

**The Medicine Wheel and the Transference of Indigenous
Knowledge from Grandmother to Granddaughter
- AND -
The Power of Words and Medicine Wheel Teachings
as a Tool for Decolonization**

**by
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Approval

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Teachings as a Tool for Decolonization

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Abstract

Essay 1: For four decades, Marjorie Mackie facilitated a Medicine Wheel workshop that she, herself developed for therapeutic purposes in the treatment of alcohol and drug addiction amongst Indigenous peoples. The research for this paper was done in an interview format between Marjorie, my grandmother, and I. This paper reflects a co-creation process resulting in my grandmother passing her knowledge of the Medicine Wheel on to me. This paper demonstrates several things: 1. The relationship between my grandmother and I; 2. The responsibility I have shown as the researcher to honour my grandmother and her teachings; 3. The passing of knowledge from an elder to the next generation; 4. The Medicine Wheel teachings themselves, which serve as a moral guide to a well-lived life; and 5. My grandmother's work with the Medicine Wheel as intellectual labour.

Essay 2: It is vital to explore not only the history of words and their effects, but to also explore how an understanding of words can be used to decolonize language. This paper examines some of the ideas found within the Medicine Wheel. These ideas are not meant to be kept in the abstract, but to be applied to one's own life in order to achieve wholeness and peace of mind, body and spirit. As an Indigenous woman working with her Grandmother in order to learn and to explore Medicine Wheel teachings, understanding the power of words and their impacts is essential because it prevents the projection of false beliefs and myths onto the teachings. My exploration of language and the Medicine Wheel is accomplished through both a westernized lens and through an Indigenous lens. I consider and use western academic discussions of discourse, structuralism and myth in combination with affirming the historical trauma associated with being Indigenous, as well as Indigenous storytelling, spirituality and community. The process of deconstructing language and myth in my own life is a journey of both frustration and healing. The discovery of the ways in which false belief systems have impacted my life and my understanding of the Medicine Wheel has left me with an acceptance of personal responsibility in knowing that I alone, choose what to allow into my consciousness and that which I choose to release. This Essay is a journey of healing and of understanding. It is a journey of self-acceptance and personal responsibility. To decolonize language is to decolonize one's own heart and in doing so the journey continues.

Keywords: medicine wheel; storytelling; indigenous methodology

Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother, Sandy Coolidge and my grandmother, Marjorie Mackie who taught me to look beyond the veil and to see Creator at the center of all things, especially in myself.

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I would like to acknowledge the many Indigenous women scholars that came before me. They paved the way for me and so many more to come. This work is not easy, however individuals such as, Lee Maracle, Emma LaRocque and Kim Anderson made it just a little bit easier for people like me.

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And I thank Creator for this wondrous, heartbreaking, devastatingly beautiful life. I am blessed.

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Essay 1:

The Medicine Wheel and the Transference of Indigenous Knowledge from Grandmother to Granddaughter

Introduction

I would like to begin this paper with introductions into my families of origin and my Indigenous Nationhood. My name is Christina Rae Coolidge. My matrilineal ancestry includes Cree and Scottish from the Red River area. My mother's name is Sandy Coolidge and my grandmother's name is Marjorie Mackie and the person with whom I am doing the work presented in this paper. Marjorie's mother's name was Ruby Nelson and Ruby's mother's name (my great, great Grandmother), was Emma Jessie Pocha, which is from where our Cree lineage comes. I am also a status Coast Salish from Tsleil-Waututh Nation in North Vancouver. I gained this status through adoption by my father Mike Wakelin. My biological father was born and raised in Denmark, where I also have strong ties to my eldest sister, niece, great niece and so on.

The research for this paper was done in an interview format between my grandmother and me. I hesitate to use the word, 'interview', as it is more of a co-creation process, with my grandmother passing her knowledge of the Medicine Wheel on to me. These teachings have been the breadth of her life and work, and should she transition to the spirit world, those teachings would go with her. Therefore, this process is essential for ensuring that these teachings, which serve to provide a model for living in a good way, continue on in our family's collective memory. "...Elders' responsibility in ensuring a moral code and history of the tribe, and it was through storytelling that they fulfilled this obligation (1995:37). Stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective. They promote social cohesion by entertaining and fostering good feeling" (Kovach, 2009, p. 95). This co-creation process is an aspect of Indigenous methodology whereby sharing stories and the passing of knowledge from elders to the next generations is grounded in relationship. This is the social cohesion to which Margaret Kovach is referring in her book, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. The reason I have chosen to present this paper in a transcription format, is so that the reader can get a sense of the relationship and trust between my grandmother and I, as well as to begin to understand her teachings of the medicine wheel by her own words.

I have been encouraged to present this paper in a standard academic format, which makes a linear presentation of my interaction with my grandmother, difficult. I have been encouraged to present a standard argument, and demonstrate how my

research proves this argument. After much consideration, I have chosen to deviate from this suggestion slightly. I understand that this presents some risk to my work, but in order to honour my relationship with my grandmother and the trust she has given, that I will use her work in the way to which it was intended, I must present it this way. If I do not, I am doing that which has always been done to Indigenous people, to our stories, to our ceremonies, to our languages, to our culture, to our way of life, and that is the forced colonial ideology that can often be found within academic institutions. Kovach makes clear that the responsibility for demonstrating these teachings in the way in which my grandmother has entrusted me to do so, falls entirely on my shoulders as the researcher. “Indigenous people well versed in their culture know that sharing a story in research situates it within a collective memory. Likewise, Indigenous researchers ought to know of the deep responsibility of requesting an oral history—i.e., an individual recounting of a particular happening. A researcher assumes a responsibility that the story shared will be treated with the respect it deserves in acknowledgement of the relationship from which it emerges” (Kovach, 2009, p. 97). Therefore, this paper demonstrates several things: 1. The relationship between my grandmother and I; 2. The responsibility I have shown as the researcher to honour my grandmother and her teachings; 3. The passing of knowledge from an elder to the next generation; 4. The Medicine Wheel teachings themselves, which serve as a moral guide to a well-lived life; and 5. My grandmother’s work with the Medicine Wheel as intellectual labour.

The Power of Words

As I will also later discuss in essay 2, while working with my grandmother, she shared how the Medicine Wheel had healed much of the shame that she had lived with throughout her life as a ‘half-breed’. The following is a short passage of our interview:

Grammi: The Medicine Wheel was one of the greatest gifts I ever received in life. (inaudible) being in Saskatchewan...when I was growing up in Saskatchewan, our family were called 'half-breeds', and that whole feeling of being a half-breed, it was that we were really something awful, like evil and terrible and not fit for humans. We were always so ashamed. In fact, one time I came in to my mom and said, “mom, Darlene called me a 'squat'”, which meant 'squaw'. (laughing)

Christina: You thought it was 'squat'. (laughing)

Grammi: 'Squat'. (laughing) I was crying. So, I mean that life was around us. I don't know how it got there or who brought it there but there was always this thing wrong...it was just wrong. So we were honest people. Not honest, that's a weak word. So anyhow, what happened, it's not what happened, but its how awful I felt about being a half-breed where ever we went in situations. In Saskatchewan there's a high group or high percentage of First Nation people, and they were people who are out in the streets and drunks and stuff. Well thats where I would see them. They were the prostitutes...just the whole thing that made half-breeds or 'indians' was the word, that was so hurtful.

Grammi: And to me, it (Medicine Wheel) is the most important thing, ever, ever ever.

Me: I do too.

Grammi: Cause when I received the MW, there were two parts. I became a person then. For the first time in my life, First Nation people would hug me, they'd say 'our people say this' and I was included in 'our people' and, like cause I was always so far away from being able to be accepted by people. And the foster home and all that situation added to it because it meant I knew that we didn't deserve any people...we weren't worth...We had kids shopping days in Kilburn Hall (orphanage) and my brother and sister and myself were never given a home...nobody ever. You know we all had our best clothes on, we had to wear them for that day and I smiled and smiled and everybody that saw us and I tried so hard to be acceptable, but at the end of the day, you go to bed and you know you're not. I used to cry cause I was...and so that when the Medicine Wheel was taught to me, it was quite simple in the beginning, and it was so direct and clear for me that i had these two gifts that was given to me, and I became a person then. And I started working with the MW as my inner self and that's where I did my work, because the wonderful part about the wheel is that everybody has it if they want it. It's right within your own self of where you think your soul or your heart or whatever word you use to describe where that is...the cathedral, people have called it so many things. Anything that means sacred and powerful. Of course I use Creator, the maker of all things...the best one I ever heard was, 'He is so great that He is without a name' (Mackie, 2014).

In order to illustrate the power of words and the Medicine Wheel, I will deconstruct this passage to establish the many ways that words have the power to hurt or to heal. The approach of the medicine wheel is meant to heal as well as to perhaps

uncover still festering wounds so that we might begin to heal those as well. My grandmother's explanation of her own journey with the Medicine Wheel is an example of how we might use the wheel in order to decolonize our own hearts and minds and stand more fully in our own power, no matter what colour of the wheel we find ourselves.

There are several trigger words and phrases in this reading; 'half-breed', 'squaw', 'drunks', 'prostitutes', 'indians', 'foster home', 'orphanage', 'I tried so hard to be acceptable, but at the end of the day, you go to bed and you know you're not'. These are the words that caused shame in my grandmother's life and needed correction. As a young girl, my Grandmother and her siblings were sent to an orphanage called, Kilburn Hall in Saskatchewan.

My great-grandmother was an alcoholic, but before this time her husband had been away with the war. My great-grandmother had become pregnant by a minister in the area who had also impregnated several other women as well. The earlier years for my grandmother were very difficult. She suffered many abuses and while she did not attend residential school because my grandmother's grandfather had accepted scrip and chose to deny his Aboriginal heritage and title, she faced much of the same treatment as students at residential school.

For many years my grandmother struggled with her identity as a 'half-breed'. She experienced racism by white people and lateral violence from Indigenous people. She was not accepted in either world. These experiences shaped her understanding of the power of words, in that they built a home inside of her that withered her spirit, just as the withering of the fig tree. However, the medicine wheel teaches us to use words in order to heal ourselves and to release old belief systems that are detrimental to a person's self-esteem and self-love.

The four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel are separated by the colour of people; red, yellow, black and white. Because my grandmother was a 'half-breed', which brings with it negative connotations, resulting in negative self-identity, she learned that she fell under two of the four quadrants; red and white. Each colour of people is given a gift. Red people have the gift of vision, yellow people have the gift of time, black people have the gift of reason and white people have the gift of movement. What my grandmother discovered, is that she had two gifts; vision and movement. As stated in our interview,

this is when she became a person. This is when she was healed from years of being considered a 'half-breed' and not feeling accepted by any person or community of people. The gift of vision was given to the red people because of their ability to see far. At a gathering I attended, Lee Brown shared a story about Indigenous people of this continent planting different colours of corn in order to welcome the people who would come from across the ocean. The red people have this gift of vision which has sustained them through the trials of colonization and has enabled the resurgence of language and culture within Indigenous communities. The white people were given the gift of movement because they are the people who crossed those oceans and have taken action steps to improve quality of life in terms of science and technology. Because my grandmother fell under both categories, she was then able to see herself as a person with multiple gifts given by Creator and felt all at once that she belonged in both worlds. And as she began sharing her vision of the Medicine Wheel by actively providing a forum for learning and discussion, she turned those gifts into an actuality for those who were in desperate need of the healing the wheel can provide. This gave her life purpose, it made her experiences in childhood and her adult life, worthwhile as they gave her the tools she needed in order to connect with others. This is the power of the Wheel and the power of words that the Wheel provides. Her healing was a direct result of the Wheel disintegrating all of her old beliefs about herself and about her own identity, which in turn allowed her to do the same for others who struggled in the same way she had struggled.

In the above passage, my grandmother also addresses the word for 'Creator', in that it can be whatever a person wants or needs it to be. It just has to uncover our sacredness. The word is not as important as the feeling it provides. Our centre is where our power is hidden, that space where Creator lives within us is what we need to retrieve in order for the wheel to become a living thing in our lives. The importance in finding the word that will bring us back to our spirits is subjective and personal. The power of that word is in what it does for us when we call on it in times of struggle or in times of faith. It reveals the power within us and this is how the wheel and all its parts help us to heal old wounds and to have faith in ourselves and our Creator. Each part of the Wheel has power, every word used to describe the wheel has power and when we can use the Wheel in our lives in active ways and in all its parts, is when we find balance and peace. The holistic nature of the wheel means that we can turn to it in all and every area of our lives, whether that is our family lives, education, careers, the environment, political

leanings, relationships, our physical health or day-to-day activities and anything in between, the wheel is there to guide us and inspire us to be our best selves and live our highest calling. This is the beauty of this teaching. The Medicine Wheel teaches us everything we need to know in order to live fully and without fear (Coolidge, 2016, p. 28-32).

My grandmother addresses colonial concepts through her discussions of the power of words. She understands that some of the concepts will evoke certain negative feelings in her clients, particular in discussions of God. For many Indigenous people, and those seeking treatment from drug and alcohol addictions, we have had negative experiences of religion and spirituality. Our history includes the institutions of residential school which has left many Indigenous people with a deep distrust in God and religion, with good reason. By addressing these negative feelings associated with words, my Grandmother can identify the places within a person that is in need of healing. Half of the battle, is awareness. The words themselves cannot hurt us, but the feelings associated with memory and trauma, do hurt us. By identifying these wounds through the use of the Medicine Wheel, it enables us to heal from such traumas and to live a healthier, more balanced life.

Decolonizing Colonial Concepts

In order to provide context to the teachings, my mother and I had a conversation about the time in history that the Medicine Wheel came to my grandmother as a tool for working with Indigenous alcoholics and addicts. Many of the concepts presented in the Wheel, may seem colonial in nature however, that is because they come from colonialism. The Medicine Wheel was given to my grandmother during a politically significant time in history for Indigenous people, and the idea of 'decolonization' was just beginning to become a part of Indigenous discourse. What my grandmother did with these colonial concepts, was to teach Indigenous alcoholics to utilize them in a such way that was and is healing, rather than harmful. In essence, she was decolonizing colonial concepts in the hearts of a colonized people.

The following is an excerpt from my conversation with my mother, Sandy Coolidge:

- ¹S: Well I think it was about in 1978 when Grammi went to NADAP, which is Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program.
- ²C: Where is that?
- S: They were training Native alcohol and drug counsellors. And it was in British Columbia, and they would get together as a group in Vancouver and different places, because it was groundbreaking.
- C: What year was this again?
- S: I think it was '77/'78, somewhere in there. Grammi sobered up in 1977, so it was probably '78. It was a group of 'Natives', or 'Indians' at that point, they were called, 'Indians', 'Native'. So, then she was sober and an alcohol and drug counsellor in Oliver, and Louise Gabriel approached her and asked her to be on the board of this new treatment center that they were trying to get together. It was an Indian alcohol society. So, she got on the board in '78/'79.
- C: Well I know that Round Lake opened in '79 because that was the same year I was born.
- S: Exactly. So, she was hired as the first set of people that was in there. And the historical setting at that time, for Aboriginal people, or 'Indians' at that time, that group of people had just, I mean, in 1960 was when 'Indians' were allowed to vote in the federal election; The white paper had been introduced in '69; Residential schools were still in full blown; Native women were still losing their status as soon as they married a non-Indian man, a non-status man. Status wasn't even an issue. I mean you were 'Indian' or not. They weren't even 'Indians' if they married a white man, you know, they were white women, considered that way. Grammi grew up in a time where because of the Metis, or the 'half-breed', she didn't fit in either culture. She couldn't fit in the white, she couldn't fit in the Native. She wasn't white enough, red enough, whatever. So, when she discovered, I don't know when she came across the teachings of the medicine wheel, but it was very early on, it was like a light bulb moment for her. It opened her world up because it combined her race and the white race. She realized that she had gifts, that who she was, was more than just one or the other.

¹ S: Sandy Coolidge

² C: Christina Coolidge

- C: Right. They both made her feel more whole than anything.
- S: Exactly. Exactly. It also just opened up this whole treatment tool for her. She was working in Round Lake, she was dealing with, I mean the people that were in there were mostly alcoholic. Drugs hadn't been a big issue at that point.
- C: Sedatives maybe, but that's about it.
- S: Yeah, yeah. And maybe weed, but I don't know. I don't remember. When I worked in there, it was mostly alcohol. And they were people, they were raw. They were fresh from the residential school. The American Indian Movement was, we were singing American Indian Movement songs at all our gatherings at Round Lake, you know, it was fresh.
- C: It was right in the middle of it.
- S: Yeah, it was fresh. Because it was sort of, I think, there was a movement that was happening, you know, and that treatment center when it opened, and when Grammi was in the midst of it, you know.
- C: And it was groundbreaking, really, because it was the first, well I don't know, I can't say it was the first everywhere, but it was one of the first at least, of treatment centers that believed that culture was the treatment, that culture itself was the treatment. I don't know of any other ones, it was, you know, the twelve steps, but it was never about culture. 'Cause that's even their motto, "Culture is Treatment".
- S: That's right, exactly. And the culture at that time, was a conglomeration of all types of culture because people, language had been lost, traditions had been lost and people were just getting in touch with the realization that it was okay to be 'Indian'. 'Native', 'First Nation', whatever.
- C: Starting to relearn your culture.
- S: And starting to reclaim and the protocols back in those days, were very much influenced by, I think, the church. It was pretty extreme. There was a lot of oppression against women. Native women were still losing their status, they weren't even people, really, technically. I remember being told that being on your time was being dirty, women were dirty. The Influence of the residential school was still, people were colonized and...

