

Survivance: An Indigenous Social Impact Game

by

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Abstract

Social impact games are on the rise as a means of encouraging social change through gameplay. This dissertation describes the outcomes of playing *Survivance* (<http://www.survivance.org>)—an Indigenous social impact game that honors storytelling, art, and self-determination as pathways to healing from historical trauma caused by colonization in Turtle Island (North America). The research addresses a gap in studies that specifically explore the impact of social impact games while uniquely merging Indigenous and Game Studies scholarship.

The study focuses on gameplay spread over one year involving ten core players and three validation players. The players are from the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon in the United States of America, where *Survivance* was developed collaboratively with the non-profit organization Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. as an extension of its multimedia health and wellness curriculum *Discovering Our Story*. Thus, this research is positioned within Indigenous ways of knowing. It is informed by *biskaabiiyang* methodology, an Anishinaabe approach of “returning to ourselves.” The survivance framework involves looking at player experiences overall, including their incoming motivations, quest journeys, and “acts of survivance” (any form of self-expression, e.g. a painting, a beadwork medallion, an experimental animation). It leverages Indigenously-determined methods including written reflections, acts of survivance as symbol-based reflection, and conversations.

Findings from the *Survivance* prototype show that intergenerational exchanges of traditions, stories, and art practices are pathways to wellbeing that influence the player’s self; various forms of community; and the greater world; while also fostering a reciprocal relationship with spirit. The study clearly shows that social impact games *do* make an impact, and goes on to describe this in ways that are relevant to *Survivance* players.

Keywords: **Indigenous, First Nations, Native American, games for change, social impact games, co-design**

This dissertation is dedicated to my community and family:
to Mal and Kat, who I love dearly and who open up worlds of play,
to my mother for her ongoing work and passing on her ways of knowing,
to my father for telling me I could do anything with my life,
as long as I was happy,
to all of Mal and Kat's Aunties for their good thoughts and warmth.

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List of Acronyms

AbTeC	Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace
AISES	American Indian Science and Engineering Society
NASCC	Native American Student and Community Center
UISHE	United Indian Students in Higher Education
WISDOM	Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.

Glossary

Aboriginal	In common usage, a synonym for Indigenous or Native, and most commonly used to refer to Indigenous peoples of Australia and Canada.
Anishinaabe	Known by variant names (e.g., Chippewa, Ojibwe) and variant spellings, Anishinaabeg are peoples who originally lived in the Atlantic Coast of the Eastern United States and Canada. They migrated west well into the continent of North America prior to recorded histories by Euro-Western explorers (Treuer, 2001, p. 7). By 1852 they were considered “the most numerous and important tribe” (Warren, 1984, p. 25) extending from areas around Lake Superior through what are now the states of Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin in the United States and the Ontario province in Canada. On the invention of tribal names see, for example, Vizneor (1994), who clarifies that “Chippewa...is defined as otchipwe, and the invented word Indian is defined as anishinabe in <i>A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language</i> by Bishop Baraga. This first dictionary of the language published more than a century ago defined anishinabe as a man, woman, child, of the anishinabe tribe, but the simulated names, not the names in tribal languages, were sustained by manifest manners in literature” (p. 11).
Euro-Western	The term “Euro-Western” refers to the social, philosophical, religious, and political constructs that have asserted European and American ideological dominance over global affairs in the past four centuries or so. Largely derived through a matrix of transmissions from ancient Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian rhetorical traditions, these directions can be summed up in the related phrases, the “Cartesian-Newtonian-Baconian epistemologies” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008, p. 151) and “Western enlightenment consciousness” (Hume, 2007, p. 581).

- Decolonization** The term “decolonization” represents a social justice movement aimed at ameliorating the effects of Euro-Western colonization on Indigenous peoples. Decolonization is associated with the related terms self-determination and sovereignty. “[D]ecolonizing research recognizes and works within the belief that non-Western knowledge forms are excluded from or marginalized in normative research paradigms, and therefore non-Western/Indigenous voices and epistemologies are silenced and subjects lack agency within such representations” (Swadener and Mutua, 2008, p. 33).
- First Nations** Used to refer to the original peoples of the Americas and now more specifically to Indigenous peoples who reside in Canada. The term “nation” is significant in asserting nationhood, which implies the idea of sovereignty.
- Game** Games are dynamic systems that engage players in structured interaction that results in measurable outcomes. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (2003) narrow the definition to systems “in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome” (p. 96). While not all games strive for exact measurements of their outcome(s), all games “... provide both moments of resolution and measurable achievement to their players” (Fullerton, 2008, p. 43). In light of growing work in the area of games for change and most relevantly social impact games, McGonigal (2011) provides a simple alternative by focusing on the defining traits of games: “a goal, rules, a feedback system, and voluntary participation” (p. 21). This definition steps away from “artificial conflict” (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003, p. 96), “make-believe” (Caillois, 1961, pp. 10-11), and “dramatic elements that make... emotionally engaging experiences” (Fullerton, 2008, p. 42), since often the conflict explored in social impact games in particular is not imaginary but very real. Nonetheless, games can offer a safe space to explore conflict through engaging gameplay. Overall, these and other definitions of games share the understanding that games involve voluntary play on behalf of the player(s) and a system that structures gameplay and responsiveness to players.

Indian	<p>“The word Indian, and most other tribal names, are simulations in the literature of dominance” (Vizenor, 1994, pp. 10-11). Stephen Pevar (1992) points out, “There is no universally accepted definition of the term ‘Indian’...Many federal laws use the word ‘Indian’ without defining it. This allows federal agencies to decide who is an Indian under those laws. Some agencies have been accused of defining Indian too narrowly...courts have used a two-part test to determine who is an Indian. First, the person must have some Indian blood, that is, some identifiable Indian ancestry. Second, the Indian community must recognize this person as an Indian...These varying legal standards have caused confusion and inconsistency...To be considered an Indian for federal purposes, an individual must have some Indian blood...However, under certain federal laws small amounts of blood, together with recognition as an Indian by the Indian community, will qualify a person as an Indian” (pp. 12-13). For Vizenor and others, the appropriation of even the control over Indian identity through establishing blood quantum under the guise of giving Native peoples “benefits that Congress intended them to receive” (Pevar, 1992, p. 12) is an egregious example of manifest manners.</p>
Indigenous	<p>In common usage, the term “indigenous” refers to locality, or the historically and geographically concentrated occurrence of a particular place by a particular people, plant, or animal over time. In the discourse of social justice, the term “Indigenous” refers to certain contemporary communities that have experienced the often deleterious effects of contact with Western or Euro-Western imperial expansion. Smith (1999) points out that “‘Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggles primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world’s colonized peoples” (p. 7). For convenience, Indigenous peoples can be defined as those who identify themselves among the groups addressed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted at its 107th plenary meeting on September 13, September 2007.</p>
Indigenous Ways of Knowing	<p>“Indigenous ways of knowing” refer to the epistemologies of Indigenous peoples—that is, to what constitutes knowledge and how “knowing” comes about in any given Indigenous culture. Indigenous ways of knowing are specific to place and people.</p>
Indigenous Methodologies	<p>Indigenous methodologies provide the agenda for theorists who base their methods on Indigenous epistemologies. Also known as “Decolonizing Methodologies.”</p>

Métis	Gerald Vizenor refers to himself as “mixed-blood” or “métis” in early works. The Métis have gained recognition as a sovereign nation in provinces in Canada. Originally, the word <i>métis</i> denoted mixed-blood ancestry, often combining Euro-Western French or Scottish and First Nations Anishinaabe, Cree, Saulteaux, Menominee, Mi'kmaq, and others, and often used pejoratively. Vizenor’s early use of the word reasserted mixed-blood or <i>métis</i> identity as an agent of survivance and self-determination.
Native American	Used to categorize the Indigenous peoples of the Americas who reside primarily in the United States; sometimes synonymous with American Indian.
Pan-Indian	A term connoting the unification of Indigenous peoples, problematic within Indigenous research communities (see Smith, 1999, Stonebanks, 2008, pp. 310-311). When the term is used by Indigenous people to denote unity, it has a positive connotation; when used to stereotype or generalize all Native peoples as essentially the same, it has negative connotations and can be related to Vizenor’s use of the term “simulation of the <i>indian</i> .”
Self-determination	In international law, self-determination refers to the right of a people (nation) to exercise sovereignty or self-rule and to determine its own political, economic, and cultural arrangements. It can refer to the efforts of Indigenous peoples to regain sovereignty after years of colonization, to restore the terms of broken treaties, or to prevent continued abuses. On an individual level, it refers to a person’s ability to exercise free will without interference. Subtle orthographic appropriations that assert control over Native representation also constitute acts of self-determination, or what Gerald Vizenor would call survivance, as in Vizenor’s spelling of “Indian” with lower-case “i” and italic font in order “to draw attention to the anomalous nature of the word” (Madsen, 2009, p. 34); in Simon J. Ortiz’s capitalization of the “I” in <i>Indigenous</i> as a way to participate in the movement to reclaim and sustain Indigenous languages: ‘I capitalize I when it comes to spelling and using the term <i>Indigenous</i> when it pertains to peoples who are indigenous or aboriginal or native to the continents of the Americas, North and South America connected by Central America” (McAdams, 2010, np); and in the widespread adoption of the term <i>peoples</i> in preference to Pan-Indian usages such as “Indigenous people” as “in important linguistic symbol of our identification as self-determining peoples” (Smith, 1999, p. 115).

Survivance

Popularized by Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, the term survivance combines “survival” and “endurance” while recognizing Indigenous survival as active presence in our contemporary context. That is, survivance asserts Indigenous identity as malleable and argues that traditions can adapt to contemporary media and that new traditions can form without compromising their traditional values. Survivance, much like Indigenous ways of knowing, is a way of living and an ongoing series of acts of self-determination. It can also refer to specific forms of survivance; namely poetry and fiction in Vizenor’s work, as well as comic books, graphic novels, theater, film, new media, and games. In the context of the social impact game *Survivance*, acts of survivance are forms of self-determination in any medium created by players as reflections of experiences that occurred while playing quests in the game.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Social impact games are on the rise as a means of encouraging social change through gameplay. These games seek to influence “real life” and often blur the lines of what constitutes the game space compared to the real world. They have many possible outcomes, such as creating social awareness around a particular issue, educating players about the depths of an issue, changing the attitudes and/or behaviors of players, and/or promoting activism and social engagement (Whitson & Dormann, 2013). *Survivance* (<http://www.survivance.org>) is one such social impact game that uniquely addresses the long-lasting effects of historical trauma on Indigenous communities of Turtle Island (otherwise known as the continent of North America).

Racism, discrimination, and unresolved grief from the loss of land, lives, and traditions continues to cause emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual imbalances for Indigenous people (Brave Heart, 2003). *Survivance* hopes to restore balance for players through gameplay that honors storytelling, art, and self-determination. It recognizes that it is players who create change rather than the game. Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor’s reverse-appropriation of the term “survivance” inspired the game’s title. “Survivance” refers to a combination of survival and endurance. Vizenor (1994) defines survivance as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (p. vii). Thus, survivance is more than mere survival—specifically, the survival of Indigenous peoples in the face of colonization, victimization, and attempted dominance by settlers—it is a way of life that nourishes Indigenous ways of knowing in the context of our self-determination in the world today.

The study explored in this dissertation addresses the impact of *Survivance* on the players and the urban Indigenous community where the game was developed. It uniquely interweaves Indigenous epistemology (that is, Indigenous ways of knowing), methodology, and methods in a study on a social impact game. Thus, this research sits

within Game Studies—a vastly multidisciplinary field shaped by luminaries including Espen Aarseth, Henry Jenkins, Janet Murray, Frans Mäyrä, Jesse Schell, Jesper Juul, and T. L. Taylor. It emphasizes game designers who also contribute to academia, such as Brenda Laurel, Jane McGonigal, Ian Bogost, Tracy Fullerton, and Robin Hunicke. The study remains true to Indigenous self-determination within the context of game-related research.

1.1. Survivance

Survivance is a social impact game that serves as an intergenerational exchange of knowledge for the purpose of restoring Indigenous wellbeing. The game creates social awareness around the colonization of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, educates players about the long-lasting effects of historical trauma, and seeks to engage players in processes that enable healing through storytelling and self-determination. The prototype takes the form of a website that echoes sentiments of Indigenous methodology by opening with: “Welcome. Stories inform us, empower us, mobilize us.”

The game system is a series of non-linear quests to be played in the real world that follow Indigenous teachings of the life journey. That is, quests can be played the phases of The Orphan (“questioning our circumstances”), The Wanderer (“wandering in search of answers in unfamiliar places”), The Caretaker (“befriending and caring about others”), The Warrior (“confronting a challenge”), and The Changer (“returning, transformed, to help others start their journeys”) in any order, since traditional teachings tell us that we may enter and revisit these phases of life depending on our personal experiences. The game also includes the life phase of The Elder in the form of storyteller guides Elaine Grinnell (Jamestown S’Klallam), Roger Fernandes (Lower Elwah S’Klallam), and Woodrow Morrison Jr. (Haida), whose stories were video recorded and adapted to quests with the guidance of the Discovering Our Story team.

Players are challenged to complete any quest of their choice depending on their perception of where they are in their own life journey. For example, The Retelling Quest within The Caretaker calls on players to revisit a traditional story from their culture, listen to the story “again and again,” and to retell the story in any medium (Figure 1.1).

Completing quests can take anywhere between a few minutes to days to months depending on the player's unique life situation and choices during quests.


<p>The Retelling Quest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Revisit a traditional story from your tribe/nation/peoples that inspires you.▪ Listen closely to the story again and again.▪ Retell the traditional story in any medium that inspires you. For example, an experimental animation that reflects on a non-linear story that is told in many different ways. This is an act of survivance!▪ Share your act of survivance by emailing the file or posting online and #survivance.	<p>Words of Roger Fernandes</p> <p>"Mythic stories speak like a dream—that when we tell these stories and our brain is actively involved, it says this never happened, that could have never happened, 'I mean that's impossible.' But the mythic stories again, are not for the brain, they're for your heart. And so they speak to us at a different level and the people receive them and accept them at a different level."</p> <p>Listen to Roger Fernandes</p>	<p>Acts of Survivance</p> 
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Figure 1.1. *Survivance: The Caretaker: The Retelling Quest*
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

As a way to process the experience of playing a quest as well as determine and reflect on the player's own perceptions of the outcome(s) of gameplay, the player creates an "act of survivance." An act of survivance, inspired by Vizenor's term *survivance*, is self-determined expression in any medium, such as oral stories, songs, poems, short stories, paintings, beadwork, weaving, photography, and films, to name a few. If the player chooses, their act of survivance can then be shared online, with their own communities, or broader into spaces such as galleries and film festivals. For example, for *The Caretaker: The Retelling Quest*, I adapted Anishinaabeg stories of the Moon People into an experimental animation (LaPensée, 2011) (Figure 1.2). The stories were gifted to me by my mother whose work in tracing out Indigenous science fiction (Dillon, 2012) I continue, and revisited for the quest by reading a short story version by Basil Johnston (1990, pp. 94-102). I was deeply inspired by a track created by Cree cellist Cris Derksen, whose work spoke clearly to the aesthetic that came to me in dreams. I then spent three months creating characters and landscapes using shells, beads, bone, leather, copper, birch, pinecones modified and then animated moving assets pixel by pixel in the image editing software Adobe Photoshop, which were then exported as individual screenshots and compiled using the film editing software Final Cut Pro. The film has since played at imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival (<http://www.imagenative.org/>), LA Skins Festival (<http://www.laskinsfest.com/>), a

special event organized by the Vancouver Indigenous Media Arts Festival (<http://vimaf.com/>), among others.



Figure 1.2. “The Path Without End” by Elizabeth LaPensée
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

This dissertation focuses on a study about the impact of the *Survivance* prototype, specifically on the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon in the United States of America where the study was based. This was the most fitting community since *Survivance* is directly based on the multimedia health and wellness curriculum *Discovering Our Story* from the Portland-based non-profit organization *Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.* *Discovering Our Story* storytellers such as Haida elder Woodrow Morrison Jr. contributed to the collaborative game design process that shaped the gameplay and prototype website design.

Findings from the prototype show that intergenerational exchange of traditions, stories, and art practices is a pathway to wellbeing that reaches the self, communities, and the world, while recognizing the reciprocal Indigenously-determined relationship with spirit and ancestors. *Survivance* has also motivated ongoing work that contributes to the community. Since the game's launch, acts of survivance from players such as Shilo George (Tsistitas) and Toma Villa (Yakama) have either been in galleries or sold and

thus furthered the players' community roles as artists. To date, *Survivance* has released publicly and premiered in the New Media category at imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival 2013 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Figure 1.3). In the near future, *Survivance* will be incorporated into workshops coinciding with ongoing efforts by non-profit organizations such as the Native Wellness Institute and Red Lodge Transition Services.

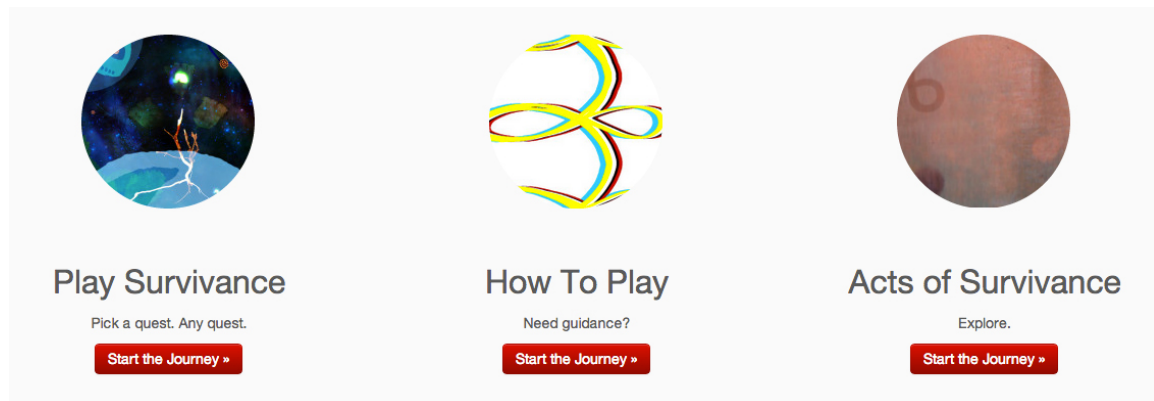


Figure 1.3. *Survivance* Website
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

To start, this chapter describes the issues that prompted the creation of *Survivance*, its relationship to the multimedia curriculum project *Discovering Our Story*, and the transition to the game space. The next section discusses the intentions, approach as informed by Indigenous methodology and methods, and contributions of the study. Research questions clarify the direction of the study, followed by addressing limitations and delimitations. The dissertation largely assumes an understanding of Game Studies terminology and thus focuses on defining Indigenous terms. The research is situated in a unique intersection of Game Studies and Indigenously-determined research.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Indigenous ways of knowing teach that wellbeing involves an overall balance of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health. This intricate balance has been greatly affected by historical trauma—the intergenerational trauma caused by the loss of lives, lands, and culture during the process of colonization (Weaver & Yellow Horse Brave

Heart, 1999; Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2011). Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, who is a Hunkpapa, Oglala Lakota Ph.D., is recognized internationally for her work addressing historical trauma. She defines colonization as a form of holocaust that has persisted as unresolved grief that manifests today as a myriad of health and social issues (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The process of colonization is also recognized as “ethnic cleansing” (Whitbeck et al., 2009) or genocide (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

In addition to the trauma caused by war and displacement from lands, Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island also experienced emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in residential schools (also known as boarding schools). The first generation to survive genocide likely experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms including depression, anxiety, hypervigilance, and drug and alcohol abuse (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Later generations were prevented from traditional ceremonial practices of mourning and grieving and therefore unable to heal from emotional reactions such as anger, guilt, sadness, and helplessness (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). As Indigenous communities continue with unresolved grief, these reactions transfer to the next generations.

Intergenerational transfer of historical trauma, along with ongoing racism and discrimination, contribute to a number of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual imbalances today. These imbalances contribute to high rates of suicidal behaviors and gestures (Brave Heart, 2003); addictions such as drugs, alcohol, and self-destructive patterns; depression and anxiety; domestic, child, and sexual abuse; and disproportionate incidences of Type 2 Diabetes and other diseases (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). These issues are interwoven with high poverty rates; high incarceration rates; and low retention and completion rates for Indigenous youth in education (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011).

Looking closer at the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon informs trends seen in similar communities. Portland’s urban and therefore diverse Indigenous community includes 380 tribes and the ninth largest Indigenous population in the United States (Ogunwole, 2002). Unfortunately, Indigenous families are among those with the highest rates of poverty at 34.4%, which is triple the 11.7% rate of Caucasian families

(Curry-Stevens et al., 2011, p. 49). Families are often in single parent homes in distressed neighborhoods. Many generations in Portland struggle with individual and family wellness due to co-occurring substance abuse, mental health issues, and Type 2 Diabetes (Crofoot et al., 2008). Today, many Indigenous youth living in Portland experience the negative impacts of historical trauma through unresolved grief and lack awareness of their own Indigenous history, culture, and traditions. Sadly, these youth are likely to commit suicide at levels 70% higher than the general popular (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011, p. 65). These troubling issues must be resolved in a culturally supportive way.

Organizations and communities such as the Native Wellness Institute, Red Lodge Transition Services, Native American Youth Association, and the Native American Rehabilitation Association seek to address these concerns in Portland, Oregon and surrounding areas. Among them is Wisdom of the Elders, Inc., a Native American non-profit corporation with work in cultural sustainability, education, and cross-cultural communications. Since 1993, Wisdom of the Elders has shared Indigenous teachings by preserving storytelling and art through a radio series, television series, educational curriculum, public events, workshops, an annual storytelling festival, and more recently the health and wellness multimedia curriculum *Discovering Our Story*.

Discovering Our Story consists of 24 sets of health and wellness curriculum dedicated to recovery and prevention of co-occurring issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. The video productions and teachings are organized around the Native American hero's journey story model, a parallel to Joseph Campbell's work, which was greatly influenced by Indigenous storytellers and elders (Konner & Perlmutter, 1988). The curriculum addresses the social and economic inequities among the Indigenous community within Portland, Oregon's four counties.

Discussions with the Wisdom of the Elders community about the possibilities of an Indigenous game started in 2005 and began to form more in 2009 during the production of *Discovering Our Story*. While *Discovering Our Story* curriculum and videos are available online for anyone to access, the project design was mostly aimed at Indigenous adults, as well as therapists and counselors in the hopes of improving services for urban Indigenous youth and adults. Indigenous teachings emphasize

looking ahead to the next seven generations for hope while looking to the past seven generations for guidance. Thus, Wisdom of the Elders was interested in adapting Discovering Our Story into a game that would be more likely to reach the community and facilitate intergenerational exchanges.

1.3. Purpose and Significance

1.3.1. Intention

Survivance is a social impact game that addresses healing from intergenerational historical trauma experienced by Indigenous communities. Studying social impact games can result in many outcomes. Research can help inform best practices for the design process; strategies for reaching players; game mechanics for aligning with social impact outcomes; and methods for identifying the impact of the game on players and the wider community. There are very few studies in this area despite research and development communities acknowledging that there is a need for evaluating social impact games (Stokes et al., 2011; Swain, 2007). Thus, this study aims at researching the impact of *Survivance*, namely on the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon where the study occurred.

This study also seeks to transform the legacy of research in Indigenous communities, which has often had questionable or negative impacts (John, 2001; Garrouette, 2003; Justice, 2004; Smith, 2005; Wilson, 2005). Bringing Indigenous methodologies and methods into the game research space is an act of survivance in and of itself. This approach is informed both by taking care with conducting research in the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon as well as my background as a mixed blood Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis researcher.

1.3.2. Approach

The *Survivance* study uniquely merges an Indigenous research approach with Game Studies. It is positioned within Indigenous epistemology (namely what was researched, what questions were asked, how they were asked, and how the data were

analyzed), decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies (motivations and agenda), the *survance* framework (structure of the study), Indigenously-determined methods during data collection (written reflections, acts of *survance* as symbol-based reflection, and conversations), and Indigenously-determined methods for data analysis (*biskaabiiyang* and symbol-based reflection).

Indigenous ways of knowing—the ontological understanding of “land, animals, plants, waters, skies, climate, and spiritual systems” of Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2003)—inform Indigenous epistemology. The *Survance* study upholds Indigenous epistemology by acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous worldviews of players; emphasizing the historical, social, and political contexts that Indigenous communities face day-to-day; and giving space-time to *Survance* players to represent themselves in their own ways.

Much like action research (de Crespigny, 2006), decolonizing methodologies recognize that Indigenous research contributes to a larger social justice movement. This study participates in decolonizing methodologies in the following ways: focusing on what Indigenous methodologies *are* rather than what they *are not* (i.e. in relation to Euro-Western methodologies, hereafter referred to as Western research); including elements of first person narrative in the writing style of the dissertation; acknowledging *Survance* as social justice in the form of a game that encourages self-determination; viewing players as collaborators in the research; representing the experience of players in their own voices as best as possible; recognizing both Indigenous Studies and Game Studies as interdisciplinary areas; and respecting the many ways of knowing by all those involved in or referenced by the study.

Since I am an Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis researcher, this study draws more specifically from *biskaabiiyang* methodology. *Biskaabiiyang*, which in Anishinaabemowin means “to return to ourselves” [J. P. Chalykoff, personal communication, April 10, 2013], involves returning to our teachings on a pathway of wellbeing. The process can occur within the researcher, the research itself, and anyone involved in the research. It means facing the effects of colonization and unraveling these through returning to *gikendaasowin*, traditional ways of being, such as language and teachings around

wellbeing. During this study, I was challenged by revisiting my family's history in parallel with being gifted with understanding the importance of spirit in art and self-expression.

Biskaabiiyang, like many other decolonizing methodologies, frames research as ceremony. The process of research involves seeking, doing, learning, and living a spirit-centered way known as *mino-bimaadiziwin* (Debassige, 2010). Ceremony protocol can appear many forms, such as the way in which the community is approached and how research is presented. The role of the researcher involves lifelong dedication. For example, following the *Survivance* study, I have made myself available to Wisdom of the Elders community for advising academic publications that speak specifically to "Discovering Our Story." I also continue to interact with many of the players of *Survivance*, whose work continues within and outside of the game.

While I chose *biskaabiiyang* to frame my own process because of my Anishinaabe ancestors, I recognize that the players of *Survivance* come from various backgrounds and thus the framework of the study speaks to decolonizing methodologies overall. Indigenous research parallels community-based research, which makes an effort to contextualize "participants" instead as partners, or more appropriately collaborators, who are equally involved in the research process (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). In an act of *anishinaabe-izhitwaawin* (in this instance, the custom of asking our Elders for input), the study design involved collaborating with the Wisdom of the Elders community. Since Wisdom of the Elders needed to research the impact of Discovering Our Story on the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon, it was a natural step to ask similar questions for the impact of *Survivance*, which is adapted from years of work from the storytellers, elders, curriculum writers, and filmmakers involved in "Discovering Our Story."

The type and protocol of research methods were informed by other decolonizing studies as well as my own experience playing through *Survivance* before introducing other players to the game. Prior to conducting the formal *Survivance* study, I played through the quests during years of iterative design work adapting Discovering Our Story into the social impact game design prototype. From my own experience playing *Survivance*, I was confident that the game certainly had an impact, but I had yet to see what forms of impact would be revealed from other players. Methods for data collection,

data analysis, data visualization, and validation were selected based on their ties to decolonizing methodologies and ability to give players the space-time to express their own experiences. The study framework also emphasized reciprocity—the act of giving or gifting back to the community involved in the research.

Data collection included iteratively writing open-ended reflections, conducting gameplay, and having open-ended conversations. Players began by visiting the *Survivance* prototype website, exploring the quest options, and then writing an open-ended reflection on their initial thoughts about the game, such as which quest they were most interested in playing. Players then played through their chosen quest, which occurred anywhere between one day and two months. To complete the quest, players created acts of survivance, taking between two days and two weeks. Players ended by writing an open-ended closing reflection following prompts about their experience with gameplay. Unplanned open-ended conversations between myself and the players and the players and other community members enriched the data.

Data analysis began by identifying themes that emerged from the initial written reflections, closing written reflections, acts of survivance, and conversations. Decolonizing methodologies calls for emphasizing the perspectives of the players, as opposed to my interpretations as a researcher. The analysis does its best to represent the players' voices in the context of establishing comparative themes. These themes then extend into the identifiable impact on the self of the player, the community, and the world.

Uniquely, the *Survivance* study visualizes data using the symbol-based reflection approach—an arts-based method of inquiry that can involve the researcher making art as a means of understanding the research (McNiff, 1998). Symbol-based reflection is more widely used as a method in participatory action research (Park, 1993). In Indigenous research, the method recognizes that creating art involves reconnecting with ancestors (Lavallée, 2009). This method is used for contextualizing acts of survivance as data that can be analyzed, as well as informing the design of symbols to represent the framework, themes, and impact in the research.

Validation occurred over several phases, including triangulating data from three new *Survivance* players who joined the study based on recommendations from previous players; verifying the methods and findings with the players, followed by the Wisdom of the Elders community, followed by the Discovering Our Story Advisory Board. The wording used in the study design and findings were verified with the larger urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon through organizations such as the Native Wellness Institute and Red Lodge Transition Services. Presentations are planned to present the findings to Portland State University's Indigenous community including the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, United Indian Students in Higher Education, and American Indian Science and Engineer Society, which involves validation as well as reciprocity.

Reciprocity involves gifting to the community involved in the research. Decolonizing methodologies recognize that knowledge provided by participants and communities is a gift (Lavallée, 2009), which should be honored and given back. Players gifted me with their acts of survivance and describing their experiences, for which I returned the gift with giving them full access and control in regards to how they were represented. Many of the players described feeling encouraged when they read the findings. The findings were also gifted to the Discovering Our Story Advisory Board for use in any way they needed, such as publications or to seek grant funding. I also gifted the Advisory Board with the annotated bibliography and access to publications that would help their publication milestones. Today, I continue to be available to players of *Survivance* for community and academic support, including recommendation letters, editing articles, and reviewing projects. Each and every player has a contribution, which adds layers to the contributions of the study itself.

1.3.3. Contributions

Survivance and its companion study offer several contributions. *Survivance* is in and of itself a contribution that is multi-fold. The research stance adds to important developments in Indigenous methodology and methods. The study addresses the efficacy of a social impact game. The methods to determine efficacy could be adapted to other studies of social impact games, in consideration of their cultural context. Lastly, the merging of this work within this context is unique and brings together communities with

few but important connections as a contribution to Indigenous game-related research. Overall, the various contributions of this research could be useful to game designers or more specifically Indigenous game designers, game researchers, Indigenous researchers, Indigenous wellness programs, and Indigenous communities looking to implement a game of their own or get involved in playing *Survivance*.

