am on the land, I see the interconnectedness to the trees, to the birds, to the winds, to the water.

Lana also mentioned the land as she discussed Indigenous leadership:

I was thinking about Indigenous leadership and I think my first memory of Indigenous leadership is the heart beat which is connected to the earth, to the mother, to the grandmothers, to language and song, to being cradled and loved and all of those teachings. My first real Indigenous leader would be my grandmother who gave that love and sharing and these teachings.

It may be challenging for those who come from a Western world view to

understand group members' spiritual connection to the land or how the spiritual connection to the land relates to leadership because, as Marilyn mentioned, many Europeans are far removed from that connection, from their tribal-ness. Marilyn, in fact, observed that this disconnect was likely a major reason that Westerners were so intent on studying Indigenous groups. "They're so many years displaced from their tribal-ness," Marilyn said; "that's what a lot of them are looking for and missing—their own Indigenous origins."

Kîskeyikaniskwew provided a variation on the connecting-to-the-land theme when she shared her perspective of what can be learned about leadership from animals:

I think about the land and I think about the sky and I think about how those beings that know those places much better than we do and have taken on roles. I look at them as leaders. For the land, say, here in Canada, the leader of the animals is there, and holds those four—in their paws I guess, four laws. They hold love, they hold honesty, they hold sharing and strength and they walk the land. They are seen as kind and healers and we look to them for those purposes when we need help. For the sky, it's the eagle. The eagle has an incredible story of transformation. [See chapter five for this story.]

Leadership and relationship with self. Participants also suggested that a person's health, including his or her healing journey, and a person's relationship to self are important to exercising leadership. Bernadine stated:

Indigenous leadership to me is being truly yourself, having respect for yourself as well as others, growing with children, growing with others, growing with Elders, role modeling your behaviors to others, being self reflective, giving yourself the opportunity to learn from mistakes or, if not mistakes, then learn from your experiences. To be able to have the confidence in yourself...so that your lived experience has meaning—has validation, being true to yourself, I think.

Lana also shared this view about one's relationship to self being an essential component of one's relationship to others:

Indigenous leadership is definitely about the person's relationship to themselves, by and who they create their relationships with, and the knowledge and skills that

they are sharing... Working in this Indigenous organization, Indigenous leadership is about having many roles and we're learning to balance that and helping one another and sharing with one another, that's being Cree.

Leadership and natural laws. Talking circle participants also indicated that Natural Laws were integral to a Cree way of life and, therefore, leadership. Pat spoke about the values that guide Cree life and, in the process, signaled that what the Cree people mean by natural laws is quite different than what Western scientists mean when they use the term:

I think another thing that's really important in terms of leadership is working from our heart, with those values of kindness, honesty, strength, determination and sharing. Those are really critical aspects of leadership. When I teach leadership to our students, I always go back to those natural laws because I'm responsible for teaching contemporary leadership to our students. I go back to those values. I ask them and I remind them.

The importance of adhering to what Cree call natural laws, as well as a number of other themes alluded to above, also are echoed in oral history material collected from Elders in the community and which I had an opportunity to read a transcription of after my visit. Elder Peter Waskahat, for example, said the following:

On this land, in the past and even today we were very careful about what we were given – what we were given through the uses of everything on the land, Creation. We were very careful, we had our own teachings, our own education system – teaching children that way of life was taught [by] the grandparents and extended families; they were taught how to view and respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that the young people were taught how to live, what the Creator's laws were, what were the natural laws, what were these First Nations' laws ... the teachings revolved around a way of life that was based on their values. (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p.6)

Leadership is ceremony. The role of ceremony seems important to understanding and being able to exercise leadership in the Cree world. Vince described the role of ceremony in a way that, to Westerners, can seem almost mystical:

We all come together in ceremony then—there's that connection and we call that

Khagisimo. When we pray, *khagisimo* and there's that connection and that's the important thing that is to connect not only on a human level but on a level of this energy, this energy that's all around us—and when you can do that—I believe that's what that leadership is, when you can lead people to that space to connect, when you have that knowledge and you can open up those doors to that knowledge, and get people to feel, and get people to see, there is some empiricism there but there's more intuitiveness which is spirit—that opens up.

Other participants also spoke about the need to engage in ceremony to reinforce the community's values, to learn from traditional teachings and ways, and to experience spiritual connectedness. Leona stated that in ceremony, vision and purpose can be found that are linked to leadership:

That's one thing that causes us to continue to develop, to continue to mentor staff and students. I think it's basically working to everybody's gifts, giving them space to grow, giving them voice, the ability to voice. I think those for me are really important. In terms of our Indigenous leadership, through ceremony, were provided the vision or the purpose of why we are here and our responsibilities and our connections.

Leadership is serving others. Leadership in this Indigenous nation places importance on the role of service and the attitude of the heart to be willing to serve. In words that almost mirrored Western discussions of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1971), Marilyn said the following:

Part of the whole thing of leadership is coming back and saying—when we are looking at ourselves in terms of the collective, if we are looking at ourselves in terms of our place, not just in this moment but in the past and in the future by taking a look at that—when a person starts thinking in that way, then they are having that Indigenous leadership perspective. Thinking beyond themselves.

Maintaining balance. Many times the need to find and maintain balance was mentioned as important to health, both individually and communally. Balance also was mentioned as important to relationships and to exercising leadership. Kîskeyikaniskwew indicated that

We have to remain in balance to walk this road we call the sweet grass trail. We

live to our responsibilities and to me that's what leadership is—to live to our responsibility and to live to our purpose. We don't do it for self interest. We do it for the well being of the ones that we love, the ones who we are a part of, our relations, all our relations not just our mom and dad or sisters and brothers but all of our relations because we are all related. So we have our natural ways of being in balance. So for women it becomes—it's a cycle that helps us to remain in balance. For men they have a different role because they have to go out and be protectors and providers.

Spirituality: tobacco as sacred offering. I noted in the access story recounted in Chapter four that Pat, representing me, had gone to potential talking circle participants and that she had offered tobacco to the potential participants she visited. During the talking circle, I heard more about the importance of offering tobacco. William said:

In terms of the journey you're engaged in—in terms of offering us tobacco—I'll try and explain the context of that. In my experience, the best way to explain it is to quote an Elder, sorry I don't know his name, but the protocol is: for what you give you get and for what you get you give, so in terms of implications of what you engaged in—we think of it as a small ritual but it underlies just about everything that we do not just in the contexts of relationships, but in the context of our relationship to the universe and it also plays out in family relationships.

William also mentioned the role of offering tobacco in maintaining relationships to the environment in order to maintain balance and respect. William stated: "If I want to cut a tree I have to offer tobacco to the tree before I cut down the tree. The rocks, the trees, everything—there is spirit in everything and somehow that connection has been lost."

Both Vince and Kîskeyikaniskwew also talked about the importance of tobacco in fostering leadership. Vince explained the importance of giving tobacco to others as follows:

You foster good relations, they're happy to be there and you build family, you build good relations, to me it's quite simple. Indigenous leadership starts with that—well of course with the Creator and that plant that the Creator put here *cistemawiyiniw* [tobacco]. That's the one that's always in the lead, always, it brings forward the leadership.

Kîskeyikaniskwew reinforced what Vince said:

And I like what Vince said about *cistemawiyiniw* [tobacco]; it's true fact. It put everything into motion by offering that tobacco. I think somebody said that, William said it, before I cut a tree down I have to offer tobacco and tobacco is the doorway. The way it was described to me, it was described to me in many ways—but one way I really like was the Blackfoot people. They have a really profound knowledge of tobacco as well. They say that's the place or that's the being, the one who provides relationship opportunity and that is the treaty. So every time you are offering tobacco you are offering a treaty relationship with somebody else. To me the treaty relationship coming from our perspective is that honesty, strength, sharing and love and that's what you're doing. What you're asking for is going to be symbiotic in relation, not a power imbalance, way of looking at it.

From listening in the talking circle, and experiencing how participants felt about tobacco, I am learning how important and sacred tobacco is and what it also signifies in terms of relationship to others and to the environment. This idea also is echoed in the literature.