- C: Sick and angry.
- S: Yeah, and addictions and stuff, so Grammi started developing this workshop, this medicine wheel workshop. There was influences, I think, from Tony Stickle, Phil Lane Sr., Lee Brown came along a little later, Gerry Oleman, there was just different people that were there at that time and she started to gather the gifts, she realized that every nation had its own kind of specialty, so food would be buffalo to the Cree, but it would be, maybe whale to the Inuit. So, she adapted this thing, created this thing so they could create their own medicine wheel within themselves. I remember her saying something, that it's like walking with a glass of water and walking in balance is about not losing any of that water. I don't know why that one stuck out for me. But she talked about the gifts and the elements and how the elements are within us. Um, as for context, I'm not sure what else to say.
- C: Okay, well, I know that Grammi always says, she'll say, when she's talking about something, like the tree represents honesty and like the eagle is keeper of the gift of vision and she'll say, but you can put whatever works for you in there. She'll always say, that you can exchange them. If someone's from the east coast, they might have different animals over there and they can put those in instead.
- S: The medicine wheel is completely fluid. It's flowing and its adaptable in different ways and in different places.
- C: But the way that I'm writing it is the way that Grammi teaches it and the way she's always taught it, with the same things she's always taught it with.
- S: Yeah, like sweetgrass.
- C: Yeah, I want it the way that she does it. I understand that its fluid, but these are her teachings. And some people might perceive some of the teachings as being colonial and with a European influence, so I need to address the colonial part. Like, I that it does have a European influence because Grammi's got European heritage.
- S: And it's in an English language, and treatment, in and of itself is a European concept. You can't not have colonial influence.
- C: Well in treatment, in terms of alcohol and drugs, the only reason why there is treatment, or a need for treatment for Indigenous people, is because of Europeans and because of colonization.

- S: Well everybody was colonized because there wasn't really a concept of being colonized and decolonized yet.
- C: I mean it's been fairly recent that, I mean Lee Maracle, she wrote *I Am Woman* several years before she was even able to get it published.
- S: Well and look at that other one, Emma Laroque. I remember reading in Robyn's class, one of her books, and thinking *holy shit, man*, because it was so out there. All the protocol that had been imposed.
- C: And that's what I've noticed about the native female writers, I mean the men don't really write like this as often, it's the women that are challenging everything. Because they are challenging Native ideas. They're not challenging white ideas or western ideas. We already know western ideas are skewed. They are challenging the adoption of these ideas that are being claimed as tradition and they're not. Because even if you think about the elders now, there's nobody alive now that were taught the real traditions, pre-contact.
- S: They're all adapted, just like Bill's mom said, "if I'd had a sewing machine, I'd have used it."³ I mean, first contact, "these pots are so light. We'll give you this and we'll take these pots to cook with, instead of these rocks." We've adapted traditions and cultures and practices.
- C: Yes, when I look at Tseil-Waututh, where they've reclaimed their language, they have language classes, they do cedar weaving, they have ceremony, they've done the elk hunt, they're working to get the salmon beds running, you know, they've got solar panels and they're working with wind turbines and they're doing all these things their beliefs as Indigenous people, but they are doing it in a way that is economical in terms of money in to send people to school to get educated and to be able to develop more of these ideas and build partnerships with "white" [air quote gesture] people and western corporations. They're very healthy. They are world leaders. And of course, they're not perfect, nobody's perfect, but if you look at the National Energy Board, they took that on and they never quit, even though it was totally unpopular when they first started to oppose the pipeline. But they kept pushing and educating people and now most of the lower mainland is opposed to the

³ My friend, Bill Nelson, told me a story about his late mother. "My mother used to make traditional blankets. Sometimes she would use a sewing machine, and was asked if they were really traditional because she wasn't sewing them all by hand. She told them, 'In the olden days, if we'd had sewing machines, we'd have used them.'"

Kinder Morgan pipeline. And they were the ones at the front of that. And that's how you combine Indigenous culture with white culture, because we are, this is where we live. So, I need to be able to do that in my writing. Because I am both (Coolidge, 2017).

In order to address the colonial aspects of the Medicine Wheel workshop developed by my grandmother, I must acknowledge the difficulties that have arisen within this research framework because I have found myself having to qualify her work as being "Indigenous" enough to Indigenous scholars, while also qualifying it as "Western" enough to meet the needed requirements for acceptance by the academy. This is a frustrating process as an Indigenous researcher. Our colonial history is embedded within Indigenous research and there is no way around this. The simple process of discussing colonial influences within Indigenous knowledge is a decolonizing act. That said, there is no way to completely remove colonial influences from Indigenous research, because the research is in itself, colonial.

Colonial interruptions of Indigenous culture continue, and there is no way to address tribal epistemologies and Indigenous research frameworks without considering these relations. It is a dilemma that is distinctively Indigenous and sets us apart from other marginalized groups. It has become part of our collective experience and a burden that our pre-contact ancestors did not have to shoulder. The relationship with the settler society impacts our world daily, in the supermarket, in neighbourhoods, and in educational institutions. In post-secondary education, Indigenous students experience the burn of colonial research on a consistent basis most evident in the suppression of Indigenous knowledges. Postcolonial? There is nothing post about it. It has simply shape-shifted to fit the contemporary context (Kovach, 2009, p. 76).

As with this work, I find myself having to qualify the Medicine Wheel as Indigenous knowledge, however because the Medicine Wheel as it is used today, is born post-contact, there are colonial concepts found within the wheel, particularly in the ways in which my grandmother has adapted the wheel for use in therapeutic settings. I would argue that what my grandmother has actually done, is taken colonial concepts and Indigenousized them in an effort to decolonize colonial concepts. The Western sciences have been 'white-washing' Indigenous knowledge for centuries, whereas the Medicine Wheel takes colonial concepts and Indigenousizes them to make them inclusive and holistic, rather than exclusive and individualistically centered. "Because Indigenous people did

not separate reason and spirit, and because they did not espouse an evolutionist theoretical perspective, their beliefs have been viewed as superstitions (Deloria, 2002). Further Indigenous knowledges could not be understood from a reductionist analyses because they could not be fragmented, externalized, and objectified” (Kovach, 2009, p. 77). I would posit to say that dismissing Indigenous knowledge because it contains colonial concepts is, once again, reductionist in that it challenges its relevancy within academic research. It feels a little like being stuck between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, in order for Indigenous knowledge to be truly Indigenous, it must not contain colonial concepts. On the other hand, if it is truly Indigenous knowledge, in that it comes from tradition and authenticity, then this is requiring that Indigenous knowledge maintain cultural exoticism mythologies. (Kovach, 2009, p. 78). “In critically analyzing the primacy of Western thought in research, a product of mainstream academic institutions, one quickly sees the politics of knowledge and inquiry—i.e., both the epistemologies (our understanding about the world) and ideologies (what should count as knowledge and who gets to make that choice)— used to maintain Western privilege” (Kovach, 2009, p. 79). Kovach poses several important questions in her discussion of Indigenous knowledge and Western privilege, they are: “what qualifies as knowledge, what is its source, and how does new knowledge emerge” (Kovach, 2009, p. 79)? As an Indigenous person, student and researcher, I find myself wondering how *does* new knowledge emerge, particularly as it is related to working with the Medicine Wheel?

The ways in which the Medicine Wheel has been used to discuss various Indigenous related topics and issues has made the Wheel a decolonizing tool and a way to look at the world that reflects Indigenous values. The Medicine Wheel concept has been adapted and utilized in a variety of settings and circumstances. For example, Anne N. Dapice applied the Medicine Wheel teachings in her examination of Native American health issues, using “the medicine wheel as a conceptual framework and integrative approach to respond to the issues of health and wellness of American Indians” (Dapice, 2006, p. 251). In 2013, a case study was conducted by Steven Thibodeau and Gary Nixon of the University of Lethbridge, whereby the Medicine Wheel was used as a psychological counselling tool in order for both, counsellor and client to find common ground and achieve healing. “It has been postulated that counselling cannot take place without communication links, and in order to communicate, counsellors and clients require a shared world view and language (Torrey, 1972)...In this case study, the

Medicine Wheel becomes such a connecting—and eventually transformational—world view for one Aboriginal man dealing with assaultive issues” (Thibodeau & Nixon, 2013, p. 200). Another case study published in the *Journal of Palliative Care* in 2010, incorporated Medicine Wheel teachings in end-of-life care. In the case study, Clarke and Holtlander applied “the teachings of the medicine wheel. The four directions of the wheel provide a framework for exploring assessment and intervention from a holistic perspective. The medicine wheel can be used to illustrate a life journey , as each person takes many turns around it” (Clarke & Holtlander, 2010, p. 34). From nursing, to education, to alcohol and drug treatment programs, to youths, to male violence, to health, to end of life care, ad infinitum, the Wheel can be a tool for learning, teaching and healing. While the Wheel has Western influences, it takes those ideas and organizes them in such a way that reflects Indigenous world views. In order for the Wheel to be truly inclusive and holistic, it is fitting that it takes some of its concepts from a variety of sources.

There are a variety of medicine wheels used by different tribes for different purposes. What Indians call the “medicine wheel” is a universal symbol known in psychology as the Jungian mandala—a symbol of wholeness. The particular medicine wheel used in our mental health facility includes all races, all life—including two-leggeds, four-leggeds, winged things, plants, and medicines. All are considered sacred and equal. This is related to the philosophy of Mitakouye Oyasin, a phrase that comes from a Lakota prayer, which translated means, “All my relations” or “We are all related”.

The medicine wheel includes all directions and the four aspects—mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. No one aspect is complete. It combines Eastern and Western philosophies. Eastern philosophy tends to be cyclical, with the sense that what has been will be, where change is not possible. Western philosophy assumes linear cause and effect and is interventionist. Thus, the medicine wheel includes cycles, and seasons, and passages but also assumes that change can and will occur. Through the medicine wheel, we learn that if we focus on or become stuck in the mental, emotional, physical, or the spiritual, we lack wholeness in all aspects. It is important to work on achieving health, positive change, and growth in each aspect for balance and wholeness (Dapice, 2006, p. 251).

My grandmother's workshop utilizes all these aspects of the Wheel, and while they may be organized slightly differently, the main goal is the same, that which to organize the world in such a way that is healing and holistic. My grandmother is also very careful to allow her clients to change the animals or language or symbols, so that they work for the individual. The allowance of fluidity and adaptation for the individual is symbolic of its inclusivity and that in itself, teaches us to remain open to new ideas and to embrace the ever-changing seasons of life.

Grandmother as Expert

My grandmother received her bachelor of social work through the University of Regina. Her experience in the field is vast and far-reaching, as she taught trainers at the Nechi Institute in Alberta; she worked at Mountain and Kent federal penitentiaries as an Aboriginal liaison person, and she worked as a trauma counsellor at Pearless Lake after the tragic deaths of six members of the small community, after they drank photocopier fluid containing methyl hydrate. (Lepine, 1986)

I can't even remember the first time that my grandmother shared the medicine wheel with me, because I was so young. It is something that has always been a part of my life and something I have associated with my grandmother. When I was in the fourth grade, she was invited into my class by my teacher, Mr. Lavasseur. He was an amazing, gentle soul and one of my two favourite teachers. Our class loved it so much that we begged for her to come back and so she did, and shared more with us. To this day, students that were in that class with me, remember my grandmother and remember the Medicine Wheel. The Wheel defies age, creed, colour, religion. It works with any person, from any walk of life if they are ready to have it. I have yet to find a single person who has not been touched by learning the Medicine Wheel as my grandmother teaches it.

She has gone to Australia and shared the wheel with some of the Indigenous people there as well. She came home with so many stories, a love of Australian Indigenous and a didgeridoo. She worked with Elizabeth Kubler Ross, who wrote about death and dying, and my grandmother has had a documentary filmed about her called, *Walking In Pain*. She has touched more lives than any other individual that I've personally known. Her story of alcoholism is heart wrenching but valuable, in that it

allowed her the opportunity to relate to other native alcoholics in a way not many others can.

The following is a brief timeline and approximate dates of her education and career spanning 40 years:

Work History Timeline

Marge Mackie began her recovery journey from severe alcohol addiction on December 10, 1976 and has been sober since that time.⁴

- 1977 Alcohol and Drug Counsellor for Inkameep (Osoyoos) Indian Band, Oliver BC
- 1978 Nechi Institute Alcohol and Drug Counsellor Training
- 1978 Board Member on the Interior Native Alcohol Abuse Society (now called Round Lake Alcohol and Drug Treatment Society)
- 1979 Alcohol and Drug Counsellor, Round Lake Treatment Centre, Armstrong, BC.

It was in the early years at Round Lake that Marge began to adapt and expand on the Medicine Wheel to apply it to trauma and addictions and to make it a personal tool to the person receiving. This process never ended for her throughout the following years.

- 1984 Federal Prison Liaison at Mountain and Kent Institutions, Lower Mainland
- 1985 Nechi Trainer of Trainers, St. Albert, AB

Provided training at the Edmonton facility and in various communities, including the Peerless lake tragedy that occurred in 1986 when six community members died after drinking a deadly mix of methyl hydrate.

- 1986 Returned to Round Lake as Counsellor and then moved into the role of Program Supervisor.

Marge's Medicine wheel presentation was very sought after. She presented in dozens of communities, counsellor training workshops, as well as at two World Indigenous People's Conferences.

Received training under Elisabeth Kübler-Ross on Death and Dying and was asked to present the Medicine Wheel teachings during those training sessions.

Provided training in a Round Lake sponsored counsellor training program called Institute of Addictions Counsellor Training at Okanagan College,

⁴ My Grandmother was known as, Marge Mackie and then, Marge Mackie-Orr for the majority of her career only recently transitioning to, Marjorie Mackie

Vernon, BC.

Obtained Bachelor of Indian Social Work at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology through the University of Regina, Merritt, BC in 1995, but stayed connected to Round Lake during her education, and returned once her degree was obtained

1998 Left Round Lake for health reasons and to look after her aging mother, but continued to be a Resource Person there until 2015

Unfortunately, due to time and age, much of my grandmother's experiences teaching the Wheel, including where, when and with whom, have faded together. What I do know for sure that over the span of 40 years, her teachings of the Medicine Wheel and she, herself was well known within the Indigenous community and in addiction recovery circles. She is an easy woman to remember, with her fierce sense of compassion and responsibility to those she served for so many years.

Receiver of Knowledge

My grandmother has shared the wheel a thousand times, but she has never passed the wheel to anyone, in the way that she has with me. She wants it to be written into a book, so that anyone can have it if they want it, at any time. As it is right now, it is something that she shares orally and in a workshop type setting. I don't know that I, or anyone will ever be able

to share the wheel and teach the wheel in the way that she does, because she has a way of pulling things out of a person; thoughts, insights, personal truths, anger, pain, joy and healing. This gift was given to her by Creator and now she has entrusted it to me. I want to learn it the way she teaches it, and I want to share it so that many will reap its benefits.

One of the main reasons that I have chosen to use an interview style format in presenting the wheel in my paper, is that no one can explain her wheel better than she can. She acknowledges that the wheel is fluid, and that anyone can choose to put any animals or representations into the wheel, that better reflect their own identities and her choices, are her choices that speak to her.

When I first realized that this was what I was meant to do for my Master's work, I was sitting in a book reading. I have to admit, I do not recall what book it was for, but it was an elder who had written a book about Sasquatch. Several of us were asked to do poetry readings of poets of our choosing before the author was presented. I read the "Lament to Confederation" by Chief Dan George, my father's uncle. Afterward, when the author of the book was sharing, he talked about himself and his grandson, and after months and months of agonizing over what exactly I wanted to do for my final master's project, it was like a bolt of lightning, *I need to get the medicine wheel from Grammi before she dies*. And of course, I need to. Of all her grandchildren, I am the one most connected to the wheel. I am the one with whom she has shared it the most. I am her first grandchild and I am the closest to her as I started my early years with her. It is my responsibility, but more importantly, my honour that she would pass it on to me. And for my grandmother, this living thing that has been such an integral part of her life and is the lifeblood of her work and her healing, the only person who could do it, besides my mother or my uncle, is me. The love and trust between my grandmother and I, is absolute and unconditional and those would be the requirements for my grandmother to feel comfortable passing along these teachings. I will not stray from her teachings; and I will also learn how to teach them the way that she does.

As important as the teachings are themselves, it is also the relationship between us that I must demonstrate as I complete this project. The relationship between her and I is unique and special and irreplaceable. Our relationship is as much a part of my work as anything, more so, even. The methods I use in this work, is demonstrated through our interaction. I do not interview her, I simply sit with her as I have done my whole life and we talk and laugh and share the love and respect between us. I share everything with her. I have no filter. When I am with her, I tell the truth. Even if I have plans to omit certain aspects of my life when I go for a visit, I find that I cannot and it always comes out. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of allowable pages, I am unable to share some of our conversations about the deep things, like sex and relationships, straight through to the more mundane, like TV and what we're eating for dinner. But it is all part of methods in working with my grandmother.

I have also shared much of my writing with her and applied her suggestions as I go, because this work is much more hers, than it is mine. I am simply the instrument by which she is able to document her work at last. I think it is particularly important in an

academic setting because it allows other Indigenous academics, who struggle to live in both worlds, to learn in both worlds as I have, that it is okay and it is possible. I have never been so challenged as I have been in doing this work, because I wish to honour my grandmother and myself, by claiming all that I am and all that we are. But it is possible, through sweat, tears, anger, laughter, a fatigue that seeps straight to your bones and spirit, but yes, it is possible.

“When a person has this concept in your, in your heart, it’s yours, you know. And it’s so darn exciting when you have it. It really is.” (Grammi)

The Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel can be found within many different cultures around the world and while each interpretation may be different, the purpose is the same; to implement a holistic view of life. This is how I know the Medicine Wheel as taught to me by my Grandmother, Marjorie Mackie (Coolidge, 2013).

In order to help the reader to visualize the wheel, I have used the term, ‘quadrant’, which will become ‘Q’. This will show within where each of the following concepts fall and will also demonstrate in written form how the medicine wheel goes around and around with no beginning and no end.

The Circle

To begin, we think of a circle. What is a circle? What does a circle represent? It represents eternity; no beginning, no end as it is with Spirit. We come to the earth as spirit and we leave the world as spirit, or energy if you like. This is at the center of the wheel; the circle within the circle. “And at the center of our being, at the center of all things there is a part of yourselves that is our spirit and whatever name you call it. I call it the Creator. At the center of everything, person or thing. People think that Indians have so many Gods, but actually what we recognize is that there are, that everything has a living center” (Mackie, 2016).

The Colours of Humankind

Quadrant 1: The Red People. Red is the colour of the world's Aboriginal population including all Indigenous people of every nation. These are the First Peoples of the world. "Every continent. Every place somebody had to 'discover' our people." (Mackie, 2016).

Quadrant 2: The Yellow People. Yellow is the colour of the world's Asian population.