Survivance as a game is a contribution in terms of its design process, design, outcomes, and ongoing role in the urban Indigenous community of Portland and its potential to reach further. *Survivance* was designed in an Indigenous way that involved collaborating early on with storytellers and elders from Discovering Our Story. Its design was based on being accessible to Indigenous communities. The gameplay takes the stance that players are the ones who make change, rather than the game itself creating the change. In addition to the study highlighted in this dissertation, the game continues on in other venues such as festivals and community workshops. *Survivance* may be of interest to other Indigenous communities, either as a game to play and a pathway to create connections between Indigenous communities across the world, or as a model to empower communities to create their own games.

Survivance the study specifically focuses on the impact of the game. Studies that address the types and extents of effects of social impact games are few, despite a call for such research (Stokes et al., 2011; Swain, 2007). This dissertation not only explores the impact of *Survivance* on its players and the community, it also interweaves a contextual narrative about the ongoing work in developing and implementing the game. The study clearly shows that social impact games *do* make an impact, and goes on to explore in ways that are relevant to its players. The research encourages studies on social impact games that involve players in reflective processes, which is further emphasized in the methods.

The methodology and methods in this study reinforce and expands on Indigenous research. The study begins from a place of *biskaabiiyang* and emphasizes the importance of including our words and our Indigenous ways of knowing. Most importantly, this study leverages Indigenous methodology and methods as valid approaches in research. Hopefully, other Indigenous scholars will be able to build from this research in a way that speaks to their own identity, research interests, and

communities, just as this study has grown from the scholarship of those before working in fields such as Indigenous health. The methodology and methods are first and foremost intended for Indigenous research interests but also offer different perspectives for researchers in Game Studies who may or may not be engaged in Indigenously-determined research.

1.4. Research Questions

The design of the study was informed by the primary research question, which in turn shaped questions for methods such as open-ended written reflections. Overall, the study seeks to answer: “What is the impact of playing *Survivance*?” Since the study is limited by location and community with gameplay centralized to Indigenous peoples living in Portland, Oregon, the study more specifically addresses: “What is the impact of playing *Survivance* on the Portland urban Indigenous community?” Players are considered members of the overall community, such that the question addresses both the impact on the individual players and the extended community.

In the context of *biskaabiiyang* methodology and Indigenous research methods, players were asked very few direct questions. To begin, players were asked to write a short reflection answering: “What interests you in playing *Survivance*?” From there, players reiterated the process of writing reflections about their quest choice, gameplay experience, and act of survivance depending on what they were most interested in writing about.

Since the main research question looks at the impact of the game on the Portland urban Indigenous community, the results suggest that there could be a similar impact on urban Indigenous communities elsewhere. The study results also showed clear impacts on the world outside of the immediate community in Portland. These instances suggest possibilities for global impact once *Survivance* is released and played internationally. While these considerations were not included in the original research question that shaped the study, the results show implications.

1.5. Delimitations and Limitations

1.5.1. Delimitations

The *Survivance* study has several purposeful delimitations. The overall study is situated within the interdisciplinary field of Game Studies yet comes from Indigenous ways of knowing and thus focuses on Indigenous methodology and methods. Therefore, Chapter 2.0 Review of Related Literature focuses on related game research, while Chapter 3.0 Process eliminates these studies from the discussion and instead pulls from methodology and methods in Indigenous research in areas such as health. This delimitation is addressed by in-depth discussion of *Survivance* and the study throughout the dissertation.

The representation of players reflected in Chapter 4.0 Findings has delimitations in terms of location, amount of players, and timeline. The study is situated specifically within the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon since *Survivance* is based on *Discovering Our Story*, which was developed by the Portland-based non-profit Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. While other studies could look at the role of *Survivance* in reservation communities, the game is most relevant to contemporary urban Indigenous identity, which is informed by living within cities and in most cases displaced from traditional lands as a result of colonization. The study looks in-depth at these experiences through ten core players and three validation players who joined the study later as a result of recommendations from the core players. While this could be seen as a limitation when compared to quantitative studies with vastly more participants, this study calls for attention and depth with few players. Further, each player was revisited an average of one year after the study took place to complete the validation phase, which furthered understanding the long-term effects that *Survivance* facilitated and strengthened the study.

1.5.2. Limitations

Since most aspects of the *Survivance* study are delimitations, there are few limitations. The methods for analysis are purposeful in order to further Indigenously-determined research. The amount of players in the study, which would be seen as few in

comparison with quantitative research, affords depth to the results. The study focuses on several months of gameplay and follows up with players an average of one year after they completed their acts of survivance during the validation phase, which reinforces findings long-term.

The one true limitation occurs because of a conflict between the expectations of Western research and those of Indigenous research. The written reflections from players and field notes from open-ended discussions with players are not included in this dissertation in their raw forms. Indigenous research mobilizes around protecting Indigenous knowledge and experiences (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Since players often shared personal stories that in some cases they requested to have left out of Chapter 4.0 Findings during the validation phase, it would be a breach in trust to include these. In order to address the requirements of academia, the documents are available by request from the researcher and with approval from individual players.

It is of utmost importance that this study supports the decisions of the players, since their identities are openly shared and their acts of survivance are publicly available online in the current iteration of *Survivance* (<http://www.survivance.org>). The decision made in response to this particular limitation takes a stance that aligns itself with engagement in social issues that *Survivance* and other social impact games inspire. The following chapter explores literature on such social impact games within the greater context of Game Studies and the Games for Change Movement.

Chapter 2. Review of Related Literature

The study explored in this research looks at the outcomes of *Survivance*—an Indigenous game for change and, more specifically, social impact game, that addresses a pathway of healing from intergenerational historical trauma caused by the colonization of Indigenous peoples in North America. The research interweaves Game Studies, a multidisciplinary field that embraces or at times contends with diverse forms of research, and Indigenous Studies, a growing area of research that is equally diverse and foundationally based in Indigenous epistemology.

For the purposes of a concentrated review of literature, this chapter situates the study within Game Studies; overviews the various meanings of the term “games for change”; delves into the development process, design characteristics, and outcomes of social impact games; and finally looks closely at social impact game research that can be compared to the *Survivance* study. The integration of Indigenous methodology and methods makes the *Survivance* study holistically unique from the research described below, which is explored in much greater depth in Chapter 3.0 Process. Fundamentally, this research aligns itself with scholars such as Henry Jenkins (2006), who believe that video games and other similar forms of media can facilitate artistic expression and civic engagement.

2.1. Game Studies

Game Studies is a multidisciplinary field that involves researchers from a variety of backgrounds interested in various aspects of digital games. Influential works such as Janet Murray’s (1997) *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* inspired exploration in interactive narrative that later extended into digital games. Humanities and Cultural Studies scholars dominated the early stages of the field in the late 1990’s (Mäyrä, 2013). Diversity in scholarship rapidly grew starting in 2001 thanks in

part to the forming of the Digital Games Research Association (<http://www.digra.org>) and the release of the *Game Studies Journal* (<http://www.gamestudies.org>).

Much of the research is dedicated to encouraging Game Studies as a field (Juul, 2001; Aarseth, 2001; Mäyrä, 2009) as well as exploring what researchers and developers mean by “games” and key terms such as “fun” or “engagement.” Eric Zimmerman (2004) refers to games as “interactive narrative systems of formal play” with the intention of promoting frames rather than rigid categories. Raph Koster (2004) defines “fun” in these systems of play as a process of learning and exploring that no longer engages players when learning stops. Robin Hunicke, Marc LeBlanc, and Robert Zubek (2004) separate “fun” during gameplay into the following categories: sensation (sensory effects for evoking emotions), fantasy (immersion in the theme of the game world), narrative, challenge, fellowship (social), discovery (exploring the unknown), expression, and submission (e.g. passing time). This research aligns with these definitions, understanding that *Survivance* pushes the boundaries of these definitions in the context of social impact game design.

Game research encompasses a wide range of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research (Mäyrä, 2008). A fraction of the range is seen in studies including ethnographies of gamers and game cultures, such as in T. L. Taylor’s (2006) *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Games Culture*, frameworks for game design (Hunicke & LeBlanc, 2004), and feminist perspectives such as in *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games* (Cassell & Jenkins, 2000). The *Survivance* study research methodology and methods uniquely come from Indigenous perspectives, thus contributing to the prevalent diversity seen in game research.

While there has been research on Indigenous games and Indigenous representations in games (Dillon, 2004; Dillon, 2006a; Dillon, 2006b; Dillon, 2008; Lameman, 2010), scholarship is rare. J. R. Parker and Katrin Becker (2005) from the Digital Media Laboratory at the University of Calgary prototyped a sound engine for *I'powahsin*, a Blackfoot language game on the Game Boy platform which was designed collaboratively with Blackfoot Blood Reserve members. However, this and other work (Parker & Becker, 2006) simply adapts Indigenous content to existing game mechanics and misses the opportunity to imagine and bring to life uniquely Indigenous game

design. Conversely, the *Digital Songlines* project—a digital landscape of Australian Aboriginal knowledge created using the Torque game engine—involved the Aboriginal community and in this case created a landscape and nameplace-oriented world for players to explore that respects traditional stories and Indigenous knowledge (Pumpa et al., 2006; Pumpa & Wyeld, 2006; Wyeld & Pumpa, 2007; Wyeld et al., 2007). Efforts such as the Skins game development workshops by the research network Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (<http://www.abtec.org>) strive to pass on Indigenous teachings while simultaneously enabling Indigenous youth with the tools and skills to determine their own representations and contributions in the game space (LaPensée & Lewis, 2009; LaPensée & Lewis, 2010; LaPensée et al., 2010; LaPensée & Lewis, 2011).

The research in this dissertation involves Indigenous methodology and methods and also finds itself located in the design research methodology group of Game Studies (Mäyrä, 2008). Game research in this area can contribute to the conceptualization of games, development of games, understanding processes of design, researching game design methods, and exploring player experience (Mäyrä, 2008). It is shaped by Brenda Laurel's (2003) *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman's (2004) *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, and *Game Design Workshop: Designing, Prototyping, and Playtesting Games* (Fullerton et al., 2004). Game developers such as Chris Crawford (1984, 2003), Greg Costikyan (1994), Raph Koster (2004), and Jesse Schell (2008) contribute to game design research. It also involves game developers who walk the lines between industry and academia, including Ernest Adams (2009) and most relevantly Jane McGonigal (2011), whose seminal work has shaped the area of Games for Change.

2.2. Games for Change

Jane McGonigal (2011), a game scholar and designer who was one of the first to explore and define the area of social impact games, believes that games can save the world. She is best known for work on Alternate Reality Games (ARGs), a genre that layers the real world with interactive transmedia storytelling, which reaches across television, films, websites, video games, and more (Jenkins, 2006). Her recent work is based on the premise that reality is broken: modern existence is fraught with

unhappiness and isolation. She looks to games, which have the ability to stimulate the mind and create psychological benefits through engaging in play, as the response. Despite the occasional excesses of tone, McGonigal's enthusiasm is inspiring, and it is clear that she represents a growing community of game designers, scholars, and gamers, literally tens of millions worldwide, who believe that games can save the world, too. "Games for Change" has emerged as a term over recent years as a reference to this area of work. Scholars Mary Flanagan and Helen Nessenbaum continue related work with Values at Play (<http://www.valuesatplay.org>), which features Eric Zimmerman (<http://ericzimmerman.com/>) and other game designers who are inspired to integrate human values in their games and game-based systems.

"Games for Change" can refer to a movement, a subset of serious games that are focused on social change, as well as a non-profit by the same name. Ludica, a women's game collective devoted to exploring alternatives to the dominate culture of games, proposes that we are currently revisiting the historic New Games Movement, which emerged in the 1960's and 1970's as a response to the Vietnam War and civil unrest (Pearce et al., 2007, p. 261). The collective considers Games for Change an area of the New Games Movement, which has returned in the context of digital games (Pearce et al, 2007, 262). Before the Games for Change Movement was named, work such as Ben Sawyer's Serious Games Initiative (<http://www.seriousgames.org/>), Ian Bogost's Persuasive Games (<http://persuasivegames.com/>), and Jane McGonigal's work in Alternate Reality Games provided pathways of interest. The Serious Games Initiative brought the Games to Change Movement to life after a gathering of developers, academics, non-profits, and foundations in 2004. The non-profit supports this area of games through resources including events, publications, and game incubators (<http://www.gamesforchange.org>). Efforts such as youth workshops, games of varying genres, and research projects all contribute to the Games for Change Movement.

Since games for change are considered a subset of serious games, they are expected to involve some form of learning (Susi et al, 2007, p. 1). Serious games are generally understood, thanks to Charles Abt, as games to inform, train, and educate. This is in-line with The Serious Games Initiative, which defines serious games as projects that involve "exploring management and leadership challenges facing the public sector" (<http://www.seriousgames.org>). Meanwhile, Ian Bogost (2007) dismisses the

“serious games” term as “high brow” and instead uses “persuasive games” to promote games that persuade players through gameplay. While this has been debated, most agree that serious games are not to be correlated with “edutainment games” which are seen as “... the combination of one of the lowest forms of education (drill and practice) with less than entertaining gameplay” (Charsky, 2010, p. 178). Rather, serious games encourage higher order thinking skills through engaging gameplay (Charsky, 2010, p. 180). However, it should be understood that different games create different learning outcomes (van Eck, 2006). Rao (2011) adapts Kinneavy’s classification to break down serious games as “newsgames ([to] persuade, express, or inform), art games (to be beautiful, to express), educational games (to inform), health games (to inform, to persuade), persuasive games (to persuade), training (to inform), advergaming (to persuade), [and] political games (to inform, persuade, express)” (p. 8). Overall, serious games are mostly applied to military, government, educational, corporate, and healthcare sectors (Susi et al, 2007, p. 1). For example, *Making History* (2006) is a strategy game used primarily in classrooms that educates players about history leading up to the Second World War.

Games that are considered games for change are understandably diverse in design and point more to the design process, motivations of the game, and/or outcomes of gameplay rather than game genre or mechanics. In contrast with *Making History* (2006), *Food Force* (2005) enables players to learn about food aid distribution while playing multiplayer social games and directly contributing to providing real meals for children around the world. The Ludica collective considers any game in which “the player experience and community are placed first” and that “has affordances to adapt to the player as the game evolves” (Pearce et al., 2007, p. 274) as participating in the New Games Movement and thus the Games for Change Movement by extension. *Food Force* (2005) could be seen as a game for change and even more specifically a social impact game, since the game creates social awareness and directly integrates action (Whitson & Dormann, 2013, p. 1).

2.3. Social Impact Games

Social impact games “unlock the potential of gameplay to teach or inform about social issues” (Ruggiero, 2013, p. 597). They have been contextualized as a subset of persuasive games (Ruggiero, 2013) or alternatively referred to as persuasive games, activist games, social change games, and documentary games (Whitson & Dormann, 2013). Whatever term is used, these games create social awareness around a specific issue, educate players, change the attitudes and/or behaviors of players, and/or promote activism and social engagement (Whitson & Dormann, 2013, p. 1). Overall, they seek to inspire transformation in players beyond the “game world” (Schreiner, 2008). For example, *Survivance* embeds awareness about the historical trauma of Indigenous peoples caused by colonization, which leads to self-awareness about how this trauma has intergenerational effects on the player and/or player’s community. Players are actively encouraged to make changes in attitude and/or behavior through self-selected quests that take place in the “real world.” Each quest concludes in creating an act of survivance to process the experience, which can then be shared on the website and through social networks as a form of social engagement.

Overall, social impact games emphasize civic engagement, which can involve “helping or guiding other players, thinking about moral or ethical issues, learning about a problem in a society, and learning about social issues” (Ruggiero, 2013, p. 597). In the case of *Survivance*, players reflect on the Indigenous experience of colonization with the understanding that it continues still today. *Survivance* involves layers of history, storytelling, and healing in the Indigenous sense of balancing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Other social impact games address such diverse topics as genocide and refugee experiences (*Darfur is Dying*, *Escape from Woomera*), human rights violations (*Pictures for Truth*), as well as environmental disasters and ongoing issues (*Hurricane Katrina: Tempest in Crescent City*, *World Without Oil*).

Social impact games have several characteristics that inform the design process, design, and effects. First and foremost, they facilitate learning through guided decision-making (Squire, 2002). They take into consideration authentic problems that relate to the real world for players to work through (Ruggiero, 2013, p. 597). Thus, they tap into players’ “natural curiosity,” which increases their interest and assists building new

knowledge frameworks (Ray et al., 2013, p. 63). Gameplay can also elicit empathy by immersing players in new perspectives, which contributes to “interest, motivation, and knowledge retention” (Ray et al., 2013, p. 68). Since each player has an individual base of knowledge and experiences prior to playing, they always have a unique personal understanding that emerges from gameplay (Ray et al., 2013, p. 63). *Survivance* educates players about historical trauma when they experience watching a video of a storyteller that relates to the quest they have chosen. Each quest takes place in the real world and embraces individual reflection by concluding with the creation of an act of survivance (again, being a form of self-expression such as a painting, a short film, a poem, a short story, and so on).

Given the context of addressing social issues in the game space, social impact games benefit from careful attention during development. In addition to game designers, programmers, artists, sound designers, and producers, teams should also include what are referred to in the game industry as “subject matter experts” (Swain, 2007, p. 806). They should also be included from the very beginning, contribute directly to the design, and playtest the game thoroughly (Swain, 2007, p. 806). In some instances, the experts may be a whole organization rather than an individual. Before adapting the Discovering Our Story project into *Survivance*, I served as a producer for the multimedia content in Discovering Our Story and facilitated the curriculum. The design grew from conversations with Haida storyteller Woodrow Morrison Jr., whose videos are embedded in one of the quest lines. This can also be understood as collaborative or co-design, an emerging area of interest that often occurs in the development of social impact games, as shown in the examples described in detail in section 2.0 Related Games Research.

2.3.1. Social Impact Game Design

Social impact game design should be social, ethical, and effectual. Social design involves some form of social interaction and very likely cooperative game mechanics. Ethical design can refer to credible, objective, and/or respectful content as well as game mechanics that promote ethical actions in the real world. Effectual game design relates to engaging gameplay that provides players opportunities to expand their knowledge in an experiential manner. While the specific content and mechanics of various games is

diverse, these three aspects are congruent across social impact games that are designed purposefully.

Social Design in Social Impact Games

Most researchers agree, of course, that social impact games should have social interaction and cooperative game mechanics (Bandura, 2004; Whitson & Dormann, 2011; McGonigal, 2010). Game design should integrate community since gameplay calls on players to in some cases take civic action or implement awareness that intends to lead to change (Swain, 2007, 807). However, some feel that social impact games lack human interaction since they are often played alone (Whitson & Dormann, 2011, p. 2). This thinking neglects to recognize the communal sense of self that is inherent in Indigenous ways of knowing. From an Indigenous perspective, individual gameplay does not imply absolute aloneness since community is always present in our actions.

Furthermore, there are indeed several strong examples of social game design in social impact games. ARGs may especially support this design since they require collaboration from many diverse players who work toward a common goal in the context of a narrative (Bonsignore et al., 2011). For example, Jane McGonigal's *EVOKE* (2007) is an ARG that begins: "YOU can make a difference." Although players may physically connect to the game as an individual through an electronic device, the gameplay connects people across the world. Players were inspired to share personal experiences about cultural diversity and debate whether any culture has a right to impose its social norms and values onto another (Bonsignore et al., 2011, p. 20). Importantly, high school and undergraduate students pointed out that missions encouraged them to take up responsibilities in their communities (Bonsignore et al., 2011, p. 20). One particular episode and mission was able to raise awareness about issues such as domestic abuse, according to a high school player who blogged about his experience playing *EVOKE* (Bonsignore et al, 2011, p. 20).

Survivance also embraces social gameplay, despite the appearance of an individual experience. In Indigenous ways of knowing, we constantly live and act as a community. Some of these ways have been damaged through colonization perpetuated mostly at residential schools/boarding schools where an individual self of sense was taught and consequently detached youth from their families and communities (WISDOM,

2010c; WISDOM, 2010d). However, many of these ways of knowing live on and the quests in *Survivance* are one way in which players can reconnect with traditional teachings. Namely, The Giving Quest within The Caretaker quest line challenges players to give to themselves, then to someone close to them, and then to someone they are familiar with, and finally to someone or an organization that they are unfamiliar with. Jamestown S'Klallam storyteller and elder Elaine Grinnell (WISDOM, 2010d) guides players by telling a story about communities sharing natural resources, language, and education to help one another. She contextualizes community and thus people as natural resources themselves. The challenges in the quests constantly reinforce a communal sense of self and actively connect players with the real world.

Social game mechanics can also involve social networks. Researchers Jennifer R. Whitson and Claire Dormann (2011) suggest that social impact games should adapt game mechanics from Facebook social network games to maximize social interaction and cooperation. Facebook and Twitter were integrated into the game design of *Survivance* shortly after the prototype and initial study phase and prior to the validation phase. Although this took place beyond the focal point of the study, there are clear implications in its outreach for *Survivance* and possible impact for other games. Using a Facebook group, Facebook posts, and Twitter posts, acts of survivance reached other players, the local urban Indigenous community, as well as a global Indigenous community strengthened by the Idle No More Movement (<http://www.idlenomore.org>). Since the study, some players have connected with one another, others have made valuable community connections, and most have continued their work in areas such as art or film beyond gameplay. “#Survivance” is a hashtag on Twitter recognized in relation to its origins from Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor as well as in connection with the game. These elements pull players together and provide a complex yet delicate narrative for players and people who are watching to follow. Social networks offer strong existing spaces for integrating social game mechanics.

Ethical Design in Social Impact Games

Some researchers suggest that game mechanics are most credible when they present a social issue objectively. Chris Swain (2007), a professor from University of Southern California's Interactive Media Division, believes that the game system and

variables of games for change should refer to facts and present more than one point of view. He states that players should gain an “unbiased understanding” of how a social issue works and then “experiment with solutions” (Swain, 2007, p. 807). His viewpoint leverages the simulation game genre that is common across serious games. For example, in *Peacemaker* (2007), players experience photos and footage during game events based on real incidents in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as they strive to create a simulation of peace in the Middle East within the game (Swain, 2007, p. 807). In *Food Force* (2005), players gain a practical understanding of the effectiveness of various actions on worldwide food support, which are informed by objective statistics from U.N.’s World Food Programme (Swain, 2007, p. 807).

Both *Peacemaker* (2007) and *Food Force* (2005) include another layer of what can be considered ethical game design—respectful gameplay intended to promote ethical choices beyond the game space. In *Peacemaker* (2007), players are encouraged to consider the value of peace, while in *Food Force* (2005) players are persuaded to take direct action in the real world by donating to the World Food Programme and spreading the word (Swain, 2007, p. 807). Along with these simulation game examples, ARGs such as *EVOKE* (2010) and *World Without Oil* (2007) have a natural affinity for ethical game design since interactions between players in ARG game design promote respect for diverse opinions and cultures (Bonsignore et al., 2011). Since ARGs are enacted in the real world (McGonigal, 2010), players are constantly challenged to reflect on and modify their own behaviors within the context of a narrative. In this genre of game design, openness and a willingness to explore diverse opinions replaces the concept that game content should present “facts” “objectively.” For example, designers of *World Without Oil* (2007) facilitated positive and supportive interactions between players by minimizing guidance and encouraging “well-conceived and well-expressed ideas” when imagining living in a world in which oil resources have been depleted (WWO, 2007). *EVOKE* (2010) brought forth human rights issues by including a graphic novel episode on “Empowering Women” with missions where players had to learn about and take direct action on domestic violence problems in underrepresented communities (Bonsignore et al., 2011, p. 19). Blogs and forum posts from players reflected a shift in thinking about “survival” in relation only to practical human needs to culturally and

ethically meaningful needs (Bonsignore et al., 2011, p. 19), which relates to the concept of survivance.

Survivance most certainly contributes to ethical game design, although not necessarily aligned with all of the requirements in Swain's definition. While the stories told in relation to quests in *Survivance* come from credible storytellers and elders, the game is not objective, that is, it does not present the voices of colonizers or descendants of colonizers alongside storytellers who are living acts of survivance. As far as the Discovering Our Story Advisory Council is concerned, this *is* what makes *Survivance* ethical. For far too long, Indigenous voices have been obscured or skewed in the service of colonizing or romanticizing Indigenous peoples. This continues still today in media such as films and commercial video games, which are wrought with misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and cultures (LaPensée, 2004; LaPensée, 2006a; LaPensée, 2006b; LaPensée, 2008; LaPensée, 2010). *Survivance* is a game in which Indigenous players are given the space to represent themselves as they see fit and to explore the representations that other players put out into the world in the form of acts of survivance. The quests encourage ethical behaviors in a way that is intrinsic—the game does not literally tell players “make ethical choices,” but rather walks players through a process of exploring their communal wellbeing in a way that leads to culturally relevant ethics. This inherent design is what makes true change possible.

Effectual Design in Social Impact Games

Game research shows that gameplay can affect attitudes and behaviors (Delwiche, 2007). Effectual game design refers to the process by which these changes happen and points to the way in which social impact games bring about change in players and consequently world. These include mechanics that engross players in experiences as well as motivate and empower players.

More specifically, “affective learning” in games “addresses important societal issues such as managing conflicts, caring for the environment, and fighting prejudices and stereotypes” (Dormann et al., 2013, p. 217). For example, *Elude* (2011), although self-identified as a game for health, brings about awareness about depression by integrating a complex system of representing emotions (Dormann et al., 2013, p. 217). In *A Force More Powerful* (2006), players are challenged to overcome oppression through

non-violent choices. Also akin to simulation, *A Force More Powerful* (2006) employs realism and accuracy about the options available to activists when working to work through oppression in the real world (Swain, 2007, p. 808). Players are immersed in tactics such as writing manifestos, holding fundraising parties, and occupying buildings during missions which can take hours to complete and require deep consideration and planning (Swain, 2007, p. 808). In *Peacemaker* (2007), players become leaders on either side of the Israeli– Palestinian conflict and seek out a peaceful resolution. In all of these games, players are motivated to take real world action or experience simulations of real world action and are thus empowered in a direction of change (Dormann et al., 2013, p. 231).

Survivance calls out for players to explore various facets of their identity, their communities, the history of colonization, and the long-lasting intergenerational effects of trauma. The player is welcomed into the game as a pathway of listening to and telling these stories. They are challenged to make steps such as recovering or revisiting language, traditional stories, family stories, and historical stories; taking care of themselves and others; and taking direct action for their own wellbeing and consequently the wellbeing of the community, given that Indigenous cultures are communal. They then process the experience of the quest by making an act of survivance (a work in any medium), which, as study findings show, leads to a sense of self-empowerment. When acts of survivance are shared, players experience recognition from the community and encouragement to continue on a long path of healing. Change is not expected to happen solely within the game, as this healing is a life-long and continuous process and thus extends beyond the timeline of the study emphasized in this research. Effectual design is what most prominently contributes to the myriad forms of impact observed in social impact games.

2.4. Related Game Studies Research

Success of social impact games can be based on many outcomes including outreach, immediate positive changes in players, and long-term positive changes in players. Some researchers suggest that success has mostly been measured in terms of number of downloads or ability to attract media attention, such as in the case of the

refugee awareness game *Darfur is Dying* (2009) (Whitson & Dormann, 2011). They critique the world influence of social impact games on the premise that they need to reach a critical mass and suggest that even McGonigal's games have few players—*EVOKE* (2010) had 19,000 players and *The Lost Ring Olympics* (2011) had 250,000 players (Whitson & Dormann, 2011). Meanwhile, McGonigal looks closer at the individual impact on players and their immediate communities, finding that in examples such as *World Without Oil* (2007), players had changed their own day-to-day habits as well as reached out to influence friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors (Zetter, 2010).

Other researchers suggest that social impact games should develop a “theory of change” during the design process and follow-up with methods that will help determine the impact of gameplay (Swain, 2007). However, Swain (2007) isolates the potential impact of games to outcomes defined by amount, such as “number of dollars donated, number of emails sent to Congress, number of news stories written, number of times players ‘tell a friend’, number of message board posts, number of meetup.com events generated” (Swain, 2007, p. 805). He further suggests in-game surveys and focus groups to be the most appropriate methods for measuring the impact (Swain, 2007, p. 808). Although strictly quantitative, his approach of defining the core messages and incorporating plans for determining whether or not players are receiving those messages is useful.

Researchers and developers are in agreement that evaluation studies are paramount for determining the types and extents of effects of social impact games (Stokes et al., 2011; Swain, 2007), which is precisely what the *Survivance* study seeks to address. Since considerably few comparative studies exist in the area of social impact games, this review also takes into account studies of persuasive games with motivations that fit within games for change. Research on *Yegna*, a game club for young women in Ethiopia, and *Smoke?*, a smoking cessation game with a version for Māori players, offer the most parallels to the *Survivance* study since they follow the projects from concept to implementation with collaborative and culturally responsive design in mind. After thoroughly describing and comparing the *Yegna* and *Smoke?* projects, the review also touches on other relevant studies that evaluate outcomes of gameplay. The review addresses the full scope of each project, including how the game came to be, what the

intention was, the way in which researchers evaluated the game, and the results of the game when implemented, since each of these points are also considerations in the *Survivance* study.

According to researchers involved in assessing Knight Foundation's social impact games *Battlestorm* and *Macon Money*, evaluating these types of games does not require a unique approach (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 2). However, they did find that there are particular considerations. By design, games have constraints, but are also full of possibility, which requires allocating space in evaluations for divergent reactions or interactions (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 2). This aspect of games is taken into account in each of the following studies as well as the *Survivance* study. Further, since implementation of social impact games is fairly new, evaluation can also result in "real-time refinement" of a game's design (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 2). Although all of the studies involved discussion about refinement based on assessment, *Yegna*, *Smoke?*, and *Survivance* are the strongest examples of real-time design refinement since the research involved players from concept to implementation. Finally, social impact games tend to be oriented to very specific contexts and thus must take into consideration what conditions may or may not be replicated (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 2). Each of the games and their respective studies explored in the following sections are specific to locations, players, and/or themes. Thus, each project is described in detail with comparisons to the *Survivance* game and study.

2.4.1. *Yegna*

Yegna is a transmedia project aimed at changing cultural attitudes around the roles of girls in Ethiopia from ages 10-16. Concerned about the way in which social norms such as requiring girls to speak in hushed voices shape the community, the government initiated *Yegna* with components including a radio talk show and game clubs. Similar to the design process for *Survivance* that superseded the study emphasized in this dissertation, *Yegna* involved communities in collaborative co-design. Jessica Hammer (Mellon Interdisciplinary Research Fellow at Columbia University) worked alongside a team and ten groups of girls either living in the capital or the rural Northern community to co-design games that would enable them with the power to

change their circumstances, to change their lives, and to change their communities (Hammer, 2013).

The team approached the *Yegna* game clubs as an exploratory design-based study. During the study, the team focused on providing players with opportunities, since Hammer (2013) feels strongly that “games don’t change the world; players change the world.” The game clubs also needed to fit within the existing culture. Thus, they incorporated brightspots methodology, which looks for the places within an existing community where members are succeeding and then amplifies those areas (Hammer, 2013). Qualitative methods were found to be the most appropriate approach for the study to ensure respectful game design (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). Hammer and the team were then able to access players individually and look more closely at individual experiences, which was also essential in the *Survivance* study. Prior to the design-based research conducted by the team, ethnographers had gathered data about the girls’ activities and roles, which helped inform methods such as discussion questions during the study (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). In the case of the *Survivance* study, design was informed by research related to the Discovering Our Story project. Later, prompts for written reflections were informed by playtesting the prototype with Indigenous friends and family.