Michell (1999), for example, stated:

The antiquity of tobacco is revealed in the Creation stories of many First Nation cultures. Creation stories provide a foundation from which a culture, worldview, and value system emerge. Stories reveal the cultural significance of tobacco as a spiritual and sacred entity that helps us to remember the importance of our reciprocal and interdependent relationship in the web of creation.⁸

The Cree World View

In my reflections summarized in the previous section, I ferreted out particular characteristics about the Cree view of leadership. In some respects, this strategy is highly inappropriate when talking about a culture that views all things as being connected and, consequently, thinks more in circular than in categorical and linear terms. Indeed, throughout the writing of the section focused on Cree views of leadership, I have continued to confront rather significant translation problems. Because the Cree world is, at base, fundamentally different and, at times, incommensurable with Western conceptions of reality, I fear I have often failed my translation task and, unintentionally,

distorted some of what was said in the talking circle. To compensate for my unintentional—but I fear also unavoidable—errors, at least a little, I will attempt to describe the Cree world view as I have come to understand it.

The importance of the creator and spiritual relationships to the universe.

During the talking circle, Kîskeyikaniskwew matter-of-factly observed: “We come from a different world view and our world view may be shredded but it’s still there.” This turned out to be a profound statement. In the talking circle, and in much of the literature about Indigenous groups, in fact, an Indigenous or Native world view was discussed as being something unique and different from the Western world view. One of the major differences is that the Cree world view does not separate the sacred and the secular the way contemporary Western culture tends to do.

Kîskeyikaniskwew shared her understanding of the Cree world view and the role that spirituality plays within it:

First I acknowledge the Creator and give thanks for this day.... To me...that is where it begins and that is what informs our consciousness....What has given us our consciousness is the acknowledgement of the spiritual and that starts with the Creator who created all that we know. In creating all that we know, which includes the four elements, the wind, the sun, the water, the rain, and the land and everything that lives on the land. Everything that lives in the skies and everything that is not seen by our limited ability to see; it was created for a purpose.

Smith (2002) has indicated that a similar world view can be found in many Indigenous cultures:

The arguments of different Indigenous people based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. These arguments give a partial indication of the different world views and alternate ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the Indigenous world. (p.74)

One very useful resource for understanding the role that spirituality plays in the Cree

world view is a book by Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) called *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations*. The book contains interviews with a number of Cree Elders. One of the Elders focused on in the book, Norman Sunchild, commented on the importance of spiritual traditions, beliefs and ceremonies in the Cree world view. Elder Sunchild noted:

Our Ancestors spent their lifetime studying, meditating, and living the way of life required to understand those traditions teachings, and laws in which the treaties are rooted. In their study they rooted their physical and spiritual beings directly on Mother Earth as a way of establishing a connectedness to the Creator and His Creation. Through that connectedness they received the conceptual knowledge they required and the capacity to verbalize and describe the many blessings bestowed on them by the Creator. They were meticulous in following the disciplines, processes, and procedures required for such an endeavour. (p. 1)

Another of the Elders, Elder Waskahat, also spoke of the centrality of the Creator in First Nations thinking. In the same book that contained Elder Sunchild's words, Elder Waskahat's described the many aspects of Cree culture and the culture of other First Nations groups that had flowed from the Creator before the Europeans arrived on the scene:

When you look at First Nation's people on this land, in the past and even today, we are careful about what we were given to do. We were given the uses of everything on the land and Creation. We had...our own teachings, our own education system teaching children that way of life, and how children were taught how to view, to respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that, the young people were [educated about] what were the Creator's laws, what were these natural laws. What were these First Nation laws. And talk revolved around a way of life based on these values. For example: respect to share, to care, to be respectful of people, how to help oneself. How to help others. How to work together....

And when the other people [i.e., the Europeans] came, all other First Nations know of these teachings of this traditional education system. Everyone had a role. Hunters, the Elders, grandmothers. Even looking for food, there were teachings for the young, for the adults, for the grandparents. A livelihood that was taught, that was what they had ... survival of a people. In a lot of this, livelihood was taught ... [to] many generations teaching from Creation. That is how they saw

their world and understood their world. For example, [we] Indians had our own doctors, our own medicine people.

[There are] a lot of teachings. Lifelong teachings that were passed on from generation to generation. They know sicknesses, they know the plants, and they knew how to treat our people of certain sicknesses. So we had our own system as well. We had our own leadership...very highly respected for a chance to lead their people. So we had all those things.

We had our own First Nations' government; we had our own life teachings on education. Even when a person had made mistakes in life, there were people that would counsel them. There was a process of reconciliation. It was done through the oral language. It was done through the Elders. There they talked about that person getting back into a balanced life and were made aware of how [to] focus [on] what was important in life.

And if that person had listened and took the appropriate guidance from those kinds of people and they would get back into a balance and be able to help them, to learn from these things. To become a part of the family, part of their nations. That is how we/they looked at life. That's the Indian way of life, and all First Nations people had understandings of different customs different traditions ... that was their life. (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, pgs. 15, 16)

The importance of connections/a belief in holism. Other aspects of the Cree world view that already have been at least alluded to are beliefs in connectedness, relationships and spirit. I will not attempt to add additional information to what has already been written about these aspects of Cree ontology. Instead, I will simply share a personal experience.

During my first visit to Blue Quills First Nation College, I participated in a variety of activities. I became aware, about midway through the visit that I was operating differently at Blue Quills than I normally do. Call me Woody Allen's Zelig, but I found myself not compartmentalizing and mentally categorizing my thoughts or my statements as I usually do. I had also stopped thinking before I spoke. In short, there was a point when my thinking and feeling and even my actions became inextricably linked together. I was less inclined to analyze what I said prior to saying it, and more inclined to respond

to things viscerally. Linear ways of coding the world around me, and the world inside of me, gave way to more circular ways of experiencing the world that were less about analysis—less about classification and categorization—and more about presence and participation.

One consequence of all of this is that I immediately began to experience a more relaxed feeling about what I had come to learn. This sense of relaxation came even though I had not been granted access, and I did not know whether access would ever be granted. I believe that, though this experience was brief, I had, in an admittedly small way, experienced an aspect of the Cree world view and, for a brief moment, began to operate in the world in a radically different way than I normally do. Anxiety about access—or anything else, for that matter—was no longer front and center in my thoughts. I was living in the moment, not standing outside of myself and analyzing what I was doing. I felt connected to those around me and to the world in general. Perhaps I was becoming at least a little bit aware of how the Cree world view impacts the way in which people interact, engage in activity and frame their thinking by experiencing, just for a moment, in a way that the Cree, themselves, become aware of things.

The Impact of Western Culture

One theme that can be found throughout the talking circle transcript involved the impact of Western Culture on Cree culture. This focus on Western culture and its influence, of course, was partially encouraged by one of the questions talking circle participants were asked to address: How has Western culture's view of leadership impacted how leadership is practiced or developed?

Even if this question had not been on my list of questions to address, however, the

influence of Western culture undoubtedly would have come up. In fact, this question was not the initial question in the list of research questions in my proposal or on the list that I brought to the group. It was the group's suggestion to make the question the initial question to discuss so that the negativity that inevitably would be generated in discussing the question could be dealt with right away and everyone could move past the inevitably upset.

In fact, during the talking circle discussion of this question what I observed could most certainly be best described as discomfort and even pain on participants' faces. Their reactions put a face on the concept of *genocide*. I began to understand experientially and viscerally the impact of years of oppression and dominance on this nation and these participants. I also began to better comprehend what I was asking people to participate in by joining in this research: I was asking them to reflect on the lingering impact of genocide and colonialism on themselves and their people.

In the circle as the discussion of Western impact proceeded, chairs were somewhat farther apart than they needed to be, which I was not sure how to interpret at the time. Once the Western-culture-impact question was addressed and every person had shared his or her response, the group took a break. Immediately following the break, participants moved their chairs closer together. The mood was much lighter and facial expressions were more relaxed. Humor even entered the conversation that had not had humor previously. Clearly the talk of the West and colonization more generally had had an impact here as elsewhere, and what I had assumed would be an relatively simple and straightforward but interesting empirical question that would generate thought and an intellectual response generated much, much more.