Quadrant 3: The Black People. Black and blue represents the colour of the world's African population. The reason why this quadrant is have black and half blue, is become some elders or spiritual leaders do not approve of the colour black brought to the sweatlodge, so the colour of blue, lessens the symbology of the 'darkness' within us.

Quadrant 4: The White People. White is the colour of the Anglos of the world or the European population.

The Gifts

Each colour of man was given a gift. This is the part of the wheel's teachings where some people can start to become confused, resistant or even resentful. This is why examining how words and their concepts might continue to have negative connotations in our minds and hearts. The way the concepts in this particular are laid out, have simply been done in a way that made sense to my Grandmother. She has always been very clear that if a concept does not work for an individual, that they should change it so that it is better suited for whomever is working with wheel medicine. As well, each aspect of the wheel is within each of us, no matter our creed, race or religion, so by no means is one concept attached only to the colour or quadrant in which it falls. This is simply a way of visualizing what parts of ones self, one might be lacking.

The gifts are the strengths of each colour, and while each colour has many strengths, these are some of the gifts that my Grandmother felt each colour exhibited in excellence. These are the gifts of each colour that resonated for her. That being said, this wheel was developed many decades ago and it has shifted and changed as the

seasons have changed. And if she were to develop the wheel today, much of what she utilized yesterday, may be very different today.

Q1: The Red People were given the gift of Vision. The gift of vision can be related to the Hopi Prophecies for example. The gift of vision comes often in the form of predictions or warnings or simply of things to come. The practice of vision quests is another example.

In the 1800s, anthropologists used the term “vision quest” to refer to a cultural and spiritual practice of various Indigenous nations in North America. Known by different names among Indigenous nations, including “dream visions” or “dream fasts,” these traditions vary across cultures. Generally, however, participants are young males, seeking to become recognized by their community as adults (and, potentially, as leaders) by completing the quest.

Participants prepare for vision quests by purifying themselves. This sometimes involves spending time in a sweat lodge, fasting or practicing customs specific to their community. In some Cree cultures, the apprentices of the mitew (shamans) begin their spiritual training at the age of five, working under the direction of another elder — often their grandfather — as they gradually prepare to sleep alone in the wilderness for their vision quest.

When the participants are ready, they leave their community for an isolated place, such as in the wilderness or near the grave sites of elders, where they can be alone and at one with their thoughts. During this time, it is typical for participants to forgo food, and sometimes sleep, as a means of preparing their mind.

Individuals often experience dreams, visions or hallucinations, potentially the result of sleep and food deprivation. However, participants believe that the visions are sacred and specific to the person who receives them, a gift from the Creator and ancestors (Robinson, 2018).

What we can learn from this gift is to pay attention to our dreams, write them down, share them and ask for guidance. The gift of vision will help us to anticipate the consequences of our actions and either prevent something negative from happening or perhaps cause a positive outcome to a particular situation.

Q2: The Yellow People were given the gift of Time. The yellow people are the ancient ones. “The areas of present-day India, Pakistan, and Nepal have provided archaeologists and scholars with the richest sites of the most ancient pedigree. The species *Homo heidelbergensis* (a proto human who was an ancestor of modern *Homo sapiens*) inhabited the sub-continent of India centuries before humans migrated into the region known as Europe” (Mark, 2012).

What we can learn from this gift, is to notice our own use of time. Are procrastinating and is that causing undue stress? We can use this gift to make goals in order to feel useful in our own lives, and we can also understand that time is precious and to be used carefully.

Q3: The Black People were given the gift of Reason. The reasons for this gift are associated with slavery and all that the black people had to, and have to endure in order to become free. They have to excel in everything they do. (I am choosing to use the present tense, because this continues to be the current state of affairs.) To look at the historical timeline of black people, from slavery to emancipation to segregation to amalgamation to inequality to *Black Lives Matter*, it has taken much thought, planning, working together, coming together, speaking out, resisting, organization, and the list goes on and on. All of this has taken and utilized the gift of reason.

What we can learn from this gift, is to use our faculties. We mustn't always be run by our emotions, that there are times when we must be thoughtful and considerate of a particular situation or person, for example. It is important to look at things are and not as we wish them to be in order to seek and find solutions to our problems.

Q4: The White People were given the gift of Movement or of Specialization. The white people have been responsible for many inventions and discoveries that have improved our qualities of life. For example, if we were to look at the movement toward electricity, we would start with fire, then to wick and oil and lamps etc., to Thomas Edison, who discovered a way to harness electricity in useful ways.

What we can learn from this gift is to continue to move forward in our lives. It is important to let go of the past. It is important to move through our pain and trauma to healing to forgiveness. We can track the movements in our lives in order to decipher

what is helpful and what is hurtful as well as where we are and where we wish to go. This gift gives us the opportunity to ensure we are always growing and always learning.

The Principles

Principles are just that our principles; our morals and ethics. They are the beliefs within us that if we were to ignore, would cause feelings of guilt, which is not consistent with balanced living. The feeling of guilt will most often, cause us to lose our equilibrium which in turn, will effect every other aspect of the wheel.

Q1: The Principle here is Honesty and represented by Tree. The reason honesty is represented by tree, is because a tree is tall and strong. If we were to walk straight and talk straight, we would be practicing the principle of honesty. However, as the moves the tree, our truth may be changed, causing us to embellish, for example, which in turn creates discord in our lives. What tree can teach us, is to keep our roots firmly planted in this principle and even when we're blown by the winds of dishonesty, our roots can always bring us back to truth.

Q2: The Principle here is Kindness and represented by a Braid of Sweetgrass. My Grandmother chose this because the three parts of the braid represent, body, mind and spirit and each of those working together, makes us stronger. As I stated previously, these are not set in stone, for example, one might prefer to use sage as a representation, or perhaps cedar in the west. The point is that these representations are always giving back. They are practicing kindness to us by giving of itself without ever asking for anything in return. People have abused it for many reasons and for many purposes, yet it still continues to give of itself.

While it is never the right choice to allow someone to continue to abuse us, what we can learn here is to give to others without expectation. Give for the sake of giving, and to show others kindness under any circumstance.

Q3: The Principle here is Sharing and represented by Sacred Animal. Sharing is to give to others. It is never acceptable to hoard anything. We use what we need and share the rest, because ultimately what we do to others, we do to ourselves. The Sacred Animal for me, is a moose however, all animals are sacred. "And so, four-legged. The four-legged give themselves, and that's a big one on how you treat animals. I know in

the culture, of any Aboriginal group, or Indigenous group, that they have an animal that is sacred. And we have in our self, a sense of an animal that represents our sacredness. I just love to watch those animal shows because I learn all the properties of animals, and how they are, and they include our dreams, they include everything. And how we honour the animals, I think it's really a strength of a culture, because they use animals, they still use animals for fields, and they're to respect animals" (Mackie 2016).

Q4: The Principle here is Faith and is represented by Mountain. Faith is represented by the mountain. Because the mountain comes up from Mother Earth and it's strong, and sure. Faith can move mountains; it's a belief for a lot of people. If you have faith, you don't have doubt, and that's the thing we're talking about here, it's the principles. Yes, it's a representation of faith. And so, over here of course is a tree, and it represents honesty. It is to be honest. There is nothing as honest as a tree. We know how to, when the wind comes along and moves a tree? And as I'm telling you one sentence, I might change my mind that I'm gonna tell you this, or I'll teach you a wrong teaching just so that I can be dishonest. I can be telling you honestly, and then just switch, like the wind changed my mind. And that's how we lie. We lie to save our self or guard our self, or we don't wanna be belittled by saying we know this or that and you know. It's one of the biggest. Well look at them. Faith, and look at honest. Those are very difficult to accomplish. In fact, it's working with us every day. Every day we have our faith. Every day we have our honesty. And how we do it, whether it makes us a healthy individual, or an unhealthy person (Mackie, 2016).

By recognizing the importance of each of these principles in our lives, we live more peacefully with ourselves and with others. It is important to understand also how quickly we can fall short of the mark, which will happen throughout our lives because we are human and a part of the human is making and learning from our mistakes. My grandmother sums it up in this way:

Now how it works is, you have faith, honesty, kindness, and sharing. What a wonderful person that you must be. Because you have them operating fully in your life. And how quickly it can change is...I'll, I'll tell a friend a lie. I'll lie about a friend of mine, and I'm being dishonest to this friend. And then what have I got? I have kindness, but not really. I'm sharing to everybody the wrong information about that person. I have faith, and obviously, I don't have much faith with that friend of mine. So, then what happens,

well, if I told my friend a lie, I have to go to that person and tell them, 'hey I've been telling people this. I told them this about you. Which was something that I shouldn't have done because I'm being dishonest, and I'm sorry that I did that'. And I might lose a friend, but I gain back my principle. And I start over, you know? And so, then it works again. (Mackie, 2016)

The Directions

Q1: The Direction in quadrant 1 is East. When the sun comes up in the east, we are each given a new day. When we rise, anything is possible for that day. We think about what we want for ourselves for the day and make a choice to be kind and respectful towards ourselves and others. "...we'll have that day before us and we have this gift of time. This concept of time... use it with care and realize what you've got...and saying remember one day at a time is all we can live. We can hope for the future, we can learn from our mistakes or gain with the good stuff we've learned, 'cause we've also learned many good things in our life and we just weren't in shape or conditioned to bring them out into our living world. And they come back, some of them, if we're really good. The goodness comes back. It all comes back good instead of rotten" (Mackie, 2016).

Q2: The Direction in quadrant 2 is South. The summertime comes with south. It is a time of work and planting and tending to our lands, cattle etc. We have time to mend things that need mending. "Now that's when you do all the powwows, the beading, all the gatherings and all the spiritual making. You do the powwows and all that in the summer. And it's a great time. And if you get in to the circuit, it's a lot of fun, some people actually do that. It's time to be busy, to do your garden and your flowers or whatever. Time to get busy with all the stuff that you do during the summer." Summer is a time to enjoy the sun, which is closer to Mother Earth. We bask in vitamin D and other nutrients come from sun exposure. This is also a time to prepare for the winter months, by canning, smoking, drying or whatever we must do for winter survival.

Q3: The Direction in quadrant 3 is West.

G: Yeah, and so the west, when the sun goes down. And that's a wonderful time too. Like, you can share some of the enjoyment that you've had. I'm sure you've gone out in the morning when the sun was going down and you're

close to water and you can just see and smell everything and just... oh it's so, it's so...

C: Yeah.

G: Yeah! You know. (*Laughter*)

C: There's not a word for it. (*Laughter*)

G: Yeah that's right! And the same when you had a good day and you're tired, a good tired. Cause you've done things you know that are good for you today.

C: Positive things.

G: Well, even when I was resting, that's a positive thing to take too. You thank the day for the wonderful time and check in with yourself. "How are you feeling now?" (Mackie, 2016)

Q4: The Direction in quadrant 4 is North. North falls in the white quadrant and is a symbol of purification and is where we find the winter season. "Mother Earth takes a rest and Father Sky looks after all the stuff" (Mackie, 2016). This is where we enjoy all the handwork from the summer months and we take this time to rest and to recharge. When the winter months finish, the sun comes up again and we start around the circle again.

Aspects of Ourselves

Q1: Spirituality is found here. The spiritual, spirituality is made up of your beliefs and your values and you practice this, it means how you do things. Some people don't realize that. Like, you can be really negative in your way without saying a word. And you can be really positive without saying a word. And, we communicate with each other so that we can understand what we're talking about. And sometimes you say "what did you say about..." And you check up. And you either have people who share your beliefs or you say "no, I don't". But I say in there that I've had Muslims, I've had everything in the workshops. And everybody brings something to the table that's new. We always learn something new. And that's the wonderful part about life. Things are always new. And if you think they're old and rotten, then you better shine it up and get clean inside (*Laughter*). (Mackie, 2016)

Q2: Emotion is found here. Emotions are connected to our thinking. If our minds are settled, our emotions tend to be settled as well. So many positive and negative things have occurred due to our emotions. If we are experiencing discomfort from our emotions, and we haven't the support or emotional intelligence to move through the discomfort in healthy ways, we may take actions that are damaging to ourselves and others. However, our positive emotions are equally powerful. We tend to feel our emotions in our stomachs, hence the term, 'gut feeling'. Our emotions are our feelings and they are connected to our spiritual wellness and our culture and society that surrounds us. It is important to pause when we are feeling any extreme emotion whether perceived as either positive or negative and check in with ourselves to ensure we aren't acting on those emotions in haste.

Q3: Physical is found here. Physical is connected to our overall physical health, this includes our diet and exercise and health regime.

G: And the physical is your health, like eating. Eating stupid since December the 1st (*Laughter*). Gaining twenty pounds (*laughs*). Looking after health means more than just eating well.

C: But also acknowledging that part of the reason why you're eating is because you're emotionally... you're having emotional stress and mental stress and that's causing the spiritual to sort of break down a bit which...

G: Right.

C: So we do food, we do drink, we do whatever instead of dealing with the spiritual part of it.

G: Yeah. And I pray and pray "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry" (*Laughter*). (Mackie 2016)

Physical is understand the birth, life, death cycle. Many people across the earth believe in some form of an afterlife, so death is not an ending, just a new beginning, which is precisely what the wheel teaches us as well.

Q4: Mental is found here. This includes our thoughts and attitudes. Much of the joy or equally, discomfort that we experience in life, is due to our mental state of mind. For example, this is an excerpt of my discussion with my Grandmother about my own mental distress in my life:

- C: To realize, and I have realized it because I've read so many books and things like that. That the reason why my emotional life is so out of control is because my mind won't stop telling me things that aren't true, you know. So, it's actually, most people try to fix the emotional part 'cause that's what's causing them problems but they don't realize that if they change their thinking, the emotional part would fix itself.
- G: And even change their body, change your...
- C: Relieve the stress.
- G: The walk you walk, the way that you strengthen yourself by using your back and all that. Yeah, it's real important. That's when you start realizing all that you can do. Sure, I bet you couldn't go through a half a day without thinking about all these things.

Importantly, the point my grandmother is making in the above conversation, is that each of the four aspects of ourselves, are in direct relation to the others. We may feel as though only one part is off balance, but if we look deeper and consider all parts, we may find that what we thought was the problem, was not actually the problem at all. This is what wheel medicine teaches us; to look deeper; to consider all aspects of ourselves, our personalities, our actions in order to become more fully honest with ourselves and to heal.

The Medicine Wheel can be taken even further. It is possible to continue for hours discussing all its different aspects. There are the four elements and the four aspects of problem solving as well. When discussing all of its parts, for example, the four seasons alone can create a conversation that lasts well into the night. This co-creation process, births insights into what we can learn from the seasons that can be implemented into one's own life. The wheel is meant to include every and all aspect of life as we know it. Its holistic essence shows us how we can choose to heal our brokenness through all that life has to teach us, if we are only willing to pay attention.

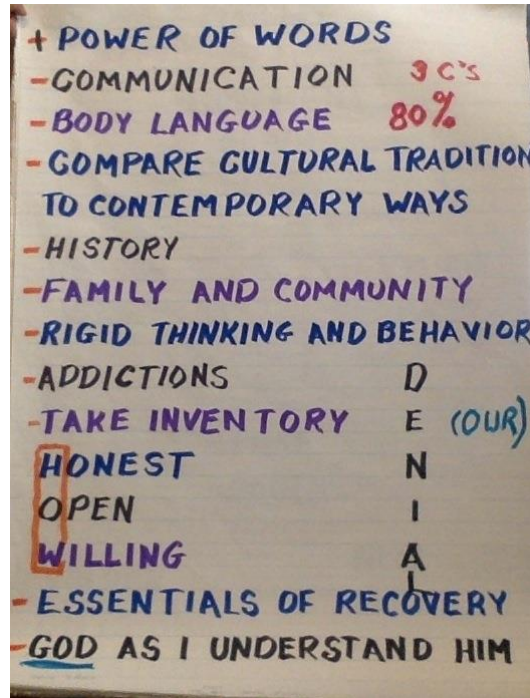
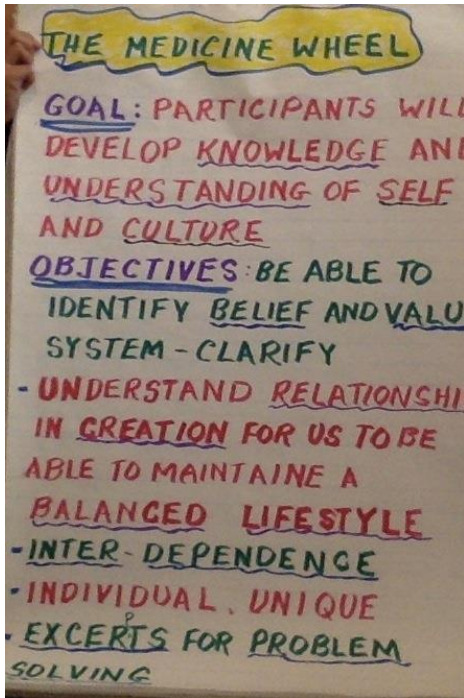
Intellectual Labour

Throughout my academic career I have come to know that the Wheel can also be used as its own methodology. Because of its versatility, and its inclusiveness, it can be used when discussing any aspect of life as we know it. It is not only an excellent tool for

addictions counselling, it can be used when discussing anything. I used the Wheel in a paper about the environment in one of my graduate classes. It can be used in discussions of anything and everything, from media relations to politics to education to family life. Utilizing the Wheel as a methodological approach in academia, allows the researcher to ask and answer a vast array of questions with great insight as well as structure.

Indigenous research is a form of resistance to centuries of colonial domination. As such, Indigenous research is part of a much broader political, economic, cultural and spiritual project of Indigenous resurgence. As the well-known Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. observed, for hundreds of years “whites have had unrestricted power to describe Indians any way they choose” (1998, 66), but Indigenous peoples are now reclaiming that power for themselves, including in university spaces. In the process, Indigenous research is transforming the social sciences, bringing new ways of being and knowing to the academy and undertaking research in ways that often challenge taken-for-granted Enlightenment models of research (Coburn, 2013, p. 52).

This quote from Elaine Coburn in “Indigenous Research as Resistance”, demonstrates the need for Indigenous scholars to have the opportunity to choose their own way within the academy. The resistance is the research itself, as refusing to be bound by colonial practices within the institution, is an act decolonizing the student, the teacher and all those that follow.