The team was given four months to produce four games. During this time, they observed, audiotaped, and videotaped ten groups of girls during phases of sessions. First, the girls played existing cultural games. The team then conducted discussions about these games with open-ended questions such as whom they play these games with, where they play, and when they are able to play (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). In the discussions, they used talking objects, which is similar to the Indigenous method of talking circles where participants may use a talking stick to signify who can speak while others listen. They asked questions such as, “What’s easier for you to do in a game rather than in real life?” In other sessions, the team played games with the girls. Of particular interest to the study on *Survivance*, the team held focus groups in which girls played new games designed around the girls’ input. The groups played the same game repeatedly (often at least three times in a row) with variants on the gameplay. Immediately afterward, they held discussion groups,

which helped determine the best gameplay choices (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013) and suggested how the games might influence the players and the community. During the design of *Survivance*, wording for the quests and instructions on how to play were fine-tuned after discussions with Indigenous friends and family who playtested the prototype.

The team ran into several constraints that transformed into opportunities, such as when girls could play, what they could include in play, and how they could play. At first, the team intended to co-design a mobile game, but very few Ethiopian girls have access to mobile phones (Hammer, 2013). Even games involving paper were an issue, since girls only receive one notebook for the year, and only if they are in school (Hammer, 2013). Games needed to use elements such as words, rocks, sticks, scraps of cloth, and tin can lids. *Survivance* also needed a platform that leveraged accessibility and playability anytime, anywhere, in the real world. While the game involves a mobile-friendly website, the quests themselves can be played without technology and the acts of survivance can be created with any materials available to players, which encourages traditions such oral storytelling.

Girls in the game clubs wanted to interact with each other more often. Since girls are culturally not allowed to play, having friends is difficult (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). Ethnographers found that 21% of the girls reported having 0 friends (Hammer, 2013). They do, however, have storytelling games and riddle games that can be played hands-free while working or quietly while sitting for tea or ceremony. They also have brief time at the well where they can play games in safe spaces (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). Girls expressed that play needed to be productive to be accepted by the community. Throughout the process, the team provided expertise in game design and encouraged girls to determine the gameplay. They adapted cultural values respected by the community, such as being kinder, smarter, tougher, braver, and happier (Hammer, 2013). Similarly, the *Survivance* game draws specifically from Native American cultural values and storytelling structures, which makes gameplay accessible and culturally relevant to the community.

Although there has not been a formal study on the *Yegna* game clubs enabling players to change themselves and the community, gameplay sessions with observations and open-ended discussions pointed to important possibilities. During discussions, girls expressed the value of the game clubs. Even just the act of being given responsibility and power over game design drastically changed their perceptions about their roles. They also found that gameplay gave girls opportunities to express themselves in safe spaces with their peers. For example, one girl stated: “It’s easier to tell people they’re treating me badly in the game than in real life” (Hammer, 2013). Gameplay in the game clubs also created situations in which girls could stand up, speak up, and make eye contact, which are not typically culturally acceptable. Stepping into another role in the safety of gameplay has an immediate influence on the player.

Girls discussed how vital it is to teach the games to other girls and family members. One girl stated that she would bring the games back to her mother to help her with issues she was having in their home (Hammer, 2013). Several girls stated that it was their “obligation” to teach other girls these games and to create new games to help one another (Hammer, 2013). Community members also encouraged the clubs since girls kept beaded bracelets with different beads that represented the different values. The community could see, for example, how kind a girl was based on the amount of kindness beads on her bracelet (J. Hammer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). Game clubs thus offered a way in which girls could help one another—another highly esteemed cultural value. *Survivance* also had a clear outreach in the community, given that two validation players came to the game entirely thanks to the core players informing them about the game. These echoes suggest possibilities for long-term change in these communities.

2.4.2. *Smoke?*

Smoke? is a persuasive game about smoking cessation for players in New Zealand that can also be considered a social impact game. Smoking is a documented health concern in New Zealand, particularly for Māori people (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 2015). The game’s objective is to “persuade people who are contemplating quitting smoking, or have recently quit smoking, that quitting permanently will be beneficial for themselves and their immediate communities” (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 215). Rilla Khaled,

along with a team based out of the University of Wellington, proposed that persuasive games should be culturally relevant in order to maximize effectiveness (Khaled et al., 2006). With virtually no comparative studies available at the time, they investigated their hypothesis by designing two separate games for two different audiences—denoting European New Zealand players as “individualists” and Māori players as “collectivists.” Similar to *Survivance*, they designed, prototyped, and playtested *Smoke?* in a series of related studies. Their research resulted in fine-tuning two games that were shown to have significant effects on players. Although *Survivance* is not a persuasive game, cultural relevance is essential to the design—from content to mechanics—especially where health is concerned. The *Smoke?* studies offer interesting comparisons in game design, study design, intentions of research, and outcomes.

The *Smoke?* team defines European players in New Zealand as “individualists” and Māori players as “collectivists” (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 213) in phased studies that took places over more than three years. Briefly, individualists emphasize looking only after themselves and their close family, being self-motivated, and being goal-oriented, while collectivists are integrated in cohesive groups and seek harmony within the group as they maintain traditions (Khaled et al., 2006, pp. 213-214). In contrast, the *Survivance* study doesn’t seek to define its players, given the context of colonization that has influenced family structures, communities, and traditions.

Before designing the games, the team conducted interviews with members of an existing smoking cessation project for Māori people to determine interest. Once interest was established, they ran two separate focus groups for students from Victoria University of Wellington who self-identified as New Zealand European or Māori and were between the ages of 18-35 (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 215). The European group included 3 men and 4 women, and the Māori group included 5 women. During 90-minute sessions, they discussed “smoking, perception of smoking, smoking cessation, cultural and societal attitudes towards smoking, marketing, and social marketing” (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 215). They transcribed and coded the discussions after the sessions. The themes informed the design of *Smoke?*, which resulted in simulation as the primary mechanic.

In *Smoke?*, players are introduced to the main character, MC (who can be male or female). MC has set a quit date, thrown out cigarettes, set a boundary that no one can smoke in his/her room, reached out to Quitline phone counseling services for support, and looked for alternative activities to replace smoking (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 217). In a game that is not possible to win or lose, players journey with MC over his/her first six weeks after the quit date. The player's decisions during the game result in a report on MC's smoking status in the future. The Māori version integrates cultural references; such as practices including family days and extended family shared meals, as well as visual symbols (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 219). The team's collectivist-oriented design strategies adapted from cross-cultural psychology research include "harmony: presenting social density cues to users; group opinion: providing users with opinions of other in-group members; monitoring: sharing a user's tracking information with a support group; disestablishing: training users out of practicing behaviors they do not wish to perform; and team performance: rewarding or reprimanding a group of users for the actions of an individual user" (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 37). In the case of *Survivance*, Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor's vast literature on the concept of survivance alongside the content from the Discovering Our Story project inspired the game's mechanics. The team collaborated with Toi huarewa, the Māori academic forum of Victoria University of Wellington, to ensure cultural appropriateness (Khaled et al., 2006, p. 219), much like the initial design phases of developing *Survivance* included feedback from the community involved in Discovering Our Story. However, *Survivance* was developed first and foremost for the community, whereas *Smoke?* was developed with the intention to validate culturally relevant design strategies.

After the game was developed, the team conducted a study to determine whether individualist players would find the European version of the game more persuasive than the Māori version and conversely if collectivist players would find the Māori version of the game more persuasive than the European version (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 35). Due to time restraints, they chose to evaluate only the short-term attitude changes resulting from gameplay using quantitative methods. These included pre- and post-surveys adapted from cross-cultural psychology research, which were implemented with players recruited from Victoria University of Wellington who played a randomly selected version of the game (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 35). The pre-survey asked

specifically about self-identified ethnicity and included questions that would reveal individualist or collective tendencies as well as pre-existing attitudes towards smoking. The post-survey followed up on “positive beliefs [about smoking], negative beliefs [about smoking], resistance to smoking, intention to quit, and temptation to smoke” (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 36). The *Survivance* study also included interaction with players before and after gameplay, but with a qualitative approach that involved players writing reflections based on open-ended prompts.

The *Smoke?* study includes 141 participants from various ethnicities (including European, Māori, Pacific peoples, Chinese, and Indian) between the ages of 17 and 25, whereas the *Survivance* study looks very closely at 10 Indigenous players and 2 Indigenous validation players. Randomly allocated, 71 of the participants in the *Smoke?* study played the European version of the game and the remainder played the Māori version (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 35). Based on comparing pre-surveys against post-surveys, they found that indeed individualist players leave gameplay with higher intention to stop smoking after playing the European version of the game, while collectivist players will have more positive change in intention to stop smoking after playing the Māori version of the game (Khaled et al., 2009, p. 36). Thus, the team determined that culturally relevant design improves persuasion objectives. The *Survivance* study builds on this work by focusing specifically on the impact of the game on its intended community of players. However, *Survivance*, much like *Yegna*, takes the work a step further by continuing the game beyond the purposes of research.

2.4.3. *Serious Beats*

Serious Beats is an online music game for second-generation migrants in Vienna, Austria aged 14 to 17 researched, designed, and currently in development by the University of Vienna’s Department of Communication in collaboration with the Institute of Design and Assessment of Technology. Drawing from McMonigal, *Serious Beats* is identified by researchers as a “positive impact game” (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 3). The team is interested in the seclusion that occurs for the second generation of migrants due to socio-economic and political circumstances (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 2). The game (still in development and not fully implemented) aims at encouraging understanding between different cultures through playing music online with the goal of changing social

behavior (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 2). Related, over 100 non-Indigenous students at Portland State University have played *Survivance*. Although the complete findings are beyond the scope of this research since the study looks specifically at Indigenous players, reflections from non-Indigenous players have shown that the game, similar to *Serious Beats*, encourages players to reflect on historical trauma and better understand their role as settlers in Portland, Oregon or find parallels with their own culturally-informed experiences. From this point, it is clear that games of this design such as *Serious Beats* are capable of inspiring changes in social behavior.

Serious Beats engages in collaborative game design, much like *Survivance*. The project merges social sciences and gives insights into how social scientists and game designers may co-design a game (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 2). The methodology weaves together “game ontology, criticism, serious games, persuasive games, game sociology, ethnography and game design theory” (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 3). They seek to study the entire process, including concept, game design, development, and implementation, with an emphasis on the impact of the game once the game is complete.

The team began with exploratory fieldwork (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 4). Around 100 qualitative interviews were conducted with Viennese youth in order to inform the game design draft. They were also involved in a participatory design session that took the form of a workshop (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 4). Although findings are not yet published, the game was played by Viennese youth for three months in early 2012. In earlier research, the team outlines a process that starts with a light prototype of the concept, followed by a game design document, then a functional prototype, and finally a series of iterative focus group testing sessions to be evaluated from both game design and social sciences perspectives (Kayali et al, 2011, p. 4). *Survivance* followed a similar process, although there are some differences. *Survivance* began as a concept in discussions with the community as *Discovering Our Story* was being developed. A light prototype was playtested with friends and family to look mainly at the design. Then the final prototype was implemented with players from the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon through Portland State University. Methods at this stage included written reflections and looking at the outcomes of the game, rather than focus group sessions where players would possibly be able to influence one another’s statements about the gameplay experience.

Currently, the published outcomes from the *Serious Beats* research relate to informing the mechanics and content of the game, such as qualitative data from interviews that describe existing music projects that youth engage with and what music they prefer, as well as quantitative data from network analysis that provides insights into the intersections of gameplay and social dynamics (Kayali et al, 2011, pp. 6-11). However, the future plan for determining the impact of *Serious Beats* on youth players' social behaviors offers interesting comparisons. Researchers intend to conduct interviews as well as gameplay metrics that will measure retention. Thus, overall, the *Serious Beats* study takes on a more commercial-oriented focus that looks primarily at the success of the game to interest and maintain players. In contrast, the *Survivance* study looks at acts of survivance that serve as tangible contributions that result from playing the game as well as the self-determined written reflections of players.

2.4.4. Battlestorm

Battlestorm is a self-identified social impact game that promotes the importance of being prepared for hurricanes developed through the support of the Knight Foundation. The game focuses on youth as leaders (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a). Comparatively, *Survivance* is an open-ended self-exploratory social impact game. Players can be youth (being up to the age of 30 in the context of Indigenous ways of knowing), adults, or elders. Much like *Survivance*, *Battlestorm* was developed first and foremost for the concerns of the community and continues to be played beyond the scope of evaluating the impact of gameplay. Unlike *Survivance*, *Battlestorm* is targeted specifically for 13-14 year olds (with study players ranging from 9-14) and was implemented by instructors with youth as opposed to youth choosing to play on their own accord, although many youth are concerned about hurricane preparedness.

As the developers and researchers involved in *Battlestorm* began the evaluation stage, they chose to document: "(1) participation and involvement of youth and other community members in the game; (2) changes in attitudes to hurricane preparedness among parents and youth, as well as knowledge acquired about good preparation habits that can be attributed to the game; (3) changes in behavior related to hurricane-preparedness among parents and youth that can be attributed to the game; and (4) the degree to which the game affects the work of the community partners and becomes

embedded in their ongoing programs” (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 27). While researchers in the *Battlestorm* study explicitly determined what they were looking to document, the *Survivance* study was open-ended. Nonetheless, there are crossovers in what was revealed in the study results, such as exploring participation of players and community in the game; determining experiences with historical trauma; changes in attitudes about self and historical trauma that can be attributed to the game, and the extension of the impact of the game into the community and into the world.

The *Battlestorm* study involved several research methods, including pre- and post-game surveys with players, post-game focus groups with players, post-game surveys with caretakers of players, observations of players during play, interviews with community partners, and interviews with advisors (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 27). They also followed up with reviews of the *Battlestorm* website, analysis of the game participation and outcomes, and interviews and dialogue with those involved in game development and Knight Foundation advisors. The methods in the *Survivance* study are just as thorough, although they take a qualitative approach.

Researchers reported results as statistics, graphs, stories, tables, and a theory map. Statistics and graphs explored various outcomes, such as the percentage of youth who informed parents and/or friends about hurricane preparedness (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, pp. 10-11) and how demographics influenced outcomes (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 14). A graph was used to show the baseline of youth talking about hurricane preparedness compared to the change after playing *Battlestorm* (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, pp. 10-12). To elaborate, stories of specific conversations between youth players and family and/or friends were summarized to address the context of the player and what happened that reflected the impact of the game on the player (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 13). Tables represented specific issues, such as feelings about hurricane safety (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, p. 14). Finally, a theory map describes how the game is accessed, how players learn the lessons, how they reach the community, and what the impact is (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a, Appendix 1). In contrast, the findings on the impact of *Survivance* emphasize the voices of players using a qualitative approach that honors Indigenous research using methods such as symbol-based reflection (Lavallée, 2009).

2.4.5. Macon Money

Macon Money—a social impact game that is also supported by the Knight Foundation—takes place in Macon, Georgia, one of the poorest cities in America (Murphy, 2011). Researchers selected Macon since various diverse groups across the city rarely interact outside of their own social circles (Murphy, 2011). The game seeks to connect players ranging from Mercer University to “the elderly” through entirely different means than *Survivance*. During the game, players receive bonds that can be redeemed for Macon Money, which is matched by the game in U.S. dollars and useable at businesses such as restaurants. However, each player only receives half a bond and must pair up with another player to complete a bond to redeem Macon Money that can be used together, separately, or given to someone else in greater need (Murphy, 2011). Thus, taking a vastly different approach from *Survivance*, *Macon Money* proposes that currency builds community.

Macon Money's study looks at a wide range of factors in order to inform successful implementation of the game and repeatability. They looked at players' initial motives for joining the game; social experiences during gameplay; who they spent money with, where they spent money, what they spent money on; and how much money they spent (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, pp. 8-12). In contrast with *Survivance*, the *Macon Money* study is largely business-oriented, since the report seeks to show success and suggest possibilities for bringing the game design to other cities. For example, looking at whether or not businesses were interested in investing in a future version of the game.

Researchers who were involved in *Battlestorm* also developed and conducted studies for *Macon Money*. Thus, the methods are parallel to the *Battlestorm* study with some revisions based on unique characteristics of the game and players. For example, since *Macon Money* was open to the public in Macon, Georgia rather than implemented by instructors in a relatively structured environment with youth as was the case with *Battlestorm*, researchers found it was difficult to schedule combined interviews with players who had matched a bond (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 4). Unlike their other study, they determined to conduct one-on-one telephone interviews (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 4) as well as analyze Facebook traffic (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 5). *Survivance* players were contacted through email or in-person, with the exception of one

phone conversation during the final validation phase with a validation player who commutes to Portland. *Survivance* also has a Facebook element, but it was implemented after the study and thus falls outside of the scope of the study described in this dissertation.

The report on *Macon Money* is considerably more qualitative than the *Battlestorm* report, since the *Macon Money* study interweaves several direct quotes from interviews alongside charts and graphs. Researchers found that players were mostly motivated by the monetary rewards and opportunities to support local businesses (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 8), and that some players drawn to the money actually found the social mixing to be the most exciting element of the game (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, 9). Players mostly spent their in-game money on or with someone else, which influenced the social depth of the game (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 10). Players earned anywhere between \$10-\$100 per matched bond, most of which was spent in local restaurants and cafes in part due to their accessibility (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, pp. 11-12). Most interestingly, all interviewees and most survey respondents reported meeting someone that they would not have otherwise interacted with thanks to playing the game, involving mostly short 5-10 minute conversations (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, pp. 12-13). Researchers also found that the majority of players visited businesses that were new to them and returned to these businesses after the game ended (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 19). In comparison, *Survivance* seeks to reinforce the existing community rather than create new community, which is important to consider since most of the *Macon Money* players didn't interact with their bond matches again (Taylor & Whitney, 2012b, p. 30). In *Survivance*, the effects on the players that echo out into the community are long lasting.

2.4.6. *Homelessness: It's No Game*

Homeless: It's No Game is a persuasive game which falls under games for change since it seeks to change attitudes toward the homeless. Players enter a single-player Flash game with retro 80's style graphics that positions them as a homeless woman who must survive on the streets for 24 hours by finding food, shelter, water, rest, and taking care of other basic needs while facing police, vigilantes, drug dealers, and other conflicts (Lavender, 2008, pp. 41-42). They win the game based on "self-esteem,"

which is determined by positive and negative encounters (Lavender, 2008, p. 42). The game was not developed for a specific audience but rather to see what, if any, persuasive effect of a game could be empirically measured (Lavender, 2008, p. 51). After game development in Vancouver, British Columbia and a pilot study, participants for the main study were recruited through Syracuse University's IST Study Response Project (Lavender, 2008, p. 53). This study is thus fundamentally different than *Survivance* since it first and foremost concerns research and engages participants with first-person single-player gameplay. Nonetheless, the methodology and methods offer interesting comparisons since the study looks specifically at the effect of the game.

Similar to the gap in research that the *Survivance* study seeks to fill for social impact games, Lavender noticed a lack of studies focused on finding and showing the effects of persuasive games. He merged methods from psychology and Game Studies in search of measurable quantitative results with quantitative supplemental results. The participants for the *Homeless: It's No Game* were divided into three groups— a game group which played the game and completed a post-game survey immediately after playing; a control group which played the game and completed a post-game survey immediately after playing the game as well as a follow-up survey three weeks later; and a narrative group which read a short narrative about a day in the life of a homeless woman, completed a survey immediately, and a follow-up survey one week later (Lavender, 2008, p. 53). All participants began with a survey that asked about prior gameplay experience, knowledge of homelessness, and interest in knowing more about homelessness (Lavender, 2008, p. 57). Attitudes of players in regards to the homeless were measured through an adaptation of Batson's nine-item scale, this incorporating psychology with Game Studies (Lavender, 2008, p. 51). *Survivance* also included pre- and post-game reflections, but these took the form of self-determined open-ended written reflections rather than scaled surveys.

Findings from *Homeless: It's No Game* address the game's impact on knowledge of homelessness and major causes of homelessness, interest in homelessness, and attitudes towards the homeless (Lavender, 2008, p. 57). There were no significant changes in knowledge of homelessness or interest in homelessness in any of the three groups. However, the group that played the game showed a significant increase in sympathy that persisted through the follow-up survey (Lavender, 2008, pp. 57-58).

Qualitative results gave some players the space to elaborate on the immersive effect of the game and show increased empathy (Lavender, 2008, p. 63), as well as object to the very idea of using a video game to explore homelessness (Lavender, 2008, p. 64). Overall, the game showed an increase in sympathy and awareness from players. *Survivance* and its related study take a very different stance since both concern self-awareness and healing, rather than “othering” people and measuring success based on “sympathy.” *Survivance/Survivance* pushes back against the perspective of victimry and actively seeks to recognize the positive aspects of our current ways of living that we build from here and now.

2.5. Implications

Determining the outcomes of social impact games is useful for recognizing the benefits of existing games and informing future design. Understanding how a game was designed, what the intentions were behind the design, reviewing the methods used to evaluate each game, and looking at the reported findings provides a broader but also more informed look at social impact games.

In cross-comparisons of *Yegna*, *Smoke?*, *Serious Beats*, *Battlestorm*, *Macon Money*, and *Homelessness: It's No Game*, it is clear that, while co-design may not be the focus of the main study, early collaboration with players and communities (sometimes referred to as “stakeholders”) shapes games that have more apparent purpose for the players. Similar to most of the games mentioned and pushing further into the unique considerations of protecting Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and stories, the design process for *Survivance* involved storytellers in early discussions that shaped the initial design prototype; developed quests that were adapted directly from the Discovering Our Story project as its multimedia curriculum was refined; responded to feedback from close community members including friends and family; and later involved the Discovering Our Story Advisory Council to assist in developing research direction for the multimedia curriculum and offer *Survivance* as an extension for the youth version of Discovering Our Story. As players reflected on experiences with *Survivance*, the importance of involving Indigenous voices and Indigenously-determined game design became clear.

As Swain (2007) suggests, knowing the intention of the game early on improves the ability to determine the impact of the game. *Yegna* is a game club where it is understood that the players change the world (Hammer, 2013), as opposed to the perspective that games change players, which McGonigal typically opts for (Zetter, 2010). So far, immediate impact is seen in the reactions of players and promises to pass on the games to other girls and women, as well as create more games. *Smoke?* was developed in order to determine whether game design should be culturally informed, offering up comparative versions of the game for “individualist” players and “collectivist” players, proving that indeed culture of players is imperative to consider in games for change (Khaled et al., 2006). *Battlestorm* aimed at making youth players aware of hurricane issues and inspiring communication about related topics with their families, at which it proved successful (Taylor & Whatley, 2012a). The *Survivance* study has the potential to create awareness about history, contemporary stories, and holistic Indigenous wellbeing in relation to self and community, as well as encourage players on a path toward positive change for self and myriad forms of community.

The methodology and methods in the *Survivance* study take a unique approach from the above studies given that the research grew from Indigenous ways of knowing. For example, in-game surveys were avoided in the *Survivance* study since they would have interrupted the flow of gameplay. The study elements were arranged separately with players during the prototype, understanding that the game lives on beyond the scope of study purposes. *Yegna* offers the most comparative methods given its framework of empowering a community of players. This research also takes the stance that players are the ones who create change and ultimately inform the way in which this change occurs during and after gameplay.

Overall, the *Survivance* study contributes a way of evaluating social impact games to Game Studies, expands on Indigenous methodology relevant to Indigenous Studies, deepens methods that could be useful to implement in both Game Studies and Indigenous Studies, and gifts a social impact game design with clear impacts on the player, the community, and the world, which are described in greater detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Process

3.1. Design of the Study

This research focuses on the impact of the Indigenous game *Survivance* on the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon through an iterative process of reflections, play, and conversations. Since the research involves Indigenous peoples and I am an Indigenous researcher, Indigenous epistemology and decolonizing methodologies were essential to the study. Indigenous ways of knowing informed the epistemological approach (specifically, what was researched, what questions were asked, how they were asked, and how the data were analyzed), the decolonizing methodology and *biskaabiiyang* (motivations and agenda), the *survivance* framework (structure of the study), methods that emphasized the voices of Indigenous players (written reflections, acts of survivance as a form of symbol-based reflection, and conversations), and methods for data analysis (*biskaabiiyang* and symbol-based reflection). Overall, the design of the study extends the work of “Algonquin, Cree, and French Métis” researcher Lynn F. Lavallée (2009), who created connections between characteristics of qualitative research including participatory research and action research with Indigenous research.

3.1.1. Indigenous Epistemology and Methodology

Indigenous epistemology is positioned within Indigenous ways of knowing—the ontological understanding of “land, animals, plants, waters, skies, climate, and spiritual systems” of Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2003). Quandamooka researcher and educator Karen Martin (2003), whose work addresses the aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Queensland, explains: Indigenist research recognizes Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, and realities as distinctive and vital; honors Indigenous social mores as processes of living, learning, and situating Indigenous peoples in lands of their own and other Indigenous peoples; emphasizes social, historical, and political contexts that shape

experiences, lives, positions, and futures; and privileges the voices, experiences, and lives of Indigenous peoples and lands (207). This research addresses Indigenous epistemology in many ways. The findings recognize and describe the diverse backgrounds of various *Survivance* players using their own terms that were then validated by sending players the complete findings and implementing revisions when requested. The study design recognizes that it is positioned within the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon, which carries with it unique history due to the displacement and forced movement of Indigenous communities. *Survivance* itself, which was developed as part of the research, addresses the historical trauma and current issues in Indigenous communities that created a need for the development of the game. Finally, the research consistently refers back to the words and voices of Indigenous people involved in the research and does its best to represent the Portland urban Indigenous community, the Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. community, and the more recently the *Survivance* player community in a way that preserves self-determination.

This research applies Indigenous ways of knowing to the study design as a contribution to the growing work in “decolonizing methodologies” that involves Indigenous peoples. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provides a seminal discussion of these issues in her breakthrough book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. She reviews the emergence of the prevalent Indigenous methodology today as a path to self-determination, pointing to healing, mobilization, decolonization, and transformation as essential processes in Indigenous research (Figure 3.1). While others promote an Indigenous research agenda in differing terms, including Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), Nêhiyaw epistemology (Kovach, 2009), “wholistic interconnectness” research (Baskin, 2011, p. 107), and “Radical Indigenism” (Garrouette, 2003)—Smith’s discussion offers a manifesto, moving researchers to promote “decolonizing methodologies” as part of a social justice movement. Certainly, *Survivance* can be seen as a contribution of social justice since it takes the form of a social impact game that facilitates social awareness around the colonization of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, educates players about the depths of historical trauma, and encourages players to engage in processes of storytelling and self-determination for healing.

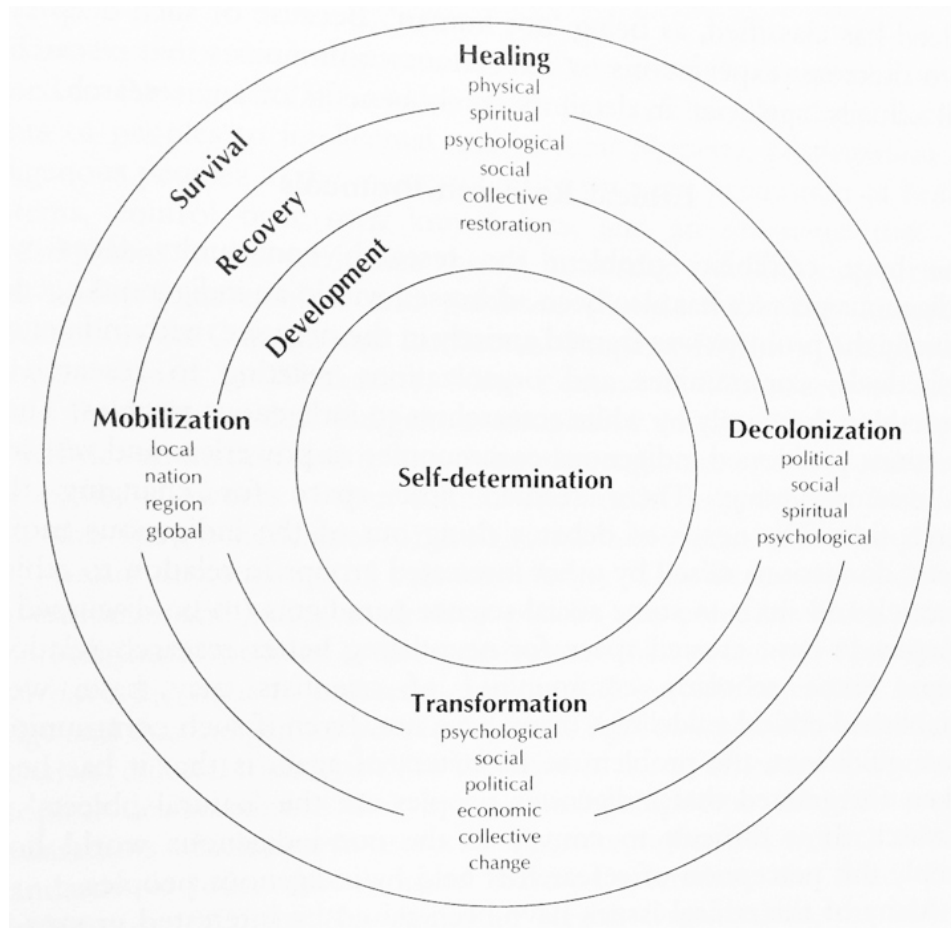


Figure 3.1. Decolonizing Methodologies
 Smith, 1999, p. 117; used with permission

Smith defines decolonization as “a process that critically engages, at all levels, imperialism, colonialism, and postcoloniality. Decolonizing research implements Indigenous epistemologies and critical interpretive practices that are shaped by Indigenous research agendas” (1999, p. 20). Some key features of decolonizing methodologies include: working against colonization by reflecting Indigenous epistemologies and traditions; including narrative and performative modes of discourse; working toward social justice, sovereignty, self-determination, and emancipation; using a collaborative model; recognizing the value of interdisciplinary research; and acknowledging many forms of knowing. This research relates directly to Indigenous epistemologies by acknowledging that *Survivance* is a pathway to self-determination that ties in closely with social justice; approaching the dissertation as a first person narrative; weaving the findings into a narrative that recognizes *Survivance* players as a unique

community within communities; directly presenting the voices of players to the fullest extent possible; weaving Indigenous Studies and Game Studies in interdisciplinary research; and honoring the differences in ways of knowing across myself as the researcher, the players, and the many communities involved in the study.