In retrospect, my thinking in formulating the question about Western impact and asking the participants in the talking circle to address it was horribly naïve. The reading I have done since the talking circle—much of it suggested by talking circle participants—demonstrated that this is the case. In fact, Indigenous people in many places have felt the need to engage in the intense and, often, painful process of identifying Western influence as a preface to and a part of what is commonly referred to as a process of decolonization designed to mute the lingering impact of a painful past.

Ironically, the Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan, whose words are recorded in the book that was mentioned above, indicated that their ancestors had anticipated the arrival of the Europeans and had assumed that the two groups would peacefully co-exist. Elder Peter Waskahat (2000) stated:

Elders from many different tribes say they knew about the coming of the White man long before he arrived. They say that Elders and holy men among them prophesied that men would come with different ways, that these men would want to live among them. Long before the arrival of the White man the First Nations discussed how they would live with the White man. There were extensive discussions to determine how the First Nations could peacefully co-exist with the newcomers. The Elders say that they knew the White man was coming across the sea from places where there was much bloodshed. On the island of the new world created by *Wisahkecahk*, that way of life could not prevail. The island of North America was created so that peace could prevail. When the newcomers arrived, peace treaties would need to be negotiated.

It was decided long before the White man arrived that the First Nations would treat the newcomers as relatives as brothers and sisters. The First Nations had decided that they would live in peace and that they would share the land with these newcomers. The sacred earth could never be sold or given away, according to the principles of the First Nations, but it could be shared. The First Nations decided that the earth could be shared with the newcomers and that it could be shared to the depth of a plough blade. The earth could be shared so that everyone could peacefully co-exist. (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 31)

As has already been noted in the discussion of history in the first section of this

chapter, things did not work out as planned. Colonization and the Western world view have left a harmful and damaging impact on many First Nations and Native American populations. Because of the many wounds, especially what the Cree characterize as *soul wounds*, inflicted on the Cree people and other First Nations and Native American groups, any discussion of leadership almost invariably circles back to responding to the lingering wounds inflicted by Western culture in the past. Two themes seem especially important: the need for leaders to promote healing and the need to reclaim traditional approaches to governance.

The need for healing. Many Native people are focused on healing the lingering wounds of Western genocide and, therefore, the goal of promoting healing has become intertwined with contemporary Cree thinking about leadership. There is no doubt that cultural genocide has left intergenerational trauma or woundedness (Duran, Duran and Braveheart, 1998), and a number of talking circle participants discussed how they had engaged in processes of healing as a part of exercising leadership. Marilyn, for example, explicitly connected leadership and the process of healing when she said, “I think that leadership is also about relationship, it’s about healing” from the impact of colonization. Other participants echoed the notion that issues of healing and freeing oneself of Western influences are central to the Cree way of life:

Pat: There’s something to be said of collectively, all of us, everybody, understanding that history and that collective trauma, because we are all impacted by it; how we live and our views of the world. Our people carry those scars, those invisible scars like lashes on their backs.

William: The courses [at Blue Quills First Nations College] blend healing and professional development. That’s what’s so unique about Blue Quills First Nations College. Reclaiming your culture is definitely part of that healing journey; also healing the soul because of the trauma that has been transmitted over so many generations.

Leona: Since the arrival [of the White man] how slowly, how gradually, how insidiously this whole western belief system has impacted us, and it was really well thought out in how they were going to eliminate us.

Leona: I know with Kîskeyikaniskwew and Vincent they have been raised in ceremony as children and those of us that have been raised in institutions like this, how much of an institutionalized mind I have. It's there—and you just keep falling back into it all the time so you need to be aware always—so its really insidious.

Imposed changes in governance. The impact of the Western world view, in fact, has created many observable changes in the ways that First Nations operate and self govern. Through Canada's Indian Act, Western settlers and colonists imposed their own understanding of governance on the First Nations people and literally dismantled Indigenous governance processes and even the physical spaces that were key to traditional systems of leadership.⁹ During the talking circle, for example, Vince shared the following:

Well it has a deep impact here in Canada because of the Indian Act and the oppressive nature of the Canadian State. I think around the 1920's they went into Mohawk country and dismantled the longhouses and the leadership of the long houses and they took away the chieftainships; the leadership roles of the hereditary system and their matrilineal system but not in the western sense. They dismantled that and put into effect the Indian Act Chiefs coercively. They had the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) go in and do all that for them, and that's the role of the RCMP to this day. They are the oppressive state apparatus for the state. The ideology is supposed to be law and order but whose law and whose order? So that's the leadership we're stuck with today.

Thus, First Nations communities are forced to operate in a system imposed upon them by people that were foreign. Because of this, many are working to reclaim traditional forms of governance that are consistent with and support the Cree world view and culture. Leona commented on this:

Leadership doesn't recognize that they are operating from a borrowed, imposed structure and with its own purpose and the way that it dismantles relationships by

departmentalization, which goes against the very grain [of Cree culture].

Brent also commented on the difference in governance between Europeans and First Nation's:

A fundamental difference between the Europeans and the Indigenous peoples whom the Europeans encountered when they arrived here was that the Europeans had leaders and were very hierarchical. The individuals they were encountering had a system that was described as being savage and being unorganized and just one step above animals. In reality the leadership in those nations was not a chief. A chief was a white concept. In the collective if the business that was at hand for the day was hunting, then a hunter came forward and he was the leader. If it was about negotiation for trade and barter, then it was the best negotiator. If it was war, then it was the best warrior; if it was about gathering and preparing food, it was many people, and those that had the skills necessary for what was to be accomplished would move into that leadership role. When that task was completed they would step back. [For] Europeans, well that just didn't fit in the logic.

Bernadine discussed how the old non-hierarchical forms of governance have lasted despite attempts to impose a Western governance system. She also described contemporary Westerners continued confusion with the Cree people's more collaborative leadership practices:

Some of these academics that we meet with—they look around the table, [we] begin with prayer, [we] begin with smudge and explain that to them and we're going around the table. We introduce our selves as a team—and you look at their faces. They say their titles and they want to know who they should be speaking to. And when they're here—that's the thing to—we invite them to come here because they need to know who we are and what it is we do...In their discussions with us, they do want to...[know] who the president is—they want to talk to "the boss" and when we sit and talk in circle format—that's huge for them as well...Even when you're handing out business cards, they're looking for as many alphabets behind your name. It's just frustrating to deal with stuff like that.

Leona made similar points about contemporary visitors' assumptions; she also indicated her personal frustration as President of Blue Quills First Nations College with these assumptions:

The outside world expects to come in and see who the "leader" is because the

leader has got this body of knowledge—that they are the spokesman for all people and they know what’s good for our people—this one person. There’s always pressure and the other thing in my experience here is that, and it really aggravates me and it really irritates me when people know who the president is, it’s like all eyes are on you, like what you say is the truth for everybody. There’s that expectation that this person is going to make the decision—you go see that one—so there’s always that pressure on those positions—and its constant and I think after awhile if you fall into that. I think people could easily fall into that because it hits the ego—so much for the spirit.

The Need for Decolonization

One thing is clear from the talking circle transcript: Leadership in the contemporary Cree group I studied was inextricably linked with the process of decolonization. Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005) provide a definition of decolonization:

Decolonization is the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation...It is not about tweaking the existing colonial system to make it more Indigenous—friendly or a little less oppressive. (pp. 2, 5, 4 as cited in Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008, p. 511)

Participants in this study mentioned that decolonization is an ongoing process as they work to reflect and reclaim traditional ways both individually and collectively.

Leona talked about how colonization is entrenched in one’s mind and one must engage in a constant process to identify and surface colonial influences:

You know this whole thing of cultural colonization—one of the ladies talks about how it’s in your head—it gets in your head. You need to recognize it, we need to know who we are, we need to know our history we can [naya] distinguish, we can recognize that there’s two sides or two or different ways of doing things and remain true to who we are, its easier if we know that information, so un-learning about it comes from each individual in terms of their own healing or in terms of their experience.

Other participants also frequently spoke about this process of decolonization and how they are helped by their interdependence and education to identify and diminish colonial influences. In fact, while I was visiting Pat and getting to know members of the

community, and listening in many talking circles, I began to see my own need for decolonization. Undoubtedly this process will be more difficult for me for a number of reasons: First, I do not have the support system that those at Blue Quills First Nations College have established for each other. Second, rather than being educated to identify and destroy colonial influences as students at Blue Quills are, I have been educated in a Western schools that consciously and unconsciously promote Western ways of thinking and being. Finally, I have benefited from the privilege that colonization brings.