The photos above are two examples of the ways in which my Grandmother would break down the Medicine Wheel in her workshops, so that the clients could easily see the goals and objectives of the workshop and the issues to be addressed for self-realization.

Because Round Lake Treatment Centre was, and continues to be an Indigenous based recovery centre, their mission is grounded in culture as treatment. It was for this reason that my grandmother's work with the Medicine Wheel came to be a useful tool for her in working with clients at the centre in order to present a practical guide for living in a way that was culturally relevant. It was through this process of developing the Medicine Wheel into a therapeutic resource that the processes of intellectual labour were most apparent. In order to provide treatment to individuals seeking recovery from addictions in such a way that reflected the impact of returning to one's culture became a process of creation through what my grandmother had been taught through experience and education. Because the treatment centre was one of the first of its kind, this required that my grandmother rely on her intellect, her instincts, her senses and her Higher Power; mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. One of the ways my Grandmother was able to present trusted recovery techniques with the use of the Medicine Wheel, was through the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The following is a brief summary of the way the Medicine Wheel can be used to present the Twelve Steps as both a recovery tool and as an example of cultural integrity. First, the twelve steps as written in the fourth edition of the basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, also referred to as *The Big Book*:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to thme all.
9. Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001, pp. 50-60).

To situate the steps into the Wheel, we begin with Step One, “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” Being “powerless over alcohol” means that we are physically addicted and “our lives had become unmanageable” means that our emotional lives have created chaos within us to the point that self-medicating is necessary for survival. Therefore, this step falls within

the *physical* and the *emotional* quadrants of the Wheel. Step Two, “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity” means that we use our mental faculties to learn about and to begin to believe in something greater, to believe that we are not beyond help. This step falls within the *mental* quadrant of the wheel. Step Three, “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as *we understood Him*” means that through the process of coming to believe, we then make a decision to have faith in a Higher Power and to proceed openly and honestly with the rest of the steps. This step is about our spiritual natures and learning to trust that we are not alone. This step falls within the *spiritual* quadrant of the Wheel. As the client continues with the steps they continue to go around and around the Wheel, utilizing each of the lessons the Wheel contains to find health and recovery. For an Indigenous person seeking recovery, presenting the Steps through the lens of the Medicine Wheel enables the client to address potential personal issues with the colonial nature of religious ideas, while bringing in other spiritual ideas important to Indigenous people, such as nature and the sacredness of animals, Mother Earth and Father Sky, the seasons, elements and what each of these aspects of the Wheel can teach the individual as they utilize an effective recovery strategy that is based in Western theology.

Reflections of a Granddaughter

My grandmother’s work has changed many lives. She remembers many faces and many names of the people she worked with at Round Lake Treatment Centre. She has been a blessing to the lives of Indigenous people and of alcoholics and addicts across this country and beyond. My grandmother is one of the strongest, kindest, warmest people I have ever known. She is one of those people who has a light inside them that draws others to her. I have been told so many times in my life that I am just like her, and that is the greatest compliment I could have ever imagined. Working with her on this project has been so incredibly powerful, painful, fulfilling and difficult. I feel as though I have been on the proverbial roller coaster. It has been difficult to find a balance between my Westernized standards of thinking and what I feel in my heart as an Indigenous woman and to marry the two, to write in such a way that presents my research and my experience, both eloquently and honestly. I have experienced much pain throughout this journey, emotional turmoil, mental anxiety, physical exhaustion and spiritual bankruptcy. I have also experienced moments of emotional joy, mental clarity,

physical strength and spiritual freedom. No matter what I am doing or what state I find myself, I can always look to the Medicine Wheel to find out what needs attention or when it's time to rest. So much of what I know today has been taught to me by the strong women in my family, especially my mother and my grandmother.

In 1985 a documentary crew came to Round Lake Treatment Centre to make a film about the centre. When they arrived and after having spent some time with my grandmother, they changed the tone of the film and it became about my grandmother and her work. The film is a testament to her sense of responsibility to the people she worked with at the centre and to the many hearts she carries inside her as she continues along on this journey. I would like to conclude with a quote from that film, *Walking In Pain* (1985), about Marjorie Mackie, the Indigenous woman, the scholar, the teacher, the counsellor, the friend, the warrior, the fighter, the survivor, the thinker, the speaker, the writer, the inspirer, the truth-seeker, the truth-teller, the feeler, the show-er, the doer, the mother, the aunty, the Grandmother:

I think it was three years ago. Round Lake gave me a shawl and it was 'walk the red road on it'. Alden helped make it and Alice, you know a bunch...and it was at the powwow. I was so overwhelmed with that, and they gave me that shawl and then they played an honour song. And I went around and you know, people had their hands up in honour and children...(shakes her head and starts to cry). Here I go again...(smiles and covers her face with her hand, wiping away tears, trying to gather herself.) And that's absolutely humbling. It's not ego. The life I lived, that people want to hear anything about what I think, feel or see...that's the incredible part that will always keep me, kinda...(smiles and wipes away a tear.) It's incredible. (Laughs a joyful laugh).

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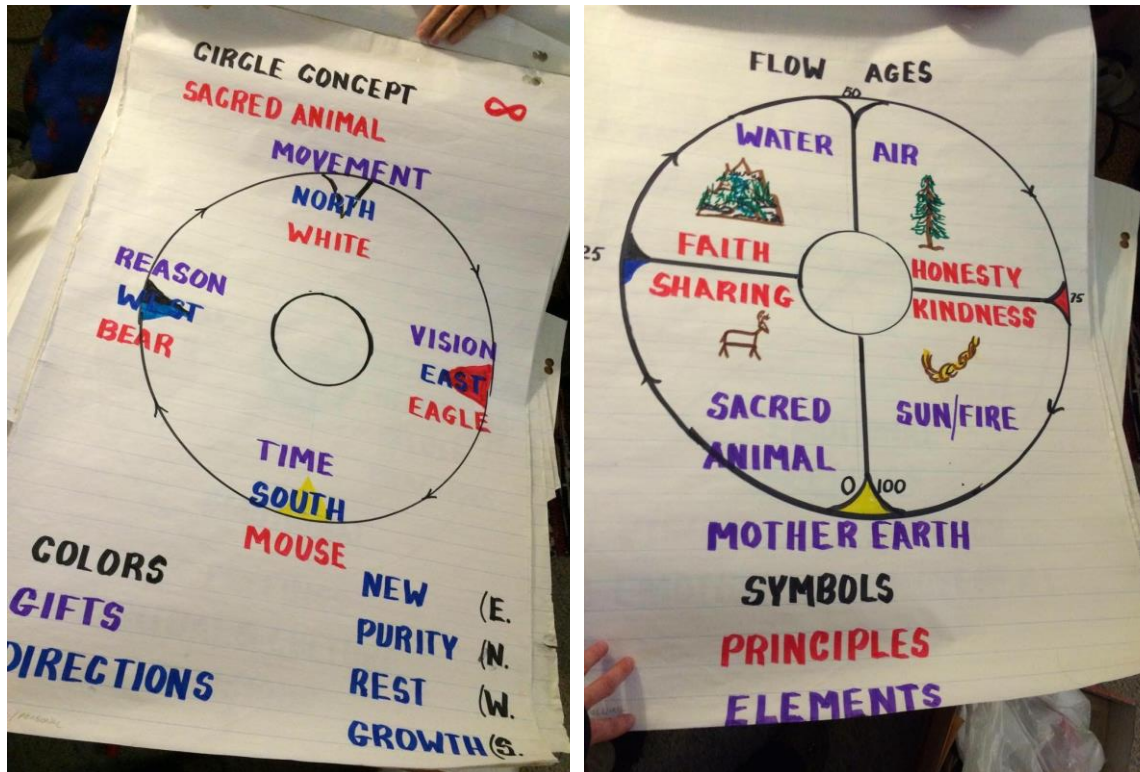
Supplemental Interview A

The following is the transcribed interview between Marjorie Mackie and Christina Coolidge. “G” is for, “grandmother” and “C” is for, “Christina”.

- G: The Medicine Wheel was one of the greatest gifts I ever received in life. *(inaudible)* being in Saskatchewan...when I was growing up in Saskatchewan, our family were called 'half-breeds', and that whole feeling of being a half-breed, it was that we were really something awful, like evil and terrible and not fit for humans. We were always so ashamed. In fact, one time I came in to my mom and said, “mom, Darlene called me a 'squat'”, which meant 'squaw'. [laughing]
- C: You thought it was 'squat'. *(laughing)*
- G: 'Squat'. *(laughing)* I was crying. So, I mean that life was around us. I don't know how it got there or who brought it there but there was always this thing wrong...it was just wrong. Anyhow, what happened, it's not what happened, but it's how awful I felt about being a half-breed where ever we went in situations. In Saskatchewan there's a high group or high percentage of First Nation people, and they were people who are out in the streets and drunks and stuff. Well thats where I would see them. They were the prostitutes...just the whole thing that made half-breeds or 'indians' was the word, that was so hurtful.
- G: And to me, it *(the medicine wheel)* is the most important thing, ever, ever, ever.
- C: I do too.
- G: Cause when I received the MW, there were two parts. I became a person then. For the first time in my life, First Nation people would hug me, they'd say 'our people say this' and I was included in 'our people' and, like 'cause I was always so far away from being able to be accepted by people. And the foster home and all thatsituation added to it because it meant I knew that we didn't deserve any people...we weren't worth...We had kids shopping days in Kilburn Hall (orphanage) and my brother and sister and myself were never given a home...nobody ever. You know we all had our best clothes on, we had to wear them for that day and I smiled and smiled and everybody that saw us and I tried so hard to be acceptable, but at the end of the day, you go to bed and you know you're not. I used to cry 'cause I was...and so that when the Medicine Wheel was taught to me, it was quite simple in the beginning, and it was so direct and

clear for me that i had these two gifts that was given to me, and I became a person then. And I started working with the MW as my inner self and that's where I did my work, because the wonderful part about the wheel is that everybody has it if they want it. It's right within your own self of where you think your soul or your heart or whatever word you use to describe where that is...the cathedral, people have called it so many things. Anything that means sacred and powerful. Of course, I use Creator, the maker of all things...the best one ever heard was, 'He is so great that He is without a name.' And I know I heard that somewhere and I've never heard the word again or what it meant. He is so great, He is without a name. And that means it to me. I get these little shivers.

- C: 'Cause you can't like, um, you can't label it. You can't give it an image or a something, because then it becomes that thing, but it's too big for any of it.
- G: It's like an embryo.
- C: Yeah
- G: It is like that.
- C: Yeah, I know what you mean.
- G: It is like that.
- C: MmmHmm. Creation and miracles and...
- G: Yes. *(Draws the circle in the middle of the circle)*
- G: And at the center of our being, at the center of all things there is a part of yourselves that is our spirit and whatever name you call it. I call it the Creator. At the center of everything, person or thing, like people think that Indians have so many Gods, but actually what we recognize is that there are, that everything has a living center.
- C: And that that center is connected to everything.
- G: That's right.



The first photo shows how the medicine wheel looks as she begins. These photos are a part of the actual flip chart that she used during her workshops. Please notice the circle within the circle. This is the living center, to which she is referring. It is where God, Creator, Spirit, or however one chooses to label the sacredness within themselves, can be found. What follows is my grandmother's description of the four colours of humans, the gifts, the keepers of the gifts, which are the animals represented and the four directions, all of which can be seen in the first photo as well.

The second photo shows the principals by which we should live and each principle is represented by a symbol. This is where she introduces the elements and if you notice the ages around the circle, the first quarter is 0-25, the second quarter is 25-50, the third quarter is 50-75, and the third quarter 75-100. These demonstrate stages in a human life cycle.

- G: And so, we begin at this part of our circle with the Red people. Why we do the red, of course, is because its First Nations and Aboriginals of the world. The keepers of the earth that have been there for centuries, centuries, millions of years.

- C: Indigenous people of every continent.
- G: (Nodding head) Every continent. Every place somebody had to 'discover' our people. And right away they made a whole lot of conclusions. Boy they never knew anything of the story and very few people ever knew the story. (Dr. Madess knew). So that's the beginning with the Red people. And each direction has a colour and a gift. So, I'll just do the colours now. Red. Yellow would be the Asians or Orientals.
- C: And that includes East Indian descent as well, right?
- G: Yes. And probably Polynesian as well. And the black and the blue represents the Black nation (African population). And the White people. Anglos.
- C: Anglos. European?
- G: Yeah. We just say white people. I guess it's part of the culture or something. Okay, then we're given a gift. Red, Yellow, Black and White. And we're given a gift.
- C: Red people have the gift of vision.
- G: Which means, behind, see things coming, know that it's coming, expect things to come, because whatever you perceive with, some people can't see the consequences of their actions, so they don't even really put it together that when they put something in place, or I mean, yeah, or in the beginning, they don't see the end, and the consequences that might happen to people, they...
- C: Like the pipeline.
- G: Yes, yes. And I was thinking residential schools and all that. There's so many. You see. Yeah. So, their gift is the gift of vision. To see. And that's the best because... People hearing that big brother is going to come across the ocean one day, and be there with us. And they knew it would happen. They had no idea...
- C: Well Lee actually, reminded me of when we went to that, when mum and I went to that gathering, um, Lee was there and he talked about how they knew that the people were coming, they knew that all the colours of man were coming, and that's why they had the corn in different colours. And I can't remember exactly what the story was, but that they had this corn that they were preparing for all these different colours of man that were going to be arriving. So, they were actually getting ready for them as their guests to welcome them and stuff.

- G: Well, he's worked with it so, him and I used to work together, we'd go out and do workshops. So, he knows a lot about me and I know a lot about him. As far as how we believe. So, um. These prophecies are really good, and that's really, really great experience for somebody to realize.
- G: And the Asian, the yellow. They were given the gift of time. They're a very ancient colour. And they have been. They have worked very hard to discover. They have quite a holistic, they have a holistic way of living and they're ancient like, they were in Asia, Europe, no... Those people who live on the Nile...
- C: Egyptians.
- G: Egyptians yeah! They're, they're ancient, and they're, they didn't travel like that, but they knew so much. This is a very rich culture, and we take, borrow from, some of the, from the Buddha, the teachings of Buddha.
- G: So, we go over here to black. And the gift is the gift of reason. I remember that was my first question I asked the person who was doing the wheel, I asked, "Black? Why would it be black?" Because I was thinking of uh, Sammy Davis Jr., and they were anything but reason, they were...
- C: They were celebrities.
- G: They overtake the world ... Jazz...
- C: Yeah, jazz and blues.
- G: So, the gift of reason, I didn't see that. Anyway, what it is, is that they have been enslaved, everybody, every other nation enslaved the black people. I wouldn't say that our people thought that way, but other cultures did.
- C: Well and I think, a lot of aboriginal people and black people were enslaved at the same time.
- G: Oh absolutely.
- C: In North America anyway.
- G: There's a lot to these, we'll do it as we go around and round. And, the gift for the white people: the gift of movement, or specialization. Remember in the power of words, of what it means. It means discovery. It means...

C: Progress. Progression.

G: It means uh... Oh, here I'm thinking of different names. Guy who started the electricity.

C: Um, inventions. Discovery.

G: Yeah, they specialize to just take it out of the air and make a wire and have it travel! And people could pick up the phone and travel so far away... So that was the gift of movement and how much we use it. So, it means... really, it means a lot of technical excellence. Well, we're all using it today but we also know it's a more global development at that.

C: Yeah, and especially now with the internet.

G: Absolutely. Everything. That gift, a lot of people have contributed to it. So then see what made me so deeply involved with the medicine wheel as I have, instead of having a 'half-breed', I had two gifts. That didn't make me twice as good as anybody. But a half became one. And that was the biggest, that was the biggest gift I've ever had inside, to think...

C: About your worth.

G: Yeah. I was 46 I think. No, I was 40 when I got the medicine wheel.

G: Okay... Oh gee, let's start over here...(drawing) Umm, this is a mountain. What do you think the mountain represents?

C: A mountain?

G: Yes.

C: It's sturdy, and strong.

G: Yes.

C: Solid.

G: Okay. Faith will be represented with the mountain.

G: You have anything else, you put it down.

C: Okay.

G: Faith. Faith is represented by the mountain. Because the mountain comes up from Mother Earth and it's strong, and sure. Faith can move mountains; it's a belief for a lot

of people. If you have faith, you don't have doubt, and that's the thing we're talking about here, it's the principles. Yes, it's a representation of faith. And so, over here of course is a tree, and it represents honesty. It is to be honest. There is nothing as honest as a tree. We know how to, when the wind comes along and moves a tree? And as I'm telling you one sentence, I might change my mind that I'm gonna tell you this, or I'll teach you a wrong teaching just so that I can be dishonest. I can be telling you honestly, and then just switch, like the wind changed my mind. And that's how we lie. We lie to save our self or guard our self, or we don't wanna be belittled by saying we know this or that and you know. It's one of the biggest. Well look at them. Faith, and look at honest. Those are very difficult to accomplish. In fact, it's working with us every day. Every day we have our faith. Every day we have our honesty. And how we do it, whether it makes us a healthy individual, or an unhealthy person. (*drawing*)

G: This is representative of kindness with a braid of sweetgrass, but it can be with sage, or it can be anything that the people in the area consider as their sacred root.

C: Like cedar in the west coast?

G: Yes, in the west. And it's everywhere. It's always giving. It's the stuff that always gives, and asks nothing back. And yet people abused it, for many things. Well, for all that stuff it's all part of that, so that it's always giving. Those are the principles. And the fourth principle is sharing. Sharing is to give. To give to others. Sometimes it's money. Sometimes it's food. Sometimes it's a good bird. Sometimes it's whatever it is. But when you're thinking of these, what is really important about the principles is, when you're working with faith, what do you- what happens when you start thinking about faith? What's the other part of faith that you're thinking about? And I will put it this way, for every action, for every action, there is an equal and opposite...

C: Reaction.

G: So, when you're working with faith, you're working with the opposite. What is the opposite of faith?

C: Fear.

G: Fear.

C: Doubt.

G: Doubt, that's right.