I am positioned as an Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis mixed blood researcher whose form of decolonizing methodology is *biskaabiiyang*. *Biskaabiiyang* has been translated to “returning to our Teachings” (Seven Generations Education Institute, n.d., p. 2), “returning to ourselves” (Geniusz, 2009), “we are making a round trip” (Gresczyk, 2011), and literally “to return to ourselves” (J. P. Chalykoff, personal communication, April 10, 2013). Anishinaabe scholar Wendy Djinn Geniusz, whose dissertation on traditional plant knowledge (2006) transformed into the book *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (2009), outlines the foundations of *biskaabiiyang*. Geniusz (2006, 2009) relates the approaches to the principles of *anishinaabe-inaadiziwin* (*anishinaabe* psychology and way of being). *Biskaabiiyang* can thus be understood as Anishinaabe survivance. However, “[t]hey are the original teachings of all Nations on Turtle Island” (Seven Generations Education Institute, n.d., p. 4) and thus can inform Indigenous methodology broadly.

The principles of *anishinaabe-inaadiziwin* (*anishinaabe* psychology and way of being) are *gaa-izhi-zhawendaagoziyang*: that which is given to us in a loving way (by the spirits) (Geniusz, 2006, 2009). They have developed over generations and have resulted in a wealth of *aadizookaan* (traditional legends, ceremonies); *dibaajimowin* (teachings, ordinary stories, personal stories, histories); *Anishinaabemowin* (language as a way of life); and *anishinaabe-izhitwaawin* (*anishinaabe* culture, teachings, customs, history). (Geniusz, 2009, p. 10). Today, recognizing myself as an Anishinaabe and Métis researcher, I return and pick up what was left during colonization—such as language, sacred teachings, and ways of being—as a pathway to not only healing, but thriving (Gresczyk, 2011).

The process of *biskaabiiyang* began for me by having a conversation with my mother that revealed for me that the methodology that I engage with is a valid approach to research. I revisited *Anishinaabemowin*, the language of Anishinaabeg, which I had left behind during childhood out of feelings of defeat. I felt at the time that if I was unable

to speak the language fluently from a young age that I had no hope of learning. Through this dissertation, I have returned to the language and recognize Anishinaabemowin words as markers of self-determination, or as Vizenor might say, “wordarrows.”

Alongside language, *biskaabiiyang* involves a process of personal decolonization interwoven with returning to *gikendaasowin*, sacred teachings and ways of being. As an urban Indigenous artist, writer, designer, and researcher, I have had many teachers from many nations as I have traveled and lived in the United States and Canada. My mother Grace L. Dillon, whose scholarship uplifts Indigenous science fiction, taught me the deep importance of *biskaabiiyang*. She recognizes “we are making a round trip” as a passage into the woods and back. As she taught me, I recalled our walks into the woods to see the trillium flower when it shows itself in early spring. She has been my lifelong supporter and teacher. She also passed on the teachings of survivance to me, which informed the design of *Survivance* years prior to this study. Many other teachers, introduced earlier chapters, have guided my way. I am grateful them for their part in making my journey of *biskaabiiyang* possible.

As I played *Survivance* in order to inform the study design, I recognized the challenges in my own wellbeing, akin to the way Laura Horton describes the *biskaabiiyang* research method “as a process through which Anishinaabe researchers evaluate how they personally have been affected by colonization, rid themselves of the emotional and psychological baggage they carry from this process, and... return to their ancestral traditions” (Geniusz, 2006, p. 13). To date, I am the only player that has played every quest. I played in a non-linear way depending on where I felt I was in the journey at any given entrance into the game that spanned over one year of playtesting, one year of playing the prototype, and continues on as I revisit and replay certain quests years later. The experiences led me on a path to personal and family healing. The more I recognized the value of the teachings I had received from my mother and family, the more I healed from colonization and the intergenerational effects that informed behaviors around me and my children that restricted or directly harmed our wellbeing. The acts of survivance consequently reflect changes in my identity, including my last name, my ability to express myself, and my confidence in the expression of myself.

Finally, *Biskaabiiyang* positions research as ceremony, an aspect that is in common with other Indigenous research methodologies (Wilson, 2008). The work of decolonizing involves learning our ways of knowing, learning our medicines, and learning our teachings through knowledgeable Elders, ceremonies, and community members who can facilitate this learning (Debassige, 2010). I regularly smudged while engaged in research steps such as collecting data, analyzing data, and especially throughout writing the dissertation. Smudging is a way to honor my ancestors as I live in a spirit-centered way known as *mino-bimaadiziwin* (Debassige, 2010). Other *Survivance* players such as Shilo George described similar ways of being as she reflected on experiences during the quests and prepared or concluded creating acts of survivance.

3.1.2. Framework

Since I am collaborating with an urban Indigenous community that includes many different peoples, the study design is derived both from my heritage, as well as the urban Indigenous community. The process was shaped through discussions with the Wisdom of the Elders (WISDOM) and Northwest Indian Storytellers Association (NISA) communities as well as through personal experience as a member of the United Indian Students in Higher Education (UISHE) and American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) communities at Portland State University (PSU). This is a careful walk—one that has pushed this study to relate Indigenous research to participatory research while avoiding the trap of “Pan Indian” research that assumes all “Natives,” “Indians,” “First Nations,” “Aboriginal,” and “Indigenous” peoples are the same (Madsen, 2009, p. 152). The players of *Survivance* are of various peoples, and thus called for an overall stance of Indigenist research with touches of Anishinaabe and Métis approaches that bridge to participatory research within the context of decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies.

Given the diversity of Indigenist research, *Survivance* as a research study required its own unique framework. The research methods (including the type and protocol) during data collection (open-ended opening and closing written reflections and acts of survivance as symbol-based reflection), data analysis (open coding and symbol-based reflection), and validation (triangulating players and open-ended conversations) were informed by my own experience of playing *Survivance*. By the time the study

described here began, I had played through most of the quests in *Survivance* during years of iterative design adapting the Discovering Our Story project into what I now understand to be a social impact game. I was confident in the players' abilities to tell their own stories and in the game's ability to create an impact, although I was not yet aware what forms of impact would be revealed.

My personal journey of playing *Survivance*, along with the journey of data collection, data analysis, and writing this dissertation informed a symbol that represents the framework of this research. For myself as a player and a researcher, for the players highlighted in this study, and for future players, *Survivance* ties directly into *biskaabiiyang* ("returning to ourselves") (Figure 3.2). The journey begins by venturing out. Then, through iterative cycles of revisiting or returning, the journey becomes clearer and reveals its great interconnectedness. Finally, the journey completes itself and maintains openness to continue infinite loops that further clarify and deepen our knowledge. The journey of the researcher in *biskaabiiyang* is paralleled by the player in *Survivance* as they venture forth and quest through the roles of The Orphan, The Wanderer, The Caretaker, The Warrior, and The Changer, described in more elaborate detail in Chapter 4 on Findings.

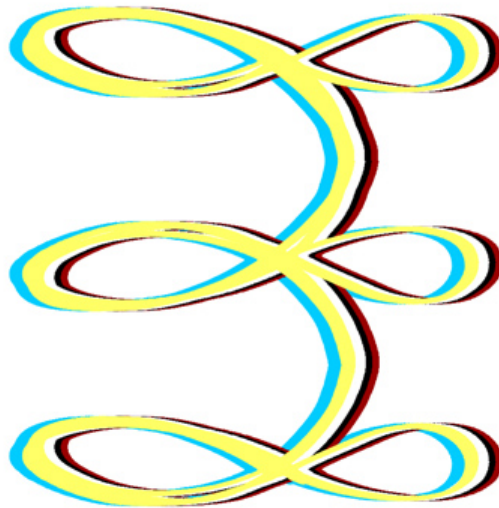


Figure 3.2. *Survivance* Framework
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

3.1.3. Features

Features of Indigenous research emphasize the position of the researcher, participants, and community within the research. Much like community-based research, which involves all partners equally during the research process and draws from the individual benefits of each partner (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003), any research involving Indigenous peoples should very directly collaborate with the community. In many cases, this means that the community is involved in informing the research question, study design, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and dissemination of the research results (Lavallée, 2009). Indigenous research takes community-based research a step further by suggesting that the community have ownership, control, access, and possession of the data and research (Gray, 2005). Engaging in research with Indigenous communities is a lifelong journey since the community should be able to call upon the researcher beyond the space/time of the study. My positioning as the researcher is described further in 3.2 Role of the Researcher.

In keeping with *biskaabiiyang* methodology through an act of *anishinaabe-izhitwaawin* (in this instance, the custom of asking our Elders for input), the study design began by collaborating with the Wisdom of the Elders (WISDOM) community to determine the research questions. WISDOM needed to report the impact of the Discovering Our Story project on the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon. Since *Survivance* directly adapts the Discovering Our Story multimedia curriculum into a game design, any impact that *Survivance* has on the community is an extension of years of work from the storytellers, elders, curriculum writers, and filmmakers involved in “Discovering Our Story.” Therefore, the study sought to answer: “What is the impact of the game *Survivance* on Indigenous communities?” and more specifically on the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon. Just as with reach of “Discovering Our Story,” the findings hold implications for the impact of *Survivance* on Indigenous players across North America living on reservations, in rural communities, and in urban communities.

In order to find out the impact of *Survivance*, ten Indigenous students from Portland State University—some members of the United Indian Students in Higher Education (UISHE) and/or American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)—

were invited to play the game's prototype over a period of one and a half years. Importantly, three other student players provided a layer of validation to the study. These players were uniquely invited and inspired to play *Survivance* by previous players. Thus, beginning *Survivance* gameplay outside of the context of the study, they missed writing an incoming open-ended reflection. Although there is a gap in written data, open-ended conversations after their gameplay experience supplement the findings. Furthermore, since these players are validation players, it is interesting to have insight on how the game extends into the community and how it might be approached outside of the context of a study.

Data collection involved circular cycles of writing reflections, gameplay, and conversations, detailed briefly here and further in section 3.0 Data Collection. Players were prompted to write an open-ended reflection about their incoming interests in playing *Survivance* after they were given a link to the website and asked to explore the quest options at their leisure. Players then selected and played through a single quest from any phase of the journey of their choosing. The quest journeys took anywhere between one day and two months. Following the quest, players created acts of survivance, which took anywhere between two days and two weeks to complete. Players completed the study by writing an open-ended closing reflection answering questions about the experience playing through their chosen quest and creating their act of survivance. In most instances, players engaged in conversations that involved myself and other members of the community.

During data analysis, which is described in section 4.0 Data Analysis, themes emerged from the initial written reflections, closing written reflections, acts of survivance, and conversations. In keeping with decolonizing methodologies, the emphasis is *not* on my interpretation as a researcher, but rather on giving ground to the voices of the Indigenous players. The overarching themes related to the medicine wheel framework as well strategies that are valuable for healing from historical trauma. Throughout data analysis, I focused on representing the perspectives and voices of players as closely as possible while distilling their experiences into comparative themes. The findings extended beyond the themes into the ripples of affects on the self, the community, and the world, described in great detail in Chapter 4.0 Findings.

Validation involved triangulating data from three additional *Survivance* players who played after the initial study began; verifying the study design and findings with all players, the Wisdom of the Elders community, and Discovering Our Story board members. Presentations are underway to reach out to Portland State University's Indigenous community including the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, United Indian Students in Higher Education, and American Indian Science and Engineer Society. The wording used in the study design and findings have also been verified with the larger urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon through organizations such as the Native Wellness Institute and Red Lodge Transition Services. The methods and results of this process are described in-depth in section 5.0 Validation of this chapter.

3.2. Role of the Researcher

3.2.1. Experience

In tandem with Indigenous methodology, I am an Indigenous researcher whose collaborative research contributes to the communities I am involved in (Lavallée, 2009). I come from Anishinaabe bridge builders, Métis traders, and Irish miners. My mother's family traveled back and forth between Garden River Reserve, Ontario, and Bay Mills Reservation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Just as my mother was a border-crosser since birth, I have followed this path in my work, which weaves through digital media such as games, web comics, and experimental animation.

The research has also directly benefited my life, which is commonly found in Indigenous research that positions the researcher within the research (Bastien, 2005). I began playing *Survivance* to help inform the methods, such as interview questions and implications for data coding. In parallel with gameplay, I have journeyed through major life transitions for personal wellbeing. Through this research, I have grown and connected with new communities and reconnected with the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon.

As someone who grew up playing videogames and constantly looked for player-characters and storylines to identify with, I was always left with the stereotypical "keeper of his people" (but who are his people exactly?) player-characters (LaPensée, 2004;

LaPensée, 2006a; LaPensée, 2006b; LaPensée, 2008a). I dreamt of empowering this generation and the next with the equipment and experience to create self-determined games and other digital media, understanding the power of transmedia (LaPensée, 2008b; LaPensée & Lewis, 2009). Although Anishinaabe and Métis with family in Michigan and Ontario, I grew up most closely to the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon. I completed a Bachelors of Arts with emphases in Native Studies and Technical Writing as well as a Masters of Arts in Writing at Portland State University (PSU).

Following my Bachelors, I broke into game industry as a journalist and quickly became a writer working on projects such as *Venture Arctic* (Pocketwatch Games, 2006). Meanwhile, I launched game development education workshops for Indigenous youth sponsored by the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) and United Indian Students in Higher Education (UISHE) in Portland. I brought these workshops to Anishinaabe, Métis, and mixed blood youth in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario through Algoma U (Dillon, 2006c). While in Sault Ste. Marie, I determined that I would need to continue my education in order to expand this and other work. I soon began a Doctoral program in Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. From there, my passion for educating youth extended into work with the Skins workshops (LaPensée & Lewis, 2008, 2009; LaPensée & Lewis, 2010, 2011; LaPensée, et al., 2010), which are led by Jason Edward Lewis and Skawennati through Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC, 2010) based out of Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. My passion for game design shaped into *Techno Medicine Wheel* (AHMAL, 2007)—a social game in collaboration with Squamish artist and herbalist Cease Wyss and Loretta Todd's Aboriginal History Media Arts Lab—to share knowledge about the location, care, and use of traditional medicinal plants growing in and around Vancouver, British Columbia. Among other projects, I have consulted for the transmedia property *Animism* (Zeros2Heroes, 2010) and developed the social media game *Survivance* (WISDOM, 2011) in collaboration with the Discovering Our Story project (WISDOM, 2009), which is the focus of this dissertation.

3.2.2. Community

The research here follows decolonizing methodologies by framing the research project as a collaboration among the Wisdom of the Elders (WISDOM) and Northwest Indian Storytellers Association (NISA) communities who contributed to the design of *Survivance*. It expresses my perspective as a diverse Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis researcher who shares the communities' interests in returning to health and wellness through self-determination.

I was introduced to WISDOM when I was part of bringing Anishinaabe and Lakota storyteller Kevin Locke to Portland State University as a member of UISHE. Often, I felt displaced as a mixed blood Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis person who lived in Oregon in an urban setting far from my family and traditional territories in Michigan and Ontario. It was meaningful to hear Anishinaabe stories while still being where I felt was my home. It meant even more to feel empowered to pick up my cedar flute again, which had fallen aside while I focused on my academic path. I soon became a volunteer for WISDOM, which involved making and distributing posters for the Northwest Indian Storytelling Festivals. I then helped WISDOM put together a monthly e-newsletter. Later, I worked for WISDOM as the distributor of their radio series and helped with the distribution of the online K-12 curriculum on Native American culture. I had many discussions with co-founder and Executive Director Rose High Bear about the possibility of designing a game with WISDOM. As a result of these creative discussions, I took on a producer role for the first year of the Discovering Our Story project. Over the next four years, I supported Discovering Our Story by contributing grant writing to help fund the project and kept in contact with the community in the context of researching storytelling to inform the design of a digital game that would be given to WISDOM.

I frequently discussed storytelling and game design with Haida elder, storyteller, and lawyer Woodrow Morrison Jr., who later became the Northwest Indian Storytelling Association's director. I regularly returned to the community for the Northwest Indian Storytelling Festivals, for the Northwest Indian Storytelling Association Retreats, and for the interviewing and video recording of storytellers for Discovering Our Story in parallel to adapting Discovering Our Story into the prototype of *Survivance*. *Survivance* took three years to develop into a launched prototype as I playtested through the quests and

revised the game in iterative development cycles. The content for the *Survivance* game is copyright to Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. and directly links to the Discovering Our Story website. WISDOM and NISA are included in the Validation process (described further in Section 5.0 below).

Indigenous students at PSU who may or may not be part of the student groups UISHE and AISES are included in the urban community that WISDOM and NISA seek to serve through Discovering Our Story and thus *Survivance* by extension. Currently, I am faculty at PSU, which contributed to selecting students at PSU as the initial players of the *Survivance* prototype, along with other important factors that are described more in section 3.0 Data Collection. The players are directly involved in verifying the findings of this research, elaborated on further.

3.2.3. Ethics

Ethics for this research required a deep process of negotiation between expectations that are unique to academia and Indigenous communities. For example, Simon Fraser University requires that research that involves Indigenous communities should have approval from leaders of the band, tribe, or nation involved. Since the *Survivance* game is intended for all peoples and the study itself is situated in the urban and therefore mixed Indigenous community of Portland, there was no way to involve the approval of a Chief. This issue had previously come up during research projects by the Aboriginal History Media Arts Lab—led by Cree filmmaker Loretta Todd through Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. Loretta Todd and I had many discussions that involved determining the importance of “band approval” in the context of urban Indigenous research projects. With her guidance, I came to the conclusion that there is no single entity of leadership to seek approval from in urban communities, although I did seek and receive approval from Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche and Kiowa), the program director for Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University. However, based on Simon Fraser University’s standards, the study plan and consent form still had to state that “band approval was not sought,” which is not exactly the situation and could have put the study at a disadvantage when received by the community. It was only with my existing connections with the community that I was able to overcome this wording required by the university.

Just as Loretta Todd had suggested during our research projects in 2007, Indigenous communities should have the right to establish their own guidelines to protect and respect their peoples. For example, the Mi'kmaq Nation created the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch to monitor “any research, study, or inquiry into the collective Mi'kmaw knowledge, culture, arts, or spirituality” (Mi'kmaw College Institute, n.d.). I have used the guidelines set forth by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to inform decisions about ethical issues, including understanding and respecting Indigenous worldviews, involving the community in determining the conduct of the research, designing a study with participatory research, giving the community and individual participants say in anonymity, and giving the community say in the use of data (CIHR, 2007). Players of *Survivance* determined that—since their work was being represented from their perspective—their names, reflections, and acts of survivance could be included in any writing and presentations with the expectation that I verify with the players before presentation and/or publication. All rights to data belong first and foremost with the individual players, secondarily to the Wisdom of the Elders community and Indigenous community at Portland State University, then to the larger urban Indigenous community in Portland, and lastly to Simon Fraser University with the understanding that the data will not be used without consent from the players and various communities involved. Any publications, presentations, or other form of reports involving this research will also credit the individual players and the communities. The data has also been gifted to the communities for use in grants, education, or other projects that will directly benefit the communities.

3.3. Data Collection

After establishing community connections, developing the game prototype and playtesting it myself through iterative cycles over three years, the formal data collection phase with players took around one and a half years. The game prototype is still ongoing and acts of survivance are regularly added to the growing prototype website outside of the parameters of this study's timeline. These parameters are described in detail below, along with the types of data, methods of recording data, and protocol for collecting data.

3.3.1. Parameters

Outside of the context of this study, *Survivance* has reached Indigenous players across the United States and Canada. Since WISDOM's primary audience for *Discovering Our Story* is the urban Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon, *Survivance* also drew from this community when selecting players for the study. Portland, named after a band of Chinook peoples, is a perfect location for this study since it has the ninth largest urban Indigenous population in the United States (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011, p. 2). It is also home to numerous services for Indigenous peoples, such as the Native American Youth Association's Early College Academy, the Native American Rehabilitation Association, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and the Native Wellness Institute. Despite these services, the Indigenous community still struggles with disparities caused by the intergenerational transfer of historical trauma and institutional racism (Brave Heart, 2003; Curry-Stevens et al., 2011). Healing requires on-going efforts toward self-determination, which include *Survivance*.

Within the larger urban Indigenous community of Portland, the Native American Student and Community Center at Portland State University (PSU) serves as a gathering place for students and community members. PSU has developed the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, includes Indigenous student groups such as the United Indian Students in Higher Education (UISHE), American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), and Pacific Islander Club, as well as hosts the Chinuk Wawa Social Club, which meets regularly to speak and teach the local Indigenous trade language. The study reached out to undergraduate Indigenous students at PSU through the Center, student groups, and classes in the Indigenous Nations Studies Program. University students were useful to this study because many are still considered youth (in many Indigenous cultures, you are considered a youth through the age of 30), yet able to sign consent forms without parental consent. The players ranged in ages although the majority were youth in the Indigenous sense of the term.

3.3.2. Types of Data

The types of data in this study uplift oral and graphic means of expressing thought alongside positioning writing as a form of *survivance* for Indigenous peoples.

Definitions of *orality* and *literacy* typically place “writing as recorded speech” as superior to “context-dependent oral and graphic traditions” (Teuton, 2010). Indigenous peoples are often considered oral cultures, and thus non-literate, which devalues communities and has historically contributed to justifying the colonization of Indigenous peoples. Cherokee scholar Christopher B. Teuton (2010), who examines oral and graphic forms of communication such as Mesoamerican writings, Diné sandpainting, and Haudenosaunee wampum belts, proposes that Indigenous ways of knowing equally value oral and graphic means of recording thought. Thus, writing by players in the form of open-ended reflections, oral expression in the form of open-ended discussions during phases of validation, and graphic representations in the form of acts of survivance align with *biskaabiiyang* methodology. In selecting these types of data, the study acknowledges the fluidity of tradition and the truth that “... cultural survivance depends on a community’s vibrant, active engagement with the worldview its members continually construct” (Teuton, 2010).

Players wrote reflections before playing a quest in *Survivance* and also after playing through a quest and creating an act of survivance. By using written (or rather, typed) reflections as a method, this study repurposes writing as a tool for survivance as resistance to writing as a tool for colonization (Teuton, 2010). Players were given one week for each open-ended reflection, the protocol for which is described in 3.4 Protocol below. In alignment with decolonizing methodologies, it is essential to give players control over the representation of their words. While these words were moved for the findings following the data analysis process (described in section 4.0 Data Analysis), all wording was verified directly with players, as described in section 5.0 Validation of this chapter.

This study looked closely at acts of survivance—which were an existing mechanic of the game *Survivance*—as symbol-based reflection. Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection, as described by Lavallée (2009), is similar to arts-based research that includes the making of art by the participants and or/researchers as a pathway to understanding what we do within our practice (McNiff, 1998). Symbol-based reflection sits within participatory action research that involves participants of the research in practical ways that empower people to contribute to both the research and change within their community (Park, 1993). Within *Survivance*, acts of survivance contribute to self-

determination of players. An act of survivance is a story in any medium inspired by the quest journey. “Story” here is used in the Indigenous definition of the term, where story can be an open-ended narrative reflection (King, 2003). During the study, players created acts of survivance in the form of paintings, photo collages, short stories, poems, and short films, to name a few. Outside of the study, *Survivance* has also inspired acts of survivance in the form of short animations, interactive websites, and photo journals.

Conversations are a method of gathering knowledge based on Indigenous traditions of oral storytelling (Kovach, 2010). Within this study, conversations were open-ended and not guided by questions or prompts, described more in 3.4 Protocol below. Many studies that emphasize decolonizing methodologies include planned group discussions (Lopie, 2007; Castleden et al., 2008) or sharing circles (Lavallée, 2009). The conversational method, as described by Plains Cree and Saulteaux Margaret Kovach, is also an Indigenous approach to research. Just as Indigenous research is relational, so is the relationship that grows between sharing story and listening (Wilson, 2001). This emerged naturally as a method during research as players approached me unexpectedly with input that was valuable to understanding the impact of *Survivance* on the community.

3.3.3. Recording Data

Written reflections were received as secure online discussion posts within classes at PSU or through email. Players understood that sending electronic files through email could potentially be insecure when they opted to do so. The text was copied into text documents and filed under the player’s first and last name. The documents include both the opening reflection and the closing reflection of an individual player. These documents include purely the original writing by players and are therefore raw data that are stored privately. In keeping with decolonizing methodologies, WISDOM may access this data with the approval of individual players.

The acts of survivance were submitted as files or links—digital images in the case of photo collages, paintings, and drawings; text documents for short stories and poems; and links for films. The acts of survivance are also available through the *Survivance* website (<http://www.survivance.org>) under the journey phase and quest that

the player selected and played through. Circular thumbnails link to content that is either available on another social site (such as Vimeo for films) or to a webpage stored internally on *Survivance* that includes the player's name, the year of submission, and the content. In one rare instance, a validation player abstained from making her acts of survivance public and therefore are not included on the website or visually in this study. The reason for this choice is discussed in Chapter 4.0 Findings.

Conversations were recorded as notes in text documents that I took after a talking circle occurred. These text documents are named after the players who were involved and denoted as a talking circle interaction in the file name. The voices of individuals who did not formally participate in signing consent forms could not be included in the data and were therefore not noted. Since there is a degree of interpretation that happens during note taking, verification with players was especially essential.

3.3.4. Protocol

Before requesting players for the study, I approached Cornel Pewewardy, a Comanche and Kiowa scholar who directs the Indigenous Nations Studies program at Portland State University, to ask permission to seek players through the university. Once I was given approval, I created posters and distributed them at the Native American Student and Community Center (Appendix C). I also created partnerships with courses through professors such as Grace Dillon, who is my mother. In this context, the university is positioned as a site of decolonizing work that recognizes and honors the intricate connections of community. The ten core players highlighted in this study were enrolled in an Indigenous themed course, while the three validation players heard about the game through the core players.

Players were invited to look at the *Survivance* website and then asked to write an open-ended reflection answering: "What interests you in playing *Survivance*?" It is important to point out that there was no suggested word count or other expectations put on players when writing their reflections. After playing through a quest and completing an act of survivance, players were then asked to write another open-ended reflection, this time without any question. This gave players the opportunity to explore what was

important to them—whether that was what they were motivated by before playing the quest, what they did during the quest, how they felt about their experience during the quest, how they created their act of survivance, what their act of survivance means to them, what they thought of the gameplay experience overall, or what they want to do next after playing the game.

Acts of survivance were directly prompted by the quests in *Survivance*. The medium was left open to players, but the content was intended to be a reflection of their experience during and after having completed a quest of their choice in any phase of the journey. For example, the Listening Quest in the Orphan phase of the journey tells the story of “The Boy Who Became Bear” through Roger Fernandes and asks players “How do you identify with the boy in the story?” and “How does this influence you now?” Prompts in *Survivance* quests are reflective of the curriculum for “Discovering Our Story.”

Conversations were open-ended, flexible, fluid, and spontaneous. They reinforced decolonizing methodologies since, within these interactions, all speakers were equal and given equal space/time to share as needed in a given situation, similar to the Anishinaabe research method of sharing circles (Lavallée, 2009). Conversations could occur any place, any time. They often happened at events that included the Indigenous community in Portland, Oregon, as well as casual gatherings. These conversations mainly involved story sharing on the part of players and story listening in my role as the researcher (Kovach, 2010). During the conversations, I did not ask any questions. Rather, players openly shared their own experiences and insights in playing *Survivance*. I reciprocally shared my experiences with playing *Survivance*. Unprompted, players reflected on how the game has had a long-lasting affect on their personal wellbeing. They often also shared next steps in their lives, such as choices to continue on in higher education.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research aligned with *biskaabiiyang* methodology and the *survivance* framework. Data was consistently revisited and revealed more as my

awareness broadened and narrowed through an inductive process of analysis. After open coding, themes emerged. From the themes, methods for data representation unfolded as I sought to represent the players' unique experiences in their own words while still making the findings clear. Symbol-based reflection, first contextualized as a method for players to reflect on their experiences through acts of survivance, reappeared as a method for data visualization to represent the themes and impact of playing *Survivance*.

3.4.1. Approach

Data analysis in this study follows *biskaabiiyang* and builds from the work of Indigenous scholars who have created bridges between Indigenous research methods and Western research methods. The analysis took a voice-centered approach (Martin, 2003) and interwove open coding (Bird et al., 2009) with reflexive triangulation (Patton, 1990; Dana-Socco, 2010). Overall, the approach in this study aligns with grounded theory (Lavallée, 2009), described in greater detail below.

Grounded theory provided structure for an inductive process of analyzing the data that was “grounded” (Berg, 1995) in what players wrote in reflections. This is similar to a voice-centered approach that emphasizes giving participants the space to represent themselves in their own ways (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). In this study, I first gathered together all of the core players' opening reflections into one document and all of the core players' closing reflections into another document. I began the first phase of open coding, a method of sorting data into categories to identify themes (Bird et al., 2009). I treated the documents as transcripts and highlighted key words (e.g. “emotional,” “spiritual,” “story,” “language”) and phrases (e.g. “found in your heart, not in your blood”). There were already clear patterns of codes that began to emerge across the core players.

The inductive process of the approach taken in this study asks the researcher to patiently wait for “interpretations and representations of these patterns [to] come forth” (Dana-Socco, 2010). In Indigenous research, this also means including interpretations that emerge during dreams or as words and images seen in day-to-day life. Between each phase of open coding, I dreamt on the experiences expressed by players and

thought on my own experiences playing through *Survivance*. I wrote notes in a separate document that followed a process of reflexive triangulation—an examination of my own perspective and voice as a researcher in parallel with the players (Patton, 1990, pp. 65-66). This helped to shape how the findings were presented.

After I highlighted similar words or phrases and began to see themes in my dreams, I took a step back from the data. Before delving into naming categories and sub-categories, it was clear to me that players entered the game with unique motivations, spoke to their journey during the quest, and reflected on their act of survivance and that each of these stories should be told separately and woven together with the themes playing at the edges. I created a master document that included all of the players (both core and validation players). I organized each player by name and included the opening reflection, act of survivance, and closing reflection one after the other. I then saw each player very clearly as an individual with his or her own story by restructuring the organization of the data. This invited me to celebrate the individuality of each core and validation player (Dana-Socco, 2010). I revisited the data in a second phase of open coding that helped me see how players' motivations later influenced their quest selections, quest journeys, and acts of survivance and informed the structure of the findings.

3.4.2. Themes

After the second phase of open coding that provided rigor after restructuring the data, I began a third phase that named codes which later transformed into sub-categories under the categories Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing. The sub-categories addressed the motivations and journey of the players. For example, Toma Villa revisited a traditional story through oral storytelling from relations, while Katie Gargan revisited a traditional story through reading a written form of the story, both of which fell under definitions of Culture derived from research. By crossing the key words and phrases that formed sub-categories within research and definitions, the categories Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing came forward.

Once I had clearly defined the categories based on research, I checked in with players to see that these sub-categories and categories were accurate to ensure the

rigor of coding (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Through reflective triangulation (the process of looking at my own experience playing *Survivance*), I recognized that while it is useful to have categories for the purposes of research, these aspects are interconnected rather than separate. This interconnectedness informed the visual data representation described below in 3.4.3 Data Visualization.