Nevertheless, I must work to identify those mental models that are vestiges of colonial oppression in order to progress to be able to participate in a true discourse with Indigenous people. That discourse, in turn, should help free me and others to see things in new ways and to consider new ways of thinking about and approaching leadership.

McGuire and Monture (2009) have written:

Colonialism, however, is not just about Aboriginal women [or Aboriginal men, for that matter]. We have our grief to carry about the oppression our ancestors and our relatives have survived. But colonialism also requires those who do the oppressing change. We acknowledge that many Canadians carry guilt over what has happened to Aboriginal peoples across the span of Canada's history. And as much as we have had to carry our own grief, Canadians too must work through the guilt. This guilt is not (and cannot be) the responsibility of Aboriginal peoples. This is, we believe, a more profound responsibility than simply dealing with what academics and anti-racist activists would call "white privilege." (p. 523)

Concluding Comments About the Talking Circle Experience

Throughout much of the sharing in the talking circle, there was an underlying theme that I heard repeatedly: the importance of resiliency. Many participants, in fact, spoke about resiliency as being important to self determination, nation building and leadership. Blue Quills First Nations College is a symbol of that resiliency because it is a place for education, healing and reclaiming the Cree way of life for many. Lana spoke

about remembering and telling stories as part of that resiliency:

Putting faces and putting people into those stories and remembering those who didn't survive these [residential] schools and honoring them by telling their story and by honoring the wounded ones including how we're wounded by not knowing our language and that's how we can resist...through education.

One of the other participants, Leona, who is a survivor of the residential schools, shared her story in the talking circle about her journey of trying to understand the events in her life and make sense out of them. In her story she spoke of reconnecting to her community and also the need to reclaim ceremony and language as a means to her own recovery. Leona, one of many living examples of resiliency, spoke of her personal process and noted the following:

That process is what is going to nurture that [resiliency]. It's what's going to feed it and connect it back to our ancestors and the spirit world for help and for guidance; I guess give us that direction and to help one another in that process. To that interdependent life that we need one another because everybody has different roles to play. So if that's resiliency, then that's, to me, how we need to go about leadership.

Implications for Future Research

In order to continue this exploration I hope to join Indigenous scholars in their efforts at examining Indigenous leadership and how this understanding can help Native communities in their efforts at decolonization and recovery from the impacts of genocide. There is a need to explore the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars can more holistically collaborate in order to jointly share Indigenous oral teachings and bring forward the stories that need to be told.

In addition it would be helpful to explore the matrilineal tradition of many tribes in North America to understand what leadership might look like in another form other than the Chief model that participants mentioned was imposed upon them by Westerners.

Implications for Teaching Leadership

This study reveals that leadership from the Indigenous viewpoint is something deeply integrated into the values and traditions of Cree ways of life. Leadership understood in this way is congruent with the Cree world view and is interwoven in relationship to other living things, the land and to the Creator. Other Indigenous nations may have similar social constructions about how leadership is understood and exercised. In order to integrate multiple views and a broadened view of leadership with students, concepts from this study can be shared with students and faculty alike in order to create a more inclusive and diverse understanding of leadership. By exposing more students to non mainstream views it is hoped that those students will become more relational and inclusive. Through exposing educational systems and academia to Indigenous views it is hoped that Native students will experience mainstream education as an opportunity to share their perspective rather than a place to feel invisible.

Conclusion

The process of this dissertation has made a tremendous difference in the way that I understand relational leadership. When first embarking on this journey of joining with an Indigenous community to collaborate on research, I had no idea the wonderful relationships that would begin and how my heart would be touched. My wish is that more research will result from the relationships that have begun. I hope that others will read the narrative and open their minds to learn about Indigenous people in a way that leads to respect and friendships. This research has changed me and I hope it will impact you as well.

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Footnotes

¹ The terms *Native American* and *First Nation* have been used to refer to the Indigenous groups that are the focus of this dissertation. Typically the first term is used in the United States and the second term is used in Canada. Both groups are generally characterized as both *native* and *Indigenous*. Therefore these terms will be used more or less interchangeably throughout this study to refer to the study's participants. Native Hawaiians, Native Samoans, Native Puerto Ricans, Alaskan Native populations are also Indigenous to North America, but these groups are beyond the scope of this inquiry. The study will explore what a group of First Nation participants say about how leadership is viewed in their cultures and how leadership is exercised in their nation.

² Bryant (1986) who does not indicate whether or not he is Native, conducted the study with members of multiple Native American groups. Though it is indicated that he followed procedures for the protection of human subjects through the university where he instructs, the study does not indicate that he conducted a Tribal government review to engage the participants. It is interesting that Bryant would most likely be prohibited from conducting this study with out the review of at least six Native American nations' own Tribal review board or Tribal Council review for the protection of human subjects and Indigenous knowledge.

³ It is noticed that the language of *decentralized authority* may be words that are created by the Western view of a Native construct of leadership within a Native nation.

⁴ The word "subjects" is in quotations here because, although it is customary in Western research to refer to those who participate in the research subjects, that turned out not to be the goal here. Even the term *participants*, which is often used in qualitative studies, does not quite, capture the co-researcher relationship we attempted to create in this study.

⁵ The Beothuk: Also spelled Beothic, Beothick, Beothuck were the Indigenous peoples of Newfoundland. There is little debate about the cause of their extinction, however some scholars argue whether or not this extermination of a people by colonizers qualifies as genocide. According to Grenke (2005),

Some scholars deny that the destruction of the Beothuks was genocide. Rowe admits that atrocities of the most barbaric kind were committed against the Beothuks from 1750-1810 during which time an unknown number of Beothuks met their death from the guns of settlers and visiting fisherman...He is quite right in his statement that settlers, fisherman and trappers pursued no consistent policy to exterminate the Beothuks. They did however persist in attacking and killing these people. And such attacks eventually led to the dissemination of the Beothuks, their withdrawal from the Coastal areas of Newfoundland and their final extirpation. (p.170)

⁶Accounts of the massacres and similar atrocities have been recorded by both modern historians and journalists of that time. Specific incidents, among many others, that are well documented include: The Thompkins Ferry massacre in 1851, a group of men hunted down and killed as many Indians as they could find; Bridge Gulch in May of 1852, 70 men surrounded and opened fire on an Indian camp of men, women and children, between 80 and 300 Indians were killed; the Orleans Bar in April 1852, miners voted to kill any Indian on sight with a gun; Weaverville, in May 1852, 153 Wintun Indians were killed, because they were believed to have killed five cows; Yontoket, 1853, Citizens from Crescent City killed 200 Tolowa people; Round Valley, 1856-1860, settlers killed 50-60 Indians, 2-3 times per week. According to Historian Dr. Gayle Olson-Raymer, historical records also indicated the following incident,

On February 16, 1860, one of the most tragic of these exterminations took place on Indian Island in the small Northern California community of Eureka. On February 25, 1860, Seaman and his militia began a massacre of Indian Peoples around the bay. That morning, Indians at the Eel River's south shore were killed, along with residents of villages in Ferndale, Rio Dell, and Table Bluff. The militia then moved onto Indian Island, shortly after most of the men had left for a hunting expedition up the Elk River. After killing almost every Indian at the celebration, the militia moved further north to wipe out villages at Bayside, Freshwater Creek, Mad River, and Widow White's Creek. See <http://www.humboldt.edu/~go1/kellogg/northerncalifornia.html>

⁷Genocide as defined by the United Nations General Assembly, means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group
 - (b) Causing serious mental or bodily harm to members of the group
 - (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
 - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
- (as cited in Churchill, 1997, p. 412)

⁸ See Michell, (1999) who states that much literature discusses the existence and importance of Tobacco in Cree and other Indigenous cultures thousands of years prior to European contact. According to Michell, a study conducted by Robert Brightman (1993) revealed the use of tobacco in the cultural practices amongst the Rock Cree people in Northern Manitoba.

While small offerings of tobacco were made in exchange for stories in the research methodology, Brightman also offered to help the elders by hauling water, chopping wood, and hunting small game as was the customary socialization practices of Cree children.