- G: Doubt is a good one. Like, but, you don't have to write it down because, well like that thing the other night that was on TV. I mean I was just really, holy, yeah, I'm just a fallen Christian. If only I could send them \$52 each month for the next year-
- C: You'd be saved!
- G: I'd be saved! (*laughter*)
- G: Just about fell for it. But I checked everything because I knew, you know, that's another scam. Yeah, we can, and this is where, here's the honesty here. You gotta you know, you've got a relationship with somebody, and a friendship and all that stuff. And then you hear your friend is telling people, you're this, you're that, and here the person you were having faith with here and they become dishonest, and telling rumours about you that hurt you as a person. And why are they doing that? So, then you find the boundary for this friend. And you back off, and you don't have that friend as honestly as you'd like a person. And so, you limit, you set a boundary, use boundary often because people see it as a word that describes things pretty quickly. And I don't think people are used to saying, well if I do this, then that is a boundary. It is one of our real primary considerations when having a friend.
- C: And boundaries are really like a healthy thing.
- G: Absolutely.
- C: They're really necessary, in every part of life.
- G: We make 'em healthy by putting limitations on some things. Like all the ten, ten sins?
- C: The what?
- G: The ten major sins of the world.
- C: Oh yeah, seven, seven. There's probably ten now though.
- G: Oh, I have ten!! (*laughter*)
- C: There probably is ten now I bet ya, with the internet!
- G: We're showing what represents the principle. These principles, mountain – faith, tree – honesty, braid or smudge – kindness, and sharing is the animal. Now we talk about animal. Sharing, represented by an animal. This doesn't even look like an animal... (*referring to the animal she drew on the wheel*).

- C: Sure it does! That's not an animal you want to hunt though, 'cause you'd starve.
- G: That's a deer really, so we'll give him one hump. *(laughter)*
- G: And so, four-legged. The four-legged give themselves, and that's a big one on how you treat animals. I know in the culture, of any Aboriginal group, or Indigenous group, that they have an animal that is sacred. And we have in our self, a sense of an animal that represents our sacredness. I just love to watch those animal shows because I learn all the properties of animals, and how they are, and they include our dreams, they include everything. And how we honour the animals, I think it's really a strength of a culture, because they use animals, they still use animals for fields, and they're to respect animals.
- C: As being part of the sacred circle.
- G: Absolutely.
- G: So see this is for sharing. These represent the basic principles of life. Now how it works is, you have faith, honesty, kindness, and sharing. What a wonderful person that you must be. Because you have them operating fully in your life. And how quickly it can change is...I'll, I'll tell a friend a lie. I'll lie about a friend of mine, and I'm being dishonest to this friend. And then what have I got? I have kindness, but not really. I'm sharing to everybody the wrong information about that person. I have faith, and obviously, I don't have much faith with that friend of mine. So, then what happens, well, if I told my friend a lie, I have to go to that person and tell them, hey I've been telling people this. I told them this about you. Which was something that I shouldn't have done because I'm being dishonest, and I'm sorry that I did that. And I might lose a friend, but I gain back my principle. And I start over, you know? And so, then it works again.
- C: So then it gets back into balance.
- G: Alright the circle concept. You know.
- C: Mmhmm
- G: So we know what the circle concept is. Once you join, there's no beginning and there's no end. It's like eternity. See I put that eternity symbol? I even say... this is a Metis symbol. And there are some that are Metis.
- C: Mmhmm.

- G: And the sacred animal. The eagle, that's for everybody. That's about vision. It's vision of an eagle that can see so far. They call it eagle...
- C: ...eagle eye vision.
- G: Yah. And of course, when its south, the mouse, with close vision. They can't see... they can just see past themselves. The bear, and then why I put the bear there, it can be brown, black or white for the north. Snow and all that stuff. The north pole and south pole
- G: The East is for newness. So, east, south. This is south. West. North. So, you start with, what is this direction? The left.
- C: The left? East. Yeah.
- G: The sun comes up.
- C: The sun comes up, yeah.
- G: Yeah. South. (*points to sheet*) South and north.
- C: Like on the left it's like, your heart is there so love is there. Your emotions are there.
- G: Yes, all that stuff. And your feelings, well they're all over the map.
- C: They come in your gut.
- G: They can really be...well that's trauma stuff too on the deep end of it. But not to be afraid of that. You're not gonna die from your feelings.
- C: Sometimes you want to but you're not gonna! (*Laughter*)
- G: Ok, so that's north, east, south and west. (*Instructs Christina to write large letters 'E, W, N, S' for each of the directions*). Ok, and you know what the gifts are of those. And what are we talking about then? We're talking about the sacred- their own sacred animal (*points to inner circle of the medicine wheel*) or, you know that sacred trees are... every tree is sacred so you don't have to worry. And you know, that time, that time is when I talk about Mother Earth and Father Sky and how we've got our framework with north, east, south, west and all that. They're a relationship.
- C: And so, with the directions, it says "new, purity, rest".
- G: Yes.

- C: So, East is new, cause it's a new day.
- G: It's a new day, the sun comes up in the east so it's a new day. And we'll have that day before us and we have this gift of time. This concept of time... use it with care and realize what you've got. Like, we talk about now. Now is right now and your views are different even though we're right now. Right now, I love you so much. (*Laughter*)
- G: So, you could say. That stuff is good for talking about time and saying remember one day at a time is all we can live. We can hope for the future, we can learn from our mistakes or gain with the good stuff we've learned, 'cause we've also learned many good things in our life and we just weren't in shape or conditioned to bring them out into our living world. And they come back, some of them, if we're really good. The goodness comes back. It all comes back good instead of rotten.
- Oh yes, purity, south. South. Now that's when you do all the powwows, the beading, all the gatherings and all the spiritual making. You do the powwows and all that in the summer. And it's a great time. And if you get in to the circuit, it's a lot of fun, some people actually do that. It's time to be busy, to do your garden and your flowers or whatever. Time to get busy with all the stuff that you do during the summer. And some people are travelling.
- Yeah, and so the west, when the sun goes down. And that's a wonderful time too. Like, you can share some of the enjoyment that you've had. I'm sure you've gone out in the morning when the sun was going down and you're close to water and you can just see and smell everything and just... oh it's so, it's so...
- C: Yeah.
- G: Yeah! You know. (*Laughter*)
- C: There's not a word for it. (*Laughter*)
- G: Yeah that's right! And the same when you had a good day and you're tired, a good tired. Cause you've done things you know that are good for you today.
- C: Positive things.
- G: Well, even when I was resting, that's a positive thing to take too. You thank the day for the wonderful time and check in with yourself. "How are you feeling now?"
- G: And of course, white (*points back to sheet*). It can be, it can mean... it mostly is a white bear. But a lot have the

seals, a lot have. Oh, and have you heard the throat singing?

C: Yeah

G: Oh my god, I think that's such a fantastic sound. Oh, I love the throat singing. I think it's great. They have competitions.

C: Yeah, they do.

G: I love them. Oh, I love them. I could listen to them all day long, and all the other things that we play. Every song is a prayer. Every song. No matter what they're singing or doing, it's a prayer.

C: Yes. And so that's purity? That's the one with the white snow.

G: Yes

C: Like a purifying...

G: Pure turns white, everything's cool. *(Laughter)*.

C: It cleans it all off.

G: Yeah, because Mother Earth takes a rest and Father Sky looks after all the stuff. I talk about grounding with Mother Earth and Father Sky.

C: Oh yeah. Actually, that's what I've been... For the last few days I've been wearing my moccasins out and...

G: I saw that!

C: It feels, you feel a connection to the Earth with them on.



The above photo shows the four aspects of humans, mental, spiritual, emotional and physical.

G: Yes. And this is (*points to a section of the wheel*) taken out of this part. The spiritual, spirituality is made up of your beliefs and your values and you practice this, it means how you do things. Some people don't realize that. Like, you can be really negative in your way without saying a word. And you can be really positive without saying a word. And, we communicate with each other so that we can understand what we're talking about. And sometimes you say "what did you say about...." And you check up. And you either have people who share your beliefs or you say "no, I don't". But I say in there that I've had Muslims, I've had everything in the workshops. And everybody brings something to the table that's new. We always learn something new. And that's the wonderful part about life. Things are always new. And if you think they're old and rotten, then you better shine it up and get clean inside (*Laughter*). And our values are what we feel is important. Like, name some.

C: Um... honesty. Faithfulness.

G: Honour our love.

C: Mmhmm.

- G: Honour, that's a pretty good word and it's used a lot. But it's true. Cause it is like a spiritual belief too.
- C: Yeah. The things that are important to us, I guess. Morality.
- G: Yes! That's right. That's right exactly. And emotional. I like that spiritual culture and just, the wheel (*Laughter*). And then I put the religious things because, a lot of the religious words end up in spiritual. 'Cause a lot of the things are common in religion and spirituality.
- C: Yeah.
- G: And I like this one, somebody told me that, "if you're arguing about religion or spiritual, you're both wrong."
- C: Yes.
- G: You can't. If you wanna have people explore your spirituality or your culture, you gotta include all those things... everything.
- And the physical is your health, like eating. Eating stupid since December the 1st. (*Laughter*). Gaining twenty pounds (*laughs*). Looking after health means more than just eating well.
- C: But also acknowledging that part of the reason why you're eating is because you're emotionally... you're having emotional stress and mental stress and that's causing the spiritual to sort of break down a bit which...
- G: Right.
- C: So we do food, we do drink, we do whatever instead of dealing with the spiritual part of it.
- G: Yeah. And I pray and pray "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry" (*Laughter*). Oh, and physical! Here you go around the medicine wheel and you're going. You know, you can figure out where you are in your life cycle and see where you think you'd be. I remember getting my white hair of wisdom. Well, they were there anyways, doesn't say I had the wisdom. (*Laughter*) But they were there. I don't think your health starts to decline really until you're about...I don't know, it's in the 50s or 60s, your 50s or 60s that you start getting signs of uh...
- C: Just little things too even.
- G: Yep.

C: Having to wear glasses, having to, like can't quite hear as well...

G: Yep, go on! (*Laughter*)

C: Back pain. Muscle aches and joint pain.

G: That all comes. And as you go around to your spiritual maturity, uh... honestly, I know a lot of old drunks.

C: (*Laughs*) Yeah.

G: And I can treat them with respect

C: Mmhmm. Yah.

G: You gotta say the same things as you would to a healthy elder, 'cause that poor person...

C: Well, and an Elder had earned that title by having wisdom and going through all of it and surviving (*Laughter*).

G: Yes. But you can change, right?

C: Mmhmm.

G: You can change that attitude at any time. And it'll stop a lot of your pain. So, if you're experiencing pain. You know, it could be coming anywhere. Like, say if you were really physically ill. You know, you gotta remember a lot of this spirituality stuff.

C: And part of spiritual is healing is, even if the body is coming to an end, the spiritual, having a strong sense of spirituality, will heal the mind. And allow the body to go. Cause it's just the body, it's just the vessel.

G: But it's a good vessel.

C: It is a good vessel (*Laughter*).

C: But sometimes it doesn't work anymore.

G: Yes.

C: And so, being spiritual means, you believe you have a spirit. So, you're not really going anywhere.

G: You can have, you can experience spiritual experiences sitting in your chair.

C: Mmhmm. I have had. (*Laughter*).

- G: So that's the kind of thing you share with them. (*Referring to those with whom she/I share the medicine wheel teachings.*) Like, 'cause they'll want to know. They'll want to tell you something. One tells and then one tells. It gets really...a lot of good stuff happens. And then so you just "ok" and then "let's go down to the emotion now". You just shift it. Always give them the gear that you're going to change it. And say "ok", we will go down to the emotional part. What are some of these things we should look at? And they start, they see the words and they start talking right away. It's always from them, that's what's good. That's what's good. And they don't know that that's in their life. And they don't know that it's possible that you have all these things going on in your whole circle, in your...
- C: Well, and to know when you're in emotional distress, like, I get anxiety. Especially in the last few years.
- G: Yep.
- C: To realize, and I have realized it because I've read so many books and things like that. That the reason why my emotional life is so out of control is because my mind won't stop telling me things that aren't true, you know. So, it's actually, most people try to fix the emotional part 'cause that's what's causing them problems but they don't realize that if they change their thinking, the emotional part would fix itself.
- G: And even change their body, change your...
- C: Relieve the stress.
- G: The walk you walk, the way that you strengthen yourself by using your back and all that. Yeah, it's real important. That's when you start realizing all that you can do. Sure, I bet you couldn't go through a half a day without thinking about all these things.
- C: For sure, first ten minutes. (*Laughter*) Usually most people are like, ugh I need coffee. That's the physical, that's addiction (*Laughter*)
- G: Well, yes. That's where a lot of people find out they have addiction, 'cause they don't know.
- C: They don't realize.
- G: Oh, I love the values, beliefs and practices!

The next section is where my Grandmother implements the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous into the wheel. The following are the twelve steps as written in the fourth edition of the basic text for alcoholics anonymous, also referred to as *The Big Book*:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to thme all.
9. Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001, pp. 50-60)

C: We stopped with the mental, spiritual, emotional.

G: Yeah, we should have put that on our body. `Cause this is where like, you're working from this side always (*points to mental side of medicine wheel*) and your left side, is your spiritual thing. So, you're always working so that when people are watching you, you can say "Here on this side"

G: So, the first step.

C: "Admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable."

G: Where do you think that is?

C: Mental.

G: Yeah.

C: Well, I guess it's the addiction part so I guess it would be physical.

G: Yeah, physical. With Step 1, what you do is decide that you're going to run your life without alcohol and make the choice each day. You know, my life's a mess, that's what I used to say. Because unmanageable didn't mean nothing to me. I didn't know it meant.

C: Well I think a lot of people, the word 'unmanageable', they allow that to be like: "my life's not unmanageable, I've got a job, I've got my car". And when I realized, 'cause I hadn't quite, like the first time I hadn't lost everything yet. So, it was like, I wasn't that unmanageable you know. But what was unmanageable was my thinking and my emotions and my inner life was so unmanageable, I couldn't even stand it. That's the important part.

G: Yeah, you didn't even know about that.

C: No. I didn't know.

G: You didn't think that there was even that.

C: I was thinking about the outside stuff that's unmanageable but that's really irrelevant actually, it's the inside stuff, cause the outside will catch up, trust me (*laughs*).

G: So, what other word, just put 'mess' or something.

C: Mess. Messy, messy. (*Laughter*)

G: And then, what's the Step 2?

C: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

G: Came to believe. Just a minute. Idea, thought, attitude.

- C: Which is up here. (*Points to 'mental' part of the Medicine Wheel*)
- G: Yeah. Mental, Step 2. Came to believe. The key word is 'believe' and that's in your head. Yeah and it kind of leaves at the end. Oh! It can restore me to sanity if I learn or if I want. So, then what you do is you look at Step 3, which is going to go that way (*Christina writes it on the side of the medicine wheel closest to the top of the screen*). What do you do with spirituality in Step 3?
- C: "Turn your will and your life over to the care of God as we understand him."
- G: "As we understand him." God, spiritual, third step. And then you can go on, I said the 4, 5 and 6 on this side,
- C: 4, 5, 6 and 7?
- G: Yep and 12, like go all the way around, keep going around (*Christina motions a counter clockwise motion around the medicine circle.*)
- G: See for me, if they're doing Step 1, 2, 3, 4 and are working on their 4 by about 9 months, that's probably sort of normal. Yeah, but anyways, that's what I've found with the program.
- C: Yeah, that's good.
- G: Ok, let's do this and you can do the steps with them and if you do the 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12. Pretty good to include to think about the ideas. And you tell 'em, "stay at it!" You can get where you really got it, where you want to have it. And that's your strength, that's your inner stuff cause that's the stuff that gets out of whack. And it might happen before we know it and we don't know that we're in a wedge or, do you know what I mean? So hurtful that you don't even know what's happening.
- C: Well, I know that a lot of people say you don't have to do a set of steps again if you practice 10, 11 and 12 but nobody ever is. Its progress, right? Nobody ever practices those perfectly for the rest of their life after doing one set of steps. So, what I've learned is that the first set of steps I did were the most difficult because I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't understand it a lot. I didn't know if I was doing it right or, you know. I was kind of just unsure. And so that was the hardest one. Plus, it was the first time you had to say things out loud that you never said out loud. It's the first time you have to... whatever. And now, I love doing the steps because I get it. I get what it's gonna do for me and I actually like can't wait to do a step

5. I wanna get it all out and get it over with. So, I think that's one thing too is that when you're new, you don't understand that it gets easier.

G: And you know as you go, new complications can come up because of

C: Cause often new addictions come up after you quit drinking.

G: Absolutely! (*Laughter*)

C: So, all of a sudden, you're having sex with everybody and you have to do another set of steps on that maybe.

G: That's not an addiction! Haha! (*Laughs*)

C: If it makes you feel good, then I'll get addicted to it. (*Laughs*)

G: So, I'm gonna teach you something today that if you get it, you've got it and you'll always have it. So, then we went through this thing. And I knew this immediately and then the next day they asked me, "who knows it?" I put my hand up because I sure knew it. And they asked me to share. And they were pretty impressed with the thing that God had given to me. That was given to me by God.

C: Mmhmm, that was your journey.

G: Ok, number 1. It's a vision. You started of course, with your left side. Number one is right there. See, hear, touch, smell, taste. Vision is to see. So, you're reminded that this whole thing happens in and outside you. I'll say to them- what are some of your senses?

C: Yeah, the vision.

G: Number two of course is emotions. Let's say you get some hot coffee. You feel it right away. And you get a reaction and you do something about it. That's how fast it can be. We're just separating it so you can see the part of it being a continuous thing. So, then you get your feelings, whether you're tasting something, smelling, touch or hear.

C: It's creating a feeling of some kind, a sensation of some sort.

G: Yeah. Or your last kiss goodnight. Or, all these things happen. And the reason is why it's happening, which says that you're in this place with this person. And you have to think about was it appropriate, inappropriate? Own your

stuff. That's where you have the opportunity to say, you know, "I find you a little too abrasive."