While the categories and sub-categories were accurate, they informed *what* the impact of playing *Survivance* was and left questions about the placement of the impact. I revisited each player's story and through a fourth phase of open coding paired with open-ended conversations with players, I identified where the impact occurred. I initially included impacts on the Self (e.g. stories of "healing" expressed in the closing reflection), the Community (e.g. stories about returning to community events after playing *Survivance*), and the World (e.g. seeing the reaction to acts of survivance that reached beyond the urban Indigenous community of Portland). Through the final validation phase with players, I came to see the reciprocity of Spirit—that as players give, they are in turn gifted back by their ancestors, an insight inspired by the player Shilo George and reinforced by validation conversations with other players, described in detail in 5.0 Validation.

3.4.3. Data Visualization

The visualization of data reiterates the symbol-based reflection approach described earlier for data collection. As a reminder and to extend this discussion, symbol-based reflection is an arts-based method of inquiry that can involve the researcher making art as a means of understanding the research (McNiff, 1998). The method most commonly sits within participatory action research (Park, 1993). When merged with Indigenous research, symbol-based reflection acknowledges that the creation of art is a spiritual process informed by those who came before us. Lavallée (2009) tamped down the path by re-contextualizing symbol-based reflection as a method that aligns with Indigenous decolonizing methodologies. Her work included data visualization inspired by the Métis symbol that represented the pathway of stories as well as a flower, which represented the four themes that emerged from the individual stories in her research (Lavallée, 2009). Similarly, I looked to my own ancestors and the research to inform the design of symbols that best represented the framework, themes,

and impact in the research. The stories of the emergence of each symbol are described in detail.

Survivance Framework

The symbol that reflects the *Survivance* framework came to me after the data analysis phase was underway. I was struggling with the concept of Indigenous circular thinking, which, although helpful, visually pins Indigenous ways of knowing in a single loop that closes with a beginning and an end. I could see that there was an outward and upward journey that occurred in both the gameplay and in the research process. There are five loops in the symbol representing the research framework and gameplay. The journey of playing *Survivance* includes quests for five of the six phases of the Native American Hero's Journey (The Orphan, The Wanderer, The Caretaker, The Warrior, The Changer). The final phase, the Elder, reaches beyond gameplay and into the world. The Changer, who returns to his or her community, goes back down the spiral while revisiting histories from personal to ancestral. In parallel, I ventured into Indigenous research at a time when several other Indigenous researchers were beginning their paths and thus had not yet published in such a way that academia would recognize these approaches and methods as valid. I revisited the growing research area in tandem with this study.

The *Survivance* research framework symbol calls out to a literal act of *biskaabiiyang* ("returning to ourselves"), the journey of playing *Survivance* that I experienced from the perspectives of a player and of a researcher listening to other players, and the historically implemented infinity-like symbol of the Métis. The Elder is reached when the final loop has the appearance of closing together the entire journey, understanding that this motion allows the loop to continue around and around infinitely. This is a lifelong process and one that we all have underway.

The symbol began as pencil and crayon sketches on paper as a gift to understand these complex parallel structures that were unfolding during the research (Figure 3.3). I also recognized that this visual representation would not be complete as a graphic in a chapter and that eventually the symbol would need to be an animation integrated into a more robust version of www.survivance.org after the research was complete. I reached out to the local game development community and received help learning how to animate the symbol and made connections for future projects in the

process. I concluded to focus on the dissertation and represent the symbol within the constraints of the format as best as possible until further development of *Survivance*.

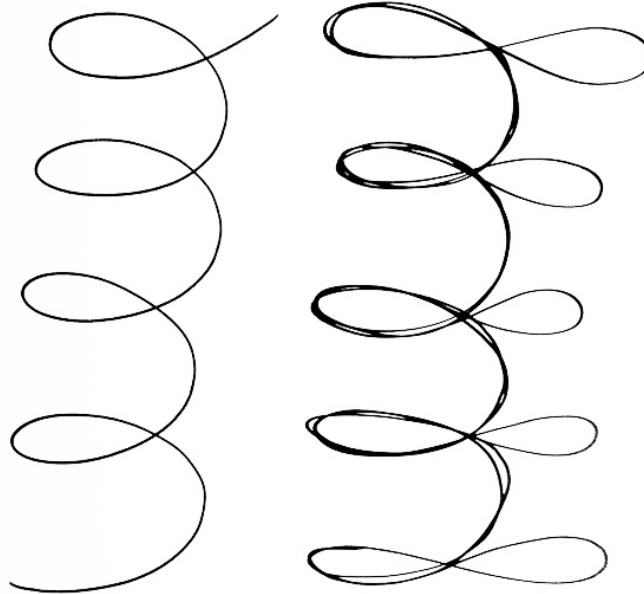


Figure 3.3. *Survivance* Framework Sketch
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

Medicine Wheel

Indigenous wellbeing involves balancing emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health. The teachings of the medicine wheel, a symbol found across many nations of Turtle Island including Anishinaabe, speak to the four directions and the intricacy of balancing these forms of health. I asked how to best represent the medicine wheel—in one particular way I had been taught or as a merge of those differing teachings gifted to me in Portland, Oregon, Vancouver, British Columbia, and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario? The process became clear—the medicine wheel needed to emerge from these many teachings and form during a ceremony in Portland where the study took place. I chose to place the medicine wheel at the Arleta Triangle in the Mt. Scott and Arleta neighborhood of SE Portland, since it is a plot of land that sits in the center of a three-way juncture of fast flowing traffic. Amidst the bustle of city life, a garden and place of community gathering flourishes. Sarah Iannarone, who has Mohawk ancestors, organizes the project. Although she has few ties to her Indigenous ancestry, she has supported my work as an ally and friend.

I placed together medicines that I already had with me: sweetgrass I had picked and braided in Alberta; sage I had picked and dried growing on the land where my home sat in Portland, Oregon; cedar gathered in Oregon and gifted to me by my Lakota and Métis sister Deidre Avery; and tobacco kept for gifting. I gathered rocks and experienced *biskaabiiyang* during the process. I revisited the area of rocks over and over with new eyes for each size I looked for. I became aware that I was adjusting my own awareness to find what I was looking for. Once at the Arleta Triangle, I placed the rocks in the pattern taught to me by Squamish herbalist and artist Cease Wyss. Each rock has a unique meaning—animals, plants, universe, clans, and so on. Each reflects the ways of being in the teachings. I placed the medicines sweetgrass, tobacco, sage, and cedar by the directions as I had been taught in Anishinaabe ways in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. I had good thoughts for the research, for the wellbeing of the community in Portland, and for the land I stood on and all its many connections. This symbol is related to the research and can be seen in Chapter 4.0 on Findings (Figure 4.4).

Culture – Identity – Wellbeing

The symbol for the interconnectedness of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing was directly inspired by many people—my mother Grace Lynn Dillon, who brought me into the woods on quiet adventures throughout my childhood to find the Trillium when the flower first appears in early spring; Anishinaabe and Métis researcher Lynn F. Lavallée who led the way by representing the themes in her study through a flower symbol; and Métis artist and writer Christi Belcourt whose amazing painted beadwork style art contains within it the teachings of the plants and medicines. Within my dreams, the digital beadwork Trillium revealed itself amidst the stars and copper. After learning more about Christi Belcourt's work through her own voice (2012) while simultaneously validating the findings with the players (more on this in the following section), I recognized copper as Spirit, a color that has appeared in much of my artwork over the years.

I came to see more of the meaning of the Trillium as I took the time to sketch out the piece, paint the elements, digitize them, and modify them in Adobe Photoshop. Each petal represents one theme—Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing. While players had varying emphases in themes, each was overlapping. That is, the flower must have all petals;

each theme is present to complete the whole. The beads represent the many contributions that build the theme. For example, family stories, historical stories, and traditional stories for Culture. It takes many beads to represent the whole petal, just as it takes many contributions to complete a healthy representation of Culture. The symbol and its placement in the research are elaborated on in the following chapter.

Self – Community – World – Spirit

During the validation phase, conversations with Shilo George and Stevie Lemke revealed the reciprocal relationship of Spirit speaking to us through our acts of survivance. In the symbol that represents the location of the impact of the game as Self, Community, World, and Spirit, the Trillium flower transforms into a representation of the whole and healthy Self who balances Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing. Unlike the Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing symbol, in which the Trillium flower is suspended in space, the flower is complete and connected. The leaves and stem represent Community that supports the existence of the flower. The roots reach into the ground and both together represent the World. Spirit surrounds the flower and grows in presence.

I completed the symbol as a mixed media piece, merging the existing illusion of beadwork created by aligning modified paint in Adobe Photoshop with layers of paint digitized through photography and also brought into Adobe Photoshop. I experienced *biskaabiiyang* as I revisited the first symbol and saw the intricate connections and built on the art style that unfolded while creating the second symbol. As a researcher and artist, I was gifted with confidence in merging technology and tradition as an act of survivance.

3.4.4. Conclusion

Just as Shilo George described revisiting the piece “kill the man. save the Indian.” as an experience that connected her to her ancestors and continues today to reveal more knowledge to her as she presents the piece to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, the data analysis and the symbol-based reflection has the potential to do the same. I have given space for the players to represent themselves and their stories as a form of collaboration that honors the reciprocal relationship of

researcher and community in decolonizing methodologies while presenting the stories in a way that points to clear findings. The players' reflections, acts of survivance, and symbols that emerged to represent the framework, themes, and impact may very well reveal more in the future. In the meantime, the validation process led to a greater understanding of the findings, described in the following section.

3.5. Validation

Validation involved many phases—triangulation through collecting multiple forms of data to answer the research question; triangulation through collecting and analyzing data from three validation players in comparison with the ten core players; iterative validation with the Indigenous community directly involved in the design of *Survivance*; and validation with all players of *Survivance* in this study. In keeping with decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies, reciprocity with the community and players was important during and after the research and dissemination of the findings.

3.5.1. Generalizability

Overall, Indigenous research doesn't seek to generalize study findings, since decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies recognize the differences in communities and individuals. However, common themes did emerge that fit within categories that were informed by Indigenously-determined definitions of the terms. Within the categories, each player's story was entirely unique.

Triangulation shaped the inclusion of three additional players to the data of the ten core players. Triangulation is a common method of validation in qualitative research (Stemler, 2001). In this context, triangulation involved checking data and findings from additional players that were not involved in the initial study. I came to find out through conversations in the community that three other Indigenous university students in Portland played *Survivance* after hearing about the game either through the core players or other community members. These players thus missed writing an opening reflection, but they were able to write closing reflections and contribute their acts of survivance. They were especially helpful for seeing how *Survivance* unfolds when players are not

mindful of contributing to a study. The themes that emerged from data on the three validation players integrated solidly with data on the ten core players, which suggests strong validity and generalizability of the categories in the findings.

3.5.2. Validation Methods

Triangulation was also a natural approach to verifying the findings since the primary data for this study included written reflections and acts of survivance as symbol-based reflections. In the case of this study, triangulation resulted in credible findings by incorporating multiples sources of data and methods (Erlandson et al., 1993). The research question sought to explore the impact of the game *Survivance* on the community. Thus, the study layered findings from opening and closing written reflections as well as players' acts of survivance in order to answer the research question.

Validation with Indigenous players and the community is an essential element of decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies. I adapted the method of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP), which is described as “a political response to tenacious colonial approaches to research and information management” (Schnarch, 2004, p. 80). OCAP is an approach of Indigenous self-determination that gives the Indigenous participants an active role in controlling and sharing data. This research adapts OCAP's guidelines for self-protection (Schnarch, 2004, p. 92): sharing data only after there has been adequate time for the Indigenous players and community to complete and disseminate their own interpretations; sharing data for specific and agreed upon purposes only; and reviewing and approving prior to release of publications developed using the data, or rather, invoking a right to dissent. The review process was intended to “ensure the quality of the work, its relevance, and the appropriateness of interpretation” (Schnarch, 2004, p. 93). Thus, the findings first went through a review process with players, which either resulted in approval or changes to information (such as locations of birth), spellings (such as “*chinuk wawa*” rather than “Chinuk Wawa”), and elaboration on reflections. For example, Stevie Lemke, who was a validation player, didn't have the opportunity to write a complete reflection before the findings were checked. She chose to share more of her story in the context of her ongoing experiences playing *Survivance* and in doing so improved the quality of the findings.

The study design was validated with Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.'s Executive Director Rose High Bear to ensure that the findings would be useful to the Discovering Our Story project analysis. Once early data was available, I shared the content with Rose High Bear as she shaped approaches to assess the Discovering Our Story project for grants. Later, I joined the Discovering Our Story board during a meeting and shared the data as it was positioned in the first phase of data analysis. The board members expressed a deep interest in seeing the data and findings, which is described more in 5.2 Reciprocity below. *Survivance* has the support of other Indigenous organizations in Portland such as the Native Wellness Institute and Red Lodge Transition Services.

Presentations that are beyond the timeline of writing about this study are underway to share the findings with Portland State University's Indigenous community including the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, United Indian Students in Higher Education, and American Indian Science and Engineer Society. After the approval of this community, presentations can be submitted to events such as the Oregon Indian Education Association Conference. Publications in peer-reviewed journals can begin once the Indigenous community approves the wording of the research.

3.5.3. Reciprocity

Within decolonizing and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies, reciprocity follows the *survivance* framework. Reciprocity is an act of giving or gifting back for the gift that you have been given as a researcher collaborating with Indigenous research participants and communities. Knowledge given by the participants and communities is a gift (Lavallée, 2009). There were unique acts of gifting that took place throughout the study and particularly during the validation phase.

In return for players' stories and acts of survivance, I gave players access to and control over how they were represented. Several players described an experience of feeling uplifted when they read the findings. They were encouraged to continue playing *Survivance* and to move forward with their ongoing work. In return, players such as Shilo George and Stevie Lemke gifted me back by describing the connections to Spirit that enriched the findings.

The findings were gifted to the Discovering Our Story Advisory Council and they were welcomed to use the findings in whatever way they needed, whether for publications to meet grant milestones or data to seek future grant funding. I also gifted the board with portions of the annotated bibliography from the research to help inform their publications. Finally, I gathered and shared files of academic articles that were difficult for board members to get access to. The institution leverages access by academics for academics, which shuts out Indigenous communities. I sought to give equal access to the Discovering Our Story Advisory Council both as a gift to the community and as an act that would generate more self-determined publications in the academy.

Lastly, I continue to be present for players of *Survivance* for academic and community support. Whether through recommendation letters, editing articles, reviewing projects, I hope to encourage players to continue on their unique and important paths. Just as every player's story is different, so are his or her ongoing contributions to the community and the world, which are explored in great detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Findings

This research study seeks to answer the question: “What is the impact of the game *Survivance* on the Indigenous community?” More specifically, it looks to the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon since *Survivance* is based on the Discovering Our Story project. The multimedia curriculum of Discovering Our Story was created by the non-profit organization Wisdom of the Elders with the voices of storytellers such as Roger Fernandes (Lower Elwah S’Klallam), Ed Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock/Nez Perce/Yakama), Elaine Grinnell (Jamestown Klallam), and Woodrow Morrison Jr. (Haida/Cherokee), as well as curriculum writers such as Karleen Wolfe (White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians/Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux).

This chapter first touches on the gameplay of *Survivance*, the positioning of players, and the themes that emerged during data analysis. It explores the motivations players held with them when they entered the game. It then describes the quest journeys as shared by each player. Finally, it shares players’ acts of survivance that resulted from *Survivance* gameplay. The players’ motivations, experiences during the quest journeys, acts of survivance, and validation phase helped inform a discussion on the impact of *Survivance*, which closes the chapter.

4.1. Survivance Gameplay

Survivance (www.survivance.org) begins by asking players to choose a quest in any part of the Native American Hero’s Journey that they feel applies to them or will help them. There are three prototype quests per phase of the journey. The phases within the game are The Orphan (“questioning our circumstances”), The Wanderer (“wandering in search of answers in unfamiliar places”) (Figure 4.1), The Caretaker (“befriending and caring about others”), and The Warrior (“confronting a challenge”). The Changer (“returning, transformed, to help others start their journeys”) concludes the game with an

open-ended call to continue creating acts of survivance. The Elder is beyond the scope of the game quests with the context that elders guide players in the game and in life.



Figure 4.1. *Survivance: The Wanderer Phase*
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

Once a player completes a quest, they then create an “act of survivance” in any medium to represent and reflect on their experience of completing the quest. An act of survivance is a form of self-determination as inspired by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor’s definition of “survivance” (Figure 4.2). Survivance would seem to connote survival—specifically, the survival of Indigenous peoples in the face of colonization, victimization, and attempted dominance first by European and then by American settlers. Stromberg (2006) attempts to clarify the relationship between the two terms: “While ‘survival’ conjures images of a dark minimalist clinging at the edge of existence, survivance goes beyond mere survival to acknowledge the dynamic and creative nature of Indigenous rhetoric” (p. 1). However, Vizenor (2008) finds this attempt at a helpful distinction unsatisfying (p. 20). Instead, he maintains the simple description of a rhetoric of survivance as “dynamic and creative.”

Vizenor’s complexities are legend among Native and literary scholars, and pinning down precisely what he “means” by survivance may be arduous, as he intentionally advances his discussions in relation to other contexts (e.g., Clifford Geertz, Michel Foucault, Michael J. Ong, George Steiner, Jacques Derrida) in order to emphasize the play of constituent meanings that elevate survivance from the status of a

mere label of experience to the level of ontology. Rather than thinking of survivance as a way to describe historical behavior (as in, “the Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears were settled in Oklahoma”), survivance implies the complex totality of aesthetic experience. Vizenor calls it a “practice” in contrast to “ideology, dissimulation, or a theory” (2008, p. 11). In effect, survivance is a way of life, related to the frequently used phrase “Indigenous ways of knowing,” used throughout this dissertation to characterize Indigenous epistemologies.

Survivance in its game form draws forth acts of survivance to visually represent the experiences of players as they interact with Indigenous ways of knowing. Thus, the game extends the survivance tradition from Vizenor’s own career path in creative writing into any medium. Importantly, Vizenor emphasizes that survivance stories are not restricted to traditional modes of communication (Hume, 2007). Rather, survivance is malleable. Expanding beyond poetry and fiction, survivance can also take the form of comic books, graphic novels, theater, film, new media, games, and more. For example, the comic book *Darkness Falls* by James Smith Cree artist Steve Keewatin Sanderson is an anti-suicide message targeted to Aboriginal youth, who are five-times more likely to commit suicide than are their comparators from other communities (Reder, 2010, 180). The comic book recalls and modernizes traditional Cree stories of Wetiko, a spirit of unending consumption. Similarly, the graphic novel *Trickster: Native American Tales, A Graphic Collection* (2011) includes visual retellings of traditional stories, such as a raven story by storyteller Jamestown S’Klallam Elaine Grinnell, who also guides a journey path in *Survivance*. Players are encouraged to follow these paths and enact survivance in any medium, with the majority of acts of survivance to date taking the form of media that can be quickly iterated, such as paintings, photo collages, poems, short stories, short films, and short animations.



Figure 4.2. Acts of Survivance for *The Caretaker: The Giving Quest*
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

After completing acts of survivance, players are invited to engage in sharing their work. They are welcome to share their acts of survivance across social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and file hosting services such as YouTube and Vimeo. The acts of survivance are either posted directly on or linked to from the *Survivance* website. *Survivance* thus connects to and reinforces existing paths of Indigenous self-determination in online spaces that are more likely to be seen and shared. The game's website either links to acts of survivance internally or externally and keeps a trail of the player's movement from one quest to another.

4.1.1. Players

The *Survivance* players whose experiences are explored in this research are Indigenous students at Portland State University who participate in the urban Portland Indigenous community. The ten core players (Sky Hopinka, Toma Villa, Andrew Belzer, Anuhea Naeole, Cynthia Stehl, Heather Chambers, Stephen Printup, Katie Gargan, Brianna Bragg, and Barbara Gladue) wrote open-ended reflections online prior to playing and after playing. In some instances, the core players participated in talking circles: a unique Indigenous research method that involves open-ended discussion between the researcher and participant(s), who are recognized as equal collaborators and contributors to the research (Lavallée, 2009). Three additional players (Shilo George, Alina Begay, and Stevie Lemke) add a layer of validation to these ten core player experiences. The validation players were introduced to the game through recommendations from previous players and engaged in playing *Survivance* without first writing an introductory reflection. They contributed written open-ended reflections after completing gameplay and have participated in talking circles. Their experiences are useful because they suggest what gameplay could look like outside of the context of a research study.

4.1.2. Themes

The journey of playing *Survivance* is broken into Motivation, Quest Journey, Act of Survivance, and Impact. "Motivation" reflects on the perspectives and in some instances clear motivation with which players entered the game. The "Quest Journey" details the reflections the players shared in writing and during talking circles about their

experience playing through a quest. “Act of Survivance” describes the acts of survivance the players created—an act of survivance being a story in any medium inspired by the quest journey. The descriptions involve looking closely at the act as well as integrating reflections from writings and talking circles with players. “Impact” describes the influence that the act of survivance has had on many levels.

The motivations, quest journeys, and acts of survivance fall into the areas of “Culture,” “Identity,” and “Wellbeing,” each further defined in the sections below. The overall “Impact” of the game also involved clear “Culture,” “Identity,” and “Wellbeing,” contributions, but are better expressed in terms of impacts on “Self,” impacts on “Community,” and impacts on the “World” and reciprocity from “Spirit” within the context of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing established early on.

4.2. Motivation

Since the impact of the game on the community is reliant on individual players’ selections of quests and unique acts of survivance, motivation is an important factor to understand. A player’s interests, life experiences, and aspirations prior to playing *Survivance* shape motivation. Before playing a quest in *Survivance* and creating an act of survivance, players wrote a short reflection that involved answering the question: “What interests you in playing *Survivance*?” Although each response was unique, the self-described motivations fit under the categories “Culture,” “Identity,” and “Wellbeing.” “Culture” represents the continuation of, revitalization of, and active presence of traditions, beliefs, language, traditional stories, historical stories, and family stories. “Identity” involves the seeking of, acceptance of, or reconnection with ancestry and relations. “Wellbeing” is the act of or promotion of being emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy.

The forms of motivation across the core players were almost evenly distributed—three players were motivated by Culture, three players were motivated by Identity, and four players were motivated by Wellbeing. The three validation players were also evenly distributed across the motivations. Of Culture, players were interested specifically in continuation of language, revitalization of traditional stories, the active presence of family

stories, and the active presence of spirituality. In Identity, players were informed by recognizing collective identity, exploring a loss of identity due to family members denying Indigenous ancestry, and disconnection from identity because of physical or familial distance from their peoples.

While it is useful to understand players' motivations in categories of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing, the degree of contribution to each category cannot be quantified, nor can each category be distanced from its interconnectedness with the other categories. This inherent interconnectedness is best represented as a beaded Trillium flower—a wild flower of the woods that emerges in early spring (Figure 4.3). This flower is significant since it is found across the majority of Turtle Island (North America), and thus reflects the diversity of the urban Indigenous community. The three petals represent the three categories and the singular beads represent the unique individual contributions that form the whole petal. The flower sits within the universe of stars and spirit in copper, reminiscent of work by Métis artist and writer Christi Belcourt (2012).

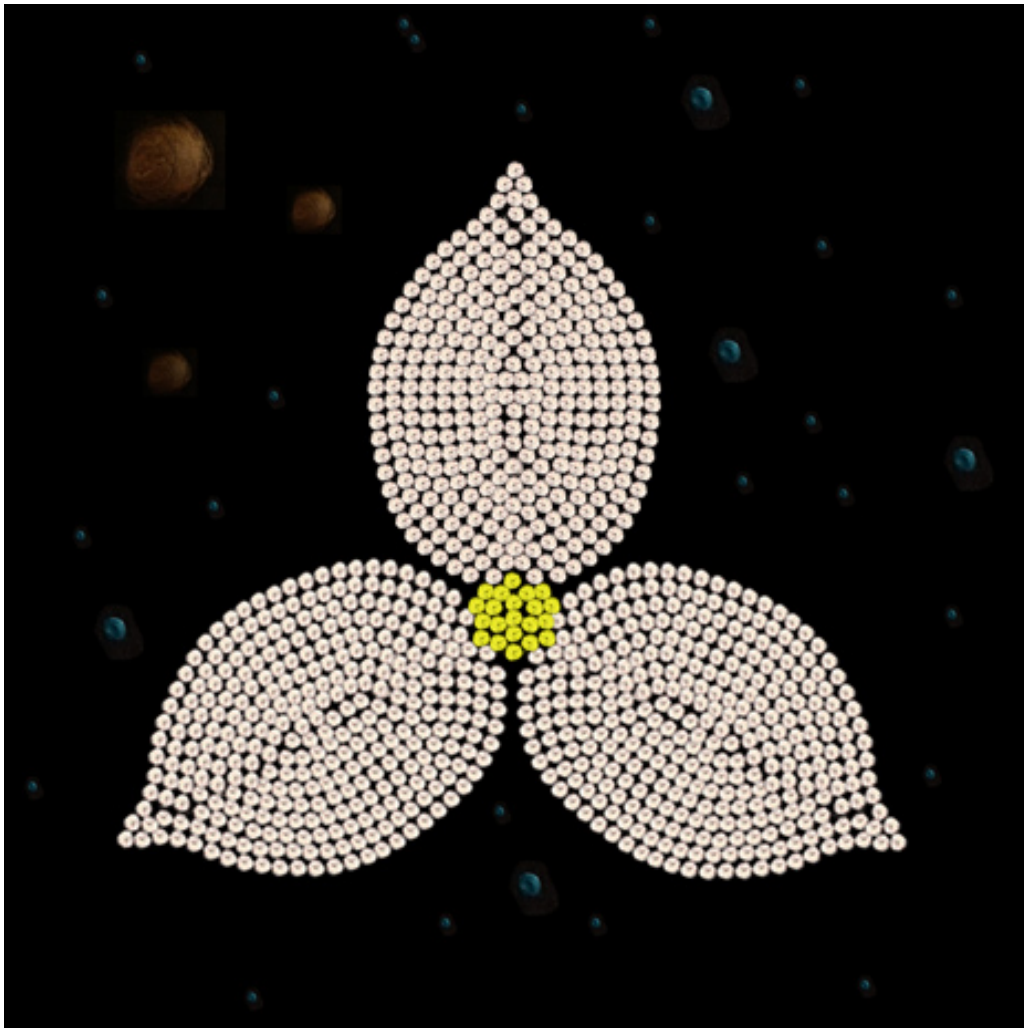


Figure 4.3. Interconnectedness of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

Since the core players are limited to ten players and the validation players are limited to three players, there may be a myriad of other possible motivations missing from this description. For example, I walked into *Survivance* as a player motivated by the active presence of traditional stories, which fits under Culture. I wanted to explore traditional stories and understand ways to adapt them into contemporary forms (such as digital art, animation, games, and comics) that would still honor their traditional forms. I also hoped that these stories would reach the next generations and inspire youth to tell their stories in any medium.

Furthermore, the majority of the core players have only completed one quest each. As I played through the game, I found that my motivations became multifold and dipped between Culture, Identity, and/or Wellbeing. For example, at times I was motivated to express my mixed Identity as an Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis person. At others, I recognized my own need for developing emotional Wellbeing. Regardless of the specifics, I am confident that any player's motivation will fit within Culture, Identity, and/or Wellbeing and that the present players offer a robust view into a range of motivations, which later overlap with acts of survivance and overall impact of gameplay.

4.2.1. Culture

Culture widely encompasses the knowledge and characteristics of a particular community (Cordero, 1995). This can include belief systems, traditions, language, stories, and other forms of making meaning (Cordero, 1995). Due to the effects of colonization, Indigenous culture involves practices of continuation, revitalization, and active presence in our world today. Continuation reinforces known and widely accepted traditional knowledge. For example, Donald L. Fixico (2003)—the Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole Distinguished Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University—points to circular thinking as a foundation of Indigenous culture. Circular thinking is reflected in talking circles, in which every voice is represented. Revitalization is an attempt to recover traditional knowledge and bring it into the present as closely as possible to its traditional form. The Northwest Indian Storytelling Festival (Northwest Indian Storytellers Association, 2011) offers an opportunity for professional storytellers to tell stories, many of which are traditional. While it cannot be said that these traditional stories are exact to their original form in many instances because of translations into English, these stories are nonetheless living (Vizenor, 2008). Active presence involves representing Indigenous culture within contemporary contexts. Communities such as Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace (AbTeC) create works within “cyberspace—the websites, chat rooms, bulletin boards, virtual environments, and games that make up the internet” so that Aboriginal communities can seize “an unprecedented opportunity to assert control” over Aboriginal representation (Lewis and Fragnito, 2005). Projects include *CyberPowWow*, an online community of artists who use new media to explore Indigenous issues (Fragnito, 1996);

“Skins,” an effort to teach game development skills to Indigenous youth and adapt traditional stories into videogames (Lameman & Lewis, 2011); and *TimeTraveller*[™] (Fraguito, 2009), a machinima series starring a time traveling Mohawk who revisits and rectifies historical trauma. In all forms, Indigenous culture involves understanding the practices and self-expression of Indigenous peoples *today*.

In the core players, quest selections and acts of survival were motivated by the continuation of language, the revitalization of traditional stories, and the active presence of family stories. The active presence of spirituality was an additional motivation found in one of the validation players. These are described in greater detail below.

Sky Hopinka, who is Ho-Chunk/Pechanga from Ferndale, Washington and moved to Portland for his undergraduate degree, worked with saving Indigenous languages prior to playing *Survivance*. He is deeply involved in Portland State University’s *chinuk wawa* Social Club, which is a collaborative gathering of students and community members interested in learning and actively speaking *chinuk wawa*. *Chinuk wawa* is the trade language of the Pacific Northwest and spread vastly across the coast and lands. Through the Social Club, he learned the language teaching methodology Where Are Your Keys? (WAYK). WAYK is free curriculum that uses game-like in-person interactions that can be adapted to any language (<http://www.whereareyourkeys.org/>). When he began to play *Survivance*, he looked for other opportunities to use the methodology. He was offered an internship with WAYK to teach the Numu language at Warm Springs Indian reservation during the summer of 2011. Consequently, his quest choice was informed by his ongoing commitment to the continuation of language.

Toma Villa, who is from the Yakama Nation and was raised in Portland, is a fisherman and artist who fishes out of Cook’s Landing with his Uncles. Prior to playing *Survivance*, Toma had an existing interest in the revitalization of traditional stories. He described that he often asks “about old times and things of the river.” However, he “never seem(s) to get the whole stories, just bits and pieces.” Toma is motivated to pass on complete stories to the next generation—“I take it upon myself to make sense of things and finish off the stories so I can mainly tell them to my little girls.” His quest

selection was informed by his passion to revitalize traditional stories as closely as possible to their original form, understanding that some elements have been lost.

One of the validation players also added to the Culture motivation. Alina Begay, who is Navajo, was led by the active presence of her spirituality. While she wanted to be open-minded in her gameplay, she was acutely aware that her incoming beliefs would influence her quest choice, journey, and act of survivance. The “foundation and keystone” of her spirituality is the Book of Mormon translated into Dine' Bizaad (the Navajo language). She seeks to acknowledge her traditional Navajo spirituality in the context of the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which is a contemporary influence.