Goodman (1993) provides a historical overview and traces the ancient roots of tobacco among cultures that include the: Plains people, Crow, Blackfoot, Sarci, Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands, Tlingit in Alaska, Iroquois, and the Chippewa of North America (p. 24) (as cited in Michell, 1999).

⁹ According to Michell (1999),

It wasn't long ago when First Nations people were legally prohibited from exercising their cultural practices in Canada. The aim was to transform First Nation people into the likeness of their European colonizers in order to make way for progress. This was achieved through the enforcement of the Indian Act of 1876, a Euro-derived piece of legislation that continues to govern the lives of First Nations people from birth to death.

Appendix A

Ethics Policy of Blue Quills First Nation College

Kanawâpahtamohk ohi kâkiyaw wiyasiwewina

kinanâskomânaw kohtâwinaw ekwa kikâwinaw

kananâskomonaw e-kîmîkosîya ospwakan, wihkask ekwa cistemaw kikawîcihikoyâhkik

Kananâskomonaw iyiniw mamitoneyicikan ekwa iyiniw pimâtisiwin ehawikosîyahk ekwa ekoni ohi kiskinohamâkewina: mamawokamâtowin, wîchîhitowin, tâpokeyihitamowin ekwa sîhtoskâtowin

ekwa ohi tepakohp kiskinohamâtokewina ka-kiskinowâpahtîkosîyahk

kihew	sâkihitowin
paskwâw mostos	kisteyitamowin
maskwa	sôhkeyitâmowin
mistâpew	kwayaskâtisiwin
mahikan	pimameyimowin
amisk	kakehtaweyimowin
miskanâhk	tâpwewin

kîcayihitamâhkik ohi kâkîsimopimâtisiwin, miyohakîyawewin, mamitoneyihitamowin, mosîhitâwin ka-mîyo pimâtisinaw

ekwa ohi mîna kihciwiyasowewina:

sâkihitowin, kwayaskâtisiwin, sohkeyitâmowin, mahtâyitowin kitâpôkeyihitenaw ekwa kitapacihitânaw

BLUE QUILLS FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE RESEARCH ETHICS POLICY

Note: This ethics policy is offered only as a notice. To fully comprehend the ethics environment, researchers must commit to relationships, ceremony, and protocol within the institution and community which will provide the interpretation. The academy has come to our lands, and now it is time to teach the academy how to be in our lands. Prior to submitting a research proposal, researchers will be required to engage in dialogue on research ethics with the Research Ethics Board and the Faculty to demonstrate their understanding of the natural laws and teachings which guide mîyo iyiniw pimâtisiwin.

*Approved by the Blue Quills Board of Governors: 2004
Revisions Approved: February 3, 2009*

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1.0 PHILOSOPHY, CONTEXT, AND RELATIONSHIP

nehiyawak are a sovereign people accepting the responsibilities to this land as given by the Creator. From this our people and ancestors derive the authority to enter into and maintain nation to nation treaties with the Crown of Great Britain, and to continue to live by the laws and ethics that guide us that are not made by us, but by the Creator. These are laws and ethics that are followed by all living beings, and we learn them through ceremony, through relationship, through the language, and through practice. We honour the Creator, the Great Mystery, the grandmothers and grandfathers, our older brother, the pipe and tobacco, the rock spirit, the smudge and medicines, and prayer. We trust these to lead us to a strong mind, a strong heart, to work together, to help one another, all our relations, and those who were here first. These laws and ethics guide us in all of our relations, within our communities as well as with people of other cultures. nehiyawewin teaches us how to be whole healthy human beings, standing in good relation to the world. We are responsible for living the seven teachings of love, respect, courage, honesty, humility, wisdom, and truth.

This ethic requires that we treat all living beings with respect, with love, honesty, sharing, and determination, and that we follow the spiritual protocols which guide those relationships. Attention must be given to the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the relationship. These protocols are learned over time and through practice. Researchers will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to the values and to practice the spiritual protocols of newo ayisiyiniwak in all aspects of their work and lives. The research must also align with the Philosophy, Vision, Mission, and Mandate statements of Blue Quills First Nations College, (Appendix A).

Research is about seeking knowledge, about forming relationships with the ones who know, and the ethics that guide that search can only be understood in a spiritual context. We honour the ethics of spirit, the ethics of we, the collective, all of Creation. In ceremony, the ones who are learning, who are receiving teachings and knowledge, are oskâpewisak ekwa oskîskwewak. o skâpewisak ekwa oskîskwewak — this is the role of the researcher — the helper, the learner. They take direction from the ones with the knowledge. Once they have learned, their teacher will send them out to be a teacher, with a responsibility to carry the knowledge for future generations, and respecting the original practice, intent, and use.

In traditional protocols there are relationships that precede the gifting of knowledge; an investment is made first in the relationship before asking for teachings. Presentations of traditional gifts are required, as is an agreement that the knowledge will only be shared and used appropriately according to the way it is shared and used by the teacher. Knowledge is essential to survival, so the maintenance and transference of knowledge is a sacred trust. Trust and respect are essential elements of the relationship.

The principal aim of this Research Ethics Policy, which together with the Research Integrity Statement, is to govern Research at or involving Blue Quills First Nations College, and relating to primary research involving humans. For clarity, this policy will govern joint research projects involving faculty or students from other institutions, provided the proposal is also approved by the home institution and any governing authority responsible for protecting intellectual property rights and traditional knowledge. Reports and documentation resulting from the research must be deposited with all institutions involved.

2.0 RESEARCH NOT COVERED BY THIS POLICY

- 2.1 The intent of and relationships surrounding the research are paramount. It will be the Researcher's responsibility to demonstrate that this research was initiated by the community, provides a direct benefit to and meets current need as identified by the community, and will also be expected to demonstrate a prior, direct, personal, and continuing commitment/ relationship with the people, the knowledge, and the community in an ongoing relationship, and that any future benefits (financial or material) accrue to the people and community. Research that does not meet these criteria will not be sanctioned.
- 2.2 Blue Quills does not currently have the capacity to support, supervise, or authorize any research involving clinical trials, medical procedures and practices, emergency health, pharmaceuticals, human genetics, human fluids/ tissues, gametes, embryos, or psychological assessments.

3.0 LEAD RESEARCHER/ PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

- 3.1 The research must be led by a member of the Indigenous community, although non native academics are invited to participate as supporting researchers or co-leads.
- 3.2 The results and the process of the research must demonstrate immediate and direct benefit to the participants and the community.
- 3.3 As an educational institution, Blue Quills places priority on opportunities for students, and each project must involve at all stages, including planning, execution, and reporting, one or more students as assistant researcher(s).
- 3.4 Students conducting research for class assignments will submit proposals to the course instructor or program coordinator for review, and will not generally be required to submit proposals for review by the Research Ethics Board, unless required by their instructor.
- 3.5 Members from the 7 First Nations which own and govern Blue Quills, who are enrolled in other institutions and who wish to conduct research at or about Blue Quills, or involving Blue Quills staff or students as participants, will be required to submit their proposal to the Blue Quills Research Ethics Board, as well as meet any requirements of their home institution.

4.0 COLLECTION, OWNERSHIP, INTERPRETATION & DISSEMINATION OF DATA

In nehiyawak tradition, the learner is dependent on the one who holds and carries the knowledge for the people and future generations. The researcher/learner is not independent and autonomous. The knowledge belongs to the people collectively, to be used on behalf of and for the benefit of the people. In accepting the knowledge, researchers/ learners accept a responsibility to share and practice the knowledge in a manner consistent with its original use and teachings. Research and learning are ceremony.

This ethics policy is designed to protect research participants, individually and collectively, and protection must be interpreted from the perspective, interpretation, and methodology of the participant and the community.

The methods used to conduct research must align with the practices and philosophies of the community.

In the case of disputes, the researchers, participants or community representatives may request a Dialogue Circle through the Director of Research and Curriculum Development.