- C: The reason is taking emotion out of it and just being a rational person, not to hurt anyone or to hurt yourself but just to think clearly for it a minute. And move forward.
- G: Agree to disagree. And you do it. So it's just that simple and that easy.
- C: So that's where you make your plan and state your intention right?
- G: Yeah, we did the emotions and now you're feeling. Think about what reason and then think about. Cause you know it's up the other way too. So, when you're going there, you make a plan. And you have an intention or you attend to something that you have to do. But you know, stay on the side of the street and get the hell out. You intend to change something, to make a plan. And if I'd seen him again, I would surely say- whatever- you know and ugh, get rid of the trash, meaning- oh if I see him again next time I'll tell him "blah blah blah" and then it's gone, and then when you see him and you tell him about anything, that's hurt, or felt good, which either way, it's just so simple, step 1, 2, 3, 4. Those are the beginning steps. That probably why 1 2 3 is so that they think about the first steps of the program and so they think that way. About the medicine wheel, the problem-solving part. It's so easy to put in what you want.
- C: Cause really, all you have to do is have some kind of awareness about yourself so you just have to, just focus on where the issue is inside of you, where it's happening inside of you. And once, if you can figure that out, then you can start to make actions, to start moving toward making some kind of action to fix it.
- G: Well what else is missing from there
- C: the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. I know this but I can't...
- G: yes you do. Sexual.
- C: Sexual, right
- G: And wherever you want to put it, is what you decide how much that's in your life or not. Some people will put right around this circle or some people will put it over like, it only happens when I'm this age, or some people will say oh no, i don't do it anymore or whatever. *(Laughter)*

C: yeah

G: So you have to be aware that your mental affects your emotions and so does the sexual at all times and all of them. They affect you all the time by how you're speaking, by how you're making grimaces with your face, how you settle your body, all that. It speaks. No matter if you want it not to, it will anyway.

C: yeah

G: It always does. you know, if people have a bad disposition and they like being grouchy because people leave them alone or stuff like that...

C: yeah

G: So it's the same thing as a principle. Okay, if you've got a physical problem, you're not feeling well, what can you do about it? Can you go to a healer? have you got somebody to go to or do you have to go do some ceremony that you know. You go and look after it, whatever it needs to be. Actually, our discussion about how do you work with your higher power? And it's in here in sobriety that you are working on your spirituality probably harder than you've ever worked. And so, as you're in there, making your mind up, you know, do I believe that it's a creator? You know, they always have a way. Some people say, 'Jesus'. It's just whatever... It's as I want it to be. I'm the one who's developing the spirituality, 'cause God isn't going to come along and trip me when I'm down. It never happens that way. Some people say, like Friday the 13th and then something horrible happens and for the rest of their life, (*mimicking fear*) "Oh, Friday the 13th..."

C: Yeah, self-fulfilling prophesy.

G: Yes. Absolutely. (*Looking over the medicine wheel to the four stages of life*) Isn't it incredible that I'm 75?!

C: You're gonna be 76 in ...

G: Yeah, but I mean- isn't it something! I was supposed to die when I was 55.

G: Yeah...

G: Yeah! Here I'm 75! (*Laughter*)

C: Doctors don't know much 'cause they just focus on the physical.

G: That was a 0 (*points back to the sheet*).

C: 25, 50.

G: 75.

C: 100.

C: So, 25 and 50. At least I'm still in the first quadrant. (*Laughter*) Not 20 anymore. 50-75. 75-100.

G: You're in this one (*points to north direction, then to the west*). 25? No, you're 27.

C: I'm 36. (*Laughs*)

G: Oh. I don't know where to put that. (*Christina and Grammi figure out where Christina's age fits on the medicine wheel*).

C: Hm, I still got a lot to go. That's ok.

G: Isn't that wonderful?!

C: Yeah, it is. Makes me feel better actually.

G: Actually, it should! (*Laughter*).

Supplemental Interview B

The following is the transcript of the interview between Sandy Coolidge and Christina Coolidge. "S" is for, "Sandy" and "C" is for, "Christina".

- S: Well I think it was about in 1978 when Grammi went to NADAP, which is Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program.
- C: Where is that?
- S: They were training Native alcohol and drug counsellors. And it was in British Columbia, and they would get together as a group in Vancouver and different places, because it was groundbreaking.
- C: What year was this again?
- S: I think it was '77/'78, somewhere in there. Grammi sobered up in 1977, so it was probably '78. It was a group of 'Natives', or 'Indians' at that point, they were called, 'Indians', 'Native'. So, then she was sober and an alcohol and drug counsellor in Oliver, and Louise Gabriel approached her and asked her to be on the board of this new treatment center that they were trying to get together. It was an Indian alcohol society. So, she got on the board in '78/'79.
- C: Well I know that Round Lake opened in '79 because that was the same year I was born.
- S: Exactly. So, she was hired as the first set of people that was in there. And the historical setting at that time, for Aboriginal people, or 'Indians' at that time, that group of people had just, I mean, in 1960 was when 'Indians' were allowed to vote in the federal election; The white paper had been introduced in '69; Residential schools were still in full blown; Native women were still losing their status as soon as they married a non-Indian man, a non-status man. Status wasn't even an issue. I mean you were 'Indian' or not. They weren't even 'Indians' if they married a white man, you know, they were white women, considered that way. Grammi grew up in a time where because of the Metis, or the 'half-breed', she didn't fit in either culture. She couldn't fit in the white, she couldn't fit in the Native. She wasn't white enough, red enough, whatever. So, when she discovered, I don't know when she came across the teachings of the medicine wheel, but it was very early on, it was like a light bulb moment for her. It opened her world up because it combined her race

and the white race. She realized that she had gifts, that who she was, was more than just one or the other.

C: Right. They both made her feel more whole than anything.

S: Exactly. Exactly. It also just opened up this whole treatment tool for her. She was working in Round Lake, she was dealing with, I mean the people that were in there were mostly alcoholic. Drugs hadn't been a big issue at that point.

C: Sedatives maybe, but that's about it.

S: Yeah, yeah. And maybe weed, but I don't know. I don't remember. When I worked in there, it was mostly alcohol. And they were people, they were raw. They were fresh from the residential school. The American Indian Movement was, we were singing American Indian Movement songs at all our gatherings at Round Lake, you know, it was fresh.

C: It was right in the middle of it.

S: Yeah, it was fresh. Because it was sort of, I think, there was a movement that was happening, you know, and that treatment center when it opened, and when Grammi was in the midst of it, you know.

C: And it was groundbreaking, really, because it was the first, well I don't know, I can't say it was the first everywhere, but it was one of the first at least, of treatment centers that believed that culture was the treatment, that culture itself was the treatment. I don't know of any other ones, it was, you know, the twelve steps, but it was never about culture. 'Cause that's even their motto, "Culture is Treatment".

S: That's right, exactly. And the culture at that time, was a conglomeration of all types of culture because people, language had been lost, traditions had been lost and people were just getting in touch with the realization that it was okay to be 'Indian'. 'Native', 'First Nation', whatever.

C: Starting to relearn your culture.

S: And starting to reclaim and the protocols back in those days, were very much influenced by, I think, the church. It was pretty extreme. There was a lot of oppression against women. Native women were still losing their status, they weren't even people, really, technically. I remember being told that being on your time was being

dirty, women were dirty. The Influence of the residential school was still, people were colonized and...

C: Sick and angry.

S: Yeah, and addictions and stuff, so Grammi started developing this workshop, this medicine wheel workshop. There was influences, I think, from Tony Stickle, Phil Lane Sr., Lee Brown came along a little later, Gerry Oleman, there was just different people that were there at that time and she started to gather the gifts, she realized that every nation had its own kind of specialty, so food would be buffalo to the Cree, but it would be, maybe whale to the Inuit. So, she adapted this thing, created this thing so they could create their own medicine wheel within themselves. I remember her saying something, that it's like walking with a glass of water and walking in balance is about not losing any of that water. I don't know why that one stuck out for me. But she talked about the gifts and the elements and how the elements are within us. Um, as for context, I'm not sure what else to say.

C: Okay, well, I know that Grammi always says, she'll say, when she's talking about something, like the tree represents honesty and like the eagle is keeper of the gift of vision and she'll say, but you can put whatever works for you in there. She'll always say, that you can exchange them. If someone's from the east coast, they might have different animals over there and they can put those in instead.

S: The medicine wheel is completely fluid. It's flowing and its adaptable in different ways and in different places.

C: But the way that I'm writing it is the way that Grammi teaches it and the way she's always taught it, with the same things she's always taught it with.

S: Yeah, like sweetgrass.

C: Yeah, I want it the way that she does it. I understand that its fluid, but these are her teachings. And some people might perceive some of the teachings as being colonial and with a European influence, so I need to address the colonial part. Like, I think that it does have a European influence because Grammi's got European heritage.

S: And it's in an English language, and treatment, in and of itself is a European concept. You can't not have colonial influence.

C: Well in treatment, in terms of alcohol and drugs, the only reason why there is treatment, or a need for treatment

for Indigenous people, is because of Europeans and because of colonization.

S: Well everybody was colonized because there wasn't really a concept of being colonized and decolonized yet.

C: I mean it's been fairly recent that, I mean Lee Maracle, she wrote *I Am Woman* several years before she was even able to get it published.

S: Well and look at that other one, Emma Laroque. I remember reading in Robyn's class, one of her books, and thinking *holy shit, man*, because it was so out there. All the protocol that had been imposed.

C: And that's what I've noticed about the native female writers, I mean the men don't really write like this as often, it's the women that are challenging everything. Because they are challenging Native ideas. They're not challenging white ideas or western ideas. We already know western ideas are skewed. They are challenging the adoption of these ideas that are being claimed as tradition and they're not. Because even if you think about the elders now, there's nobody alive now that were taught the real traditions, pre-contact.

S: They're all adapted, just like Bill's mom said, "if I'd had a sewing machine, I'd have used it."⁵ I mean, first contact, "these pots are so light. We'll give you this and we'll take these pots to cook with, instead of these rocks." We've adapted traditions and cultures and practices.

C: Yes, when I look at Tseil-Waututh, where they've reclaimed their language, they have language classes, they do cedar weaving, they have ceremony, they've done the elk hunt, they're working to get the salmon beds running, you know, they've got solar panels and they're working with wind turbines and they're doing all these things their beliefs as Indigenous people, but they are doing it in a way that is economical in terms of bringing money in to send people to school to get educated and to be able to develop more of these ideas and build partnerships with "white" [air quote gesture] people and western corporations. They're very healthy. They are world leaders. And of course, they're not perfect, nobody's perfect, but if you look at the National Energy Board, they took that on and they never quit, even though

⁵ My friend, Bill Nelson, told me a story about his late mother. "My mother used to make traditional blankets. Sometimes she would use a sewing machine, and was asked if they were really traditional because she wasn't sewing them all by hand. She told them, 'In the olden days, if we'd had sewing machines, we'd have used them.'"

it was totally unpopular when they first started to oppose the pipeline. But they kept pushing and educating people and now most of the lower mainland is opposed to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. And they were the ones at the front of that. And that's how you combine Indigenous culture with white culture, because we are, this is where we live. So, I need to be able to do that in my writing. Because I am both.

Essay 2:

**The Power of Words and Medicine Wheel Teachings
as a Tool for Decolonization**

I feel as though I am attempting to learn how to breathe underwater. The greatest lesson I am learning through this process, is how far from whole that I actually feel. The only language I speak, write and understand is English. I do not recall ever learning a single Cree or Coast Salish word as a child. The language of my ancestors was so successfully smothered from the breath of my family, that I have had no awareness of its deprivation from my life. I want to convey my experience, but I cannot from the confines of a colonized language within the walls of a colonized institution. My frustration and confusion has overwhelmed me to the point I want to resist the expectations of western scholarship so totally, that I am sure, the words I write would become so obscure and unintelligible that I would wind up cutting off my nose to spite my face. Coming to the realization that the language of my ancestors was not a part of my development, I must acknowledge that this fact alone, makes me feel less Indigenous; it makes me feel as though, I am once again playing 'Indian', rather than actually reclaiming that I am an Indigenous woman of the Cree nation. How do I express to you in English, that my heart feels broken? How do I convey the energy behind the feeling in a language that has taught me that my 'otherness' as a Cree woman has made me worth less than the white man who lays beside me? How do I expose to you as a white woman, my frustration at not being native enough; for looking too white; for not knowing how to speak any language but English; for not knowing how to fancy dance or to sing at the drum, or the protocols for doing so, or even how to bead a cover for my Bic lighter just so I can say that I did it myself? How do I write those words with my white fingers, or speak those words with my white, female lips and have you take them seriously? This is the genocide of which you speak, the holocaust of creative sovereignty and critical thought. I, so utterly feel this loss straight to the marrow of my bones, that there is some sort of tragic eloquence to the unraveling of everything I thought I knew about who I am and where I come from. How do I use all that I have been taught from my western education without reducing all that I am learning from my Grandmother, to just another fable from an illusory, yet simple-minded Indian? And how do I do this in the language that colonized the authenticity of my experience in the first place?

Introduction

The English language is one of colonization with Indigenous history embedded within. It is vital to explore, not only the history of words, or their effects, but to also explore how this acknowledgement can be flipped on its head to decolonize the language. I will do this through the teachings of the medicine wheel by examining some of the ideas found within it; these ideas, which are not meant to be kept in the abstract, but applied to one's own life in order to achieve wholeness and peace of mind, body and spirit.

As a student in the school of communication, the theories of media, mediums, semiotics, discourse, rhetoric, structuralism, myth and the overall consideration of the power of words were fascinating to me. These ideas made the world come alive and put the beat into my heart. I found myself, for the first time, seeing more clearly so much of what I had felt through the years. All of a sudden, I realized that I was not alone in my frustration of perceiving things that others couldn't or wouldn't. I realized that there was an entire discipline dedicated to it and that it was included in the social sciences. It was a miraculous moment for me and I had found myself a home in this school of knowledge.

I will weave together the power of words as a tool of decolonization through the medicine wheel with many of these theories that have so fascinated me throughout my academic career. My challenge in writing as an Indigenous student has been that I am also an academic who has been passionate about western theory and I enjoy the practice of academic writing. I am good at it. I am also good at telling stories and writing poetry. I have struggled to bring these together as I am not only one or the other, I am both; I am many.

In order to accept wheel medicine in the fullness of its teachings, it is vital to explore the power of words, and the ways in which words make manifest ideas and experiences for those who absorb them. Semiology acknowledges that shapes and sounds turn into concrete objects, and concrete objects turn into symbols; from these processes, myths abound which is why critical analysis of word power is necessary, particularly with respect to Indigenous writings and teachings. This is to avoid obscuring Indigenous knowledge with westernized cultural myths embedded within the English language. Discussions of myth inevitably leads to discussions of structuralism, which are

also important to address regarding the power of words in teaching the medicine wheel. Colonization and patriarchy are inherent aspects of Indigenous knowledge and experiences, therefore an assessment of the effects of these overarching systems on resultant teachings of the wheel are required.

Through this evaluation, I have found that Indigenous knowledge which is shared through the English language or any language that is not of our original tongue, is paradoxical by virtue of myths found within language. Myths exist within language because the history which enabled the myth in the first place, has been removed in order for the myths prolonged signification (Robinson, 2011). However, the fact remains that all Indigenous knowledge that exists within the framework of the English language stipulates that the history which colonized language, is inherent and absolute. I believe this is what makes Indigenous writing, academia, knowledge, teaching, experiences, feelings, ad infinitum, so challenging to communicate within the network of the English language.

As an Indigenous woman, it is impossible for me not to feel the inadequacies of a language that does not inherently reflect all that I am as a being. I am more than the thoughts, which become these lines and squiggles on a blank piece of paper. I am a cacophony of thoughts, feelings, experiences, senses, dreams etc. I am my physicality, my brain, my breath, my heartbeat. I am my spirit that dances to inspirations and appears as goose bumps and tingling flesh or as tears in my eyes. I am my emotions, sometimes overwhelming and often retrieved, processed and purified through the things I create with my hands or my voice. I am many things, that which words cannot always convey, which is why art and music and laughter and silence are as important for expression as anything words alone can provide. As an academic, I am limited by words; by words that often carry within them myths that are damaging to all that I am, and all I am attempting to express.

I have also felt the pressure to present my writings as 'Indigenous'. I admit, I don't know what that means. I cannot allow myself to be pigeonholed as one or the other; an academic or Indigenous; as 'white' or 'red'. I am, like the medicine wheel teaches, all things, all colours. I will present my work in such a way that reflects all that I am and all that I have become as a student, an Indigenous person, a westerner, a

woman, a poet, an artist, a granddaughter, and often a confused yet curious and wonderfully complex human and spiritual being.

Indigenous Methodology

This paper utilizes an Indigenous methodology in terms of viewing words through the lens of the medicine wheel, so in that respect, I recognize my Indigeneity; however, to define Indigenous methodology is not a simple task. There is no definitive answer to the question of Indigenous methodology. In fact, I would venture to say just the opposite. The definition of Indigenous methodology is hidden within its limitless possibilities. In my experiences of reading the works of such Indigenous academics and writers as, Lee Maracle, Emma LaRocque, Joyce Green, Grace J.M.W. Ouellette and Janice Acoose, Indigenous methodologies, may or may not contain, reflection, storytelling, personal experiences, as well as, expert knowledge, spiritual teachings, academia and anything in between. (Coolidge, 2016).

For example, Lee Maracle's account of 'Rusty', in chapter six of her book *I am woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*, gives the reader a glimpse of the diversity of themes found within the book. The story of Rusty braids together a life of rape, violence, alcoholism, suicide, and death. At a young age, Rusty learns about rape and the habitual space it would occupy in her life. Rusty's account of relations with white boys and men, emphasize a particular theme within the book; that being the effects of white supremacy, white privilege and the oppressive and often violent nature of white men in the lives of Native women. This white supremacy includes not just white men, but white women and the domination of 'whiteness' in Western society as well.

What white boys wanted in dark meat was not the coy, flirtatious routine of white girls but the subtle mysticism they thought dark-skinned girls had a monopoly on. They wanted sultry silence and intense submission, a wise facade without their own women's smugness. They wanted the self-effacing surrender of a dark woman to white superiority (Maracle, 1996, pp. 49/50).