The players had a wide range of motivations that fit under Culture. Sky's interests in the continuation of Indigenous language extend beyond his peoples and reach to the possibility of continuing any language as he works to promote and pass on the WAYK teaching methodology. Toma's inspiration to revitalize traditional stories will ensure that these stories remain in the minds of the next generations. Alina's passion to interweave her Navajo beliefs with the teachings of Jesus Christ shows the dynamics of individual Indigenous spirituality. In all instances, the players are motivated to express Culture, which is a dynamic form of survivance unique to each individual.

4.2.2. Identity

Self-determination of identity is a vital part of survivance. Since the physical displacement of peoples from their lands (Garrouette, 2003), federal government has appropriated and controlled Indigenous identity under the guise of giving Indigenous peoples benefits by establishing blood quantum requirements, which has resulted in denied rights and displacement of recent generations (Pevar, 1992, p. 12). Internal racism is also a pressing issue. In many historical cases, Indigenous people denied their own identity in order to avoid institutional racism. In more recent instances, tribes have a particular interest in limited legal “Indian” status to control the allocation of tribal resources such as land, money, and political privileges (Garrouette, 2003, p. 16). However, there is a surge of recognizing “mixedblood” or “crossblood” identity, which is

“an international confrontation” of legal definitions of Indigenous identity (Coltelli, 1990-91, p. 112) and opens us to celebrate our current forms of Indigeneity.

In the core players who were drawn to explore their identity, quest selections and acts of survivance were informed by acknowledging collective identity, generational denial of Indigenous identity, and physical distance from culture that disrupted identity. One validation player was also greatly motivated to celebrate resistance to government definitions of Indigenous identity. The specifics of each player’s motivations are described in-depth below.

Andrew Belzer, who is a world-traveling mixed blood Cherokee, described himself as a “wanderer” by “choice.” He is motivated by the “challenge” of “learning new things in unfamiliar situations.” As someone who has been a wanderer his “whole life,” he too comes from wanderers, both his mother and father. He was “excited” to have the opportunity to speak with his mother about her “past” and “stories” to reinforce his existing sense of identity. His quest selection was informed by his interest in learning about his family’s stories, which express the active presence of his mixed Cherokee family in the modern context of international travel.

Anuheā Naeole, who self-identifies as “Native Hawaiian,” is interested in reflecting on her “collective identity.” She noted that her ancestry is mixed and includes other cultures along with Indigenous Hawaiian. She was motivated to choose a quest that could be “applied” in her “daily life.” She saw *Survivance* as an opportunity to celebrate her collective identity and her tendency to be a “caretaker.”

Cynthia Stehl is Blackfoot from her father. Cynthia has had to “change and adapt” due to life circumstances, which were “extremely hard and difficult.” Although she is “starting to heal and regenerate,” she still has “feelings/fears” that she “wrestles with.” She finds that she is “still wandering and searching.” Part of her search is rooted in the denial of her Indigenous ancestry by her grandparents’ generation. Her quest selection was motivated by her interest in finding out more about her Blackfoot culture and understanding why her grandfather so adamantly denied his own identity, which has had a lasting effect on the following generations.

Heather Chambers, who is Jamestown S'Klallam from her father, “desires to connect” with her Indigenous heritage. The Jamestown S'Klallam live in the northern Olympic peninsula of Washington. Since Heather lives in Portland, she has been “cut off from the tribe by distance.” She has also been separated from the tribe by the complication of legal tribal status. Her father and older brother were the last of her family who qualified to be enrolled. She wanted to find a quest that would help her reconnect with that part of her identity.

Shilo George, who is Tsistitas (Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho), was a validation player who wanted to celebrate her identity and the perseverance of her family in the face of the government’s attempts to eradicate tribal status. She is motivated to confront the “true effects of colonization” on identity brought about by concepts such as “blood quantum.” Her ongoing exploration of the “tools of genocide” and generations of her family’s resistance led to her quest selection in *Survivance*.

The various motivations that fit within Identity are understandably unique and yet united in their affirmation of self. Andrew, who is confident in his identity, is interested in recognizing Indigenous peoples as they are in the present. Anuhea, who is strongly connected to her identity and acknowledges that she comes from many cultures, is motivated to express her collective identity day-to-day. Cynthia, who is searching for answers about her Blackfoot heritage, is motivated to understand the struggles experienced by her grandparents’ generation and to connect with that part of her identity. Heather, who has felt forcibly disconnected from her Jamestown S'Klallam heritage because of her lack of tribal status, is motivated to reconnect with that side of her identity. Shilo, who is firm in knowing her identity, is motivated to look closely at the devastation caused by colonization and resist the residual loss of identity. Each player’s motivations are very specific to his/her own experiences with identity based on family history. Despite the differences, each player is joined in a common goal to express self to the fullest possibility.

4.2.3. Wellbeing

Survivance also applies to literally surviving as in *living* and living well. Due to the disparities caused by historical trauma and ongoing institutional racism (Curry-Stevens,

et. al., 2011, p. 3), Native Americans face higher mortality rates from chronic and infectious diseases, suicide, and homicide (Barnes, et. al., 2010). Most alarmingly, Indigenous youth are five-times more likely to commit suicide than youth from other communities (Reder, 2010, p. 180). Economic challenges, limited access to health care, crime, and walls in the educational system contribute to these troubling issues (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011).

However, there is hope for healing. Indigenous advocacy based in traditional knowledge suggests that a path to recovery from these troubling issues relies on balancing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing (Curry-Stevens, et. al., 2011). The teachings of balance are passed down from ancestors through the medicine wheel—a symbol and tool that carries teachings of health and wellness (Lavallée, 2009). It is a symbol of circular ways of knowing and interconnectedness (Figure 4.4). Although there are varying designs that differ among peoples, I draw from my knowing of *bimaadiziwin*—this intricate balance—more directly from two Anishinaabe forms of the medicine wheel that were taught to me in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. In one version, there is a circle is in four quadrants—white to the north, yellow to the east, red to the south, and black to the west that are gifted with the medicines sweetgrass, tobacco, sage, and cedar. In another version, stones represent the four directions aligned with emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual balance on the outer edges; animals connecting the directions; the plants, land, and stars near and around the center; and ways of being connecting these all of these aspects.



Figure 4.4. Medicine Wheel
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

The teachings tell that all peoples are interconnected and that each individual's story should be understood within the context of our connections. The teachings also tell that wellbeing requires *bimaadiziwin*, a balance of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Physical wellbeing involves prevention of and/or recovery from chronic and infectious diseases such as cancers, diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, and strokes. It also encompasses prevention and/or recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Emotional wellbeing is the ability to cope with emotions brought on by challenging situations. Mental wellbeing includes concerns such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Spiritual wellbeing, in this case, broadly refers to an individual's connection to cultural

and spiritual practices (King et al., 2009). Of the core players, quest selections and acts of survivance that related to Wellbeing involved the act of and promotion of living as well being physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. The validation player reinforced the motivation of being emotionally well. Each player's motivation is described in-depth below.

Stephen Printup, who identifies as Comanche, is concerned with the suicide rates in (as he states) "Indian country." Bolstered by the needs of the community, Stephen is interested in finding ways to bring awareness to suicide issues as well as prevent future suicides. His direction when choosing a quest was based on what would give him an opportunity to make an impact in this troubling issue.

Katie Gargan is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota who was raised in Portland. She is dedicated to promoting "healthy lifestyles." At the time of playing *Survivance*, she was the coordinator of United Indian Students of Higher Education student group at Portland State University and an employee of Healing Feathers, a Native American student advocacy group focusing on suicide prevention and living in a healthy way. She was "excited" about the opportunity for "introspective" when selecting a quest.

Brianna Bragg, who is Yankton Sioux, wanted to "face the feelings and challenges" she encountered "before and leading up to" her younger sister having cancer. Survivance in this instance meant helping her sister with *surviving* and defeating cancer cells through support and cultural healing practices. She was drawn to the Warrior and Caretaker quests, since she helped her sister "complete a year-long battle with cancer."

Barbara Gladue is also known as Assimiwnan Quaw (Chokecherry Woman) from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. She dropped out of Junior High School due to the pressures of being "under privileged, underserved, overlooked, and plagued with a feeling of hopelessness." Since, her "passion and heart is to serve and advocate for Native America's," which is aided by completing a college education and seeking her own mental and emotional wellbeing. She was looking for "healing" when she chose her quest.

Stevie Lemke, who is Cherokee by way of her father and Anishinaabe by way of her mother, came upon *Survivance* as a validation player looking for a means to explore her emotional state of being. She was adopted by her grandmother (her father's mother), who is Cherokee, but didn't speak her language despite growing up around it from her mother before her. She went to powwows as a child and knew she was Cherokee and Anishinaabe, but felt displaced by not knowing her immediate family. Along with this journey, she sought emotional healing from finding herself as part of the statistics of Indigenous women assaulted by non-Indigenous men.

In the Medicine Wheel or Sacred Hoop, which is a symbol used by many Indigenous peoples, wellbeing means being emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually balanced (Montour, 1996). That is, one cannot be fully physically well without also being mentally well. The aspiration for physical, emotional, and mental wellness for the self and others is emphasized in the core players and validation player. Stephen is concerned with preventing rampant suicides in the community, which is directly linked to emotional and mental wellness. Katie shares the motivation of suicide prevention within the larger context of physical health, such as drug and alcohol prevention. Brianna is concerned with her sister's physical wellbeing and her own emotional and mental wellbeing during the process of helping her sister overcome cancer. Barbara clearly recognizes the connection between mental and emotional wellness and how that has been affected by her childhood experiences. Stevie understands that the importance of balancing the strength within herself and drawing from there to heal from her life experiences. While each player has his/her own specific emphasis in the Medicine Wheel, they are also united by the overlaps inherent in balancing Wellbeing.

4.2.4. Summary of Motivations

The motivations of the ten core players and three validation players offer a glimpse into a variety of backgrounds to *Survivance* players. Although each motivation is unique, they informed the categories Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing. In some players, motivations are overlapping, such as Alina, whose motivation was to explore her culture and celebrate her spiritual practices, which more specifically fits under Culture, but from a distanced look also relates to the Wellbeing of her spirituality. Players experienced

growth in their motivations and even further crossover as they played through quests, which is described thoroughly in the next section.

4.3. Quest Journey

Looking at the quest choices and the experiences of playing through the quests as described by players helps inform the impact *Survivance* has in the community at the quest stage of gameplay. After looking through the *Survivance* website to familiarize themselves with the content, players select their first quest (Figure 4.5). Players may choose a quest from any phase of the journey based on where they feel they are at in their lives currently. The game relies on a player's motivations and sense of self at any given time, thus it does not require a linear play-through from The Orphan quests to The Warrior quests. As a player, I found myself going back to first quest (The Orphan: The Listening Quest) after completing the majority of the game, because I was not yet ready to face the ways in which I identified with the boy in the story of "The Boy Who Became Bear" when I began playing *Survivance*.



Figure 4.5. *Survivance* Website Home Page
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

Quest selections determine where *Survivance* will have an impact. Of the ten core players and three validation players, four chose quests in The Orphan, six in The Wanderer phase, one in The Caretaker, and two in The Warrior. The Orphan quests tend to be more about internal reflection. The Wanderer quests combine internal reflection with looking to new information, in some cases from other people. The Caretaker quests involve interacting with other people. The Warrior quests encourage interacting with the larger community. The number of players limits the understanding of *Survivance*'s impact, since not every quest was selected. However, the popularity of particular quests helps to see where players in this particular community are most likely to contribute.

Quest experiences help to inform what forms of impact *Survivance* has on individual players and the community. Based on the descriptions of the players' experiences, every quest was successful in meeting the intentions of the phase (The Orphan, The Wanderer, The Caretaker, The Warrior). For all players, the journey set out by the quest was rewarding for their sense of self, which is elaborated on in the quest-specific subsections below and further in the Impact section of this chapter.

4.3.1. The Orphan

The Orphan quest phase is about “questioning our circumstances.” As storyteller Roger Fernandes (Lower Elwha Band of the Klallam Indians) asserts, every person is an orphan in some way and our journey begins in this place (WISDOM, 2010a). The Orphan includes The Listening Quest, The Core Values Quest, and The Broken Hoop Quest. The Listening Quest tells the story of “The Boy Who Became Bear” through Roger Fernandes and asks players “How do you identify with the boy in the story?” and “How does this influence you now?” None of the players began with this quest, but four of the core players commented that they watched the video while exploring the *Survivance* website as a way to introduce themselves to the game. In The Orphan phase, two players chose The Core Values Quest and two chose The Broken Hoop Quest. The quests and experiences are described below.

In The Core Values Quest, players watch a video of Jamestown Klallam elder and storyteller Elaine Grinnell, who tells a story of active presence and reflects on what it

means to be interconnected and part of a tribe (WISDOM, 2010d; WISDOM, 2010e). Players are then asked to write a list of ten values, whittle those down to five, then three, then just one. “This is the center of your belief system,” the game purports (Figure 4.6). Stephen described that he narrowed his values down to Happiness, Family, and Love, and that he had an “emotional” experience trying to choose just one, and ultimately went with Love, which greatly informed his act of survivance, explored in the next section. Alina, a validation player, stated that it was “easy” to complete The Core Values Quest—“spiritually” has been her “quest in life.” “It encompasses my entire life, dictates my decisions, influences whom I associate with, and ties me to my family forever for eternity,” she elaborated. The two players described different experiences—for one it was a difficult process, for another it was simple. Despite the differences in the process, both said that determining a core value was “helpful.”


<p>The Giving Quest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give to yourself. Promote self-care by deciding and following through on something you want to do. ▪ Give to someone close to you. Do something special for someone close to you, such as writing a poem, singing a song, making a meal, or listening. ▪ Give to someone you are familiar with. Do something special for someone you are familiar with, such as sharing a meal with a co-worker. ▪ Give to a stranger. Volunteer your time or donate to an organization or someone you are unfamiliar with. ▪ Tell a story in any medium that reflects your giving. For example, a photo of something you made as a gift. This is an act of survivance! ▪ Share your act of survivance by emailing the file or posting online and #survivance. 	<p>Words of Elaine Grinnell</p> <p>“We have our sister tribes of Port Gamble and Lower Elwha. We work together to protect our fisheries and all of our natural resources, you know. We work together on our language and education. We help each other. We may have something they don't. We share then. That is maximizing your natural resources.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Listen to Elaine Grinnell</p>	<p>Acts of Survivance</p> 
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Figure 4.6. *Survivance: The Caretaker: Giving Quest*
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

One core player and one validation player chose The Broken Hoop Quest, which introduces the concept of historical trauma through the historical and family stories of Haida elder and storyteller Woodrow Morrison Jr. (WISDOM, 2010f; WISDOM, 2010g):

In my dad's generation (my father's now 96 years old) and the generation just before him were sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. They sent them all the way from Alaska to Pennsylvania

and others were sent to the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. When they were there, they had to wear a little patch, like Hitler did to the Jews. But they wore a little patch just with a thin thread holding it on that said 'Speak English.' 'And if I caught you talking Haida, I'd take that name tag, and take that tag and it had your name sewn on the back. At the end of the day we'd turn them in and whoever turned in the most would get a prize.' So that was one of the things they did to stop you from speaking your language.

After watching the video, players are tasked to: “Explore historical trauma, whether experienced by you or by relations. Seek out stories.” They are then asked, “How might this past trauma impact you today?” Heather identified with the quest because it has been “difficult” for her to find out more about her Jamestown S'Klallam culture. Her family was “quiet about the Native side of the family,” which is a common experience caused by colonization. She reflected: “My grandfather was silent in regards to the tribe and the Native culture all the way to his death when I was in high school.” To complete the quest, she revisited stories she was told during her childhood. Conversely, Shilo’s family is proud of their Tsistitas (Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho) heritage, but still devastated by what she refers to as the “genocidal tactics” of boarding schools. She looked back at the “true effects of colonization on the recent six generations” of her family, but also transformed the experience of the quest by seeing the “strength and hope” of her ancestors and reaffirmed her identity in relation to “blood quantum.” Similarly, Heather was able to reclaim her identity.

Each player’s journey was personal and influenced by the motivations they walked into the game with. The quests were successful in challenging players to “question” their “circumstances.” Stephen was surprised to see “Love” as his core value, since his life as a combat veteran has been distanced from that term. Alina was not surprised to see “Spirituality” as her core value, but she was reaffirmed in the importance of the term to her identity. Heather reconnected with her Jamestown S'Klallam culture and found stories of historical trauma throughout her family. Shilo reaffirmed the existing connection with her culture and revisited stories of historical trauma in her family, which allowed her to confront her issues with “blood quantum,” discussed further in the Impact section of this chapter.

4.3.2. The Wanderer

The Wanderer quest phase involves “wandering in search of answers in unfamiliar places.” Roger Fernandes elaborates: “The Wanderer has these questions about their life and they don't know where the answers are at, so they begin to wander. They don't know where the answers are at, but they hope that by wandering, they'll bump into them somewhere.” Quests include The Searching Quest, The Collective Identity Quest, and The Wounded Hoop Quest. The Searching Quest with words from Roger Fernandes tasks players with seeking out an Indigenous story. The Collective Identity Quest, led by Elaine Grinnell, asks players to look at what groups they belong to in order to construct their collective identity and challenges them to remove unhealthy connections and encourage healthy connections. The Wounded Hoop Quest, with stories from Woodrow Morrison Jr., propels players to confront feelings associated with historical trauma. Not surprisingly (considering that the core and validation players are undergraduate students who are naturally in The Wanderer phase of their lives), the most frequently played quest of all phases was The Searching Quest with five instances. One other player chose The Wounded Hoop. The quests and experiences are described below.

The Searching Quest begins by watching a video of Roger Fernandes, who explains the Hero's Journey and the place of the Wanderer (WISDOM, 2010a) (Figure 4.7). He relates the importance of stories and storytelling to our ongoing self-determination. The quest then challenges players to: “Seek out a story from your tribe/nation/peoples. It can be any form of story, such as traditional or historical. You can hear stories by attending events, asking relations, or even looking online!” Players reflect on the questions: “How do you identify with the story? What is its meaning to you?”



Figure 4.7. *Survivance*: Discovering Our Story: “The Boy Who Became Bear” screenshot by Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.; used with permission

Of the five players who played *The Searching Quest*, one received parts of traditional stories through oral storytelling, one heard stories from a family member, one read a traditional story published in a book, and one sought memories of stories internally. Toma referred to his summer travel as “wandering journeys” that gave him the opportunity to share and “work out” a story about Elk and Sturgeon that his Uncle told him while fishing at Cook’s Landing. The story his Uncle told him was only about Sturgeon: “He didn’t tell me the whole story, just that there was a story about sturgeon and elk and that they are connected.” He asked a friend about the story; his friend told him “a bit more” but it was “still broken up and not the full story.” He had to piece the stories together to create a whole story. Andrew, who also heard stories orally, sought inspiration for his act of survivance from his mother’s stories. In his reflection, he recounted the factual story of his family—his father, his grandparents on his father’s side, his mother, the joining of his mother and father—and how their journeys have influenced his identity. Katie read the creation story of the Black (Pe Sla’ in Lakota). When she picked the quest, she initially thought she would write a story, but once she read the story in detail, she was inspired in another direction, described in the Acts of

Survivance section. Cynthia felt that she “got hung up on” the quest, since she has had many “life changing things happen” in the past four years. She looked back through her own memories and sought stories internally, which gave her the feeling that she “made a large amount of progress on [her] quest.” Stevie, although adopted, reflected back on the reality that there have been a series of adoptions in her family and many other Indigenous families, which is directly related to historical trauma. Although she grew up away from most of her family, she finds strength in accepting her identity and understanding her story in the greater context of colonization. All of the players started with the exploration of stories in many forms and applied them to their current lives.

More pointedly, The Wounded Hoop quest calls out emotions related to historical trauma. It poses to players: “What feelings of yours are caused by past trauma? These might be isolation, sadness, anger, fear, and despair.” The quest then reassures the player: “You are not alone. Historical trauma has caused separation, silencing, and abuse which impact us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.” Woodrow Morrison Jr. (WISDOM, 2010f, WISDOM, 2010g) recounts the effects of historical trauma:

When you're away from home... they indoctrinate you, well people call it brainwashing, but brainwashing implies removing impure thoughts, so maybe that's what they were doing. But when we got home, after spending a year of being told that everything we did at home as bad, wrong, dirty, evil, sick, whatever... Well, when you grow up in a tribal society the non-verbal communication is paramount. So we would get home and they'd see this rejection, and they would reject us. So once you get this dialectic, this tension between two worlds, once it starts, you go back to school, you come back, the gap gets wider and wider until finally you're in a state of normlessness.

Later in the video, Woodrow Morrison Jr. tells about the eradication of traditional beliefs that upheld women as the respected foundation of the family and connection to the land. Barbara chose The Wounded Hoop and listened closely to the story that explained the Haida understanding that a woman is the foundation of the totem pole. Her feet are placed in the ground, for she is the one who is strong enough to hold up the rest of the totems and to remain firmly planted. Barbara identified that her perception as a Chippewa woman aligned with Haida beliefs: “To the Haida, if the woman is unbalanced, so too is her family, her man cannot stand, because she holds him” (WISDOM, 2010f).

By listening to another person's journey, she was able to revisit her own: "Once I identified with Mr. Woodrow's personal testimony and learned of his journey to solace, I found it easier to reflect upon my own hurt, and anger." She found that "his journey to freedom" gave her "hope to open an old wound" and still be able to recover and heal more fully.

The six players who chose quests in The Wanderer phase sought answers through stories. In all instances, the stories started off as or became personally relevant during the quest journey. Toma took on the challenge of recreating a traditional story and spent an entire summer seeking its elements. Andrew went to his mother to find out more about travel stories related to his family. Katie found a traditional story in written form that inspired her. Cynthia confronted her own stories through memories and internal reflection. Stevie reached out to her culture through her family and through her community, which inspired her to look ahead rather than dwell on her personal encounter with physical trauma. Barbara similarly confronted her emotions through memories of her childhood and saw hope in returning to traditional beliefs exemplified in the stories of the Haida and her own Chippewa peoples. All of the players described either a sensation of "inspiration" or "healing" that occurred during their quest journey.

4.3.3. The Caretaker

The Caretaker quest phase is about "befriending and caring about others." It includes The Retelling Quest with words from Roger Fernandes, which tasks players to revisit a traditional story and retell it in any form. The Giving Quest, led by Elaine Grinnell, has several steps of gifting that culminates in giving to a stranger. The Sacred Hoop Quest with stories from Woodrow Morrison Jr. asks players to explore feelings that have had a negative impact on relationships, to work towards resolving relationships that need healing, and to create new healthy relationships with others. One core player chose The Giving Quest, detailed below.

In The Giving Quest, Elaine Grinnell tells stories of companionship and support across the tribes: "We have our sister tribes of Port Gamble and Lower Elwha. We work together to protect our fisheries and all of our natural resources, you know. We work together on our language and education. We help each other. We may have something

they don't. We share then. That is maximizing your natural resources" (WISDOM, 2010d). The quest steps involve giving first to yourself, then to someone close to you, then to someone you are familiar with, and finally to a stranger. Anuhea took several days to complete the quest. To give to herself, Anuhea made a DVD of photos of the four years she attended Portland State University. To give to someone close to her, she wrote a "letter of appreciation" to her two best friends who helped her through those four years. To give to someone she is familiar with, she brought a Hawaiian dessert for her co-workers. To give to a stranger, she volunteered for the Pilipino Cultural Night, which included self-expression for the Filipino community such as cultural dances and spoken word. She described the quest as applying to her "day-to-day" life and that the strength of her collective identity grew over the time she took to complete the steps.

The Giving Quest is successful in The Caretaker phase's hope to reinforcing friendships and express caring. Anuhea's experience involved reflection, self-expression of her Native Hawaiian identity, appreciation of the support that helped her through university education, and an introduction to a community related to another part of her heritage.

4.3.4. The Warrior

The Warrior quest line involves "confronting a challenge." It concludes the phases of the journey playable in *Survivance* and leads to The Changer, which is the "return home" involving continuous self-determination until one becomes The Elder. The Warrior thus includes The Telling Quest, The New Ways Quest, and The Fight Quest. The Telling Quest challenges players to create their own story. The New Ways Quest challenges unhealthy behaviors. The Fight Quest involves mending the player's sacred hoop by forming new healthy relationships and behaviors. One player selected The Telling Quest and one chose New Ways Quest.

Roger Fernandes introduces The Warrior in The Telling Quest with: "The Warrior fights a battle, they become the warrior. This is when the hero does what we think a hero should, which is they fight the battle, they kill the dragon, they save the baby in the burning building, whatever. But they wouldn't do that unless they had gone through the previous phases." Players are asked, "What's a story you want to tell? What parts of

yourself must you face? What parts of yourself can you share?” and challenged to create their own story (Figure 4.8). Brianna Bragg described her experience as “intraspiritual” as she confronted the questions. Her story involved her recent journey as a “caregiver” to her “little sister,” who eventually “won her battle” with Ewing Sarcoma cancer. She felt that telling her story would help her “heal.”

<p>The Telling Quest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's a story you want to tell? What parts of yourself must you face? What parts of yourself can you share? Create your own story in any medium that inspires you. For example, a short film. This is an act of survivance! Share your act of survivance by emailing the file or posting online and #survivance. 	<p>Words of Roger Fernandes</p> <p>"The Warrior fights a battle, they become the warrior. This is when the hero does what we think a hero should, which is they fight the battle, they kill the dragon, they save the baby in the burning building, whatever. But they wouldn't do that unless they had gone through the previous phases."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Listen to Roger Fernandes</p>	<p>Acts of Survivance</p> <p>...ate was going ... out into the ...urt and then .</p> <p>Singing auld songs to . center of a circle of b... r tongues are poisoned. S... nselves raw.</p> <p>*Keep on rainin, levee canoe was broken in tv eyes are pricked. They</p> <p>...n he fled for ... n with his worr... v in the waters ...</p>
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Figure 4.8. Survivance: The Warrior: The Telling Quest
<http://survivance.org>; creator Elizabeth LaPensée

The New Ways Quest poses: “What unhealthy behaviors do you have?” Elaine Grinnell serves to encourage players in the context of recovering from alcoholism: “I'd say it's worth it. You'll find new friends. You'll find new things to do. And then you'll be in control of your own life” (WISDOM, 2010d; WISDOM, 2010e). The quest offers: “Get rid of [unhealthy behaviors] by keeping yourself busy! Learn stories, learn about your history, learn a language, learn about medicinal plants, or learn skills to express yourself.” Sky chose The New Ways Quest as he embarked on a summer internship with the Where Are Your Keys? (WAYK) language program. During the internship, he supported Numu language revitalization for youth on the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation. He was completely invested in the internship and lived in a house nearby the reservation since there is no housing available there (an issue that affects tribal members). As Sky described, the process was strenuous at times: “We'd get up in the morning, go to the reservation, work for nine hours, then go home and talk about everything that happened until it was time for sleep then start it all over again. It was intense, and it was fun, and it was stressful and frustrating...” However, it was also “extremely rewarding” to him: “It's just really encouraging to see these young adults passionate about language revitalization and their desire for a healthy community and taking part in a program like this.”

For both Brianna and Sky, The Warrior quests encouraged them to confront challenges. In Brianna's case, she had to face emotions that she experienced during her caretaker role with her younger sister during her battle with cancer. For Sky, he was challenged to dedicate a summer to a language revitalization project in a community with lateral violence between the tribes. Both concluded their quests with a sense of completion about their journeys. As expected, The Warrior quests require more time and involve an ongoing transformation that ultimately leads to players entering the role of The Changer.

4.3.5. Summary of Quests

The quests successfully led players on journeys that met the intentions of each quest phase. Players in The Orphan quest phase "questioned" their "circumstances." Stephen felt that he discovered something new about his values, while Alina was reaffirmed in her values. Those in The Wanderer phase sought out answers. Toma pieced together a traditional story from multiple storytelling encounters with family. Andrew reached out to his mother to hear new family stories. Heather sought out stories from her family that had been hidden. Cynthia confronted childhood memories about her family. Stevie looked to her quest journey as a path that helped her transform the notion of "victimry" into one of "survivance." Barbara faced her childhood trauma and turned her experience around by seeing the connections between Haida and Chippewa perspectives on the role of women. The Caretaker quest involved "befriending and caring for others." Anuheia gave thanks to friends who supported her and made new connections through an event. Finally, The Warrior phase provoked confrontations of challenges in the players. Sky entered a community he was unfamiliar with and collaborated with them to continue the Indigenous language. Brianna faced the emotional but ultimately uplifting journey of helping her sister defeat cancer.

Although beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to follow an individual player's journey from quest to quest. As I played *Survivance*, I found that I first picked quests that fit what I was already doing in my life. When I ran out of quests that were "easy" for me, I had to confront more challenges, which was a difficult and rewarding experience. From the core and validation players, it is clear that any starting

quest in the journey creates a meaningful experience, which is made visible in the players' acts of survivance.

4.4. Acts of Survivance

While the possibilities for acts of survivance may go beyond the categories of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing, the initial acts by core and validation players in some instances lined up with the players' incoming motivations and in some instances followed another path. Within Culture, acts speak to language, storytelling, arts, and traditional values. Identity acts relate to self-identity and ancestral identity. Acts of survivance are described in detail below and integrate player reflections. Wellbeing includes acts that emphasize personal and community mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and balance.

4.4.1. Culture

Connections with land and culture are intrinsically linked to health for Indigenous peoples (Wilson, 2003). Similarly—understanding that the land directly informs Indigenous languages—language reclamation is essential to the process of healing from historical trauma (McCarty, 2003). Sky Hopinka shot and edited a short film about the future of Indigenous language and the process of revitalization of the Numu language at the Warm Springs reservation (Hopinka, 2012). Although Sky is involved more directly in the continuation of the West Coast trade language *chinuk wawa*, he chose to focus his act of survivance on the Warm Springs youth and “Where Are Your Keys?” (WAYK) language learning methodology. Sky explained: “I really wanted to hear what the high school kids had to say, and I really wanted to do what I could to give them a voice.” Sky sees direct connections between language and the overall wellbeing of a community: “It's just really encouraging to see these young adults passionate about language revitalization and their desire for a healthy community and taking part in a program like this.” Film, although certainly not a traditional medium, has been adapted by Indigenous peoples for self-determination in a medium that often depicts stereotypes of Indigenous peoples (Kilpatrick, 1999; Rollins, 2011). Sky's film provides a look at the youth interest in revitalizing language, the helpfulness of WAYK techniques, and changes seen in the

community during the program. As one youth shared: "It's our culture. It's what our ancestors gave their lives for, trying to save our people. And that's what a lot of people don't get. I'm going to try to keep my culture alive."

Stories, across all cultures, reflect our knowledge and ways of being (King, 2003). Returning to and creating new stories can reclaim tradition or reconcile colonization (Corntassel, 2009) for purposes of healing. Both Katie Gargan and Toma Villa combined storytelling and art. Katie created a beadwork medallion inspired by the story of the Black Hills (Figure 4.9). As she described, "... the Black Hills are in the background, with a moon up above and arrows in the middle to signify the four directions." She chose beadwork for its role as a traditional medium, while also reflecting that her piece was made using glass beads, which were introduced in the last 200 years or so during trade between Indigenous peoples and settlers. She understood her beadwork as a "story" and directly referenced the overlay of accounts of the Black Hills.