- 4.1 The data collected, including the notes, photos, videos, or other electronic recordings, interim reports, artifacts, sketches, results, and final reports of the research will be secured and owned by the people: research participants, communities, and the College.
- 4.2 Data interpretation must also reflect the knowledge of the people and will be conducted in a collective process with participants. An evaluator appointed by the Research Ethics Board will review the final report and make recommendations to the Researcher and the Research Ethics Board relating to culturally appropriate interpretation of data.
- 4.3 Credit will be given in the final product to all participants and researchers, with any original/ individual work being credited accordingly. Participants have the right to remain anonymous or be acknowledged by a pseudonym if they choose.
- 4.4 Consensus among participants and community leaders will be required to guide the dissemination of results.
- 4.5 Any research that is published will be held in joint copyright between the Lead Researcher, the participants, and the College on behalf of our ancestors and future generations. Royalty sharing agreements will be required.
- 4.6 Copies of all research projects involving Blue Quills staff or students must be held

by the Blue Quills library, unless determined otherwise by the Research Ethics Board and Elder advisors. Where consent is obtained from participants, the raw data will be held in a secure, locked cabinet to support future research projects, and access may be granted only according to protocols outlined in this policy.

5.0 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

- 5.1** Indigenous people hold knowledge in trust for future generations. The primary goal in research will be to align research projects with this policy, and the vision, mission, and philosophy statements of the College and any communities involved.
- 5.2** Consideration must be given to the protection of collective traditional knowledge, even in the event that an individual is willing to share this knowledge in a research project. The Research Ethics Board, with the advice of Elders, will review each proposal to make every effort to avoid the appropriation or misrepresentation of collective cultural knowledge, and to honour the boundary that exists between the opportunity to learn traditional knowledge and the public distribution or commercialization of that knowledge. Special care must be taken in situations that involve ceremonial protocols.
- 5.3** During the proposal stage, or at any of the regular reviews, or at the request of the Lead Researcher or a participant, a Researcher may be required to present the project to Elders, including representatives identified by the Researcher, to determine any requirements to protect the collective intellectual property rights of the People (for example: ceremonial or healing/ medicinal knowledge).

6.0 PARTNERSHIPS WITH RESEARCHERS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- 6.1** Researchers may wish to invite colleagues from other institutions to partner on Blue Quills research projects. Any researchers from other institutions who are involved in a Blue Quills project will be bound by this research policy, and the Blue Quills Research Ethics Board will hold final authority.
- 6.2** Blue Quills researchers participating in research projects from another institution will continue to be bound by this research policy. Any research at other institutions involving Blue Quills staff or students will require approval of the home institution, as well as of the Blue Quills Research Ethics Board.
- 6.3** In the event that there is a conflict between this policy and the policy of another institution involved in the research, a meeting involving Lead Researchers and both Research Ethics Boards will be arranged to address and resolve the conflict.

7.0 PROTECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

- 7.1** The dignity of research participants is paramount. They must be approached through the spiritual protocols, and have the opportunity to consider their participation once they understand the full nature of the project, their role in it, the benefits and implications of the research for them and for the community. They must offer this consent without coercion or the promise of undue personal financial or material gain (a small stipend is allowable). Participants retain the right to participate anonymously or under a pseudonym.
- 7.2** Research involving minors or dependent adults will require the consent, inclusion, and participation of a parent or legal guardian in the research project. The parent or legal guardian must be present at all times the minor or dependent adult is participating. In cases where the research may be compromised without the opportunity to interview minors or dependent adults in confidence, the Researcher must demonstrate an over riding need to the Research Ethics Board during the proposal stage, and obtain the written consent of the parent or legal guardian. In cases where third party consent for the participation of minors or dependent adults has been achieved, but the participant is capable of clearly expressing their dissent and chooses to do so, this expression shall preclude any consent given by an authorized third party. Determinations will be made on a case by case basis
- 7.3** The Researcher is responsible for describing and reporting, the process of securing free and informed consent following traditional protocols.
- 7.4** Researchers must disclose to participants and to the Research Ethics Board any personal benefit, including academic, financial, or commercial potential/ applications.
- 7.5** Any member of the research circle (researcher or participant) has the option to remove her/himself from the process at any time without undue influence or interference from the Researcher. If a Researcher intends to remove her/himself from the project, a meeting with the Faculty and the Research Ethics Board must be arranged prior to the withdrawal being effective. The Research Ethics Board reserves the right to appoint an alternate lead Researcher, or to discontinue the project.
- 7.6** Participants also have the right to clarify or delete any contribution they have made at any time to the project, and to request confidentiality or anonymity. Failure to respect the rights of participants may result in the Researcher being sanctioned or removed from the project.

- 7.7 The research project must also incorporate support services for participants, including ceremony and counselling.
- 7.8 Any research involving naturalistic observation will be subject to greater scrutiny requiring that the researcher demonstrate the necessity of unobtrusive observation, that every effort is made to ensure minimal risk and protect the rights of participants, and may require that the researcher inform the participants after the observation and obtain their consent in the event that the person is identifiable in any photographic or written research record. Consideration will be given to research involving public events where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy, or where it can be expected that participants are seeking public visibility. Special care must be taken in situations involving ceremonial protocols.

8.0 RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

8.1 Term and Responsibility

- 8.1.1 The Research Ethics Board will be responsible for reviewing and guiding all research projects hosted by Blue Quills or involving Blue Quills staff and/or students. The seven First Nations which own and govern Blue Quills may request that the Blue Quills Research Ethics Board serve as a review board for community research projects, or projects conducted in the community by other researchers/institutions. This policy will also be made available as a reference to partnering Indigenous institutions.
- 8.1.2 The Research Ethics Board will be appointed and mandated by the Board of Governors of Blue Quills First Nations College, based on nominations or applications received in a posted procedure.
- 8.1.3 Each member shall be appointed to a 5 year term, renewable upon application to and approval by the Board of Governors.
- 8.1.4 The Board may also from time to time invite the advice of Elders to guide their work on specific matters.
- 8.1.5 The Chairperson of the Board shall report to the Board of Governors on a quarterly schedule.
- 8.1.6 Notice of resignation prior to or at the end of an appointed term must be received by the Chairperson prior to the next quarterly meeting of the Research Ethics Board and the Blue Quills Board of Governors.

8.2 Membership & Quorum

8.2.1 Members of the Research Ethics Board will be selected by the Board of Governors to achieve gender balance, includes a minimum of five members:

- a chairperson from the community,
- an elder (teacher of ceremony),
- two Blue Quills faculty members with a graduate degree,
- a Blue Quills student in undergraduate or graduate programs,
- up to two external reviewers, with graduate degrees, expertise in a particular research/knowledge field, and experience in Indigenous communities (references required).

8.2.2 The Research Ethics Board membership will be selected to ensure expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods (with a Participatory Action Research component) in research involving humans. Elders and academics will be selected for their knowledge of Indigenous ethics and ethics in research, to ensure that Indigenous knowledge and philosophy are reflected in a scholarly review, and will take into account any prior peer and funding agency reviews. The Research Ethics Board may also invite other persons with cultural and/or academic expertise to review specific projects and provide recommendations to the Research Ethics Board.

8.2.3 A quorum of five, including the Elder and at least one internal and one external academic member, will be required for all decisions of the Research Ethics Board.

8.2.4 Preliminary reviews, audits, and investigations will not require quorum and may be handled by a committee of Research Ethics Board members appointed by the Research Ethics Board.

8.2.5 Due diligence and proportionate review will be applied to research proposals to ensure that greater scrutiny is given to those proposals which are potentially more invasive or harmful to participants.

8.3 Meetings and Attendance

8.3.1 The Research Ethics Board will meet in person at Blue Quills quarterly or as required to review research proposals and to audit projects in progress.

8.3.2 Members of the committee will be expected to attend all regularly scheduled meetings, or provide sufficient notice of absence to allow the meeting to be

rescheduled. Repeated absences (three consecutive) may require that another person be appointed to that position.

8.4 Honoraria and Expenses

- 8.4.1** Members (except Blue Quills staff) will receive a small honorarium and an expense allowance for actual mileage, meals, and accommodations expenses where applicable.

8.5 Conflict of Interest

- 8.5.1** To avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest, members of the Research Ethics Board must declare and fully disclose any sponsorship affiliation or personal interest in any project presented for review. The Research Ethics Board will collectively decide whether any member will be excused from the review of a particular project.