This book in its entirety, has inspired a generation of women, and is now coming to inspire the next generation. What struck me first and foremost was Maracle's ferocity and 'no-holds-barred' way of writing and communicating her ideas, especially with the

knowledge that it was first published in 1988. It is filled with intellectual accounts of feminism and much associated with it, such as is shown in Rusty's story. Maracle's text brings together stories like Rusty's into complex theoretical discussions of feminism and Indigenous experience. There are also discussions of love, lesbianism, settler women's ideas, the native elite, laws and traditionalism, institutionalism, ideologies in education, Native medicine, consumerism, and even Marxism and communism. These varied concepts and ideas, all come back to discussing Maracle's perspective on Indigenous feminism. Her inclusion of stories, and her own poetry scattered throughout the chapters weaves both intellectual and creative thought that acts as resistance to colonial powers.

As I was drawn into the devastating honesty to which Maracle is known for, I was hyper aware of my own experiences, particularly associated with sexual assault in the home, which is so common amongst Native communities.

Rape, ladies and gentlemen, is commonplace in the home. In the home, it is not a crime. What is worse, in our desperate fear of being unloved, a good many women plead for mercy and accept responsibility for the beating and beg forgiveness for imaginary transgressions. Could this be where men get the idea that women "like it, ask for it" when the subject of rape is discussed (Maracle, 1996, pp. 23)?

While my experiences with assault are slightly different, they evoke the same powerlessness and the same desperate need for love. These experiences that Maracle writes about so poignantly, are the experiences of my mother and grandmothers; my aunties and cousins.

Though, most of *I Am Woman* is filled with some of the hard truths of many Native women the vast majority of the settler population chooses to ignore and deny, I was moved by the sections of the book that discussed spirituality, resistance and a connection to culture and self. The confusion associated with my mixed heritage, my pale skin and my adoption into Tsleil-Waututh has made it difficult for me to know exactly who I am as an individual and as a community member. The aspects of spirituality from both the Tsleil-Waututh people, as well as to my Grandmother's Cree heritage, have allowed me to sift through the confusion and lateral violence and own my place in the arms of my grandmother's. This, in and of itself, is my own act of resistance and decolonization.

Spirituality is re-connecting with the self and our ancestry. It is doing the right thing for your family and your community. Burn sage, brothers and sisters, but when you are burning it and carrying a small child, think about going to school and fighting red-neck teachers, the nicest of whom is going to ask you to erase yourself and be like him. Our kids need to know that we are on their side (Maracle, 1996, pp. 134).

Maracle's book helped me to connect to why I am doing this work; why I am attempting to bring alternative pedagogies into colonial institutions. The reason is so that we, as Indigenous people, might have the opportunity to teach the white settler that we are here, we are visible and we have a real and valid way of life that has the potential to heal the land and its people (Coolidge, 2016).

In considering Indigenous methodology and contrasting the way in which one author uses it in one piece of writing in comparison to another author in another piece of writing. For example, in these pieces, Maracle uses Indigenous methodology in order to tell stories of others, of herself and some of the experiences that occur in the lives of Native women. In the following book, Joyce Green gathers various Indigenous authors in *Making Space For Indigenous Feminism* uses Indigenous methodology in order to address Indigenous feminism through showcasing essays from academics. In Green's anthology, several questions are posed by Makere Stewart-Harawira in her chapter entitled, "Practising Indigenous Feminism: Resistance to Imperialism". "The central question of this book is whether or not Indigenous feminism is a legitimate position. And if so, the corollary questions are: What represents an Indigenous feminist? What are they? What do they look like" (Green, 2007, pp.124)?

Therefore, is Indigenous feminism a legitimate position? According to Green, it is. She suggests that Indigenous feminism must be used as a critique of colonialism, as she argues, "that the emerging Aboriginal feminist literature and politic...must be taken seriously as a critique of colonialism, decolonization and gendered and raced power relations in both settler and Indigenous communities" (Green, 2007, pp. 21). She stresses the importance of understanding patriarchy as the base from which Aboriginal women have been marginalized and held in subordination to men. Green's anthology also addresses governance practices that have allowed for such oppressions to continue at all. Therefore, what represents an Indigenous feminist?

In order to discover this, Verna St. Denis argues in her chapter, "Feminism is for Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity", that "Aboriginal people, researchers and scholars must have the freedom to debate and discuss the contradictions and paradoxes that arise in our strategies as we move towards decolonization, including the merits of feminism for Aboriginal people" (Green, 2007, pp. 50). In so doing we can begin to understand our diversity, our nationhood, culture and gender differences. Jorunn Eikjok argues that true liberation for Indigenous women would be when we understand, accept and celebrate our differences from men, rather than seeking 'equality'. (Green, 2007, pp. 121) Therefore, this book argues that Indigenous feminism isn't a quest for equality, but rather for justice; justice in our relationship with Indigenous men and women, with settlers and importantly, within the public sphere

This book speaks to my research in that the medicine wheel itself, teaches the importance of balance between the male and female spirit. It teaches that our differences are what bring balance and to depend too heavily on one, is what will make a community sick. This is essentially what the book emphasizes, as well as insisting that privileged Indigenous women must be central on this quest, by using their privilege to seek justice for all Indigenous women. Stewart-Harawira argues,

Indigenous women who are in positions of privilege are called upon to vigorously refute capitalism's excesses and greed; to refuse the dominator politics of power-over; to refuse to give up our sons and daughters, our children and grandchildren to warmongering that now called democracy; to reject the greed that is now called freedom; and to stand firmly in the intersection of the politics of local and global. (Green, 2007, pp. 136)

As an Indigenous woman academic in a position of privilege, I use writing as a politic in order to challenge Western ideology and ideals. My research itself challenges western academia and governance by offering a differing world view.

I have never thought myself an Indigenous feminist, prior to my reading Green's book. I knew that it was important to me, however I was unsure as to how one becomes an Indigenous feminist. What I discovered through much of the book, was that I am

already participating through the work that I have done throughout my academic career, and will continue to do long into the future (Coolidge, 2016).

I posit that most, if not all Indigenous methodologies include colonial history, whether implied or included outright. This history has shaped the effectiveness and acceptances of Indigenous methodologies within academia. The discomfort that has arisen for me in particular, when attempting to include intimate reflection together with my customary and fixed template of western academic ideology, has been difficult. From all that I've read, this discomfort is not uncommon for the Indigenous academic, albeit less now than when Lee Maracle, Emma LaRocque or Janice Acoose first published or attempted to publish, for example. These women were trailblazers who created space for women like myself.(Coolidge, 2016).

These women weave their writings in such varied, yet appealing ways. Their use of words in order to tell their stories are examples of the power which I write about now.

Words Have Always Had Power

The power of words has been understood for thousands of years. It has been taught by religions, world and spiritual leaders and it can be read about in books and seen in movies. In the next section, I include a variety of people, places and things that demonstrate the universality in the belief that words have power. I am establishing that this idea has been validated across time and space, across cultures, religions and races. There is an inherent belief in the human experience that understands the power that words carry within them. The words we use and the significance we allow them to have in our lives, have the power to hurt or to heal.

There is a story in the bible, Mark 11: 12-25, whereby Jesus curses a fig tree, (12) "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples hear him say it." Further into the story it says, "(20) In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. (21) Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

This parable demonstrates the power that Jesus' curse had on the fig tree. My interpretation of this is that we have to be mindful of our words. After they are sent out into the world, they cannot be taken back. Our words have the power to destroy. I,

myself have had the experience of an emotionally and verbally abusive intimate relationship and when such abuse occurs, there is an inner crumpling that takes place; a withering, just like the fig tree. After this withering has happened, it is very difficult to begin to grow again. I continue to carry the effects of this damage and it has affected every aspect of my life. This in turn affects the lives of every person I come into contact with, which demonstrates the ripple effect of harmful words upon another.

As a side note, I would like to point out that my use of a biblical example straight off the hop, may evoke a strong guttural reaction in any who may read this. This is intentional as it speaks to the very power that I discuss in this paper. When my Grandmother begins her medicine wheel teachings, she wants participants to become aware of such reactions within their bodies. This is the purpose of understanding the power that certain words have in our own lives. The name 'Jesus' and the word, 'bible' carry an enormous amount of history, and for many of us that history is violent. But I challenge the reader who reacts, to recognize that there lies within themselves, things unresolved. Perhaps it is anger, sadness, betrayal trauma or simply cynicism and resentment. Whatever it may be, that feeling in your gut is asking to be healed. This is why the power of words are such an integral part of wheel medicine, because it uncovers unresolved pain. The medicine wheel wants us to be healed of this pain, so we can be more effective in our lives. The wheel wants us to be peaceful and free.

Gautama Buddha has been quoted as saying, "Words have the power to both destroy and heal. When words are both true and kind, they can change our world." Yehuda Berg, author and Co-Director of Kabbalah Centre International testifies that,

Our words have the power to change destinies, both our own and that of others. Often, we throw around words in jest or perhaps in anger that harm and hurt and create long lasting damage. If we understood the seriousness of what we were saying we might never say it. Words have power and they have energy that we put out there into the minds, and thoughts of our children, our friends, our mates and our peers. If we are in a position of leadership where our words create policies we have to be sensitive and diligent. If we were handling a bomb which could go off at any minute as a result of our actions, we would mind ourselves and be delicate. Our words have the same power yet we wield them around as though they were powerless and insignificant (Berg, 2010);

The Quran says, "Tell my bondmen to speak that which is kindlier. Lo, the devil sows discord among them. Lo, the devil is for man an open foe" (Quran 17:53).

This belief in the power of words extends much farther than religion, but has been expressed by many people in many ways. The phenomenon of the book *The Secret*, for example, discusses the law of attraction. In it, it says, “Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the Universe, and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the source. And that source is You” (Byrne, 2006, pp. 10).

This speaks to an important aspect of the Medicine Wheel, which is the gift of our mental abilities. Our thoughts fall under this category. Thoughts come to us in words or images. As *The Secret* has suggested, our thoughts attract either what we want or what we don’t want into our lives. This speaks to the power of words, because as I use the phrase, “the power of words” I am including all cognitive processes. Thoughts, just as the spoken word, also have the power to hurt or to heal. If I consider my own inner dialogue, I am at once struck by its power in my life. Like so many of us, I am my own worst critic. When I am mindful of my thoughts, I hear their judgements. It is a continuous stream of blame, guilt, shame and doubt. I am never quite sure of my own footing. I continually think that I am disappointing others and failing myself. When something or someone validates the positive aspects of my being, I am surprised and doubtful.

I was the recipient of a large entrance scholarship through my university, and my first thought was, what’s the catch? I didn’t believe it because I thought myself unworthy. I had to read and reread emails, do research and spend time convincing myself that I had actually earned it, worked for it and was worthy of the honour.

This type of thought pattern in turn, affects all other aspects of what makes me who I am. Physically, I become tired and unmotivated. Emotionally, I am unable to fully connect with others or to allow myself feelings of true happiness, joy and comfort. Spiritually, I am unable to fully bring myself to my Creator because I know that I think of Creator’s creations as unworthy of love and grace. However, when my thoughts about myself, my life and the world are in a place of gratitude and surety, I am much more likely to approach the world in such a way that welcomes experiences that ensure even more gratitude. I walk with confidence, joy and an inner knowing that everything that comes to me or happens to me will be in my own best interest. I can live with

acceptance and faith, and these thoughts and attitudes bring me in balance. Therefore, I receive medicine from the wheel in all its embodiments.

Other examples of literature that demonstrates this idea are *The Book Thief*, “I have hated words and I have loved them, and I hope I have made them right.” (Markus, 2007, pp. 528); *The Thirteenth Tale*, “There is something about words. In expert hands, manipulated deftly, they take you prisoner. Wind themselves around your limbs like spider silk, and when you are so enthralled you cannot move, they pierce your skin, enter your blood, numb your thoughts. Inside you they work their magic.” (Setterfield, 2006, pp. 8); and *The Name of the Wind*, “Words are pale shadows of forgotten names. As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts” (Rothfuss, 2007, pp.672-673).

In *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* by Kim Anderson, she discusses the importance of storytelling for Indigenous people as a means of resistance. “Indigenous stories are significant because they are anchors of resistance. They are also ways of preserving the language and the power and meaningfulness of the spoken word. Our stories are unadulterated version of our history and creation. They are critical for Native people who seek a sense of identity founded within Native culture” (Anderson, 2000, pp. 131). Oral tradition for Indigenous people is as vital as air. It has been the thing to sustain language, culture and autonomy. It teaches children about themselves, about who they are as well as providing important lessons of what to do and what not to do. It provides knowledge keepers, particularly women, with the opportunity to reclaim their roles within the community. It acts as a form of resistance because it enables us to rebuild and reclaim who we are at the most essential level, that of our spirit and of our Selves.

As I write these words now, I am struck by the simplicity of pouring all that is in my heart out onto this page. How simple, yet powerful words can be when used for the purposes of, not only healing, but to propel myself forward in the parts of life that are important to me such as my education. As long as I can remember, I have been using words scribbled on a page in order to get out all that was a muddled mess inside of me. Not much has changed over the years, as that is what I do now as well. Words. Words are a power that make it so.

Addressing Myth

There is an old adage that says, 'if you asked a fish to describe its environment, the last thing it would mention would be water.' This is essentially the way that myth works within language. Its imperceptible to those who've been absorbed by the myth. This occurs in a variety of ways and in order to better understand the influence these myths have on language and medicine wheel work, I will address several of the instances described by Barthes. In Andrew Robinson's series, "An A to Z of Theory; Roland Barthes's Mythologies: A Critical Theory of Myths" he cites Barthes as saying,

Crucially, myths remove any role for the reader in constructing meanings. Myths are received rather than read. A message which is received rather than read does not require an interpretation through a code. It only requires a certain cultural knowledge. (One might add that it also needs a certain form of life corresponding to the resonance of this knowledge).

It also has a tendency to empty language. It removes signs from their context, hiding the process of attaching signifier to signified. It thus strips signs of their richness and specificity. The function of myth is to empty reality of the appearance of history and of social construction. The initial sign is 'rich' in history. Myth functions by depriving it of history and turning it into an empty form to carry a different meaning...This emptying is also a kind of filling. The concept carried by a myth appears to be eternal and absolute. In fact, the concept carried by a myth implants into the sign an entire history and perspective. It speaks to a very specific group of readers. It corresponds closely to its function. For instance, it refers back to particular stereotypes embedded in gender, racial, or class hierarchies (Robinson, 2011).

As it's suggested, "the function of myth is to empty reality of the appearance of history and of social construction." The English language for Indigenous people includes history absolutely because without this history, Indigenous people would not be speaking English (or in the case of Barthes, French), in the first place. As well, social constructions that create such myths are born via institutional and political forums that aided in the detrimental practices that colonized Indigenous people and their languages. Robinson lists Barthes seven techniques of myth; Inoculation, removing history, identification of the other with the self, tautology, neither-norism, quantification of quality

and statement of fact without explanation. For the purposes of this paper, I will examine inoculation, removing history and statement of fact without explanation. They are defined as follows:

- 1) Inoculation – admitting a little bit of evil in an institution so as to ward off awareness of its fundamental problems. For instance, admitting the existence of ‘a few bad eggs’ in the police so as to cover up the abusive nature of official police practices.
- 2) Removing history – making it seem like social phenomena simply ‘exist’ or are there for the viewer’s gaze, eliminating both causality and agency. Neoliberalism, for instance, is often treated as ‘globalisation’ or ‘modernisation’, as an abstract economic necessity rather than a political strategy.
- 3) Statements of fact without explanation – ‘that’s just the way it is’. The idea of ‘common sense’ is used to command the pursuit of truth to stop at a certain point.(Robinson, 2011).

The myth of inoculation can be seen in the ways in which the church has admitted a little bit of evil in order to circumvent the fact that its institution is directly responsible for most of the trauma that plagues Indigenous people to this day. The myth of removing history can be seen within language itself. No matter what language an Indigenous person is speaking, if it is not that of their ancestors, then history is embedded within it. This myth removes that history. We fail to recognize that simply uttering words in English carries with it trauma and colonization. In order to decolonize, we must be aware that the words we use in a language other than our traditional language, carry pain within them. Finally, the myth of statement of fact without explanation can be seen within the institution of academia. There is a belief within scholarship that we are to research, write and present in a very specific way. This way does not make space for diverse epistemologies that might offer insights and viewpoints that differ from standard academic work, because ‘that’s just the way it is’. While this is changing, it has been a challenging transition. The following will address each of these myths more fully.

As my Grandmother begins talking about the medicine wheel, she begins with the circle within the circle. This represents God, Creator, spirit or the word one associates with spiritual essence. From there she will ask what thoughts and feelings are aroused by the word ‘God’ or ‘religion’. For many Indigenous people, myself included, religion has a negative connotation due to travesties committed against Indigenous

people by the church. As residential school beat the 'Indian' out of the child, many times it beat hope, security and faith out of the man or women as well. For a century, the church denied its association with suicide, alcoholism, abuse and trauma that has occurred amongst Indigenous people as a result of residential school. Non-natives have believed for many, many years that the maladaptive behaviours of Indigenous people are of their own making, and the church has allowed this discursive pattern to continue. The inoculation of this myth has occurred because the institution of the church denied their fundamental problems in association with residential school. The abuses committed by the church included sexual, verbal, emotional and physical assault, not by one person, not in one school, but in all schools, by many people.

I attended the truth and reconciliation events in Vancouver in 2013 and was struck when I discovered that there were priests in attendance offering apologies to survivors that wanted or needed it. I had to question whether their presence at the event was either to carryout or to eradicate the myth of inoculation. It is my belief now however, that in order to truly eradicate this myth, particularly in regard to the church's treatment of Indigenous people, it would require an overhaul of the entire institution. It would require the removal of all patriarchal dogma and a serious re-evaluation of the interpretation of all religious scripture. It would also require much more than priests offering apologies. It would demand that religious leaders speak to their congregations and teach them about the damage they've done in the past and how this damage continues to breed trauma in generations that follow. This would be admitting to the fundamental problems within the church and the myth of inoculation would final begin to topple from within the church.

Chief Bev Sellars of the Xats'ull Cmetem' First Nation, has been quoted as saying, "We have been forced to deal with the residential school issues and we now know that all the suicides, the alcoholism, the very low self-esteem of our people, the sexual abuse, the loss of our language and the culture, the family breakdown, the dependency on others, the loss of pride, the loss of parental skills, and all the other social problems that have plagued our people can be traced directly back to the schools" (Million, 2013, pp. 79). It has been a long road, however this myth has begun to splinter for Indigenous people, for the government, for non-natives and for the church itself, but it is only a beginning. While, there are still those ignorant to the plight suffered those via the church, education is slowly increasing.