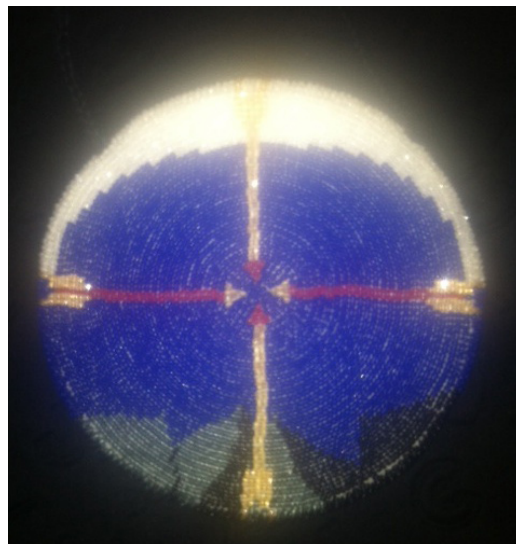


Figure 4.9. Medallion by Katie Gargan
photo by Katie Gargan; used with permission

While Katie's act took the form of beadwork with an existing written story for context, Toma Villa challenged himself to recreate a traditional story along with carving for a linocut print (Figure 4.10). Toma first pieced together the story of Elk and Sturgeon from listening to different relatives, often while fishing, as described in the section above. He chose to adapt the oral tradition to a written story "Wilups and Wawúkya" (Villa,

2012). After finishing the story, he created a linocut print for the “visual aspect.” He described the process as “long” but “great.” He started by drawing Elk and Sturgeon together in different ways, and when he came to “what would work best,” he “finally got it” and started carving. Although written stories are not widely seen as tradition, carving certainly is. Toma combined both, motivated by passing the story on to his daughters in words and visuals. He wanted to show in the linocut how Elk and Sturgeon are connected, and thus he literally connected the two figures in his act of survivance.



Figure 4.10. “Wilups and Wawúkya” by Toma Villa
photo by Toma Villa; used with permission

Traditional values are fundamental to healing since ways of knowing shape the pathway. In Indigenous tradition, truth is within the self as opposed to outside and absolute (Monture-Okanee, 1992). With the loss of these values comes the disfiguring of traditional roles, such as those of women (Monture-Okanee, 1992). Barbara Gladue

created a painting to represent the traditional role of women (Figure 4.11). In her painting, the woman is portrayed as a tree, and as Barbara described, “[She] is nurtured by the earth where her roots lie, she is in the center because she represents balance.” The woman is “large because she is connected to the cosmos.” She is connected with the moon, the sun, and the stars at the center of rotation, reinforcing balance for herself. The red in her dress represents “anger and strength,” Barbara explained. Further, she adapted the notion of “The Broken Hoop” (the name of the quest that led to her act of survivance) into a black belt around the woman’s waist to show a complete, unbroken hoop, symbolizing Barbara’s personal transformation and recognition of the traditional value of women in her nation. Although painting with acrylics on canvas is not necessarily traditional, Barbara’s medium choice reinforces survivance since she adapted Western techniques to the certainly traditional process of painting for Anishinaabeg (as Barbara is from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa).

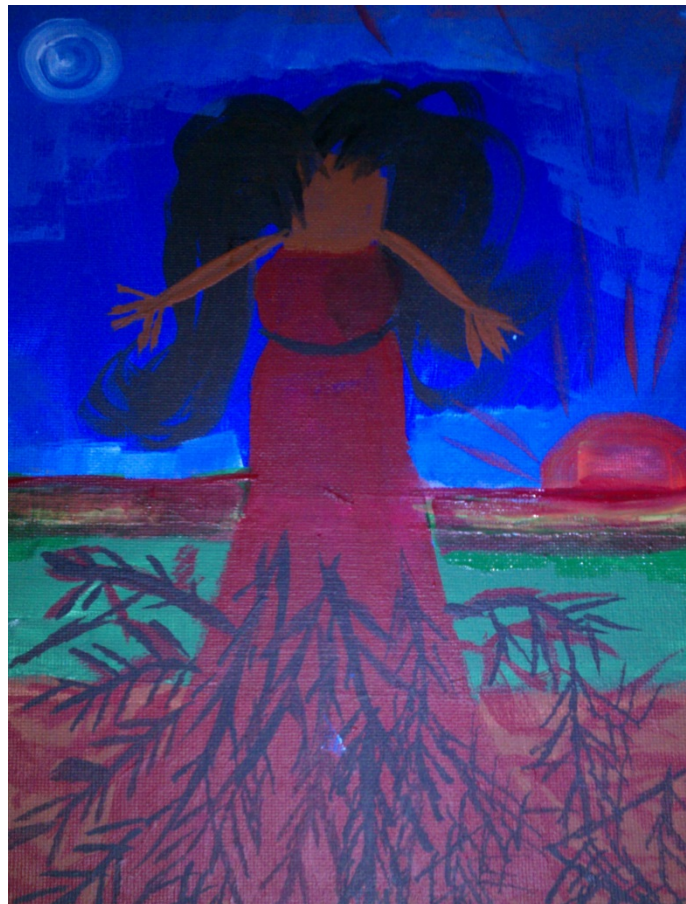


Figure 4.11. “Roots” by Barbara Gladue
photo by Barbara Gladue; used with permission

Kānaka 'Ōiwi (or “Native Hawaiian”) traditions value friendship, as Anuhea Naeole explained when describing the digital collage she created to display elements from her journey during the Giving Quest within the Caretaker phase. She used a close-up photo of a letter she wrote to a friend, a screenshot from a slideshow themed around her four years as an undergraduate at Portland State University, a poster of the Annual Pilipino Cultural Night that she volunteered at, and a photo of the Haupia (a traditional Hawaiian dessert) that she made for her co-workers. Each individual element was an experience shared with other people and culminated in a collage for her to later recall “memories” of “respecting and honoring” her friendships. Anuhea’s act of survivance combines stills that capture her expressions of friendship in handwriting, a slideshow on a DVD, in-person at a cultural event, and in-person at her workplace. She utilizes digital media technology in both her quest and her act to continue traditional Kānaka 'Ōiwi friendship practices of showing appreciation and gifting.

4.4.2. Identity

Identity and empowerment can contribute to self and community health (Kirmayer et al., 2003). The individuality of identity can be expressed through *Survivance*. Andrew Belzer, who was confident in his identity prior to playing *Survivance*, wrote a poem inspired by his mother telling him stories about his family during his quest journey. Along with writing the poem, he also described his family’s travels. He considers his close family his “tribe” regardless of heritage. He is Cherokee from his father and grandfather before him. Andrew’s mother is from England and traveled to Israel after nursing school, which is where she met Andrew’s father, who had fled from the United States to Israel to avoid the Vietnam draft. His parents traveled together through the Middle East and eventually settled on a small farm in La Calera in Bogota, Colombia, where Andrew was born. Andrew identifies as a “global citizen” and is therefore concerned with global issues. He believes that culture is “found in your heart, not only your blood.” His poem “Mother’s Breath” (Belzer, 2012) speaks to his connection with the land in Colombia, where he will “return home”:

“Mother’s Breath”
I was born as the sun set
behind the mountains of Bogota,
an afternoon child.

I was born alone in a room
with only one other person,
Mother, midwife and nurse.
The story goes that the night before
my mother had seen Rocky I,
and I was born a fighter.
My father built us a house
from wood and straw
and pieces of aluminum.
No running water, No electricity
we were very poor,
we were very happy.
Colombia gave me my first breath
like a second mother
she nurtured my growth.
I was born in wanderer
yet I will return to her, Colombia,
air, water and ashes.
Aire, Agua y Cenizas

Andrew Belzer, 2012

Confirming and reclaiming identity requires self-exploration and revisiting past stories and connections to relations. Heather Chambers, whose father is Jamestown S’Klallam and Chilean and whose mother is Danish, was firm in her identity but also felt disconnected. Her father and brother were the last to qualify for tribal enrolment and her grandparents were very quiet about culture due to the shaming that occurred from colonization. Although her father has recently reached out to participate in gatherings, Heather pointed out that “the family [she is] the closest to has been disconnected from their culture.” Her act of survivance involved writing a short story titled “Heinz 57” (Chambers, 2012) about the two stories she “heard the most often growing up” that related to her culture. She weaves historical stories with layers of how she was told these stories and her own experiences in school as a child exploring using the structure of a recipe. She uses Clallam words, details her connections to relatives who upheld the culture, and also describes her exploration of her Scandinavian culture. While she explains that “Heinz 57” was a grade school nickname to describe someone of mixed heritage, she reclaims the term as positive rather than negative through her act of survivance.

Exploration of identity can also be very individual. Cynthia Stehl (2012), whose father is Blackfoot, wrote the short story “Little Fox.” The story is written in a style similar

to traditional Native American animal stories. She used her act of survivance as a way to process her life experience, focusing mostly on three years that have drastically “changed” her. Her act speaks to survivance since she uses a traditional style of story with the contemporary process of a written short story format. Her hope was to “share [her] experience of coming through the darkest night and surviving.” In the story, the fox survives, and in fact thrives by making new healthy relationships and coming to acceptance with the past.

Identity can also be affirmed prior to playing *Survivance* and still benefit from deeper exploration. Shilo George created a seven panel portrait series titled “kill the man. save the Indian” (Figure 4.12). Although Shilo was well aware of her family and her heritage prior to playing *Survivance*, the quest journey and act of survivance propelled her to ask difficult questions and confront answers that were potentially traumatizing but also very revealing and therefore healing. The piece relates to her portfolio of works, which “experience, explain, and present the complex concepts” of her “mixed Indigenous/white heritage and identity.” During the process of creating the series, Shilo reflected on “the tragic loss of cultural traditions and values due to over 200 years of genocidal tactics, in particular the devastating effects of boarding schools” in her family. For Shilo, creating art acts as “healing balm” on “emotional wounds.” As she made her act of survivance, she was gifted with the presence of Trickster in the form of a rabbit in one of the panels and navigated the tricky spaces between settler/Indigenous relations. As she explored her inner struggles, she felt “connected” with her “ancestors and culture.”



Figure 4.12. "kill the man. save the Indian" by Shilo George
photo by Shilo George; used with permission

4.4.3. Wellbeing

Indigenous wellbeing concerns holistic physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance (Lavallée, 2008). Mental and emotional wellbeing are central to preventing suicides, which are a devastating concern for Portland's urban Indigenous community (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011) and require culturally specific approaches (Crofoot-Graham, 2002). Stephen Printup created a proposal and presentation for a social media campaign to bring awareness to and prevent suicides in Indigenous communities. "The Life First" project asks people to submit words or phrases that make them feel positive. These words or phrases are then printed on the front of a t-shirt followed by "For My Life." The back of the t-shirts state: "Defeating Suicide in Indian Country." As Stephen explained, the project provokes discussion around the distinctly higher rates of suicide among Native American youth, causes people to contemplate what "Indian Country"

really means, and serves as an “impetus for a mass dialogue about racial stereotypes.” To date, Stephen has presented the project to the Clinton Global Initiative in Washington, DC and started an email list. In the near future, he will begin the Facebook and Twitter campaigns. Certainly, social media is a contemporary means of distributing information and facilitating global discussions. Stephen’s act of survivance utilizes the Internet as a space for mobilizing Indigenous people and creating change by showing youth that mental and emotional wellbeing is important to a wide community.

Often, Indigenous community members are impacted by imbalances in physical wellbeing (Curry-Stevens et al., 2011). Brianna Bragg’s younger sister was hit by Ewing Sarcoma cancer. Brianna kept a journal and collected photos about walking alongside her sister during her battle with cancer. She took care of her sister, attended the treatments, and provided emotional support. Her sister’s connection to culture, reinforced by Brianna and other relatives, helped her on her path of healing. She smudged—a traditional form of ceremony involving the burning of sweetgrass, sage, and/or cedar and cleansing one’s body, mind, and spirit with the smoke—throughout her fight. Brianna captured some of these moments using photos. Eventually, as Brianna continued the quest, her collection of photos inspired her and her sister to finish the series with a journey to the beach on her sister’s last day of chemo treatment. Since, her sister has been healthy with no signs of cancer. Brianna put together the photos for her act of survivance because, being a photographer, she considers images to be a strong form of contemporary storytelling.

As wellness involves mind, body, and spirit, spiritual wellbeing must also be recognized on the path to healing. Although Alina Begay was not surprised to narrow down her core values to her spirituality during the quest journey, she found that she experienced realizations about her spirituality while creating her act of survivance. Alina created a digital photo collage (Figure 4.13), which involved taking a photo of herself while praying and wearing Navajo regalia, as well as collecting images from the Internet that related to her unique spirituality. She also included a photo of a traditional Navajo wedding basket that she crocheted, representing the four sacred mountains and Navajo balance in life. She came to find that her spirituality “encompasses” her “entire life,” informs her decisions daily, influences who she associates with, and “ties her to [her] entire family forever for eternity.” She was raised with Navajo traditions within Mormon

religion, but points out that she does not “fit the mold in thinking or appearance of a typical Navajo or Mormon.” She “melds” these practices in “harmony” and within finds her own spiritual wellbeing.



Figure 4.13. Digital Photo Collage by Alina Begay
photo by Alina Begay; used with permission

Emotional wellbeing concerns maintaining connections to land, culture, and community within the context of holistic healing. Stevie Lemke, a validation player who confronted her experience of assault, described her experience creating an act of survivance as “emotional.” She completed two quests and created two acts of survivance that she chose not to share since she had an “internal struggle about sharing the things that are negative.” Interestingly, Haida storyteller Woodrow Morrison Jr. and I had discussed this possibility during a talking circle at a café years earlier. It was his

belief that negative acts were valuable for personally processing, but that sharing them with the world would not be helpful, since they could contain “poison” that others could be susceptible to. Stevie, recognizing herself this possibility without outside prompting, understood that the acts of survivance were most important for her. She came to see that Indigenous people not only continue on, but also thrive in our culture and ways of knowing. She avoided “the negative connotations of victimhood” and “identity issues” by seeing herself for herself and continuing on playing new quests and making new acts of survivance.

4.4.4. Summary of Acts of Survivance

In most instances, players’ incoming motivations directly related to their acts of survivance. Sky Hopinka and Toma Villa entered *Survivance* as contemporary storytellers interested in Culture and their acts are related to their ongoing work. Andrew Belzer, Cynthia Stehl, Heather Chambers, and Shilo George approached *Survivance* to reconcile with Identity and in turn their quest choice and acts of survivance directly spoke to Identity themes. Stephen Printup, Brianna Bragg, and Stevie Lemke had very clear motivations concerning Wellbeing and *Survivance* provided an opportunity for them to continue on that path.

Occasionally, a player’s motivation helped them enter and choose a quest in the game, and their primary area of impact changed during the process of creating an act of survivance. Alina Begay was motivated by her mixed Culture and her act spoke to her personal spiritual Wellbeing. Anuheā Naeole was motivated by her Identity and this influenced deeper connection and day-to-day applications of her Culture during her quest in her act of survivance. Katie Gargan was motivated by Wellbeing due to her life’s work and found an act of survivance that continued her Culture to be the most rewarding. Similarly, Barbara Gladue was motivated by personal Wellbeing, which she found during the process of creating an act of survivance that revisited and renewed traditional Culture around women.

Although it is helpful to understand the acts of survivance in terms of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing, that is not to forget the value of the journey of the players. It is also important to recognize that these areas often have crossovers. Rather than focus

on categorizing the areas of impact, this research recognizes *Survivance*'s impact on the players themselves, the communities they are active in, and the world around us all, described in detail in the following section.

4.5. Impact

Survivance impacts the player's self, the community, and the world. In turn, the acts of survivance return to players in the form of spirit (Figure 4.14). Impact on the player's self is seen mostly during the quest journey and the process of creating an act of survivance. The impact on the self and the act of survivance can in turn have an impact in the community. Further, the impact in the community and the acts of survivance can have a broader impact in the world. The acts of survivance also return back to the player through spirit—the connection with our ancestors and the echo that returns from the world back to the player. The layers of impact are best described from player to player with considerations for their incoming motivation, experience during the quest journey and making their act of survivance, the act of survivance itself, and what has happened since playing *Survivance*.

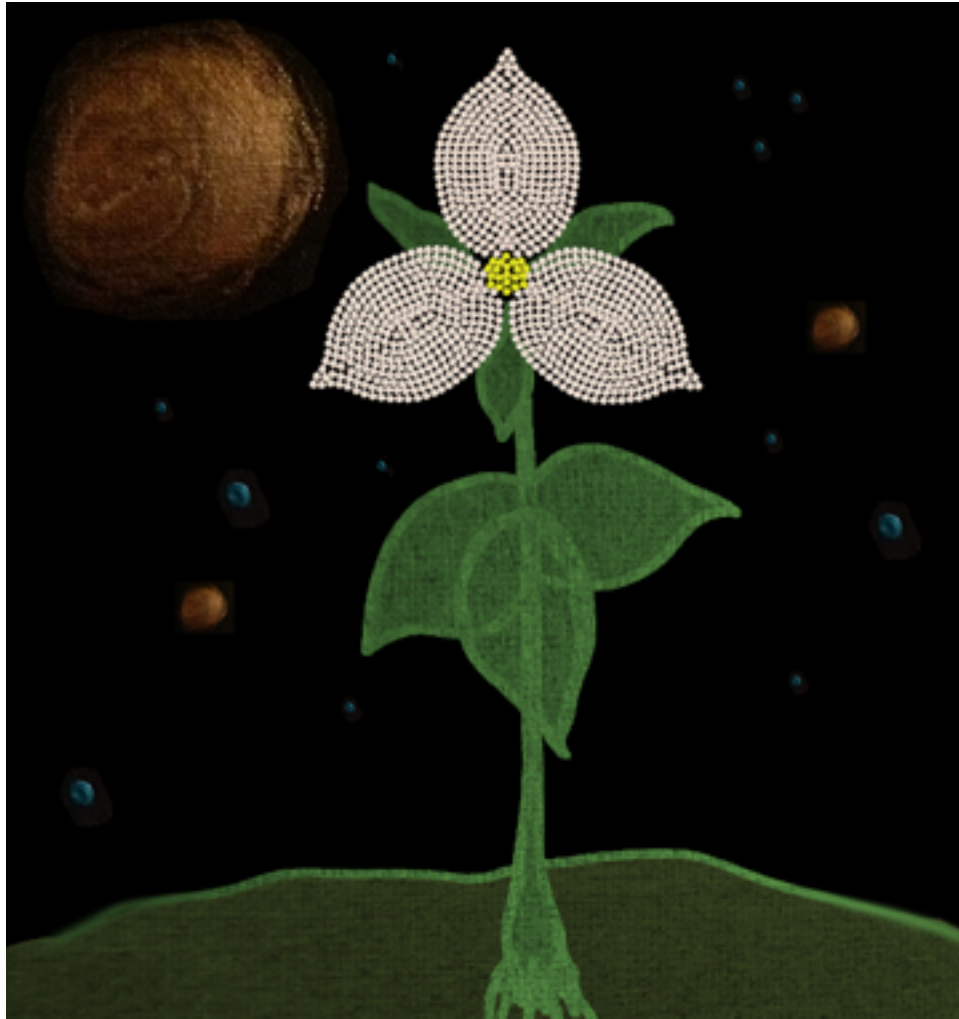


Figure 4.14. Self – Community –World – Spirit
photo by Elizabeth LaPensée

4.5.1. Self

While it certainly could be said that any self-growth ultimately benefits a community that an individual participates in, and in turn improves the community, which ripples out to the world, there are specific impacts described here. Andrew Belzer, Alina Begay, and Stevie Lemke’s gameplay reflected self-development.

Andrew Belzer entered *Survivance* with identity as his motivation and created a poem for his act of survivance that reflects on his global identity. Through playing *Survivance*, he affirmed for himself: “culture is found in your heart, not your blood.” During his quest journey, he spoke more in-depth with his mother and found out where

his “wanderer” inclinations come from—much like his parents, he has “traveled extensively.” He also always “return(s) home.” Andrew, despite not being blood bound to Colombia, recognizes that this land is his home. *Survivance* helped Andrew reaffirm his identity. Currently, he is applying to graduate school for a Masters in Spanish, the primary language of Colombia. His mother also recently visited Cartagena as a volunteer, which Andrew intends to do before starting school again.

Alina Begay sought a place to explore culture while playing *Survivance*. Although her journey and act of survivance more directly related to spiritual wellbeing, culture was also interwoven throughout her experience. Prior to playing *Survivance*, she felt “afraid” to share her culture and spirituality with others, since she was concerned with stereotypes associated with being Native and being Mormon. After playing *Survivance*, she shared: “I dictate who I am. I may be different but I could never imagine or want to live my life any other way.” She expressed that she “loved” playing *Survivance* for self-development: “... it really made me think and helped me grow and even heal.”

Stevie Lemke was looking for emotional wellbeing while playing *Survivance*. She described finding emotional wellbeing by processing negative emotions to release them. Although she chose to not share her first two acts of survivance, she continues to play the game and shares what she sees as her positive acts of survivance in weaving, language learning, and photography. Stevie is pursuing a law degree from Lewis and Clark College while nourishing herself by exploring creative interests encouraged during playing *Survivance*.

4.5.2. Self and Community

While every player experienced impacts on the self while playing *Survivance*, several players also directly impacted the community either during the quest journey, through their act of survivance, or since playing the game. Cynthia Stehl, Anuhea Naeole, Heather Chambers, Katie Gargan, Brianna Bragg, Barbara Gladue, and Shilo George all had various layers of contribution to their respective communities and thus the larger urban Portland Indigenous community.

Cynthia Stehl approached *Survivance* as an opportunity to grapple with her identity. Through the quest, Cynthia realized that her “life looks and is completely different than it was four years ago.” She chose to adapt a traditional storytelling style to a new story with animal characters and a journey that reflects her life experiences. Her hope is that other people will read her story. She sees it as a contribution to the community to help others that are going through similar experiences.

Anuheā Naeole wanted to explore her identity, and in a way did so, through actively representing her culture during her quest journey and act of survivance. After playing *Survivance*, Anuheā reflected: “There is so much ... that we do daily that not only affects ourselves but also affects others around us.” She represented her culture during her quest journey through friendship traditions. By giving thanks to her support system of friends and colleagues as well as volunteering at an event, she directly contributed to the community during the quest. She found that playing *Survivance* was “very rewarding not only towards [herself] but for others in [her] daily life.”

Heather Chambers began *Survivance* with an apprehension about her identity. As a child, she felt a fissure in her family’s cultural identity during her grandparent’s generation, which resulted in feelings of “disconnection.” Heather explained: “... they simply shutdown everything connected with their culture.” Telling her story and revisiting her childhood helped her reflect on the “broken hoop,” a symbol that has helped her grapple with identity issues. Her journey has not ended, but rather just started. She expressed that still has more personal healing to do and more “information” to find. Since playing *Survivance*, she has attended community events.

Katie Gargan expected to see themes of wellbeing in her quest journey and act of survivance since this is her area of work in the community. Instead, she followed her own path and described herself as “thankful” for the chance to create an act of survivance based on the Black Hills creation story. While beading, she experienced emotional balance during an otherwise hectic time of the year in school. Katie shared: “...when I am beading my mind is calm and my emotions are balanced. By virtue of how much time beading this medallion took I was forced to relax for extended periods of time over the past couple of weeks.” Katie was then able to share the medallion and its

accompanying traditional and historical stories with her community, thus giving back the story after the process of interpreting and recreating it as a form of cultural reclamation.

Brianna Bragg began playing *Survivance* near the end of her sister's battle with cancer. She hoped for continued physical wellbeing for her sister as well as emotional wellbeing for herself. *Survivance* offered a path to healing from the struggle she had experienced as her sister's caretaker during cancer. Brianna felt that writing her reflections and visually sharing her story "empowered" both the story and herself. Further, the story offers hope to her and her sister's community. They shared information about cancer with their community through an event booth during the journey of healing. Since playing *Survivance*, Brianna has been able to share the photo story of her sister's healing process and received emotional healing for herself.

Barbara Gladue walked into *Survivance* in the hopes of receiving wellbeing. She found personal wellbeing through reconnecting with and exploring her culture. During the quest journey, Barbara reflected on her experiences in her marriage and household: "I recognize that when I am doing well my house is in order, meaning, my husband and kids are too happy and doing well; when I'm out of balance, so too is my family (my house)." As she created her act of survivance, she experienced "empowerment": "I knew what the painting would look like before I actually got it on a canvas, but once I began painting I became emerged in what it truly meant; the connection to the earth, the cosmos, how we are from the same blood line; how 'it' flows throw you, me, the earth, the sky, the sun. I became empowered." Her healing of self in turn opened her eyes to see that she is part of a community of Indigenous women. She describes: "I especially felt a sense of pride, and strength—a connection like a chain link, to all the woman who have gone before me and even those who have not yet come, that we 'Women' are The Back Bone, The Foundation of mankind." She saw connections between her peoples and others in regards to the traditional roles and values of women, which strengthened her internal sense of value as well as reflected out to her immediate community.

Shilo George was motivated to play *Survivance* as a way to seek identity affirmation. In her act of survivance, she wanted to see herself and her ancestors together after the "decimation" of their lineage "from the effects of genocide and historical trauma." In the process, Shilo reaffirmed her identity: "Blood quantum has no

bearing what-so-ever on my ability and right to reclaim my heritage and culture and to heal my wounds.” Her act of survivance served as her piece for the Art Scholarship Student Exhibition, which was available online at Survivance.org, as well as on display at Portland State University’s Art Building for the community to see. Since playing *Survivance*, Shilo has continued her studies and affirmation of her identity.

4.5.3. Self, Community, and World

Some of the players had clear impacts on the self, their respective communities, and also the world either during the quest journey, through their act of survivance, or since playing the game. Sky Hopinka, Toma Villa, and Stephen Printup each created acts of survivance, which have had ripples through the community and have propelled their work forward into the world.

Sky Hopinka approached *Survivance* as an opportunity to promote culture by means of language recovery. By playing *Survivance*, he felt “closure” for the work he did during the summer. He commented: “... a big change happened within me during the summer, I felt like I found a direction to go in, which is Indigenous language revitalization.” He has a “resolve” because of “finishing the film and seeing the final cut.” Since playing *Survivance*, Sky is pursuing a master’s degree in Film in the hopes of enabling ongoing work in language revitalization and filmmaking. While his quest journey had an impact on the community at Warm Springs Indian reservation, his act of survivance also has had an impact on the urban Portland Indigenous community by inspiring activity in the *chinuk wawa* Social Club. He felt that sharing the film was essential since it is “important for people to share with each other what they’re doing, what they’ve got going on, and to help spread the word of what else is out there, what is lacking, and what needs to be done.” The film helped promote the Where Are Your Keys (WAYK) language program. Since, Indigenous communities all across Turtle Island, including urban and reservation communities, have picked up the methodology. The program enables Indigenous language revitalization on a global scale.

Toma Villa continued and reclaimed cultural traditions through playing *Survivance*. Since finishing his act of survivance, Toma has created prints to tell the story to other people. He shared: “I printed out some on my small press at home and

took them around to show people and tell the story, they would listen with full attention and loved it, and it helped out to have a visual to go along with it as well.” In addition to sharing the linocut print online and using it as a visual to pass on the story in-person, he also donated a print to the Northwest Indian Storytelling Festival’s auction, which is hosted by the Northwest Indian Storytellers Association, a sister organization of Wisdom of the Elders. His work through *Survivance* encouraged him as a storyteller and artist. He gifted his work directly to the community for a monetary contribution. Since playing *Survivance*, Toma’s artwork continues to be featured alongside master artists such as Lillian Pitt.

Stephen Printup walked into *Survivance* with the strongly determined motivation of encouraging emotional and mental wellbeing in the community. Although his experience was “emotional,” his act of survivance turned proposal for the “The Life First” social media project was received well by the Clinton Global Initiative. He described himself as “motivated to continue the work.” The campaign is certain to have an impact on the urban Portland Indigenous community where Stephen intends to launch the project. From there, he hopes for the project to grow via social networks into worldwide awareness of suicides in Indigenous communities.

4.5.4. Spirit

While validating the findings with players, some expressed that the game’s impact went beyond Self, Community, and the World. That, in fact, their acts of survivance were a way in which Spirit spoke back to them. Spirit can also be understood as our ancestors and the manifestation of generations of knowledge that have come before us. By reaching out in a stance of self-determination, players experienced an echo effect that has since influenced their lives and ongoing work.

Andrew Belzer shared the story of his Cherokee ancestor and reflected on the influence this story has had in the family. Since playing *Survivance*, he returned to visit his mother and hear more family stories. He also took the opportunity to copy digital files of photos saved on her computer that have been for the most part neglected by the family. He looked back at his childhood home, which had a metal roof with father patched with grass. He pointed out the juxtaposition of his childhood photos with more

recent photos of the same land he grew up on in Columbia—the openness and vastness replaced by house development. He is inspired to create something from the photos that will coincide with his ongoing efforts to achieve the fluency to write his own literature in Spanish.

Shilo George described frequently looking back at the seven-panel piece she created for her act of survivance. Although she felt a strong connection to her ancestors and was secure in her identity as an Indigenous woman prior to playing *Survivance*, her “kill the man. save the Indian.” piece has given her a way to interact with her ancestors and see them. As she shows the piece to in new venues, it continues to reveal new elements to her that influences her latest artwork.

Stevie Lemke continued questing and embraced photography and weaving as a pathway to healing (Figure 4.15). She is also learning the jingle dress dance—a ceremonial Anishinaabe dance that has been adapted to powwows—in the hopes of living these teachings and passing them on. Through *Survivance*, she connected to Spirit in a way that has guided her to passions that renew tradition.



Figure 4.15. Woven Hat by Stevie Lemke
photo by Stevie Lemke; used with permission

4.5.5. Summary of Impact

Survivance has many moments to create impact—during players’ quest journeys, while making acts of survivance, in the acts of survivance, and in times following as players continue their own acts of survivance and self-determination. The forms of impact are on the Self, the Community, and the World, recognizing the reciprocal relationship to Spirit that echoes back knowledge and ways of being from ancestors. Andrew Belzer, Alina Begay, and Stevie Lemke experienced an impact on Self. This is layered with Andrew and Stevie both pointing to the importance of Spirit during validation. Cynthia Stehl, Anuheia Naeole, Heather Chambers, Katie Gargan, Brianna Bragg, Barbara Gladue, and Shilo George related impacts on the Self and the Community around them. Shilo and Katie’s artwork and community efforts have continued on to impact the World. Shilo found that she returns to her act of survivance often and that it continues to emphasize for her the ways in which Spirit and our connection to our ancestors helps us. Sky Hopinka, Toma Villa, and Stephen Printup each experienced an impact on the Self, created acts of survivance with clear contributions to the Community, and their work has been well-received by the World. Each player’s story is unique and suggests a range of possibilities for the overall impact of *Survivance*.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The study detailed in this dissertation explores the impact of *Survivance*—a social impact game that hopes to offer a pathway for Indigenous players to heal from historical trauma through *acts of survivance* (self-determined expression in any medium). The research intricately expands on and joins together Indigenous ways of knowing (referred to in research as epistemology), Indigenous methodology, and Indigenously-determined methods in a study on a social impact game. Therefore, the study engages in Indigenous research that is situated within the multidisciplinary field of Game Studies.