9.0 REVIEW PROCESS & DECISION MAKING

- 9.1** Proposals must be received no later than four weeks prior to the posted quarterly meeting of the Research Ethics Board. Unless the Research Ethics Board requires additional information or revisions, a decision will be rendered within four weeks following the regularly scheduled meeting, and written notice of the Board's decision will be provided to the Researcher within 10 working days of the decision.
- 9.2** Each review will begin with a pipe ceremony, involving the Researcher, research partners, and the Research Ethics Board members. The Researcher will then have the opportunity to present the research proposal and discuss how the research activities and results align with the spiritual laws and teachings of the nehiyawak people, and will honour and benefit generations past, present, and future.
- 9.3** The lead researcher will be required to submit a quarterly report to the Research Ethics Board, which may request a review or audit based on the reports or whenever requested by the research team, including participants, or when concerns are raised by the community.
- 9.4** The Research Ethics Board will discuss the project with the Researcher with the intent of clarifying any elements, and making recommendations which will ensure the project meets the criteria of the ethics policy.

- 9.5 Decisions will be reached by consensus, and inclusion of the Researcher in these discussions is at the discretion of the Research Ethics Board.
- 9.6 Minutes will be kept at every meeting and made available to College management, researchers, and funding agents.
- 9.7 The Researcher will be provided with written notice of the Research Ethics Board decision within 10 working days of the decision. In the event approval is not granted, written reasons shall be given with the intent of assisting the researcher to improve resubmission or future submissions following the same procedures as the original application. The researcher also has the opportunity to ask for a Dialogue Circle to be convened involving the researcher and members of the Research Ethics Board, where the review process and outcome will be examined, inviting dialogue to clarify the intent of the researcher and the Board.

10.0 MISCONDUCT – DIALOGUE CIRCLE

Refer to Blue Quills First Nations Research Integrity Statement

- 10.1 Consistent with the philosophy and intent of this policy, allegations of misconduct will be addressed according to traditional protocols, informed by the principles and practices of Restorative Justice/ Sentencing/ Healing Circles. When participants commit to and trust the philosophies of the Dialogue Circle and Restorative Justice they will find that the process honours the integrity of the participants, and seeks to restore honour and balance to relationships, addressing: safeguards to all involved, rebuttal opportunities, sanctions, restoring reputations, protecting whistleblowers, informing parties, and appropriate disclosure and dissemination of findings. When a person feels that the trust and honour of the project has been compromised or violated, an opportunity exists for a Dialogue circle to be convened to review the situation and arrive at consensus on a resolution. The primary goal in this process is to achieve healing for all parties involved, and to strengthen the project.
- 10.2 Misconduct may include, but is not limited to: violations of traditional protocols, plagiarism, altering research data, violation of confidence or protection of participants, mismanagement of funds or materials/ equipment, and issues relating to personnel management and relationships.
- 10.3 Reports or evidence (written or verbal) of impropriety or misconduct in research or project / financial management will be addressed to the Director of Research and Curriculum Development/ Managerial Team. Any individual at the College receiving information relating to alleged misconduct in research has a responsibility to forward or redirect the complaint to the attention of the Director

of Research and Curriculum development. Parties reporting misconduct will be advised of the Dialogue Circle Resolution Process. If they choose not to participate, the matter will be referred to the Managerial Team to determine if the allegations warrant an investigation and Dialogue Circle, and may at its discretion, proceed in the absence of the person originally lodging the complaint.

- 10.4 Upon receipt of a complaint by a member of the research team (staff, student, participant), the administration, granting agency, peer review agency or a community member, the College Managerial team will identify a facilitator independent of the Research Ethics Board, with knowledge of traditional protocols and appropriate mediation experience to convene a circle within five working days of receiving a complaint. The Research Ethics Board reserves the right to require that the research be discontinued temporarily and all funds protected pending the outcome of the Circle.
- 10.5 Prior to the circle, the facilitator will meet in confidence with the complainant and the respondent to gather information and to clarify the process, including a discussion on the traditional values that support and inform the process. Confidentiality will be maintained within the Circle.
- 10.6 Upon receiving instructions from the Research Ethics Board, the facilitator will invite an Elder, a member of the Research Ethics Board, a person with expertise in the area of research taking care to avoid any conflicts of interest, the complainant, the respondent, and anyone identified by the complainant and respondent, to participate in a healing Dialogue circle. At this circle, the facilitator will introduce the process and review the protocols. The circle will begin with a smudge and a prayer, and a comment from the Elder to guide the process. Each person in the circle will have an opportunity to speak in turn and share their perspective on the situation, their feelings, and to identify their needs in moving forward to a resolution. The circle will be guided by the natural spiritual laws of love, honesty, sharing, and determination, and will look for opportunities for human growth and learning, ensuring that all participants take responsibility for their actions, and accept the consensus of the circle.
- 10.7 Within one week after the Dialogue Circle, respecting appropriate traditional protocols, the facilitator will be responsible for submitting a written or verbal report and recommendations to the Managerial Team for consideration and dissemination. The Managerial Team may accept the findings of the Dialogue Circle, however, reserves the right to request that the Dialogue Circle reconvene to address issues they determine to be outstanding or unresolved. The determination of the Dialogue Circle shall be final and binding on all parties, will be final and binding on all parties, and prevents any party from independently and publicly disclosing the findings and procedures. In cases where the misconduct

involves funds provided by a granting agency, the report will be shared with that agency. The Management Team will be responsible for ensuring that a fair and accurate report is made available to all parties concerned. All records and reports will be held securely by the Director of Research and Curriculum Development, for a period of five years. Where the allegations are determined to be unfounded, any and all records of the allegation will be destroyed.

- 10.8 Pending the outcome of the Dialogue Circle, the Research Ethics Board has the authority to appoint another Researcher to lead or co-lead the project, to apply strict audit procedures, to remove the Researcher from the project, and/or to exclude the Researcher from qualifying for future grant applications for a period of up to 5 years. In cases where a Researcher has been removed from the project, they will be deemed and reported to be in breach of this policy, if within five years they publicly disclose any information obtained through the project.
- 10.9 A Researcher found to have committed misconduct will be responsible for refunding any misappropriated funds, and may be required to participate in ongoing training and reconciliation.

11.0 APPEALS

- 11.1 Appeals will be heard by the Research Ethics Board of Red Crow Community College in a reciprocal agreement with Blue Quills First Nations College, with the Research Ethics Policy of the originating institution governing the appeal process, and determinations to be made regarding the fair application of the policy. The Appeal Board does not have the authority by way of their decision, to have the effect of amending the Research Ethics Policy of the originating institution. A notice of the intent to appeal must also be filed with the Director of Research and Curriculum Development/ Managerial Team.

APPENDIX A

Blue Quills First Nations College

Mission Statement

The Blue Quills First Nations Board of Governors will address the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental needs of the seven member First Nations through the delivery of quality educational programs.

The College is dedicated to increasing and accessing educational opportunities for students by empowering them to overcome barriers that restrict success in college and university settings.

The College believes the maintenance and enhancement of culture contributes to positive self esteem and, therefore, encourages participation in the learning environment.

Vision Statement (Kiskinohtayhiwewin)

Our Spirit...

Our Life...

Our Way...

Blue Quills First Nations College will continue to honour (the) Nistameymahkanak dreams and visions for generations yet unborn.

Blue Quills, guided by the seven member First Nations, will facilitate the process of proactive change in learning. The College environment will reflect our cultures, values, ancestral knowledge, traditions and relationships, nurturing learners to achieve their individual goals and meet the collective need.

Blue Quills will provide a meaningful and balanced curriculum, bringing the uniqueness of our culture into an educational setting.

Educational Philosophy

At the core of the Blue Quills philosophy of education is the guidance of the Creator, our Mother Earth, our Language and the Natural Law: LOVE, HONESTY, SHARING, DETERMINATION

Mina

Our Treaty Rights include a holistic education which nurtures the four dimensions of a healthy, strong, whole person: MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL

Ekwa

Based on lifelong learning that is inter-generational, experiential/process oriented, recognizing the gift, ability, knowledge, diversity, humour...

Ekwa Mina

This learning is facilitated in collaboration with the College and members of the seven First Nations,

Ekosi Macikah

Dependent, Independent, and Interdependent Learning.