When working with wheel medicine, it is important for Indigenous people to address their own thoughts and feelings associated with religion so as not to allow confusion between what occurred at the hands of the church and our own spiritual essences. It is vital to disconnect spirituality and religion in order to step more fully into who we are as spiritual beings. This demonstrates a clear example of the power of words. The word 'religion', 'priest', 'nun' or 'Jesus', for example, can re-traumatize a person who attended residential school because of the history that is embedded within the words themselves. This history brings us to the second figure of myth; removing history, "making it seem like social phenomena simply 'exist' or are there for the viewer's gaze, eliminating both causality and agency" (Robinson, 2011).

Building from the previous example, wherein social issues that have arisen due to colonization and the resultant traumas for Indigenous people, it is oft believed that these issues are of our own making. Alcoholism and drug addiction, mental illness, homelessness, suicide, children in the care of the ministry, sexual dysfunction, abuse etc., Until very recently, much of the general population of non-natives has viewed Indigenous people in terms of trauma and the social issues that have arisen due to that trauma. Residential school was largely unheard of and misunderstood. However, even though residential school is much more widely accepted as one of the key roots of Indigenous trauma, it continues to be given less importance by much of the settler population. One of the most recent examples of this ideological confusion came from conservative senator, Lynn Beyak. "Conservative Senator

Lynn Beyak mounted a defence of the residential school system for Aboriginal children in the Red Chamber Tuesday, lamenting that the "good deeds" accomplished by "well-intentioned" religious teachers have been overshadowed by negative reports documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "I speak partly for the record, but mostly in memory of the kindly and well-intentioned men and women and their descendants — perhaps some of us here in this chamber — whose remarkable works, good deeds and historical tales in the residential schools go unacknowledged for the most part," she said" (Tasker, Politics, 2017). Beyak has also been quoted as saying, "I've suffered with them up there. I appreciate their suffering more than they'll ever know," she said. "The best way to heal is to move forward together. Not to blame, not to point fingers, not to live in the past" (Tasker, Politics, 2017). What Beyak fails to

understand with statements such as these, is that intergenerational trauma continues today and will continue well into the future if it is not confronted and healed.

According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, these are some of the effects of residential school on Indigenous people and communities:

1. Alcohol and drug abuse; 2. Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and fetal alcohol effect (FAE); 3. Sexual abuse (past and ongoing); 4. Physical abuse (past and ongoing; especially, but not exclusively, of women and children); 5. Psychological/emotional abuse; 6. Low self-esteem; 7. Dysfunctional families and interpersonal relationships; 8. Parenting issues such as emotional coldness, rigidity, neglect, poor communications and abandonment; 9. Suicide (and the threat of suicide); 10. Teen pregnancy; 11. Chronic, widespread depression; 12. Chronic, widespread rage and anger; 13. Eating disorders; 14. Sleeping disorders; 15. Chronic physical illness related to spiritual and emotional states; 16. Layer upon layer of unresolved grief and loss; 17. Fear of personal growth, transformation and healing; 18. Unconscious internalization of residential school behaviours such as false politeness, not speaking out, passive compliance, excessive neatness, obedience without thought, etc.; 19. Post-residential school community environment, seen in patterns of paternalistic authority linked to passive dependency; patterns of misuse of power to control others, and community social patterns that foster whispering in the dark, but refusing to support and stand with those who speak out or challenge the status quo; 20. The breakdown of the social glue that holds families and communities together, such as trust, common ground, shared purpose and direction, a vibrant ceremonial and civic life, co-operative networks and associations working for the common good, etc.; 21. Disunity and conflict between individuals, families and factions within the community; 22. Flashbacks and associative trauma; i.e., certain smells, foods, sounds, sights and people trigger flashbacks memories, anxiety attacks, physical symptoms or fear; e.g. the sight of a certain type of boat or vehicle (especially containing a social worker or RCMP), the sight of an old residential school building, etc.; 23. Educational blocks - aversions to formal learning programs that seem "too much like school," fear of failure, self-sabotage, psychologically-based learning disabilities; 24. Spiritual confusion; involving alienation from one's own spiritual life and growth process, as well as conflicts and confusion over religion; 25. Internalized sense of inferiority or aversion in relation to whites and especially whites in power; 26. Toxic communication - backbiting, gossip, criticism, put downs, personal attacks, sarcasm, secrets, etc.; 27. Becoming oppressors and abusers of others as a result of what was done to one in residential schools; 28. Dysfunctional family co-dependent behaviours replicated in the workplace; 29. Cultural identity issues - missionization and the loss of language and cultural foundations has led to denial (by some) of the validity of one's own cultural identity (assimilation), a resulting cultural confusion and dislocation; 30. Destruction of social support networks (the cultural safety net) that individuals and families in trouble could rely upon; 31. Disconnection from the natural world (i.e. the sea, the forest, the earth, living things) as an

important dimension of daily life and hence spiritual dislocation; 32. Voicelessness - entailing a passive acceptance of powerlessness within community life and a loss of traditional governance processes that enabled individuals to have a significant influence in shaping community affairs (related to the psychological need of a sense of agency, i.e. of being able to influence and shape the world one lives in, as opposed to passively accepting whatever comes and feeling powerless to change it.

"Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as "normal" when we are children, we pass on to our own children. Children who learn that ... or [sic] sexual abuse is "normal", and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical and sexual abuse on their own children. The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so. This is the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1999:A5).

There is an inherent ideology in western society that focuses on individual successes and failures that are contrary to Indigenous culture, in that collectivism and community are vital to the welfare and survival of the whole. The medicine wheel teaches us that all parts of the medicine wheel must be in balance with the rest in order for a person or community to be healthy. Western thought teaches us that each person is responsible for themselves and only themselves, which removes societal responsibility when something or someone goes awry. Residential school and its aftershocks are the responsibility of church and state. Lack of education amongst non-natives is the responsibility of the state. None of the politics associated with residential school is the responsibility of Indigenous people, yet the consequences and repercussions have fallen fully on the shoulders of Indigenous communities as we navigate our way to healing in a society that is hell-bent on misunderstanding trauma, blaming victims and forcing a way of living, thinking, believing and being that is contrary to everything Indigenous people have known since before first contact.

This myth has served a purpose in justifying the continued raping of the land and the exploitation of resources. This myth engrains itself into the consciousness of Indigenous people, often resulting in self-abuse and the abuse of others. The term, 'lateral violence' only exists because of the myths that have produced the belief that to be Indigenous, is to be flawed in some way. Indigenous identity has the potential to bring up negative feelings of shame and discomfort, particularly for Indigenous women.

Indigenous women have experienced the brunt of patriarchy by white men, by policy and by our own people. Indigenous women are mistreated at every corner of society and are murdered or go missing at an alarming rate. While there is more education today, there is still an underlying belief amongst much of the western world, that these women have brought this upon themselves by living dangerously, rather than addressing the historical and generational trauma that is the driving force behind such dangerous living, and that such attitudes make Indigenous women easy targets in the first place.

The last example I will address regarding the functions of myth is the suggestion that myths are constructed via statements of fact without explanation. “The idea of ‘common sense’ is used to command the pursuit of truth to stop at a certain point” (Robinson, 2011). As I consider this function, I cannot help but think of my own journey within academia. I have been taught to think, write, and learn through a very specific process that reflects western scholarship. It was not until I began graduate school that I was encouraged to pursue alternative methodologies that more accurately communicate who I am as an academic and as an Indigenous woman. However, even then I faced discord with professors who had no knowledge of Indigenous methodology and were so fixed in their ideas of western theory that they were incapable of acknowledging, firstly some of the challenges I face as an Indigenous woman, and secondly, that I learn in a different way than many of my peers. This situation was very frustrating to me as I was dealing with a professor who refused to bend in his own understanding of academia in order to accommodate my needs in even minor ways. As an Indigenous student seeking to utilize Indigenous methodology, he was unwilling to accept an alternative methodology to that which he had been taught, as well as provide a supportive environment during a time when I was experiencing the aftermath of trauma from earlier years. This example demonstrates the function of myth as statement of fact explanation, in that this particular professor proffered western methodology as being ‘just the way it is’, without considering that this may, in fact, be an erroneous assumption that is harmful and destructive to an Indigenous student such as myself.

Margaret Kovach discusses the changes taking place in the academy in regard to diversified epistemologies.

Through the creation of a principled ideological space, a miyo interval, there is a possibility to move forward with the exciting proposition of Indigenous and tribal research frameworks. But how do we create these

environments? What are the philosophies, values, and practices that offer this freedom? The academy is grappling with an increasingly non-homogeneous environment. This is evoking new theoretical discourses of inclusiveness, engaging the once invisible and excluded. It is an exciting time for theorists and scholars, but it is also testing every aspect of the 'tried and true' customs of institutional knowledge centres. The new landscape asks that the academic institutions self-assess according to new terms — the hope of this critical examination is in the potential for re-invention. (Kovach, 2009, p. 156).

Kovach is suggesting that it is time for academic institutions to check themselves in terms of the 'tried and true' methods of learning that are in fact, myths within these centres that have yet to make real space for Indigenous students who may or may not approach learning in such a way that differs from the 'norm'. As I do my work with my Grandmother, with the medicine wheel and attempt to share this knowledge in a scholarly format, I feel bound by the rules I have been taught over the years. It can be stifling, but I am not one to shrink from a challenge. I acknowledge that much has changed in a very short amount of time due to the work of many Indigenous scholars that have come before me and it is the work of the coming generations that will continue to change and shape the academy in such a way that makes room for Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. I am excited to be a part of this group and I am honoured to have the opportunity to shatter the myths that bind us.

It is important to address myth when looking at word power and wheel medicine in order to address myths that have the potential to perpetuate destructive ideas in a myriad of circumstances. Careful consideration of one's own beliefs can often lead to profound insights as to whether or not we are buying into inaccurate social or political constructions. Research and education often break through these ideologies and result in a much better understanding of the world and of oneself. For myself as an Indigenous woman, it is also vital that I address the words or situations that make me uncomfortable, the word, 'religion' for example, or 'Christianity'. My discomfort arises from the history associated with these institutions and not with the words themselves. I must challenge myself to make peace with these words and learn to separate the word with the actions that have taken place in the name of 'religion' or 'Christianity'. If I am to find balance in my life, I must be willing to accept people as they are, accept the past as it was, and move forward with an open mind and heart.

Within the Medicine Wheel

As previously discussed in essay 1, while working with my Grandmother, when she shared how the medicine wheel healed much of the shame she had lived with throughout her life as a 'half breed', and as we now call it, Metis. The following is a short passage of our interview.

Grammi: The Medicine Wheel was one of the greatest gifts I ever received in life. (inaudible) being in Saskatchewan...when I was growing up in Saskatchewan, our family were called 'half-breeds', and that whole feeling of being a half-breed, it was that we were really something awful, like evil and terrible and not fit for humans. We were always so ashamed. In fact, one time I came in to my mom and said, "mom, Darlene called me a 'squat'", which meant 'squaw'. (laughing)

Christina: You thought it was 'squat'. (laughing)

Grammi: 'Squat'. (laughing) I was crying. So, I mean that life was around us. I don't know how it got there or who brought it there but there was always this thing wrong...it was just wrong. So, we were honest people. Not honest, that's a weak word. So anyhow, what happened, it's not what happened, but its how awful I felt about being a half-breed where ever we went in situations. In Saskatchewan there's a high group or high percentage of First Nation people, and they were people who are out in the streets and drunks and stuff. Well that's where I would see them. They were the prostitutes...just the whole thing that made half-breeds or 'Indians' was the word, that was so hurtful. And to me, it (Medicine Wheel) is the most important thing, ever, ever, ever.

Christina: I think so too.

Grammi: Cause when I received the MW, there were two parts. I became a person then. For the first time in my life, First Nation people would hug me, they'd say 'our people say this' and I was included in 'our people' and, like 'cause I was always so far away from being able to be accepted by people. And the foster home and all that situation added to it because it meant I knew that we didn't deserve any people...we weren't worth...We had kids shopping days in Kilburn Hall (orphanage) and my brother and sister and myself were never given a home...nobody ever. You know we all had our best clothes on, we had to wear them for that day and I smiled and smiled and everybody that saw us and I tried so hard to be acceptable, but at the end of the day, you go to bed and

you know you're not. I used to cry 'cause I was...and so that when the Medicine Wheel was taught to me, it was quite simple in the beginning, and it was so direct and clear for me that I had these two gifts that was given to me, and I became a person then. And I started working with the MW as my inner self and that's where I did my work, because the wonderful part about the wheel is that everybody has it if they wan it. It's right within your own self of where you think your soul or your heart or whatever word you use to describe where that is...the cathedral, people have called it so many things. Anything that means sacred and powerful. Of course, I use Creator, the maker of all things...the best one I ever heard was, 'He is so great that He is without a name.'

In order to illustrate the power of words and the medicine wheel, I will deconstruct this passage to establish the many ways that words have the power to hurt or to heal. The approach of the medicine wheel is meant to heal as well as to perhaps uncover still festering wounds so that we might begin to heal those as well.

My Grandmother's explanation of her own journey with the medicine wheel is an example of how we might use the wheel in order to decolonize our own hearts and minds and stand more fully in our own power, no matter what colour of the wheel we find ourselves. There are several trigger words and phrases in this reading; 'half-breed', 'squaw', 'drunks', 'prostitutes', 'Indians', 'foster home', 'orphanage', 'I tried so hard to be acceptable, but at the end of the day, you go to bed and you know you're not'. These are the words that caused shame in my Grandmother's life and needed correction.

As a young girl, my grandmother and her siblings were sent to an orphanage called, Kilburn Hall in Saskatchewan. My great-grandmother was an alcoholic, but before this time her husband had been away with the war. My great-grandmother had become pregnant by a minister in the area who had also impregnated several other women as well. The earlier years for my grandmother were very difficult. She suffered many abuses and while she did not attend residential school because my grandmother's grandfather had accepted scrip and chose to deny his Aboriginal heritage and title, she faced much of the same treatment as students at residential school. For many years my Grandmother struggled with her identity as a 'half-breed'. She experienced racism by white people and lateral violence from Indigenous people. She was not accepted in either world. These experienced shaped her understanding of the power of words, in that they built a home inside of her that withered her spirit, just as the withering of the fig tree.

however, the medicine wheel teaches us to use words in order to heal ourselves and to release old belief systems that are detrimental to a person's self-esteem and self-love.

The four quadrants of the medicine wheel are separated by the colour of people; red, yellow, black and white. Because my grandmother was a 'half-breed', which brings with it negative connotations, resulting in negative self-identity, she learned that she fell under two of the four quadrants; red and white. Each colour of people is given a gift. Red people have the gift of vision, yellow people have the gift of time, black people have the gift of reason and white people have the gift of movement. What my grandmother discovered, is that she had two gifts; vision and movement. As stated in our interview, this is when she became a person. This is when she was healed from years of being considered a 'half-breed' and not feeling accepted by any person or community of people.

The gift of vision was given to the red people because of their ability to see far. Lee Brown shared a story at a gathering in Lillooet, about Indigenous people of this continent planting different colours of corn in order to welcome the people who would come from across the ocean. The red people have this gift of vision which has sustained them through the trials of colonization and has enabled the resurgence of language and culture within Indigenous communities. The white people were given the gift of movement because they are the people who crossed those oceans and have taken action steps to improve quality of life in terms of science and technology. Because my grandmother fell under both categories, she was then able to see herself as a person with multiple gifts given by Creator and felt all at once that she belonged in both worlds. And as she began sharing her vision of the medicine wheel by actively providing a forum for learning and discussion, she turned those gifts into an actuality for those who were in desperate need of the healing the wheel can provide. This gave her life purpose, it made her experiences in childhood and her adult life, worthwhile as they gave her the tools she needed in order to connect with others. This is the power of the wheel and the power of words that the wheel provides. Her healing was a direct result of the wheel disintegrating all of her old beliefs about herself and about her own identity, which in turn allowed her to do the same for others who struggled in the same way she had struggled.

In the above passage, my grandmother also addresses the word for 'Creator', in that it can be whatever a person wants or needs it to be. It just has to uncover our

sacredness. The word is not as important as the feeling it provides. Our centre is where our power is hidden, that space where Creator lives within us is what we need to retrieve in order for the wheel to become a living thing in our lives. The importance in finding the word that will bring us back to our spirits is subjective and personal. The power of that word is in what it does for us when we call on it in times of struggle or in times of faith. It reveals the power within us and this is how the wheel and all its parts help us to heal old wounds and to have faith in ourselves and our Creator. Each part of the wheel has power, every word used to describe the wheel has power and when we can use the wheel in our lives in active ways and in all its parts, is when we find balance and peace. The holistic nature of the wheel means that we can turn to it in all and every area of our lives, whether that is our family lives, education, careers, the environment, political leanings, relationships, our physical health or day-to-day activities and anything in between, the wheel is there to guide us and inspire us to be our best selves and live our highest calling. This is the beauty of this teaching. The medicine wheel teaches us everything we need to know in order to live fully and without fear. "We move towards, become like those things that we think about." Marjorie Mackie.

Reflections

This journey through academia, through the process of obtaining my MA and wrestling my own personal challenges through it all, has been arduous and heartbreaking and wonderful. The writing in and of itself, has been its own challenge. While I bridge two worlds, white and red; Western and Indigenous; communications methodologies and Indigenous methodologies, I have found that I have been the subject of my own research and writing. My feelings about myself and my work have shown me that I have far to go in terms of decolonizing my mind and allowing myself to be all that I am without explanation and without shame. I have experienced anger, frustration, sadness, trauma and these feelings have manifested in ways that are damaging to my spirit. Coming to terms with the fact that I can be an Indigenous, academic woman and reflect this in more ways than I have always been taught, was and is often confusing. However, in the end, more important than the words on this page, is the acknowledgement that I can be whomever I choose to be, regardless of any outside influences. By attempting to merge the teachings of the medicine wheel with the teachings of myth within language, I was able to recognize the power of words in my

own life. They have much more power than I even gave them credit for prior to my writing of this paper. The medicine wheel teaches us that we are all connected, that every aspect of who we are as people and as communities must be in balance in order to find peace; and what I have learned is that there are times when we must lose our balance, in order to know where to find it.

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