Existing research on Games for Change proposes that games should influence players and create change. In alignment with scholars such as Jessica Hammer, this research takes the stance that it is players who bring about change. Often, this work is already happening. In the case of *Survivance*, the game is simply a venue for this growing work to be channelled and shared. Understanding this foundational perspective, the study sought to answer: “What is the impact of playing *Survivance*?” The study’s question is furthered narrowed down by its locational context to: “What is the impact of playing *Survivance* on the Portland urban Indigenous community?” In answering this question, the study offers up possibilities for social impact games in terms of design and ways of looking at impact.

5.1. Contributions

5.1.1. Research Stance

Much of Games for Change research suggests that the influence of social impact games should be measured in forms such as monetary contributions and even more surprisingly that true change can only happen when there is a critical mass of players. This perspective neglects Indigenous ways of knowing, which acknowledges the power

of intergenerational exchanges and the importance of every contribution to the community as equal. In *Survivance*, players self-reflect and this in turn leads to individual changes that naturally influence the community, given that Indigenous communities interact collectively. By merging Game Studies with Indigenous epistemology, this research pushes the definition of “impact” and reflects back on the community’s interpretation, which is recognized as valuable.

The overall stance of the research extends Indigenous methodologies by bringing forth *biskaabiiyang* methodology, which informs the motivations and agenda of the *Survivance* study in an Anishinaabe way. This dissertation shows how exactly *biskaabiiyang* methodology can be applied in research, including collaborating with the community, returning to traditional teachings in our contemporary present, and upholding the integrity of Indigenous knowledge in academia, which is wrought with offenses against Indigenous peoples and ways of knowing. Throughout the design process, gameplay study, and dissertation writing, I have done my best to live in the spirit-centered way known as *mino-bimaadiziwin* as an Irish, Anishinaabe, and Métis researcher and game designer. I played the prototype in a non-linear way, completed acts of survivance for every quest, and am currently revisiting the quests that resulted in what Woodrow Morrison Jr. and I discussed as “poison.” Aligning with players such as Stevie Lemke, I chose to discard these acts and walk forward. Through this experience, I was able to see that playing through the quests and creating act of survivances were the most valuable aspects of the game for self-determination and self-development. Publicly sharing the acts and seeing their life in the world is another layer to the game but not essential for a complete gameplay experience. Other acts, such as the experimental animation *The Path Without End* (LaPensée, 2011), have gone on to play at film festivals such as imagineNATIVE Media + Arts Festival 2011 and LA Skins 2011. These acts encouraged me to revisit previous quests and explore the boundaries of repeat gameplay. Through this research, I have lived *biskaabiiyang*—I have returned to myself.

Although Indigenous methodologies have taken precedent among Indigenous researchers, it is difficult to find research that specifies Indigenous methods. The *Survivance* study clearly contributes methods that can be applied to other research. During data collection, players wrote their own reflections inspired by open-ended prompts as a way of assuring self-expression. Talking circles, an already established

method, offered supplemental data. Acts of survivance were interpreted as symbol-based reflections—a method used in other methodologies and adapted for its potential as an Indigenously-determined method by previous research in Indigenous health. Finally, conversations with players were applied as a method, acknowledged as fluid and untraceable oral exchanges that were validated by players. Data analysis referenced back to *biskaabiiyang* and symbol-based reflection. In order to ensure validity, players were given the Findings Chapter and conversations were held about edits for clarification. For example, Sky Hopinka shared that “*chinuk wawa*” is the proper spelling for the trade language as opposed to “*Chinuk Wawa*.” Although minor, these changes are essential to appropriately represent the players and the diverse communities they interact with. Confirmation after data analysis and writing was essential for the legitimacy of the research and addresses any hesitation about the accuracy of the work. Appropriately, the study contributes methods that could be applied in either Indigenous research or Game Studies research.

5.1.2. Summary of Findings

In order to address the layers of *Survivance*, the analysis looks closely at motivations, quest journeys, and acts of survivance. Exploring these areas of player experience revealed effects on self, their communities, and the greater world. The motivations, quest journeys, and acts of survivance clearly reflected impacts of Culture, Identity, and Wellbeing. “Culture” refers to the continuation of, revitalization of, and active presence of traditions, beliefs, language, traditional stories, historical stories, and family stories. “Identity” includes the seeking of, acceptance of, or reconnection with ancestry and relations. “Wellbeing” is the very being or promotion of being emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy. The layers of impact seen in *Survivance* are detailed as Self, Community, World, and Spirit within the context of these categories.

Motivations explore the perspectives and at times pointed motivations that players came into the game with. The manners of motivations among core and validation players were fairly evenly distributed—four were motivated by Culture, four were motivated by Identity, and five were motivated by Wellbeing. Within Culture, players wanted to contribute to the continuation of language, revitalization of traditional stories, the active presence of family stories, and the active presence of spirituality. In Identity,

players were driven to acknowledge collective identity, explore a loss of identity due to family members denying Indigenous ancestry, and explore the disconnection from identity because of physical or familial distance from their peoples.

Quest Journeys describe the experience players shared about playing through a self-selected quest in any phase of the game. Among all players, four selected quests in The Orphan phase, six in The Wanderer phase, one in The Caretaker, and two in The Wanderer. Quest selection naturally informed the creation of acts of survivance. For example, quests in The Orphan phase lean toward internal reflection, while quests in The Warrior phase encourage interaction with the other people. Every player described an experience that was rewarding for their sense of self, while some extended the reflection into effects on the community.

Looking at acts of survivance involved interpreting the acts as symbol-based reflections as well as including players' own interpretations of their acts in their written reflections. Interestingly, acts by all players in some instances aligned with their incoming motivations and at times resulted in other contributions. For example, Alina Begay entered *Survivance* with the intention of exploring and expressing her Culture, but found in the process that her act of survivance related more to recognizing her spirituality as an essential part of her Wellbeing. Overall, Culture acts related to language, storytelling, arts, and traditional values. Identity acts related self-identity and ancestral identity. Wellbeing acts expressed personal and community mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and the balance of these aspects.

The greater impact of *Survivance* is described in relation to the influence that the game has had on many levels, including Self, Community, World, and Spirit. Impacts on self are clear in the quest journeys and acts of survivance. These can lead to an impact on the community and the self-expression seen in the acts can reach out into the world. The acts can also bring knowledge to players through spirit—the echo of our ancestors reconnecting with us, which reiterates *biskaabiiyang*.

All players of *Survivance* reflected on some form of influence on Self, while other players also saw impacts on Community and World, as well as reverberations of Spirit. More specifically, three players experienced self-development. Seven players saw self-

growth that reached their communities and thus contributed to impacts on both Self and Community. For example, Katie Gargan shared the medallion she beaded to reflect the story of the Black Hills with her community. She experienced calming of her self during the process. She was then empowered by the reception from her community and her own ability to retell the story in an intriguing way that challenged concepts of tradition. Her piece has the potential for World impact if she shares it beyond her immediate community in the future. Three players showed impacts on the World within the timeline of the study. Their acts of survivance reached their communities and then beyond. For example, Toma Villa turned his linocut that relates to his recovery of the “Wilups and Wawúkya” story into prints. He gave prints to members of his community and continues to use it to tell the story. He also donated a print to the Northwest Indian Storytelling Festival’s auction, which provided a monetary contribution to the community. This work continues to be displayed alongside pieces by master artists such as Lillian Pitt. Finally, three players described impact that went beyond Self, Community, and World defined in the initial analysis. They expressed what is understood as Spirit—the manifestation of generations of knowledge returning to us today. This has encouraged them to move forward with their work in areas such as language, art, and education to improve the future for the next generations.

5.1.3. Reflections

N'gii mikaan waa miigseg nbimaadziwining through the process of developing and researching *Survivance* and walking forward into future work in *Survivance* and other games. I offer here words for the next generations—for anyone who pursues self-determination in the game space in any role(s), such as writer, designer, artist, programmer, and/or scholar. I acknowledge that I am responsible for *biskaabiyyang* and for finding ways to reclaim *gikendaasowin*. I am also called upon to live *miinidiwag*—giveaway—in games and scholarship.

From a scholarship perspective, reciprocity and giveaway spirit guide much of my work. Reciprocity involves contributing to the community and returning gifts in meaningful ways. For example, I empower communities with access to scholarship, should they need it, for efforts such as writing grants. This giveaway spirit is more extensive when it comes to acting out scholarship. Namely, since protecting knowledge

and interactions in Indigenous communities is an important, I am often unable to commit to scholarship such as articles and conference presentations. What is appropriate for one community may not be for another. The best practice is to respect the collaboration, communicate openly with respect, and respect the decisions of community members.

From a game development perspective, working on games with Indigenous communities is a collaborative process that recognizes community members as knowledge experts. My role is to guide the design in a way that best meets the needs of the community. This may at times conflict with personal design interests. For example, while much of my other game design work emphasizes fun gameplay, this was not always possible with *Survivance*. Many of the quests can be fun, but many others are about processes that push players, sometimes with discomfort, into pathways of healing. It is more important to walk alongside collaborators to co-design an experience that leads to their desired outcomes than to be concerned with conventions of game design.

Having said this, *biskaabiiyang* can lead to deeply empowering self-expression in game design. As I continue to gift communities by guiding game development and they return the gift by sharing knowledge for the next generations to access through gameplay, I have grown as a writer, designer, and artist. Along with more collaborations such as a board game about traditional food gathering practices co-designed with the Northwest Indian College, I am currently designing games that come from spirit, empowered by the processes learned and mastered while playing *Survivance* and iterating art as symbol-based reflection throughout the dissertation. With the experience I have gained, I walk into this phase of life confident that I can create games with mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics that respect my ancestors by expressing my own unique voice.

5.2. Future Work

Survivance lives on beyond the scope of the study on the prototype that is detailed in this dissertation. The opportunities for continuing the game, holding additional studies, and adapting lessons learned from this research are multi-fold. Currently, the final version of the game is living at <http://www.survivance.org> and available for anyone

to play. For example, Shilo George has continued to play the game (Figure 5.1). In alignment with Indigenous methodology, as the researcher and game designer, I am responsible for maintaining the game's site and remain available for all past, current, and future players indefinitely and continue to revisit the quests as well. The hope is to acquire funding to develop the second iteration of the game into a third version and train members of Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. so that the community is enabled to distribute and maintain the game in a self-determined way.



Figure 5.1. "Voice" by Shilo George
photo by Shilo George; used with permission

Survivance in its current form has the potential to reach out beyond the urban Indigenous community of Portland, Oregon. The game can be played anywhere with web access, and even then, webpages can be printed out and distributed to anyone who has limited access. *Survivance* has been displayed in the New Media category at imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival 2013—the world's leading Indigenous media event. Indigenous artists from other communities have expressed interest in contributing acts of survivance in conversations with Discovering Our Story's Producer Daniel Dixon.

The game is sure to continue outward into the world, just as Shilo George's, Toma Villa's, and Sky Hopinka's acts of survivance have.

In addition to inspiring direct action, social impact games can also create social awareness. *Survivance* has the potential to inform non-Indigenous communities about the experiences of Indigenous peoples today. Although outside of the scope of this study, the game has been played by over 100 non-Indigenous undergraduate students at Portland State University. The written reflections and acts of survivance from these players may offer an intriguing look at how non-Indigenous players interact with the game. However, the intention of *Survivance* is to first and foremost inspire Indigenous self-determination.

In the near future, *Survivance* will be used as a means to inspire self-determined expression in workshops in Portland, Oregon through partnerships with non-profit organizations such as the Native Wellness Institute and Red Lodge Transition Services. Indigenous youth and adults alike who are seeking healing from the intergenerational transfer of trauma will be able to play the game. The Discovering Our Story Advisory Board has expressed interest in coordinating art gallery exhibitions of acts of survivance that are created during these workshops if the players would like to display their work. At every step, *Survivance* responds to the interests of the community it was designed with and for.

All are welcome to play *Survivance* and follow its ongoing growth in years to come.

Mino bimaatisiwin!

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Appendix A. Survivance Study Details

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY School of Interactive Arts & Technology Survivance Player Study Study Details

1. Brief Description

The aim of this study is to describe the gameplay and artifacts of playing the online game *Survivance*. Undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in playing the game will be selected to participate in this study. Participants will be instructed to 1) select one or more quest(s) from the *Survivance* game, 2) play their chosen quest(s), and 3) complete a written reflection about their gameplay experience.

Survivance is an online game that requires an Internet connection, a web browser, and in some cases art materials to complete an *act of survivance*. Players start the game at <http://www.survivance.org>. They choose a quest. They do the quest, which may require activity offline. They then finish the quest by creating an *act of survivance*, which is a story in any medium, such as a short story, a painting, a photograph, and so on. Participants may choose to digitize their *act of survivance*. They are also given the option to keep their *act of survivance* private or post it online to be shared on the *Survivance* website. The participants are then prompted for written reflections.

2. Procedure

Participants

Participants will consist of university students who are aged 19 and older. They will be recruited through the Indigenous Nations Studies program at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. The study does not discriminate based on age, gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, or religion.

Consent

Consent forms will be sent by email as an attachment. The study will not be conducted until the consent form has been signed, scanned, and emailed as an attachment.

Methods

Participants will be asked to play a quest or quests from *Survivance* at their convenience and leisure. When they have completed a quest and an act of survivance, they will be prompted for written reflections through email about playing *Survivance*. Prompts for written reflections begin with: (1) What interests you in playing *Survivance*? This is followed by a post-game reflection to answer: (1) Which quest did you choose? (2) What

motivated you to choose this particular quest? (3) What happened when you performed the quest? (4) What was your *act of survivance*? (5) How did you feel after finishing your act of survivance? (6) Would you share this act of survivance online? Why or why not? (7) How would you describe your overall experience playing *Survivance*?

3. Potential Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks associated with this study. Participants may explore their personal mental, emotional, and physical health depending on which quest they choose to play in *Survivance*. Participants may benefit from the subject matter and challenges of the quests. For example, the Giving Quest challenges players to give themselves and others gifts. Participants are informed that they are able to discontinue the study at any point.

4. Subject and Data Anonymity

Since email is not anonymous, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Participants may choose whether or not to post their acts of survivance on the *Survivance* website, which is available to the general public. Participants who request to remain anonymous will not have their acts of survivance used on the website or shown in the study. They will be stored privately on a USB stick to be kept securely in a file cabinet of the EMIIE Laboratory in the School of Interactive Arts & Technology at Simon Fraser University.

Data collected will be maintained for a duration of 7 years from the time the study is completed, after which time it will be destroyed. Digital data will be stored on USB sticks and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the EMIIE Laboratory in the School of Interactive Arts & Technology at Simon Fraser University.

5. Permission

The Indigenous Nations Program at Portland State University has approved inviting players through email lists such as the United Indian Students in Higher Education and American Indian Science and Engineering Society as well as posters at the Native American Student and Community Center.

Band Council approval has not been sought since the study is being conducted in the United States.

Appendix B. Community Approval

Office of Research Ethics
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Multi-Tenant Facility
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S

Dear Research Ethics Board:

The Indigenous Nations Studies program at Portland State University supports the Survivance Player Study being conducted at Simon Fraser University's School of Interactive Arts & Technology.

In our support, Indigenous Nations Studies approves the distribution of advertising materials to find voluntary players for the Survivance Player Study. This entails allowing Beth Aileen Dillon to send an email to the United Indian Students in Higher Education and American Indian Science and Engineering Society mailing lists. She may also put up posters at the Native American Student and Community Center.

We understand that the Survivance Player Study is purely voluntary and that students may choose not to participate or may withdraw from the study at any time without an impact in their standing in the program.

Thank you,

Cornel Pewewardy
Indigenous Nations Studies
Portland State University
1633 SW Park Avenue
Street Portland, Oregon 97201

Appendix C. Requests for Players

Poster

Survivance game looking for volunteer players for a dissertation study!



Survivance is a real world storytelling game that asks us to listen to, reflect on, and create stories in any medium that inspires us.

Survivance was made in collaboration with Wisdom of the Elders, the Northwest Indian Storytellers Association, and the Discovering Our Story project.

We are looking for volunteer players for a dissertation study being conducted at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada.

For more information, contact Beth Aileen Dillon at [REDACTED] and check out <http://www.survivance.org>.

Email

The real world game *Survivance*, which is based in the teachings of the Discovering Our Story project by Wisdom of the Elders, is looking for volunteer players.

Survivance is a real world storytelling game that asks us to listen to, reflect on, and create stories in any medium that inspires us.

Volunteer players will contribute to a dissertation study being conducted at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada.

For more information, such as study details and the consent form, please contact Beth Aileen Dillon at [REDACTED] and check out <http://www.survivance.org>.

Social Media

The real world game *Survivance*, which is based in the teachings of the Discovering Our Story project by Wisdom of the Elders, is looking for volunteer players for a dissertation study. *Survivance* asks us to listen to, reflect on, and create stories in any medium that inspires us. For more information, please contact Beth Aileen Dillon at [REDACTED] and check out <http://www.survivance.org> .

Appendix D. Survivance Prototype Screenshots

The original web design of the Survivance prototype is included in the form of screenshots below in the following order: Home Page, How to Play, The Orphan, The Wanderer, The Caretaker, The Warrior, The Changer, and Communicate.

Survivance

"Life is a chance, a story is a chance. That I am here is a chance." — Gerald Vizenor

The Game

Welcome.

Stories inform us, empower us, mobilize us.

Survivance is a real world storytelling game that asks us to listen to, reflect on, and create stories in any medium that inspires us to seek personal healing and recovery.

[Learn how to play.](#)

[Start playing.](#)



The Journey

Stories take us on a **journey of transformation**.

- **The Orphan**: Questioning our circumstances.
- **The Wanderer**: Wandering in search of answers in unfamiliar places.
- **The Caretaker**: Befriending and caring about others.
- **The Warrior**: Confronting a challenge.
- **The Changer**: Returning, transformed, to help others start their journeys.

[Welcome](#) | [How To Play](#) | [Communicate](#)

[The Orphan](#) | [The Wanderer](#) | [The Caretaker](#) | [The Warrior](#) | [The Changer](#)

© 2012 Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. | [Discovering Our Story](#)

Survivance: How To Play

"Native imagination, experience, and remembrance are the real landscapes of liberty..." — Gerald Vizenor

Questing

A **quest** is a step in your journey, such as learning about your history. There are quests for every phase of the journey: Orphan, Wanderer, Warrior, Caretaker, and Changer. Elders guide us.

- **Choose a quest.** Where are you at in life right now? What is helpful to you? Pick a quest from any phase of the journey at any time.
- **Perform a quest.** Follow the steps!
- **Reflect.** Make space in your mind to think about the quest. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and listen to the sounds around you.
- **Rest.** You may perform a quest and complete your act of survivance at another time. You are on your journey.

Act of Survivance

An **act of survivance** is Indigenous self-expression in any medium that tells a story about our active presence in the world now.

- **Choose a medium.** What inspires you? Storytelling, writing, taking photos, carving, painting, drawing, beading, dancing, singing, drumming, remixing, filmmaking, animating, new media, games? Play!
- **Gather materials and tools.** Bring together everything you need. Need something? Ask relations. Treat yourself.
- **Choose and clean a space.** Who can focus with a mess around? Get unscattered! Make a special space for yourself.
- **Create.** Go for it. If you're trying something new, look up tutorials or just experiment.

Sharing

You may want to **share** your act of survivance online or offline.

- **Decide.** Would you like to share your act of survivance?
- **Digitize.** If so, digitize your act of survivance if you need to. This may mean scanning or taking a photo or recording audio.
- **Upload.** Upload your file. Make sure you retain ownership wherever you upload your file! If you want to host it at survivance.org where you retain full ownership, [email the file](#). If you choose to upload elsewhere, [email a link to the file](#).
- **Promote.** Share your act of survivance through your networks and #survivance.



[Welcome](#) | [How To Play](#) | [Communicate](#)
[The Orphan](#) | [The Wanderer](#) | [The Caretaker](#) | [The Warrior](#) | [The Changer](#)
 © 2012 Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. | [Discovering Our Story](#)

Survivance: The Orphan

Questioning our circumstances.

The Listening Quest

- Listen to "[The Boy Who Became a Bear](#)."
- How do you identify with the boy in the story?
- How does this influence you now?
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your interpretation of the story. For example, if you want to paint, clear a space, pick a surface like a canvas, choose colors, choose brushes, set up water and a plate to put the paint on, turn on music, and begin. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Core Values Quest

- What are your core values? Make a list ten values, which could include *Peace, Wealth, Personal Expression, Family, Power, Friendship, Intellect, Career, Fame, Social Justice, Community, Nation, Freedom, Influence, Justice, Happiness, Knowledge, Social Status, Truth, Integrity, Love, Spirituality, Wellness, Environment*.
- Whittle those down to only five.
- Then three! You can do it.
- Then just one. This is the center of your belief system.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects the core of your belief system. For example, if Environment is at your center, you can take a photo of a tree. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Broken Hoop Quest

- Explore historical trauma, whether experienced by you or by relations. Seek out stories.
- How might this past trauma impact you today?
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your exploration of historical trauma. For example, writing a poem about your experience.
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

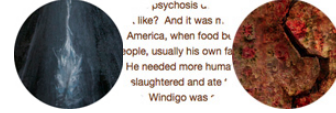
Words of Roger Fernandes

"At some point, all children, I believe, feel some kind of abuse going on..."

"A long time ago in a village far to the east there lived a little boy. One time his parents died, making him an orphan. No one would take care of this poor boy. He would wander from home to home begging for food and shelter. No one would take him in. They called him 'Orphan Boy'."

[Listen to Roger Fernandes](#)

Acts of Survivance



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Words of Elaine Grinnell

"I can remember Billy Hull coming in the evening on the ebb tide. He would have his canoe and the sail up. He would be sitting back and be low in the water because he had so many fish. And we'd all grab our pans. Grandma would grab her pan and we would all go down in front of his house and he would share those fish with everyone. And I think that's part of being a tribe. That's part of being interconnected. What a marvelous thing – and we'd all watch for him!"

[Listen to Elaine Grinnell](#)

Acts of Survivance



Words of Woodrow Morrison Jr.

"In my dad's generation, my father's now 96 years old, and the generation just before him were sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. They sent them all the way from Alaska to Pennsylvania and others were sent to the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. When they were there, they had to wear a little patch, like Hitler did to the Jews. But they wore a little patch just with a thin thread holding it on that said 'Speak English.' And if I caught you talking Haida, I'd take that name tag, and take that tag and it had your name sewn on the

Acts of Survivance



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Survivance: The Wanderer

Wandering in search of answers in unfamiliar places.

The Searching Quest

- Seek out a story from your tribe/nation/peoples. It can be any form of story, such as traditional or historical. You can hear stories by attending events, asking relations, or even looking online!
- How do you identify with the story? What is its meaning to you?
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your interpretation of a traditional story. For example, a song that expresses its impact on you. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Collective Identity Quest

- What groups do you belong to? This could include gender; sexual orientation; roles in family; roles in work; friendships; social, political, or spiritual groups; tribal affiliation or nation. This is your collective identity!
- Remove connections from your life that cause you to be unhealthy.
- Focus your attention only on connections that encourage you to be healthy.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your collective identity. For example, a painting of symbols that represent your culture. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Wounded Hoop Quest

Words of Storyteller Woodrow Morrison Jr.

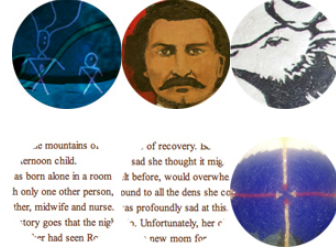
- What feelings of yours are caused by past trauma? These might be *isolation*, *sadness*, *anger*, *fear*, and *despair*.
- You are not alone. Historical trauma has caused separation, silencing, and abuse which impact us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your feelings. For example, a drawing of yourself. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

Words of Roger Fernandes

"The Wanderer has these questions about their life and they don't know where the answers are at, so they begin to wander. They don't know where the answers are at, but they hope that by wandering, they'll bump into them somewhere."

[Listen to Roger Fernandes](#)

Acts of Survivance



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Words of Elaine Grinnell

"You have to be willing to give up friends. You have a lot of friends that you can party with – and then once you give up that drinking – it seems like they don't trust you any longer. People will drop away after awhile."

[Listen to Elaine Grinnell](#)

Acts of Survivance

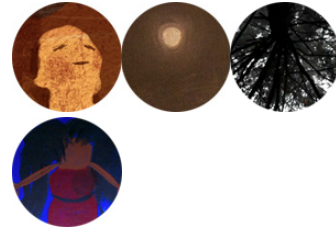


Words of Woodrow Morrison Jr.

"When you're away from home... they indoctrinate you, well people call it brainwashing, but brainwashing implies removing impure thoughts, so maybe that's what they were doing. But when we got home, after spending a year of being told that everything we did at home as bad, wrong, dirty, evil, sick, whatever..."

Well, when you grow up in a tribal society the non-verbal communication is paramount. So we would get home and they'd see this rejection, and they would reject us. So once you get this dialectic, this tension between two worlds, once it starts, you go back to school, you come back, the gap gets wider and wider

Acts of Survivance



Survivance: The Caretaker

Befriending and caring about others.

The Retelling Quest

- Revisit a traditional story from your tribe/nation/peoples that inspires you.
- Listen closely to the story again and again.
- Retell the traditional story in any medium that inspires you. For example, an experimental animation that reflects on a non-linear story that is told in many different ways. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Giving Quest

- Give to yourself. Promote self-care by deciding and following through on something you want to do.
- Give to someone close to you. Do something special for someone close to you, such as writing a poem, singing a song, making a meal, or listening.
- Give to someone you are familiar with. Do something special for someone you are familiar with, such as sharing a meal with a co-worker.
- Give to a stranger. Volunteer your time or donate to an organization or someone you are unfamiliar with.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your giving. For example, a photo of something you made as a gift. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

The Sacred Hoop Quest

- Where have your feelings had a negative impact on your relationships?
- Work towards resolving relationships that need healing.
- Create new healthy relationships with others.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your relationships. For example, write a short story inspired by your experience. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

Words of Roger Fernandes

"Mythic stories speak like a dream—that when we tell these stories and our brain is actively involved, it says this never happened, that could have never happened, 'I mean that's impossible.' But the mythic stories again, are not for the brain, they're for your heart. And so they speak to us at a different level and the people receive them and accept them at a different level."

[Listen to Roger Fernandes](#)

Acts of Survivance



Words of Elaine Grinnell

"We have our sister tribes of Port Gamble and Lower Elwha. We work together to protect our fisheries and all of our natural resources, you know. We work together on our language and education. We help each other. We may have something they don't. We share then. That is maximizing your natural resources."

[Listen to Elaine Grinnell](#)

Acts of Survivance



Words of Woodrow Morrison Jr.

"I was institutionalized, and of course I was angry. I mean there was a rage going on in there. I would lash out and I nearly killed people. I didn't kill them, but it wasn't because I wasn't trying. I used to pick the biggest guy I could find; maybe I was hoping this one could kill me. I wasn't what you would call a good fighter. I was just crazy. I wouldn't even remember it afterward when the rage was gone."

[Listen to Woodrow Morrison, Jr.](#)

Acts of Survivance



Survivance: The Warrior

Confronting a challenge.

The Telling Quest

- What's a story you want to tell? What parts of yourself must you face? What parts of yourself can you share?
- Create your own story in any medium that inspires you. For example, a short film. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

Words of Roger Fernandes

"The Warrior fights a battle, they become the warrior. This is when the hero does what we think a hero should, which is they fight the battle, they kill the dragon, they save the baby in the burning building, whatever. But they wouldn't do that unless they had gone through the previous phases."

[Listen to Roger Fernandes](#)

Acts of Survivance

...ute was going ...d out into the ...urt and the .
Singing auld songs to . center of a circle of b... r tongues are poisoned. S...
nselves raw.
*Keep on rainin, levee ...ance was broken in te ... eyes are pricked. They
...n he fled for ... with his worr... v in the waters a"

New Ways Quest

- What unhealthy behaviors do you have?
- Get rid of them by keeping yourself busy! Learn stories, learn about your history, learn a language, learn about medicinal plants, or learn skills to express yourself.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your transition. For example, a mixed media piece inspired by learning an Indigenous language. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

Words of Elaine Grinnell

"I'd say it's worth it. You'll find new friends. You'll find new things to do.

And then you'll be in control of your own life."

[Listen to Elaine Grinnell](#)

Acts of Survivance



The Fight Quest

- Mend your sacred hoop. Are there events, ceremonies, or meetings in your area? Are there collaborations you want to pursue?
- Form new healthy relationships and behaviors.
- Tell a story in any medium that reflects your experience. For example, a mixed media experimental animation inspired by ceremony. This is an act of survivance!
- Share your act of survivance by [emailing the file](#) or posting online and [#survivance](#).

Words of Woodrow Morrison Jr.

"What you learn is that when you hit a certain point in your healing, your recovery, you get scared, because I don't know what the rules are anymore. There are no rules. Trust your feelings."

[Listen to Woodrow Morrison, Jr.](#)

Acts of Survivance



Survivance: The Changer

Returning, transformed, to help others start their journeys.



The Return Home

- Tell stories.
- Write poetry.
- Sing.
- Teach.
- Perform a rite of passage.
- Quit unhealthy behaviors.

[Welcome](#) | [How To Play](#) | [Communicate](#)

[The Orphan](#) | [The Wanderer](#) | [The Caretaker](#) | [The Warrior](#) | [The Changer](#)

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Survivance: Communicate

"Native imagination, experience, and remembrance are the real landscapes of liberty..." — Gerald Vizenor

Contact

- **Email.** survivancegame@gmail.com
- **Twitter.** [@survivancegame](https://twitter.com/survivancegame)
- **Facebook.** [Survivance Group](#)

Upload

- **Have a host.** Already have the file hosted on your own website or file sharing network? Great! Email the link to survivancegame@gmail.com.
- **Need a host.** Need somewhere to host your act of survivance? Email the file to survivancegame@gmail.com, whether it's a jpg, Word document, .mov, .mp3, or otherwise.
- **Ack! It's too big!** If the file is too big to send by email, you can use a service like [Dropbox](#) and share the file with survivancegame@gmail.com.
- **Still confused.** If you need help uploading your file, just contact survivancegame@gmail.com for help.

Promote

- **#survivance.** Put "#survivance" in Twitter tweets, Facebook status updates, and other social networks to share your progress in *Survivance*.
- **Link.** Link to acts of survivance you've done or ones you want to share.



[Welcome](#) | [How To Play](#) | [Communicate](#)

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