Mandate

Blue Quills First Nations College is mandated by the seven member/ owner First Nations through their Chiefs and Board of Governors to advance and protect iyiniw pimatisiwin ekwa iyiniw mamitoneyicikan (indigenous forms of life and thinking) through teaching, research, and community service, guided by the natural laws of the nehiyawak (Cree people), and grounded in nehiyawewin (Cree language), and aligning with the Blue Quills philosophy, vision, and mission statements.

The research must be conducted by and with our communities/ people, respecting traditional protocols, ethics, and relationships, and must contribute directly to the lives of people, supporting empowerment in individuals and the community.

The teaching must honour the whole person, building effective teacher learner relationships, and balancing our knowledge with contemporary literature to support learners and communities in achieving their goals.

The community service must support administrative and community activities, including ceremonial and traditional social events.

BLUE QUILLS FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE RESEARCH INTEGRITY STATEMENT

This statement, together with the Research Ethics Policy, will guide the work of Researchers and the Institution, and will apply to all parties involved in the research enterprise in any capacity. All researchers will be held to the highest standards of integrity and ethics, guided by the natural laws of the Cree people. These are learned through ceremony and a lifetime commitment to living *iyiniw pimatisiwin*. (refer to Research Ethics Policy). All activities in the College are also governed by the Philosophy, Vision and Mission statements, as well as the College Mandate.

Integrity in traditional protocols, human relations, in research methods/ processes, and in financial management will be paramount in:

Human relations: treating colleagues, assistants, support staff, advisors, and participants with the highest respect, understanding that the Researcher's primary responsibility is to help and to serve the interests of the community and the people

ensuring that traditional/ ceremonial protocols are observed by the research team in all circumstances

Research: acknowledging sources and contributions, including those made by participants, students and collaborators, as well as previously published work of the Researcher

where participants or students are involved in the writing of the findings, they shall be acknowledged as contributing authors. Where previously unpublished work of students, collaborators or participants is included, the author's permission shall be obtained, and the work appropriately attributed

maintaining the highest standards of scholarly and scientific rigour in collecting, storing, interpreting, and reporting information, respecting the intellectual property rights and cultural uniqueness in data interpretation

disclosing all and any public or private sponsors of research, including financial and in kind contributions, as well as potential for employment, publishing, or production

each person's contribution to the research project shall be acknowledged, except where confidentiality has been requested or required

anyone who contributes to the writing shall be listed as an author (this does not necessarily include reviewers and editors who will be included in the acknowledgements, unless they contribute substantial or original work, in which

case they may be included as authors)

Financial management: researchers will be accountable to the funding agency and the College for all funds received and expended, and will be responsible that funds are managed according to approved budgets.

researchers will be governed by the financial policies and procedures of the College, and will be subject to random internal audits

The College will ensure that a workshop on integrity and ethics in research is hosted annually, and that all researchers and students participate prior to project approval. Students participating in the research team will be required to complete a research methods course.

INVESTIGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

The Director of Research and Curriculum Development will receive allegations of misconduct relating to a researcher involved in a research project only in writing with specific information/evidence, and will address the matter in the process outlined in the Research Ethics Policy, and will undertake to investigate allegations of academic, financial, or professional misconduct. This investigation will be conducted with integrity and with the primary aim of resolution and restitution. The nehiyaw (Cree) model of conflict resolution will be employed. In the event an allegation is proved to be true following an investigation and dialogue circle, and depending on the severity of the misconduct, and the Circle may require a correction or procedure or behaviour, to suspend or dismiss a researcher found to be in serious violation of the Integrity and Ethics policies, or to remove the research privileges of the individual or team for a specified period of time.

Within the process outlined in the Ethics Policy, the confidentiality of the person(s) making the allegation and the person alleged to have committed misconduct will be maintained within the Dialogue Circle throughout the investigation and resolution process. A researcher proven to have committed misconduct will be identified. All documents and records relating to the investigation will be secured by the lead investigator, and all copies destroyed, except those retained in a secure file for the purpose of maintaining an historical record. In situations where misconduct is determined not to have occurred, appropriate restitution will be made in the circle, and if directed by the Circle, a public disclosure will be made to ensure that any wrongful allegations of misconduct are clarified.

Due process will be observed. The person alleged to have committed any misconduct will have opportunity to provide evidence and respond to all details of the allegation and the investigation.

Where researchers are responsible for or in receipt of funds from an outside source, notice of the results of the investigation will be provided to the funding agency. The College and the researcher will cooperate fully in any investigation that may be undertaken by a funding agent.

Allegations of professional misconduct not related to a research project will be referred to the appropriate supervisor, and will be handled in accordance with this integrity statement and general College personnel policies.

Appendix B

Responses to Ethics policy questions

November 30, 2009

Response on ethics policy from Julia Buchanan

Item # (from Blue Quills First Nations College Research Ethics Policy)

- 3.1 Patricia Makokis and I met on email over two years ago and have been getting to know each other. She has been very generous with me and I am getting to know her family as well. Once we met in person last spring and discussed the research she invited me to visit Blue Quills. Following the visit, intention was shared to engage in the research process. I consider the relationship to the research as co-leads on exploring Cree leadership and have also taken her direction in order to learn about and respect Cree protocols and culture.
- 3.2 I believe the process for this research has given some immediate benefit to the community at Blue Quills by giving voice and by inviting a space where members of the college community can share. Members that participated made comment that this process should happen more frequently which makes me think that perhaps an immediate benefit is experienced by learning from one another and sharing. Giving voice is also a benefit of this research as many people can benefit from reading the research and learning about Cree views of leadership. It is hoped that this process of giving voice will lead to more respect and sensitivity from people that are unaware of Cree views of leadership by becoming educated.
- 3.3 Due to the distance from San Diego to Blue Quills First Nations College and Saddle Lake, it is difficult to include students through each stage of the process however it would be helpful, and Leona Makokis suggested that students observe the dialogue and circle process. I am happy to come to Blue Quills and share with students the process of this research, the ongoing process of relationships and perhaps create a dialogue or sharing that would benefit the students.
- 4.1 Data collected and storage:
The recording of the dialogue is kept by Blue Quills First Nations College. Any copy made for transcription can be returned to the college for storage and future analysis.
- 4.2 Data will be shared as transcribed for corrections or changes—and omissions through email. Pat Makokis has planned to visit San Diego and will look over data and emerging interpretation in Dec. 2009. I will also provide copy through email and seek input from participants at multiple points. Phone appointments can be included if participants desire.
- 4.3 I will seek input from each participant how they would like to be indicated in the study whether with their name or rather anonymous with a pseudonym of their choosing.

- 4.4 By keeping participants informed I hope to be aware of consensus and take direction from that consensus for dissemination of results including a presentation to community, students or faculty as indicated.
- 4.5 Joint copyright will be sought unless Blue Quills would rather not since this is also part of a dissertation process.
- 4.6 The original recording is in the possession of Bob with the technology office. I can provide a hard copy of the dissertation for the library at Blue Quills.
- 5.2 The data from the recording will be transcribed. The interpretation will be shared with participants for input in order to ensure appropriate analysis. Any information from ceremony will not be shared other than mentioning that the research process began with appropriate ceremony and that research is ceremony.
- 7.1 Under the guidance of and in collaboration with Pat Makokis, and also direction from Leona Makokis, I have been learning and have honored the spiritual protocols to each participant in the circle to ask for their help. I also brought gifts to share with each participant in a giveaway ceremony at the conclusion of the circle. Lunch was provided on the day of the circle.
- 7.2 No minors are involved
- 7.3 Informed consent included a process. Pat Makokis connected with many participants in advance to discuss the research idea and also to set a time and place. Spiritual protocols are offered to each participant to ask for help. In addition and to also support the Protection of Human Subjects policy from the University of San Diego (6.2), informed consent forms were provided to each participant for their review and signature. This process was followed to respect Blue Quills Ethics policy which also suggests following the policy of participating institutional requirements for the protection of Human Subjects. Participants did come and go at will from the process and the dialogue was directed by consensus of participants for break times etc.
- 7.4 There is a personal benefit in the process of dissertation for Julia Buchanan from University of San Diego.
- 7.5 This is understood.
- 7.6 Transcription and analysis will be shared through email as the process evolves. Participant's rights in this regard (right to clarify, delete, request confidentiality or anonymity) are acknowledged and respected.